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ZIONISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE KINSHIP OF PEOPLES: HASHOMER HATZAIR IN NORTH AMERICA

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

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Referee: Prof. Michael A. Meyer

DIGEST

Hashomer Hatzair is a Socialist-Zionist youth movement with branches in Israel and many countries of the Diaspora. Founded in Eastern Europe during and immediately after the First World War, it was established in the United States and Canada in 1923. The movement places a strong emphasis on aliya to a kibbutz of the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair, and its American graduates have helped to establish a number of kibbutzim in Israel.

Founded in New York by a handful of immigrant young people from Kishinev, the movement soon grew. In 1932, it was the first movement to bring a shaliach (emissary) from Palestine to work with its members. By 1936, the movement reached its high point of approximately three thousand members.

In the years immediately prior to World War II, Hashomer Hatzair was rife with internal conflict over the proper approach to the coming war. Some members, influenced by the Trotskyist movement, advocated a policy of "revolutionary defeatism," viewing the fight as a continuation of other imperialist wars. Others, eventually to constitute the majority, advocated a policy of "fighting fascism within and without." With American entry into the war, leaders of the Trotskyite faction were ejected from the movement. Many shomrim (members of Hashomer Hatzair) served in the U.S. and Canadian military forces.

After the war, shomrim participated in illegal immigration to Palestine and subsequently in smuggling arms to the new State of Israel. Many immigrated to Israel, and

the concommitant leadership vacuum severely weakened the movement. During the Korean War and the McCarthy period, Hashomer Hatzair and its adult affiliates (Progressive Zionist League, Americans for Progressive Israel) were investigated by the FBI. The movement was suspected of violations including advocacy of draft evasion and being a foreign-controlled political organization; the movement was also suspected of being a Communist front. None of these charges could be substantiated. However, the aftermath of the Red Scare, when combined with the above-mentioned leadership vacuum, almost killed the movement.

In subsequent years the movement recovered somewhat, but never exceeded 500 members. In 1985, it was in a period of severe decline, with a total membership of under 250. Although there have been repeated calls for the Kibbutz Artzi to close down North American Hashomer Hatzair, it still exists and continues to form garinim (settlement groups) destined for the Kibbutz Artzi.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis bears my name, and of course ultimate responsibility for it rests with the author. However, it could not have been completed without the help of a number of people, both in the United States and in Israel, who provided me with significant assistance during the research and writing process.

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The Rev. James Walsh, S.J., of Georgetown University can be considered the "First Cause" of this thesis. It was his example and inspiration, more than anything else, which prompted me to enter the rabbinate, and thus caused me to have to write this thesis as a prerequisite for ordination.

Finally I should like to think my referee and advisor, Dr. Michael A. Meyer. Dr. Meyer is everything a Jewish historian should be, combining a passion for Jewish living with scholarly detachment, keen insight, and a firm devotion to social justice. His concern for and devotion to his students exceeds the call of duty. He knows when to "crack the whip" and when to allow free rein, and he always prompts his students to grow. Dr. Meyer embodies the highest ideals of

Progressive Judaism, and it has been both a pleasure and a privilege to work with him. Yirbu c'mohu b'Yisrael.

DEDICATION

Yaron Zamir of Kibbutz Ein Dor was the son of American shomrim. His parents, Yehoshua (from Rochester, N.Y.) and Rama (from Chicago) were members of North American Kibbutz Aliya Daled and founders of Ein Dor.

Yaron was a product of shomer education. Taught to love peace, he answered his country's call to war. In October 1978, he wrote a poem in his diary. The final stanza read:

"And that same small detail -- world of hatred
With the same people and melody of protest
They can now arise and scream to the world:
Enough Killing!"

On June 6, 1982, the first day of the Lebanon War, Yaron Zamir was killed during the Israeli conquest of the Beaufort. He was among the first of more than 600 young Israelis to be sacrificed in this vain and unnecessary war, the brainchild of an Israeli leadership totally opposed to all that Yaron, his family and his movement stood for.

Less than a month later, on July 3, 100,000 Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv to protest the continuation of the war. The rally was called under the slogan taken from Yaron's poem, "Dai L'harog, Enough Killing!" I was present at that rally, and I remember crying as Yehoshua Zamir's open letter to the prime minister, in which he quoted his son's poem, was read to the gathering. Yehoshua's letter, and the outcries of many other parents whose sons were taken from them for no good reason, surely had their impact in eventually putting an end to the madness.

Yaron Zamir was a shomer, and he well represented the Jewish and human values of his movement. His death was a loss not only to his parents and his kibbutz, but to the future of Israeli society.

This thesis is dedicated to his memory.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
HASHOMER HATZAIR: THE EUROPEAN AND PALESTINIAN BACKGROUND

In the introduction to his book Hashomer Hatzair: me-adat neurim l'marksism mahapchani (Hashomer Hatzair: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism) Elkanah Margalit writes:

> The subject of my work is Hashomer Hatzair in Eretz Yisrael. But even at the beginning of my research I came to realize that it is simply impossible to understand the phraseology of members of Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine, and the manner of their reaction to their new reality, without clarifying the characteristics of the "collective character" which crystallized in Hashomer Hatzair abroad, in Galicia and Poland, during the years 1913 - 1920; that is to say, without understanding the origins of Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine from a free and exclusive youth movement abroad.1

What Margalit said of Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine is equally true of the movement in the United States and Canada. The history and ideology of Hashomer Hatzair in North America can only be understood if one bears in mind that the movement here was but one (and one of the smallest and weakest, at that) of many branches throughout the world. Although there were some local variations in aspects of Hashomer Hatzair's ideology and program, the movement throughout the world was remarkably uniform. (This was particularly true after the establishment in Palestine of the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair in 1927, and the subsequent decision of the Kibbutz Artzi to send shlichim to Diaspora branches of the movement.) From the world headquarters of the movement, first in Warsaw and then at Kibbutz Merhavia, there flowed a continuous stream of ideological and educational publications, magazines

and the like. At the same time, the movement in the Diaspora saw itself always as directed towards Eretz Yisrael, and indeed a steady stream of aliya served to replenish and strengthen the Kibbutz Artzi. Thus, despite obvious differences in local realities, Hashomer Hatzair was and is a remarkably uniform world movement.

This chapter will serve as a brief survey of the origins and ideology of the Hashomer Hatzair world movement. I will describe the origins of Hashomer Hatzair in Central and Eastern Europe during the First World War, the early influence of the Baden-Powell Scouting movement, the German Wandervogel and "Free Youth Movement", and Martin Buber and his circle. Then I will discuss the first aliya of shomrim, part of the Third Aliya which began in 1919. This period was highlighted by the founding of the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair in 1927 and the crystallization of Hashomer Hatzair ideology as a separate and distinct trend within Labor Zionism. Of particular interest at this time is the new orientation away from the mysticism and romance of the early years and towards a distinctly Marxist and Borochovist ideology.

More tangential to the North American youth movement, but still of importance in understanding the ideological development within Hashomer Hatzair, were: the founding of the Socialist League (1936), the Hashomer Hatzair Worker's Party, and eventually of MAPAM (Mifleget Ha-Poalim Ha-Meuchedet, the United Workers' Party) in 1948. Unique to Hashomer Hatzair among Zionist youth movements was its support of a bi-national Jewish-Arab state in Palestine and consistent

opposition to partition.

I. Hashomer Hatzair: The Early Years

The institutions of the Hashomer Hatzair movement regard 1913 as the year of the movement's founding, and anniversaries of the movement are celebrated and commemorative publications issued according to this assumption. Thus, in 1943 the world movement celebrated thirty years of its existence[2] and in 1963, 50 years.[3] But in recent years, Elkanah Margalit has cast doubt on the movement's generally self-accepted account of its own origins.

According to the "official" version of the early years, Hashomer Hatzair grew out of two separate groups, Hashomer, a Jewish scouting group along the line of the British Boy Scouts organized by Baden-Powell, and Zeirei-Zion, "a study group on Zionism and for Jewish cultural activities."[4] The two supposedly merged in 1913, and thus, combining elements of both names, Hashomer Hatzair was born.

Margalit's recent research into Hashomer Hatzair, however, indicates that the chronology that is generally accepted within the movement is incorrect. Margalit discovered that the Galician precursors of "what would later be called Hashomer Hatzair" were "scattered associations for sports and scouting, which were founded ca. 1911, and in 1913 united and took for themselves the name "Hashomer", inspired by "Hashomer" (early self-defense organization of Palestinian Jewish pioneers - CLA) -- [and] associations that called themselves

Tzeirei Tzion (not to be confused with the party of that name) which arose ca. 1903 and were educational circles for the improvement of Judaic knowledge." The groups merged, according to Margalit, in Vienna in 1916; at first they called themselves "Shomrim Tzeirei Tzion" and later simply "Hashomer." The name Hashomer Hatzair was not, it seems, adopted until 1919, at the group's convention in Lodz.[5]

The social background of both groups was similar. Members of the two organizations were primarily the sons and daughters of middle class Galician Jews who tended toward assimilation. They were students of the Polish gymnasium or, more rarely, the German. Their parents might or might not have spoken Yiddish at home, but the language of the children was Polish; indeed, some of them considered themselves "Poles of the Mosaic faith." Very few of the early Shomrim were children of Hasidic or other Orthodox groups; few were working youth or other non-students. Their parents were mostly from the established sectors of Galician Jewry: merchants, agents, free professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) and even some who were owners of rural agricultural estates. As might be expected from this social background, most of the early literature of the movement -- even publications that appeared in Vienna during the World War I period -- was in the Polish language.[6] The appearance of what would later become Hashomer Hatzair

> must be understood first and foremost against the background of the Zionist awakening in Galicia, against the background of the varied literature and journalism of the [Zionist]

> movement in Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish and German; and specifically against the background of the student societies -- the Zionist gymnasiasts and the corps of Zionist academics which arose in Galicia from the '80s, and whose members came from observant as well as free-thinking homes. The youth from the observant homes received, obviously, a religious education and learned Hebrew. From among them came the first group leaders who began to spread the Hebrew language and drew the children of the free-thinkers/assimilationists to Judaism. The Zionist movement in Galicia succeeded even at its beginning to win over the best of the students, ironically enough from the assimilationist homes, even though part of this youth tended toward the Polish socialist movement or toward assimilation in the style of "Poles of the Mosaic faith."7

These early groups were, on the whole, not party-oriented; most of their activity consisted of study of classic Jewish and Zionist literature, sporting activities, and culture programs. They did pay the Zionist "shekel" and supported the Basel Program, but they did not in any way actively encourage or support the aliya of their members. In many ways, these early groups were Jewish imitations of the (Gentile) Polish Scouting movement, with its stress on military discipline, physical health and development, emphasis on order and cleanliness, and development of self-reliance.

The outbreak of the first World War shook Galician Jewry to the core. Its homeland became a battlefield; at the very beginning of the war the Russians invaded and reached the outskirts of Cracow; they did not withdraw entirely from Galicia until 1917. About half of all Galician Jews fled: to Hungary, Moravia, Czechoslovakia -- but principally to Vienna.

Even after the war, conditions could hardly be said to

have improved. The war of the non-Communist powers against the Bolsheviks continued until 1920. Galician Jewry was split between the Poles and the Ukrainians, who were at war with each other. Pogroms broke out on both sides of the dividing line; a few hundred Jews were killed, many more injured, arrested and exiled. Those Galician Jews who remained in Vienna knew, of course, of the fate of their friends and relatives. They themselves confronted unemployment and severe poverty in Vienna; families were left penniless when fathers and older brothers were mobilized into the Austrian army. This was the background which gave rise to Hashomer Hatzair.

According to Margalit, the Vienna Period (or Vienna-Galicia Period, since contact with Galicia was never completely cut off) was the formative one in the growth of Hashomer Hatzair and its particular characteristics. In Vienna, Galician Jewish youth came into contact with "the West" -- even though they continued to go to Polish-language schools and had little success in attracting native Viennese to their group. The Western influences of Vienna continued to be felt for a long time.

In Vienna, Galician Jewish youth encountered the "Blau-Weiss", the German Zionist youth group. The Galician Jews were both attracted and repelled; attracted by the "freedom" and "naturalness" of the German youth, but repelled by their minimal Jewishness and Zionism. Also in Vienna, the early shomrim were influenced by the German "wandervogel" and their ideology of a youth culture in opposition to the decadent

mores of adult society. Of more lasting impact was their contact with Martin Buber, his circle and his periodical Der Jude. Buber lectured at the ken (lit.: nest, the term for a local chapter of Hashomer Hatzair) in Vienna and, after the war, visited the ken in Lvov as well. His influence would be felt not only in Europe but also in the early days of Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine. (Indeed, even though Hashomer Hatzair would later turn from mysticism to Marxism, Buber had an ongoing relationship with it and with MAPAM until the end of his life.) By mid-1918 the Vienna ken numbered about 400 shomrim; it is possible that at the height of the refugee influx the Vienna ken achieved a membership of 1000. With the end of the war, the focus of the movement shifted to Galicia proper; largest and most prominent of the kinim was that at Lvov.[8]

Yaakov Chazan, one of the early leaders of Hashomer Hatzair, described the early days of the movement in the Diaspora:

> While we struggle stubbornly to master the ability to converse in Hebrew among ourselves, we dare to be in the front ranks of those then fighting for the revival of our Hebraic culture. The "Kinim" where we meet become lively springs of Hebraic atmosphere, exciting islands of Palestinian exuberance in the dismal Diaspora's sea. Still juvenile, our Galician movement fights an obstinate battle for Hebrew in the schools, organizes the students' strike in Lwow and is its mainspring. In Poland, we become one of the leading supporters of the Hebraic school, of "Tarbut". So it is wherever the Movement appears.[9]

The movement grew and spread throughout Eastern Europe. In 1924 the first World Assembly of Hashomer Hatzair was

held, bringing together shomrim from Poland, Galicia, Lithuania, Latvia, the Soviet Union, Rumania, and the Free City of Danzig (Gdansk). At the time the world movement numbered 11,000. The European movement continued to expand; by 1939, on the eve of the destruction of European Jewry, there were 70,000 shomrim, mostly concentrated in Eastern and Central Europe.[10]

As indicated above, the early European Hashomer Hatzair was not the socialist organization familiar today. But already in those years, the first stirrings of a socialist Zionist viewpoint were felt:

> From our earliest days, we possessed a deep historical, national and socialist intuition. Even before we were fully acquainted with Zionist theory, we were orthodox Zionists craving for accomplishments. Not knowing Marx, we already surged with a socialist enthusiasm that demanded action. Even before Borochov was revealed to us in all his greatness and depth, we guessed at the nature of Jewish labor's decisive task in the renascence of our national and social life.[11]

Already at the beginning of the twenties, the Polish movement in particular stressed the study of Marxism.

> It would not be altogether true to say that at the beginning of the twenties, Hashomer Hatsair was still completely strange to Marxism; it would be more exact to say that Marxism had not yet become a general theoretical starting point and guide in choosing its path, as it is today.[12]

II. The First Shomer Aliya

The Third Aliya was a comparatively large wave of immigration which followed on the heels of the World War, the

Balfour Declaration, and the award of the mandate over Palestine to Great Britain. The beginning of Hashomer Hatzair immigration to Palestine was a Third Aliya phenomenon. The very first shomrim arrived in 1919; in 1920 and 1921, about 600 arrived, although many of them subsequently either left the country or joined non-shomer frameworks. For the founding convention of the Histadrut, in 1921, Hashomer Hatzair ran a joint list, called "The New Immigrants", with Tzeirei Tzion and Hechalutz. There were 4 Hashomer Hatzair delegates to the second convention of the Histadrut in 1923, which would translate into about 200 Hashomer Hatzair voters.[13]

The early strength of the Hashomer Hatzair immigration was dissipated somewhat due to the lack of organizational ties between Hashomer Hatzair groups in various countries. (As noted earlier, the founding convention of the Hashomer Hatzair world movement was not held until 1924.) Groups of Hashomer Hatzair immigrants dispersed throughout the country. It was not until 1924, the same year that the world movement was organized in Europe, that Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine united. Even at this point, there was some objection; numbers of shomrim had in the meanwhile been absorbed into other political frameworks (such as Ahdut HaAvoda and the Gdud) and demanded freedom of action for new shomrim arriving in the country.[14]

The most common employment for Hashomer Hatzair immigrants during the Third Aliya was in road-building. This was a unique and formative experience not only for shomrim; the Gdud HaAvoda and the Kibbutz HaMeuchad also grew out of the

period of road-building. Jewish youths, mostly urban and often unused to physical labor, found themselves remote from civilization and engaged in hard physical endeavor. No facilities were available, and thus communalism was a necessity of life: communal kitchens and dining halls, whatever social and cultural life was available, and pay equality. The shomrim, whether they were alone in their roadbuilding crew or together with immigrants from other groups, formed an independent community with its own particular style and esprit de corps. Shomrim worked on the Haifa - Jedda, Tiberias - Tabha, and Nazareth - Afula roads. On the Haifa - Jedda road, though working together with the Gdud HaAvoda, they formed an autonomous group (Gdud "Shomria") under the leadership of Mordechai Shenhavi and Abba Khoushi, later to become mayor of Haifa.[15]

One of the smallest groups, but (at least in Hashomer Hatzair legend) the most influential, was the commune of 26 settlers at Betania Ilit. This period, in the eyes of those who went through it and those who wished they had, was "wrapped in mysteries, and gave rise to wonder." The Betania Ilit commune was noted for the intensity of its group life, and in particular for the intimate and confessional sichot, or group discussions, that often lasted all night. This first commune was considered the "eagle's nest", (ken n'sharim, a pun on the word "ken" which connotes a branch of Hashomer Hatzair) and the source of the communal ideals and lifestyle of Hashomer Hatzair.[16]

A literary product of Betania Ilit was the first edition of the "Hashomer Hatzair" journal to be published in Eretz Yisrael. Called Kehilliateinu ("Our Community") it was a 200-plus page collection of diary entries, poems, letters and essays by the members of the Hashomer Hatzair settlement. The strong ties to Martin Buber and his circle are evident from some of the pieces; included in the publication are a letter from Buber's associate Shmuel Hugo Bergman, as well as a letter to Buber from one of the settlers, "Eliyahu." In his letter, addressed to "the beloved Martin Buber, my companion and my teacher" (re-i v'rabi) and written in an artificial and difficult to understand Hebrew, Eliyahu describes the daily life at Betania Ilit. He expresses regret that, although "I know how great is your place in the life of our community, I also know - to the point of pain - that many of my comrades who are here do not recognize the solid bridge which connects our ways, and do not see you as the bearer of the burden. . . the burden which you bear for us, whose weight we were able to shake off only because of you. But I do recognize you as such - not the famous author, just the man whose pitcher overflows from his reality to my reality, who calls for freedom of the peoples out of the concern and the love that is in solitude, who burns with the flame of Hasidism . . ."[17]

The group at Betania Ilit, joined by others, crystallized by the mid-1920s as the first kibbutz of Hashomer Hatzair, Beit Alpha. The three other early kibbutzim which were involved in the founding of the Kibbutz Artz were Merha-

via, Ein Shemer, and Mishmar HaEmek. Other kibbutzim founded earlier by non-shomrim, such as Gan Shmuel (1921), also joined the Kibbutz Artzi and adopted Hashomer Hatzair ideology.

III. The Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair

The romantic period of the early shomrim was not to last long. As the new immigrants became absorbed in the country and its labor force, they were confronted with the conflicts in Palestinian society between worker and employer, between various political streams, and between Jew and Arab. They could no longer be concerned only with the internal needs of their own group. This period led to the development of Hashomer Hatzair's unique Marxist Zionist viewpoint. The late Peretz Merhav, one of the leading Marxist theoreticians of the Kibbutz Artzi, saw this development as a natural outgrowth of the then-prevailing conditions in Palestine:

> In the same way that Hashomer Hatsair had earlier tried to apply analysis and science to subjects like pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, etc., it now attempted to answer the problems of sociology and politics. When it attacked these problems scientifically it could only come to a socialist outlook and Marxist conclusions: class struggle, international solidarity (with workers throughout the world and with the neighboring Arab laborers), support for the socialist construction in the U.S.S.R., etc. As alert youths seeking the roots of things and believing in complete realization, they were less apt to choose the compromising reformist version of socialism than the revolutionary one.18

Merhav's viewpoint is essentially verified by Elkanah Margalit, a non-Marxist (though socialist) chronicler of the

Israeli labor movement:

> [Hashomer Hatzair's] platform presented its own type of Marxist Zionist Socialism. This interpretation was the fruit of much practical, bitter experience in Palestine . . . during the Fourth Aliya, and not the product of any consistent indoctrination. It was more of a reaction on the part of a unique youth movement that was disappointed by the harsh reality in the country during the twenties.19

In many ways, the ideology that Hashomer Hatzair arrived at was orthodox Borochovism.[20] The relationship between the two aspects of Borochovism, revolutionary socialism and pioneering Zionism, was explained by the Hashomer Hatzair-developed "Theory of Stages."

Hashomer Hatzair did not like to call itself Socialist Zionist, but rather both Revolutionary Socialist and Pioneering Zionist. The two aspects were not identical, but neither were they in conflict. Rather, they were complementary. According to the Theory of Stages, different aspects of the overall ideology would predominate at different times. In the first stage, the Zionist aspect would predominate; this would be a time of construction, of immigration, and establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine. This is not to say that the socialist aspect would be forgotten entirely, but it would take a back seat to national solidarity. Once the Jewish majority had been achieved, however, the socialist stage would be reached. This would be the period of class struggle and socialist revolution. The Theory of Stages was important in allowing Hashomer Hatzair to participate in Zionist constructivism and to cooperate with other parties

within the Palestinian labor movement without abandoning altogether (as Hashomer Hatzair would often accuse MAPAI of doing) its commitment to eventual revolution and the establishment of workers' hegemony.[21]

A unique third aspect, besides revolutionary socialism and pioneering Zionism, of the developing Hashomer Hatzair ideology was "Kibbutzism." This was not a substitute for class struggle; it was not enough merely to create a socialist society within the kibbutz while ignoring the capitalist nature of the surrounding society. Indeed, creation of the kibbutz was in and of itself to "swim against the stream" given the capitalist nature of society, but the kibbutz was to play a role in the larger society as well. Maximum development of the kibbutz ideal was made possible by education from childhood and by the "organic kibbutz" which would allow for maximum personal freedom and democracy. Each kibbutz was to enjoy a great deal of autonomy; but the kibbutz as a whole was an "intentional community" whose members should share a common ideology (the principle of collectiviut raayonit). Although the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair did eventually cooperate with non-kibbutz elements that shared its general approach, life in a Palestinian kibbutz was seen as the only natural and correct outcome of participation in the educational youth movement, whether in Palestine or the Diaspora.

IV. Later Developments

With the crystallization of the ideology of the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair by 1927, one could say that the pro-

cess of developing an ideology was completed. What followed was, then, not development of an ideology but rather application of that ideology to events and developments of the day. This application would lead to the founding by the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair of the Socialist League in Palestine, the Hashomer Hatzair Worker's Party, and of Mapam, all prior to the creation of the State of Israel. These developments did not have a direct organizational impact on the Hashomer Hatzair movement in North America; but the stands and tactics adopted by these groups would be reflected in the positions, and the work within American Zionism, of North American Hashomer Hatzair.

Already by the early 1930s many urban left socialists in Palestine were disappointed by the "reformist" (i.e. non-Marxist, non-revolutionary) tendencies of the main labor party, MAPAI. Some of them began to form themselves into groups of "Hashomer Hatzair sympathisers," and the Kibbutz Artzi council of 1935 decided to support and encourage these moves, but not to the extent of forming a new political party.

A party organization did come into existence two years later, however, when the "Socialist League in Palestine" was founded as an urban political ally of the Kibbutz Artzi, to spread its ideology among city workers and to garner their support for Hashomer Hatzair stands in the Histadrut and other arms of the Yishuv. The Socialist League served only as a temporary step, and there were soon demands within and

without the Kibbutz Artzi to abandon the dual-organization approach and create one unified Hashomer Hatzair political party. These demands intensified when, in 1941-42, Hashomer Hatzair won over 20% of the votes to the Fifth Conference of the Histadrut. Hashomer Hatzair was now the largest opposition party, second in size only to MAPAI. It was clear that the bulk of Hashomer Hatzair's political support was coming from outside the kibbutzim. Still, there was hesitation on the part of the kibbutz leadership; only when it became clear (through the expulsion of the left-leaning "Siah Bet") that MAPAI had become a reformist and non-revolutionary party was full unity agreed to. In February 1946 the Socialist League and the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomer Hatzair together formed the Hashomer Hatzair Workers' Party.[22]

This framework was to last only two years, but they were two crucial and stormy years in the development of the Yishuv. The Hashomer Hatzair Worker's Party set itself in opposition to both the British Mandatory power and to calls for a Jewish state in part or all of Palestine. Opposing Partition, as it had opposed the Peel plan in 1937,[23] it supported instead a plan for a bi-national state with power to be shared equally by Jews and Arabs. It supported, along with the Ihud group of Buber, Magnes and Ernst Simon, the "League for Jewish - Arab Rapprochement." It created Sifriat Poalim (Worker's Library, one of the largest Israeli publishers) and the Center for Progressive Culture, headed by the poets Avraham Shlonsky and Leah Goldberg.

Ironically, that part of the Palestinian labor movement

that was closest to Hashomer Hatzair in its social outlook was distant from it in its view of the solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict. Ahdut HaAvoda (the former MAPAI "Siah Bet") and Left Poalei Zion (a prior MAPAI splinter) opposed the bi-nationalism of Hashomer Hatzair and proposed instead a "Jewish socialist state in all of Palestine."[24] This was based on the assumption that conflict between the two nations was inevitable and that no attempt at compromise would prove workable in practice.

With the adoption by the United Nations of Partition in 1947, and the subsequent outbreak of war between the Yishuv and the surrounding Arabs, both the bi-nationalism of Hashomer Hatzair and the demand of Ahdut HaAvoda for a state in all of Palestine became theoretical at best. This being the case, the two groups merged on the basis of their Marxist Socialism. Thus was born MAPAM, the United Workers' Party, which was to win 19 seats in the First Knesset and become the largest opposition party.

NOTES

1. Elkanah Margalit, Hashomer Hatzair: Me-adat neurim l'marksism mahapchani (Tel Aviv, 1971) 11.

2. Cf. Y. Chazan, Thirty Years of Hashomer Hatzair (Palestine, 1944).

3. Cf. With Strength and Courage: 50 Years Hashomer Hatzair (New York, 1963).

4. Ibid., 3.

5. Margalit, Hashomer Hatzair, 20, 22.

6. Ibid., 17.

7. Ibid., 19.

8. Ibid., 20-23.

9. Chazan, Thirty Years of Hashomer Hatzair, 4.

10. Ibid., 8-9.

11. Ibid., 23.

12. Peretz Merhav, The Israeli Left: History, Problems, Documents (San Diego, 1980), 81.

13. Margalit, Hashomer Hatzair, 80-81.

14. Merhav, The Israeli Left, 82.

15. Margalit, Hashomer Hatzair, 80-81.

16. Ibid., 81.

17. Kehilliatenu, (Beit Alpha, Israel, reprinted 1964), 187.

18. Merhav, The Israeli Left, 82.

19. Elkanah Margalit, "Socialist Zionism in Palestine: Collective and Equalitarian Tradition," The Jerusalem Quarterly, No. 28 (summer 1983): 106.

20. Ber Borochov, a Zionist theoretician of the early 1900s, had arrived at a "synthesis" of Zionism and Marxism. He held that because of the "inverted pyramid", i.e. the abnormal economic structure of the Jews in the Diaspora, Jews could only wage the class struggle and become a "normal" people after territorial concentration. Borochov, unlike Marx, distinguished between the nationalism of oppressed nations, which was progressive and revolutionary, and that of oppressor nations, which was reactionary.

21. Cf. Merhav, The Israeli Left, 85.

22. Merhav, The Israeli Left, 89-91.

23. Cf. The Case Against Partition (New York, 1937).

24. Merhav, The Israeli Left, 97.

CHAPTER TWO
THE EARLY YEARS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MOVEMENT

The Background

The European Hashomer Hatzair movement, as we saw in the previous chapter, grew up as an independent and autonomous youth movement. It was not the "youth section" of an adult party, and thus was free to develop its own ways -- many of which remained unique to Hashomer Hatzair. The growth of the European movement was prompted by the conditions in which Jewish youth found itself, and was an attempt at responding to these conditions. European Hashomer Hatzair developed, in a sense, ex nihilo; although it drew on some of the tradition of the Baden-Powell Scout movement and the German "Free Youth", for the most part there was little for the movement to imitate in creating its own character. There were no real models to follow.

The American movement arrived on the scene some five to ten years, depending on the chronology one accepts, after the birth of the world movement. By this time there was a well-developed symbolism and sense of group identity. There were shomer communes in Palestine, and the distinctive pioneering Zionist and revolutionary socialist ideology of the Kibbutz Artzi was beginning to develop. There was already a "shomer well" from which the new movement could drink.

North American Hashomer Hatzair at its founding, besides having something of a model to emulate, differed significantly from its European counterpart in one important respect. While the European movement was seen by its founders as a

response to conditions of the surrounding society, the North American movement started as an attempt to recreate something that had been left behind overseas. Virtually all of the early shomrim were immigrants who had been in the movement in Europe; indeed, most of them had been shomrim together in Kishinev. In some respects, in its early years the American movement resembled a young people's landsmanshaft. This would change with time; as the gates of immigration closed, the American movement had to reach out to non-immigrant Jewish youth or it would die. Yet, in adapting to American Jewish society, Hashomer Hatzair refused to give up its distinctive character.

I. The First Shomer Group

The history of Hashomer Hatzair in America is generally dated from the establishment of a ken in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn in late 1923. However, prior to this ken, the longest continually operating Hashomer Hatzair group in North America, there was at least one earlier attempt at establishing a Hashomer Hatzair group in New York. Until recently, almost nothing was known about this group, which left behind only one document -- the oldest North-American related document in the Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva, Israel.[1]

The document in question is an unsigned letter, on the letterhead of the "Hashomer Organization of New York" to a Benyamin Dror of Haifa. In this letter, dated 15 October, 1922, the writer tells of a donation of $233 which the organ-

ization sent to Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine for the support of its collectives. The donation was sent through the Actions Committee of the Histadrut, but no acknowledgement was received, and the senders were troubled. Perhaps the money had not been received? Had something gone wrong? The writer was willing to send a further donation, but would not do so until an acknowledgement of the first donation had been received.

The writer also tells Dror that he has heard rumors of the anthology recently published by the shomrim in Eretz Yisrael (the reference is apparently to Kehiliatenu, the publication of the Bitanya Ilit commune). He requests Dror to send two copies of the anthology, and closes with the traditional Hashomer Hatzair greeting hazak v'ematz (be strong and of good courage). There is no record of Dror's response to the group or of any further correspondence.

It will be noted that the organizational letterhead, in both Hebrew and English, refers to the sending group as "Hashomer" and not "Hashomer Hatzair." However, the use of the semel t'nua (movement symbol combining Jewish and scouting elements) on the letterhead, the shomer greeting "hazak v'ematz" and the fact that it was addressed to a Hashomer Hatzair group in Haifa leave no doubt that the sender was someone who was familiar with and identified himself as part of the Hashomer Hatzair world movement.

Writers dealing with the origins of Hashomer Hatzair in North America have been puzzled by this solitary document, written over a year before the establishment of the first

known Hashomer Hatzair group. The transcript of an interview with one of the founders of the Brownsville group, Yaakov Levenberg, may solve the mystery.[2] Levenberg states that a Dr. Kantor, a dentist who had been in Hashomer Hatzair in Europe, tried to organize a group in New York a year or so before the Brownsville ken got off the ground. This group lasted a few months and then disintegrated; one of its members, Aaron Karp, later found his way into the leadership of the Brownsville ken. Perhaps it was this early, unsuccessful group which corresponded with the Palestinian movement and sent it financial support.

II. The Brownsville Ken

The leaders of what would become the first successful Hashomer Hatzair group in North America shared a similar background. For the most part, they were very recent immigrants to the United States. They were in their middle-to-late teens, and thus were a few years younger than the founders of European Hashomer Hatzair. Most of the members of the Brownsville ken had been members of Hashomer Hatzair in Europe; though they often dreamed of aliya, they were still under parental control and thus, willingly or not, followed their parents to the United States. Most of these shomrim hailed originally from the Ukraine or other parts of Czarist Russia, and had spent time during the Russian civil war as refugees in Bessarabia, which was then under Romanian control. In Bessarabia, particularly in Kishinev, they came into contact with slightly older youths who had been in Hashomer Hatzair

in other parts of Eastern Europe. At least three of the eventual leaders of the American movement -- Yosef Wilfand, Yosef Farber and Avraham Zeiger -- studied together in the same class in Kishinev, in a school financed by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.[3]

The immigrants of 1923 represented the last wave in the flood of Eastern European immigration that radically reshaped and redirected American Jewry. The first restrictive immigration act had been passed in 1921; the Immigration Act of 1924, passed shortly after the arrival of these young immigrants, would all but seal the gates.

The America that the new immigrants found was that of the "Roaring Twenties." The internationalism of Wilson had been rejected in favor of the "normalcy" of Warren G. Harding. Prohibition was the order of the day, but it was honored as much in the breach as in the observance. American society was being pulled in many directions; simultaneously with the isolationism of Harding and the social conservatism of the Eighteenth Amendment, America experienced a flowering of arts and letters and a renewed fascination with the Left.

The Jewish world, too, was sending out mixed messages. Although for most Jews the desired goal was acculturation into American society, New York Jewry and that of other large cities witnessed the continued flowering of Yiddish and Hebrew literary and artistic creativity. The Zionist movement, especially in the wake of the Balfour Declaration and its subsequent ratification by the League of Nations, flourished

-- but it was that particularly American type of Zionism represented by Justice Louis Brandeis. Though Brandeis and his slate had been defeated at the 1921 convention of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), he continued to set the tone. "In the 1920s Zionism was American because it was businesslike, acultural in emphasis, and philanthropic. By tailoring its approach to fit the temper of the decade, the ZOA [and the Zionist movement as a whole] was able to insure its own continuity."[4]

Of course, the Brownsville that these new immigrants found themselves in was not typical America; the newcomers lived in neighborhoods which were almost entirely Jewish, where Yiddish was the lingua franca, where one could, and often did, exercise leadership (as did Zeiger upon his arrival) without knowing a word of English. (Activities were carried on in Yiddish or Hebrew, and movement records were kept entirely in Hebrew.) But as much as Brownsville was not mid-America, it was also not Kishinev. There were difficulties in adjusting to American society; there was loneliness, there was nostalgia:

> It was natural that the first thing which would happen on our coming to a new land would be that a nostalgia would arise for the prior country. And more than anything, it was natural that there would be strong longings for Hashomer Hatzair, for the youth movement.[5]

In response to these pangs of nostalgia, the immigrant youngsters sought each other out. One of the founders, Yosef Farber, recalls:

> We got to America at the beginning of 1923. It was actually on New Years, the beginning of

> the year. It's difficult to say how we discovered each other, but it seems that all the immigrants concentrated in the old section of Brownsville, on Osborne Avenue, Blake Avenue, etc. In that year (Yaakov) Levenberg, (Yosef) Golub and I organized Hashomer Hatzair, and the ken in Brownsville was established.6

European Hashomer Hatzair in the early 1920s, the movement with which these young immigrants were familiar, was essentially a scouting movement:

> In order to emphasize this, it is enough to tell that even the greeting hazak v'ematz appeared only in the year 1921-22, and before that the orders were still given in the Scouting style: heivei nachon! (be prepared) and the response was: tamid muchan (always ready). And I must note, that we observed faithfully all the details of scouting and placed a great emphasis on it.7

This emphasis continued in the early years of the North American movement. Peulot (activities) consisted of hikes, trips to parks, games, excercises, and the like. The language of activities was generally Yiddish. In retrospect, the founders of the American movement realized that there was a marked lack of specifically Jewish content to their activities, because it was felt that there was no need for "Jewish" activities:

> There was no problem with anything connected to "Yiddishkeit": our daily language was Yiddish and it turned out in a natural way that we all knew Hebrew as well, a good and beautiful Hebrew which we were fortunate enough to learn in the excellent Hebrew schools. Knowledge of the history of the people and Jewish self-consciousness -- all this was not a problem for us . . . we did not doubt the fact that we were Jews. This was self-evident.8

The original core group numbered forty to fifty shomrim, virtually all of them recent immigrants. At first they did

not blend into their surroundings. "Although we were residing in the United States, we continued to live in Kishinev. There was a sort of wall around us, and we did not tunnel under it to the world beyond it."[9] As the shomrim maintained contact with the movement they had left behind in Europe, new ideas began to seep in. The American shomrim read the same literature as did their comrades in Europe: Tolstoy, Roland, A.D. Gordon. Interestingly, one of the most widely-read authors among the Brownsville shomrim was James Fenimore Cooper; he, too, was read in Hebrew.[10]

There was great interest in Palestinian affairs in those early times, and it seems that there was an unspoken assumption that the eventual goal of the shomrim was aliya. However, there was no formal Zionist activity. Paying dues of 10 to 15 cents weekly, the shomrim were able to rent an ulam on Thatford Avenue (the term "ken" had not yet come into use). The shomer ulam was located in the next building over from a branch of Tzeirei Tzion, a Zionist organization whose members were only slightly older than the shomrim. Friendly ties developed, but no formal connections. Through Tzeirei Tzion the fledgling shomrim were led into the New York Zionist world and took part in the general Zionist rallies, fundraising for the JNF, etc. In 1924, two members of Hashomer Hatzair in full tilbosbet (uniform) presented world Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, then on a U.S. speaking tour, with a bouquet of flowers at a Zionist rally in his honor.

As successful as the Brownsville group might have been

in meeting the needs of its original members, it soon became clear that if the movement were to continue it would need new blood. The madrichim decided to try and organize within the Talmud Torah schools, but met with resistance. Eventually, one teacher in the Stone Avenue Talmud Torah allowed Hashomer Hatzair to attempt to organize in his class. The experiment succeeded, and the first "American", i.e. native-born, group of Hashomer Hatzair was formed. When the older, original nucleus broke up -- as we shall see below -- this "American" group, "K'vutzat Shual,"[11] continued on its own. The members of this group, who were 11 or 12 years old when they joined Hashomer Hatzair, would eventually be the moving force behind the founding of the first American kibbutz, Ein Hashofet.

III. The Manhattan Ken

The origin and development of the Brownsville ken has been well documented in recent years through the reminiscences of its founders. Unfortunately, very little is known about the beginnings of the second group of North American Hashomer Hatzair - the ken in Manhattan, which came to be known as Gdud (Troop) Brenner.

Although accounts of the origin of this group conflict, all agree that the two main leaders were Avraham Karp (who had been in the first, failed Hashomer Hatzair group in Brooklyn) and Yitzchak Slonimsky (later known as Irving Sloan). Slonimsky and Karp had both been in the European movement; they met at a meeting of Tzeirei Tzion and decided to see if they could organize a Hashomer Hatzair group in

Manhattan. They placed an advertisement in one of the Yiddish newspapers, asking all those who had been in the European movement to come to a meeting at the Tzeirei Tzion clubhouse on Grand Street. Out of those who responded to the advertisement, a new group was formed; this group was later reinforced by Polish and Galician immigrants.[12]

The Manhattan group, Gdud Brenner, opened an office on Grand Street. The Brooklyn group, distinguishing itself from its Manhattan compatriots, called itself Gdud Trumpeldor. "Trumpeldor in those days had not yet been adopted by the Revisionists. In our eyes he was one of the heroes of (the Palestinian self-defense group) Hashomer and it was natural that we greatly admired him."[13] Contacts were established between the two groups, and joint programs took place. Eventually, as the original Brownsville group grew smaller, the older shomrim from Gdud Trumpeldor joined Gdud Brenner, and newer, larger quarters were found on Henry Street in Manhattan.

IV. Birth pangs

By 1925 a unified leadership of the New York shomrim was established; Aaron Karp became the first mazkir (secretary). The first "circular letter" (chozer) of the New York mazkirut, dated May 4, 1925, lists three branches of the organization: Gdud Trumpeldor, in Brownsville, headed by Yosef Farber, numbering two plugot (divisions) and six kvutzot (groups) ranging in age from 11 to 17; Gdud Hahashmonaim in Boro Park, Brooklyn, headed by Moshe Fox, one pluga and

two kvutzot, ranging in ages from 10 to 16; and finally the Manhattan group, Gdud Brenner, with a pluga of "m'vugarim" (adults, but perhaps the writer means what were later called bogrim, i.e. those in their late teens and onwards) called Kadima, and a group of tzofim (scouts). Other movement news included the first city-wide meeting of all group leaders, a Lag B'Omer outing to Forest Park, and the news that the group "Shomer Halutz" had disbanded but that its members would stay in the organization as individuals.[14]

Another important event for the shomrim was the arrival in the spring of 1925 of the Palestinian youth delegation, under the auspices of the Jewish National Fund. Two of the three members of this delegation, Eliezer Rieger and Shalom Spiegel, had been among the founders of Hashomer Hatzair about a decade earlier in Galicia. Although the time the delegation, which was essentially a fund-raising mechanism, could spend with the shomrim was limited, the opportunity to hear of the early years in Europe and the development of the Palestinian movement was appreciated. In their farewell letter, the delegation expressed regret at not having had more time to spend with those "who are close to Eretz Yisrael (and also close to us from the shomer point of view.)" However, what they had seen convinced them that even in the United States "the flame had been kindled -- albeit for now in a small group -- which sparked that youthful spirit which created our Zionist youth movement and the labor movement in Eretz Yisrael."[15]

These three years also saw the establishment of Hashomer

Hatzair branches outside the New York metropolitan area. The first tentative steps in Montreal were taken in 1924; Toronto and Winnipeg followed in 1925. The Winnipeg ken, so distant from the metropolises of Montreal and New York, soon folded, although it did last long enough to send a delegate to the movement's first national convention in 1927.[16]

The Boston ken was founded by Yosef Wilfand, one of the group that had studied together in Kishinev. On his arrival in the United States in 1923, he had gone directly to Boston, where he attempted almost immediately to create a nucleus of Hashomer Hatzair. This original attempt did not succeed.

By 1926, Wilfand had received Hebrew teacher's certification and was teaching in the "Ivriah" Hebrew school. There he received permission from his principal to organize a "Zionist and scouting group" from among the senior students. This experiment won the support of the head of the Boston Bureau of Jewish Education, Louis Hurwich, who sought to expand the program into the other schools under his aegis. Hurwich wanted the program to be an official part of the Boy Scouts of America, which allowed for troops affiliated with churches and religious institutions.

Negotiations took place between Hurwich and Wilfand, on the one hand, and the Boy Scouts organization, on the other. It was agreed that activities could be conducted in Hebrew; the name Hashomer Hatzair could be retained; but that boys and girls would have to be organized in separate units, as was the American and British pattern. The New York office of

Hashomer Hatzair vetoed this agreement, though under what authority it did so is unclear, since a national framework would not be set up until 1927. At any rate, the program in Boston went on without the Boy Scout sanction. Despite Hurwich's support, it was difficult to get the program off the ground because few teachers who had not been active in Hashomer Hatzair were willing to undergo the necessary "scoutmaster training."

Despite the difficulties, the Boston ken did conduct the typical Hashomer Hatzair activities of the day: scouting programs, hikes, singing, participation in JNF fundraising, etc. In early 1927, a number of students from the Boston Hebrew Teachers College joined the movement, bringing with them their students from one of the Roxbury Hebrew schools. In February 1927, an assembly was held marking Tel Hai Day; this assembly, addressed by the New York Hashomer Hatzair leader Yosef Farber, was accounted a great success, and has since been regarded as the official starting point of the Boston ken.[17]

At the same time that new Hashomer Hatzair groups were getting off the ground, the original Brownsville nucleus was going through difficult times. In 1926, most of that original group had reached the age of 18 and begun to wonder what the future would bring. In order to prepare themselves for eventual aliya and kibbutz life in Eretz Yisrael, a number of the core members sought to study agriculture. Some went to the National Farm School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, but did not last long; "we did not want to be agronomists, but tillers of

the soil."

Turning to the Jewish Agricultural Society, the organization founded by Baron Hirsch to assist Jews in settling the land, the shomrim obtained places for hachshara (agricultural training in preparation for aliya) with Jewish farmers in Connecticut. About twenty or twenty-five young people participated in the hachshara in one form or another; of these, eight were involved full-time for a period of two years. The members of this group styled themselves the "Shomer Halutz K'vutza."

During the hachshara period, an ironic development took place. Though preparing for speedy aliya to Palestine, the young immigrants became, in their own eyes, more Americanized. Though living and working with Jewish farmers, they began to abandon their attachment to agriculture and to specifically Jewish problems. These developments seem paradoxical, particularly as those who participated in the hachshara do not testify to close contacts with non-Jews or with proletarians. Perhaps the relationship with the farmers involved turned sour, though again there is no indication that this is so; or perhaps it was due to the influence of the literature that the would-be Palestinians were reading. At any rate, it was during the farm experience that many of the founders began to stray from the ideology of Hashomer Hatzair. As Farber told it:

> . . . it can be said that this was the first time we had discovered America. We no longer walked the way we had in Kishinev. We started to read a different literature, which told of

> American history. We discovered that the "salt of the earth" is not the farmer but the proletariat. We were still dedicated to the ideals of working the land and negation of the diaspora, but here we began to be won over by the idea that the one who would realize the liberation of man and the world would be the worker, the proletarian. It was necessary to save the world, not just one tiny corner of the great big world.
>
> Thus began the drift towards the left. A gap had been opened between myself and the ideas of the movement, and the rift grew continually wider. I saw before me a world full of troubles and suffering, and it was not Hashomer Hatzair which would bring the solution. . . We became Americans. I was the first to pave the way towards the American Left.19

Yaakov Levenberg tells a similar tale of leftward drift, but he points to the lack of specific Jewish content in the movement as a cause of this tendency:

> When we returned from the farms in 1927-28, most of those who had been there had already managed to glimpse other ideological paths. And since at that time communism had started to spread in the Jewish streets and to increase its influence; and since we were members of a movement whose main aspiration was not specifically to see the purely Jewish aspect of life, but rather to seek a way to make a better world (emphasis added), many of us began to see this [communism] as the only way, and they paid the price -- especially the leadership, our oldest group. They left the movement. Some immediately, some a few years later, and they went to other movements. Thus was cut the tie with the Hashomer Hatzair movement until many years later.20

By the time the repercussions of this period had fully worked themselves through, the vast majority of those who had been on hachshara left the movement. Thus, most of those who had been instrumental in founding the Hashomer Hatzair in America were no longer involved in the movement. However, by this time there had appeared a new leadership figure, one who

had been in Kishinev with the founding group, one who would help set the tone that Hashomer Hatzair would take in America for the next several decades.

V. Avraham Zeiger

Avraham Zeiger (1906-1932) was an unlikely person to become one of the dominant, almost legendary figures of the North American Hashomer Hatzair. Zeiger was born in the Ukraine and was a sickly child from the first days of his life. While still a toddler, he suffered a severe fall that left him a hunchback.[21] Knowing that because of his precarious physical state his livelihood would depend on the use of his mental abilities, Avraham's parents did their best to insure their son would receive the best education possible. In 1917 he was enrolled in the new "Hebrew Gymnasium" which had been opened in his home shtetl of Stoishe; he was especially drawn to the study of geography, the adventure novels of Jules Verne, and the Hebrew language. In those days of political ferment, socialist revolution and rising Zionist consciousness, the twelve-year-old Zeiger and some of his friends organized themselves into a Zionist society: "logic decreed that if there was 'Tzeirei Tzion' (Young People of Zion) and 'B'nai Tzion' (Children of Zion) then there should also be 'Nechdei Tzion' (Grandchildren of Zion)" and this is the name Zeiger and the others gave to their group.[22]

In 1921, Zeiger and his family moved to Kishinev, joining the Ukrainian refugee community there. Avraham studied in

the Joint-sponsored school and joined the Hashomer Hatzair troop that had been organized by slightly older refugees who had been shomrim in Russia. His shyness, brought on by his frailty and physical difficulty, at first inhibited him; but he soon became one of the most active and dedicated of the young shomrim. It was here that Zeiger first met and became friendly with Yosef Wilfand, Yosef Farber and others who would be among the founders of Hashomer Hatzair in New York.

The Kishinev days, which most of the founding group would later look back on as "The Golden Age" (tor hazahav) did not last long. The Hashomer Hatzair group dispersed as its members, with their families, left -- some for Eretz Yisrael, some for Argentina, most for the United States. In 1922 the Zeigers moved to Bucharest, the Rumanian capital, to wait their turn for an entry visa to the United States. When their turn for inspection came, however, the U.S. consul rejected Avraham as unfit to enter the United States because of his poor physical condition. The family split, with the father and Avraham's two younger sisters going to the United States. Zeiger stayed behind with his mother, hoping for an improvement in his health which would eventually allow him to enter the United States.

Although Zeiger was cut off from his shomer friends, he did not remain idle. Eventually a Bucharest ken was founded, with Zeiger as mazkir and "spiritual guide for those group leaders who were remote from the Jewish sources."[23] During this period, Zeiger maintained contact with his former comrades in the United States. As mazkir of the Bucharest ken,

he was also in contact with the other European branches of the movement as well as with the developing kibbutzim in Palestine.

Sometime prior to 1926, Zeiger's mother set sail for New York, and the young man, not yet 20 years old, was left alone. Eventually, his father was able to obtain the necessary entry permits for him, and in late 1926 Zeiger left for the United States. His coming was enthusiastically awaited by the shomrim in New York, as Zeiger not only represented an experienced movement leader but also symbolized a living contact with the European and, especially, Palestinian movements. He arrived in the United States on December 23, a few days before the opening of the first veida (national convention) of Hashomer Hatzair.

Zeiger's contemporary, Yosef Wilfand, recalls the new arrival's impact at the first convention:

> Zeiger's appearance was not that of a typical leader (certainly not according to the accepted patterns of leadership in America.) Yet there was something in his rich voice and fresh, original Hebrew style that brought a wealth of new and inspiring concepts from his experience as an active leader for the past three years with the growing Rumanian movement. His report on "The World Movement and the Development of the Shomer Idea" was received with rapt attention, even if it did not excel in very logical order.24

At the convention, Zeiger was elected national mazkir, the most important office of the movement. The mazkirut consisted of seven members, two each from New York and Montreal and one each from Boston, Philadelphia and Winnipeg. The hachlatot (decisions) of the veida stated that the unified

organization was to be:

> 1. . . a federation with multi-faceted independent education, which strives to educate Jewish youth in this country in accordance with the values of our people's national liberation movement.
>
> 2. The federation strives to educate and guide the young people in all aspects of their national, social and cultural lives, and to prepare them for a life of significant labor and productive construction.
>
> 3. The federation creates for Hebrew youth the appropriate atmosphere to supply all the various needs and wants in their lives.25

The first veida concretized the educational setup of the movement among European lines. There were to be three distinct shchavot (stages) in the educational movement: k'firim (cubs) for ages 10 - 13; tzofim (scouts) for ages 13 - 17; and yotzrim (producers) for ages 17 and older.

Other decisions included the statement that Hashomer Hatzair saw itself as an integral part of the Zionist movement, but non-partisan and neutral as regards the various labor-oriented parties competing for support on the Zionist scene. Hashomer Hatzair was to maintain friendly relations with all Zionist parties and organizations and with other Jewish youth groups. Hashomer Hatzair was to participate actively in the "national funds" such as the JNF and Kapai (fund for labor Palestine). The conference also expressed its sorrow at the death of the Zionist thinker and writer Ahad Haam, word of which reached the conference in its closing minutes. It is interesting to note that no mention is made of aliya, hachshara, or socialism (though the connection with

the Zionist labor movement is clear) in any of the conference decisions.

Although Zeiger was now the mazkir and thus, at least on paper, the chief leader of the movement, opposition to his leadership soon developed. Ironically, the chief seat of opposition to Zeiger's "European-style" leadership came from the members of the Shomer Halutz K'vutza -- many of whom, it should be remembered, were Zeiger's boyhood friends in Kishinev. These now-Americanized shomrim felt that the European-type youth movement would not work in America, that it would not succeed in attracting large numbers of Jewish youth. Also, as noted above many of the hachshara returnees had moved towards the general American left and were less concerned than Zeiger with particularistic Jewish concerns.

The opposition to Zeiger's leadership was not without basis. Although no one questioned his devotion -- because of his frailty he could not take a full time job and so was free to devote most of his time to the movement -- it was perhaps this very devotion that contained the seeds of the problem. It was not until much later that Zeiger found the time to devote himself to the task of learning English -- and this at a time when it was generally felt that the future success of the movement depended on being able to recruit large numbers of American-born and American-educated young Jews. The anti-Zeiger group gained control of the movement and, for the time being, Zeiger's hopes for a Hashomer Hatzair summer camp had to be postponed.[26]

The second national veida was held in January 1928.

Zeiger was not re-elected to the mazkirut. It was suggested to him that he nonetheless stay on as secretary, continuing to perform the clerical duties but without the authority he formerly exercised, but he replied that he did not wish to be a "typewriter."[27]

At the second convention it was reaffirmed that the goal of the movement was to educate Jewish youth in the values of the national liberation movement and "against the forces of assimilation and disintegration."[28] Again there was no mention of halutziut or aliya, mainly because it was felt that such notions would not strike a responsive chord among American Jewish youth. With the Palestine economy severely depressed, aliya would have to wait.

The lack of a firm commitment to aliya, like the failure to re-elect him to the mazkirut, represented a setback for Zeiger, on a personal as well as ideological level. His boyhood friends, those he had hoped for so long to work with and build a movement with, had not only rejected him. They had rejected the ideals to which he had devoted his life. Only Wilfand from among the Kishinev group remained loyal to what Zeiger considered the true shomer idea.

However, Zeiger's defeats would prove to be temporary. Freed of his administrative chores, Zeiger threw himself with renewed energy into the educational activities of the New York kinim. Additionally, most of those who were prominent in opposing him soon left the movement altogether; many made their way into the Communist Party and would lose all contact

with Hashomer Hatzair.

In the summer of 1928, Zeiger was able to see his dream of a European-style shomer camp on American soil become a reality. A site was found in Highland Mills, New York, not far from the Yiddish socialist Unser Camp. Four leaky tents were pitched and a primitive dining hall and kitchen were built. Although there was an inordinate amount of rain during the two weeks the camp lasted, Zeiger and his co-leaders succeeded in building a high level of morale. The primitive and uncomfortable conditions may even have helped, to the extent that they provided a more "authentic" Palestinian atmosphere. (One must keep in mind that this was the era of the G'dud HaAvodah and similar groups of the Third aliya.) The Palestinian aura was heightened as well through the presence of Yehuda Ya'ari, one of the original members of the first shomer kibbutz in Palestine, Bitania Ilit. (Ya'ari had left the commune after five years and was sent to New York by Shmuel Hugo Bergman, director of the National and University Library in Jerusalem, to study Library Science at the Pratt Institute. [29]) Ya'ari, later to become a writer of some note, introduced Palestinian songs and tales of the shomer settlements to the group.

Yet by all accounts the guiding spirit of the camp, its dominant force, was Zeiger:

> The sight of Zeiger preparing for Shabbat at moshava is something which can never be forgotten. On Friday evening, at sundown, all the shomrim assemble clothed in white -- an impressive sight. The spirit of Shabbat pervades everywhere and even the trees in their whispering seem to await the start of the sabbath.

> At last Zeiger appears. He leads us about in "hakafot" style. Later he speaks in beautiful Hebrew about our strong ties with the past, with former generations... [about] the new social and national values that we are creating on ancient Hebrew foundations in our homeland. He continues; the sabbath is one of the values which is fundamental to the existence of our people, to which it always cleaved. Such values were not relinquished even in the face of the greatest danger -- then they chose to die for them. . .
>
> Each one of us feels that he speaks to us with such deep enthusiasm because he himself is bound in a thousand ways with our Hebrew culture from its early beginnings until today, We are drawn together by his words and feel as one. . . After the lighting of the candles, we sing Chassidic songs expressing the hopes and suffering of our people. Zeiger receiving the sabbath is a scene so indelible that one can never forget it.30

The third veida was held during Passover 1929. By this time Zeiger was clearly the leading force in the movement; his opponents had either left or been won over. At the veida, the representatives were presented with a problem born of the success of their movement. Hashomer Hatzair was now fairly well-established and was no longer struggling merely to survive. Shomrim were moving up through the ranks; but once they reached adulthood, they were lost to the movement. There was no adult organization for them to "graduate" into, nor were there any concrete expectations stated.

> Zeiger arose and asked the question -- what is our goal? His answer was clear: our goal is the same as the rest of the world movement. It is to organize Jewish youth in all parts of the gola, to educate it and bring it to participate in the rebuilding of our homeland in the spirit of Eretz Yisrael Haovedet (Labor Palestine). . .31

And thus the veida took the fateful decision: at the age

of eighteen every shomer was to embark on a course of hachshara in preparation for eventual halutzic aliya, or else leave the movement. With this decision, Hashomer Hatzair differentiated itself from all other Zionist youth movements, which supported or encouraged but did not demand aliya of their members. By giving their movement an exclusively halutzic orientation, the Hashomer Hatzair delegates rejected the otherwise universal American Zionist assumption that "America is different."

What was it that led these young Jews to embark on a path so different from that of other Zionist youth groups? The answer seems to lie in the specific characteristics of Hashomer Hatzair during this period. Unlike other Zionist youth groups then operating in the United States (Tzeirei Tzion, Young Judea and Avukah, the Collegiate Zionist Organization) Hashomer Hatzair had no adult group sponsoring it. This meant that the goal of Hashomer Hatzair could not be seen as developing young leadership cadre for the adult party. The classic contention that aliya drained the home organization of leadership never arose. Quite the opposite was true; if there were no framework (i.e. hachshara and kibbutz aliya) for graduates of the movement to funnel into, their strength would be lost altogether.

Another factor in the development of Hashomer Hatzair's halutz exclusivity lies in the fact that the North American branch perceived itself to be and functioned as a part of a worldwide movement. Throughout the world, halutzic aliya was seen as the ultimate goal of all shomrim. Although there is

no indication that the leadership of the world movement ever attempted to force the issue, ultimately the "moment of truth" had to arrive. Either North American Hashomer Hatzair would conform to this basic tenet of shomer ideology, or it would develop, as most other Zionist youth movements did, its own version of the "America is different" idea. The latter step could only be considered deviationist by the rest of Hashomer Hatzair, however, and would surely have meant that the North American section would cease to be part of the world movement.

VI. Hachshara and the First Kibbutz Aliya

Implementation of the decision reached at the veida during Pesach 1929 was given strong impetus by the events that took place in Palestine shortly thereafter. Word of the Hebron and Safed massacres reached America during the second week of the second annual summer camp, once again held in Highland Mills, New York. The shomrim present responded by traveling en masse to New York City to participate in the Zionist protest rallies. In addition, the older shomrim present took the step of establishing themselves as a kibbutz aliya with concrete plans to make aliya as a group.

With the establishment of the kibbutz aliya it became necessary to establish some sort of hachshara. At first the Hashomer Hatzair leadership turned to the same farmers among whom the first, unsuccessful group had trained. However, these farmers proved to be Yiddishists and non-Zionists, and

so it was decided to look elsewhere. Eventually Judah Lapson, one of the founders of Avukah and a supporter of Hashomer Hatzair, asked New York pharmacist Eliyahu Rochwarg to put a part of his Plainfield, New Jersey farm at the disposal of the shomrim.[32] Rochwarg agreed.

There were ten shomrim in the Plainfield hachshara group, "all inexperienced and without leadership," as one of their number, Avraham Fein, recalls.[33] They attempted to support themselves by producing and selling vegetables and eggs, and though the neophytes were successful in raising their agricultural products they were not successful in marketing them. This failure they attributed not only to the economic depression but also to their great distance from New York City, which was their market. They ended the year with a deficit of about $1500, which Rochwarg covered. An unexpected result of the hachshara year was that Rochwarg's daughter Simcha fell in love with one of the shomrim and joined the kibbutz aliya.

In late 1930 the shomrim decided to try and find a different, more suitable location for their hachshara. Again Lapson was instrumental. This time he convinced another Jewish farm owner, Elias Cohen, to make his Earlton, New York, farm available. According to Fein, who was present at the meeting during which Cohen agreed to allow the shomrim to use his farm, "he told us that he was not a Zionist, but that he liked Jewish youth who wanted to learn to work the land, and he put at our disposal everything he had at the farm."[34] Cohen covered the cost of building a new chicken coop and

even provided the food for the shomrim during their period of hachshara.

In the early 1930s the North American movement was faced with the question of its place on the world Hashomer Hatzair scene. During the late '20s, tensions began developing in the European movement over the political direction of Hashomer Hatzair and the Kibbutz Artzi Federation. The bulk of the world movement supported the separate political program of the Kibbutz Artzi as it had developed in Eretz Yisrael. The Lithuanian, Latvian movements and parts of the Austrian did not agree with this political direction and favored integration into the "mainstream" of the Labor Zionist movement, represented at the time by Mapai and the Kibbutz Meuchad. This tension came to a head at the 1930 World Convention, where the movement split. The Latvian and Lithuanian movements left the majority organization and formed Hashomer Netzah (Noar Tzofi Halutzi); the Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz USSR (today Kibbutz Afikim) refused to join the Kibbutz Artzi and joined Kibbutz Meuchad instead.

The split in the world movement did not immediately affect the situation in North America, and for a while the New York head office maintained correspondence with both the majority and minority headquarters. But with the first kibbutz aliya rapidly approaching the time when it would at last set sail for Palestine, a decision was needed. Would the American movement affiliate with the Kibbutz Artzi or with Mapai and the Kibbutz Meuchad?

The American Hashomer Hatzair convention held in early 1931 concentrated primarily on the question of affiliation. This veida was distinguished by the presence of Israel's future Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion. Fein recalls:

> At that time Ben Gurion was visiting the United States as a representative of the Histadrut. When he found out about the convention he invited himself to speak before us. He came out very, very strongly against what he called "Warsaw," which was a symbol for him of the separatism of Hashomer Hatzair. If we really want to make aliya, he claimed, we had to join the great mainstream camp, the Histadrut and Mapai, not to isolate ourselves in a factionalist way. . . It is interesting to note that B.G.'s sharp words influenced us in the opposite direction . . . (after he spoke) I asked him a confrontational question. In his response he got so angry, and continued to pound on the table and repeat that "this is not Warsaw", that he succeeded only in strengthening our opposition.35

By a vote of about 90%, the veida decided to affiliate with the Kibbutz Artzi and the majority Hashomer Hatzair movement. In the spring of 1931, the first North American shomer halutzim set sail for Palestine. The American kibbutz first spent a few months in Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek, then went to Hadera while it waited for its allocation of land. Eventually this group would go on, in 1937, to settle on its own land and found Kibbutz Ein HaShofet, named in honor of the American Justice Louis D. Brandeis.

In early 1932, Avraham Zeiger passed away at the age of 26. At about the same time the first shaliach (emissary) of the Kibbutz Artzi, Mordechai Bentov, arrived in the United States. North American Hashomer Hatzair was now firmly established as a part of the world movement.

In the first nine years of its life, Hashomer Hatzair in America had grown from a handful of teenage immigrants from Kishinev into a movement with branches in a number of U.S. and Canadian cities. It had grown confident enough in its message to proclaim its goal of halutzic aliya, and had taken its first steps toward converting intention into action. The movement had survived the defection of most of its early leaders, and the death of its most prominent figure. The arrival of Bentov was an indication that the Palestinian leadership of the Kibbutz Artzi took seriously the possibility of building a socialist-Zionist youth movement in America. Still, the movement must have been quite small, though no membership figures were kept prior to the arrival of Bentov; the 1931 veida, for example, was not covered in any of the New York Yiddish or Anglo-Jewish newspapers. The spurt in numbers, and with it the movement's growth in influence, was yet to come.

NOTES

1. Unsigned letter of 15 October, 1922, to Binyamin Dror, Haifa. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

2. Transcript of an interview with Yaakov Levenberg, translated into Hebrew from the Yiddish and transcribed by Dov Vardi, p. 1. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

3. Transcript of an interview with Yosef Farber, translated into Hebrew from the English and transcribed by Dov Vardi, p. 1. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

4. Naomi Cohen American Jews and the Zionist Idea (New York, 1975) 32.

5. Levenberg interview, 2.

6. Farber interview, 2.

7. Levenberg interview, 1.

8. Levenberg interview, 3,4.

9. Farber interview, 2.

10. Ibid., 2.

11. Farber interview, 3. Also, Dov Vardi, "Pirkei Yoman-N'orim," Hedim (July 1983): 15.

12. Levenberg interview, 5. Yosef Wilfand, The History of Hashomer Hatzair in North America, 1923 - 1938 (unpublished, incomplete typescript, undated) 9, 10. Samuel Grand, The Origins of Hashomer Hatzair in America, (New York, 1972) 4.

13. Levenberg interview, 5.

14. Chozer I, May 4, 1925. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

15. Letter from Palestine Youth Delegation to mazkirut of Hashomer Hatzair, July 23, 1925. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

16. Wilfand, History of Hashomer Hatzair, 15.

17. Ibid., 16, 17.

18. Farber interview, 4.

19. Ibid., 4.

20. Levenberg interview, 6, 7. The change in person from first to third is in the original.

21. Yehuda Ya'ari, Yosef Wilfand, Arieh Dashevsky, eds., Kovetz L'Zichro shel Avraham Zeiger (New York, 1933) 12.

22. Ya'ari, Wilfand and Dashevsky, Kovetz, 14.

23. Ibid., 17.

24. Wilfand, History of Hashomer Hatzair, 19, 20.

25. Chozer Alef, 15 Shevat 5687. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

26. Grand, Origins of Hashomer Hatzair, 8, 9. Wilfand, History of Hashomer Hatzair, 21.

27. Ya'ari, Wilfand and Dashevsky, Kovetz, 21, 22.

28. Ibid., 28.

29. Transcript of an interview with Yehuda Ya'ari, August 14, 1977. Interviewed by Dov Vardi, Simcha Rochwarg-Vardi, and Elazar Goelman, 3. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

30. Havai, A Collection of Sources (New York, 1943) 6. Translated from Ya'ari, Wilfand and Dashevsky, Kovetz, 28, 29.

31. Ibid., 6.

32. Grand, Origins of Hashomer Hatzair, 13. Also, trancript of an interview with Avraham Fein, interviewed by Dov Vardi, February 23, 1979, 2, 3. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

33. Fein interview, 3.

34. Ibid., 3.

35. Ibid., 3. Fein's account is substantially confirmed by Yehuda Ya'ari; see Ya'ari interview, 4.

CHAPTER THREE
GROWING NUMBERS AND INFLUENCE

I. Laying the Groundwork

In 1932, the North American Hashomer Hatzair movement embarked on a period of growth and expansion that would not level off until five years later. Although reliable figures are hard to come by, at Zeiger's death in early 1932 the movement almost certainly numbered less than a thousand shomrim, who were organized in a dozen kinim. By 1936, there were 23 kinim with a probable membership of nearly 3000.[1] The first American kibbutz, Ein Hashofet, was about to settle on its own land; aliyah by members of the second kibbutz, Kfar Menachem, had already begun.

Several factors combined to account for these successes. Some of them were external to Hashomer Hatzair. The Great Depression, for example, led to intense ideological ferment in American society, Jewish no less than Gentile. With the collapse of the American economy, the material attractiveness of the U.S. decreased, while at the same time the Palestinian economy was doing fairly well. Also, the advent of Nazism and the feeling that perhaps "it <u>can</u> happen here" helped to make Zionism a much more widespread phenomenon in American Jewry than it had been heretofore.

No less important, there were internal factors which contributed to Hashomer Hatzair's ability to take full advantage of the new opportunities presented it. As we saw in Chapter Two, the first leaders of the American movement were foreign-born and unfamiliar with the American scene, but by

1932 most of them had left the movement. Their American-born replacements could reach other American Jewish youth on their own terms. In addition, the movement had its first Palestinian shaliach, Mordechai Bentov, who arrived in the United States toward the end of 1931.

II. The Bentov Shlichut

Mordechai Bentov (1900 - 1984) served as the first shaliach to the North American movement. Polish-born, he was multi-lingual, had attended a British Mandatory law school and was a member of Mishmar HaEmek, the second kibbutz of Hashomer Hatzair and one of the founding kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi. In Zionist history, he is perhaps better known for his roles in the leadership of the pre-state League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and his membership in the Provisional Government and several cabinets of the State of Israel than for his American shlichut.

Upon arrival, Bentov was faced with the task of single-handedly developing the concept of shlichut in America, of writing his own "job description." Although there were some prior examples from which to learn -- the Palestinian youth delegation described in chapter 2, Ben-Gurion's and Ben-Zvi's stay in New York during the World War and Yehuda Yaari's earlier activity in Hashomer Hatzair -- never before had any Zionist movement or party sent a representative on a long-term basis to work full-time in its American branch.[2]

The arrival of Bentov was seen by the shomrim themselves as the beginning of a new era for their movement.[3] First, it

served to strengthen the movement's identification with the majority faction of the world movement and with the Kibbutz Artzi, following the 1930 split in the world movement. The movement had already rejected in that same year a suggestion to send two shlichim, one from the majority and one from the minority; Bentov's arrival was perceived as closing off any possibility of a change in the American movement's stand.

Despite the great hopes which the American shomrim placed in Bentov, it would not be correct to term the period of his service "the Bentov era" or anything of the sort. The movement continued, in accordance with its self-perception as a youth movement, to be largely run by the shomrim themselves, particularly those in the older age group. Bentov's greatest impact was in helping to develop norms and standards for the movement, which up until then had operated largely on an ad-hoc basis. The movement office moved to newer and more spacious quarters at 305 Broadway in Manhattan, where it was to remain for many years. Office procedures were modernized. Previously, Zeiger had served as a one-man office and most materials were written by hand. Records and correspondence were filed haphazardly if at all. Under Bentov, procedures were streamlined; better and more thorough contact was kept with the various branches in the United States and Canada. Though correspondence and records continued to be primarily in Hebrew, use of English became more common.

The educational program of the movement was standardized according to the patterns known in Europe; at the same time

modifications in content were made to fit American realities, taking into account the fact that the movement was now largely American-born. The pattern adopted divides shomrim into three major subdivisions:

1. B'nai Midbar (children of the desert), ages 11-14.
2. Izofim (scouts), ages 14-17.
3. Bogrim (adults), ages 17-up.

The symbolism used in Europe for the youngest group was essentially that of the forty years' wandering in the desert, the Dor ha-Midbar. Far from carrying the negative connotations one might expect, the desert period was seen as one of ideal simplicity and egalitarianism. In America, this was combined with American Indian lore, and the experience of the halutzim in Eretz Yisrael was compared with that of the American pioneers.[4] It should also be noted that previously this youngest group had been termed k'firim, cubs, in accordance with Boy Scout usage. The system adopted under Bentov thus also indicates a subtle move away from total adherence to the Scouting program.

The European-born Palestinian shaliach gave strong impetus and endorsement to the "Americanization" of the movement. Perhaps it took an outsider, one whose "shomer authenticity" was above question, to see the possibility of adapting some externals to better fit the American scene without sacrificing the integrity of the movement's content. At any rate, Shmuel ben Zvi believed that

> . . . ironically it was the shaliach from Eretz Yisrael who gave the push for the "Americanization" of the movement. Under his

> influence, the process of hachshara and aliya of the veteran generation was speeded up, and the movement began to be built by the younger madrichim. Systematization was introduced into the foundations of (the movement's) education, a nationwide leadership camp was established, work programs and bulletins appeared in English. The movement appeared in public for the first time, in a Lag B'Omer procession in the streets of New York. It began a struggle for its place in the public (i.e. Jewish and Zionist) institutions. . .5

The earliest statistical picture of the united North American Hashomer Hatzair appeared, in English, during Ben-tov's shlichut.[6] The statistical summary gives a report of each of the 15 kinim extant in November, 1932: overall number of members, "kvutzoth" (sub-groups within the ken), group leaders, and a break-down by the three age-levels. It also indicates the percentage of members in each ken who have paid the Zionist shekel as required by Hashomer Hatzair rules. The statistical study reveals that there are 1089 shomrim: 410 k'firim (the movement was still using the old terminology at this point), 487 tzofim and 192 bogrim. They are organized into 92 kvutzoth under the direction of 112 "menahalim," as group leaders were then called. Each kvutza was composed of one age group and was led by one or more menahalim. In a large ken that might be several kvutzoth of each age-level. On the average, 77.5 per cent of shomrim had paid the shekel, ranging from highs of 100 per cent in Portsmouth, N.H. (a ken consisting of 1 menahel and 7 kfirim) and Rochester, N.Y., to a low of 22.5 per cent in Toronto. The statistical summary also contains a bar graph representing the composition of each ken as well as a curve representing percentage of shekel

payments for the various kinim. The explanatory material notes that figures for new members since the program of hitrachavut (expansion) are not included, and that the current number of shomrim in the U.S. and Canada actually was nearer to 1400.

Also during the period of Bentov's shlichut Hashomer Hatzair began publishing an English-language monthly magazine, called Hashomer Hatzair. The purpose of the magazine continually served as the focus of debate during the 1930s and even beyond, since there were varying opinions as to the magazine's primary function: education, recruitment of new members and supporters, or a forum for ideological debate within Hashomer Hatzair.[7]

In May, 1933, Bentov returned to Palestine. His contribution was evaluated shortly thereafter by one of the members of the Hanhaga Rashit:

> In short, it can be said that our first Shaliach strengthened the internal and external positions of the Histadruth [i.e. the movement], systemized the educational and organizational work, and helped us clarify our ideological standpoint.[8]

In evaluating the Bentov shlichut over fifty years later, one is struck by the repeated statements that Bentov was helpful in terms of organization and ideological clarification. In recollections of shomrim from this era, there is no mention of a warmth or admiration that was felt for Bentov, or of the sense that he served as an example to be imitated. Although there is no criticism of his role, neither is there effusive praise or excessive affection. This might not be

noticeable were it not for the fact that in accounts of many of Bentov's successors this sense of warmth and respect does come through. It is only by comparison with the feelings toward others, especially Bentov's immediate successor Moshe Furmansky, that one forms the impression Bentov's chanichim were damning him through faint praise. Documentation on this question is lacking, but perhaps this is the reason that there was an "interregnum" of some eleven months between Bentov's departure and Furmansky's arrival.

III. Moshe Furmansky

Moshe Furmansky was, like Bentov, Polish-born and a member of Mishmar HaEmek. He lacked the formal qualifications that Bentov had brought with him, but seemed to the leaders of the Kibbutz Artzi to possess the personal qualities which would make him a success in America. Indeed, it was the American kibbutz aliya, while undergoing training at Mishmar HaEmek, which had first suggested Furmansky as a shaliach to the American movement.[9] Furmansky spent two periods of shlichut in North America; during the second, he was trapped here by the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent closing of the Mediterranean Sea. Returning to his kibbutz after the war, Furmansky fell in 1948 during the defense of Mishmar HaEmek.

Upon arrival in the spring of 1934, Furmansky perceived that conditions were ripe for the expansion of Hashomer Hatzair. Hitler's ascension to power in Germany, combined with the continued economic depression, caused many young

Jews to turn to radical solutions; many of them could no doubt find their place in Hashomer Hatzair if the movement were in a position to absorb them. Additionally, Furmansky and the local leaders were impressed by the support and assistance they had been receiving in Talmud Torahs and Hebrew schools throughout the country. Furmansky succeeded in persuading the Kibbutz Artzi to send two more shlichim to aid him in his work. In the summer of 1934, the two arrived: Chana Grunwald and Yonah Yannai, both members of the American Kibbutz which was then at Hadera while awaiting its allocation of land by the Jewish National Fund. Grunwald went to Montreal, becoming the first full-time shaliach (actually in this case shlicha) in Canada, while Yannai remained in the national office in New York, freeing Furmansky to travel extensively to the kinim in other cities.[10]

In the early and mid 1930s, the Hashomer Hatzair movement experienced phenomenal growth. Most of the members who joined at this time, at least in the New York kinim, shared some important characteristics. In general, they were American-born but the children of immigrants; the language spoken at home was Yiddish, but they studied in English-speaking public schools and thus were perfectly bilingual. They tended to come from working-class homes that were traditional if not Orthodox in character. Some of the parents were truly Orthodox but most were what can be termed "non-observant Orthodox" or "marginally Orthodox"; the home was kosher, the children received a supplementary Jewish education in an Orthodox

Talmud Torah, and the father attended an Orthodox synagogue -- but only on holidays. In general, the parents were pro-Zionist, but not to the extent that they would have desired to see their children go on aliya rather than participate in the American Dream. Interestingly, few of the shomrim in this period seem to have come from homes where Jewish secularism was the norm, even though secularism was widespread in the immigrant Jewish communities from which they hailed. Perhaps those coming from secular homes were put off by the Jewish particularism of Hashomer Hatzair and turned instead to more universalistic causes. Additionally, new members were generally recruited through community Hebrew schools and Talmud Torahs, which naturally were not attended by children of secularists.[11]

The various neighborhoods which had flourishing kinim -- Williamsburg, Brownsville, Bensonhurst and Boro Park in Brooklyn, as well as the East Bronx, were not all-Jewish. Generally there was an admixture of other immigrants as well: Italians, Poles, perhaps Irish, but ethnic solidarity and attendance at supplementary Jewish schools meant that most young Jews socialized primarily with other young Jews. In the early and mid 1930s, the urban street, especially among Jews, was a jumble of rival ideologies: Stalinism, Trotskyism, various shades of socialism, Yiddishism, Zionism, and religious Judaism of various stripes. The advent of Hitler and, subsequently, the Spanish Civil War, served to turn many young Jews to the Left. Thus, the socialism of Hashomer Hatzair served as a drawing factor and not the recruiting

disability it would become in subsequent decades. The challenge came, instead, from the non- and anti-Zionist Left, which criticized Hashomer Hatzair for its alleged parochialism. Veteran Hashomer Hatzair leader Avraham Schenker, today Mapam member of the Zionist Executive, recalls that many shomrim of the time were torn between the desire to go to Spain and fight with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and the desire to make halutzic aliyah.[12] But for many, who joined the movement in their early teens, Hashomer Hatzair seemed to solve their questions of identity:

> During the Hitler period, in the period of the sense that something was terribly wrong in the world and there was a need for some sort of action, I debated with myself whether I was a Zionist or a socialist and I really didn't know what to join. One day a friend . . . invited me to a meeting with a halutz . . . He told us about Hashomer Hatzair, about Borochov, about the synthesis between socialism and Zionism, and it made a great impression on us. Suddenly we saw the figure of a person only slightly older than us, and we saw in him the challenge that it was possible to mend the world, to change things by oneself . . . we decided to join Hashomer Hatzair.[13]

For many shomrim in this era, the ken became a second home. Most of the neighborhoods were quite compact and the moadonim were centrally located, often in close proximity to the neighborhood Talmud Torah where the majority of members studied. Whether or not formal activities were scheduled on a particular day, shomrim would gravitate to the moadon and spontaneous activities would be organized. The moadon was continually open and was rarely empty. Recalling his days in the East Bronx ken, Yehuda Sela of Kibbutz Hatzor says "it

seems to me that the moadon didn't have a key at all. At any rate it was never locked."[14] In all things a Palestinian atmosphere prevailed; the shomrim even took pains to play soccer rather than baseball, even though the game was virtually unknown to American youngsters, since soccer was the primary sport played in Eretz Yisrael.[15]

In the early years of the American movement, the emphasis on Hebrew was as much out of necessity as ideology; most of the first shomrim in America were much more comfortable in Hebrew than English. By the 1930s this had changed, since English was now the primary tongue of the vast majority. Nevertheless, the emphasis on Hebrew remained strong, with many of the older shomrim teaching in Hebrew schools and Talmud Torahs. Jewish educators, including even some Orthodox rabbis, agreed to support the group because of its stress on Hebrew; there was also an attempt, supported by the Reform rabbi and Zionist leader Stephen Wise, to organize Hashomer Hatzair in his Free Synagogue, but this experiment lasted only a year. In return for permission to recruit in the Orthodox schools, Hashomer Hatzair agreed to abide by certain religious strictures, shifting its main activities away from the sabbath, and observing kashrut in its camps. (The latter was not a great problem as Hashomer Hatzair could rarely afford to serve meat in any case.) Although the leaders of the movement were willing to accommodate religion to some extent, there was a limit. A heated debate took place to determine whether two shomrim with good voices might accept positions as <u>hazan sheni</u> for the High Holidays. Permission

was ultimately granted, on condition that the honoraria be paid over to the group's treasury.[16]

The emphasis on Hebrew was so strong that meetings of the Hanhaga Rashit were conducted entirely in Hebrew. One newly-elected Hanhaga Rashit member whose Hebrew was weak had to wait for an entire year until he was able to speak at a meeting.[17]

Knowledge of Hebrew was also used as a tool to open new kinim. An "older" shomer (often in his late teens) would be sent to another city on "shlichut", equipped with a few dollars and the addresses of a friendly family or two. Since most of these "shlichim" were excellent Hebrew teachers, many of them trained at the Teachers' Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary or of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, they had little trouble finding positions. These jobs then served to maintain the shaliach as well as give him access to potential recruits.

A recurrent theme in reminiscences of these years is the solidarity and group spirit of the shomrim. Physical conditions in the camps were often primitive, but no one complained.[18] On one occasion, the person in charge of buying provisions for a camp miscalculated and bought too many cornflakes. As a consequence, there wasn't enough money to buy other food and the shomrim had nothing to eat but cornflakes, apples picked from a nearby orchard, and water for the last five days of the camp. Loyalty to the group was so strong, however, that not one camper in attendance mentioned the

incident to his or her parents. Comparing this with the spirit of American Jewish youth of the 1980s, Avraham Schenker said, "today if we missed dessert at one meal we would hear about it."[19]

An important element in maintaining the spirit of the movement, in keeping the level of enthusiasm high, was Furmansky himself. He was especially in his element at Hashomer Hatzair camps, for he was talented as a singer, dancer and storyteller. Furmansky came from a Chassidic background, and it was through him that Chassidic songs became popular in Hashomer Hatzair. For many young shomrim, he symbolized all their ideals: the kibbutznik-worker, the Eastern European intellectual, and the fully actualized Jew. At the same time, through his travels, his reading and his contacts with major Zionist and Jewish leaders on down to the youngest shomer, he came to thoroughly understand the American scene. One of his chanichim recalls thinking, "[h]e understands us better than we do ourselves."[20] Furmansky was loved and respected by the members of the movement, who viewed him as someone older and to be relied upon, an authority but one who used persuasion and reason rather than rank and compulsion.[21]

During this period of his first shlichut, Furmansky was a prolific writer and theoretician. Hardly a month passed without a fairly lengthy article by the shaliach in the Hashomer Hatzair magazine. Furmansky devoted many of his articles to defense of the movement against Communism, which was known in Hashomer Hatzair as "red assimilation." At the same time, Furmansky was often called upon to defend Hashomer

Hatzair against charges that it was Communist. In a passage typical of his polemical style, Furmansky attacks Jewish communists for their opposition to Zionism, based on the claim that no Jewish problem exists, while at the same time they support Biro-Bidjan as a solution to the Jewish problem:

> [The Jewish Communists repeat] the old self-certain declaration that no nation can solve its problem through emigration. And this is said to the Jewish people in one of those publications [New Masses] that proclaim from the housetops the importance of Biro-Bidjan and the territorial concentration for the Jewish people. It would be interesting to know how Biro-Bidjan is going to be built without emigration. Won't the Jews of Berditchev, should they wish to participate in the building of a Jewish republic in Biro-Bidjan, pack their belongings and migrate to a far off land in Soviet Asia . . . . Now, now, friends and editors of the New Masses, can the Jewish question be solved where the Jews live, or must the majority of them migrate in order to find their national, social, economic and cultural salvation?
>
> And, therefore, if we are already migrating, why is migration to Eretz Yisrael reactionary, chauvinist, and "Nazi"?. . . [B]ecause this development is coincident with the historical line of the Jewish people, which was desirous of continuing its future in the land of its past, and in doing so did not wait for the Comintern to "permit" it to do so and has gone ahead now for years with its work in Palestine . . . 22

Furmansky also devoted considerable thought to the future of American Jewry. Writing after Hitler's ascension to power, he was influenced by the failure of the German Jewish community to successfully assimilate. Furmansky was convinced that American Jewish attempts at assimilation were similarly bound to fail. Though aware that assimilationism held sway in much of American Jewry, Furmansky felt that the impact of the

national revival in Palestine when combined with the continued vitality of antisemitism would prevent any branch of world Jewry from fully assimilating. Furmansky recognized the difficulties inherent in trying to attract American youth to chalutzic Zionism. In particular, the highly individualistic character (as opposed to emphasis on the group) of American society would prove to be a stumbling-block. However, there was no alternative but to educate and propagandize for the preservation of Judaism. It was wrong to present primarily theoretical arguments, however correct those arguments might in fact be. "Jewish youth," wrote Furmansky, "can be drawn back to Judaism primarily through the living, contemporary vision and endeavor of a common national future in the homeland."[23]

In 1936, Furmansky returned to Mishmar HaEmek, only to come back to the U.S. just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Following Furmansky came many other shlichim. However, no other shaliach would leave as profound a stamp on the movement as he did.

IV. Chalutziut: Problems and Successes

In 1935, a problem cropped up for the first time which would come back to haunt Hashomer Hatzair throughout its history. This was the question of university education. In 1929, it will be recalled, the movement passed a resolution requiring a shomer reaching the age of 18 to proceed to hachshara or leave the movement. Post high-school education

was permitted in certain circumstances, especially if it was felt that the education would prove of benefit to the kibbutz. Earning a degree was out of the question; it was bourgeois and contradicted the ideals of either vocational training or learning for its own sake. Nevertheless, there were a number of active shomrim who sought to go to college rather than hachshara. At the 1935 Moshava (camp) in Bridgewater, Conn., the conflict came to a head. Five madrichim were told not to proceed with their college plans. "You will write history," they were told, "but we will make it." Three of the five left the movement.[24]

It is difficult to get a thorough statistical picture of the movement in the mid-1930s. Statistical presentations were made for movement ve'idot, which contained news on the formation of new kinim, progress of collections for various funds, statistics of the various moshavot (summer camps), and highlights of the year's activities in each ken as well as in the Hanhaga Rashit -- but no indication as to the total amount of shomrim in any ken or in the movement as a whole!

Still the impression is created of large-scale growth, even if exact numbers are hard to pin down. From the 15 kinim in 1932, Hashomer Hatzair had grown to 23 in 1936. Growth was especially strong in the midwest, with new kinim in Akron, Cleveland, Toledo, Youngstown, Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee. Hashomer Hatzair also reached the west coast as kinim were founded in Los Angeles and San Francisco.[25]

During the early 1930s moshava attendance also grew by leaps and bounds; besides the original camp in upstate New

York, others were started by 1936 in the Midwest, Canada, the Philadelphia - Baltimore region, and the West Coast. Moshava attendance figures are not directly indicative of the size of the movement as a whole since not all shomrim were in a position to attend moshava. Indeed, attendance at moshava would probably indicate a high level of commitment to the movement, at least in the early years while conditions were rather primitive. (In later years Camp Shomria became a profit-making venture and even accepted non-shomrim as campers.) Thus, the number of shomrim in any given year was at a minimum equal to the number of camp attendees, and probably much higher:

26

Year	Moshava Attendees
1928	40
1929	70
1930	150
1931	325
1932	385
1933	400
1934	700
1935	1100
1936	1700

During the first half of the 1930s, the influence of chalutz Zionism was felt far beyond the ranks of Hashomer Hatzair. In 1933 Young Judea, the only other Zionist youth movement which then existed in the United States, included chalutziut in its program and, for the first time, encouraged its members to make aliya. The movement, which was connected with the General Zionist groups Hadassah and the Zionist Organization of America, called on its members who were eligible to join the Hechalutz Organization (see below) and

go on hachshara.[27] (It should be noted that at this time the General Zionists were not nearly as antagonistic to Hashomer Hatzair and socialist Zionism in general as they would later become. Irma Lindheim, the second president of Hadassah, who had been the first woman rabbinic student at the Jewish Institute of Religion but did not finish the program, was an active supporter of Hashomer Hatzair and eventually became a member of Mishmar HaEmek. Charles Cowen, Educational Director of the ZOA, was similarly pro-Hashomer Hatzair and spent the last year of his life at the second American Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz, Kfar Menahem.)

In Young Judea chalutziut was now an option, even a priority, but was not the entire focus of the movement as it was in Hashomer Hatzair. In 1933-34, another youth movement appeared on the North American scene which shared Hashomer Hatzair's total commitment to chalutziut and Socialist Zionism and which used tzofiut (Scouting) as a main educational tool. This movement, Habonim (The Builders) was an outgrowth of, and eventually replaced, the Young Poale Zion Alliance (YPZA), which had been the youth section of Poale Zion but not a youth movement in the classic sense.

The genesis of Habonim came at the 1933 Convention of YPZA, which called for the establishment of a Socialist-Zionist "tzofim" movement (as opposed to what the YPZA was, a youth branch of an adult party) in North America.[28] This movement copied the organizational pattern of Hashomer Hatzair, with three sections (shchavot) based on the same age divisions as in Hashomer Hatzair. The groups were Solelim

(Pathfinders), ages 11-14; Tzofim (Scouts, the same term as in Hashomer Hatzair), ages 14-17; and Bonim for ages 17 and older. The movement greeting was aleh, (ascend), which was responded to by aleh u-v'neh (ascend and build). By December 1934 the term Habonim came to stand for the entire movement as well as the oldest shichva.[29]

At about the same time the American branch of the mostly-German movement Gordonia was founded by German Jewish immigrant youth. This movement in 1935 adopted the rule of mandatory hachshara at age 21.[30]

Although the concept of chalutziut was growing in America at this time, there was no success in creating a united Hechalutz Organization.

Hechalutz had been founded in Eastern Europe after the first World War as an a-political coalition of all chalutzic-Zionist youth groups. Its main goal was to purchase and maintain hachshara farms, to obtain and allocate certificates for immigration to British Mandatory Palestine, and in general do anything necessary to strengthen chalutziut and aliyah among diaspora Jewish youth. In 1926, Hashomer Hatzair entered the world Hechalutz on the basis of an agreement which would preserve its autonomy. The most important points of the six-point agreement preserved the right of shomrim to train on their own hachsharot and not be dispersed among non-shomrim; preserved the right of a shomer garin or kibbutz aliya to maintain its own identity and determine its own form of aliyah; and made the stipulation that while shomrim were

obligated to be active and cooperative members of Hechalutz, their first loyalty was to remain Hashomer Hatzair.[31]

In 1932, Poalei Zion began the formation of Hechalutz in America. However, the American branch was not to be based on a coalition of autonomous youth movements as in Europe; rather, Hechalutz was itself to be a youth movement, the only chalutz youth movement. At the time, there were no Poale Zion-oriented chalutz movements, and the creation of Hechalutz along this pattern seemed to present Poale Zion with the opportunity to control and ensure the loyalty of the nascent movement. Hashomer Hatzair was the only chalutz movement then extant in North America, and acceptance of the proposed conditions would have meant its demise, its members being merged into an organization run by others. Hashomer Hatzair rejected these conditions and demanded the right of entry into Hechalutz based on the conditions agreed to in Europe (the Danzig agreement), which they considered binding throughout the world. In 1933, an American Hechalutz organization was founded, dominated by the newly-created Poale Zion youth movement Habonim; Hashomer Hatzair stayed outside.

Throughout the next two years, Hashomer Hatzair continued to insist on the right to join Hechalutz based on the Danzig conditions. Secret negotiations took place in 1934 when a high-level Histadrut delegation came to New York. Representing Hashomer Hatzair were Furmansky and Yermiyahu Haggai, while the Mapai-dominated Histadrut was represented by Zalman Rubashov (later Zalman Shazar, third President of Israel) and David Ben-Gurion, in whose room the meeting took

place.[32] The issue was even brought to the World Zionist Congress.

On January 5, 1935, agreement was reached between Mercaz Hechalutz (the American Hechalutz governing body) and Hashomer Hatzair on essentially the same terms as the Danzig agreement. Two members of Hashomer Hatzair were co-opted onto Mercaz Hechalutz. However, the reservations that Hashomer Hatzair had can be seen from the fact that the Hashomer Hatzair members requested to serve only as observers until the convention of the newly-united American Hechalutz organization,[33] when elections would be held.

The agreement did not hold for long. Of the members of the newly-unified Hechalutz, fifty per cent were from Hashomer Hatzair while most of the rest were from Habonim. Hashomer Hatzair thus demanded that two shlichim be sent to Hechalutz in the United States, one of them to come from the Kibbutz Artzi. This demand was rejected and Enzo Sereni of Mapai (later to achieve fame as one of the Haganah parachutists captured and executed by the Nazis during World War II) was sent to America as the only Hechalutz shaliach.

Relations between Sereni and Hashomer Hatzair were poor. Hashomer Hatzair charged that Sereni was out to destroy it. Rumors and charges were rife throughout the Zionist movement that Hashomer Hatzair was essentially a Communist front. Hashomer Hatzair maintained that Sereni was behind these attacks. The movement restated its demand that a second shaliach be sent. Sereni, for his part, maintained that

sending another shaliach would indicate lack of confidence in his work, and would thus oblige him to resign his post and return home.

After several months of accusations and counter-accusations, Hashomer Hatzair brought the question to the Histadrut mishlachat (shlichim in the United States). The mishlachat agreed that Sereni had acted improperly toward Hashomer Hatzair, but postponed action on a second shaliach. At this point, Hashomer Hatzair left Hechalutz.

Shortly thereafter, the Histadrut reversed the decision of its mishlachat and decided to send another shaliach. Upon hearing this news, Sereni resigned, stating in his final report that he saw no future for chalutziut in the U.S. Ultimately, no one was sent; neither the "second shaliach" which prompted Sereni's resignation nor a new shaliach to replace Sereni. The organization collapsed, not to be formed again until well after the outbreak of World War II. Hashomer Hatzair charged that "Sereni left the Hechalutz in a very bad condition" and that his failures "were the real reasons for his departure."[34] Sereni for his part charged that he was forced out unfairly by Hashomer Hatzair.

V. Summation

The five-year period covered in this chapter represents one of the most successful and active eras in Hashomer Hatzair history. During this period, the movement more than doubled, both in number of members and number of kinim. Conditions were ripe for this expansion, and the movement was

able to capitalize on these conditions to a large extent. The Depression and subsequent radicalization of many Jews, combined with Hitler's ascension to power in Germany, made Hashomer Hatzair's combination of socialism and Jewish nationalism attractive to many young Jews.

The essential kernel of the Hashomer Hatzair idea spread to other groups as well. Even though relations with these other groups, particularly as they related to the Hechalutz organization, were often poor, the very existence of these other groups had to be seen as a plus for the shomer idea if not the shomer organization.

At the same time, the first waters of what would eventually become a flood appeared. Loyal and valuable shomrim challenged the policy of mandatory hachshara and were ultimately forced to choose between their education and their youth movement. Most opted for college. In later decades, as we shall see, the trickle became a flood and significant numbers were lost by Hashomer Hatzair and by the Zionist movement as a whole.

In the late thirties, the focus would shift from rapid growth to concentration on political issues. In 1937 the movement would become involved in the fight over Partition. Shortly thereafter, the question of Hashomer Hatzair's attitude toward World War II would serve to split the movement, which would be further weakened by the conscription of most of its male members after the U.S. entered the war.

NOTES

1. Bulletin, Feb. 1933; Din V'Cheshbon to the Eighth Veida, 1937, 20. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

2. Samuel Grand, The Origins of Hashomer Hatzair in America (New York, 1972), 16.

3. Shmuel Ben Zvi in Levi Dror et al., Sefer Hashomer Hatzair, 3 (Merhavia, 1964): 524.

4. Grand, The Origins of Hashomer Hatzair, 17.

5. Ben Zvi in Dror et al., Sefer Hashomer Hatzair, 524.

6. Bulletin, Feb. 1933. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

7. Avraham Schenker, interviewed by the author, January 4, 1985.

8. A. Dashevsky, "The Story of a Decade", Hashomer Hatzair, March - April 1934.

9. David Kuselewitz, "An Integrated Personality" in David Kuselewitz, ed., Moshe Furmansky: In Memoriam (New York, undated), 5.

10. Grand, The Origins of Hashomer Hatzair, 27.

11. Schenker interview; and Yehuda Sela (Silverman), interviewed by the author, July 17, 1985. Both tapes deposited in American Jewish Archives.

12. Schenker interview.

13. Transcript of an interview with Sima Altman-Schenker, interviewed and transcribed by Yehuda Sela, 1983, Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

14. Recollections of Yehuda Sela, 1983, Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva, 2.

15. Schenker interview.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Sela and Schenker interviews.

19. Schenker interview.

20. Aharon Antonovsky, "He Understands Us", in Kuselewitz, Moshe Furmansky, 10.

21. Sima Altman-Schenker interview, 4.

22. Moshe Furmansky, "We Pink Nazis", Hashomer Hatzair, March 1935, 20, 21.

23. Moshe Furmansky, "Problems of Renascence: On American Jewish Youth", Hashomer Hatzair, October 1934, 11.

24. Schenker interview.

25. To the Seventh Veida, Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva, 2.

26. Ibid., 11. The 1936 figure is from the Din V'Cheshbon to the Eight Veida, Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva, 20.

27. Samuel Grand, "A History of Zionist Youth Organizations in the United States from theiir Inception to 1940" (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1958), 50-51.

28. Ibid., 224.

29. Ibid., 229-230

30. Ibid., 241.

31. "Agreement Concerning the Entrance of the Members of Hashomer Hatzair into Hechalutz", Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

32. Handwritten minutes of this meeting are in the possession of the Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

33. Minutes of meeting between Mercaz Hechalutz and the Hanhaga Rashit of Hashomer Hatzair, January 5, 1935. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

34. Din V'Cheshbon to the Eighth Veida, 25.

CHAPTER FOUR
"FIGHT FASCISM WITHIN AND WITHOUT"

I. A Youth Movement Faces the Larger World

By the late 1930s, the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement in North America had reached its high water mark. With the outbreak of the second World War, the movement began a period of numerical decline from which it would not recover. Paradoxically, at the same time that it was beginning to shrink as a youth movement, Hashomer Hatzair found its influence in the larger community growing. Hashomer Hatzair began for the first time to take stands, and publicize them, on the political issues facing world Jewry. Although not yet having the features of a political party, Hashomer Hatzair began to carve out its own unique identity within the larger bloc of Labor Zionism.

The year 1937 may well be said to mark the beginning of Hashomer Hatzair's entry into the larger Jewish political arena, when it published and distributed its polemic against the Peel Commission plan for the partition of Palestine. Shortly thereafter, world political issues would strongly impinge on the youth movement itself, as Hashomer Hatzair was nearly torn apart over its position on the approaching World War II. Even after the actual outbreak of the war, some shomrim favored the Trotskyist position of "revolutionary defeatism"; they maintained that victory for either side would be disastrous for the proletariat, and that the socialist's true task was to oppose <u>both</u> the Axis and the "bourgeois democracies." The majority faction, however, adopted

the slogan of "fight fascism within and without", helping the Allied war effort but opposing at the same time at least the more egregious aspects of Allied policies (such as the British White Paper).

Shomrim participated actively in the war effort. The kibbutzei aliyah and hachsharot were severely disrupted as hundreds of male shomrim entered the military. Even prior to that, the American movement was engaged in sending what help it could to its counterparts in Nazi-occupied Europe. After the war, contacts were made with European shomrim who had survived the war, and preparations would soon begin for aiding in illegal aliya and circumventing the embargo on arms shipments to Palestine.

By the end of the war Hashomer Hatzair found itself numerically smaller, and internally weakened by the disruptions of the war effort. Young men who had spent years facing death thousands of miles away from home found it difficult to return to their roles in what was still, after all, largely a Scouting movement. The "backlog" of older shomrim who should have made aliyah long ago, but were prevented from doing so both by British policy and the closing of the shipping routes, did not contribute to the health of the situation.

Another paradox was presented, however, by the fact that despite entering into a period of decline the North American branch was no longer a backwater of the world Hashomer Hatzair movement. The huge Eastern European branches were no more; the 70,000 shomrim of pre-war Poland, including such heroes as Mordechai Anielewicz, had mostly disappeared into

mass graves or the smoke of the crematoria. America now possessed the largest intact Diaspora branches of Hashomer Hatzair; and as the action centers of world Jewry were now increasingly America and Eretz Yisrael, the American movement was expected to make its presence felt at Zionist conferences and the like. In Palestine, the Kibbutz Artzi had given birth to a political party; perhaps it was time for America to follow suit.

II. Consolidation

As we saw in the previous chapter, the years 1932-36 were a period of rapid growth for Hashomer Hatzair. In 1932, the movement had 15 kinim with 1089 registered shomrim, of whom 385 attended moshavot. By 1936 there were 23 kinim, and 1700 moshava attendees; although there were no membership figures published for that year, shomrim then active place the number of members at about 3000.[1]

The next year saw a rather curious phenomenon. The movement had further expanded to 26 kinim, but moshava attendance fell off somewhat to 1500.[2] The movement leadership recognized the fact that there were marginally fewer shomrim, but felt that far from indicating a problem this was actually a plus for Hashomer Hatzair. As was perhaps to be expected, some members who were not really suited to the group were sloughed off:

> Hitrachavuth [expansion] may be carried on in two ways: intensive and extensive. In the last two years, although our numbers have not increased to a startling amount, we still can

> say that hitrachavuth has gone on steadily and consistently. The intensity [emphasis in original] of the activities and the inner strength developed by the Shomrim themselves show the strength as well as the actual number of kinim and membership lists [emphasis added].
>
> [T]he type of hitrachavuth which we have been carrying through now is one of slow, organic growth, one of intensification from within and slow, proportionate expansion to new points. Thus kinim, once large with the inflation of first enthusiasm [emphasis added], have become matured and solidified in their strength. This is true hitrachavuth.3

In an attempt to streamline the administration of the movement, glilot (sing. galil), or regions were established. The galil was to be an intermediate framework between the national movement and the local ken; by formalizing this arrangement through creation of galil-wide institutions, it was hoped that cooperation between the various kinim in a geographical area would be improved. The first glilot formed were New York (including the nine kinim within the City of New York plus Plainfield, N.J.) and New England (Boston, Providence, and Lynn, Mass.). By 1937, Galil Midwest (Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Toronto and Montreal) had been created on paper but had not yet begun to function. (Eventually the two Canadian kinim would be taken out of Galil Midwest and would form their own region.) Montreal was the largest ken in the movement, although again no exact figures are extant; the Hanhaga Rashit merely noted that the Montreal neshef pumbi (public recital) was attended by 1700 people.[4]

In 1937 the movement expanded its publishing activities.

The Hashomer Hatzair monthly continued to appear, serving more and more as a vehicle for publicizing the movement and its activities and gaining outside support. A new publication, El Al, was launched as an internal organ for the intermediate age group, tzofim. Niv ha-Boger, an internal ideological periodical which had first appeared some years previously,[5] was issued more frequently as well.

Also in 1937, Hashomer Hatzair published its first English-language book, Deep Furrows. Written by shaliach Avraham Ben-Shalom, the book was an account of kibbutz life and of the Hashomer Hatzair movement in Palestine. Among its twenty chapters were "Kibbutz and Class Struggle," "Kibbutz and the Family" and "Kibbutz and the Child."[6] Unlike most other Hashomer Hatzair publication ventures, which generally ran deficits, Deep Furrows immediately sold out its first edition of 700 and went into a second printing. Concerning the book's success, the Hanhaga Rashit asked rhetorically: "What more need we say than that from far off South Africa comes first an order for books and then a letter of praise?"[7]

Also in 1937, Hashomer Hatzair in a pamphlet it published took a stand that put it in opposition to the majority of the Zionist movement. The Case Against Partition was written by Joshua Leibner, a member of the first American kibbutz who had returned to the U.S. on shlichut. In his pamphlet, which represented the views of the Kibbutz Artzi in Palestine as well as the movement here, Leibner argued against acceptance of the 1937 Peel Commission proposal to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab States, with stra-

tegic areas remaining in the hands of the British.

Leibner argues that the Peel Commission plan, formulated in the aftermath of the Arab riots of 1936 and 1937, is "a scheme on the part of Great Britain to safeguard her own interests in Palestine."[8] It would free Britain of her responsibilities to world Jewry under her League of Nations mandate and give her permanent control over Jerusalem, the Lydda airport, and other strategic areas or holy places -- probably to include the Haifa port. According to the borders planned, the Jewish State would be "neither 'State' nor Jewish."[9] Its 2300 square miles would at an absolute maximum absorb 2 million more Jews, but the figure was likely closer to 1 million. Leibner asks: "How can we, despite the unquestioned need of Jews in Poland, Roumania and Germany, take a step for which future generations may curse us?"[10]

Leibner also makes some arguments which foreshadow the bi-nationalist stand later to be taken by Hashomer Hatzair and its affiliated parties:

> Something is happening to Zionism! We no longer have our feet on the ground. For years we preached that the building of Palestine was a slow, difficult process; that it required all the preparation, stamina and devotion that Chalutzim have put to the task. We have been proud of the fact that our "conquest" today has been one of toil and not of the sword, as in Joshua's time . . . That is why the Emek is today much more a symbol of true Zionism than Tel Aviv! But Messianic sentiments are liable to pull down the entire structure which took us years to build up. . .
>
> Is not the idea of "transfer" or "evacuation" of the Arabs from the "Jewish State" symptomatic of the new state of mind creeping into the Zionist movement? Does it not invite

> a sentiment of isolation and segregation which is nothing short of suicidal? We are told that the prospects for peace will be much brighter if both the Arabs and Jews will live in separate "states" . . . Will the result be peace?10

Leibner answers his own question by predicting that the result of partition would not be peace but an eventual war, as the tiny Jewish state would inevitably feel the need to expand its crowded borders even by force. Leibner closes by stating that Hashomer Hatzair, while remaining generally loyal to the Zionist leadership, would continue its struggle against partition and for "a real Zionism"[11] by arguing against the scheme in Zionist public opinion and urging its rejection by the next Zionist congress.

Hashomer Hatzair's public opposition to the proposed Jewish state placed the organization at odds with the majority of the Zionist movement, and was the cause of criticism from other Zionist groups. The criticism was apparently so severe that the 1938 Veidah, while reiterating the movement's stand, issued a protest against "the attempt to identify the anti-partitionists with the anti-Zionists."[12]

If the movement's opposition to Partition served to make it a focus of criticism, another 1937 event served to focus more positive attention on Hashomer Hatzair. On July 4 of that year (the timing was apparently coincidental) the first American Kibbutz Aliya, which had spent five years on temporary settlement in Hadera while waiting for its permanent land allotment, took possession of its new home. The kibbutz, the first Jewish settlement in the Juara region of northern

Palestine, was named Ein HaShofet (Spring of the Judge) in honor of Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. Brandeis, who was attracted by the pioneering spirit of Hashomer Hatzair (often comparing them to the early American pioneers), had made a major contribution to the Jewish National Fund to help underwrite purchase of the Juara tract.[13]

Shortly after the kibbutz settled the land, two of the ex-American shomrim were killed by Arab snipers. This event had a sobering effect on the American movement and served to bring home the dangers and sacrifices that chalutziut might entail.

III. Preparations for War

The late 1930s saw world fascism gaining ground with frightening speed. In Spain, Republican forces were on the verge of defeat; socialists from all over the world came to aid in the struggle against Franco, but the capitalist democracies stood aside as an elected, but left-wing, government fought for its life. Franco's Phalange, on the other hand, was aided by both Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.

Throughout the world, the conviction was growing that a new world war was likely. Hitler's 1939 dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and his further territorial demands on other fronts, gave impetus to this view. Socialists could not help but view fascism, be it in its Italian, German or Spanish incarnation, as an abhorrence. But socialists were also committed to the elimination of the capitalist system as found

in the Western democracies. The West's failure to aid the Spanish Loyalist cause and Chamberlain's appeasement policies were not likely to cause excessive confidence in their ability or even desire to oppose fascism. Still, perhaps Western capitalism, though evil, was truly the lesser of two evils, and thus to be supported until after the defeat of fascism. Like other groups, Hashomer Hatzair was faced with the question: What should the socialist position be towards the coming war?

For Hashomer Hatzair, this question was to be further complicated by Jewish and Zionist considerations not faced by other socialist groups. Although implementation of the "Final Solution" was not to begin until 1941, the Hitler regime was making life increasingly unbearable for those under its rule. The "Kristallnacht" of November 1938, when millions of dollars worth of Jewish property was destroyed and over 20,000 Jews arrested and placed in concentration camps, emphasized for Jews the world over the need to contain if not defeat Hitler. But a few months later, the West would prove itself an unreliable ally. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, meeting with Hitler at Munich, sacrificed Czechoslovakia for the chimera of "peace in our time." Then, the British government in May 1939 issued the infamous White Paper severely restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. This was a crushing disappointment for many in the Zionist movement who had placed much trust in Great Britain. Only a month later the refugee boat St. Louis with over 900 German Jews seeking safety was turned away from the United States.

As early as October 1938 the American movement began thinking through its position on the coming war. In that month, the Misrad Bogrim (section of the national office responsible for programming for the oldest age-level) issued a discussion paper on "The Labor Movement and War." Though the piece was written originally in 1935, the Misrad Bogrim states that "[i]n spite of the changes that have taken place in world affairs we find this material still actual. (sic)"[14]

According to this discussion paper, war will be inevitable because of the contradictions inherent in fascism. Promises are made which cannot be kept, and thus scapegoats must be found. Once internal enemies have been exhausted, external enemies are needed; "the entire nation is drugged into chauvinism and anxiously awaits its 'salvation' through a war."[15] In the event of war, the democratic countries of the West are likely to adopt an appeasement policy and leave the Soviet Union exposed to danger. Although the Soviet Union

> is not the fatherland of the workers of the world (as the Stalinists would like to believe) because each working class must fight for its rights in its own country, [nevertheless] everything that can weaken the Soviet [Union] and help in its downfall is counterrevolutionary.[16]

Thus:

> it is the task of the world labor movement to be the vanguard and champion of world peace. Within each country Socialist forces must fight fascism and reaction to hinder their growth. They must prevent the spread of fascism to democratic countries and bring about the isolation of fascist countries.[17]

The discussion paper outlines three possible policies

that would be open to socialists in the event of war; it is startlingly accurate, because these three policies did indeed become those debated within Hashomer Hatzair following the outbreak of war. The three policies were the social democratic "class peace" approach, Trotskyite "revolutionary defeatism", and the "centrist position" which was exemplified by the slogan "fight fascism within and without."

The "class peace" approach, identified in the discussion paper with "reformism" or "social democracy" as opposed to revolutionary socialism, held that fascism was in essence the only immediate threat. It advocated total abandonment of the class struggle and loyalty to bourgeois democratic governments in order to support the war effort against fascism.

"Revolutionary defeatism" was its polar opposite. Socialists could not abandon the class struggle under any circumstances. The coming war was merely a battle between two imperialist line-ups. Fascism was in any case only the logical extension of capitalism, and thus the victory of the capitalist democracies would not leave the workers any better off than their defeat. The socialist objective in America remained the overthrow of American capitalism, irrespective of whether or not this might lead to America's military defeat. Indeed, military defeat might provide the spark needed to light the bonfires of revolution, as had been the case in Russia during the first World War.

The centrist position tried to steer a course between the Scylla of "collaboration" and the Charybdis of "defeatism" which might well lead to a Nazi-Fascist dominated world.

According to this view, Nazism and fascism did indeed constitute a greater threat to the working class than did capitalist democracy, and thus it was permissible to temporarily unite with liberal democrats in order to prevent the spread of fascism into the democracies. While supporting the war effort against the fascists,

> [t]he working class must protect its independent existence and its freedom of decisions in democratic countries. It must remain free and independent from bourgeois government in its country -- even if that country is an ally of Russia. Its policy at the beginning of a war should be only a temporary policy and a transition to revolutionary policy . . . should take place as the war continues. The goal of the war for the bourgeoisie is not the same one which exists for the proletariat. Sooner or later -- these two goals will conflict with one another. When the country is busy with its external enemy workers must struggle from within and seize control at the opportune moment.18

This third policy was the one advocated in the discussion paper. However, this stand was not mandatory for shomrim and there continued to be a significant percentage who supported revolutionary defeatism. The "class peace" position, though often mentioned in discussion papers, does not seem to have garnered any significant support.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Trotskyites, though a minority, played a significant role within the movement. At the 1938 Veidah, two factions ran candidates for Mazkir of Hashomer Hatzair. Avraham Schenker was considered the "pro-Soviet" candidate and Meyer Rabinowitz the "Trotskyist" candidate. Schenker won, but Rabinowitz and his sup-

porters stayed in the movement.[19] At the time, it was felt that since Hashomer Hatzair was not a political party ideological differences within reason were acceptable; breaches of action, which would later develop, were another story.

An article from the December 1940 issue of the Hashomer Hatzair monthly indicates the great extent of pro-Trotsky feeling but also the widespread ambivalence about that feeling within the movement. Written by Arthur Rosenberg, a non-movement Marxist scholar, the article is essentially a political obituary of the recently-murdered revolutionary. Rosenberg notes Trotsky's failure in his later years to rally people around him, criticises his lack of "understanding for the special national tasks of the Jewish working class" but nevertheless praises him for his "remarkable courage," hails him as "the outstanding socialist personality of our time" and states that "workers of the future" will "praise and follow his true socialist mind."[20] Interestingly, the article was run with a disclaimer stating that it does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editors; this sort of disclaimer was exceedingly rare in the publication, but even rarer was the publication of pieces with which the editors did not agree (except perhaps in a symposium or for purposes of dissection of the objectionable piece, neither of which is the case here). We can only conclude that the editors were pro-Trotsky enough to want to take some positive note of his death, but wary enough of some of his policies or of his followers to avoid total identification with him.

In late 1940 and 1941, the debate in the movement over

the war came to a head. A full-scale debate was scheduled for the Ninth Veidah, in April 1941, and in preparation for this debate position papers were circulated.

The "official" discussion paper issued in 1940 indicates the beginning of a fear within the movement that a government crackdown on "subversive" elements was about to begin. One copy was sent to a trusted individual in each ken, and it was not to circulate. Every boger was to be given an opportunity to read the position paper, but it was to remain in the possession of the shomer who had received it.[21]

The 1940 position paper recognizes that "the spread of Nazism spells the greatest tragedy of the working class" but states that "the only effective fight against Fascism can be led by the socialist movement using socialist means, and through the struggle for the victory of socialism."[22] A war between the fascist powers and the capitalist nations was merely a clash of two imperialisms; only a Socialist Europe could effectively check the spread of fascism.

In Palestine, the role of the Haganah was to protect the interests of the Yishuv and not become totally identified with British interests. Temporary cooperation with the British should not be ruled out entirely, but only if an independent political policy is followed. The American shomrim note that "the Yishuv has expressed clearly and often its readiness to defend itself" and they express their "readiness to join the ranks of the Haganah in Palestine in order to defend it."[23]

In a 1941 position paper this policy was reinforced and the slogan "fight fascism within and without" made its first appearance.[23] Concretely, this policy meant temporary co-operation with the bourgeois democracies and service in their armies while at the same time being ready to seize power should the opportunity present itself.

The policy of support for the allied war effort was bitterly attacked by the Trotskyist faction in a subsequent Veida Bulletin. Publishing their position under the title "Why Revolutionary Defeatism", they claimed that America had already become a fascist country, basing their claim on the alleged trend toward "state capitalism" which had accompanied the gearing-up of the economy for war.[23]

According to the advocates of revolutionary defeatism, it was impossible to cooperate with the bourgeoisie while at the same time seeking to overthrow it:

> The experience of past wars and the present one up to date has shown that war demands that the ruling class suppress the oppressed class. Class collaboration is merely falling into the hands of the bourgeoisie who utilize this weapon to crush the independent organizations of the workers under the banner of national unity in the "war crisis." Realizing that revolutions must be prepared for, renunciation of training of a revolutionary party with roots in the masses for the sake of waiting and provoking a revolutionary situation is merely to lead the workers blindfolded to massacre and defeat.
>
> Therefore we discard the poisonous defensist policy . . . [w]e maintain Revolutionary Defeatism to be the correct revolutionary strategy in the present imperialist war.[26]

The debate over policy toward the war was repeated at the Veidah which took place in April of 1941. The centrist

position was presented this time by Moshe Furmansky, shaliach from 1934 to 1936, who had recently returned to the United States for his second period of shlichut.[27] The centrist position and the slogan "fight fascism within and without" were adopted by majority vote; there is no record of the exact tally.

The extent of Trotskyite support in the movement at this time is unclear. Certainly Trotskyites were either numerous enough or articulate enough to make their voices heard and to present their policies whenever ideological debate was engaged in. Avraham Schenker, who was Mazkir of the movement for much of this time, believes that the Trotskyite movement in the United States made an organized effort to infiltrate and take over Hashomer Hatzair, seeing it as an organization that was well-organized and tightly-disciplined, and ripe for takeover since a revolutionary socialist ideology was already deeply ingrained in the movement.[28] This claim, however, is not made in any other sources or reminiscences of the period. Yehuda Sela (Silverman), who was also a member of the Hanhaga Rashit at this time, maintains that the Trotskyite influece was simply the influence of a number of shomrim who had arrived at a Trotskyite position on their own and, believing it to be the correct policy to follow, sought to persuade others.[29]

The Trotskyite influence in the movement and the debate over the war were terminated with U.S. entrance into the conflict following the Pearl Harbor bombing of December 7,

1941. Immediately subsequent to U.S. entry into the war, the American branch of the Jewish National Fund adopted the slogan "Land for Victory" (based on the Allied "V for Victory") and sought to tie in the JNF collection to the allied war effort. Hashomer Hatzair, which had as one of its major activities and traditions participation in JNF campaigns, decided to support this collection. Three shomrim who had been leaders of the Trotskyite faction within the movement refused to participate in the collection, denouncing the JNF for its alleged collaboration with British imperialism.

This violation of movement discipline was not tolerated; a distinction was drawn between theoretical disagreement on the one hand and action contrary to movement policy on the other. On December 12 the three shomrim (David Scheck, Yisrael Beinin and Natan Brown) were expelled. According to the Mazkirut's announcement of the decision, the action of the three was not a matter "which deals alone with KKL [JNF]. It is a matter which goes to the very roots of Hashomer Hatzair."[30] Although there was some protest at this decision[31] it soon died down. No other shomrim followed the three who were expelled from the movement and Hashomer Hatzair's flirtation with Trotskyism came to an end.

Another 1941 development that would foreshadow later steps was the foundation in Los Angeles of an adult group, Vaad Lemaan Hashomer (The Commitee for Hashomer). The Vaad was essentially a fundraising and political support group consisting of adults who had no youth movement background. From the group's correspondence with the New York office, it

seems that members of the group were not personally interested in chalutzic aliya but wanted to help the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement grow, and to spread its message and distinctive ideology in adult Zionist circles.

In the spring of 1941, the Vaad obtained a plot of land which they felt was suitable either for a Hashomer Hatzair moshava or for a hachshara farm. However, nothing seems to have come of this plan, apparently due to a lack of resources to fund needed improvements.[32]

During the financial year 1940-41, the Vaad disbursed $1158.33; some of this was sent as a subvention to New York while most of it was disbursed on direct expenses for Hashomer Hatzair activities in California.[33] The money was mostly raised through educational activities: lectures, plays, concerts and the like. This type of activity, it was felt, not only served to bring in funds but also to fulfill the educational mission of Hashomer Hatzair in the Jewish community.

Although there had been other adults who devoted much time and money to helping Hashomer Hatzair, the Los Angeles Vaad is the first recorded <u>organized</u> adult group associated with Hashomer Hatzair. In its combining fund-raising and educational activities, the Vaad established the pattern later to be followed by other Hashomer Hatzair-associated adult organizations. Los Angeles, in particular, would prove to be fertile ground for the later development of adult support.

IV. Hashomer Hatzair During the War

The period of World War II proved to be one of great challenge and difficulty for Hashomer Hatzair. With American entry into the war, and especially as word began to reach here of the sufferings of European Jewry at the hands of the Nazis, opposition to the war vanished and Hashomer Hatzair threw itself wholeheartedly into the Allied war effort. If the movement was strengthened by its newly-restored unity, however, it was greatly weakened by other factors. The entry of Canada into the war, as a part of the British Commonwealth, had already made it impossible for Canadian shomrim to come to the U.S. for hachshara; cooperation in general with the Canadian kinim was made more difficult as it became harder to routinely cross the border. The closing of the Mediterranean and the British White Paper prevented the few remaining members of Kibbutz Aliya Bet and those of Kibbutzei Aliya Gimel and Daled from reaching Palestine. Additionally, as military conscription grew more widespread, male members of the movement were taken from hachshara, from studies and from movement activity into the military. The burden of maintaining the movement fell on the female members of the movement and on shlichim of non-American origin (notably Furmansky) trapped here by the closing of the Mediterranean.

If the situation of the American movement was difficult, it was still as nothing compared to overseas branches. In Eastern Europe, many of the branches continued to function, often underground, despite the Nazi occupation. The American

movement took it upon itself to aid its European counterparts to the extent that it was possible. Contact with underground European movements was maintained via Palestine and the Palestinian shlichim sent clandestinely to Europe.[34] Nearly $3000 was raised and sent to the underground movement, again via Palestine.[35] In addition, the Keren Hagana (Defense Fund) was set up in the summer of 1942 to assist in the defense of the Yishuv in case of an attack by Rommel's forces. In a matter of weeks, over $1600 was raised which was "sent to Palestine for special purposes."[36]

In order to keep shomrim aware of developments in Europe the Hanhaga Rashit would from time to time translate and distribute some of the correspondence it maintained with Hashomer Hatzair in Nazi-occupied Europe. This correspondence was written in a type of code; "the family" referred to Hashomer Hatzair, "brothers and sisters" or "cousins" were other kinim, Meir (a reference to Meir Yaari) was the Kibbutz Artzi and "seeing Meir" meant aliya. Even in the midst of the war, one of the Polish kinim wrote that they were sending "birthday gifts" to "Grandpa Ussishkin" (Menachem Ussishkin, head of the JNF). From occupied Belgium came news of a government decree which hindered the movement:

> there are still some cousins whom no one knows anything about. Uncle Gzerah (Hebrew for decree) arrived here some weeks ago, and you know how bad he is and how he bothers the children. But one can do nothing here and one can hardly change such an old gentleman. Above all, there is the great difficulty of having to support him . . . no matter what one does he humiliates us all the same. [However] he takes care not to go too far, because outside

the family he is not much liked . . .[37]

There is no record of the total number of American shomrim who served in the U.S. military; the April 1944 Din v'Cheshbon (report) of the Hanhaga Rashit stated that there were approximately 120 members of Kibbutzei Aliyah Gimel, Daled and Heh in the U.S. military at that time.[38] This does not account for shomrim who were not yet members of Kibbutzei Aliyah or who mobilized later than the date of the report; shomrim on hachshara often found it possible to obtain temporary draft deferments as agricultural workers but were eventually mobilized. There is also no record of the number of shomrim in the Canadian army.

Most shomrim serving in the military attempted to keep up their contacts with the movement. A special office in the New York headquarters was set up to handle correspondence with soldiers, send them movement publications, etc. Soldiers were also expected to keep their dues current and pay a small percentage of their salaries to the movement. Soldiers serving in Europe were given addresses of Hashomer Hatzair branches in the countries to which they were sent, and many succeeded in establishing contact with non-American shomrim. In England, a number of veteran American shomrim helped the relatively new English movement organize its moshavot, and in other ways helped it develop its educational program.[39]

Even those shomrim who were not overseas found the army experience to be broadening. As products of urban areas and of a largely-Jewish milieu, contact with rural Gentiles often proved a source of amazement:

> I came down here [an air base in Laredo, Texas] with a fellow from Randolph Field and we got to sleep next to each other. He's a married man of 30 and comes from Oklahoma -- a nicer guy than he I've never met and for a country man he's quite intelligent . . . [but he knows] hardly anything about the outside world. The interesting part . . . is that he's a descendant of the Cherokee Indians and he's practically all Indian on his father's side. . . . meeting this guy, a real Indian sure was a surprise to me. Back home we think that Indians live in reservations but from my conversations with this fellow I find that a good deal of them live in the cities and although they still participate or hold these ancient festivals he laughed at me when I mentioned scalpings and some more of those things from the books. When I told him that my folks had been born in Europe he could hardly believe me, and then when I said to him that I myself came here from Europe only a few years ago he couldn't conceive of the idea. At first he didn't believe me and said that I was joking with him but I convinced him and you should have heard all the questions he asked about Europe . . . He knew very little about the Jews and wanted to know how many there were in the world and was completely ignorant of the persecution by Hitler of the Jews . . . I'm going to learn a lot from him about the American Indians, then I'll be able to teach it to the B'nai Midbar.40

Towards the end of the war, soldier shomrim participated in the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where among those liberated were 195 shomrim.[41] One shomer wrote to New York of his encounter with Chaike Grossman, a shomeret who was commander of the Bialystok Ghetto revolt (and who is today a Mapam member of Knesset):

> Quite casually she told us of a few incidents to illustrate her point; for example, the time she had to drive a wagon-load of guns through the entire town to the ghetto. The town was filled with Nazi patrols on the lookout for suspicious looking vehicles or people with any packages in general. Calmly she drove through the town, singing a Polish song. Sighting one

> patrol she didn't wait for it to investigate her, but approached it and coolly asked for directions to a certain part of town; another patrol stopped her further on and asked for her papers (which were false, of course); without haste or trepidation she showed them, so that the Nazi didn't even look closely. . . it seemed natural that she should have acted the way she did, for as she said: it was inevitable since she was a shomeret.42

In some of Hashomer Hatzair's correspondence during the war, security issues and concerns cropped up. In one case, a shomer who had applied for Officers Candidate School expressed concern that his candidacy might be rejected if it were known that he was in Hashomer Hatzair. Therefore, he was preparing to state, if asked, that he had left the movement and had, in the course of his military service, given up many of his previous beliefs. He was requesting the movement to back him up in this regard, if asked, to cease sending him mailings of movement publications (he would read those sent to other shomrim on the base), and to remove his name from the movement mailing list.[43]

The influence of Hashomer Hatzair was felt in the adult Jewish community during the war to a greater extent than ever before. In 1942, the right-wing Revisionist Zionist movement began agitating for the establishment of a Jewish Army, and would appear at public meetings with this demand throughout the United States. Hashomer Hatzair took an active role in opposing the Revisionist move, not so much out of opposition to a Jewish Army <u>per se</u> as out of fear that it would be controlled by the Revisionists and used for their own political purposes. In Baltimore, a leaflet was distributed by

Hashomer Hatzair accusing the Revisionists of, inter alia, sabotaging JNF collections, trying to exterminate the Histadrut and endangering Palestinian Jews by inciting Arab riots.[44]

A watershed event in Zionist history was the 1942 Biltmore Conference, an across-the-board gathering of all shades and stripes of Zionist opinion in America and, as if by proxy, throughout the world -- since America was perhaps the only place in the world where all Zionist parties and groups could gather freely to debate and discuss. Hashomer Hatzair was the only youth movement to have a full voting delegate, probably because it represented the stand not only of the youth movement per se but of the Kibbutz Artzi and Socialist League in Palestine; Furmansky represented the movement in the adult plenum and Schenker in the youth plenum. The Biltmore Conference was the first multiparty Zionist gathering since the advent of the British Mandate to demand a Jewish state and not some other less than fully sovereign arrangement. Only Hashomer Hatzair dissented from this demand; while applauding both the democratization of Jewish life represented by the mass gathering, as well as the increasing Zionization of American Jewry, Furmansky abstained in the vote, stating that Hashomer Hatzair did not accept the principle of a Jewish Commonwealth but supported instead a bi-national state:

> Had Palestine been an empty unpopulated country there would have been no controversy. However the presence of a million Arabs in Palestine compels the Zionist movement to seek a political formula which would safeguard the

> full realization of Zionism and promote permanent political cooperation of the Arab masses in Palestine as well as in the Near East.
>
> It is our deepest conviction that the Jewish Commonwealth conception does not answer this important problem.45

Despite the concrete accomplishments of the World War II period, processes were set in motion that would eventually prove to be of serious detriment to the movement. In particular, the loss of so many older shomrim to the army would prevent the movement from growing normally and deprive younger groups of their leadership. This was recognized at the time, of course, but there was little that could be done to prevent the problem short of massive draft evasion:

> The calling of our bachurim [young men] into the armed services meant a radical depletion in the ranks of our menahalim. Plugot bogrim, formerly leading community contacts for the kinim, were suddenly depleted and the remaining chaverim assumed many additional responsibilities. In many kinim, the effects were felt in general atmosphere in the ken, in decline in numbers and educational activity, and weakening of the structure.46

A number of kinim folded or were merged with others. In New York there was a decline from ten kinim to six, and from close to a thousand shomrim to about five hundred. Even Ken Brownsville, the first North American ken, disappeared, merging with East New York to form Ken Masada.[47] This decline in numbers was reflected in other regions as well, although again accurate figures are lacking.

In sum, the period 1937-1945 represented a high-water mark for Hashomer Hatzair in terms of concrete accomplishment though not in numbers. Three new kibbutzei aliya

were formed, shomrim participated concretely in the anti-fascist war effort, overseas shomrim were aided and the world movement's policies enunciated. At the same time however, a severe erosion of the movement began. Without older leaders it was next to impossible to recruit or train new blood; in particular as soldiers were demobilized, the movement became top-heavy with many "chiefs" and very few "Indians." This problem was not unique to Hashomer Hatzair. Habonim leaders, too, took note of the havoc that military conscription was causing in its shichvat hadracha[48] and other youth movements must have been similarly affected. But because there was no paid staff in Hashomer Hatzair, it would prove more difficult in later years to recoup the losses.

Although there would be heroic days to come, with shomrim playing important roles in illegal immigration and in arming the new state of Israel, the movement was in a severely weakened state. The outbreak of the Korean war, and in particular the McCarthy "red scare" which lead to infiltration of the movement and the exclusion of its shlichim from entry into the United States, soon drove the movement into a nearly comatose state. Though it did not die, it was, as we shall see, barely a shadow of its former self.

NOTES

1. My interviews with Avraham Schenker, January 5, 1985; and with Yehuda Sela, July 17, 1985, both deposited in American Jewish Archives.

2. Din V'Cheshbon of the Hanhaga Rashit, 1938, 20. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

3. Ibid., 4.

4. Ibid., 6 - 9.

5. Ibid., 10 - 13.

6. A pre-publication announcement for the book, including a table of contents, is found on the back cover of Joshua Leibner, The Case Against Partition (New York, 1937). I was not able to obtain or examine a copy of the book.

7. Din V'Cheshbon 1938, 17.

8. Leibner, The Case Against Partition, 7.

9. Ibid., loc. cit.

10. Ibid., 10 - 11.

11. Ibid., 11.

12. Hachlatot of the Eighth Veida, 1938, 2. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

13. Fifty Years of Hashomer Hatzair in North America (New York, 1937), unpaginated.

14. War: Discussion Material (Hozer #9204), October 18, 1938. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

15. Ibid., 2.

16. Ibid., 4.

17. Ibid., 2.

18. Ibid., 5.

19. Schenker interview.

20. Arthur Rosenberg, "Trotsky and His Tradition," Hashomer Hatzair, November 1940, 14.

21. What Is Our Stand on the Present War?, 1940, 4. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

22. Ibid., 5.

23. Ibid, 8.

24. Veidah Bulletin II, 1941. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

25. Veidah Bulletin IV, 1941, 19. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

26. Ibid., 22.

27. Din V'Cheshbon of the IX Moatza Rashit, 1941, 19. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

28. Schenker interview.

29. Sela interview.

30. Letter from Mazkirut Rashit to Mazkirut Kibbutz Aliya Gimel, December 12, 1941. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

31. Letter from Aryeh Jacobowitz to Hanhaga Rashit, December 14, 1941. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

32. Letter from Katherine Auslander to Shifra Geller, June 5, 1941. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

33. Letter from Katherine Auslander to Moshe Furmansky, Shifra Geller, and Yehuda Schwartz, October 25, 1941. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

34. Din V'Cheshbon of the Hanhaga Rashit, 1944, 34. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

35. Ibid., 30.

36. Ibid., 31.

37. Al Nah Yipol Lvovenu (sic), 1941, 10 - 11. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

38. Din V'Cheshbon 1944, 38, 39, 41.

39. Oral history reminiscences of Yehuda Sela concerning his service in the U.S. Army, 2. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

40. Letter from "Carl" to "Elana", February 15, 1943. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

41. Letter from Dotty Nacht to Mully Rosen, June 1, 1945. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva. Most of the correspondence between the New York office and shomrim in the military was conducted by Dotty Nacht and Elana Margolis.

42. "Davy White Meets Chaike," Youth and Nation, October 1945, 1, 13.

43. Letter from "Yehoshua" to "Elana and HR", January 21, 1943. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva. A more humorous incident involved the Hanhaga Rashit with the U.S. government Office of Censorship. In early 1943, the movement had been planning to publish a book by Kibbutz Artzi leader Meir Yaari, At the Crossroads of a New Era. Yaari was planning to write a new foreword, taking into account the recent revelations concerning the mass murder of European Jewry, and sent a telegram to New York asking them to hold off publication: POSTPONE WRITING BOOK UNTIL ARRIVAL OF FOREWORD FROM YAARI ABOUT DIASPORA OWING SITUATION AND NEWS FROM NAZI.

This telegram bears a "pass" stamp from the Office of Censorship, but the following day one of the censors had second thoughts:

Mr. Hashomer Hatzair
305 Broadway
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Hatzair:

It has come to our attention that you have recently received the following message from Meir Yaari, Affula, Palestine:
[text of telegram]

Will you please be so kind as to furnish this office with the complete explanation of the text of this message.

Kindly direct your reply to the attention of the Service Division.
Very truly yours,
S.W. Hubbel

Elana Margolis, a member of the Mazkirut, hastened to explain:

"Mr. Yaari asks us in the cable message to postpone publication of the book until we receive a foreword which he is writing, which will discuss the situation of the Jews throughout the world, including these more recent announcements of Nazi plans of Jewish extermination."

Nothing further was heard from the censors concerning this matter.

44. The leaflet is found in the Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

45. "Declaration of Hashomer Hatzair" to the Biltmore Conference. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

46. Din V'Cheshbon 1944, 2.

47. Ibid., 9 - 12.

48. Furrows (Habonim magazine), May 1944, 2.

CHAPTER FIVE
ALIYA, COLD WAR, AND DECLINE

I. Facing New Challenges

The period between 1945 and 1953 was one of serious challenges to the continued existence of Hashomer Hatzair. Several factor combined to impede the movement's growth and made it increasingly difficult for it to function, despite the fact that the American Jewish community was becoming increasingly "Zionized." Indeed, by the mid-1950s the movement, though still extant, was barely functioning. Conventions were no longer held and movement publications were not issued.

A recurring motif throughout much of this period was the sudden and massive aliya of the entire leadership stratum of Hashomer Hatzair. These aliyot, as we shall see, were caused by several reasons, but all had the effect of severely impeding smooth functioning of the movement. Another problem faced by Hashomer Hatzair was the atmosphere of McCarthyism and the Red Scare in the United States, which went so far as to cause FBI surveillance and infiltration of the youth movement and its adult affiliates.

By 1946, when the North American movement held its first post-war Ve'ida, signs of Hashomer Hatzair's decline were already present. As older shomrim went on aliya, legally or otherwise, there were few madrichim left behind to take their place; and in many cases, some of the small number still available were called to New York in order to staff the main office of the movement. The result in some cases was outright

closure of the kinim; in others, consolidation. The two Chicago kinim merged, and the ten New York-area kinim of 1937 shrank to four by 1946.[1] Meanwhile, between the end of the war and November 1946, exactly 100 shomrim from North America made aliya.[2]

Taking cognizance of the numerical situation, the Ve'ida formally "recognize[d] the basic inadequacy in the tnua (movement)"[3] but at the same time it posited that the coming years would offer renewed opportunities for the movement's growth:

> The threat of economic depression and political reaction and the inability to offer the secure life which youth fought for in the war will characterize the coming years. We may safely expect that these changes will bring forth from the vanguard of American Jewish youth the same revolt and idealism which was the main attribute of the European youth movements during the last decades.
>
> This period will also underline the particular weakness of the American Jewish position.
>
> In this atmosphere Hashomer Hatzair can grow into a strong youth movement encompassing large numbers of the best of American Jewish youth.[4]

Since it was U.S. entry into World War II that really brought the American economy out of the depression, many socialists assumed, as did Hashomer Hatzair in the above statement, that the end of the war would bring a return to the scarcity and depression of the 1930s. In fact, the opposite of almost everything predicted by the 1946 Ve'ida occurred. The U.S. economy grew more and more prosperous; college education grew ever more common; and, with increasing suburbanization and the rise of Jewish acceptance epitomized

by the "Protestant - Catholic - Jew" phenomenon, the "weakness" of the American Jewish position became less and less apparent. Thus, the increased effort at hitrachavut (expansion) called for by the Ve'ida[5] would not meet much success.

At the same time as the youth movement continued to shrink, steps were taken toward the formation of an adult organization or political party which, while not participating in American elections, would compete in partisan elections to the World Zionist Congress as an ally of the Palestinian Hashomer Hatzair Worker's Party. The 1946 Ve'ida hailed the creation of the Palestinian party, which had taken place earlier in the year, and called on the Kibbutz Artzi to send shlichim here for the purpose of creating an American equivalent. Until the arrival of those shlichim, older shomrim and friends of the movement were to begin laying the groundwork.[6]

A degree of reticence was noticeable, however, in the call for establishment of a party. Hashomer Hatzair had always prided itself on its independence and freedom from adult control, and would often chide other youth movements for their dependence. Furthermore, there may have been a fear that with the establishment of a party, the role of the youth movement would be changed from producing chalutzim to producing Diaspora cadres and members of the adult group. Thus the Ve'ida insisted that the party to be established "must in no way interfere with the political and structural nature of the youth movement."[7]

The call to organize an American party was soon met. Various groups of Hashomer Hatzair adult supporters had been meeting on an ad hoc basis in various locations for some time; among these were the Vaad Lemaan Hashomer in Los Angeles, mentioned in Chapter 4, and a group of young adults in New York City. In June 1947, the New York body held an organizing conference and formed the "Progressive Zionist Group - Hashomer Hatzair". This was seen as a temporary measure, and the conference passed a resolution proclaiming its desire to contact similar groups "in order to create an American Hashomer Hatzair Party affiliated with the World Union of Hashomer Hatzair Parties."[8]

The New York group seems to have quickly changed its name from Progressive Zionist Group to Progressive Zionist League. A group by that name was issuing press releases from the Hashomer Hatzair office by August of 1947.[9]

The national party was established sometime later, in March, 1948, adopting the New York group's name: Progressive Zionist League - Hashomer Hatzair. Chapters existed at the time of the founding conference in New York, Rochester, Toronto and Montreal; there was also a local group in Los Angeles but it had not ratified the decision to join the PZL.[10]

The founding conference expressed support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine upon termination of the British mandate; at the same time, it looked forward to the ultimate solution of the Palestine problem through the creation of "a bi-national socialist society in a reunited Pales-

tine."[11] Among other resolutions were encouragement of PZL members in making aliya through the Hechalutz and through agencies of the Histadrut[12] and a call to "join in the struggle against reaction and fascism in the U.S. and on the international scene."[13]

The Progressive Zionist League - Hashomer Hatzair soon took its place in the Zionist and Jewish organizational world as the Zionist membership organization representing the Hashomer Hatzair viewpoint. Shortly after its establishment, the Palestinian Hashomer Hatzair party merged with another Marxist Zionist group, Achdut Ha'avodah, to form Mapam, the United Workers Party.[14] The World Union of Hashomer Hatzair Parties was replaced by the World Union of Mapam. However, in the United States the merger was never effectuated because Achdut Ha'avodah supporters preferred to remain in the large Labor Zionist organization, Poale Zion.[15] Thus, the adult organization, though affiliated with the World Union of Mapam, continued to use only the Hashomer Hatzair name in its title.

Although the Los Angeles group was invited to join PZL - HH, it did not do so; it seems to have seen its function as fund raising and philanthropy rather than political involvement.[16] It adopted the name Americans for Progressive Israel. Eventually both API and PZL - HH became nationwide organizations supporting the overall Hashomer Hatzair movement and the Kibbutz Artzi. PZL - HH members paid the shekel and were members of the World Zionist Organization, while API members

did not necessarily define themselves as political Zionists.

Starting in May 1948, Hashomer Hatzair made a rare foray into domestic American politics. The Hanhaga Rashit decided to engage in "critical support" for the third party movement of Henry Wallace, who had preceded Harry Truman as Roosevelt's vice president. Hashomer Hatzair was not enthusiastic about Wallace per se, but viewed his movement as the only one capable of keeping the United States out of war with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. In the opinion of Hashomer Hatzair, Wallace was not stridently anti-Soviet as were most other candidates. The movement believed that the Communist Party comstituted the backbone of the Wallace campaign, and as Hashomer Hatzair was largely pro-Communist, this was an added inducement to back Wallace.[17]

At the same time as support for Wallace was indicated, fear was expressed lest the youth movement become overly involved in American politics and lose sight of the fact that it was, after all, a Palestine-oriented movement.[18] Thus, although the PZL - HH did publicly endorse Wallace, the youth movement refrained from doing so. It did, however, educate its own members about the benefits of the Wallace campaign.[19]

II. Aliya Chofshit, Medina Ivrit!

While adult supporters were busy organizing a Hashomer Hatzair political party, shomrim themselves were active in helping illegal immigrants seek entrance to Palestine despite the British White Paper restrictions. Shomrim and members of

other Zionist youth movements, particularly those with naval experience, were sought to man boats for what came to be known as Aliyah Bet. The purpose of these sailings was not merely, or even always necessarily, to bring a few hundred or thousand Holocaust survivors into Eretz Yisrael. In cases where the ships were caught and entrance to Palestine denied, it was hoped to embarrass the British and shame them into ending the White Paper and opening the gates to large-scale Jewish immigration. The world, it was felt, would not long stand for scenes of Holocaust survivors being herded by the British into detention camps or shipped back to the European sites of their suffering.

One of the more famous exploits of the Aliya Bet, later memorialized albeit inaccurately in a novel and a motion picture, was the voyage of the President Warfield in 1947. This surplus American ship, which was originally a Chesapeake Bay steamer and served as a troop carrier in World War II, was refurbished in Baltimore over a period of several months by a crew including many shomrim. The first time the crew tried to sail the ship it nearly sank, but after further repairs it was deemed sea-worthy.[20] Re-named Exodus 1947, the ship set sail for Europe to pick up its load of passengers. Although the ship was commanded by the Haganah/Jewish Agency and not by Hashomer Hatzair itself, nevertheless the youth movement and the PZL were active in publicizing the role played by shomrim in the events to follow. The heroism many shomrim displayed in this episode became extremely important in the movement's self-understanding of the contributions it

made to the nascent State of Israel, and in depicting the bravery of shomrim and their cool-headed acceptance of duty.

About 4500 displaced persons were crammed into the ship at the French port of Marseilles. Among the passengers were 1000 children; there were also about 800 shomrim, veterans of the European movement who had survived the war.[21] The vast majority of the passengers, however, were described by one of the crew as "animals" due to the effects of their war-time experiences:

> I say that the people are animals and a liability to Palestine, but they must be taught once again to live like men and their self-respect must be restored to them. They survived because of their animal intelligence and ingenuity but their fight for individual existence is over and they must now be re-created.[22]

As the ship neared the coast of Palestine, it was tracked by the British. The ship was warned not to enter Palestinian coastal waters, but kept sailing. Well before the ship even crossed over the coastal water line, it was attacked and boarded by the British. Passengers and crew, including the Americans, were imprisoned and then transported on prison ships back to France. One of the Hashomer Hatzair crew members, a medic, described the "battle":

> We found ourselves 40 odd miles from the Palestine coast. We were surrounded by six destroyers (one of which, ironically enough was H.M.S. Charity) and the cruiser Ajax. We were told that we would be arrested if we entered Palestine waters "illegally." Night fell . . . At 3:30 a.m. the first destroyer rammed into our port side without warning. We were 15 miles outside Palestine coastal waters and the destroyer had attacked with none of her navigation lights on (international

violation on two counts). Our decks were crowded with women and children as well as men. The British immediately hurled smoke and tear gas bombs. This was followed by the boarding of what appeared to be masked men from Mars -- soldiers and sailors with heavy white helmets, gas masks, lead, weighted sticks, arm protectors, revolvers and tommy guns. Against 8 warships with armed men the Jews fought back with tin cans and sacks-full of raw potatoes . . . an even battle . . .

I remember running along a deck with a two day old baby in my arms (one of the two born on the ship) while several "limeys" started throwing some bombs at me. I looked up and for the first time saw the "Mogen David" flying from the aft mast, while the smoke billowed around it along with noise and confusion. The steam whistle from the ship let out a long wail like some stricken animal.

All morning long the wounded and injured were brought in. Total inventory of those injured, etc. included one fourteen year old boy dead with two bullet holes through his head. He kept gurgling blood until he died; eight people with bullet wounds including a number of teen-agers; several people unconscious from blows on the head (one of whom, an American crew-man, died later in Haifa); and a number with opened heads. Of those shot one man was an American with a bullet through his mouth. The British had taken command finally by driving a number of people for cover with the use of Sten guns.

It was a very fair fight. Potatoes against guns. Another victory for the gallant heroes of Dunkirk. The victors stood without remorse or humility.

I saw Haifa for four hours before being transferred to the prison ship "Ocean Vigor." The details are unnecessary. It bore all of the trade-marks ofa prisoner-of-war camp or worse.23

When the prison ships returned the displaced persons to Europe, most of the passengers, at the advice of the Exodus crew members, refused to disembark. As the American shomrim lived with their passengers in the cramped prison ships off

the coast of France, their previous harsh view of the survivors turned to one of respect:

> Standing that afternoon in the almost airtight hold packed with men, women and children, watching them as they were told the news [that they were to be returned to France] and listening to the tremendous Hatikva with which they responded, I was, for the first time in many years, reduced to uncontrollable sobs. Those who are leading the masses out of Europe generally speak in terms of the utmost contempt for the same masses who are truly enough selfish, grasping, etc. But they are as glorious as any band of pioneers in history. Shorn of every vestige of human dignity by the Nazis and now even by the British, they have learned how to live in the jungle and to "look out for the wildlife." But they are animals with a dream -- a dream of coming to a place where they can have real homes again . . .
>
> all they want to do is to live like human beings. And then we told them that the whole trip was to be made over again, that they were being sent back, and that even though the French would offer them refuge and citizenship, they must refuse and remain in their cages, with the barbed wire, the armed guards and the constant humiliation in spite of everything. When they sang that Hatikva, it wasn't a song of excited Zionists in New York, but the tragic response of those who were living out the pathos of the Zionist epic with their bodies and the sick bodies of their pregnant wives and sick children. A dozen times I've fought against myself and wondered whether we had the right to make politics with the bodies of our people. . .
>
> There are a large number of Shomrim on board, both Kibbutzim and Batei Noar (Youth Aliyah-organized groups of teenagers too young to form their own garin, and destined to be absorbed by an older kibbutz). The most wonderful is a large group of Hungarian kids who came out of Hungary together, and carry on sichot and their ken life even on the ship. More than ever before, I believe that we are a wonderful movement.24

The French government refused to disembark the Jewish

passengers against their will. Eventually, the prison ships were brought to Hamburg, Germany, in the British occupation zone and the passengers were forcibly disembarked and placed in British internment camps. This event had the hoped-for effect on world opinion.

Participation in the illegal immigration struggle was not the only way in which shomrim helped the yet-to-be-born Jewish state. Female members of Hashomer Hatzair traveled to Mexico in order to smuggle out gold which would be used to purchase weapons from Czechoslovakia.[25] Shomrim were also active in the effort to procure and ship weapons from this country, in violation of the Neutrality Act and the embargo that the United States had placed on arms shipments to the Middle East. Although during this epoch members of Habonim were caught by FBI agents crating explosives at their Cream Ridge, N.J. hachshara, the FBI was unable to turn up conclusive evidence implicating Hashomer Hatzair in the matter.[26]

During the months leading up to the end of the British Mandate, the American movement was stunned by the deaths of a number of its chalutzim in the as-yet unofficial war against the Arabs. Also among those killed was Moshe Furmansky, the shaliach who had spent two terms of shlichut, including the entire duration of the second World War, in America. The movement published a memorial book containing tributes to Furmansky; the respect he had enjoyed from many sectors of American Jewry can be seen from the fact that among the contributors was a leading Conservative rabbi and Reconstructionist thinker, Ira Eisenstein.[27]

On the Palestinian scene, the second American kibbutz at Kfar Menachem, whose earliest members had settled on its site by 1939, was consolidated and permanently settled by 1947. Hatzor was settled by members of Kibbutz Aliya Gimel starting immediately after the war, while members of Kibbutz Aliya Daled were undergoing hachshara at Ein HaShofet. This group became the first kibbutz established after the creation of the State of Israel, settling Ein Dor on May 17, 1948.[28]

III. Aliya and Organizational Difficulties

During the period between the end of the World War II and the creation of the State of Israel, aliya of shomrim continued. Some of it was legal but most was not, and due to that fact there are few records concerning the manner of aliya or exact numbers. However, from the number of members reported by the various kibbutzei aliya of the movement, it can be assumed that over 200 American shomrim made aliya during this period.

This rapid aliya served to a certain extent to normalize the situation in the movement; the closing of aliya during World War II, along with military service in that effort, had created a situation where many of the leaders of the "youth movement" were people in their late 20s or early 30s. By early 1948 this backlog had been all but eliminated, and due to the concommitant opening of hachshara slots at Hightstown the March 1948 Moatza Rashit (an intermediate body between the occasional Ve'ida and the permanent Hanhaga or Mazkirut)

was able to look forward to a situation whereby "chaverim going on hachshara or aliya should be of a younger age" in the near future and that "in order to insure adequate preparation for our chaverim, hachshara [would] not be less than a year."[29]

However, the normalized situation that the Moetza looked forward to was of short duration. On May 15, 1948, the British Mandate expired and the State of Israel came into being. Although Hashomer Hatzair had long opposed the idea of a Jewish state, favoring instead a bi-national solution, creation of the State of Israel and the subsequent attack on that state by six Arab armies led to a closing of the Zionist ranks. Hashomer Hatzair threw itself wholeheartedly into the effort to keep the young state alive.

One of the earliest decisions taken after the creation of the State was to cause a serious drain on the leadership of the new movement and turn the hopes of the Moetza of a few months earlier on their head. Due to the need for manpower, military and civilian, created in Israel by the War of Independence, the commitment to a full year's hachshara had to be reversed. At the beginning of June it was decided that all members of Kibbutz Aliya Heh would either be in Israel or on their way by October 1.[30] This meant an interruption of hachshara for members of that kibbutz aliya. Responsibility for the hachshara farm and many key leadership roles in the youth movement now fell on members of Kibbutz Aliya Vav, who were mostly in their late teens. Thus, in the period of a few

months the leadership situation of the movement was completely reversed. Previously, leadership had been exercised by a group that was far older than what would be the norm for a group like Hashomer Hatzair; suddenly, it was being exercised by a group that was younger than the norm and, due to the prior leadership backlog, inexperienced as well.

It was also at this time that Hashomer Hatzair began accepting into the ranks of its kibbutzei aliya young people in their late teens or early twenties who had not grown up in the movement but who had in some way arrived at the decision that they sought to become chalutzim. The Hanhaga Rashit decided to send potential chalutzim of this type directly to hachshara, and there combine the normal program of learning agriculture and collective living with a modicum of "Socialist-Zionist education."[31] No records are available indicating how many people eventually joined Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim in Israel as a result of this program. However, several former Americans who have been interviewed for the oral history project of the Hashomer Hatzair archives either mention that they are products of this program or recall other members of their kibbutz who were.

In early 1949, another aliya "speed-up" became necessary, and this time it was Kibbutz Aliya Vav which had to shorten its term of hachshara and leadership of the youth movement. Upon the heels of the War of Independence, the Israeli government felt it was imperative to create as many new settlements as possible. Kibbutz Aliya Heh, which as stated above was then a hachshara unit at Ein HaShofet, set

up its own kibbutz at Sasa, an abandoned Arab village in the Upper Galilee near the Lebanese border. The government was desirous that Kibbutz Vav, which already had a nucleus of 40 or 50 members in Israel, also establish its settlement as soon as possible. In order to facilitate settlement of such a small group, it might become necessary to unify it with another group. This in itself would not be a problem; most of the previous Kibbutzei Aliya had unified with Hashomer Hatzair groups from other countries in establishing their permanent settlements. In this case, however, it might mean a splitting of the American Kibbutz Aliya, with those now in Israel helping to form one settlement, while those arriving later would belong to a different settlement. In order to eliminate this threat, as well as to enable the movement to do its share in meeting the manpower shortage in Israel, it was decided to speed up the aliyah of Kibbutz Vav and shorten the length of hachshara given its members.[32]

During Passover of 1949 Hashomer Hatzair held its Twelfth Ve'ida. This convention dealt to a large extent with ideological matters, including the relationship of the American youth movement to the PZL - HH and that of Hashomer Hatzair as a whole to Mapam. The continued adherence of Hashomer Hatzair to the principle of "collectiviut rayonit" (ideological collectivism) was stressed:

> The Kibbutz Artzi, as a collective organization, is also a political movement which expresses the political and ideological beliefs of its chaverim. Within a party, or outside of a party, the collectiviut rayonit of Hashomer Hatzair always exists and functions. [Although

> there are problems in clarifying the relationship of the Kibbutz Artzi to the now relatively diverse Mapam Party they] are not of sufficient importance to nullify or to disregard the fundamental and basic principles of Hashomer Hatzair: the collectiviut rayonit.33

This was the last Ve'ida the movement would hold until 1963. The reasons for this, so clearly symptomatic of the decline of the movement as a whole, will be discussed below.

With the mass aliya of Kibbutz Vav now underway, leaders of Hashomer Hatzair recognized that the movement was in a difficult condition. However, now that the storm of sudden aliyot had, it seemed, been weathered, it was time to once again go about organizing a more soundly structured movement. The Moetza Rashit evaluated the situation:

> We may consider this period that we are undergoing today the most trying period in our existence. And when, if not under difficult situations, is the worth of a movement proved and confirmed?
>
> We may face even more difficult situations in the future and we will have to learn how to meet them. Large numbers of our madrichim are going on aliya, and this situation seems to perpetuate itself. Therefore, we must undergo a process of readjustment to the new conditions which confront us today. . . .
>
> Our education schedule must be readjusted to a quicker rate of development. I purposely say quicker because it does not mean that would the present situation not have precipitated this conflict, we would not be moving the same way; towards earlier aliya, earlier hadracha; happier and more fully developed people in the fire of self-realization.
>
> The problem is that what may have taken perhaps years to achieve had to be done overnight . . . 34

At the same time that Hashomer Hatzair was coming to grips with the aftermath of the previous half-decade's

crises, it developed a realization that the European youth movement experience was not directly translatable to post-war American realities. Although in fact the classic Borochovian analysis of the "inverted pyramid" nature of the Jewish economic structure was "more acute in America . . . than in other countries in the Galut", the lack of overt antisemitism in American society served to hide this fact:

> The inner contradictions of Jewish existence in America do not affect directly the life of the Jewish Community to the extent of creating a feeling of insecurity, or a reaction against the abnormality. The Jew in America is psychologically secure in his middle class position . . . to the extent of preventing the action of the community towards forming a movement or identifying themselves with an ideology.[35]

Thus, success in America would be more difficult to achieve than it had been in Europe, with its large and relatively class-conscious Jewish proletariat. Still, the movement leadership felt success would be possible with sufficient preparation and effort on the part of shomrim.[36]

Typically, there is no record of what the actual membership of Hashomer Hatzair was during the late 1940s or early 1950s. However, a 1952 report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that there were a thousand or fewer members, while Hashomer Hatzair claimed two thousand for outside consumption.[37]

IV. Korea and Red Scare

As we have seen, by the late 1940s Hashomer Hatzair leaders were aware that sustaining their movement in America

would be an uphill struggle. Two factors were soon to combine and make conditions even more difficult than anticipated. The "Cold War" between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the attendant hysteria generally known as "McCarthyism" helped make the still pro-Russian Hashomer Hatzair anathema to most of the Jewish community, despite the movement's record of concrete achievements.[38] It also became difficult if not impossible to send new shlichim to the U.S. Because of Mapam's pro-Soviet stand, U.S. entrance visas were routinely denied to its members, including of course prospective shlichim from the Kibbutz Artzi.[39]

In addition, the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950 caused, once again, the problem of massive and unplanned-for aliya. Shomrim of draft age were faced with the choice of conscription into the U.S. army or immediate aliya; in either case, they would be lost to the educational work. The movement was thrown into a quandary. It did not want to lose shomrim to a war with which, after all, it had little sympathy. On the other hand, it would be risky to go on record as advising its adherents to violate the U.S. Selective Service Act.

Reconstructing the history of the movement from about 1950 on is difficult, because few documents from this period are extant. Accounts of debates and decisions were, it seems, not written down; or if they were, they were subsequently destroyed in fear that the FBI might eventually get hold of them. At any rate, a substantial gap exists in the archives

of the movement. Recently, with the release of FBI files under the Freedom of Information Act, some light can be shed on the period.

Although there is no written record of an official movement decision on participation of shomrim in the Korean War, it is clear that many shomrim of Kibbutz Aliya Zion chose to evade their American military obligations and go earlier than planned to Israel. It was this draft evasion, so it seems, that first prompted the FBI investigation of Hashomer Hatzair,[40] which began in earnest around 1950. At the same time, the PZL - HH was being investigated for possible violations of the Registration Act (requiring registration of foreign agents) as well as for "subversive activities" due to its alleged "foreign control." By belonging to international political organizations, such as the World Union of Mapam, PZL - HH may have been in technical violation of American law as it then stood. The FBI agent recommending prosecution referred to the PZL - HH as "a seditious conspiracy."[41] Eventually the investigation was broadened beyond the question of draft evasion and the question of foreign control into a thorough inquiry into the history, membership, and ideology of the organization. In Los Angeles, API was also being investigated as a possible Communist front organization because, the FBI believed that "of its known local officers, directors, speakers, or entertainers, twenty-eight are known to be Communist Party members or spouses of known Communist Party members."[42] The files on API in Los Angeles are particularly thorough, being complete reports of almost every

API activity held in Los Angeles between 1948 and 1953, including attendance figures.[43]

The FBI cites several instances of similarity between API views and those of the Communists. It notes, for example, that one of the speakers at an API meeting shortly after creation of the state of Israel criticised Great Britain and U.N. mediator Ralph Bunche, an American.[44] Also, both API and the Communist Party, the FBI noted, advocated separation of religion and the state in Israel, and opposed the Korean War.[45] However, it was unable to substantiate allegations that military training was being provided at Camp Shomria, the Hashomer Hatzair-run summer camp.[46] The FBI file also contains a lengthy article from the American Communist publication Jewish Life which was critical of Hashomer Hatzair and Mapam and urged "progressives" not to support or join API or the PZL - HH.[47] Although surveillance would be continued just in case, the FBI concluded by 1953 that API's activity "appears to be limited to meetings addressed by speakers on Israel."[48] This seems to have ended the matter as far as API itself was concerned, but there were investigations of other movement branches as well.

Investigation of the youth movement as such was conducted mainly by the Newark FBI field office, apparently because the hachshara farm at Hightstown, N.J. was in its jurisdiction. Included in the Newark file are interviews with a number of people who had either visited the Hightstown farm or had had contact with its residents for one reason or

another -- local merchants and police officials, for example. Views differ on whether or not the residents of the farm were "communistically inclined" or not. Most of those who had only brief contact were impressed by the idealism of the farm residents and stated that they showed no interest in communism. Those who remained for a longer period of time and attended study sessions often reported that the residents seemed to follow the Communist Party line. Although no proof of communist affiliation could be established, it was recommended that "consideration might be given to this farm as a possible Communist Party hide-out"[49] due to its relatively remote location and the strong construction of its buildings.

Investigation was also made as to whether or not Hashomer Hatzair actually advised its members to evade their U.S. military obligations. One informant stated that he and two other Hashomer Hatzair members had been advised by the movement to go to Israel rather than serve in the U.S. military. The three followed this advice, but became disillusioned with kibbutz life and came back to the U.S. The members of the group, he said, were aware that they would have to serve in the Israeli military.[50]

This allegation, however, was denied by Avraham Schenker when he was the subject of a surprise FBI interview on September 29, 1953. Schenker, who had been mazkir of the youth movement in the late 1930s, was now the head of the PZL - HH as well as of Hashomer Hatzair Incorporated, the legal owner of the youth movement's property. He stated that it was "the policy of the organization very definitely to point out to

these young men (prospective olim) their obligations under the Selective Service Act."[51] Whether or not this was in fact the case, the movement was not prosecuted for violations of the Selective Service Act.

Similar to the Los Angeles file on API, the Newark file documents a number of similarities between Hashomer Hatzair and communist positions; it also documents several areas of disagreement, particularly on the question of Jewish emigration to Israel and over the nature of Zionism. The overall investigation of Hashomer Hatzair was brought to a close on November 25, 1953, with the conclusion that no Communist Party control could be established and that Hashomer Hatzair was indeed what it claimed to be, a socialist-Zionist organization.[52] The FBI files do contain some entries dated later than 1953. However, they deal for the most part with inquiries by prospective members and unsolicited tips about Hashomer Hatzair.

Hashomer Hatzair was not, it seems, the only Zionist youth movement investigated by the FBI. Many of the Hashomer Hatzair files contain cross-references to Habonim, and occasionally to Hashomer Hadati as well, since all three movements were united in Hechalutz and all three ran hachsarot called "Hechalutz Farm." Since most information in FBI files about groups or individuals other than the subject organization is blacked out, however, it is not possible from the Hashomer Hatzair files to determine anything about FBI surveillance or infiltration of other movements.

V. Le'an?

By 1953, then, we see that the movement had been substantially weakened. From its 1936 high of almost three thousand, the ranks of Hashomer Hatzair had declined to no more than a thousand and perhaps much lower than that. The weakness of the movement was such that no further Ve'ida would be held until 1963, although in theory one was supposed to be held every two years. The movement was not dead; the Hightstown hachshara continued to function with a handful of members every year and a few kinim, particularly those in New York, Los Angeles, Montreal and Toronto continued to function. Aliya continued as well, although not in anything like the numbers just before and just after the creation of the State of Israel. It is clear, however, that from the 1950s onward Hashomer Hatzair was just a shadow of its former self.

Although never a very large movement, Hashomer Hatzair was once the largest and most significant of the chalutzic Zionist youth movements, with an influence beyond its numbers. By the 1950s, it had shrunk both absolutely and in comparison to other movements, in size and in influence. Why?

Aharon Antonovsky, a former member of Kibbutz Aliya Heh (Sasa) and today a professor at Ben Gurion University, attributes the decline to the Stalinism of the Kibbutz Artzi in the late 1940s and early 1950s. According to Antonovsky, the increasing politicization of the movement robbed it of its youthful enthusiasm and its distinctive character. Previously, Antonovsky said, there had been a political ideology and

ideals but not political interests *per se*; now, the movement was compromised:

> [now it was] a defined policy to achieve strength, it didn't matter for what. It is always an illusion, that one can compromise in all sorts of matters; after you achieve power, *then* you can return to values.[53]

Antonovsky represents what might be termed the "purist stream" in graduates of Hashomer Hatzair. Active in the Israeli peace movement (he is a member of the editorial council of the monthly *New Outlook*), Antonovsky is critical of Mapam for what he alleges is its excessive willingness to compromise matters of principle. He sees this tendency as a direct outgrowth of the Stalinism of the 1940s.[54] According to Antonovsky, the Kibbutz Artzi "destroyed the movement."[55]

Avraham Schenker, who, being Mapam's member of the Zionist Executive is clearly less critical, attributes Hashomer Hatzair's decline to a number of factors. Among them, he cites the "denominationalism" of contemporary Jewish education in America. While he was a youngster, Schenker recalls, education was communally controlled; this made it easier for Hashomer Hatzair to organize, since many of its members were outstanding Hebrew teachers. In addition, the communal schools did not have the interest the synagogues did and do in directing their students towards one of the denominational youth groups (National Federation of Temple Youth, United Synagogue Youth, National Council of Synagogue Youth) rather than to an independent movement like Hashomer Hatzair or, for that matter, Habonim and Young Judea. Schenker also laments

the failure of Hashomer Hatzair to establish Progressive Zionist day schools during the years when such an undertaking would have been possible.[56]

Schenker is undoubtedly right when he attributes at least part of Hashomer Hatzair's decline to the denominational trend in Jewish education. Another factor linked to this is the increasing suburbanization of American Jewish life. Suburban Jews have a markedly higher degree of synagogue affiliation than urban Jews, and today's "full service synagogue," complete with religious school and youth group, is largely a suburban phenomenon. The move away from the city also meant that the environment which fostered Hashomer Hatzair's strength was dead. The intensity of ken life was made possible by the fact that shomrim could walk to the ken after school and spend several hours a day there. In the suburbs, this was of course not possible; and city kinim, too, suffered as crime made it unsafe for children to go out or stay out at night.

In addition, one has to realize that the basic premises of Hashomer Hatzair are not in keeping with most of the accepted norms of American Jewish life. The United States is the only developed country without a mass socialist movement or labor party; socialism is at best considered eccentric and at worst dangerous and subversive. American Zionism has never really placed much emphasis on aliya. The Brandeis tradition for the most part saw Zionism as charitable work, important to be sure, but not leading to aliya. The strict emphasis on aliya was very much against the grain of American Zionism.

Other Zionist youth movements that did not demand aliya seem to have been more successful in gaining and retaining members. Young Judea was the only indigenous American movement. It was also the only one with paid staff, a movement that was not particularly socialist though pro-kibbutz, and the movement which placed the weakest emphasis on aliya. Perhaps not surprisingly, it always had more members than the other Zionist youth movements combined.[57]

Finally there is the influence of the series of mass aliyot. These have been fully discussed above; suffice it to say that they seem to have inflicted structural damage from which the movement never recovered.

After 1953, Hashomer Hatzair experienced some ups and downs which will be discussed in the next section. A noticeable spurt in membership took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the period of the counterculture and renewed Jewish pride after the Six Day War.

VI. From 1953 to 1985.

In the various kibbutzim of the Kibbutz Artzi, and in other places in Israel, one will find several dozen graduates of the North American Hashomer Hatzair movement. An equal or greater number can be found in the United States who passed through the movement and remember it with varying degrees of nostalgia. These people might protest against the assertion that Hashomer Hatzair all but died in America by the mid-1950s. But viewing the movement objectively, one cannot but

agree with the conclusion of a former shaliach to the United States, interviewed for an evaluation of the movement by the Kibbutz Artzi publication Daf Yarok, that "the movement in North America began slowly dying as far back as the Second World War."[58]

By the mid-1950s, membership in Hashomer Hatzair was down drastically from its pre-war stage, and would never grow beyond 500.[59] The kinim still functioning after the mass aliya of the Korean War era consisted mostly of the chanichim of those who had participated in that aliya. Due to the Red Scare, recruiting for the movement became difficult. Instead of recruiting openly through Hebrew schools, children coming from known progressive backgrounds were approached in a secretive manner.[60] As noted above, most of the organs of the movement had ceased functioning. There were no ve'idot, and Youth and Nation ceased publication around 1954.[61]

The Canadian sector of the movement was not as seriously affected by the McCarthy atmosphere and remained comparatively much stronger. Some indication of this can be seen in the moshava attendance figures from 1957. In that summer, three moshavot were held in the United States, attended by 225 shomrim. In Canada, with a Jewish community a tiny fraction the size of that in the U.S., the two moshavot were attended by 148 shomrim.[62]

By 1957, the Red Scare had greatly subsided, and the movement felt confident enough to resume open recruiting.[63] This move seems to have shown positive results. In 1959, 25 American and Canadian shomrim made aliya -- more than from

all other Zionist youth movements combined.[64]

Another indication of the upward swing in membership is the fact that in 1963 a Ve'ida was held, the first since 1949. By this time, Hashomer Hatzair was the only movement in North America still maintaining a hachshara farm; other movements had replaced hachshara in America with a one-year seminar on a kibbutz in Israel. Hashomer Hatzair reaffirmed its desire to maintain its hachshara, feeling that this was more realistic training (because the trainees were fully responsible for their own sustenance) as well as serving as a positive example for younger shomrim.[65] Hashomer Hatzair affirmed its support for the civil-rights and disarmament movements. Shomrim were encouraged to participate in these struggles. However, they were not to join any political organizations, nor were they to wear any non-Hashomer Hatzair symbols, such as SANE buttons, on their movement chultza (uniform shirt).[66]

In 1966, another ve'ida was held. Aware of the leftist political ferment occurring on many American campuses, the delegates began to look for ways to reach out to the New Left. The ve'ida decided to participate more actively in general left-wing struggles and to publicize more forcefully the movement's stands. It was also felt that the hachshara farm could be used effectively to reach out to New Left groups, as a living example of socialism in America.[67] This ve'ida also, for the first time in the history of the American movement, allowed all shomrim the opportunity to obtain a

college degree prior to aliyah.[68]

These efforts began to show some fruit, in particular after Israel's stunning victory in the June, 1967, Six Day War. In the aftermath of the war, Zionism and Israel developed new popularity in the American Jewish community. Kinim grew; the Montreal ken, historically the largest in the movement, had between 100 and 150 members.[69] In 1968, funds made available by the Jewish Agency made it possible to send shlichim to Chicago and Philadelphia, where kinim had not existed for many years. The Los Angeles ken grew so large that plans, apparently never carried out, were made to launch a second ken. Also in 1968, a group of Jewish university students in the San Francisco-Berkeley area independently arrived at an ideological position similar to that of Hashomer Hatzair and sought to affiliate with the movement in some way.[70]

A similar group was organized in New York in 1969 as the Jewish Liberation Project.[14] This group held its founding meeting at the Hightstown hachshara, and operated for some time out of the API/Hashomer Hatzair office at 150 Fifth Ave. The Jewish Liberation Project became the base of New York's "Radical Zionist" community, and among other things issued a Passover Haggadah that portrayed the Exodus in terms of class struggle. The group seems to have disbanded fairly quickly, although some of its members, including the feminist writer Aviva Cantor, became active in the leadership of API.

In 1970, the Hightstown hachshara was finally closed down. However, the next year the Hashomer Hatzair magazine

Youth and Nation reappeared after a hiatus of more than a dozen years.[71]

The year 1973 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the world movement and the fiftieth of the movement in America. A flurry of activity accompanied the anniversary. A booklet was published, reprinting a dissertation chapter on the origins of Hashomer Hatzair in America. Another booklet detailed the origins and current status of the various kibbutzim in Israel founded or populated by graduates of the American movement. Plans also were laid for publication of a comprehensive history of American Hashomer Hatzair, but this never appeared.[71]

In the decade or so since then, the movement seems once again to have experienced a period of decline. Few of the archival materials from this period have been treated and catalogued at the Hashomer Hatzair archives, and thus for the most part are unavailable to the researcher. The writer is personally acquainted with a number of shomrim from this period, however. Many tell similar stories of chance encounters with the movement. Some were invited by friends to participate in an athletics contest or some similar event, and something in the movement served to draw them to it. Although the movement continued to be tiny numerically, with centers in Queens, N.Y., Los Angeles, and Montreal and Toronto in Canada, the group spirit of the small number of shomrim seems to have been quite high. Aliya still continued in numbers which, though small, seem still to surpass those of

larger movements. The Daf Yarok article mentioned above claims that there were 40 shomer olim in the years between 1980 and 1985, while during those same years there was no aliya at all (at least to kibbutzim) from Habonim.

The picture of the movement in the summer of 1985, according to Daf Yarok, seemed rather dismal. At that time there were twelve Hashomer Hatzair shlichim in the United States, of whom only five had anything even remotely resembling Hashomer Hatzair kinim. The rest occupied their time in various communal activities outside the framework of their formal assignment. The "inventory" printed as a sidebar gives the statistical picture of the movement at that time:

> In the United States as a whole there are 7 kinim, which number all together(!) 180 members from the age of 9 until 22. Among these are 20 bogrim. In one ken, San Francisco, all activity has ceased and the ken is closed. In Canada there are two kinim which have 60 members, among them 6 bogrim.
>
> Some specifics:
>
> New York: 20-30 members, 3 bogrim.
> Los Angeles: 30 members, 2 bogrim.
> Philadelphia: 20-30 members, no bogrim.
>
> On the continent (North America) as a whole there are, according to the report (prepared by the Kibbutz Artzi shlichim) two garinim, which together number 40 bogrim. One is a garin for Kibbutz G'vulot, part of which will make aliya this year and part, it seems, next year. The second is a garin to Kibbutz Adamit, and its aliya date is unclear.74

Shlomo Glazer, shaliach in New York from 1982 to 1984, points out a crucial difference between the first and the second thirty years of the North American movement's existence, above and beyond the question of numbers. During the

days of the "classic" youth movement, until shortly after World War II, the movement was run by bogrim and the shlichim served merely in an advisory capacity. Since then, there were more and more shlichim and fewer and fewer bogrim. The movement was run by shlichim, and ceased to be truly a youth movement. In that sense, Glazer says, Hashomer Hatzair really died years ago. "True," he says, "where there is a shaliach a few members congregate around him, but that's not a youth movement."[75]

Most current and former shlichim agree that there is no future for the youth movement as it presently exists in America. The only reason it has not been closed down, they say, is because the leadership in Israel cannot accept a situation where "the flag of Hashomer Hatzair won't fly" over the world's largest Jewish community. Unfamiliar with the American reality, they insist that the crisis in the American movement is the fault of shlichim who do their job poorly. If the shlichim were better, the Israeli leadership says, the movement would be strong. The shlichim interviewed in the Daf Yarok article insist that this is not the case. They agree that Mapam and Hashomer Hatzair must have a presence in America, but feel that new ways of working, more suited to the American scene, have to be found.

NOTES

1. Din V'Cheshbon of the XI Ve'ida, 1946, 76. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

2. Letter from Meir Jaffe, Mazkir of Hashomer Hatzair, to Mercaz Hechalutz, November 6, 1946. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

3. Din V'Cheshbon of the XI Ve'ida, 74.

4. Ibid., 73.

5. Ibid., 74.

6. Ibid., 70.

7. Ibid., loc. cit.

8. Proceedings of the Progressive Zionist Group, 10. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

9. see Information Bulletin Number Two, Progressive Zionist League, August 14, 1947. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

10. Proceedings of the National Conference, 1948, 24. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

11. Ibid., 26.

12. Ibid., 27.

13. Ibid., 28.

14. see Chapter 1 for a fuller discussion of this issue.

15. Chozer #13, Hamoetza Harashit, Dec. 17, 1947. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

16. Letter from Geraldine Stern, API Newsletter, Spring 1985.

17. Din V'Cheshbon of the Hanhaga Rashit, May 6, 1948, 2. 4. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

18. Ibid., 3.

19. Ibid., 4.

20. Transcript of an interview with Avi Livni, 2. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

21. Letter from "Avi" (presumably Avi Livni) in PZL Information Bulletin #2, August 14, 1947, 11. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

22. Ibid., 10.

23. Ibid., loc. cit.

24. Letter from Shmuel Baer, August 4, 1947, in Chozer #03, September 12, 1947. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

25. Transcript of an interview with Batsheva Livni, 2. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

26. Report of Newark FBI field office, October 16, 1952, 4.

27. David Kusselewitz, ed. Moshe Furmanskyi In Memoriam (New York, 1948), 9.

28. Information on the "American" kibbutzim can be found in a booklet, Fifty Years of Hashomer Hatzair in North America (New York, 1973).

29. Din V'Cheshbon 1948, 10.

30. Chozer #25, June 2, 1948. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

31. Ibid.

32. Chozer #14, Feb. 28, 1949. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

33. Veidah Bulletin III, 1949, 12. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

34. Sicha Moetza Rashit (sic), undated, 1950, 4. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

35. Ibid., 1.

36. Ibid., 2.

37. FBI File 100-30282, June 29, 1951, 11-15.

38. See for example letter from "Aharon" to Meir Jaffe, August 8, 1950, and Sichat Hanhaga Rashit, October 19, 1950. Both in Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

39. Sichat Hanhaga Rashit, October 19, 1950.

40. Memo from "SAC, Newark" to "Director, FBI", July 21, 1952.

41. "SAC, WFO" to "Director, FBI", November 26, 1951.

42. FBI File 100-30282, August 9, 1950, 1.

43. Ibid., 9-10.

44. Ibid., 4.

45. Ibid., 30-31.

46. "SAC, LA" to "Director, FBI", July 20, 1950.

47. FBI File NY 100-36770, 3.

48. FBI File 100-30282, August 9, 1950, 1.

49. "SAC, WFO" to "Director, FBI", June 19, 1952.

50. File NY 100-36770, 3. As is the case with all FBI files obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, identities of the informants are blocked out and it is not possible to determine whether these were legitimate shomrim or FBI "plants."

51. FBI File NY 100-93822, 2.

52. "SAC, NY" to "Director, FBI", November 25, 1953.

53. Transcript of an interview with Aharon Antonovsky, 6. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

54. Ibid., 5-6.

55. Ibid., 5.

56. My interview with Avraham Schenker, January, 1985. Tape deposited in American Jewish Archives.

57. Douglas Frazer, "Sixties Youth, Zionist Youth". Forum, Spring 1982, 28, 33.

58. Daf Yarok, August 27, 1985, 8.

59. Douglas Frazer, "Sixties Youth, Zionist Youth," Forum, Spring 1982, 29.

60. Iggeret Ha-Mazkirut, September 5, 1957, 7. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

61. "Epilogue" to Samuel Grand, The Origins of Hashomer Hatzair in North America (New York, 1973), 36.

62. Iggeret Ha-Mazkirut, September 5, 1957, 1-2.

63. Ibid., 7.

64. Hachlatot of the Moetza Rashit, Pesach, 1960, 2. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

65. Proceedings of the XIII Veida (1963), 23-4. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

66. Ibid., 37.

67. Hachlatot of the XIV Veida (1966), 2. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

68. Ibid., 3.

69. Transcript of an interview with David Hill, 1. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

70. Iggeret La-Shlichim, Feb. 17, 1968. Hashomer Hatzair Archives, Givat Haviva.

71. Frazer, "Sixties Youth", 32.

72. see note 4.

73. Unpublished manuscripts, in varying stages of completion, of this projected history were recently found in the New York office of Hashomer Hatzair. Only the chapter by Yosef Wilfand, listed in the bibliography, was used in the preparation of this thesis.

74. Daf Yarok, August 25, 1985, 16.

75. Ibid., 7.

ASSESSMENT

Attempting to sum up the history of a strongly ideological movement such as Hashomer Hatzair is very difficult. Much depends on the point of view of the person who is making the evaluation, the degree of sympathy that one has to the ideology in question, and in particular the relative importance one places on aliya, on settlement, and on kibbutz.

If one sees aliya as the summum bonum of Zionism, one must evaluate Hashomer Hatzair in a relatively favorable light. Although the creation of more than half a dozen kibbutzim and the aliya of several hundred chalutzim is merely a drop from the vast sea of American Jewry, nevertheless one is faced with the reality that this is far more than any other youth movement operating in America ever accomplished. Add to this the role that shomrim played in illegal aliya, in smuggling weapons and supplies to the nascent state of Israel, in settling the borders and in defending the country, and one has a fairly proud record. This is especially so when one considers that American Zionism has not stressed aliya, and that American society is largely antipathetic to socialism.

Those who do not stress aliya so greatly will be less impressed. Only a tiny fraction of American Jewry passed through Hashomer Hatzair; movements like Young Judea or the denominational youth groups have certainly done more toward building the Jewish identity of American Jewish youth, few of whom are likely to make aliya. Indeed, the aliya exclusivity

has often had a negative effect in that ex-shomrim who did not make aliya often became embittered and abandoned Zionism and Jewish identity entirely. In numerical terms, and in terms of concrete achievements here in America, Hashomer Hatzair has often been a sideshow; Urofsky's standard book on American Zionism, American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust, does not contain a single reference to Hashomer Hatzair.

Perhaps the most important contribution that Hashomer Hatzair has made is, ironically, the key to its small size and relative lack of influence. Hashomer Hatzair, in its refusal to abandon its ideology and accept the widespread American Zionist assertion that "America is different" and "America is not Gola" has remained a prod and a challenge to the American Jewish community, a reminder that while American Jews are building Zion largely through their purses, Jewry of most of the world has built Zion with their bodies, their pain, and their faith.

Just as importantly, Hashomer Hatzair and its adult affiliates have continued to assert that Jews and Arabs can and must live together peacefully. In its insistence that Jewish rights need not negate Palestinian rights, Hashomer Hatzair has provided relief from the "moral autism" so widespread in American and world Zionism.

Although Hashomer Hatzair in America has seen many successes in the past, its shlichim today are correct in their negative assessment of the future of the American movement. As long as the Kibbutz Artzi is willing to finance

shlichim, there will always be a handful of youth movement members around them. However, current American Jewish realities are not such as to engender any large-scale rebirth of the movement.

The reasons given in chapter five for the decline of the movement in the 1950s still apply for the most part today. The heavily concentrated Jewish neighborhoods on which the ken system was based by and large do not exist any more. The continued dominance of synagogue-based Jewish education tends to funnel students into the denominational youth groups rather than independent youth movements, although with the growth of independent chavurot and the resurgence of the Jewish day school this may change.

The secularist ideology of Hashomer Hatzair also presents a problem to the continued existence of the movement. Secularist Judaism of the type so familiar in the 1920s or 1930s is all but dead in America. This does not mean that American Jews have returned to religion. People affiliate with synagogues for all sorts of reasons that have nothing whatever to do with religion, but the fact of the matter is that in America the synagogue is almost the only place one goes to for any sort of Jewish identification. As long as Hashomer Hatzair remains "allergic", so to speak, to working with synagogues and rabbis that are close to it from the Zionist and political point of view, growth and recruitment will remain near-impossible tasks. Some way has to be found toward increasing cooperation with the Reform, Reconstruc-

tionist, and possibly the Conservative movements.

The other main focus of Jewish identity in America, the federations, are difficult places for Hashomer Hatzair to find adherents. Besides being very much part of the "America is not galut" mindset, federations are geared toward a "consensus" and establishment point of view. As the divisions in Israeli society grow sharper, Hashomer Hatzair is likely to find itself more and more representing a minority, "dissenting" viewpoint.

The one selling point that Hashomer Hatzair seems to have in its favor is the kibbutz. American Jews are often attracted to the concept of the kibbutz as something uniquely Israeli, a true contribution that the Jewish state has made to the world. Most young Jews visiting Israel spend some time on a kibbutz, regardless of youth movement background or lack thereof. Since the raison d'etre of Hashomer Hatzair is, after all, to bring olim to the Kibbutz Artzi, it seems logical that more effort should be expended towards attracting American youngsters to at least short-term kibbutz visits, and maintaining contact with them once they have returned. This too presents problems in that both the Reform and Conservative movements now sponsor their own kibbutzim affiliated not with the Kibbutz Artzi but with the United Kibbutz Movement. However, the Kibbutz Artzi has recently shown interest in expanding its work with the Reform movement and possibly even creating a Reform kibbutz within the framework of the Kibbutz Artzi.

A youth movement following the suggestions outlined

here would no doubt look radically different from what has historically been known as Hashomer Hatzair, but it could still succeed in producing chalutzic aliya, probably in larger numbers than the current youth movement. In this way, a Kibbutz Artzi and Mapam presence need not be lost in this community numbering about 40% of world Jewry. The other alternative, it seems, is continued spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars from the budget of the Kibbutz Artzi for a movement with fewer members than one suburban temple youth group.

Today it seems that the traditional approach of Hashomer Hatzair is not appropriate to the American scene. Recruitment to an independent youth movement is difficult and the intensive ken life of the classical European youth movement is no longer possible. Instead, Hashomer Hatzair must find new ways of working in the American Jewish community. Kibbutz Artzi shlichim could work and teach in synagogue religious schools and day schools, and perhaps the movement could set up a day school of its own. American visitors to Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim could be introduced to the history and ideology of the movement, and contact could be maintained after the group has left.

Although Hashomer Hatzair's classic youth movement format does not seem appropriate to contemporary American Jewry, its ideology and analysis, on the other hand, may well be. Certainly many of the developments predicted by Hashomer Hatzair in its use of Borochovian analysis have not come to

pass. Just as certainly, however, assimilation and the disappearance of Jewish identity pose a major problem to continued Jewish existence over the course of the next several decades. Perhaps the Hashomer Hatzair assertion that Jewish identity is only possible in the contradiction-free atmosphere of Israel will, in the end, prove correct. In that case, Hashomer Hatzair will have been far more important, and certainly more prescient, than most current evaluations would admit.

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