DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL RIGHTS: JERUSALEM'S ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN THE ERA OF STATE-BUILDING

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This essay focuses on a comparative analysis of the contribution of Jerusalem's academic community to the emergence of a civil society during the formative years of Israeli state-building. Although many of the prominent scholars were not only active participants in the Zionist movement, but after their emigration to Palestine became personally dependent on the political success of the Zionist project, their loyalty to the political leadership of the Yishuv and the state was limited by their sense of truth and justice. In what was, at the time, a very etatist society, Israeli scholars maintained the principles of political freedom, and contributed a great deal to the advancement of the ideals of civil rights (especially with respect to recognition of the personal and collective rights of the Arab minority), and to the development of a critically-oriented public discussion on the central issues of state-building.

Intellectuals in Politics — An Introduction

At least since Plato, intellectuals have portrayed themselves as vital to the good of humanity, and have done so in ways that depict them as the consciousness of society, representative spokes-

men who act as the guardians of truth and justice for all. This fig-
ure occurs in Kant's "image of 'the ill-natured men' who redeem
our race as lawgivers and scholars."[1] Of course, neither Plato nor
Kant used the word "intellectual" itself to refer to these represen-
tative "leaders" or "masters." The term "intellectual" did not
emerge until the Dreyfus Affair in France in the late 1890s, with
many of the overtly political associations of this term not being
acquired until much later. Nevertheless, the figure of the person
endowed with a universal value able to describe and analyze a
situation or a condition from this point of view and to prescribe
what ought to be done in order for this subject to realize itself, or
at least in order for its realization to progress, was by then already
firmly established. At least since the eighteenth century, Western
culture has supported the right of the intellectual to speak, in the
capacity of master, of a truth and justice which can and must be
applied universally.

According to the classical concept, intellectuals, by the very
nature of their work and autonomous position, have a responsibil-
ity for truthfulness and towards truth. Lewis Coser insisted that

> In the tasks they perform modern intellectuals are descendants of
> the priestly upholders of sacred tradition, but they are also and at
> the same time descendants of the biblical prophets, of those in-
> spired madmen who preached in the wilderness far removed from
> the institutionalized pieties of court and synagogue, castigating
> the men of power for the wickedness of their ways....They con-
> sider themselves special custodians of abstract ideas like reason
> and justice and truth, jealous guardians of moral standards that
> are too often ignored in the market place and the houses of
> power.[2]

Timothy Garton Ash has commented that "the intellectual's
job is to seek truth and then to present it as fully and as clearly
and as interestingly as possible."[3] This was a view put forward by
Alan Montefiore when he argued: "By 'an intellectual' I mean
here to refer to anyone who takes a committed interest in the va-
lidity and truth of ideas for their own sake."[4] Moreover, as argued
by Shlomo Avineri, as far as intellectuals are concerned, "there is
no *a priori* determination [of ideas]," so that "choice is the very
embodiment of the intellectual's determined social being."[5] Avin-
eri gives voice to perhaps the prevalent image of the intellectual:
rootless and therefore free of social constraints with respect to his
politics. Taking the argument further, Timothy Garton Ash as-
signs to the intellectual "the role of the thinker or writer who en-
gages in public discussion of issues of public policy, in politics in

the broadest sense, while deliberately not engaging in the pursuit of political power." There should therefore be a "necessarily adversarial relationship between the independent intellectual and the professional politician," and this, he believes, should be as much the case in a liberal, democratic state as in a dictatorship.[6]

However, it should be emphasized that any comparative analysis of the role of intellectuals in political discourse inevitably leads to a number of methodological and epistemological dilemmas.

First, as it has been proposed by Karl Mannheim, all ideas are related to and are influenced by the social and historical situation in which they emerge; ideas are "bound to a location" in the social process. Simultaneously, as was mentioned by Ron Eyerman, "how we understand the term 'intellectual' depends to a great extent upon the cultural traditions alive in a society."[7] For example, Seymour Martin Lipset emphasizes the difference between the definition of intellectual in America and Europe, claiming that unlike Europe, "in America where university educations are much more common, graduates do not constitute a distinct class or community," and professionals who apply culture as part of their jobs are not included in the category of intellectuals.[8] Another illustration of this thesis is provided by Gary Morson, who analyzed the specific national peculiarities of nineteenth century Russian intellectuals' self-definition, which is based on a commitment to a specific set of beliefs organized around socialism, atheism and revolution, as well as an adherence to a code of conduct that included ritual contempt for everything bourgeois.[9]

Second, there is a common conceptual problem of linkage between the practice of scientific research and the conception of intellectuals as a separate status group. Presumably, science in general is a form of public knowledge: as Yaron Ezrahi puts it, "the paradigms of knowledge which supported the rise of modern science appeared to expand the social matrix of the community of knowers beyond the former limits of a privileged, exclusive elite of scholars."[10] In other words, progress in scientific research inevitably leads to the extension of the community of knowers — but does it also lead to the extension of the community of intellectuals, if such there is?

To be more exact, the term *"les intellectuels"* first acquired widespread usage as a consequence of Emile Zola's open letter to French President Felix Faure and the *"manifeste des intellectuels"* evoked by one of the most famous public discourses of modern history — the Dreyfus Case (1898).[11] Its meaning was then clearly indicated by Ferdinand Brunetiere — one of the critics of this

manifesto from the extreme right, who was the first to use this term derisively. It signified persons of high scholarly or scientific standing, who presumed to represent the nation's conscience on basic political questions. Brunetiere touched upon the essential issue of what has been called by Richard Hofstadter "anti-intellectualism," namely, the question why the voice of "writers, scientists, professors and philologists" should have some special importance — more than, for example, the voice of generals, priests or professional politicians. Moreover, intellectuals always constitute a minority of a larger population, the rest of which does not necessarily support their activities or regard them as its representatives. Thus, the mandate of intellectuals is based on their own personal consciousness of political responsibility, reflecting a complex relationship between personal consciousness and social environment.

In general, "the various attempts to define the intellectual appear to fall into two broad categories: those attributing personal characteristics on the one side, and those that look to social structure and function, on the other."[12] Defining the intellectual according to his or her personal characteristics, Robert Merton considers individuals as intellectuals "insofar as they devote themselves to cultivating and formulating knowledge";[13] Lasch defines an intellectual as "a person for whom thinking fulfills at once the function of work and play";[14] Edward Shils — as one who feels the "interior need to penetrate beyond the screen of immediate concrete experience"; Lewis Coser — as somebody "who never seem satisfied with things as they are."[15] Presumably, Coser's definition refers to the common conflict between an intellectual and an existing social order. This view leads to the predetermination of the essence of intellectual activity by its social context. As formulated by Lewis Feuer, "the intellectual is one who chooses to estrange himself from the cultural superstructure. To call a person an intellectual is to suggest that in some basic way he stands against or apart from the contemporary dominant culture."[16] This definition eliminates any difference between an intellectual and a dissident, claiming opposition to dominant culture as determined by corporative power elites to be an indispensable condition of an intellectuals' consciousness.

Vaclav Havel defines the intellectual as "a person who has devoted his or her life to thinking in general terms about the affairs of this world and the broader context of things."[17] Other people do this too, but what marks out intellectuals, Havel contends, is that they do it *professionally*. Surprisingly, it was Vaclav Havel, a dissident playwright turned politician and state president, who ar-

gued that intellectuals' "broader sense of responsibility for the
state of the world and its future...has done a great deal of harm"
when intellectuals have presumed to "offer universal solutions" to
the world's problems. Such "utopian intellectuals" should there-
fore be resisted in favor of "the other type of intellectual: those
who are mindful of the ties that link everything in this world to-
gether, who approach the world with humility, but also with an
increased sense of responsibility, who wage a struggle for every
good thing." Such intellectuals, Havel argues, should be listened
to "with the greatest attention, regardless of whether they work as
independent critics, holding up a much-needed mirror to politics
and power, or are directly involved in politics." He concludes,
"After all, who is better equipped to decide about the fate of this
globally interconnected civilization than people who are most
keenly aware of these interconnections, who pay the greatest re-
gard to them, who take the most responsible attitude toward the
world as a whole?"[18]

The various ways of defining the intellectuals' role differ in
many important respects, each playing on a particular aspect or
aspects of what their proponents believe most clearly identifies
them. However, as mentioned by Stephen Leonard, their differ-
ences should not be perceived as merely theoretical or abstract.
Rather, the various definitions "should be understood as political
statements, crafted in response to a constellation of developments
in which the identity of the intellectual has become a matter of
ongoing social concern."[19] Moreover, the terms in which they are
crafted may be seen as outcomes of a long history of conceptual
change that has constituted and reconstituted the intellectual as an
entity in which sociological, moral, and epistemic issues are mu-
tually constituted dimensions in conceptual/political struggle. In
other words, the disputes they embody rise and fall with social
and political conflict over the persons, practices, and self-
understandings presupposed in the use of — or attempt to trans-
form — the concept of the intellectual.

It should be mentioned that the image of the independent intel-
lectual has held a powerful grip upon the twentieth century imagi-
nation. But the independent intellectual has also come under de-
tailed scrutiny. As mentioned by Jeremy Jennings and Anthony
Kemp-Welch, at least three questions have to be addressed in this
respect. The first concerns the proper role of the intellectual:
whether the stance of detached independence has either ever been
attained or would be desirable. The second asks whether, in socio-
logical terms, even the *relative* autonomy of the intellectual can
still be said to exist and, thus, whether the societal grounds of the

intellectual's authority have been irretrievably undermined. The third explicitly challenges the philosophical basis of the independent intellectual's claim to speak in the name of an abstract and timeless truth and thereby raises the difficulty of in whose name and for whom the intellectual speaks.[20] Does the modern intellectual develop his political ideas relatively independently of his social location? Or does the intellectual's social location determine the character of his political ideas to a considerable degree?

Israeli Intellectuals and the Ethos of Nation-Building: A Review of the Current Debate

The condition of the a priori taking of the dissident position of an eternal opponent of the political and cultural superstructure could become very problematic in the case of a state in the making. In this situation, intellectuals are usually expected to contribute to the construction of the cultural identity of the developing society. This role may be doubly gratifying for intellectuals. It permits them to conceal their actual social marginalization; at the same time, they are able to legitimize their roles as teachers and leaders of the society. However, one can follow Michael Walzer who, while examining the role of intellectuals as social critics, emphasizes that "criticism requires [one] to step away from certain sorts of power relationships within society; it is not connection but authority and domination from which we must distance ourselves."[21] The question is whether this role of intellectuals as social critics is legitimate and possible during the epoch of nation-building. For this reason, the analysis of the role of intellectuals in one of the most successful examples of the nation-building in the twentieth century — i.e., the revitalization of the Jewish national home in Palestine/*Eretz Israel* — could be of particular interest.

Summarizing previous research on the role of Jewish intellectuals in the design of Israeli society and public consensus concerning its collective identity, one can distinguish between three complementary critical approaches. The first, suggested by Anita Shapira, assigns the intellectual a marginal role in the cultivation of a national culture in the formative years of the Zionist movement. The second, proposed by Michael Keren, claims the uselessness of intellectuals after the achievement of political independence during the first years of statehood, which is generally accompanied by a dissolution of their vision into a multitude of

trivial concerns. The third, assumed by Nissan Oren and Yaron Ezrahi, takes into consideration the impossibility of prolonged planning based on the vision of the intellectual due to the changing patterns of the contemporary democratic system, which is characterized by rotations within a relatively closed competition between rival political groups.

According to Shapira, whose operational definition of *Eretz Israel* intellectuals applies to the founders of the Hebrew University,

> The University played a somewhat marginal role in the young Zionist Movement and in particular in the Zionist Labor Movement. In European national movements — in Czech nationalism for example — the university played a central role in the revival or creation of a national culture: The language, the national epic, the folklore were all cultivated and nurtured by the University. This was not the case in the Jewish renaissance: the cultural revolution took place outside of academia. The University's marginal role in the cultivation of a national culture during the formative years of the Zionist Movement stemmed from the fact that the Hebrew University was not a catalyst of the national movement, but was instead a result of the movement's emergence. By the time the Hebrew University was established in the mid-1920s, a secular Hebrew cultural infrastructure was already in existence, independent of the academy.[22]

Unlike Shapira, Michael Keren has focused on the place of *Eretz Israel* intellectuals in the politically independent Israeli society as it crystallized from 1948 on. According to Keren, an intellectual who plays a major role in a national movement sees himself, according to Alvin Gouldner, as a historical agent; but after independence, he finds himself to be useless. Scientists and professionals are called on to serve the nation-building effort — but historians, linguists, writers, and teachers are pushed aside. This increases the intellectuals' unease with the new state; they feel alienated from the events taking place around them.

> In the new state, the intellectuals' former leadership role is lost; they feel politically impotent. From an enthusiastic vanguard, they turn into helpless observers of the social and political scene — a scene characterized by pettiness compared to the glorious past. Nothing is more disenchanting to them than the dissolution of their vision into a thousand trivial concerns, but this is what they now see happening.[23]

Moreover,

> In Israel, the manifestation of unease was nourished by an additional factor: cultural activity for its own sake has traditionally been rejected. Jewish intellectuals were expected to make a contribution to whatever community served as a focal point for their work. In the nineteenth century, the national community became that focal point; after independence, many intellectuals had difficulty abandoning it. When cultural life is new, [and the] sovereign state naturally began to follow an autonomous path, they felt that something was amiss.[24]

The pessimism of political scientists such as Nissan Oren and Yaron Ezrahi has been influenced by the recognition of essential peculiarities of current patterns of democracy. Developing Plato's idea, Lewis Feuer declared that "the intellectual is an amalgam of the prophet and the philosopher-king";[25] however, according to Nissan Oren's sense of reality, "philosopher-kings are hard to come by in modern times. Contemporary governments, moreover, operate under continual stress, leaving little or no time for its captains to contemplate and reflect."[26] Furthermore, the advent of plebiscitarian democracy, which has been described by Max Weber in his outstanding work "Politics as a Vocation," inevitably leads to the weakening of the intellectuals' social status. In Henry Kissinger's words, "the intellectual is asked to solve problems, not to contribute to the definition of goals. In short, all too often what the policymaker wants from the intellectual is not ideas but endorsement."[27] According to Yaron Ezrahi, the responsive democracy of the latter part of the twentieth century shows a declining faith in even a loose convergence between the various interests of individual citizens, or between individual interests and the public good of the entire polity. "The declining trust in the capacity of modern political institutions to aggregate the various interests and build consensus actually undermines even the minimal degree of determinant of the normative referents of public political action which is necessary for the most moderate instrumentalization of politics."[28] Like a political elite, intellectuals are not expected to contribute their ideas to the creation of a future society; what they are expected to do is merely respond to the events that have already taken place.

Nevertheless, these pessimistic applications of different sociological perspectives have been disputed by a number of "new historians" and "critical sociologists" led by Baruch Kimmerling, who argues that "self-mobilized" intellectuals have penetrated the political culture of Israeli society. Recognizing that the language

of the social sciences is not only a tool of research but also a po-
tential instrument of political influence, the argument has been
that Israeli scholars consciously decided to surrender by legiti-
mizing government policy. Discussing the adoption of value-laden
views concerning (1) the sociopolitical boundaries of the subject
under investigation, (2) the historical periodization of the society,
(3) the terminology used to characterize the identity of the soci-
ety, (4) the way the problems are posed, and (5) the topics that are
deemed appropriate for investigation, Kimmerling maintains that
social research is not merely a reflection of a constructed social-
political reality, but also a partner in the construction of that real-
ity.[29]

This analysis is rooted in Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegem-
ony. Gramsci's argument consists of three main parts. First, he
contends that, as each of society's major social groups develops,
it creates alongside itself a set of intellectuals recruited from a
particular social group and therefore "organically" tied to it. Sec-
ondly, in addition to producing its own organic intellectuals, a
newly emergent social group finds already in existence a "tradi-
tional" set of intellectuals tied to older social groups and possess-
ing some degree of ideological influence over *all* social groups.
As the newly emergent group's power increases, it struggles "to
assimilate and to conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellec-
tuals." Thirdly, the actual formation of intellectuals' political
consciousness is determined to some degree by the character of
their education: "school is the instrument through which intellec-
tuals of various levels are elaborated."[30]

Gramsci asserted that those who live the life of the mind are
the organic creations of social and political interests, and they
give the group whose interests they serve "homogeneity and an
awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in
the social and political fields." Historically — or, as Gramsci
says, "at least in all of history up to the present" — these once-
organic intellectuals have become increasingly specialized, taking
the forms of administrators, scholars, scientists, theorists, and so
on, who then appeared as traditional intellectuals because they
"seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted
even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and
social forms."[31]

Gramsci urges us to recognize that (1) social structures are in
a constant state of developmental flux; (2) intellectuals are mobile
through these structures; (3) over time, given intellectuals may be
connected to various social groups to varying degrees; (4) intel-
lectuals' political ideas are largely a product of these connections;

and (5) the manner in which these connections exercise their in-
fluence is readily discernible if we examine (a) intellectuals' so-
cial origins, (b) the group character of the education they receive,
and (c) the opportunities with which intellectuals are presented
for becoming occupationally and politically tied to a variety of
social groups during or after their formal education. According to
this formulation, intellectuals are not classless or rootless.[32] Their
political ideas are determined in considerable measure by a rather
complex process of social affiliation and disaffiliation.

Gramsci's ideas that constructs of cultural identities, particu-
larly those based on historical arguments, are the products of in-
tellectual work, have been taken forward by Charles Wright Mills,
who argued that "the opinion-makers of every age have provided
images of the elite of their time and place."[33] Moreover, as argued
by Jostein Gripsrud, constructs of historical cultural identities
may be doubly gratifying for intellectuals: they ideologically veil
their actual social marginalization and legitimize their roles as
teachers and leaders of society.[34] Michael Keren emphasizes that
Ben-Gurion demanded the transformation of intellectual activity
as part of the process of social change. "If nation-building was to
succeed, the knowledge base of society had to be expanded; intel-
lectual activity had to become a source of new insights and
thruths as well as a source of messianic inspiration."[35] According
to Kimmerling, Israeli intellectuals met these demands:

> During most of Israel's history, Israeli social science was per-
> ceived as an integral part of the state-building process and the
> formation of the new society. Thus the legitimization process was
> double-edged: scientists supported the emerging society, which
> needed their support, and the social science community gained
> legitimacy. [Moreover], the social science community contributed
> not only to the myth-building process, but also to the hegemony
> of dominant internal forces.[36]

According to Kimmerling, the construction of political he-
gemony is impossible without the collaboration of intellectuals,
who are important partners in designing Israeli society and its po-
litical culture.

Gramsci's paradigm has been adopted and implemented for the
analysis of the role of intellectuals in Israeli state-building by
Shlomo Sand, Professor of History at Tel Aviv University, the
author of one of the two most important (although controversial)
recent books on the subject (the second book, authored by Yoram
Hazony, is discussed below). In *Intellectuals, Truth and Power*,
published in Hebrew, Sand analyzes the formation and crystalliza-

tion of the "organic" secular national intellectual and argues that "the relative autonomy that the intellectual sectors achieved vis-a-vis political power in the modernization process in the Western world was not expressed in the same way in a society of immigrant settlers [in Palestine]."[37] Sand maintains that

> By the 1930s the political center had managed, by means of party and labour-union tools, to attain a high level of control over the economic and social systems, and particularly over the capital flowing in from donations and other revenue. This control also led, ultimately, to a relatively strict supervision of the intellectual sector. The degree of dependence in the pre-state political system of the "authorized" cultural agents soon became evident and reflected in the nature of the hegemonic ideology that was to reign in Israeli society from the mid-1930s onwards. The few attempts by intellectuals to achieve a legitimate status as independent political critics were doomed to failure, whilst the "revolts" of lone individuals like the radical poets Uri Zvi Greenberg of the right wing and Alexander Pen of the left wing led to their total marginalization for many years.[38]

According to Sand, "the only intellectual institution that managed to sustain a relatively high degree of independence up until the establishment of the state in 1948 was the Hebrew University, founded in Jerusalem in 1925. The university was the breeding ground of a surprising resistance to the power systems and values of the ruling political nucleus (which, although still without sovereignty, wielded increasing authority)."[39] As Sand claims, "in the lecture halls of the university in Jerusalem crystallized the most fascinating ideological opposition to the central movement of Zionist colonization."[40] However, according to Sand,

> The failure of the universal messages of these intellectuals, combined with the outbreak of the 1948 war, put an end to this collective organized unease and, once the machinery of the new state had been set up and the university subordinated to the government's budgetary policy, intellectual protests from the university world had a personal rather than collective character (at least up until the 1960s). In the first decade of the state's existence,...the second generation of Hebrew University notables, such as the sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt, the philosopher Nathan Rotenstreich, the historian Ben-Zion Dinur, and many others, accepted the subordination of spiritual values to state and collective ones as a historical imperative. The rational bureaucracy headed by the enlightened ruler was the object of uninhibited intellectual admiration, an admiration that permitted Ben-Gurion, the first prime

minister, to establish a monolithic political culture which com-
pletely ignored criticism from both the Right and the Left.[41]

Sand summarizes his thesis by claiming that "most of the Is-
raeli intellectuals submissively accepted not only the cult of the
state, but also the veneration of members of the army, the high
priests of this cult of power."[42]

An opposite argument has been presented in another recent in-
fluential book. In *The Jewish State. The Struggle for Israel's
Soul,* Yoram Hazony, president of the neo-conservative Shalem
Center, an institute for Jewish social thought and public policy in
Jerusalem, claims that "after the founding of the state of Israel
leading figures at the Hebrew University continued to refine the
very same historical and philosophical theories that had consti-
tuted the conceptual undercarriage of Jewish anti-Zionism and
resumed their campaign to discredit Ben-Gurion and his Jewish
state as a false Messianism and a totalitarianism."[43]

According to Hazony,

> this decades-long work of delegitimizing mainstream Labor Zion-
> ism, particularly among children from Labor Zionist homes
> studying at the Hebrew University, reached its climax in the overt
> attack that Buber and dozens of other Hebrew University profes-
> sors, along with hundreds of their students, leveled against the
> prime minister during the Lavon Affair in 1961 — an attack at
> once cultural and political, and which was so successful that it ef-
> fectively ended Ben-Gurion's career in both arenas.[44]

Moreover, Hazony argues that

> The conceptual and cultural vacuum left after Ben-Gurion's dis-
> appearance was filled by the idea of Israel as an essentially
> "neutral" state, as advocated by the leading lights at the Hebrew
> University and their students. It was this often unwitting adop-
> tion of the anti-Zionist theories in the very heart of Israel's cul-
> tural mainstream in post-Ben-Gurion Israel that was largely re-
> sponsible for the phenomenon that we are now seeing under the
> name of "post-Zionism."[45]

Hazony warns: "Today there exists the possibility that Buber's
ideological children are on the verge of transforming Israel into
precisely that which the early dreamers of Zionism had fought to
escape: a state devoid of any Jewish purpose and meaning, one
that can neither inspire the Jews nor save them in distress."[46]

Here we will argue that both approaches presented above are not authentic. The Israeli intellectuals have not accepted either the cult of the state or the veneration of the cult of power. During their meetings with Ben-Gurion, in their articles and books, they disputed even the fundamental concepts of Zionist state-building. Certain Labor movement leaders such as Berl Katznelson and Zalman Shazar were personally close to prominent Hebrew University scholars such as Martin Buber, Gershom Sholem, and Hugo Bergmann; however, "despite these scholars' positive attitudes toward the Labor movement, they never became accepted as part of the Labor subculture."[47] This was due to the Labor movement's ambivalence to academia as well as its rejection of the political views of the aforementioned scholars, who were either members of or close to the Brit Shalom circle that called for Arab-Jewish dialogue and a binational Jewish-Arab Palestine.[48] However, the Hebrew University professors who were members of Brit Shalom and Ihud were faithful Zionists, and some even came from the centers of the Zionist establishment abroad.

Nevertheless, during Mandatory times and after the establishment of the State of Israel, a singular group of Central European intellectuals worked not within but side by side with official Zionism.[49] Prominent Israeli intellectuals widely expressed their disengagement from the essential concepts of state policy concerning issues of national security. In Michael Keren's words, "the constant effort to apply universal norms to a political reality marked by security threats has made Israel unique among warrior nations in having a large, stratified, and active intellectual community whose incumbents did not refrain from harsh critique of political authorities. Keeping in close touch with their peers abroad, they criticized the government for policies and practices in the occupied territories, stood guard against abuses of civil rights, and voiced their opinion on every issue in the life of the state."[50]

In spite of their fascination with the state, intellectuals mostly turned into its critics. They debated at length public and foreign policy issues and took an active part in discourse over the nature of the democratic system, the state's behavior toward minorities, Israel's relations with Germany, the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the like. Israeli intellectuals were dominant in the social and political movements operating in Israel over the years such as Shurat Ha'mitnadvim (The Volunteers' Order), established in the 1950s to fight government corruption; Min Ha'yessod (From the Foundation), established in the 1960s in response to authoritarian tendencies attributed to Prime Minister

David Ben-Gurion; Movement for Peace and Security, established
in 1968 under the leadership of the historian Yehoshua Arieli;
Shalom Akhshav (Peace Now), established in the late 1970s to
enhance the peace process with Egypt; and Yesh Gvul (There is a
Limit), established in the early 1980s to accommodate conscien-
tious objectors during the Lebanon War.

The Academic Community Against
the Ethos of State-Building

The argument that Israeli scholars contributed a great deal to
the development of a critically-oriented public discussion on the
central issues of state-building is based on a number of evident
cases. First of all, there was no agreement on Ben-Gurion's con-
ception of the primacy of the state over society (i.e., etatism).
During the formative years of the state, the combination of prag-
matic politics and utopian vision, as well as the need to carry out
the tasks of nation-building quickly and efficiently, gave rise to
an ideology of "etatism," attributing to the state those functions
and values formerly associated with the social infrastructure. In-
tellectuals took relatively little part in the debates on "etatism,"
but in a lecture before Labor movement activists in 1959, Nathan
Rotenstreich warned that the utopian motive in modern develop-
ing societies and the endowment of the national government with
the halo of utopia could result in the total identification of social
creativity with the bureaucratic institutions of government.[51] Soon
to become rector of the Hebrew University and an Israel Prize re-
cipient (1963), Rotenstreich argued that social life should not be
conceived as existing only within the framework of the state.
Since the state is nothing else than a grouping of citizens, it can
have no other morality than the citizens have. The state is merely
an abstract entity requiring social approval and legitimacy and
cannot be conceived separately from the social processes compos-
ing and legitimizing it. The state is nothing but the sum of these
processes, and its decisions are not made in a vacuum; they are
expressions of human decisions in the social sphere.

Rotenstreich presented this state of affairs as not only desir-
able but necessary. He claimed that a state lacking the element of
social debate loses its vitality. Furthermore, as man's dependence
on the state bureaucracy increases, the state is faced with the un-
precedented need to reallocate some of its power. The modern
state must limit the power granted it by the many functions it ful-
fills in order to maintain its ability to function at all. Nonpolitical

social activity must therefore be encouraged in order to avoid communal degeneration. Rotenstreich concluded that if indeed the historic function of government is the formation of a new society, such a society must be formed not by messianic theory but by daily social activity.

Second, some intellectuals could not accept Ben-Gurion's concept of the link between an instrument of force such as the army, and the implantation of basic universal values within youth. In one of the most important intellectual pamphlets written in Israel, Yeshayahu Leibowitz responded to an overzealous reprisal by an Israel army unit that took place on October 14, 1953, in which fifty Arab civilians in the village of Kibiyeh were killed and forty houses were destroyed.[52] To Leibowitz it was not the use of force that was problematic (in his own words, "defense and security often appear to require the spilling of innocent blood"), but its legitimation as part of a universal system of ethics. Leibowitz argued that such an action "is forbidden *per se*":

> We must ask ourselves: what produced this generation of youth, which felt no inhibition or inner compunction in performing the atrocity when given the inner urge and external occasion for retaliation? After all, these young people were not a wild mob but youth raised and nurtured on the values of a Zionist education, upon concepts of the dignity of man and human society.[53]

Moreover, Leibowitz and other scholars not only expressed their disagreement with the central role of the military in managing the Israeli-Arab conflict, but also criticized Ben-Gurion's conception of the army as a main force in state-building, the framework to weld together the different immigrant groups, to break down clan and community barriers, and to establish flourishing agricultural settlements. This conception blurred the distinction between ideals and power, if the army was to be endowed with a messianic mission. In the 1960s, the intellectuals would challenge that link, and the messianic rhetoric regarding the military became open to debate. In his manuscript "Military Education and the Vindication of the Good," Ernst Simon emphasized that the concept of "security" should be analyzed "so as to demonstrate that it need not be understood exclusively in the military sense, but that a morally sound education, of relevance not only to immediate, but also to the more remote future, is also an important factor in security."[54] Such slogans as "the best to the air force" *(ha'tovim le'tayis)* were commonly used as part of the recruitment efforts by the defense forces. In the 1960s the intellec-

tuals would awaken to the messianic overtones involved in such slogans. "The best," Nathan Rotenstreich would then declare, "to do good deeds; the pilots to the air force."

Defending Civil Rights:
Professors Against the Military Authorities

Some of the most prominent Israeli intellectuals expressed their disagreement with the etatist concept of a nation in arms. In 1953, Amnon Zichroni asked to do civilian instead of military service and became the first conscientious objector who attracted public attention. Born to a middle class family, Amnon Zichroni was a serious high school student and a loner, who spent long afternoons at the library. When drafted into the army in July 1953, he did not refuse, admitting later that all-out pacifism seemed to him too utopian at that time. He was sent to an infantry battalion, but shortly after arrival declared himself a conscientious objector and refused to carry weapons. As a consequence, he was posted in service roles within the Nahal brigade and, when ordered to stand guard at night, carried a stick rather than a rifle. He deserted the camp for three days, during which he contacted Nathan Hofshi, chair of the Israeli branch of War Resisters International (established in 1947),[55] refused orders upon his return, and was finally placed in military detention where he began a four-day hunger strike. The lawyer hired by Amnon Zichroni's parents to defend him in the court martial was Mordechai Stein, whose son and daughter had also refused the draft, and who had close contacts with Nathan Hofshi.

In a letter to the president of Israel, Zichroni depicted his strike as a protest against "a restriction of conscience that takes place in Israel" and claimed he denied any moral justification for the existence of an army. On May 28, 1954, he started his second hunger strike. He was sent to a psychiatric hospital, was found perfectly healthy, and was consequently tried by a court martial which, unimpressed by his claim of conscientious objection, sentenced him to seven months in prison.[56] His prolonged hunger strike, which lasted 23 days and brought him close to death, attracted worldwide attention.

On June 5, 1954, Nathan Hofshi, together with three other members of the Israeli branch of WRI, visited Zichroni at the hospital and joined him in a one-day hunger strike. One of them, Shalom Zamir, was arrested during the strike. Nathan Hofshi applied several times to the president of Israel, the defense minister,

the prime minister, the chairman of the Knesset, the President of India Dr. Rujanarda Persed, and to Prof. Albert Einstein with a plea to help to release Zichroni from jail and from military service. On June 16,1954, a media briefing on the Zichroni affair was held in Tel Aviv. The hunger strike ended when Amnon Zichroni was absolved by Minister of Defense Pinhas Lavon. On June 20, 1954, Zichroni was informed that his penalty was reduced to a month (that had already passed) and that he could recover at home. After his recovery he served for five months without uniform in the Civil Defense Force, until he was finally discharged.

When Amnon Zichroni's hunger strike began to endanger his life, prominent Israeli intellectuals — Martin Buber, Shmuel Hugo Bergmann, and Ernst Simon — appealed to Prime Minister Moshe Sharett. While expressing their disagreement with Zichroni's views, they insisted on a person's right in a democratic society to follow personal convictions without suffering the death penalty. They claimed that the right to think differently, even the right to err, ought to be recognized in an enlightened democratic state. Buber, Bergmann, and Simon opened the letter by noting that their approach was not politically motivated and clarified that they did not belong to any group of war resisters. Despite their sincere wish for peace, they wrote, the tragic nature of human history must be recognized. Even nations reluctant to fight were not spared the engagement in bloody struggles. At the same time, we must recognize the right of others to think differently and condemn every war, including a war which is perceived as a just one.

The three intellectuals assured the prime minister that in light of the prevailing attitudes in Israel and the world, there was no chance that the pacifist mood would spread and endanger Israel's or any other country's security. Conscientious objectors would remain a very small minority everywhere. Hence, the prime minister ought to find an "honorable solution" to the dead-end road in which both the young objector and the authorities found themselves. The letter ended with yet another pragmatic argument, hinting that if Amnon Zichroni's hunger strike resulted in his death, the state's reputation would be jeopardized.[57]

Four years later, in 1958, the conflict between the intellectuals led by Martin Buber and the government authorities broke out afresh in connection with the indictment of Aharon Cohen for meeting a Soviet agent in his kibbutz and not reporting it to the authorities. Cohen, an acknowledged expert on the Arab world and on Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine, was a member of the Mapam (Zionist Socialist party) kibbutz Shaar Ha'amakim, and

was Mapam's chief representative in the League for Jewish-Arab
Rapprochement and Cooperation.[58] Martin Buber was impressed
by Cohen's energy, dedication, organizational ability, voluminous
knowledge about Jewish-Arab relations, and his enthusiastic be-
lief in the possibility of improving them. Several years before,
Buber wrote the preface to the third volume of Cohen's trilogy,
Israel and the Arab World, which he described as an objective
and extremely important scientific work based on an inner knowl-
edge of the events.

Cohen's trouble arose in connection with this very trilogy,
which narrated the history of the relations between Zionism and
the Arabs of Palestine and neighboring lands from the late nine-
teenth century to the present, a book, not at all incidentally,
highly critical of Ben-Gurion's attitude towards the Arabs. Unable
to obtain from the Hebrew University and the National Library,
Russian-language periodicals on the Middle East dating back to
before the Russian Revolution, Cohen got in touch with Vitaly
Pavlovsky and other representatives from the Russian Embassy in
Israel, and in the course of meetings with them not only expressed
openly his critical views on Israel's Middle East policies, but also
wrote down the names of the Mapam leadership in a personal code
in order to conceal the visits of the Russians from the leaders of
Mapam, who preferred to conduct all talks with Russians them-
selves and who had criticized Cohen for his overemphasis on
Marxist theory. Under Israeli law, anyone meeting a "foreign
agent," the definition of which was unclear, could be accused of
passing information if he could not satisfactorily explain the
meeting, even if there was no evidence that he had in fact done
so. Cohen was arrested under this law in 1958, at the very time
that his book was being prepared for publication. Cohen believed
this was done to stop the publication of his book, parts of which
were impounded to be used at the trial, which was held at the be-
ginning of January 1962, three and a half years later.

Martin Buber, Ernst Simon, and Dr. Shereshevsky issued a
statement in which they asked for the maximal possible publicity
under the given conditions of security for the arrest, which was
not yet a matter under judicial consideration. Buber was the first
to declare himself willing to testify before the Haifa District
Court, and when the trial opened he arrived in Haifa and testified
for three hours in Cohen's favor.[59] Appearing as the first witness
for the defense, Buber testified before the court that he had known
Cohen since 1941, when they had both been among the first mem-
bers of the League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Coopera-
tion, along with Henrietta Szold and Judah L. Magnes. Buber met

frequently with Cohen (who became secretary of the league at the end of 1941), particularly after Cohen's visit to Syria and Lebanon in 1942 and his testimony, together with Ernst Simon, before the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry in 1946. Buber attested to Cohen's extreme sincerity as a person who basically said what he thought, one whose thoughts and speech were of a piece. When Justice S. Kassan rephrased this as, "His heart and his mouth are one," Buber agreed that this was for him the main thing. In a relationship of over twenty years, Buber could not recall a single incident which would contradict his conviction that Aharon Cohen was a man who meant what he said.

Although Buber's words made a profound impression upon the judges, they sentenced Cohen to five years in prison. Ben-Gurion was pleased with the verdict and the sentence as well as with the court's arguments, praising privately the wisdom of the Israeli judiciary. He was not so pleased when eight months later the Supreme Court took a different line: Justice Alfred Vitkin wanted to quash the verdict and release the prisoner immediately, and Justices Moshe Landoi and Moshe Berenzon sought to reduce the sentence by half, not joining their colleague only because they felt that the law, highly dubious and draconian though it was, still was binding upon them and left them no other choice.[60] "Public opinion in Israel generally regarded this as the vindication of Aharon Cohen which Buber and his friends had demanded from the beginning," reported Ernst Simon. On December 21, 1962, Martin Buber, Nathan Rotenstreich, Gershom Sholem, Ernst Simon, and others submitted a petition to Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the President of the State of Israel, to pardon Cohen because of the state of his health. They received in reply a curt note from the president's legal adviser that "The President has considered all the arguments in your request...but he has reached the conclusion that the material at hand did not warrant reducing the sentence."[61]

In February 1963, on the occasion of Buber's eightieth birthday, Ben-Gurion sent him best wishes as "a friend, an admirer and opponent." Ben-Gurion signed his letter "in love and veneration," and Buber replied that he was truly happy to receive this letter, which touched on a complicated realm of their relationship — the type of opposition that does not exclude personal closeness. "I may say to you that I agree with you in this, and that, with all factual reservations, I could characterize my position toward you in words similar to the friendly ones that you have used in writing me." But Buber went on to say that he saw in this letter a sort of continuation of Ben-Gurion's previous letter to him of February 1962 in which he refused to pardon Aharon Cohen:

> Allow me on this occasion to make an observation concerning our
> controversy. Some time has elapsed meanwhile, and perhaps you
> now see a possibility, in the framework of your authority, to par-
> don and to release the ailing Aharon Cohen from prison. That
> would make me very happy.[62]

Ben-Gurion immediately replied to this letter, once more re-
fusing to pardon Cohen. One of the first actions of Buber's friend
Zalman Shazar, when he became president of Israel, was to par-
don Aharon Cohen, an action he communicated personally to
Buber.

Israeli intellectuals also criticized an accepted conception of
the military administration as a central force in the shaping of Is-
raeli Arab citizens' political status. At the beginning of August
1972, a group of six eminent professors from the Hebrew Univer-
sity, as well as a spontaneously organized group of twenty of the
best-known Israeli writers, initiated and led public protest against
the military authorities' refusal to allow Greek Orthodox Arabs,
the inhabitants of Ikrit and Bir'im, to return to their villages, de-
spite the Supreme Court declaration that no legal barrier existed
to their return. The participation of intellectuals in the protest
movement not only led to legitimization of this movement (in
contrast with protests over other subjects connected with the man-
agement of the conflict), but resulted in recruiting many partici-
pants who were not members of marginal groups and who acted
on a regular basis in the Israeli political arena.[63] However, Israeli
intellectuals expressed their opinions on the military-mediated
management of the conflict long before the August 1972 cam-
paign. Israeli intellectuals' axiological and political disagreement
with the existence of the military administration contributed much
to its abolition in 1966.

In general, restrictions on movement may serve three main
aims: preventing citizens of other countries from entering the
country without permission; preventing the residents of the coun-
try from leaving for other countries; and preventing the free
movement of citizens within their own country. In 1948, the State
of Israel was already equipped with legislation which made it pos-
sible to impose restrictions on movement for each of the above-
mentioned purposes. But as was mentioned by Menachem Hof-
nung, over and above the clearly defined security aims, these re-
strictions served several political purposes related to the defini-
tion of Israel as a Jewish state.[64] They were imposed mainly on
Arab residents and made any attempt by them to form political
organizations very difficult. Each of the many areas subject to the

restrictions became an isolated geographical unit. There were 54 such areas where the military administration operated, and movement from one area to another was forbidden without a permit. The authorities' control over the issuing of permits in each area prevented any effective political activity without the silent acquiescence of the state authorities.[65]

The military administration was established in October 1948 and it functioned without a defined legal basis for a year and a half. Only in January 1950 were the military governors given the authority of military commanders under the Defense (Emergency) Regulations, 1945. At the beginning, restrictions of the military administration were also applied to Jews; from 1949 and until they were abolished in 1966 they affected only Arabs.[66] The Israeli legislation which complemented these ordinances was the Emergency (Security Zones) Regulations of 1949 which authorized the minister of defense to declare "security zones" along Israel's borders. Entry to a "security zone" was only permitted to permanent residents of that area. The regulations enabled military commanders to remove permanent residents from security zones and settle them in other areas. For example, by means of the Emergency Regulations the residents of the Arab villages of Qasas, Qatia, and Juuna were evacuated on June 5, 1949. The actions of the military administration were carried out without any external judicial review. Residents who violated the regulations and disobeyed the orders of the military administration were tried before military courts. Three judges presided over each trial, only one of whom had a legal education. There was no right of appeal from the decisions of a military court; only in 1963 were such appeals made possible.

On February 24, 1958, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion received a deputation of Ihud, composed of Buber, Simon, and Shereshevsky, which submitted a memorandum calling on him to restrict the scope and jurisdiction of the military administrations, and complaining of the "military government ideology" which "takes it for granted that part of the population of the State of Israel — the Arab minority — is deprived of the rule of civil law that applies to the rest of the population." Although in principle they were for the outright abolition of military administrations, they recognized the difficult security problems that this step might entail and suggested instead that military rule be lifted from all areas which were not in proximity to the frontier and that the implementation of all matters not closely tied up with security must be entrusted to civil authorities and civilian officials.[67]

The issue of abolishing the military administrations fifteen years after the Declaration of Independence caused a polemical public discussion on the mission of the intellectual in society and state-building. In February 1963, Ben-Gurion appeared before the Knesset in his role as minister of defense to respond to a proposal to abolish military rule over Israel's Arab population. Ben-Gurion referred to a group of intellectuals who had just signed a public statement calling for the abolishment of military rule:

> The day before yesterday I read in one of the newspapers of a public statement by professors, doctors and other dignitaries against military rule. I know some of the signatories of this statement and I admire them as intellectuals and great scholars. But I must say to my regret that this statement has not raised their reputation in my eyes. I cannot find any intellectual or ethical justification for the assumption behind it, that the opinions of professors Buber, Avimelech, Urbach and others in matters of security have any special weight, greater than that of any other citizen of the state....If I shall need an expert opinion in matters of Talmudic commentary I shall gladly refer to Professor Urbach, in Godly matters to Professor Buber and in matters of economics to Professor Patenkin. But I do not recognize the superior expertise of these distinguished professors in matters of security or in matters of political ethics.[68]

Two prominent Israeli intellectuals — Ernst Simon and Shmuel Sambursky — responded to Ben-Gurion's speech. Simon mentioned Ben-Gurion's declared opposition to intellectuals speaking in one voice, and his interest in active participation by the intellectual in the formation of the society — two views which contradicted his claim that intellectuals have no special say in matters of politics. "Isn't politics one of the elements forming the social character of the state?" asked Simon. If Ben-Gurion feels, as he always claims, that teaching and education are interrelated, Simon continued, then teachers have not only a right, but a duty, to say what they believe in, and not only what they know.[69] He added that while politicians are sometimes required to lie, social scientists are associated with the quest for truth, and, hence, deserve to be heard.[70]

Shmuel Sambursky, professor of history and philosophy of science, was close to Simon's political circle while remaining an admirer of Ben-Gurion. In a letter to the prime minister he tried to justify the scientist's special role in politics. The field of human knowledge has become so vast, and is expanding so quickly, that no man or group of men in our time can possibly set out to make

all knowledge their province. Scientists have learned the lesson of specialization — he who specializes for any years in one field, such as national security, may attribute to security issues a greater role than they deserve. Thus, the scientist's request to restore the correct perspective stems not from his greater wisdom but from his academic experience and approach, that is, the perception of things from a certain distance.

Confronting Anti-Semitism: The Jewish Spirit vs. the Jewish State

It was during the Eichmann trial that a group of prominent Israeli intellectuals emphasized once again "the necessity of certain distance." This trial was one of the most dramatic episodes of Israeli public life. Eichmann was apprehended by Israeli agents in Argentina fifteen years after the end of World War II. In a personal letter to President of Argentina Arturo Frondizi, Ben-Gurion wrote: "The survivors of the Holocaust regarded it as their mission in life to bring the man responsible for this crime, without precedent in history, to stand trial before the Jewish people. Such a trial can take place only in Israel."[71] Here the equation is made between the Jewish people and Israel; the only "Jewish" court in existence was that of the State of Israel. Ben-Gurion not only saw the Eichmann trial as a legal act of a sovereign state,[72] but also as a proof of the insight embedded in Zionist ideology: the Enlightenment had failed to resolve the Jewish problem and only a Jewish state could guarantee the survival of the Jewish people.

Political Zionism portrayed the Holocaust less as the vile fruit of totalitarianism and more as the culmination of two millenia of anti-Semitism. The Jews had been defenseless because they did not possess political power. Attorney-General Gideon Hausner alluded to this when he insisted that the purpose of the trial was to establish "the correct historical perspective"; such a perspective was subsequently formulated by Chief Justice Simon Agranat in his verdict that denied Eichmann's appeal: "At that time [1962] we were still a small people, a small state....Remember the victims, the victims....People must know that their state will defend them."[73] Although Knesset Member Peretz Bernstein contended that "turning the Eichmann case into a normal criminal proceeding would not only injure the feelings of every Jew, but the very significance of the trial itself,"[74] both Ben-Gurion and Hausner were convinced that this symbolic and ideological content should

and could fit within the framework of a conventional criminal
trial.

In 1962 very few Israelis objected to the death penalty for
Adolf Eichmann. Among them were philosophers Martin Buber,
Hugo Bergmann, and Gershom Scholem; another opponent was
Norman Bentwich. They objected to the trial in Israel from the
beginning, maintaining that victims must not persecute their
butchers, and that since Eichmann's crimes were crimes against
the human race as a whole, he should be tried before an interna-
tional tribunal. Buber, who even met the prime minister person-
ally in order to persuade him to attempt to rescind the execution,
saw the punishment as a "mistake of historical proportions." In
his opinion, "it may serve to expiate the guilt felt by many young
people in Germany, and hence be an obstacle to the resurgence of
humanism in them and in the world." Buber made it clear that he
did not oppose the execution simply because of his objection to
the death penalty, nor was he motivated by feelings of pity or by
doubts about the severity of the sentence. He was not against the
trial itself, although he preferred an international court "with a
certain representation of humanity to give the right kind of per-
spective." Buber proposed instead that Eichmann should be given
life imprisonment — not in a cell like an ordinary criminal, but,
as a symbol of the Holocaust, be put to work out on the land in a
kibbutz farming the soil of Israel so that Eichmann would "be
made to feel that the Jewish people were not exterminated by the
Nazis and that they live on here in Israel." His opposition
stemmed from the belief that it was pointless to seek retribution
through the execution of Eichmann, for there can be no retribution
for crimes of such magnitude. The crimes were so monstrous that
they fell beyond the ordinary realm of punishment, and the death
of Eichmann served none of the accepted purposes of punish-
ment.[75]

This point was brought up with renewed vigor after the execu-
tion. The noted scholar, Gershom Scholem, addressed himself to
the public and historical aspects of the trial and not to its legal
aspects. He grasped the trial as geared to "a different sort of na-
tional and human education, a different human consciousness."
He termed Eichmann himself as "an impotent," a portrayal that
aroused criticism from his colleagues, who reminded Scholem that
Eichmann was a far cry from this image both in his deeds and in
the way he grappled with the indictment. Scholem saw Eichmann
principally as an example of the systematic liquidation of the im-
age of God in man and the dehumanization of an entire nation.
The verdict was a wrong solution, he felt. It corrupted the histori-

cal significance of the trial by creating the illusion that it was possible to conclude something in this affair by hanging a single person. It would have been better, he wrote, if the hangman would not intervene between us and the reckoning which we had with the world.[76]

Despite the fact that only a minority of Israeli citizens in the early 1960s arrived in Israel from Europe after World War II, both Ben-Gurion and his opponents perceived the whole Jewish population of Israel as the victims of the Holocaust. Minister of Education Ben-Zion Dinur (a prominent Israeli historian who developed a Palestinocentric tradition in modern Jewish historiography)[77] undertook initiatives to deepen historical recognition of the Holocaust, including one to bestow retroactive Israeli citizenship on Jewish victims of the Holocaust.[78] However, the philosophers and the foremost Israeli statesman of the time suggested contradictory interpretations of this fact. According to Ben-Gurion, the historical lesson of the Holocaust was that Jewish passivity has fatal consequences, while Jewish self-defense and resistance are virtuous expressions of national vitality.[79] This juxtaposition served to reinforce the hierarchy between Zion, the locus of heroic self-defense, and Galut, the locus of ignoble suffering. The historic answer to the Holocaust, and the avoidance of future genocide, lay in the building of a sovereign Jewish state; only this state had the morally recognized right to administer justice regarding Nazi executioners. For Buber, Bergmann, and Bentwich, the fact that all Jewish citizens of Israel were the victims of the Holocaust would inevitably result in a predetermined trial. Consequently, Eichmann should be tried before an international tribunal outside of Israel. Moreover, they argued that because it was especially important to pay attention to the international community's prolonged unprecedented crime against the Jewish people, it was necessary to judge the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people before an international tribunal.

The fact that prominent Israeli intellectuals could not accept the idea that the historic answer to the Holocaust lay in the building of a sovereign Jewish state is especially important. What is no less important is that Buber and his followers' argument was rooted in Buber's views, which had been clearly expressed sixty years before the Eichmann trial.

Aged nineteen, Martin Buber was one of the student intelligentsia who rallied to Herzl's call for a Zionist congress in 1897. However, from the outset he was much closer to Ahad Ha'am's organic Jewish nationalism and cultural school of thought than to the functional and political mode of Herzl. Together with other

members of the student intelligentsia, including the young Chaim
Weizmann, he founded the Democratic Faction at the Fifth Zionist
Congress in December 1901 as an opposition group to certain as-
pects of Herzl's administration of the Zionist organization; this
faction commanded 37 delegates out of a total of 287. In addition
to Weizmann and Buber, the faction included other prominent
young intellectuals: Leo Motzkin, a mathematician; Berthold Fei-
wel, a writer; Shmaryahu Levin, a writer and brilliant orator, and
others.[80]

The Democratic Faction's program was thrashed out in the
first half of 1902. The essence of Zionism was defined in terms of
the striving for national cultural individuality, "an original He-
brew national culture in *Eretz Israel*." According to the program,
"Zionism designates as Jewish cultural possessions, the past and
present creations of the Hebrew spirit to the extent that they can
be associated with general human culture." Although the program
acknowledged the political goals of the Zionist Organization un-
der Herzl's direction, affirming that "the complete liberation of
the Jewish people will be made possible only through the estab-
lishment of a publicly, legally sanctioned refuge in *Eretz Israel*,"
it rejected the proposition that Zionism was in essence a reaction
to anti-Semitism.[81] As emphasized by Ahad Ha'am, the spiritual
mentor of the Faction, not anti-Semitism but the disintegration of
Jewish cultural distinctiveness under the combined impact of civic
emancipation and secular enlightenment was the critical defect of
the Jewish condition. Ahad Ha'am's shifting of the emphasis
away from the "problem of the Jews" to the "problem of Judaism"
does not mean that he failed to recognize the severity of anti-
Semitism as a cause of Jewish distress. But he was convinced that
Jewish nationalism should not be predicated upon that issue. To
his understanding, the Jewish national movement was valid and
necessary irrespective of the distress precipitated by anti-
Semitism. Buber also emphasized the spiritual need of the Jews
more than their physical distress exacerbated by anti-Semitism. In
this he followed Ahad Ha'am; he subordinated the Jewish nation's
need for a physical refuge as a political unit to its need for a home
or sanctuary as a community of culture.

At the beginning, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was
conceived as part of the Jewish national ideology. For all the na-
tions that achieved their rebirth during the nineteenth century, the
existence of a national university was an inseparable part of the
process of revival, as the national soil and language. The Hebrew
University was, in addition, an expression of the unity of *Eretz
Israel* and the diaspora, as well as a symbol of the place Jerusa-

lem is destined to fulfil as the spiritual center of the entire Jewish people. Ahad Ha'am's vision of *Eretz Israel* as the spiritual center of the Jewish people as a whole has found tangible expression in the Hebrew University. The Zionist Congress resolution of 1913, which approved practical measures for the establishment of the university, envisaged it as a powerful factor in its national and political struggle. It was in the spirit of this ideology that Chaim Weizmann laid the foundation stone of the university during World War II.

However, two years after the foundation of the state, in his programmatic essay entitled "A Great Task," Shmuel Hugo Bergmann argued that "it cannot be gainsaid that this ideology no longer holds good in the new circumstances that have been created by the establishment of the State of Israel. The University has lost the function of a political instrument, with which it was endowed by the 1913 Congress."[82] For Bergmann, the spiritual mission of the Jewish intellectuals is more important than their contribution to the process of state-building: "During the first twenty-five years of its existence the University has taken a foremost place in the establishment of the State by training the future intelligentsia of the Jewish people. From now on we must see to it that the practical tasks of developing the country do not make us oblivious of our spiritual task in the sphere of Judaism. The edifice to which we are ministering is more than an economic and social structure; it is the embodiment of the spiritual hopes and aspirations of Judaism for thousands of years."[83]

Struggling for the Survival of the Israeli Democracy: Intellectuals vs. the Prime Minister During the Lavon Affair

During Israel's first twenty years of statehood several crises occurred that exposed the intrinsic weaknesses inherent in the arrangements between the army and the political system. The first acute crisis was in 1954, the year of the "mishap," when the seeds of the Lavon affair were sown. The "mishap" was the term coined to describe sabotage actions carried out in Egypt in July 1954 by IDF Intelligence Unit 131, whose members were caught, tried, and convicted by the Egyptians. The actions were intended to damage the growing political relations between Egypt and the West, namely Britain and the United States.

The disclosure of the network's existence provoked Israelis to question whether the man who gave the order was Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon or Director of Military Intelligence Colonel Benjamin Gibly. One commission after another was appointed to investigate this question. The protracted and convoluted post mortem brought to the surface the deteriorating relationship between the top political and defense echelons and became the root from which the Lavon affair grew.[84]

In 1955, Pinhas Lavon was forced to resign his office (in 1956 he returned to his previous position as Secretary General of the General Federation of Labor); for five years he plotted a campaign to rehabilitate himself. Then, in 1960, Lavon charged that his fall from office was the result of a conspiracy hatched by military intelligence officers acting in league with Chief of Staff General Moshe Dayan and Director General of the Ministry of Defense Shimon Peres, proteges of David Ben-Gurion. Avraham Elad, an Israeli undercover agent posing as a German businessman in Egypt, revealed that Gibly and his subordinates — Mordechai Almog and Mordechai Ben-Zur — induced him to perjure himself before the Olshan-Dori Committee which had been appointed by Prime Minister Sharett. Moreover, Attorney General Gideon Hausner announced that Dalia Carmel, Gibly's and Minister of Finance Levi Eshkol's former secretary, admitted having "changed" the copy of Gibly's important letter to Dayan, adding the absent words "On Lavon's instructions."[85] At the end of December 1960, the cabinet endorsed the findings of a seven-member committee headed by Minister of Justice Pinhas Rosen, which cleared Lavon of having given the order in July 1954 that brought about the "mishap."

However, this verdict did not suit Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, the very person upon whom Lavon relied for his political rehabilitation and for the opportunity to clear his name publicly. Ben-Gurion nullified the conclusions of the government-appointed commission, accused its members of perverting justice, and ordered the government to retract its endorsement or he, Ben-Gurion, would resign from office. Evidently convinced that Ben-Gurion was about to resign as prime minister, the anxious Labor leaders considered how to uphold the ministerial committee's findings and still prevent the resignation. They worried that a secretariat debate would turn into a duel, and that — as Ben-Gurion had hinted — he would accept the committee's findings only at the price of Lavon's head. Levi Eshkol, who had been unanimously selected as "peacemaker," agreed to pay the price. The secretary of the Labor party, Joseph Almogi, urged the party

branches to take to the streets in noisy demonstrations champion-
ing Ben-Gurion over Lavon.

   Although the incident in Egypt occurred in the mid-1950s,
only in the autumn of 1960 did it come to public notice. On De-
cember 30, 1960, a petition calling for "cleansing the air and res-
toration of confidence," signed by fifty renowned intellectuals
(among them a group of professors from the Hebrew University of
Jerusalem: philosopher Nathan Rotenschtreich, Judaica scholar
Ephraim Urbach, sociologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, economist
Don Patinkin, and historians Jacob Talmon,[86] Joshua Arieli, and
Joshua Prawer) in support of Lavon, was published in the daily
newspapers. A group of professors labeled Ben-Gurion's crusade
against the government's Committee of Seven as a serious chal-
lenge to democracy. The petition acknowledged Ben-Gurion's
achievements as the founder of the state, but rejected the notion,
attributed to the prime minister's "associates," that the survival of
the state depended on "any one individual."[87] This public state-
ment had a far-reaching effect. The crisis had spread, and all par-
ties involved began to perceive it as a struggle over the founda-
tions of public order and morality. In the words of Jacob Katz,

> Although it was difficult for the average citizen to judge the facts
> of the case itself, the tactics adopted by Ben-Gurion and his aides
> stood in flagrant contradiction to every rule of democracy and
> fairness. To force members of the government to retract, just be-
> cause the Prime Minister disagreed with them, negated the most
> fundamental rules of due government process....It is no wonder
> that, in such a situation, citizens unused to political activism saw
> it as their duty to protest. Consultations with colleagues at the
> Hebrew University and teamwork with other intellectuals outside
> Jerusalem resulted in a plan to launch a public battle by organiz-
> ing a protest rally, publishing a manifesto, and urging the public
> to sign. The rally took place on January 11, 1961, with some 120
> people in attendance....The speeches at the rally were delivered
> with a grave air, reflecting the common concern lest the country's
> leadership become despotic, with all the disasters that would re-
> sult. We read a proclamation expressing this apprehension at the
> rally and distributed to the newspapers for publication. It became
> abundantly clear that the organizers had expressed the protests of
> many like-minded citizens when they were reinforced by new
> members and groups identifying with their cause formed outside
> of Jerusalem. The crusade gained added weight when major intel-
> lectuals such as Hugo Bergmann and Martin Buber declared their
> support.[88]

Nathan Rotenstreich gave an interview to *Maariv* in which, in response to the question of whether there was actually a danger of the collapse of Israeli democracy, he affirmed that present trends were indeed "truly dangerous."[89] Yeshayahu Leibowitz declared that "the 'Affair' demonstrates that the State of Israel is not a democracy"; he argued that "Napoleon was much more honest than David Ben-Gurion, because he did not claim that he was fulfilling a prophetic vision."[90] Buber followed up with a letter to Ben-Gurion in which he directly accused the prime minister of threatening Israeli democracy.[91] Three weeks later, Buber granted a rare interview to the press, in which he declared that he had signed the statement against Ben-Gurion because — in his own words, "I felt — and when I say that I felt, I mean that my whole mind was enveloped by this feeling — and I felt that this was...an hour of danger."[92]

The leaders of the group were some of the outstanding professors in Israel's oldest, and at the time only, university. As Avraham Avi-hai pointed out, "their status was closer to that of keepers of the public conscience, and their previous lack of intervention in politics lent an air of objectivity to their action."[93] Although intellectuals could not prevent the injustice done to Lavon — wanting to mollify Ben-Gurion, at the beginning of February 1961, the Mapai secretariat decided to dismiss Lavon as the Secretary-General of the General Federation of Labor — they played a major role in promoting his case as an individual facing a tyrannical state apparatus in his quest for personal justice.

In a retroactive analysis of the intellectuals' involvement in the "Lavon Affair," Jacob Katz has succinctly summed up that "Relative isolation is the price one pays for ensuring scholarly objectivity. But conscious withdrawal from public activity should not be construed as apathy, and there are times and situations that demand the removal of the barrier between scholar and society." Katz listed two conditions likely to make a scholar renounce his voluntary passivity: "(a) when the democratic process seems imperiled — that same process that assures, among other things, freedom of scholarship; and (b) when a travesty of justice seems imminent."[94] Katz claimed that both of these conditions were present in the "Lavon Affair" and that the actions of Ben-Gurion and his supporters left the intellectuals with little choice but to take an open stand in opposition.[95]

Undoubtedly, Israeli civil society's public discourse on state-building and disobedience has been significantly influenced by the intellectuals' active participation in the "Lavon Affair." Scholars decided to form a political group (called Min Ha'yessod,

From the Foundation) within Mapai, devoted to the party's reform along the lines that guided their struggle for Lavon. They felt the time had come to rethink ideological issues and renovate the party accordingly. However, the party hardly welcomed reformers. Less than a year after its formation, Min Ha'yessod called for casting blank ballots in the 1961 elections as a sign of protest. In 1964, it split from the party altogether. Although there were many reasons for the split, it stemmed mainly from the realization that Mapai did not allow for fresh thought along the lines cherished by the intellectual community in the 1960s. Thus, representing the nation's conscience on basic principles of public order, intellectuals played a central role in demarcating the borders of legitimate and illegitimate political behavior.

Disengagement of Israeli intellectuals from the dominant Labor party clearly manifested itself during the crisis before the Six-Day War, that began on May 14, 1967, when Egyptian forces entered the Sinai Peninsula. As the crisis started, intellectuals were among the first to express fear over the country's rule by Mapai politicians. When faced with real danger, on June 2, 1967, seven professors of political science (Benjamin Akzin, Aryeh Unger, Emanuel Guttman, Yehezkel Dror, Martin Seliger, Moshe Czudnowski, and Nimrod Rafaeli) signed a petition calling for "national leadership," explaining its benefits in professional terms — despite the fact that on May 28 (just five days before), Golda Meir, Secretary-General of Mapai, objected to a national unity government. As Michael Keren put it, "intellectuals played a leading role in the public outcry for an emergency government."[96] Intellectuals were involved in the search for what Ehud Ben Ezer called "mythological figures" who would avoid the wheeling and dealing of politics and lead the nation to victory. In an open letter to *Ha'aretz*, intellectuals called for the nomination of former general and Chief of Staff (1953-58) Moshe Dayan, a clever and pragmatic politician who had resigned his membership in Mapai in 1965, as minister of defense.[97] The intellectuals' belief that in the hour of crisis all party differences should be forgotten was supported by a number of groups and persons, and a national unity coalition was formed when the Gahal and Rafi parties joined the cabinet.

Israel and the Arab World:
Professors in Search of Peaceful Coexistence

Three years after the Six-Day War, the prominent Israeli histo-
rian Jacob Talmon published a treatise called "Israel Among the
Nations." Even the most faithful believers in military force as the
only means of problem-solving in the region could not ignore
Talmon's message: "Israel may be able to win and win, and go on
winning till its last breath, thereby demonstrating the truth of
Hegel's aphorism about the 'impotence of victory.' After every
victory we would face more difficult, more complicated problems.
For as Nietzsche has put it, there are victories which are more dif-
ficult to bear than defeat."[98] Talmon asserted that "there is no
longer any aim or achievement that can justify...twentieth-century
battle," arguing that Israeli leaders who justified warfare on the
grounds of national interest or historical rights were a throwback
to the "Devil's accomplices in the last two generations...[who]
warped the soul of millions and all but exterminated the Jewish
people."[99]

Talmon's scenario was often recalled after the Yom Kippur
War (1973), when it came true, but even during the years of post-
Six-Day War euphoria, discussing U.S. Secretary of State William
Rogers' peace plan, prominent Israeli intellectuals condemned
governmental politics "to rely on military strength to maintain its
complete freedom of maneuver in the present and the future."[100] In
an article, published in *Ha'aretz* and *New Outlook* in September
1970, Professor Yehoshua Arieli, then head of the Department of
American Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, men-
tioned that "Israel must settle on a principle, or formula, that sat-
isfies both its demands for security, and moves it toward peace."
Arieli emphasized that "Israel should declare that it recognizes
the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the right to estab-
lish an adjoining state as long as they honor Israel's sovereignty.
Israel should have encouraged the political organization of the
Palestinians in the territories long ago. Israel's future in the Near
East depends on its desire and ability to help the Palestinians live
as a free people in their own state."[101] The same opinion was
maintained by Jacob Talmon in his open letter to Minister of In-
formation Israel Galili. Talmon emphasized that

> In the eyes of the world, as well as in mine, the recognition or
> non-recognition of the Palestinian Arabs as a group possessing
> the right of self-determination is the main, basic question. It is
> the touchstone by which it is decided whether we aspire to set-

tlement and conciliation — to a respect for the rights of others or to disregarding them; it is the criterion of the determination of the democratic nature and moral character of our State. Those who argue that by recognizing the rights of the Palestinian Arabs we undermine our right to live in this country, and to constitute a state within it, do not know what they are saying. In fact, the very opposite is true: recognition of the rights of others adds indisputable moral weight to our claim, and their denial deprives us of our moral right at least in the eyes of other nations to argue that we have a special license from the Almighty God to Jenin and Nablus."[102]

Arieli's and Talmon's statements contradicted the essential principles of Golda Meir's cabinet, which during 1969-1971 rejected two Rogers' initiatives, as well as Gunnar Jarring's proposal for a peace arrangement which involved an Israeli commitment to withdraw its forces from occupied Arab territory to the former international boundary between Egypt and the British Mandate of Palestine; on the other hand, Egypt would give a commitment to enter into a peace agreement with Israel and to respect its independence and the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. Professor Arieli criticized Israeli foreign policy, stressing the point that "if the Arabs agree to a peace arrangement with guarantees for Israeli security, Israel must then evacuate all, or most of the occupied territories." At the end of December 1971, thirty-five professors and public figures in Israel (among them — Professors Shmuel Ettinger, Shmuel Eisenstadt, Yehoshua Arieli, Michael Bruno, Asher Arian, Don Patinkin, Yehoshua Praver, Amnon Rubinstein, Emmanuel Marks, Yonatan Shapira, and others) signed an open letter to Golda Meir expressing "the feeling that as yet Israel's Government has not made the most of all its political possibilities to commence negotiations with Egypt and to prevent the danger of a renewal of the war." A group of highly distinguished Israeli faculty members suggested that the government "re-examine its declared positions and raise proposals which, while not detrimental to Israel's security, would serve as a realistic basis for the possibility of negotiations with Egypt."[103] Nevertheless, the prime minister expressed no willingness to meet the group of professors who signed this letter.

Conclusion

Discussing the heritage of the Prophets, Ben-Gurion remarked that "an intellectual living...at home in the culture of the mighty, rich nations surrounding us...had to have great faith in the mission and uniqueness of Israel in order to retain his Jewishness."[104] These words are no less relevant regarding Buber, Magnes, Bergmann, Rothenstreich, Talmon, and Katz than Micah and Hosea. These prominent scholars were not only active participants in the Zionist movement, but after their immigration to Palestine became personally dependent on the political success of the Zionist project. Nevertheless, the Israeli intellectuals' loyalty to the political leaders of the Yishuv and the state was always limited by their sense of truth and justice. It was the community of Central European Jewish scholars in Jerusalem that become the backbone of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and it was these same intellectuals who were also at the center of the political opposition to the ethos of political Zionism within the Jewish community in Palestine and the State of Israel.

When the Mapai establishment faced the unprecedented criticism of intellectuals during a critical stage in the "Lavon affair," Joseph Almogi, Mapai Secretary-General and a leading Ben-Gurion loyalist in the Mapai apparatus, commented that the professors commanded less voters than the party could obtain easily in one half of a *maabarah* (immigrant transit camp). However, though campus-centered protest activity could not save Lavon, the movement for the defense of democracy was an important element in legitimizing the possibility of socio-political protest and dissent in Israel. Hebrew University professors appeared as an independent force, outside the party structure; it was one of the first, but not the last time that the university served as a focus of political protest.

Academic discourse is embedded in an active form of knowledge that shapes collective identity by bridging between a re-invented past and the meanings and boundaries of collectivity. For this reason, in a highly ideological and mobilized society, which created, within a relatively short span, a culturally heterogeneous community and — shortly thereafter — a state, intellectuals are expected to provide a cultural legitimization to the power elite and its policies. Nevertheless, even in the etatist society intellectuals can maintain the principles of political freedom. In addition, certain critically-oriented public discussion on military issues can take place even in a society under siege. Israeli intellectuals cherished democracy, played an active part in the formation of the

country's constitutional set-up, and engaged in pressure-group politics. Israeli intellectuals have played a major role in the transformation of Israel from a mobilized society engaged in nation-building to a liberal democracy. It seems that these are the important outlines of the Israeli case study.

Notes

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2. Lewis Coser, *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View* (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. viii.

3. Timothy Garton Ash, "Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians," *New York Review of Books,* January 12, 1995, p. 35.

4. Alan Montefiore, "The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals," in I. Maclean, A. Montefiore, and P. Winch, eds., *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 201.

5. Shlomo Avineri, "Marx and the Intellectuals," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28 (1957):277.

6. Ash, "Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians," p. 35.

7. Ron Eyerman, *Between Culture and Politics: Intellectuals in Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 3.

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9. Gary S. Morson, "What Is the Intelligentsia? Once More, an Old Russian Question," *Academic Questions*, v. 6, no. 3 (1993):20-38.

10. Yaron Ezrahi, "The Authority of Science in Politics," in A. Thackray and E. Mendelsohn, eds., *Science and Values* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974), p. 217.

11. "Manifeste des intellectuels" and the Dreyfus Case have been analyzed by various authors; see, for example, Regis Debray, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities: The Intellectuals of Modern France* (London: New Left Books, 1981). Theodore Draper mentioned that the connection between the Dreyfus case and the appearance of the term "intellectual" "seems hardly likely in view of the fact that the *Oxford English Dictionary* has an English usage of the term [by Edward Benlowes] as far back as 1652, and three perfectly recognizable uses in the nineteenth century, one by Byron in 1813"; see Theodore Draper, "Intellectuals in American Politics: Past and Present," in Nissan Oren, ed., *Intellectuals in Politics* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), p. 41. It seems that in this period the term first acquired widespread usage — both in Europe and America, where the philosopher William James was the first to use it in one of his letters in 1899; see Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), p. 39.

12. Eyerman, *Between Culture and Politics*, p. 1.

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14. Cristopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York: Norton, 1965); quoted by Eyerman, *Between Culture and Politics*, p. 1.

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17. Vaclav Havel, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, pp. 36-37.

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24. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

25. Feuer, "What is an Intellectual?," p. 51.

26. Nissan Oren, "Statecraft and the Academic Intellectual," in Nissan Oren, ed., *Intellectuals in Politics* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), p. 7.

27. Henry A. Kissinger, "The Policymaker and the Intellectual," *The Reporter*, March 5, 1959, pp. 30-35; quoted in Draper, "Intellectuals in American Politics," p. 24.

28. Yaron Ezrahi, "Changing Political Functions of Science in the Modern Liberal-Democratic State," *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, 7 (1988):197-198.

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30. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, translated and edited by Q. Hoare and G. Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971 [1949]), p. 10.

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32. See Robert Brym, *Intellectuals and Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), pp. 54-60.

33. Charles Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 325.

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37. Shlomo Sand, *Intellectuals, Truth and Power. From the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, "Horizons" Library, 2000), p. 148 (Hebrew).

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41. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

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86. Talmon published an important article on the Lavon Affair entitled "The Affair — or the Crossroads?," *Ha'aretz*, February 17, 1961.

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89. Rothenstreich's interview was published in *Maariv*, January 10, 1961.

90. Leibowitz's interview was published in *Pi Ha'aton*, the Hebrew University student union newspaper, February 19, 1961.

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