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THE PALESTINIAN ARABS:
A TEST CASE OF JABOTINSKY'S NATIONALISM

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The following inquiry was prompted by a question in which I had long been interested: How did the early Zionist leaders face the presence of the Arabs in Palestine? As someone who is both interested in and concerned about current Israeli political realities, I was particularly anxious to use this project as an opportunity to study Zionist history in general and the origins of the Palestinian problem in particular. I believed (and still do) that in order to better understand the current situation of the Palestinian people, it would be necessary to return to the origins of the problem and focus on early Zionist settlement in the land in the 20th century. I was interested in a variety of issues: How did the Zionist leaders react to Arab nationalism? How did they understand it? Did the Zionists ignore the presence of the Arabs in Palestine? Did Zionist leaders differ in their approach to the Palestinians?

Given the major requirement that this research be done in Hebrew sources, there seemed to be two ways to approach the subject matter. One possibility would be to focus on the history of the problem through journalistic

sources, i.e. newspapers and journals of the early Yishuv. Such a task, however, seemed not only cumbersome, but somewhat unrealistic given the time span allotted for the research. Another approach was to investigate the problem through the writings of a major Zionist thinker and observe the way in which he reacted to the question of the Arabs in Palestine. I was interested in someone who not only wrote about Zionism but who was also actively involved in Zionist political affairs; whose ideas and thought were designed to impact both political realities and the direction in which the Zionist program would go. The study thus shifted from a historical study to an intellectual study of a leading Zionist thinker and the ideas and ideologies that influenced his politics. The question then became which Zionist thinker? Ben Gurion? Chaim Weizmann? Martin Buber and the Brit Shalom movement? Upon direction from my advisor, I searched through a new book on Zionist thought by Professor Shlomo Avineri. The longest chapter in the book, to my surprise, was devoted to Vladimir Jabotinsky, someone I knew very little about. The preface of the book further surprised me. There, Avineri discusses the reasons for his selection of certain thinkers and exclusion of others:

Such selection raises dilemmas; and the critical reader could naturally object to the exclusion of a number of persons from this book. Can one deal with Vladimir Jabotinsky without mentioning Chaim Weizmann?

If David ben Gurion is included why is there no chapter on Berl Katznelson?...To this I can only answer that while the choices may seem arbitrary, I feel that my criteria for both inclusion and exclusion are defensible. Weizmann, for example, for all his stature and importance as a statesman, can hardly be viewed as a thinker, while Jabotinsky is seen -- even by those who consider his policies catastrophic - as an intellectual of considerable caliber...¹

Sensing Jabotinsky's importance then and understanding only vaguely his connection to current Israeli policies through his impact on his disciple Menachem Begin, I decided to pursue an in-depth study of the thought of this man on the Arab question. While I had also hoped to compare his ideas on this issue with those of David ben Gurion, I could not in the end do justice to both with the limited amount of time. While comparisons are made at certain points of this work, a more serious and thorough comparative study must await for the future.

An analysis of Jabotinsky's thought must first begin with knowledge of his biography. What will interest us in particular as we review Jabotinsky's life will be those places and events that had a notable impact on his development as a thinker.

Jabotinsky was born in 1880 into a middle-class family living in Odessa. A cosmopolitan Russian city, Odessa was filled with diverse national groups and was permeated by the spirit of the Enlightenment. The intellectual and cultural vibrancy of the city, Jabotinsky would note later, made a definite impact on his intellectual development. Jabotinsky's family maintained very little

attachment to its Jewishness. Though he learned Hebrew at an early age, Jabotinsky later wrote that during his youth he "had no inner contact with Judaism...and never breathed the atmosphere of Jewish cultural tradition."² Jabotinsky was a voracious reader of world literature and through his reading was exposed to the diversity of European thought and culture. Already at a young age he exhibited literary talents by writing and translating poetry. His translation of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" into Russian while in high school was later to become a classic.

In 1898, Jabotinsky went to Berne and then to Rome, where he studied law and served as foreign correspondent for two Odessa dailies (often under the pen name "Altalena"). It was this three year period, Jabotinsky was to write later, that made the most profound impact on his spiritual and intellectual growth. It was this period, in which he absorbed himself in the history and traditions of the Italian national experience, that heightened his interest in and influenced his views on nationalism:

If I have a spiritual homeland, it is Italy, much more than Russia...From the day of my arrival there I became fully integrated into Italian youth, and its life I lived until I left Italy. All my views on problems of nationalism, the state and society were developed during those years under Italian influence; it was there that I learned to love the art of the architect, the sculptor and the painter, as well as the Latin song...At the university my teachers were Antonio Labriola and Enrico Perri and the belief in the justice of the socialist system, which they implanted in my heart, I kept as self-evident until it became utterly destroyed by the red experience in Russia. The legend of Garibaldi, the writings of Mazzini, the poetry of Leopardi and Guisti have

enriched and deepened my superficial Zionism: from an instinctive feeling they made it into a doctrine.³

His encounter with Italian nationalism was to shape his views towards all questions of nationalism, including the question of Jewish nationalism in which he was soon to become involved.

Jabotinsky returned to Odessa in 1901 and joined the editorial staff of Odesskiya Novosti. It was the Kishinev pogroms of 1903 that sparked his involvement in Zionist activities. He soon became involved in creating a Jewish self-defense group and, at the age of 22, went as a delegate to the Sixth Zionist Congress. In 1906 he took an active role in the Helsingfors Conference which adopted a resolution in favor of equal rights for Jews and all other nationalities of the Russian empire. He spent the next few years as a professional Zionist and was very much in demand as a speaker all over Russia. At the outbreak of World War I, Jabotinsky was sent to Eastern Europe and North Africa as a roving correspondent for a Moscow newspaper. When Turkey declared war on the Allied Powers, Jabotinsky was convinced that the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was imminent and that the Zionist movement should abandon its neutral stand and side with the Allies. He believed that after the war, with British occupation of the land, the Zionists could best fulfill their goals. He was also convinced that the Jews should take an active military role in the war to demonstrate their full support of the Allies. While in Egypt he participated in

establishing the Zion Mule Corps which took part in the Gallipoli campaign. Later, he persuaded the British government to accept a Jewish Regiment in the British Army, although the regiment was to see little action in the war.

After the War and the demobilization of the Jewish Legion, Jabotinsky, anticipating anti-Jewish violence by Arab extremists, organized the Haganah, a self-defense corps. He was quickly imprisoned by the British authorities and charged with inciting the Arab masses during the Jerusalem riots.

In 1921, Jabotinsky was appointed as a member of the Zionist Executive but resigned two years later due to growing ideological differences with the mostly Labor members. He devoted himself to publicizing his ideas in the Russian Zionist weekly Rasvet as well as lecturing in various parts of Europe. Over and over he would discuss the themes that were to become the major planks of the future Revisionist party: the need to return to Herzl's concept of the Jewish state, the restoration of the Jewish legion and the need for a major political offensive calling for radical change in British policy. British policy, he declared, must have as its first aim facilitating a Jewish majority in Palestine -- including Transjordan -- by means of rapid mass immigration.

In 1925, Jabotinsky founded the Revisionist Zionist Organization as an opposition party within the World Zionist Organization. The movement became the central

organ for lobbying for his ideas. As Rael Jean Isaac noted, the Revisionists were never able to build a strong Revisionist party in Palestine; the party's major branches remained abroad, in Europe.⁴ Most of the party's adherents were from Poland. Despite its inabilities to create a strong organization and establish a vibrant presence in Palestine, the Revisionists succeeded in becoming a significant force. In Palestine, for example, in the 1931 elections to the Assembly of Delegates, the Revisionists won the second largest number of delegates, 23 percent of the total. In 1929, while the Revisionists won 7 percent of the vote in elections to the Zionist Congress, they surged ahead in 1931 to win 21 percent as against 29 percent for the newly united Mapai Party.⁵ The Revisionists were never to win enough of the vote to take control of the Congress and as a result never possessed control of the immigration certificates to Palestine.

In 1935, feeling increasingly alienated from the Labor Zionist leadership, Jabotinsky and his followers left the official Zionist Movement and founded the New Zionist Organization with its headquarters in London. The movement supported a policy of evacuation of East European Jews. Support of "illegal immigration" became a major activity of this movement between 1935 and 1940. With the outbreak of World War II, Jabotinsky demanded again the creation of a Jewish army, to join with the Allies in fighting the Nazis. In 1940 he sailed for the US to

enlist support for the army but died that summer of a heart attack while in New York.

More than any other Zionist party, Revisionism was a movement associated with one individual. In the same way, in approaching Jabotinsky's thought, one must recognize that his thought cannot be seen in isolation from the movement. For Jabotinsky was not a theoretical Zionist thinker. He was a political thinker who was never completely independent from his party. He was a party ideologue and thus knew that the success of his ideas depended upon the support of his party. At times he would have to modify his ideas and compromise with competing interests within the group of supporters. Like most political leaders, he would have to walk a fine line to keep the coalition of support under his control. He would come into conflict not only with the Labor Zionists but with members of his own party as well, on issues such as secession from the World Zionist Organization, maintaining the alliance with Britain, and retaliation against the Arabs.

From a study that has included analysis of 28 of his articles, certain characteristics of Jabotinsky's thought have emerged. Jabotinsky's thought is characterized firstly by a high degree of logic. His arguments are very clear and precise. The reader can easily see how he proceeds from his assumptions to his conclusions. Some have described it as an either-or type of logic. To each

problem, he presents two possible solutions, one that is right and one that is wrong. Jabotinsky's thought is also highly ideological. He adheres very rigidly to a certain system of ideas and doctrines about life which he applies to the issues and realities before him, regardless of their practicality.

A tone of authority emanates from Jabotinsky's writings. It is a tone that no matter what he was saying made him appear intransigent. Jabotinsky is determined to appear resolute, perhaps because he was often championing unpopular ideas. One gets the sense that by being uncompromising, he hoped to force others into accepting his ideas. Jabotinsky was the leader of the opposition party; he and the Revisionists were the ones out of power. Like others in their situation, they could afford to be more uncompromising and more critical than those who were in power, who because of their position, were ultimately responsible for making decisions.

Finally, there is a certain hard realism that seems to inform his views. His thought reflects a cynicism about human nature, a skepticism about liberal beliefs in human goodness and a certain Darwinian-like attitude of survival of the fittest.

An intellectual study of this thinker, as with any thinker, will require analysis of primary source material. While no index to Jabotinsky's writings exists, a 14 volume collection of his works, Ktavim, (Writings) does exist,

edited by his son Ari Jabotinsky. These volumes contain many of his speeches, poems, his novel, Samson, and his journalistic pieces. Most of the volumes are organized in a topical way. One volume, for example, is devoted to political controversies with his opponents in the Zionist movement; another is devoted to the fundamental principles of Revisionism and the intellectual background of the movement. Because the works are ordered topically, I could, without too much difficulty, find articles that were relevant to my investigation, without having to read all 14 volumes. The second major collection of Jabotinsky's writings is Ktavim Nivcharim (Selected Writings) edited by Professor Joseph Klausner. While not as comprehensive as the Ktavim, this three volume collection did contain at times articles not found in the Ktavim. For my purposes it was especially helpful, in that the first half of the third volume was devoted to the topic "Jews, Arabs and the British." The 14 articles contained in this section were all directly related to my thesis topic and the information contained therein comprised a very important part of my research. A number of secondary sources on Jabotinsky also referred to specific articles by name and I was generally able to find those articles in either the Ktavim or the Ktavim Nivcharim.

The number of secondary sources on Jabotinsky is increasing, given the current leadership of the State of Israel. There is real interest in studying the thought of

the man who so deeply influenced Begin and his politics. Two of the best works in this regard are Party and Politics in Israel by Rael Jean Isaac and The Making of Modern Zionism by Shlomo Avineri. The former presents a thorough analysis of Revisionist Zionism, identifying it as one of the three dominant currents in Zionist thought and history. She discusses the Revisionist myth, its ideology and the contributions of its leader Jabotinsky. It is the second work that is especially important in helping us see Jabotinsky in his proper intellectual context. Contrary to much of the earlier literature on Jabotinsky which presents his thought in a vacuum, this one attempts to account for the intellectual and historical influences on his thought. As Avineri wrote, "The major impact on Jabotinsky's intellectual development was Italy...Italian nationalism -- with its pathos and rhetoric; the heroism of Garibaldi's volunteers...determined the nature of Jabotinsky's views on nationalism."⁶ Jabotinsky's view of the world, his critique of liberalism, and in particular, his views of and commitment to the ideal of nationalism were all largely determined by his Italian experience. His thought continued to develop when he returned to Odessa and was involved in literary and public activities. As an intellectual living in Europe, he was, as Avineri said, surrounded by powerful ideas and currents of thought prevalent in Europe between the two world wars. In particular, the movement of integralist nationalism, with

its ideas of centralized leadership, militarism, and the corporate state, became important components of his national theories. Jabotinsky was, according to Avineri, "much more European and cosmopolitan than those pioneers who mainly came from the atmosphere of the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe."⁷

Two other volumes on general Zionist history were particularly helpful in conceptualizing Jabotinsky's activities and politics and contrasting them with those of mainstream Zionism: The Idea of the Jewish State by Ben Halpern, and A History of Zionism by Walter Laquer. Laquer to some extent also discusses the intellectual context of Jabotinsky's thought and in addition devotes a special chapter in his work to the Palestinian issue, entitled "The Unseen Question." Howard Morley Sachar's general work, The Making of Modern Jewish History, also includes an excellent chapter on Zionist history.

The final work of note is, of course, the major biography of this thinker, written by Joseph Schechtman. In those two volumes, Rebel and Statesman and Fighter and Prophet, Schechtman traces the events of Jabotinsky's life, his major achievements, and the development of his ideas. What the reader must know, however, is that the author was a friend and collaborator of Jabotinsky, who worked closely with him in the Revisionist movement. Schechtman was the editor of the journal Rasvet, which became one of the major publications of Jabotinsky's ideas. There is a strong

tendency among Revisionist writers to be highly subjective in their presentation of Jabotinsky. There is a tendency to present him not only as a man of action and of great intellectual ability -- which he was -- but to make him out to be almost more than human. Most of these writers, trying to present Jabotinsky in the best light, often soften some of his more hard-line policies. Often, they write defensively and engage in continuing polemics against the Labor Zionists. Such tendencies to some extent mark Schechtman's work as well. While the work is a necessity for a basic introduction to Jabotinsky's life, the reader must be careful to recognize its subjectivity and biases.

One further issue faced in this research was that of translation. While Jabotinsky did write in Hebrew (he in fact knew at least seven languages), the articles utilized from the works cited above were almost all translations from the Russian, many of them from the journal Rasvet. Working in translation presents its own set of problems. The precise meaning of words often changes and thus the real intent or even subtler points of the writer are often lost. This researcher, despite this problem, has done her best to analyze Jabotinsky's writings with the hope of understanding his reactions to and analysis of the Arab question.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

¹ Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1981), p. ix.

² Joseph B. Schechtman, Rebel and Statesman (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc. 1956), pp. 38-39.

³ Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, pp. 162-163.

⁴ Rael Jean Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel (New York: Longman, Inc. 1981), pp. 37-38.

⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶ Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, pp. 162-163.

⁷ Ibid., p. 177.

CHAPTER TWO

JABOTINSKY'S VIEWS OF ZIONISM

As we begin to lay the groundwork for understanding Jabotinsky's view of the Arab problem in Palestine, we shall have to first understand his views on nationalism. As we shall see, his theory of nationalism shaped not only his views towards the Arab question but towards the Jewish question and other national questions as well.

One does not have to read between the lines to detect that Jabotinsky was a "strong" nationalist. He considered nationalism a supreme value. He insisted that "there is no value in the world higher than the nation and the fatherland, there is no deity in the universe to which one should sacrifice these two most valuable jewels."¹ The inspiration for such a belief was the tradition of Italian nationalism, and specifically the writings and experiences of Garibaldi and Mazzini, the 19th century leaders of Italian nationalists during the time of the struggle for Italian reunification.

Jabotinsky was committed to the value of nationalism qua nationalism and thus endorsed, to the chagrin of most Zionists, Ukrainian nationalism, which of all the newly emerging nationalist movements in Eastern Europe,

was considered as one of the most anti-Semitic. His defense of this movement was not blind; it followed very logically from his theory of nationalism. Ukrainian nationalism possessed, in his view, the elements central to the development of any national movement. By their rejection of foreign and alien elements, the Ukrainian people were able to preserve a vitality, and an authentic character that for Jabotinsky were essential elements of any nationality.

While these elements were, in his view, important characteristics of nationalism, there was one component that was even more basic: race: "Land, language, religion and historical events are not the essence of a nationality, while they are important, but the essence of nationality, is the racial component."² Thus we begin to see how much of a racist Jabotinsky was. The claim by some that because he did not believe in such a thing as a pure race he cannot be considered a racist goes contrary to the evidence of his own writings.

For Jabotinsky, what ultimately distinguished one individual from another, one people from another, was blood: "The feeling of national character," he wrote, "is sunken in a man's blood, in his racial-physical type and only in that."³ For Jabotinsky, what prompted and justified the emergence of national movements and national entities was the presence of a specific physical quality - racial composition:

Every race possessing a definite uniqueness seems to become a nation, i.e. to create for itself an economic, political, and intellectual environment in which every detail will derive from its specific thought and consequently will also relate to its specific task. Such an environment a specific race can establish only in its own country, where it is the master. For this reason, every race seeks to become a state...because only in its own state will it feel comfortable.⁴

Given this view, we can sense how Jabotinsky will apply his theories of nationalism to the Jewish people.

Jabotinsky believed that by virtue of the fact of their race, people of different races will react differently to the same phenomena. Differences in race will mean differences in character. Nationalism is but the logical extension of that feeling of uniqueness. The national framework allows those who share distinctive psychic characteristics and intellectual abilities to create an environment (a philosophy, literature, economy etc.) which reflects its common racial composition. Nationalism and race in Jabotinsky's thought become intertwined. A nation is primarily a racial community, "endowed with a special racial psychology which appears in one form or another, in every member of the community."⁵

The notion of superior races was both an implied and explicit one in Jabotinsky's writings. Clearly for him the European race was superior to the non-European race. This became, as we shall see, one of his justifications for Zionism. The idea that the Jews are a superior race is seen more clearly in a fictional piece entitled "An Exchange of Compliments." The article was published in

1913, according to Avineri, as a response to an anti-Semitic tract called "An Inferior Race", which proclaimed Aryan supremacy and Jewish inferiority.⁶ At first it seems, Jabotinsky denies all notions of racial superiority. Each race, he says, has its own special qualities. He then, however, goes on to discuss the qualities which make for a superior race, "if there ever would be such a thing."⁷ He says firstly that "a superior race has to possess self-awareness; it possesses a kind of pride which can withstand everything."⁸ The person who belongs to the superior race will feel it in his gut. It is the kind of feeling, he says, that the white man feels when he meets a Bushman. Furthermore, he says, "For such a race, the very idea that it will accept the authority of an alien element is organically disgusting and detestable."⁹ The Jews, he points out, unlike the Russians (or Aryans), all possess these criteria. Historically they have maintained their originality and their rejection of external and alien elements. (As we have seen, these were the criteria he cites in endorsing Ukrainian nationalism.) Jabotinsky has written this article with two purposes in mind: first, to dispute the myth of Aryan supremacy which condemns the Jews to being inferior, or even to not being a race at all and thus to not having any just claim to nationalism. He also sets out to make fun of Jewish universalists, who in their defensiveness and desire to strip the Jewish people of every element of particularism, claim all people to be

equal. Superior races, Jabotinsky asserts, do exist. The criteria are very clear, and just as it is true that whites are superior to the Bushmen, so Jews should not be embarrassed to admit that they are a separate race and in fact a superior one. Later, he will argue that it is because Jews are a superior race to the Arabs that they are justified in having sovereignty in Palestine.

As we begin to apply Jabotinsky's notion of nationalism in general to Jewish nationalism, Zionism, in particular, it becomes clear why he says that the Jews can never really take full advantage of the Emancipation; why they cannot become, as Mendelsohn claimed, Germans of the Mosaic persuasion. The Jew, in Jabotinsky's view, can never become a German or a Frenchman because his blood is different. Jewishness is not only a religion; in fact, with Jabotinsky, it is primarily a racial-national category: "A Jew who is educated among Germans can acquire German customs, words, etc. but the core of the inner structure will remain his -- Jewish -- because his blood, his body, his physical-racial type are Jewish."¹⁰ In Jabotinsky's view, the only way a Jew can assimilate is by changing his blood, such as will happen through a long chain of inter-marriages. So long as a Jew has Jewish blood, his inner essence will prevent him from assimilating.

While assimilation for Jews seems improbable for Jabotinsky, it is not impossible. Living in Galut with greater rights, he cautions, will increase the contacts

Jews have with non-Jews and will naturally lead to an increase in intermarriage. Those Zionists who endorse the solution of political autonomy, as he himself had once done, whereby Jews can live as a national minority in countries in Europe, are endangering the inner national character of the Jewish people. The physical mixing of the Jews with the non-Jewish majority will cause the disappearance over generations of the essential character of the Jew and thus of the Jewish nation. Autonomy, then, given his view of race, is not a political solution that Jews and especially Zionists can afford to endorse: "Preservation of our national essence can occur only on the condition of preserving the purity of our race and thus we require a territory of our own, on which we will be the decided majority."¹¹

We can see by this discussion how much Jabotinsky's views were influenced by late 19th century and early 20th century theories of race. Racial theories abounded by the turn of the century, as theoreticians and their popularizers attempted to explain group differences largely by invoking the concept of race. The works and ideas of such men as Houston Stewart Chamberlain in Germany and Charles Maurras in France gave academic respectability to notions of race and racial superiority. In his study on race, Jacques Barzun wrote, "For the French and German racists, 'blood' is an infallible oracle giving answers to all questions. In the minds of those who hold to these

theories of race, blood is synonymous with race, with conscience, with honesty, with artistic judgement and with a sense of their own superiority."¹²

Just as Chamberlain viewed the nation's abilities and attributes to be products of race, so Jabotinsky said that race causes "degrees of intelligence, a stronger or weaker tendency to look for novel experience, temperament, etc.,"¹³ in short, abilities and character traits.

At a time of growing nationalism, race was identified and invoked by Jabotinsky and other nationalists as a key component of national character. It lent an element of indestructability and permanence to these emerging nationalisms. As Max Hildebert Boehm wrote,

The question of the permanence of national character is linked with attempts to explain it. Those who adhere most closely to the theory of the permanence of national character attempt to make race or blood mixture the determining factor. They hold that all changes in the racial basis of a people, such as those brought about by the absorption of an alien racial element in colonial possessions, would result in a corresponding alteration of national character.¹⁴

Jabotinsky indeed embraced both of these notions. The Jews are a nation because of their blood and their racial-physical structure and as such have a natural longing for a territory they can call their own. Jews have rejected and must continue to reject alien elements in order to preserve their racial type and thus their unique national character.

There are other aspects of Jabotinsky's views of nationalism which influenced his views of Zionism. Many

of these emanated from theories he had begun to develop as a student in Italy, not only reading the literature of Italian nationalism and its great heroes, but experiencing as well the new currents of nationalism that had taken rise in Italy and other parts of Europe. This kind of nationalism had come to be called "integral nationalism," by the Frenchman Charles Maurras and referred to an exclusive type of nationalism, one that emphasized national self-assertion and the will to power. While early 19th century nationalism was liberal and democratic in intention, it turned in the latter half of the 19th century into national egoism. In this view, the nation state is no longer set in the context of a larger humanity; it becomes its own sufficient justification.

In Italy this growing "sacro egoismo" was soon to turn in the 1920's into fascism; in Germany, in the 1930's, to Naziism. Both of these were extreme forms of nationalism; both of them held the centralization and exclusivity of the nation to be the highest ideal. The importance Jabotinsky placed upon ceremonialism, parades and mass rallies; his extolling of mass discipline and a martial ethos all reflect the growing tide of exclusive nationalism. As Avineri has argued, Jabotinsky's insistence on the nation's devotion to internal unity - the monistic principle; his opposition to proletarian class organization, and his emphasis on strong and centralized leadership all mirror the prevalent ideas of post-World

War I European thought. They reflect in particular, the ideas of Mussolini and the growing Italian fascist movement. These notions were all deeply integrated into Jabotinsky's general political philosophy. We shall soon see how these notions affected the type of Zionist thought he espoused and the kinds of policies he pursued.

Our analysis of the type of Zionism which any Zionist thinker propounded would begin with the question, how did he conceive of the Jewish problem? And so, with Jabotinsky we ask as well, how did he conceive of the Jewish problem? Throughout the history of Zionism, Zionist leaders have differed on their judgement of the nature of the Jewish problem. As Ben Halpern has written,

Different factions arose in the Zionist movement stressing one or another nationalist aim and one or another aspect of the Jewish problem which this aim was particularly designed to remedy. Whether land, language or sovereignty were the particular principle valued as the primary aim and as the logical end of all nationalist policy was a judgement on how the Jewish problem was conceived by another type of Zionist, and which of these major nationalist aims seemed, accordingly, the most logical as a direct solution for the problem.¹⁶

Jabotinsky and the Revisionists saw themselves as heirs to the tradition of Herzl and Nordau. Many of the views which Jabotinsky espoused - his analysis of the Jewish problem and his proposals - were surprisingly similar to those of the founder of the Zionist movement. For Jabotinsky, as for Herzl and Nordau, the Jewish problem was viewed as the problem of anti-Semitism. It was the problem of Jews who were powerless and oppressed, who would

continue to be oppressed as long as they continued to live as a minority among Gentiles. The plagues of anti-Semitism and alienhood would continue to infect Jews wherever they went as long as they remained a minority.

For Jabotinsky, the urgency and extensive nature of the Jewish problem called for a grand solution. He proposed one that was highly political, designed to hastily eliminate the Jewish problem: 1) mass evacuation of anti-Semitic danger zones in Europe and mass rapid immigration to Palestine; and 2) mass colonization and the creation of a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan. Jabotinsky, convinced of the correctness of this analysis, repeated these formulas over and over again: מקור המחלה - המיעוט . "The source of the disease - being a minority. Being a majority - is the remedy. The word Judenstaat means - a Jewish majority."¹⁷ He repeatedly criticized those Zionists (cultural Zionists presumably) who believed that "We can manage with a מרכז לאומי בלי רוב יהודי, a national center without a national majority."¹⁸ Such a belief is not only naive, he argued, but it is a serious retreat from basic Zionist principles. The Revisionists, said Jabotinsky, are concerned with "the salvaging of a nation, not the creation of flower shops."¹⁹ Anything less than a majority will, he believed, become another version of Galut. Like Herzl, Jabotinsky believed deeply that "when the Jewish nation rose to claim its rights to sovereignty in its ancestral

homeland, the other nations would ultimately recognize this right, because in this age of Englishtenment, they no less than the Jews must be interested in curing the plague of anti-Semitism."²⁰

Jabotinsky's use of the phrase "ancestral homeland" was quite deliberate throughout his career. The "majority" he insisted must be maintained *על שני צדדי הירדן* "on both sides of the Jordan." This claim to Trans-Jordan became a central principle in the Revisionist party platform. (It was only after 1967 that the Herut party, which was the political heir of pre-state Revisionism, abandoned its claim to Transjordan.) Despite the fact that the British had suspended the territorial provisions of the Mandate in 1922 concerning establishment of a Jewish National Home in Transjordan, Jabotinsky and his followers refused to accept the legitimacy of this redefinition. From the day that Britain accepted the obligations of the Mandate, Jabotinsky and his followers insisted that the program of Jewish colonization would take place on the territory of the Jewish national homeland, *ארץ ישראל, כולה*, i.e. in Palestine and in Trans-Jordan.

It is interesting to note that as early as 1928, Jabotinsky emphasized the strategic importance of Trans-Jordan for the Jewish future, "in the face of the terrible situation in Eastern Europe."^{20a} Even more than Western Palestine, Trans-Jordan was seen as critical for

the Jewish future because of its size (three times the land size of Western Palestine) and population (less than one-fourth that of Western Palestine). Ten years later, in the face of impending doom for the Jews of Europe, Jabotinsky again implored annexation of Trans-Jordan: "Settlement of millions of Jews, which will solve the Jewish problem, is possible only if Trans-Jordan will be open for Jewish settlement."²¹ The fact that the Revisionists, despite their uncompromising stance on Trans-Jordan, never even sent a symbolic group to settle there, is an interesting point for speculation.

Given his analysis of the Jewish problem and his proposed solution, how did Jabotinsky hope to achieve his goals? The approach he took reflected the type of Zionist thinker he was: highly ideological and highly political. It was an approach that aimed at having an effect on both the external affairs of Jews as well as their internal affairs. From the early days of World War I, Jabotinsky favored the idea of an alliance between the Zionists and Great Britain. This idea was to become a cornerstone of his politics. As Ben Halpern has stated, "The idea of an alliance with an existing sovereign power as a prerequisite for 'evacuating' the mass of Jews to Palestine and for setting up the Jewish state on the basis of a Jewish majority was his ruling idea."²² For Jabotinsky, that sovereign power was England. The Zionists, he believed, could implement the grand project of rapid, large-scale

transfer of Jews from Europe only with the full cooperation of the powerful British allies. Only by Britain acting directly to build the Jewish state, only by a colonization program which required full and dedicated British efforts, would the Jews be able to evacuate and settle. "The Revisionist program," wrote Halpern, "required a Mandatory policy unequivocally directed to this end (rapid mass migration to Palestine); a world-wide Jewish company endowed with extraordinary powers to control immigration; and a policy in the countries whence Jews emigrated favorable to their orderly mass evacuation."²³

Herzl set Zionism's first aim as the obtaining of a charter, a proper, legal basis for establishing the Jewish claim. For the Revisionists, with the Balfour Declaration in hand, political aims remained equally important; a strong alliance between the Zionists and the British was considered a prerequisite to the solution of the Jewish problem.

Jabotinsky was convinced of the fundamental coalescence of interests between Great Britain and the Zionists. For him, it was a fundamental, spiritual bond, premised on the European nature of Zionism as he saw it (to be discussed in Chapter Three). It was a notion that became Revisionist dogma; one that he questioned only at brief times in his career:

We believe with full faith in the justice and righteousness of the British people -- that it will fulfill any demand in the future. We also believe that there are mutual interests between us -- that

England gives because it can also get in return. Because of us, England has gained much in the past and stands to gain much in the future. There is a partnership between England and the Zionists. The English people know it. Jews are building a place in the world, the only haven, which from an ethical point of view belongs to Europe and will always belong to it.²⁴

Jabotinsky's notion of cooperation with Britain was based more on ideology than on reality. It was inconceivable to him that Great Britain would not support Zionism uncritically; it was completely unjustifiable that they would give any credence or support to Palestinian nationalism. Great Britain's agreement to take on the Mandate indicated to him its belief in the Zionist program and its ideological affinity to a British-Zionist alliance in the MidEast. For Jabotinsky, Great Britain's acceptance of the Mandate meant a commitment not only in general to the Zionist enterprise but also a commitment to carry out in detail the political tasks that colonialism required. As seen by Jabotinsky, it meant to create unequivocally the conditions in Palestine that would make mass migration to that country possible: "The question of absorbing the large stream of immigrants requires the direct intervention of the government -- administrative activities and legislating laws which only the government can carry out."²⁵ The success or failure of Zionism would depend upon British efforts: "The creation of a majority is an imperial task. Vast emigration is an imperial concern. Active and positive aid is required from the government."²⁶

The fact that Jabotinsky opposed the autonomous organization of a Jewish self-defense corps or of a Jewish school system in Palestine under the Mandate reflects the extent to which he went to meet his objective: to make the establishment of the Jewish state the direct aim and responsibility of the Mandate power. If the Jews undertook to defend, educate and colonize themselves, he reasoned, this would only make it easier for the Mandatory to avoid the responsibility for creating the Jewish state. As Ben Halpern noted, "In the interests of the grand alliance that would make possible the great evacuation, he was inclined to regard as 'expendable' any nuclei of sovereignty, as well as of economic or social power, that could be built in Palestine by the Jews alone."²⁷ Such a position reflects the triumph of ideology over pragmatism that ultimately characterizes Jabotinsky's thought. It reflects the extent to which he was an ideologue - unswervingly committed to certain beliefs and principles despite the ever-changing political realities.

In light of this, Jabotinsky's constant harangues against Great Britain criticizing the Mandatory Power for not aiding the Zionists in a practical way or for assisting the Arabs, become more understandable. Jabotinsky's demands of the British government were based on an assumption of mutual interests. This assumption caused him to believe that the British, whether out of laziness or confusion, had to be constantly reminded and pushed to fulfill their

obligation. Jabotinsky recognized that while Great Britain may have shared in theory an ideological commitment to Zionism, there were certain individuals in the British government and among the public who did not share this belief. These individuals, he felt, were mistaken about where their true interests lie, and it would take information and moral pressure to convince them who is their true ally. Like Weizmann, he was convinced that a diplomatic-propaganda offensive towards the British was a matter of the highest priority.

Thus, Jabotinsky's second major emphasis in external Jewish affairs was an intensive diplomatic effort for the recognition of the Jewish claim to Palestine. Like Herzl, he believed that through propaganda and diplomacy, Jews would receive international support for their aims and their claim to Palestine. By convincing the British in particular, he believed the Zionists would achieve their goals: "Zionism is 90 per cent economics and 10 per cent politics," he wrote. "No one is scorning the worth of practical work done in the land. But this 10 per cent politics is a prior condition to our success, the sine qua non above all else."²⁷ While he does concede the importance of the efforts of the practical and Marxist Zionists, he unequivocally asserts the primacy of his goals - political work. Thus early on he emphasized political work as opposed to the settling of pioneers in the land as the means to accomplishing his goals.

To this end Jabotinsky was a prolific propagandist, writing voluminously in a variety of journals and newspapers. He met constantly with English officials to make the Zionist case. He was an eloquent speaker, and traveled the globe to rally support, both Jewish and non-Jewish, for Zionism. All of this made up his *revivah* - his political offensive. He firmly believed that the Zionist case, if made articulately, would receive enthusiastic response: "We fully believe that every just opinion, if it will be only defended wisely, energetically and courageously, will find a responsible ear among the British people."²⁹ In his testimony before the Shaw Commission (1930), and the Members of Parliament on the Question of Partition (1937) and the Peel Commission (1937), he cogently and eloquently presented the case for a Jewish state and for mass rescue. He consistently attempted to convince the Mandatory Power of the importance of its full and active participation.

Thus propaganda, diplomatic work, and the establishing of alliances, all became the emphasis of the Revisionists and prerequisites for meeting their goals of mass evacuation and colonization. Despite the increasingly modest interpretations of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate by the British, Jabotinsky insisted that such a "monolithic" Zionism or "Greater Zionism" as it has been called, was the most valid approach to the Jewish problem at this time. This approach, it should be noted, differed from Weizmann's approach to Zionism (which came to be

called "organic" Zionism) which stressed, in addition to diplomatic work, the building of the Jewish national home slowly, person by person, farm by farm. It differed radically from Ben Gurion's more Marxist approach, which emphasized the prime importance of creating economic infrastructures; without these infrastructures, Ben Gurion insisted, the Zionists would never possess political power. Both Weizmann and Ben Gurion aimed for the gradual building up of sound social, cultural and economic foundations of the Jewish settlement in Palestine so that the means of statehood would be ready for some point in the future when the political direction of the country would have to be determined. For Jabotinsky, once the political mechanisms were in order, and the means for mass evacuation and mass colonization were at hand, the Jewish problem would be solved in one fell swoop.

It should be noted that the belief in a British-Zionist alliance was not unique to Jabotinsky; indeed most Zionists of that time shared this faith. Weizmann, perhaps even more than Jabotinsky, believed that the British were totally sympathetic to the Zionist program. Yet because Jabotinsky emphasized the achievement of Zionist goals by political work from the outside rather than by actual gradual building of the homeland from within, the alliance with England became absolutely central. Ironically, it further increased Jewish powerlessness and vulnerability, as it placed more responsibility for Zionist endeavours on

the British and made the Zionists almost toally dependent on British whims.³⁰

For Jabotinsky, the success of Zionism depended not only on external alliances and political work, it depended as well on the inner transformation of the individual Jew. Zionism, he felt, demanded a new breed of Jew in the world. It necessitated a transformation of Jewish values which were at variance with those needed to achieve statehood. This new type of Jew who understood the precarious position of Jews all over the world, would be prepared from a position of strength to respond. He would not be afraid of the word militarism and would have learned an essentially new ethos of Jewish existence in the modern world:

Comfort lies in the concept of strength...For children of this generation, the main thing they must learn is -- to shoot. If they tell me that a state is built with ploughs and shovels and with the sweat of the brow -- I agree. But everyone understands that of all the conditions necessary for the revival of statehood, shooting is unfortunately the most important.³¹

Jabotinsky's vision was one of extreme self-reliance and total independence for the Jews. For too long, he felt, Jews had relied on others; now, they would have to learn to rely only on themselves. Jews who live in Galut and have learned to accept powerlessness must now learn the values of *qibutz*, of military strength and discipline, in order to succeed in their dream of acquiring their own state. Reality teaches us, he says, that the land will be won, not by physical labor, nor by sweat and toil but by blood and iron. That very command, "get iron" was

Jabotinsky's message to the Jewish people offered through the mouthpiece of the blinded Samson in his novel by that name.³² "In place of the Jewish laborer," wrote Rael Jean Isaac, "the Revisionists offered the ideal of the Jewish soldier, disciplined and dedicated to winning the land which belonged to the Jews by right of history and the original Mandate."³³

The realities of Arab resistance, he said, the recognition that the Jews will be settling on inhabited land, and the notion that without an armed force the Arabs will prevent them from settling, make the need for Jewish armed forces and creation of a Jewish martial ethos an absolute one. For Jabotinsky, there was no alternative. "Zionism is settlement," he said, "and thus it rises or falls on the question of armed forces."³⁴

As Jabotinsky saw it, the model of the new Jew was the Betari, the member of the Revisionist youth movement. In his leadership of that movement, Jabotinsky attempted to mold a new generation of Jewish youth who, having internalized these values, would cause the Zionist state to become a reality. It would be a generation that, unlike those of the past, appreciated values of strength and power, and the spirit of militarism in general. These youth would learn to value too all the accoutrements of militarism that were equally important in holding the nation together: the value of ceremony, the importance of military discipline, and the ability to act as a collective:

Betar is structured around the principle of discipline. Its aim is to turn Betar into such a world organism that it would be able, at a command from the center, to carry out at the same moment, through the scores of its limbs, the same action in every city and every state. The opponents of Betar maintain that this does not accord with the dignity of free men and it entails becoming a machine. I suggest not to be ashamed and respond with pride: Yes, a machine. Because it is the highest achievement of a multitude of free human beings to be able to act together with the absolute precision of a machine...³⁵

Just as Mussolini had determined that 20th century Italy was not to become the victim of less-civilized aggressors, so too had Jabotinsky determined that the Jews would not be powerless victims. Mussolini required Italian children to be trained with military valor, and to be indoctrinated with military values, which he felt had for too long been dormant. "Fascism," Mussolini declared, "discards pacifism as a cloak for cowardly supine nationalism in contra-distinction to self-sacrifice..."³⁶ Jabotinsky's condemnation of Jewish pacifism was equally scathing.

At the center of the nation is the commander to whom the masses have submitted; he is the one who directs them. The task of nation-building requires total devotion to this one ideal. A leadership structure that was centralized, where authority would not be divided and total obedience was pledged to the leader, was best designed to meet it: "A leader is a man who has been authorized to do the thinking for the whole nation, so that rank and file no longer need to think...If there is no superman available, we get hold of an ordinary fellow and thrust that title on

him."³⁷ Like most European fascistic systems, the leader's authority in Jabotinsky's vision of a state is absolute and indisputable, and the people are expected to form an unbreakable unity behind him. However Jabotinsky does acknowledge individual liberty and this reflects on the one hand his liberalism: "It is not true that man is citizen first; on the contrary, man is first of all something above a citizen -- he is a king in his own rights and should not be bound by an outward duty or obligation unless absolutely necessary for his own and his neighbor's protection. The power of the State must, therefore, always be kept to that absolutely inevitable minimum."³⁸

An affirmation of the sovereignty of the individual is not generally heard from those labeled fascist. Jabotinsky's fascism is atypical of 20th century fascist movements in that he doesn't believe that the will of the nation will be manifest in every area. There are thus liberal and extreme elements in Jabotinsky's nationalism. While his political philosophy is characterized by extreme centralization on the one hand, with an insistence on authority vested in one individual with everyone else following orders, he does not call for centralization of authority in every area. In building a state or national defense for example, he sees the necessity for state control; but regarding the economy, he believes in free enterprise and minimal government interference.

With centralized leadership, Jabotinsky believed, Jews can best devote themselves to the singular ideal of

the creation of the Jewish state. This singlemindedness, this monism, was for him, a supreme value. Any competing values, any beliefs or ideologies that might direct the groups' loyalties away from the Jewish state idea were to be rejected outright. The Betar movement would again model this value in becoming "a generation that has dedicated its life to one single ideal of the creation of a Jewish state, knowing of no other ideals."³⁹

Jabotinsky's rejection of socialism flowed logically from these views. Early in his career he had been sympathetic to socialist ideas. But as he became more involved in Zionist efforts, and more committed to the principle that Palestine must absorb as many Jews as possible, as quickly as possible, he became convinced that socialist doctrines were a luxury that Zionism could not afford. Socialist policies, he felt, particularly the class idea, would not promote the most rapid and efficient development of Palestine: "Perhaps in a normal state, class war is a good thing. But it is clear, that if Jewish factories are laid waste in Tel Aviv (due to strikes or the like) we will lose a known number of places for settlement, and by this we will lose our hopes to reach a Jewish majority."⁴⁰ Jabotinsky concluded that Zionism and socialism were two irreconcilable ideas, and with his typical either-or logic warned: "Either Zionism fights against and aims to destroy the aspiration to class among the Jewish people in Israel during all the days of its

building, or else Zionism will not be realized."⁴¹ He pleaded with Jews to understand the exceptional nature of Zionist colonization and to appreciate the urgency and difficulty of the task which faced them. He warned them that the needs of the state must supercede those of any class or individual. For Jabotinsky, the absolute commitment to national policies demanded of its citizens a different way of life.

The actual party platform of the Revisionist party, as seen in its platform of 1928 and its 1938 program entitled "The Ten Year Plan," reflected the extent to which Jabotinsky was able to translate his aims and ideas into actual party policy. Both are statements of goals and both declare their disaffection with the Labor policies. Jabotinsky's belief that a clear and open definition of Zionist aims was essential in aiding the Zionist cause influenced the tone and style of this presentation. As in all party presentations, the Revisionists made it clear what they were unhappy with, as well as what they wanted, from the British, other Zionists and the Arabs. Foremost in these platforms was the propaganda effort, and the continual emphasis of the need for the single-minded attachment to the idea of a state. "The Ten Year Plan," he begins, "is designed to serve as a basis for stages of activity, whose purpose is to turn Palestine on both sides of the Jordan, into a Jewish state with a Jewish majority by creating political, economic and social conditions in

order to settle one and a half million Jews in the next ten years."⁴² The unqualified, unabashed declaration of the goal of the Zionist enterprise marked Jabotinsky and the Revisionists off from the other Zionists. The other leaders, under pressure from the British and the Arabs, had become by the late 20's and early 30's much more vague about the final goal of Zionism. Jabotinsky considered such vagueness a dangerous retreat from Zionism, in the same way that he saw Zionist passive acceptance of Britain's increasingly narrow definitions of the Balfour Declaration as dangerous.

At the 17th Zionist Congress in 1931, Jabotinsky devoted the bulk of his address to the necessity of clarifying the ultimate goal of Zionism: that a Jewish majority in a Jewish State was the aim of Zionism. During the Congress, Weizmann granted an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and (perhaps provoked by Jabotinsky's speech) declared, "I have no understanding of and no sympathy for a Jewish majority in Palestine."⁴³ It was precisely against this subterfuge of Zionist goals that Jabotinsky protested. Interestingly, the Zionist Congress felt Weizmann had gone too far as well, and did not re-elect him to the presidency of the World Zionist Organization.

Another demand in the Ten Year Plan was the annexation of Trans-Jordan. This demand was seen as historically legitimate and as pragmatically necessary to ensure the

absorption of the mass number of immigrants that were expected.

The question of absorbing these immigrants required the direct intervention of the Mandatory government. It required increased administrative and legislative activity on their part, to prepare the land for the mass evacuation. In the article, "What do the Revisionists Want?", an article reflecting the major principles of the Revisionist party, Jabotinsky identifies other areas of Revisionist concern. Land reform, they felt, was an item of great importance, one which the Mandatory Powers must respond to in a serious way. Jabotinsky, who constantly protested British policy requiring Jews to pay for the land they used, demanded that because the cost of land was making it impossible to establish new agricultural settlements, the government should confiscate all uncultivated land and give it to the Jews. Adjustments in the tax system were called for in the platform as well as a national loan to enable the establishment of heavy industry. Only when these conditions were fulfilled by the British, would the land be able to absorb continuous and large-scale immigration.

Jabotinsky also tried to counter the increased presence of British high commissioners and other important officials in Palestine who were unsympathetic with Zionist aspirations by demanding that the selection of important mandatory officials take place with the advice and consent of the Zionist leadership. In a critique of policies of

the World Zionist Organization regarding membership in the Jewish Agency, Jabotinsky demanded that only Zionists (those who give money and believe in the Zionist ideal) should be allowed membership in that body. The Jewish Agency, he felt, as the only instrument that connects the Zionist movement to the Mandatory government and the League of Nations can ill afford the presence of non-Zionists in its ranks.

In response to the increasing hostilities by the Arabs toward Zionist colonization, Jabotinsky demanded, as part of his reforms, the increase of official defense forces in Israel. In particular, he suggested the need for a Jewish legion under British auspices to take on the burden of self-defense of the Jewish people. Once again, Jabotinsky presented this requirement to the British as an absolute: "Anti-legionism means the giving up of Zionism. That's an iron law of the logic of life."⁴⁴ The Revisionists stressed again in their platform the notion of an alliance of interests between Great Britain and the Zionists and the importance of diplomatic and propaganda efforts. Regarding the Arabs, they emphasized the justice of the Zionist enterprise and their belief that "only when there is a [Jewish] majority [in Palestine] will there be true reconciliation [between Jews and Arabs]."⁴⁵

Jabotinsky's views towards the Arabs in Palestine were consistent with his views of nationalism. Unlike many Zionists, he did not deny their presence in the land and

on the contrary, devoted a good deal of his propaganda efforts to confronting their existence. But before we turn to this issue, the climax in fact, of this investigation, it is worth pausing to take a look at the thinker and his ideas thus far.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Jabotinsky is the dynamism and increasing complexity of his thought. As an intellectual who lived in Europe, he was surrounded by constant streams of intellectual thought which undoubtedly influenced him. He was an ideologue who applied European intellectual ideas to his own theories of Zionism. Clearly he moved with the time. As a youth, his thought was deeply influenced by the ideas of the Italian Risorgimento. The centrality of the nation and the supreme value of nationalism are all reflected in his early writings and were to be central ideas in his theories of Zionism. His early writings, in the first two decades of the 20th century, reflected another notion from the European milieu -- the critical factor of race. The discussion of race at that time was very alive and very complex. Jabotinsky used the racial notion as a basic underpinning to his theory of Jewish nationalism. Scientific participation had given respectability to these notions and Jabotinsky was able to weave the general racial theories into his thought, though he was clearly not concerned with presenting the scientific details. His thought progressed in the 20's and 30's to include notions of militarism, discipline and ideas more

characteristic of fascism. Indeed it is no coincidence. For as we've seen, it is in the early 1900's that integral nationalism is on the rise, culminating in the 20's with Mussolini and movements of fascism in Europe. Again Jabotinsky was able to use these prevalent theories, which increasingly emphasized the need for a highly centralized state in his Zionist theories.

There are several things that might have caused him to be more centralized in his theories and more extreme in his nationalism. We can speculate that as time went on, he wanted more power. Feeling less time to accomplish his goals, he demanded more centralization of power in the leadership. The internal Zionist fight may have added to this. Jabotinsky and the Revisionist party were the ones out of power. His call for a more centralized state may have reflected his increasing frustration and drive for more authority, and the hope that once in power he would be able to implement his policies despite the opposition. Finally, the call for centralization may have come as a result of the increasingly desperate situation of European Jews. The luxury of an open and democratic rule was perhaps not one he felt the Zionists could afford at the time. For whatever reasons, it is clear that Jabotinsky responded to Zionist issues from a complex theory of nationalism, one that possessed both liberal elements as well as highly extreme ones.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹ Vladimir Jabotinsky, "Obscurantist" in Ktavim, vol. 9, ed. Ari Jabotinsky (Jerusalem: Ari Jabotinsky, 1950), p. 110. (Vladimir Jabotinsky will be referred to in subsequent footnotes as VJ.)

² VJ, "On Race" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Shlomo Zaltzman, Inc. 1936), pp. 291-292.

³ VJ, "Letter on Autonomy" in Ibid., p. 143.

⁴ VJ, "Lecture on Jewish History" in Ibid., pp. 335-336.

⁵ VJ, "On Race" in Ibid., pp. 289-290.

⁶ Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1981), p. 168.

⁷ VJ, "An Exchange of Compliments" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 1, p. 226.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁰ VJ, "Letter on Autonomy" in Ibid., p. 144.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 153.

¹² Jacques Barzun, Race: A Study in Superstition (New York: Harper, 1965), pp. 7-8.

¹³ VJ, "Lecture on Jewish History" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 1, p. 334.

- 14 Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, s.v. "Nationalism."
- 15 Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, pp. 159-186.
- 16 Ben Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 24.
- 17 VJ, "Majority" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3, ed. Joseph Klausner (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1964), p. 2.
- 18 Ibid., p. 3.
- 19 Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel (New York: Longman, Inc. 1981), p. 140.
- 20 Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State, p. 32.
- 20a VJ, "What Do the Revisionists Want?" in Ktavim, vol. 11, ed. Ari Jabotinsky (Jerusalem: Ari Jabotinsky, 1952, p. 286).
- 21 VJ, "Transjordan and the Ten Year Plan" in Ktavim, vol. 12, ed. Ari Jabotinsky (Jerusalem: Ari Jabotinsky, 1952), p. 231.
- 22 Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State, p. 34.
- 23 Ibid., p. 37.
- 24 VJ, "What Do the Revisionists Want?" in Ktavim, vol. 11, p. 297.
- 25 Ibid., p. 284.
- 26 Ibid., p. 285.
- 27 Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State, p. 34.
- 28 VJ, "What Do the Revisionists Want?" in Ktavim, vol. 11, p. 285.
- 29 Ibid., p. 293.
- 30 In some Revisionist circles, faith in British support of Zionism began to erode in the early 30's, in particular among members of Betar and the Irgun. Anti-British sentiments peaked in 1940, causing a split in the

Irgun. The group of Abraham Stern and his supporters refused to accept Jabotinsky's advice that grievances against Britain be set aside and Jews join the war effort against the Axis powers. Having lost all faith in diplomatic action, they believed Britain to be the main enemy of Zionism. This group seceded from the Irgun, set up the National Military Organization in Israel (later called Lehi) and carried out an armed struggle against the British throughout the war.

³¹ VJ, "The New Alphabet" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3, p. 71.

³² Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel, p. 35.

³³ Ibid., p. 36.

³⁴ VJ, "The New Alphabet" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3, p. 73.

³⁵ Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, p. 172.

³⁶ Salo Baron, Modern Nationalism and Religion (New York: Meridian Books, Inc. 1960), p. 74.

³⁷ Oscar K. Rabinowicz, Vladimir Jabotinsky's Conception of a Nation (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1946), pp. 17-18.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁹ VJ, "The Idea of Betar" in Ktavim, vol. 11, p. 312.

⁴⁰ VJ, "Class" in Ktavim, vol. 9, p. 246.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 244-245.

⁴² VJ, "Transjordan and the Ten Year Plan" in Ktavim, vol. 12, p. 231.

⁴³ Joseph Schechtman, Fighter and Prophet (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc. 1961), p. 150.

⁴⁴ VJ, "What Do the Revisionists Want?" in Ktavim, vol. 11, p. 295.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 295.

CHAPTER THREE

JABOTINSKY'S VIEWS OF THE ARABS

The centrality of the national experience in Jabotinsky's thought raises the question of his views about the Arabs in general and Palestinian nationalism in particular. To understand the policies which he and the Revisionist party put forth, we must understand the beliefs he held about the Arabs.

One of his fundamental assumptions in his general world-view was the superiority of European versus non-European culture. To Jabotinsky, non-European i.e. Eastern culture was socially backward and culturally degenerate. Islamic culture, he maintained, is 500 years behind Western culture. It is characterized by a fatalistic philosophy, depressing poverty, political tyranny, theocratic government, and a suppression of the rights of women.¹ Not only is the Islamic world spiritually inferior to the Western world, but it is also politically powerless against the West. He claimed that the Islamic world is not and never will be a threatening political force. Because of this, he argued, the Western powers and Great Britain in particular have nothing to fear from Arab reprisals if they support Zionism. "There are British newspapers," he said,

"demanding the destruction of Zionism in order that we not provoke or disturb the threatening powers of Islam ... Islam as a unifying political force is non-existent."²

Jabotinsky criticized the Zionists for rationalizing Great Britain's vascillating efforts in the Zionist program; England, he maintained, as part of the powerful Western powers, is capable of asserting her strength without worrying about serious repercussions. "From an objective viewpoint," he says, "Europe can do anything on its Western shores and its eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and onward ... There are no powers who can today or tomorrow disturb her or interrupt her actions if she seriously decides to act in one way or another. Europe in the East can do whatever she wants ... and this applies to each major European power and to England in particular. The real question therefore is what Europe wants."³

The West then is in every way superior to the East: intellectually, ethically, culturally and politically. Against those people, including many Jews, who claim the Jews are an Eastern people, Jabotinsky vigorously defended his view that the Jews are by nature part of the West. While Jewish racial origins may be in the East he wrote, Jews severed their cultural and intellectual ties with that part of the world 2000 years ago and thus no longer have anything in common with the East. He criticized any idealization of the Orient, which as Avineri points out,⁴ had become a very popular theme in both Zionism and modern

Hebrew literature:

We Jews belong to the West. We are an occidental people, both products of as well as generators of Western culture. I realize that we still hold on to some wild customs of the East. These are hardly part of the essence of Judaism. That is the reason we had an enlightenment, so that we could separate the primitive traditions and laws from the essence. And it succeeded. The primitive customs died out and the essence survived. The essence is expressed in the fact that Europe is ours from an ethical point of view; its ethical passion was drawn from our Tanach. We are among the first creators of Europe. The major principles of European civilization -- dissatisfaction, fighting with God, the idea of progress, the idea of a Messiah - of an ideal in the future -- these qualities we gave to Europe long before our ancestors came to Europe ... European culture is from our bones, our flesh, our spirit. To run away from the West, to cling to that which is typical of the East, would mean for us to deny who we really are.⁵

In going back to its ancestral home, Jabotinsky makes it clear, the Jews are not returning to the Orient. Zionism is a form of European expansionism. It is the extension of the moral, enlightened culture of the West into the unenlightened and primitive culture of the East. Zionism is thus part of general European colonialism, which bases its actions on an assumption of cultural and intellectual superiority: "We Jews are going to Eretz Yisrael as Nordau said 'to expand the borders of Europe until the Euphrates'... in order to sweep away from Palestine and Judaism, now and forever, all traces of the Eastern spirit. And if we can do the Arabs a favor, we will help them become free of the East."⁶ Jabotinsky's tone becomes increasingly condescending towards the Arabs in this article as in some others. In the end, he declared, the Arabs will be thankful for Zionist settlement, for when the

building is completed, Arab culture will be raised to previously unknown heights.

The reality that the Arabs were inhabiting the land and the presumption that they would react strongly against Zionist efforts drove Jabotinsky to clarify his position on two significant issues: Palestinian nationalism and the centrality of Palestine for the Arabs. For the most part, Jabotinsky's thought is logical and extremely consistent. Yet, on these two issues in particular, he was, as we shall see, forced to be inconsistent. The Arabs of Palestine, he acknowledged at times, are a separate national entity possessing a unique national consciousness. And yet in the same article in which he seems to acknowledge that Palestinian nationalism is distinct from Arab nationalism he also seems to deny it: "Expropriation of a piece of land from a nation which has great holdings in order to give a place to a wandering nation -- is an act of justice." (emphasis mine)⁷ Jabotinsky is here calling upon all Arabs ("a nation which has great holdings") to make a sacrifice for the Jews. He has subtly shifted his focus, from Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian nationalism to Arabs and Arab nationalism in general. When it was safe to do so, he unconditionally proclaimed the separate national identity of the Palestinians. When however, there arises any conflict between Jewish rights to the land and Palestinian rights to the land, he shifts his focus to talking about Arabs in general. By doing so, he seems to include

Palestinians in that wider group of Arabs in general, thus mitigating local Palestinian nationality.

Jabotinsky makes other efforts to downplay the particularism of Palestinian national identity. In his article "Pedlars of Culture," he insists, as Avineri writes, "that medieval Arab culture was not Arab at all, not even Muslim, and that most of the glorious names in medieval Arab culture were not Arabian but Persian, Syrian, Jewish and Afghan."⁸ "The point is," says Avineri, "that the same person who cited every shred of historical evidence to demonstrate that the Ukrainians possessed a specific national identity, reversed himself completely with regard to the Arabs."⁹

As a race, the Palestinian Arabs have a need for their own land where they can create a culture and an environment that reflects their racial composition. "Palestine," he stated unequivocally, "is for Palestinian Arabs their only homeland, the center and refuge of their national independent existence." (emphasis mine)¹⁰ This view is consistent with Jabotinsky's view of nationalism. Yet this view too was to change. Later in his career, in the late 30's, with the declining situation of European Jewry, Jabotinsky greatly modified his view on the critical importance of Palestine for the Palestinian Arabs. Having already decided that the Jews had the overriding claim to the land, he was not terribly concerned to apply his definition of nationalism consistently:

There is only one instance in which it is a tragedy to be a minority; it is the case of a people who is a minority everywhere and always, scattered among foreign races, and has no one corner on the globe of its own and no homeland in which it finds shelter. This is not the case for the Arabs, who have other lands to go to, each of which is an Arab national homeland." (emphasis mine) 11

Palestine was, he had said, the national homeland for the Palestinian Arabs. So long as that notion did not conflict with Jewish needs, Jabotinsky could affirm it. Yet when Jewish rights and Arab rights to the land came into conflict, he was compelled to argue that the Palestinian Arabs could go elsewhere for shelter. Here again, Jabotinsky realized that the logic of his position would be to say that Palestinian nationalism and Jewish nationalism have equal claims to the land. For Jabotinsky, however, that logic was unacceptable. He therefore shifts from a focus on Palestine as the national homeland for the Arabs to the other Arab lands to which they can go. Jabotinsky understands that his ideology can only go so far, that an affirmation of Palestinian nationalism is possible only if it does not conflict with Jewish nationalism. For him, because Jews have an overriding need for the land, there can be no competing claims by other nationalities. He therefore introduces a new line of argument, one which says that the Palestinians can go elsewhere, an argument which is inconsistent with his previous statements but allows him to attain his goals. Especially later in the 30's, when the situation of the Jews worsened, he was not going to allow universal notions to endanger their rescue.

Jabotinsky's major goal of course was that the Jews become a majority in the land. And yet, while the Jews would be sovereign in the land, he consistently argued that the Arabs should never be forced to leave. For most of his career he asserted this notion with real ethical passion. Contrary to many people's impressions of him, then and now, he was not intent on wiping out the Arabs or of expelling them from the land. Indeed he criticized those Zionists who, looking for a solution to Arab-Jewish tensions, suggested the idea of a population transfer, an idea that became especially common in Europe after World War I. For the most part, he consistently argued that the Arabs and the Jews would live as two nations in the land of Israel:

Two nations will always dwell together in Palestine."¹² The extent of the interaction he envisioned between these two nations in the land is a question for further investigation.

To substantiate his beliefs and perhaps to pacify those who criticized his belligerent attitude vis-a-vis the Arabs, he constantly cited his participation in the Helsingfors Conference of 1906. At this conference of Russian Zionists, a program was formulated that called for national autonomy with full rights for national minorities. "The Helsingfors programs," wrote Rael Jean Isaac, "was intended to grant Jewish nationalism an autonomous political and cultural expression anchored in law in Eastern Europe."¹³ By reminding people of his active participation

in this conference, Jabotinsky hoped to convince them that while the Arabs would necessarily become a minority in the Jewish state, they would not be oppressed or driven out and in fact they would be treated as full citizens with equal rights.

At a later point in his career, however, Jabotinsky did suggest in public the possibility of voluntary Arab emigration from Palestine. Writing in the 30's, Jabotinsky was concerned about how many people the land could hold; he wanted to ensure that a maximum amount of territory be available as refuge for the millions of endangered Jews in Europe. Again, the superior claims of Jewish needs over Arab needs and Arab nationalism forced him to reevaluate an alternative he previously had rejected as unethical:

I don't see any tragedy or danger in Arab readiness to emigrate. The idea of a transfer of minorities... seems to get increasingly better to me... One thing is certain: any Arab nation that will find the courage and the area of land necessary in order to invite emigration of the uprooted, will benefit greatly in a material way. It will receive instantly great sums of wealth and great experts to settle the land. Arab emigrants will also take with them donkeys loaded with great wealth. In this way it would be easy to solve all the problems tied to this corner of the European region.¹⁴

Jabotinsky's writings consistently reflect his concern that the Zionists act ethically towards the Arabs. Indeed he constantly criticizes the Zionists for trying to be deceptive about their aims. He did not consider honest statements about Jewish goals of a state or a majority as inflammatory, as did many Labor Zionist leaders. Jabotinsky seemed concerned to treat the Arabs fairly and

seemed convinced that his attitudes and policies be not only realistic but ethical as well.

Jabotinsky certainly did not underestimate the antagonism of the Arabs in Palestine towards Zionist efforts, seeing that "their attitude for Israel is the same instinctive love as ours."¹⁵ Arab hostility, he said, is the natural hostility that natives feel towards settlers coming in to their land. In Jabotinsky's mind, the two parties to the struggle of sovereignty, the Jews and the Arabs, possessed irreconcilable differences; conflict for them is inescapable. The Arabs will never agree to colonization efforts and especially to a Jewish majority; the Zionists will settle for nothing less. Neither group could afford to compromise.

In Jabotinsky's view, there was only one way to resolve the conflict -- through power. In the face of Arab opposition, the Jews must build an "iron wall": "Our settlement must either stop or continue in opposition to the will of the natives. It can continue and develop only under the aegis of force, by an iron wall, which the strength of the local population will not be able to break."¹⁶ Jabotinsky's solution to the conflict then is quite simple. The Arabs won't give the Jews the land peacefully. The Jews must therefore go in and settle it with such strength that they will have to be accepted.

While the Revisionists foresaw eventual Arab agreement to a Jewish Palestine, they saw no possibility

of achieving that agreement until the Jewish presence was greatly strengthened, by numbers and by military might. Jabotinsky thus wanted all attempts of Zionist leaders to negotiate with the Arabs abandoned. He suspected those Zionists who attempted to negotiate with the Palestinians of potentially compromising Zionist aims. He rejected any suggestions that the Zionists compromise on striving to be a majority or an agreeing to a Parliament with an Arab majority. Jabotinsky's uncompromising commitment to Zionism, to the land and to Jewish sovereignty in the land, caused him to be unconciliatory. In the 30's, he opposed British plans of partition and cantonization of Palestine. Nothing less than a majority would do:

This does not mean that an agreement with the Palestinians will never be possible. They will only come to an agreement when they have no other hope, when they realize that they cannot break the iron wall. That is when they will want to negotiate. That is when we can give them guarantees and when the two nations can live side by side in peace. The only way to this agreement is the iron wall -- the attainment of supremacy in Palestine.¹⁷

Before Arab claims become pressing, before they attract sympathy for their cause, the Jews just strengthen their hold on the land. Once they become a majority, they can deal with Arab claims from a position of strength, from a posture which says "we will be so tough and resolute they will have to accept us." Clearly at that point, the two peoples would not negotiate as equals. With the Jewish majority a fait accompli, the Arabs would have no choice but to negotiate on the Zionists' terms.

Jabotinsky believed furthermore that the powerful British allies would join with the Zionists in building this iron wall of strength. With British cooperation, as promised under the terms of the Mandate, the Zionists would be protected physically and helped to create a Jewish majority. In addition, British activities will also spur significant economic growth for the Arabs which would, he believed, help ease Arab-Jewish tensions. As Jabotinsky saw it, the Arab riots in the 20's and the 30's were caused more by British administrative inaction than by Zionist settlement. He knew, however, that the Arabs would oppose British participation in the same way that they opposed Zionist efforts. Nevertheless, he said, "England must fulfill its obligations without considering the local mood."¹⁸

Once Jewish sovereignty was accomplished, Jabotinsky reiterated again and again, the Arabs as a minority would not suffer: "Equal rights will not just be promised, they will be realized. The two languages and all religions will be given equal rights; and each nation will receive broad rights of independent cultural sovereignty."¹⁹ A major section of the Ten Year Plan is also devoted to this discussion. The Arabs as individuals will have civil and cultural rights and will also benefit economically from the establishment of the Jewish state. The one thing they will not have is national sovereignty. While that is not something the Jews can live without, it

is something he seems to say, that the Palestinians can live without. The solution of political autonomy which he rejected for the Jews as a minority in Europe he did not reject for the Arab minority in Palestine. While such a stance may appear inconsistent, it was not inconsistent with his adherence to his highest value. This as we shall see was not nationalism in general but Jewish nationalism in particular.

What motivated Jabotinsky to suggest that the Arab problem be dealt with in this manner? Why did he feel that the Zionists had a right to treat the Arabs in this way? And how was a man who spoke so consistently of ethics and the need to treat the Arabs fairly, able to justify his program of Zionism?

On one level, Jabotinsky responded to all of these questions very directly. Indeed throughout his writings one can find three major justifications for his Zionism. The arguments were highly political, and highly intellectual arguments, addressed as we shall see in the jargon of that time. One of his central justifications was based on the issue of need and is tied to his view of the Jewish problem. The Jews, plagued by constant anti-Semitism, need a refuge. Thus he declared, "expropriating a piece of land from one who has much land to give a place to a wandering people is an act of *p13*, of justice."²⁰ On the one hand, Jabotinsky dealt with the Arab question in terms of Jewish needs. Palestinian nationalism is a secondary consideration

to Jewish need. The end, saving Jews, justifies the means, in this case, making the Arabs a minority. This motivation was emphasized especially in the 30's and his tone became more urgent: the Jews need the land, especially Trans-Jordan, for humanitarian purposes, to save as many Jews as possible.

The simplest solution to this emergency situation he tells his critics in "The Ethics of the Iron Wall" would be to find another land in which to settle. He takes pains, however, to show that unsettled, unpopulated areas do not exist in the world today, that all land has been parceled out, and that "the natives" in every land are not interested in having foreign settlers invading their homeland. Thus, he concludes, the Jews are faced with two possibilities: either forcing their way into Palestine or continuing to live "like wandering dogs."²¹ For Jabotinsky, necessity makes the Jewish claim to the land justified.

A second justification he uses is that the Zionists deserve the land because they are better able to cultivate it. "The land in this territory," he says, "belongs first of all to those who know how to exploit it better. The land does not belong to 'natives' but to humanity, to that nation which knows how to make it fruitful and productive."²² Jabotinsky's assumption here is a common one of his time: that the earth exists to be made productive and that that group which can produce more from it is the more valuable group. One need only look at the

land now he says, to see that the Jews possess a superior ability at developing it. He cites statistics showing the dramatic increase in Jewish development since combined British-Zionist efforts began in 1920. He cites the increase of agricultural settlements, the creation of hydro-power stations, the introduction of electricity, planting of trees, creation of a university and a technical high school, etc. as some of the many accomplishments. Compared with those of other countries involved in colonization, the Zionist achievements, he boasts, are much greater and much more impressive. And needless to say, compared with what the Arabs have done with the land, such achievements reflect how much more appropriate is Zionist control of the land than Arab control.

Thirdly, Jabotinsky's belief in the racial factor and the superiority of Western culture provides another justification for his form of Zionism. European expansionism in the form of Zionism is justified he says because the white race is bringing a superior culture into the East. In "These Things Were Not Said to Us" he discusses this notion that the Zionists are coming to bring culture to the natives. In his view, progress demands colonialism. The preservation of the white race and the spreading of Western culture in all parts of the world are essential for the progress of civilization. Of the two races, black and white, it is the white race which should survive for the good of humanity and civilization: "The first law of

nature is self-preservation," he declares. "I am prepared to fight for this, for the rule of my race and no one will tell me that I must give up my interests for the good of the race of the natives."²³ For the preservation of the white race then and in the interests of progress, the Zionists are justified in doing what they are doing. Thus, Jewish need and know-how validate the Zionist program. However, in a subtle shift in argument, Jabotinsky maintains in "The Iron Wall" that Zionism is not only justified but that it is in face ethical. Recognizing perhaps certain challenges to his arguments, challenges of an ethical nature, he moves to discuss Zionism on that level:

Either Zionism is ethical or unethical. We had to decide for ourselves even before we took the first shekel. And we answered in the affirmative. And if Zionism is ethical, that is 'just', then its justice will have to be carried out without considering the willingness or unwillingness of anyone else. And if A, B or C want to disturb the carrying out of justice with force, because they find that it is not comfortable for them, we will have to disturb them -- with force. That is ethics, there is no other kind.²⁴

Jabotinsky is addressing primarily his fellow Zionists whom he feels are naive in their approach to the Arab problem, because of their belief that the right attitude towards them will bring peace. The only attitude he says that is appropriate at this time is to build the "iron wall." This passage asserting the ethical nature of Zionism is used at the end of the article, presumably to bolster his argument that the Jews need to build an iron wall against the Arabs quickly and without vacillation.

It is Jabotinsky's use of the term "ethical" that

draws our attention. Jabotinsky understands the power inherent in the term ethics; he knows that ethics speaks with a great deal of authority, especially to Jews. He has shifted his arguments here, in order to speak to the general moral sense of people as well as to that of the Jewish people in particular. He wants to make another compelling case for Zionism, one which speaks to the ethical sensitivities of the people listening. Jabotinsky rarely uses the term "ethical" in justifying Zionism, although this is not the only passage in which we find it. Either the issue is not of major concern to him or perhaps he knows that it is a difficult and potentially thorny issue and has thus chosen not to raise it too frequently. He does not, however, ignore the issue, as some politicians might choose to do, and it is the way in which he addresses it that is of interest to us.

In the usual Kantian sense of the word, ethics refers to a universal standard, something which applies to all people. And yet, as Jabotinsky applies it to Zionism, it takes on a different meaning. For clearly, as he himself recognized in his writings, not everyone will receive equal treatment in a Jewish state. Jews will be the majority; Arabs the minority. The Arabs will not be oppressed physically, but they will not be treated in the same way as the majority group. They will not have the same equal rights as the Jewish group has.

How then does Jabotinsky proceed from ethics, where everyone will be treated equally, to a politics that calls

for limited rights for Arabs? And how does he call that ethical? How is he able to go from arguing ethics -- equal rights for equal people -- to calling for force against the Arab people in order to take the land? How is he able to call that justice?

Jabotinsky begins by asserting that ethics and justice are synonymous, an equation that is simple and fair. The first principle of justice as we know it calls for equality: equal people should have equal rights and equal claims. In this context, Arabs and Jews must be treated alike. He then, however, brings in a second principle of justice, with which we too are familiar: certain people have special needs; those special needs call for special treatment. One has to then decide which group has the more special need and claim. In this case, Jabotinsky asserts that the Jews in fact have special needs, and these radically outweigh the special needs of the Arabs. While he believes that equal people must be treated equally, he begins to interpret this first principle through the second. The Jews, he argues, are a group with extraordinary disabilities; plagued everywhere by anti-Semitism and civil and religious discrimination, they need their own land. Palestine is their only homeland, their only shelter. The Arabs in Palestine, on the other hand, with somewhat lesser problems, have other lands to which they can go if they must live under their own sovereignty. Other Arab countries can provide them with shelter. In the determination of justice there is no question but that Jewish needs

greatly supersede Arab needs. Hence justice, the principle of deciding between competing claims, clearly favors Palestine as a Jewish state.

Having argued that the Jewish claim to the land is far more justified than the Arab need, Jabotinsky takes that argument to its extreme by means of another equation. Fulfillment of Jewish need is the greatest principle. The fulfillment of justice sometimes requires force. In the case of Zionism, it absolutely requires force, given the opposition of the natives. To pursue their just ends, the Zionists can thus use such force as is required to settle the land. Furthermore they can supersede the major Arab need, sovereignty, in order to truly have control of their destiny. By thus emphasizing the second, narrower component of justice (that of special needs and special treatment) to the exclusion of the wider, more inclusive first principle Jabotinsky is able to assert an extreme form of nationalism. It is a nationalism which deprives Arab nationalism of any real status and leaves the Arab people second-class citizens in what is admittedly their homeland. Jabotinsky has thus carefully and very consciously used terms with universal associations (ethics, justice) to justify the particular Zionist program. Through a careful application of political logic, he has reinterpreted them in a different way, with the result that ethics now serves to justify a politics that is extremely particularistic and a nationalism that is highly egoistic.

Thus because the Jews have the superior claim to the land, Arab resistance to their activities is in Jabotinsky's estimation, immoral. By the same twist of logic, he again draws on a universal standard, morality, to criticize Arab opposition to unfair treatment: "We believe that the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine is a result of the highest justice and any opposition to it should be considered immoral. It is impossible to acquiesce to injustice; with regard to the specific question of the creation of a majority, there is no possibility that we can make concessions. Against injustice it is possible only to fight!"²⁵ Jabotinsky's tone here as elsewhere is tough and resolute. Undoubtedly, the tone in which he spoke, even more than the actual content of his speech, caused people to consider him to be intransigent and belligerent towards the Arabs.

In the last analysis, Jabotinsky's logic provided for one authoritative claim to the land and no more. Because of his view of nationalism in general, he could and did recognize Palestinian nationalism and the significance of Palestine as the national homeland for the Arabs of Palestine. He could and did allow for two nations to live together in the land. He could allow them a certain status and rights as individuals and as a minority group. But because of his views of Jewish nationalism and his unswerving commitment to alleviating the problem of Jewish need, he could not consider the national needs of the Arabs

equal to the national needs of the Jews. Not any nationalism, but Jewish nationalism was the ultimate value in Jabotinsky's thought; it was the standard by which he evaluated, and constantly criticized, the actions and policies of the British, the Zionists and the Arabs.

As we have seen, racial considerations were an integral part of Jabotinsky's thought. He did not intend, however, for his theories to be used for the destruction or the oppression of the Arabs. Jabotinsky was a racist but he was not a Hitler. No doubt the intransigent style in which he stated his views, and his generally condescending tone towards them, caused people to identify him as an enemy of the Arabs. His use of racial language, we should note, was fairly typical of early 20th century thinkers, including other Zionist thinkers. He did believe that the Jews were by race superior to the Arabs and that Jewish nationalism was superior to Arab nationalism. Such superiority however is never seen by him as a mandate to oppress another group.

Finally, essential to Jabotinsky's justification of Zionism is the notion of the supremacy of Europe. As people of the West, the Jews possess all the superior attributes he ascribes to the European people. Did Jabotinsky in fact consider the Jews of Eastern Europe and Russia "of the West"? What would he have said about the Falashas - the black Jews of Ethiopia? Would he have also considered them as Western? Would his ideology have even

allowed "Bushmen" to be Jewish? What about the Sephardic Jews, those Jews of Arabic countries (who were in recent years to become so important a part of the State of Israel)? Were they also by culture and spirit people of the West? Apparently in response to his critics, Jabotinsky did address this latter issue. Taking his definition to its logical conclusion, he claimed that the Sephardim too possess a European culture: "All the Ashkenazi Jews and certainly half of the Sephardi ones have been resident in Europe for 2000 years. This is a sufficiently long time for spiritual integration."²⁶ It is difficult to know if Jabotinsky really believed this or if he was reading Jewish history this way in order to justify his Zionist theories. Clearly he opposed the notion that the Jews and Jewish culture could continue to be part of the East. By admitting this, it would seem to indicate that the Jews were primarily of Eastern stock and Jabotinsky would then not be able to apply his theory of European superiority to them. He would then lose one of his central justifications of Zionism.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

¹ VJ, "The East" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3. ed. Joseph Klausner (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1964), pp. 31-32.

² VJ, "On Islam" in Ibid., p. 22.

³ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁴ Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1981), p. 168.

⁵ VJ, "The East" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3, p. 34.

⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷ VJ, "The Ethics of the Iron Wall" in Ibid., p. 16.

⁸ Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism, p. 180.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ VJ, "The Iron Wall" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3, p. 9.

¹¹ VJ, "The Arab Problem Undramatized" in Ibid., p. 249.

¹² VJ, "The Iron Wall" in Ibid., p. 6.

¹³ Rael Jean Isaac, Party and Politics in Israel (New York: Longman, Inc. 1981), p. 159.

¹⁴ VJ, "The Arab Problem Undramatized" in Ktavim Nivcharim, vol. 3, pp. 249, 251.

¹⁵ VJ, "The Iron Wall" in Ibid., pp. 6-8.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

- 17 Ibid., p. 11.
- 18 VJ, "Round Table with the Arabs" in Ibid., p. 58.
- 19 Ibid., p. 55.
- 20 VJ, "Ethics of the Iron Wall" in Ibid., pp. 15-16.
- 21 Ibid., p. 15.
- 22 VJ, "These Things Were Not Said to Us" in Ibid.,
pp. 43-44.
- 23 Ibid., p. 44.
- 24 VJ, "The Iron Wall" in Ibid., p. 11.
- 25 VJ, "What Do the Revisionists Want?" in Ktavim,
vol. 11, ed. Ari Jabotinsky (Jerusalem: Ari Jabotinsky,
1952), p. 299.
- 26 Avineri, The Makings of Modern Zionism, p. 180.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

It is at this point that we need to look at Jabotinsky with somewhat more of a subjective and evaluative eye. We shall attempt to go beyond the conclusions so frequently reached in the current literature on this controversial figure where Jabotinsky is portrayed either as a saint or a demagogue. Given what has been said thus far in this research, what can we say about the man and his ideas? What contribution if any did he make to Zionist thought? What were the positive things he had to say and what were the problematic areas of his thought?

There are several things, in my view, which must be said in his favor. His strong emphasis on the need for defense in the early Yishuv is an idea which while criticized in its day became very significant. From early on, he argued the need for a Jewish self-defense unit in Palestine. He understood that settlement would create local tensions and that the pioneers would have the need to protect themselves. The moderate Zionists believed quite naively that settlement, even gradual settlement, could be accomplished peacefully. Especially after the riots of

1920-21, they quickly sensed the merit and realism of Jabotinsky's idea.

Within Jabotinsky's writings we find his vision of a new type of Jew. In this respect, he takes his place with other post-Emancipation thinkers who, in response to modernity, call for a transformation of Jewish values. He, like them, sought to transform the image of the weak and powerless ghetto Jew, into the Jew who is both aristocrat and military hero. He emphasized the virtues of self-discipline, fine manners, neatness, loyalty, courage, as well as physical strength. He believed that the Jews, in order to maintain a nation, must be willing and able to control their destiny with both military and political power. It is this image of the new Jew -- assertive, proud and able to defend himself -- which I think was a significant contribution to Zionist literature. It was significant because a serious movement of Jewish nationalism would require a change in Jewish consciousness. The path to nationhood would not be easy and would require certain qualities of strength and character. A movement of nationalism would require an ability to face the often harsh world of reality, where an ability to shoot would be essential. As Laquer has written, "[Jabotinsky] offered a realistic view of the ways of the world -- to those who were unfamiliar that power and might are all parts of the realities of national existence."¹

To be sure, Jabotinsky emphasized these "soldier" values to the exclusion of others. The military values he stressed are not in my view the only ones important to the new Jew living in his own land. Indeed the new Jew he advocated was to be secular, and more worldly; he would espouse a Jewish nationalism that emphasized nationalism -- national pride, and deemphasized the Jewish component. And yet, Jabotinsky's voice was important if only to provide a needed balance to the more liberal views of his day. The more moderate Zionists, like the Labor Zionists, did not want to face the issue of Arab resistance. Like true liberals, they believed that discussion and compromise would settle the conflicts between them and the Arabs. They thus viewed Jabotinsky's directness and "militarism" as unhelpful and inflammatory.

In certain ways, Jabotinsky was an astute politician. He had a far better understanding than his colleagues of Arab reaction to Jewish settlement. He was far more realistic about the meaning of Zionism for "the natives" - that it was going to engender conflicting claims to the land and great opposition to becoming a minority. He understood early on what the moderates came to acknowledge years later: that however much consideration the Zionists gave the Arabs, the Arabs would always oppose the creation of a Jewish majority and state at whatever speed it took place. He articulated the notion that the Arabs would protest not only the submergence of their national

identity but any alteration of their traditional position in Palestine.

It is interesting to note then that in the 30's, after attempts at reconciliation with the Arabs had failed, the more moderate Zionists would espouse certain of Jabotinsky's ideas which they had previously rejected: that negotiations with the Arabs were useless; that only with more Jews who possessed more power could there be a lessening of Arab-Jewish tensions; that a Jewish armed force is necessary to cope with local tensions; and that ultimately parity between Jews and Arabs would not be possible until the problem of settling the post-war refugees was solved first.

In certain ways then Jabotinsky was ahead of his time. The application of his ideology of nationalism to specific policies caused him to suggest notions that were to become significant and which were later on to become part and parcel of mainstream Zionist policy. In addition, his strong sense of Jewish nationalism caused him to be one of the most outspoken advocates for the Jews in Europe in the 30's, working tirelessly for their evacuation from Europe. For all that one may disagree with his ideas, Jabotinsky was an unusual politician. Unlike most politicians, he was a thinker and an intellectual, who very consciously and carefully formulated his policies based on intellectual ideas. He was an eloquent orator, who with great passion and a gift for languages, articulated

his views to Jews and non-Jews all over the world with the hope of finding a solution to the Jewish problem in Europe.

In addition to these positive contributions, there were certain ways in which the application of his ideological views to political policy was to be problematic. One prime example is his analysis of the British interest in Palestine. To his final days, Jabotinsky relied on British participation in his Zionist program. This reliance, based on ideology rather than reality, was to be the weakest link in the Revisionist program. For all his desire to face reality with the Arabs and use reality as a guide in formulating Zionist policies, Jabotinsky was incredibly naive and unperceptive in his belief in the so-called British-Zionist alliance. His ideology of the European character of Zionism and Zionism as European expansionism put blinders on his eyes that prevented him from understanding British motives. In emphasizing the British-Zionist alliance, Jabotinsky overlooked almost completely the importance of the Arab factor in British calculations and misread British support of the Arabs in the late 20's and 30's. While he recognized that the British had imperial interests in the Middle East, he erroneously identified British imperialism with the Jews as necessary. He continued to believe, despite mounting evidence to the contrary, that the British needed the Jews as the exclusive instrument of their imperial interests. He failed to see that the British were using both the Jews and the Arabs,

often pitting one group against the other, in order to achieve their own interests. He was so convinced by his own ideology that he could not conceive of the possibility of the British acting only for themselves.

While it may seem that because of its single-mindedness, Revisionism was strategically better prepared to meet the Jewish need for sovereignty, that claim becomes spurious in light of the evidence. By depending so heavily on the British link in the successful realization of Zionism, Jabotinsky left the Jews more vulnerable and less prepared to meet their needs. In calling for massive and swift Jewish immigration and settlement, he was continually dependent on the British to help in implementing that scheme. In calling for Jews to use force against the Arabs, he was keeping the Jews dependent on the British for that force. Jabotinsky's demands were based not on actual power possessed by the Zionists but on potential power which he assumed they would gain from the British-Zionist alliance. The fact that British aid and support for the Zionists was for the most part non-forthcoming, made Jabotinsky's demands sound quite empty. As Avineri put it, "By stressing maximalist political and military aims and without a firm foundation in the country and without real allies, [Jabotinsky's thought] leads to empty rhetoric and to strategic and political weakness."² The fact that the Revisionist plan depended on allies who were not in hindsight true allies would have had truly

catastrophic consequences had it become mainstream policy. Rather than encouraging the Jews to build the state gradually from within, it would have kept Jews waiting indefinitely for the mercy and benevolence of Britain or some other country.

Jabotinsky's general approach to the Arabs was the second major area of his politics which was problematic. His policies were here too directly influenced by his ideology of nationalism. Because of his ideology, Jabotinsky, perhaps more than any other Zionist leader, belittled the political consciousness and effectiveness of the Arab national movement. Convinced of the racial, cultural and economic superiority of the Zionists, he did not believe that the Muslim world would ever be a serious threat to Jewish nationalism. In the early days of the Mandate, he did not consider Arab nationalism to be a serious obstacle to Jewish settlement; he feared only that if a Jewish majority were not speedily established it might become so.

But Jabotinsky was not alone in his misinterpretation of the potential strength of Arab nationalism. Intent on their own pursuits, almost all the Zionist leaders misjudged Arab reaction to Zionism. Caught up in their own national movement, they did not recognize that the Arabs were also undergoing a national revival and were most fearful of the aggressive new immigrants. In the end, neither maximalists nor moderates saw the Arab question as

the critical question in Zionist settlement, one which would involve the Yishuv in a conflict which would last for generations. In hindsight, they were so occupied with the problem they were solving that they refused to see the one they were creating.

In the end then, the major critique of Jabotinsky is directed not only towards these miscalculated political policies, but even more so towards his ideology as a whole. It is on the one hand a critique of Jabotinsky's belief that Zionism is morally unassailable. Is Jewish nationalism somehow different from other forms of nationalism and therefore free from all moral scrutiny? Or is it, like any other movement of nationalism, to be evaluated and judged from an ethical point of view? For Jabotinsky as we have seen, the canons of ethics and of justice declare that the Jews because of their superior needs can claim special rights to the land and are correct in resisting those who oppose them with force. Thus in whatever way the Jews can meet their goals they are justified in doing so. The more liberal part of his nationalism demands that Jews not oppress the Arabs in the land nor drive them out. While the Jews have the only legitimate claim to the land, there is still to be a place for the Arabs in the land. Nevertheless, no matter how much euphemism was used, he was espousing a complete alteration of the national status and rights of the people in the land. His "strong" nationalism would mean the complete denial of the national rights of

the people already living in the land.

It is the position of the more moderate Zionists, in my opinion, which was the more acceptable from an ethical point of view. While concerned with the particular needs of the Jewish people, the moderates also took more seriously the Arab claim to the land. They thus attempted in their response to strike that delicate balance which Jews have faced historically -- the balance between universalism and particularism. They attempted to walk a fine line in creating a nationalism which would meet Jewish needs and yet not oppress the needs of the neighboring people. Like Jabotinsky, they affirmed that Jewish needs justified a national movement whereby Jews would settle in their historic homeland. But unlike Jabotinsky, they acknowledged that there were two claims to the land -- that of the Arabs as well as that of the Jews -- and that therefore the Jews must not suppress the needs and national identity of the Arabs in the process of establishing their own national existence.

While the more moderate Zionists were forced to come to some of the same conclusions of Jabotinsky later on, they did so after years of attempting to implement a more liberal form of nationalism, one that declared the means of attaining the goals to be an important consideration. They consistently attempted to realize a nationalism which did not suppress the claims of the Arabs. Even when faced with the emergency situation of the Jews in Europe in

the late 30's, they compromised on their territorial demands for the Jewish homeland and accepted the partition plan proposed by the British.

In hindsight, given the tragedy which befell European Jewry, it is somewhat difficult to oppose Jabotinsky's national movement, one which was so single-mindedly focused on saving Jews and committed to Jewish security and normalization. In addition given the shabby treatment which Israel has been subjected to in more recent times, especially in the United Nations, it is not hard to feel that Israel must do all it can to protect itself and its needs and worry less about others. And yet, ultimately because of its denial of the Arabs' significant claim to the land, it is impossible to affirm Jabotinsky's type of nationalism today. Because of its avowed particularism, at the expense of the national identity of the Palestinian Arabs, such a movement can be deemed unethical.

Finally, it is Jabotinsky's whole ideology of superior and inferior peoples that deserves the most severe criticism today. At the core of his attitude vis-a-vis the Arabs was the belief in racial and cultural determinism. The Arabs are by race, he has said, among the inferior peoples in the world; by culture, being of the East, they are part of a degenerate, uncivilized culture. The Jews by race are among the superior peoples of the world; they are, he argued somewhat tortuously, people of the West, part of Europe, and thus intellectually and culturally part

of the enlightened. Racial, cultural and economic inferiority go hand in hand. It is the white race alone which contributes to the betterment of humanity and civilization. It is the white race alone that knows how to be more productive; it is the white race alone which is the possessor and nurturer of real culture.

Racial ideology was a mode of thought endemic in Western civilization, influencing the greatest and weakest minds of the past century and a half. In the history of modern nationalism, race was a critical factor. The notion of racial superiority was often a component of imperialistic movements, providing the rationale to conquer and rule the more "backward" peoples. Jabotinsky's ideology of inferior and superior races was nothing new in its time. Yet it is ironic that it was the racial factor that became the new key element in modern forms of anti-Semitism. Little did he know that the end result of racial theories in Germany, having endowed the Jews with negative stereotypes and vices, would lead to the barbarism of the Holocaust.

Having been the victims of Nazi racial imperialism, Jews know too well the implications of theories of racial determinism. We know too, of the inimical consequences of racial prejudice, which has subjugated the blacks in this country even until this day. We should be aware that these very theories of racial, cultural and economic inferiority served and continue to serve as rationale for European

colonialism in and exploitation of Third World countries.

There are tendencies today, with the resurrection and embellishment of the Jabotinsky legend, to avoid mention of this notion -- that at the core of Jabotinsky's policies towards the Arabs is an ideology of racism. No doubt when modern disciples read from his writings at the gala celebration of the Jabotinsky centennial on November 11, 1980, they did not include the passages discussing Arab racial inferiority. Perhaps they shared a tinge of the discomfort which many of us feel today with Jabotinsky's thought. Perhaps they sensed that such an ideology of Zionism, based on theories of permanent race inequality, would cast its pale over all of his other accomplishments. For all that he did accomplish, Jabotinsky's worldview goes against our most cherished values of human equality with equal rights for every human being. It is this clash with our fundamental ethical notions that must call into question the relevance of Jabotinsky's teachings for the world today.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

¹ Walter Laquer, A History of Zionism (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 380.

² Shlomo Avineri, The Making of Modern Zionism (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1981), p. 209.

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