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# The First and Second Aliyah

“Usually, those preparing to travel to Palestine tend to keep in mind the romantic, beautiful Palestine and think about its future, the memories of its exalted past and enchanting antiquity, disregarding the real Palestine, with its simple, crude everyday life.”<sup>1</sup> This is how the young David Ben Gurion, in one of his first letters to his father from Palestine, depicted the gap between the expectations of the Zionist immigrant and the reality he encountered in the country. Zionist propaganda did not prepare immigrants for an encounter with an Oriental country: a wild landscape devoid of trees and shade, where a merciless sun beat down, sapping human strength, where the swamps swarmed with malarial mosquitos and the inhabitants were strange and alien, wild like the land itself. The chasm between the image of the country inscribed in the hearts of those dreaming of the “beloved land of our fathers” and the actual land of Palestine was the source of many a trauma.

The Jewish immigrant who came on the First Aliyah (1881–1904)—and even he who came on the Second Aliyah (1904–1914)—harbored great expectations: He thought he was coming to the biblical Eretz Israel, a pleasant land in which Jews could live in peace and comfort, every man under his vine and fig tree. The conception of a “land of wonders” is common in the literature of memoirs and expresses the exalted vision the immigrants had about the country they were about to immigrate to.<sup>2</sup> Many at the time of the First Aliyah also believed that they would find abundance in Palestine and a suitable livelihood; indeed, the First Aliyah was remarkable for its heady degree of optimism. Yet beyond all utopian images of the land that stirred their imagination was the vision that this would be a country of and for Jews: Jews would be able to dwell there in safety and have no need to worry about what Gentiles might think of them: “Before I came here, for some reason, I beheld Palestine in my mind’s eye as a single city, inhabited by Jews who were free and surrounded by many empty fields—empty, empty, waiting for more people to come and toil upon them.”<sup>3</sup>

For most immigrants, the first encounter with the land and its inhabitants took

place in the principal port of entry to the country, the harbor town of Jaffa. In the variegated and colorful din of an Oriental port, one heard the penetrating shouts of the strapping Arab sailors, who would assist the passengers and their baggage down from the ships, tossing them, without much ado, into waiting rowboats and then ferrying them to the shore. Thus, the initial encounter with the land also was the immigrant's first experience with its Arab inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, the impression left by that experience differed from individual to individual. Reuven Yosef Paicovitch (the father of Yigal Allon, Palmach commander and a deputy prime minister in the Israeli government) felt that the young Arabs of Jaffa were hostile toward Jews and insolent. As a precaution, he made some wooden clubs for himself and his brothers very soon after arrival. When they walked through the narrow streets of the densely populated Arab town, they beat their clubs on the ground and felt that this gesture of defiance earned them the respect of the population.<sup>5</sup> Others, like Berl Katznelson or Ben Gurion, were not particularly impressed by their first encounter with the inhabitants of Palestine. Ben Gurion, for example, was impressed by the twisting, narrow lanes of Jaffa, the sight of a young Jew riding on a horse or a young Jewish girl on a donkey. Yet he found no need to make mention of the Arab inhabitants thronging the streets of Jaffa.<sup>6</sup> The excitement about their arrival in Palestine, the new tastes of the land and meeting with all sorts of Jews eclipsed their encounter with the local Arab inhabitants. The latter were possibly regarded as a fixture in the strange, exotic scene, not worthy of any particular attention.

Yet in the eyes of others, such as the writer Brenner, that encounter was indeed traumatic. The first night he arrived in Palestine, while walking the streets of Haifa, a group of young Arabs emerged and moved toward him from one of the filthy alleyways, shouting, "Yahud!" Reacting in keeping with what he deemed appropriate for a native son back in his own land, he wanted to start a fight. But those accompanying him reminded him that Haifa was a completely non-Jewish city: "So . . . once again . . . there's *another* sort of alien in the world that one must suffer from. . . . Even from that filthy, contaminated lot, you have to suffer!"<sup>7</sup>

If the meaning of Zionism was to liberate the Jew from the ambivalence of living as a minority among a non-Jewish majority, and to give them a place in the sun where he would be free of the need to have constantly to take a foreign people into account, that first meeting with the reality of Palestine undermined such hopes. The feeling of belonging, of being a part of the land (or, more precisely, the feeling that the land belonged to him) was marred by a salient flaw: the ubiquitous presence of non-Jews that had to be taken into consideration. Brenner referred to Palestine as "my land" in quotation marks, thus symbolizing the dubiousness of his sense of belonging, in the wake of the encounter with the local Arab population.<sup>8</sup>

Brenner's awareness that there was another people in the land claiming to be its masters was a traumatic realization that haunted him all the years of his life in Palestine. Along with the crisis of adjusting to the rigors of physical labor, a physical challenge that taxed the men and women of the Second Aliyah, that recognition was the most difficult: "Who can imagine the pain of the unfortunate *intelligent* Jew who comes here, desirous of a different life, more wholesome, filled with physical labor, the fragrance of the fields—and who, after a few days, realizes that his

dream was false, that the land already belongs to Arab Christians, that our farmers are but farmers in the abstract, and that there is no hope here for our people?"<sup>9</sup>

Surprisingly, that awareness had not been part of the consciousness of the men and women of the First Aliyah who began arriving in Palestine at the beginning of the 1880s. Their relationship with Palestine was characterized by two elements. First, there was the total conviction that Palestine was the land of the Jews. From the minute the foot of the first Jew touched the land in this modern return to Zion, he acted as though he were lord and master of the land. These men and women had no doubt that it was they who were the decisive component and factor in the country. That fact was also reflected in their behavior. The contrast between the actual situation in Palestine and their image of it can serve as a sort of proof of the power of ideology to shape a consciousness that would *eventually* change reality—yet with total disregard for the actual facts of life at the time. After all, Palestine in those years had a population numbering some seven hundred thousand, less than 10 percent of which was Jewish; and of these, only a miniscule percentage were imbued with a Zionist historical consciousness. Second, related to this image was a sense of power; but this feeling, too, bore no relationship to the empirical facts of the situation.

A letter written by Vladimir (Zeev) Dubnow, a member of Bilu (the first organized group of young Russian Jews to come to Palestine motivated by Zionist ideology), to his brother Simeon Dubnow, the famous historian and advocate of the national rights of Jews in the Diaspora, can serve as an illustrative example. On October 20, 1882, only a few short weeks after landing in Jaffa, this Russian student wrote: "The ultimate aim or *pia desideria* is to take control of Palestine in due time and to return to Jews the political independence they have been deprived of for two thousand years. Don't laugh, this is not a delusion." He explained that the way to achieve this was by creating a strong and solid Jewish economic foundation in Palestine. "In brief: to try to make sure that all land and all production is in Jewish hands." Dubnow went on: "In addition, it is necessary to teach the young people today and the coming generation the use of arms (in free and wild Turkey, anything is possible). Then . . . and here I can only guess . . . that grand day will arrive, the day whose coming was prophesized by Isaiah in his impassioned vision in the song of consolation. The Jews will yet arise, weapons in hand (if need be); and, in a loud voice, they shall proclaim themselves the lords and masters of their ancient homeland."<sup>10</sup>

It is beside the point that shortly thereafter, Vladimir Dubnow despaired of the prospect of Jewish settlement in Palestine and returned to Russia. A letter such as this could not have been written by a Jew in the Pale of Settlement, even though many towns and cities in the Pale had a larger Jewish population than the total Jewish population in Palestine at the time. Simeon Dubnow believed that Jews were entitled to national rights in the countries they were living in. Yet instinctive feelings among Jews and non-Jews expressed a different perspective, namely, that a land belongs to its people. Thus, Russia belonged to the Russians; and, by the same token, Palestine belonged to the Jews.<sup>11</sup> For that reason, from the moment Jews landed in Jaffa harbor, they did not behave like a small minority dependent on the good grace of the majority. Rather, their comportment was befitting of per-

sons who were the rightful lords and masters of the land and would, at best, have to take the existence of violent neighbors into proper account.

One of the characteristics of the First Aliyah was the absence of a complex ideology. Their outlook, in so far as they were Zionists, did not go much beyond the desire to live in Palestine in a rural setting—leading a life close to nature. Preference was given to working the soil. They came from Russia and Romania, were orthodox in their religious practices, and preserved the customs of their fathers. They rejected the criticism by the Haskalah of Jewish life-styles in the Diaspora. Hence, their Zionism did not include the modernizing component—namely, changing the image of the Jew and promoting Jewish integration into the modern world—as advocated by secular streams of Zionism.

Not all the groups making up the First Aliyah were cut from the same cloth: The Bilu group, for example, had been influenced by the idealism of Russian revolutionaries. Its members saw themselves as pioneers, blazing the path for the Jewish masses that would follow in their footsteps. They were secular in outlook and aspired to create a model society in Palestine. Some of the settlers in Rehovot were influenced by the ideas of Ahad Ha-Am and tried to implement them in their colony. Yet these were relatively small groups, despite the certain degree of importance they had. Most of the men and women of the First Aliyah were unable to boast of a particularly good education. Abstract questions and issues were not what they enjoyed discussing. The revolution entailed by their coming to Palestine and embracing village life was not accompanied by a revolutionary shift in their consciousness or a change in their way of life at home and on the street. Petah Tikvah, the largest of their colonies, resembled a small town in Lithuania. Zikhron Yaakov and various colonies in Galilee were similar in style. Rishon le-Zion had a somewhat peculiar character, a mixture of a Jewish hamlet and quasi-French manners, due to the influence of the officials of Baron Rothschild who lived there. Most of these colonies remained dependent on the baron's assistance over a period of more than fifteen years, down till the turn of the century.

The Jewish colonies lived by agriculture. No one knew exactly what branches were suitable for the Palestinian soil and climate. The economy of the Arab villages they encountered did not provide a good example for emulation. Its meager output was insufficient for meeting the needs of the Jewish settlers—even those with modest expectations, like the settlers who had come from backward areas in Eastern Europe. The poverty of the Arab village was manifest in their extremely low standard of living, the unacceptable conditions of sanitation and hygiene (even when compared with the situation in Jewish hamlets in Eastern Europe), the scourge of skin and eye diseases, and the lack of any public services (not to mention illiteracy). All this was far worse than what they had known in Russia and Romania. That, then, was the settlers' first impression of their fellahin neighbors.

After Baron Rothschild became involved in the enterprise and decided to support the colonies, which were threatened by extinction due to a lack of capital, he decided to implement monocultural cultivation in Palestine, that is, a farm economy based on a single crop meant for marketing. The first crop that the colonies in Judea and Samaria (areas situated in the southern and northern coastal plain) specialized in was viticulture. Only at a later stage did they begin to develop the citrus

branch, a field of agriculture in which the Jaffa Arabs had already succeeded, having made a brand name of their oranges. Both these branches required concentrated labor in short seasons, based on cheap hired hands, especially in connection with fruit harvesting and marketing of produce.

These facts determined the relationship between the Jewish colonists and the nearby Arab villagers. The small number of Jews needed Arab workers to tend to their vineyards and orchards. They also required milk products and vegetables from the Arab villages. A system of relations arose that was based on mutual dependence: The Arabs were in need of income from the Jewish economy to supplement the meager income from their own farms. Arab villages near to Jewish colonies, abandoned earlier in the nineteenth century, were reinhabited as a result of Jewish settlement in the area. The price of land near the colonies rose accordingly; and the villagers refused to sell, since they feared they might lose their jobs in the nearby colonies. Although the Jewish employers paid scanty wages, a supplementary income, especially in cash, was a blessing for the Arab fellahin. On the other hand, the Jews would have been unable to maintain their farms without Arab labor. The Arab workers became an inseparable part of the scene in the Jewish colonies.<sup>12</sup>

In Lower Galilee, where colonies based on field crop cultivation had been established, the colonists required Arab tenants, sharecroppers who hired themselves out for the season in return for a certain percentage of the harvest. The sharecropper and his family lived in a miserable hut in the farmyard of the Jewish farmer (though the houses of Jewish farmers in Galilee were themselves anything but palaces). The father and his children then worked at odd jobs in the fields, while the tenant's wife assisted the farmer's wife with household chores. In contrast with the accepted practice in Judea, where farmers behaved like landowners and would not demean themselves by working, preferring to appoint "overseers," in Galilee the farmer and members of his family toiled side by side with the Arab sharecropper from dawn to dusk.

The pattern of relations that developed in several of the colonies—especially Petah Tikvah, Rishon le-Zion, Nes Ziona in Judea, and Zikhron Yaakov in Samaria—was similar to what was customary in colonial societies elsewhere: a minority of settlers, exploiting local native labor in order to develop the economy. The native population, constituting the great majority, remained in an inferior position, economically, socially, and culturally. The network of interpersonal relations that developed likewise did not differ from the accepted norms in such societies. Its fabric was an interweaving of strands of domination and dependency, alienness and intimacy, contempt and fear.

The Jewish colonists had no particular sympathy for the Arab. In their eyes, he was a foreigner, with strange customs and a religion and system of values different from what they had been accustomed to among their Gentile neighbors in Europe. Their first impression was that this stranger respected strength and that the language of physical force was the only idiom he understood.<sup>13</sup> The tendency of colonists to reach quickly for the whip and beat the offender for every transgression, large and small, committed by the fellahin, is recalled in testimonies describing events in the colonies beginning with the early years of settlement. Thus, for example, the violent riot by fellahin in Petah Tikvah in late March 1886, labeled immediately by the

Zionist press as a "pogrom," was in actual fact the outcome of overbearing behavior on the part of the farmers in the colony. The latter had "confiscated" the donkeys of their neighbors, claiming they had trespassed on the fields of the colony, even though the fellahin were apparently innocent.<sup>14</sup> Already on his first visit to Palestine in 1891, Ahad Ha-Am gained a highly unfavorable impression of the attitude of the colonists toward their Arab neighbors: "They behave hostilely and cruelly toward the Arabs, encroaching upon them unjustly, beating them disgracefully for no good reason, and then they do not hesitate to boast about their deeds."<sup>15</sup>

That phenomenon was also in evidence in the years to come. The colony Rehovot, a notable positive exception among Jewish colonies in Judea in respect to its public administration and adherence to appropriate behavioral norms, was laudable for its prohibition on striking any person; and it was "even forbidden to beat an Arab worker."<sup>16</sup> Yet even the council of Rehovot had to investigate incidents in which an Arab worker had been beaten by his employer, though he had done no wrong.<sup>17</sup> Beating was not limited to one side only: On more than one occasion, Arabs also beat up Jews, both outside and within the colony. In Rehovot, there were a number of incidents where Arab workers attacked and battered their employers or Jewish workers.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, in Kefar Tavor in Lower Galilee, there were numerous incidents in which local tenant farmers did not hesitate to enter the house of their employer and attack him, because he had been late in paying their wages (or similar complaints).<sup>19</sup> There were also cases in which Jewish farmers utilized Arab strongmen against other Jews, especially during disputes with socialist workers from the Second Aliyah.<sup>20</sup> On Ahad Ha-Am's second visit to Palestine in 1903, he was shocked by the attitude of the colonists in Galilee toward the sharecropping tenant Arabs living in their farmyards. "The attitude of the colonists toward their land tenants and families is really very much like their attitude toward their animals," he wrote.<sup>21</sup> Even if we assume that Ahad Ha-Am was exaggerating and that there were other kinds of relations between colonists and their land tenants, there can be no doubt that his description contained a kernel of truth.<sup>22</sup> The expression "a people similar to a donkey" was apparently quite common among Jewish farmers as a description of Arab workers. It derives from the Talmud, used there on several occasions in connection with Canaanite slaves,<sup>23</sup> and was widespread in the Diaspora in referring to Gentiles (to the extent that Jewish internal censorship permitted). In Palestine, there were no restrictions of self-censorship; Jews therefore thought they had a license to use that talmudic expression at will.

The writer Moshe Smilansky, a founder of Rehovot, explained the contemptuous attitude on the part of Jewish settlers toward their Arab neighbors by referring to the preconceived notion that Jews had of Palestine: "From the first moment of the Zionist idea, Zionist propaganda described the land to which we were headed as desolate and forsaken, impatiently waiting for its redeemers." In the minds of the settlers, this attitude created a "feeling of certainty that Palestine was a virgin country." It was that same feeling of certainty (or, as I prefer to describe it, of ownership) that, according to Smilansky, led to an "attitude of contempt" on the part of the first colonists toward the local Arab inhabitants.<sup>24</sup>

The crystallization of stereotypes was not long in coming. Arabs were considered to be lazy loafers. If they had no "supervisor," they would not work at all.<sup>25</sup> On

the other hand, they were ready to work to the point of exhaustion for a pittance.<sup>26</sup> Stereotypical wisdom held that the Arab respected strength and valor but was a coward, and gave in at the slightest show of force.<sup>27</sup> The lack of respect with which the fellahin or bedouin treated the property of others—manifested in stealing from the fields, houses, or farmyards—infuriated the Jewish settlers. “The Arabs are all thieves”<sup>28</sup> was a complaint voiced in a number of variations by the settlers.<sup>29</sup> The filth in the Arab villages, their state of neglect, the lack of trees and gardens, the stench of manure that served as fuel for their ovens—these components provided material for criticism, and were used in creating a distinction between the Jewish village, depicted as a positive model, and the local Arab village, abject and backward.

Eye diseases were extremely common among the Arab population, and it was obvious that Jewish children would also come down with them. That fact was mentioned as one of the reasons why it was imperative to keep a distance from the Arabs.<sup>30</sup> Ahad Ha-Am complained about the negative habits that Jewish children were learning from the children of the tenants in the farmyard.<sup>31</sup> Zeev Smilansky detailed the bad characteristics that the young picked up by associating with Arabs: obscenity, ugly habits, and indecent facial expressions and gestures: “This is how the young become accustomed to lying, false oaths, swindling and trickery, stubbornness and unbridled egoism.” There was also a certain sexual tension in the air, manifested in the uncomfortable feeling visitors had in Zikhron Yaakov, seeing young girls from the colony out for a stroll in the evening, walking among scores of Arab males.<sup>32</sup>

Contemporaries interpreted the high-handed attitude shown by Jewish farmers toward the Arab population as a product of the revolutionary upheaval that had taken place in their own situation: Coming from oppressive and highly autocratic regimes in their countries of origin, they found themselves in a new environment, the wild freedom of Ottomanic Turkey. Only yesterday they had been members of a small and persecuted minority taking pains to avoid incurring the wrath of its neighbors. Today they were in control of the situation, lord and master in their own house. The Turkish authorities were open to being swayed by baksheesh and by the influence of persons who enjoyed standing with the foreign consulates, like the officials of Baron Rothschild or Jews of Austrian origin in Palestine. Hence, the authorities tended to lean toward the benefit of the settlers in disputes between Jewish colonists and the local population. There was total freedom in everyday life, bordering on license.<sup>33</sup> The complex psychology of “when a slave reigns” (an expression used by Ahad Ha-Am in reference to the arrogance of the upstart colonists)<sup>34</sup> was manifested in the colonial system of relations that developed in the colonies. Those who were born and raised in that atmosphere had a certain “arrogance of the ‘lord and master’ toward his slaves.”<sup>35</sup>

This system of relations engendered a certain intimacy between Jews and Arabs. There were occasions when that closeness of contact resulted in excellent interpersonal relations on a human basis, as Moshe Smilansky portrayed in some of his stories in *Hawaja Musa* (Mister Moses) or in stories of the veteran colonists in Galilee. More frequently, though, it simply reduced the obligatory distance between the status of lords and that of the natives, without creating any sense of mutual fond-

ness. There was little mystique: The Arabs knew their employers intimately, with all their weaknesses. In the course of time, they learned to understand the Yiddish commonly used by the settlers; and there was no secret in the colony that they did not know about, from problems of its defense to common Jewish habits and customs. Just as the colonists had a negative opinion about their Arab workers, the latter had little praise for their employers. Among themselves, they generally ridiculed them and spoke contemptuously about their habits.<sup>36</sup>

At times, there were substantially more Arabs than Jews living in the colonies. The shadow of threat hovered constantly over the colony. The dependence on, and the fear of, Arab workers was the other face of the colonial society. Although those workers were regarded as a vital component in the economic structure of the colony, the founders of the colony and their children never lost sight of the possibility that these half-wild natives might one day rise up against them. On various occasions, employers avoided firing a corrupt worker or guard who had not carried out his assigned duties to the letter, for fear he might someday return and take vengeance. The methods of revenge varied from uprooting seedlings, smashing windows, and stealing cattle all the way to physical assault.<sup>37</sup>

Contact between Jewish settlers and Arabs was limited in functional and social terms. The spheres in which contact took place were circumscribed, and centered on work relations. The veteran Jews in Palestine (part of the “old Yishuv,” the orthodox community that had lived in Palestine prior to the Zionist settlements—in particular the Sephardim) had various types of social contact with Arabs. This was not the case with the new settlers: Quite naturally, people have a tendency to avoid social relations with persons they consider inferior. After the dispute in Petah Tikvah in 1886, El’azar Rokeach insisted on inviting Arabs there to a cup of coffee in one of the homes of the settlers: “Everyone familiar with the character of the natives of our land knows the power that rests in a flagon of coffee with which we shall honor the Arab who comes to our home, the power to win his affection for us.”<sup>38</sup> In vain. Even if Rokeach’s expectations regarding the persuasive powers of a cup of coffee seemed exaggerated, the fact that his proposal and others like it were rejected was indicative of the real situation when it came to relations between the settlers and the native population.

That state of affairs was also reflected on another plane: complaints and criticism voiced even before World War I regarding just how little Jews knew about the Arab population and its customs, especially their lack of knowledge of Arabic.<sup>39</sup> This ignorance derived in part from the fact that Jews tended to have contacts only with certain strata of the Arab population, namely fellahin and bedouin. Occasionally they met the representative of the local authorities, but little beyond that. The urban Arab intelligentsia in Palestine and, of course, the old Arab aristocratic families were considered “out of bounds” when it came to the Jews. It is quite possible that one of the reasons for this low level of contact with higher-placed and more-educated strata in Arab society was the background of the settlers themselves: most of them did not belong to the Jewish intelligentsia, and none were from the ranks of the Jewish aristocracy. It is difficult to imagine them engaged in serious discussion with educated Arabs even if they had sought their company and knew their language. This limitation on the nature and scope of Jewish–Arab relations served



to strengthen the stereotype among Jews of the boorish Arab, backward and uncivilized. By the same token, urban Arabs were depicted as scheming and cunning, prone to machinations and evil designs, men that could not be trusted.<sup>40</sup> That stereotype fostered the sense of mastership and was, in turn, nurtured by it.

Nonetheless, simultaneous with this, there was also a tendency among the colonists to adapt and appropriate certain attributes of the local culture. Young people in the colonies, for example, were fond of adopting and imitating the symbols of power in bedouin culture: horseback riding, carrying weapons, and wearing a *kaffia* headdress.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the meek and humble fellah, who was like a virtual door-mat in the colony, awakened feelings of contempt and disrespect. But the bedouin, who often guarded (or robbed) the colony, knew how to impose his will, especially in the smaller and isolated settlements; and it was he who stirred the imagination of the second generation in the colonies. Of course, that romanticizing of the bold noble savage is familiar from the literature of other countries with a history of colonial settlement, and is characteristic of the ambivalent network of relations that can develop between settlers and certain elements in the indigenous population in a colonial context. Yet such romanticism does not necessarily entail active adoption of the native symbols of power by the colonists. In the case of Palestine, imitation of bedouin symbols of power apparently derived from the fact that the Jews as yet had no power symbology of their own and appropriated the symbolism current in the area. This was an external expression of the shift in values that had taken place in coming to Palestine.

There were some who voiced criticism of this adoption of native customs by the Jews, viewing it as a process that might undermine the qualitative advantage Jews enjoyed over Arabs and lead to their assimilation among the Arab population, instead of the reverse.<sup>42</sup> Others thought differently: The eyes of Herzl and other leaders of the Zionist movement, such as Max Bodenheimer and David Wolffsohn, were reportedly filled with tears when they attended a demonstration of riding ability by equestrians from Rehovot during their visit to Palestine in October 1898. The metamorphosis from clothing salesmen to cowboys from the Wild West (such were the comparisons used by Herzl to describe the encounter) appeared to be living proof of the revolution in the image of the Jew that the life in freedom on the soil of his homeland was meant to bring about.<sup>43</sup>

Up to 1908, that is, until the Young Turk revolution, it was difficult to discern any genuine confrontation between Jews and Arabs. The Arab national movement in Palestine was still in its infancy. To the extent that there were Arab intellectuals animated by a nationalist spirit, their impact was not felt in public life in Palestine.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, an Arab then would have had to have a rich imagination to believe that the few thousand Jewish settlers scattered across the land could someday pose a serious threat to the status of the Arab population in Palestine. During this period, clashes between Jews and Arabs were on the order of a quarrel between neighbors and were quite similar to the kind of disputes that erupted between Arab villages. The cause for the quarrel generally involved differences over water and grazing rights and rights to land. The purchase of land did not always ensure the rights of Jews to have access to the water sources in the area. The war over water was a topic that repeatedly surfaced in relations between Kefar Tavor and its Arab

neighbors.<sup>45</sup> Grazing pasture was considered the public domain in Arab society. Arab herds grazed on the field of stubble belonging to Jews, in accordance with local custom. But the Jewish farmers followed another code and wished to preserve the pasture in their fields for their own animals, a decision that brought about disagreements and fights.<sup>46</sup>

The worst problems were associated with the purchase of land. The history of Jewish colonization is replete with stories of acts of fraud by sellers, where the naive Jewish buyers bought land without knowing exactly what they had purchased. The result was a chain of claims and counterclaims, violence and counterviolence. There were also incidents where Jews became embroiled knowingly, as in the case of land purchase in Metulla. Jewish buyers there took advantage of a combination of political circumstances to acquire the land at the expense of the local Druze inhabitants. The upshot was a series of bloody disputes that cost Baron Rothschild's officials a fortune in bribes to resolve. There were instances, for example, the case of Rosh Pinna, where the purchase of land entailed eviction of the Arab tenants.<sup>47</sup> Until the arrival of Jews, a change in land ownership did not involve a concomitant change in the person cultivating the land. The fellahin continued to work their land even after they lost its possession, whether due to chicanery and strong-arm tactics or because of debts owed to shrewd Arab moneylenders. Jewish purchase of land was arranged over the heads of those tenants, by means of agreements with the effendi, the legal owner of the land. In general, compensation was paid to the evicted tenants forced to vacate their land both for the loss of their squalid huts and for the crop (if any) in the fields. Yet all this did not change the fact that the fellahin were transformed overnight from farmers who possessed land in some form (even if as land tenants) into hired hands. That problem of dispossession had troubled people like Yitzhak Epstein or Moshe Smilansky even during this period. Suggestions were made to try to avoid purchasing land where there were tenant farmers and to concentrate on acquiring land in less fertile (hence, less settled) regions of Palestine.<sup>48</sup> These proposals were a part of a broader framework, namely, the entire question of relations between Jews and Arabs.

Members of the Second Aliyah began to arrive in Palestine in 1904. That wave continued, with short interruptions, down to 1914. During that decade, it is generally estimated that some thirty-five thousand Jews arrived as immigrants. Many were advanced in years and wished to spend the remainder of their lives in Palestine and be buried in the Holy Land. A minority, estimated at several thousand, were young people who had migrated to Palestine motivated by Zionist ideology of one or another socialist brand. Over the quarter of a century that had passed since the immigrants of the First Aliyah had left for Palestine, the situation in the Pale of Settlement had undergone a transformation. Now a ferment of revolution was in the air. The Russian revolutionaries served as a model to be emulated by young Jews animated by a desire to change society. Many of them joined the Russian revolutionary movement. Others participated in the activity of the Jewish Socialist party, the Bund. Some, however, created a link between universal and national redemption and arrived at the Zionist conclusion that the Jewish problem would not be solved by a general revolution but that it required its own specific solution. The Zionist outlook of those young people was shaped by a socialist conception of

reforming the universe and of recasting the image of the Jewish people into a people of workers.

Physical labor played a central role in the ideology of the Second Aliyah. There were some who were influenced by Narodnik ideology, and regarded the peasant as the cornerstone of a healthy society. Others were affected by “enlightened” conceptions, such as the notion of the productivization of the Jewish people, namely, its transformation from a nation of middlemen into a people living by its own productive labor. In their eyes, only physical labor was worthy of the appellation “work.” The Marxists among them felt it was especially important to create a Jewish working class in Palestine: Only when there was a Jewish proletariat would Jews be able to struggle on the right side of the barricades in the coming revolution. Whether influenced by ideas of productivization, the romanticism of agricultural labor or proletarian romanticism, those young people knew that they wished to be agricultural workers in Palestine. In contrast with their predecessors from the First Aliyah, whose gifts were not verbal or literary and who preferred to deal with material problems, viewing intellectual questions with contempt, many members of the Second Aliyah had a veritable passion for lofty questions and issues. Ideology and ideological disputes were the source of their spiritual sustenance. They lived under great intellectual tension and self-scrutiny, constantly examining themselves to discover whether they were indeed living up to their self-imposed commandments and ideals.

A significant number of those young people had concrete experience of pogroms in Russia. From 1905 on, pogroms there had become more frequent, arousing a growing sense of fury and outrage among young Jews; and such experiences became an integral component of the psychological makeup of the Second Aliyah, in contrast with the First Aliyah. The topic of “self-defense” was one of the key questions on the agenda of that wave of immigrants. Some, in fact, had already participated in self-defense units while still in Russia.

Most of the members of the Second Aliyah were preoccupied with themselves, their individual experience of grappling with Palestinian realities, the hardships faced by a young person in the strange new environment, the burden of loneliness and unhappiness. To all this was added the problem of coping with the challenge of physical labor. It appears that this was indeed the chief problem that occupied the young immigrants. They loved psychological probing and engaged in much mental mortification of themselves and others—as befitted those who emulated a model of life drawn from Russian literature.

To judge from the small quantity of ink expended in its discussion, the men and women of the Second Aliyah had little interest in the Arab problem. They came burdened by a sense of profound pessimism and soon developed the fashion of “despair” about the future of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. None wrote enthusiastic letters along the lines of Vladimir Dubnow. If they harbored hopes about setting up a Jewish state, they preferred to keep those dreams to themselves, deterred by the enormous gap between the ideal and reality. On their agenda, political issues were not problems that demanded immediate attention. Their lives revolved around social, economic, and cultural issues. The Arabs were marginal to them and remained at the periphery of the drama of their personal lives. They inter-

preted that drama as a struggle for the rejuvenation of the Jewish people, endowing it with national importance.

The encounter of these young immigrants with life in the colonies was traumatic. Some ten years later, Ben Gurion described that encounter in terms that suggest a sense of profound shock. He spoke about the “honeymoon” in the homeland, when everything seemed so enchanting and magnificent. But despite the flush of early enthusiasm, he soon detected an old, familiar picture: “The first settlers became middlemen and shopkeepers, who traffic in the hopes of their people, selling the aspirations of their youth for a pittance. They introduced the idol of exile to the temple of national rebirth, and the creation of the homeland was desecrated by *avodah zara* [employment of Arab workers, lit. ‘alien work’].”<sup>49</sup> *Avodah zara* (in its religious sense “idol worship”) is a notion pregnant with meaning in Judaism. It was one of the three sins—along with bloodshed and incest—rather than commit which, a Jew preferred to be killed. Application of this concept to describe the work of Arabs in Jewish colonies depicted it as being equivalent to breaking a taboo. In the eyes of these young immigrants, for whom physical labor had the status of a supreme value, the employment of Arabs appeared like a desecration of the sanctity of the land. The semicolonial system that they encountered in the colonies was in total contradiction with the set of values they had brought with them to Palestine. Instead of the new Jew and a normal people, what they found were life patterns and human relations well known to them from the Diaspora. Once again, the Jew was not working but, rather, supervising the work of others. The image of the Jew as leaser of great estates, familiar from the history of Poland, reemerged in the new reality of Palestine.

The servile system that appeared in the colonies could not but repel anyone endowed with a sense of social sensitivity. The confrontation between the young men and women of the Second Aliyah and the colonists became inevitable when the newcomers rejected the colonial ideal and refused to become farmers; in their role as workers, they viewed themselves as bearers of social, national, and human values far superior to those of their predecessors in Palestine.

Thus, the paradox arose that the socialists, who carried aloft the banner of changing the world, fraternity among peoples, and other virtues of peace and non-aggression, found themselves in actual fact on a national collision course with the Arabs. In order to escape from the colonial structure of settlement, they called for the building of a Jewish society by Jews alone, from foundation stone to rafter. More sensitive than their predecessors regarding problems deriving from the relations between a minority and majority, they wanted to break free from all the complications bound up with living as a people in the midst of another people. This was to be brought about by a total separation of the evolving Jewish society in Palestine from Arab society. Concretely, they called for a preferential labor policy: all jobs created by Jewish capital should be reserved for Jewish workers. The importance of this step, were it to be realized, would be the creation of two separate economies, Jewish and Arab. Eventually, this meant the creation of two societies as well. During the Second Aliyah, that remained only an aspiration. Jewish workers were few in number, and soon found themselves in serious conflict with the farmers in the colonies. Here was a confrontation between the representatives of two contrasting

systems of value and culture: young versus old, secular versus religious, idealist versus materialist, venerating of physical labor versus despising of it, revolutionary and out to change reality versus reactionary and determined to preserve the past and present.

*Kibbush ha-avoda* (conquest of labor)—the slogan used by the young pioneers to denote their desire to supplant the Arabs working in the Jewish fields—proved a failure: Arab workers stayed on to work in the Jewish-owned fields. Consequently, the expression gradually took on a new meaning, namely, accustoming the Jewish worker to the rigors of arduous physical labor. But the contours of the public debate on the question of the relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine were already visible. There was a trend that aspired to integration between Jewish and Arab society (whatever the nature of that integration may have been) contrasted with a current aiming at separation (whatever its objective). These two fundamental approaches in the relations between the two peoples had already been outlined during the Second Aliyah. Precisely because there was no place at that time for serious discussion of basic political questions, due to the nature of the Ottoman regime and the relatively small scope of Jewish settlement, an opportunity presented itself to discuss a broader issue: the nature of the future Jewish society, then in the process of formation.<sup>50</sup>

The workers bestowed the status of a supreme national value on the question of Jewish labor. Anyone who failed to understand its importance was regarded as, at best, dim-witted, at worst, a traitor. Most of the Zionist leaders shared the view of the workers who stressed that it was imperative to ensure the Jewish character of the colonies by employment of Jewish workers—but not all. Ahad Ha-Am, for example, had doubts about the wisdom of “a total conquest of that kind” and feared that such a policy would earn the enmity of the Arabs.<sup>51</sup>

During the First Aliyah, Jews regarded their right to Palestine as self-evident and requiring no proof. That attitude was based, consciously or not, on the historical right of the Jews. Jews even claimed that among the older fellahin, an ancient tradition survived that the Jews would one day return to Palestine and be its masters again, as they were in the distant past.<sup>52</sup> Members of the Second Aliyah found it difficult to accept that approach. In the last resort, they were hard put to advance an alternative justification, so they too, fell back on the argument of the historical Jewish claim to Palestine as an explanation for the right of Jews to settle there. However, as adherents of the Narodnik view that the land belongs to whoever works it, that justification was insufficient. They argued that the historical right provides nothing but the primary right to settle there and that the ultimate right to the land would be determined by actual labor on the land. That approach now became a central strand in the line of Zionist argumentation in general and a crucial component in the justifications advanced by the Zionist Labor movement in particular.

In 1907, as a result of the publication of Epstein’s “A Hidden Question” in the journal *Ha-Shilo’ah*, a dispute erupted in the Jewish community in Palestine. Epstein contended that Jews should help in any way possible to promote Arab progress; others disagreed. This issue laid bare the covert submerged layer of competition for Palestine and the feeling among Jews that Arab backwardness was a trump card in Jewish hands in the future struggle for the land. From what was said in that

dispute, it is evident that the dominant approach in the Yishuv was that the struggle between Jews and Arabs for Palestine would be resolved at a future date after the arrival of mass Jewish immigration that would transform the Arabs into a small and negligible minority. Until then, Jews would have to behave wisely and abstain from provocative behavior, such as purchasing land that entailed eviction of fellahin. Concurrently, they should not make any special effort to advance the condition of the Arab population.<sup>53</sup>

In this dispute, manifestations of Arab enmity toward Jews were interpreted by applying concepts borrowed from European models of Jewish–Gentile relations: If Arabs hate us, this is not the result of our own actions, it is a decree of fate, the product of the eternal hatred of the world for the eternal people; there is no sense in trying to befriend them. The more Jews ingratiate and demean themselves before the Gentiles, the more they are hated. This perspective had been corroborated by a salient fact of experience in Eastern Europe: All Jewish efforts to endear themselves to the Russian people and the sacrifices of Jewish revolutionaries for the sake of that people had brought nothing but the scourge of riots.<sup>54</sup>

The dominant feeling was optimistic: In 1907, the anxious search for signs heralding the emergence of an Arab national movement (an anxiety that, as will be recalled, had accompanied every manifestation of Arab animosity toward the settlers) had not yet discovered any cause for concern. The commonly accepted view was cautious but sanguine: *For the moment*, there was no sign of any such movement. That assessment of the situation was also associated with the question of the likelihood of an Arab attack on the Jewish settlement. Along with the humanistic arguments he mustered in support of a nonprovocative attitude toward the Arabs, Epstein alluded in his essay to the imminent physical danger that could arise should the Arabs rise up against Jews.<sup>55</sup> It was disputed whether there were concrete prospects for such a violent outburst. Opponents of Epstein's views argued that for the present, this was not a relevant issue. "At the moment, fear of his fist is far from our minds," wrote Nehama Pukhachewsky, a resident of Rishon le-Zion, demanding that the national interest be given priority over any other.<sup>56</sup> Moshe Smilansky, in contrast, was more sensitive when it came to the future danger from the Arabs and called for preparations to meet it, though he, too, did not believe there was any immediate danger in the offing.<sup>57</sup> This question was debated primarily in the ranks of the First Aliyah. The main issue was what was the best way to ensure a peaceful process of colonization. Most of the settlers in the colonies tended to view Arab–Jewish relations optimistically: The Arabs were backward, lacking in political awareness, and (except for the bedouin) cowardly. There was no reason to fear that they might become an obstacle on the road to Zionist settlement. Moreover, the contention was that Jewish settlement brought great economic advantages for the fellahin. In Arab villages located near Jewish villages, there were signs of relative prosperity. Consequently, it was unreasonable to think that the Arabs would oppose such settlement. Fellahin were viewed as persons who were not motivated by "lofty" sentiments (such as national identity), and it was thought they were guided first and foremost by considerations of material advantage. If there was animosity, many believed, it had probably been stirred up by the urban Arabs, especially the Christians—the agitators and troublemakers.

This optimistic perspective was an integral component of the quasi-colonial network of relations. The European settler generally saw the local population as being unable to oppose him, and uninterested in any such opposition. That assumption served as a kind of precondition for settlement, as well as a justification. Thus, it is not surprising that most Jews who employed Arab workers were not afraid of them and voiced contempt in varying degree for the ability of the Arabs to inflict any harm on Jewish settlement in Palestine.<sup>58</sup> The attitude of the colonist elite (whose typical representatives were men like Avshalom Feinberg or Aaron Aaronsohn) toward Arabs was based on the notion of the superiority of the Jewish settler and on the desirability of a certain amount of cooperation between the two populations to the mutual benefit of both, though at different levels.

Members of the Second Aliyah rejected that conception. The ideology of "Jewish labor" advocated national solidarity at the expense of economic or class interests. For the same reasons that the farmers tended to minimize the danger of a future Jewish–Arab conflict, the workers emphasized its potential threat. In order to induce the farmers to oppose their natural inclination to employ cheap workers, it was necessary to stress the immanent contrast in interests between Jews and Arabs by giving decisive weight to national identity and identification. The pessimistic approach regarding the future of Jewish–Arab relations was a built-in component of the opposition to the quasi-colonialist method—an argument for its negation and for a nationalist alternative. This was one of the main reasons why the workers stressed the *national* character of the Jewish–Arab conflict, a tendency that made its appearance in 1907. Ironically, individuals who immigrated to Palestine with a well-defined class consciousness, such as the Poalei Zion party, were the ones who emphasized the national character of the Arab–Jewish contrast. Poalei Zion was an orthodox Marxist party that had embraced the teachings of Ber Borochov in regard to the need for the creation of a Jewish proletariat in Palestine, so that a proper class struggle could develop within the Jewish people.

As mentioned, the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908 led to a growing ferment in the Arab world. Arabs now began to give expression to suppressed national feelings. That ferment was not centered in Palestine but, rather, in Syria; and what was taking place in Palestine was a kind of supplement to the central events there. Scholars agree that it is difficult to find signs at that time of the existence of a specific *Palestinian*–Arab nationalism, separate from Pan-Arab nationalism.<sup>59</sup> Yet this new upsurge in national sentiment found expression in Palestine in the form of demonstrations of animosity toward foreigners, Jews in general, and the Zionist settlers in particular. The activists spearheading these demonstrations were indeed urban Arabs, especially Christians—apparently because they had a better level of education. The paper *El-Carmel* was first published in Haifa in 1908. Anti-Jewish agitation had an important place on its agenda. Arab officials in Nazareth and Tiberias revealed a tendency to prefer Arabs to Jews in their decisions. Moreover, as a result of the Turkish revolution and its aftermath, there was a prevailing consciousness in Palestine that the heavy hand of the authorities had been weakened. In regions far from the center of power, such as Galilee, an atmosphere of license was generated, bordering on anarchy. This reduced the state of security regarding life and property.<sup>60</sup>

Some scholars are inclined to link these events to the tendency that emerged among certain groups in the Second Aliyah to stress the nationalist nature of the Jewish-Arab contrast.<sup>61</sup> Yet one should be cautious about overemphasizing the importance of those events in shaping the attitude of the Second Aliyah people toward the Arabs, their awareness of the national character of the potential confrontation, and their attitude toward the use of force. As was already mentioned, significant segments of the Second Aliyah were hardly troubled by the Arab question. Even when it made the headlines (in the last years before World War I), it was not a topic for deliberation in any political party or in any of the social bodies that had formed in the meantime. It is true that the subject was discussed in the press, but it remains doubtful whether those articles can be considered proof that the Arab problem had been placed at the top of the agenda of the Jewish community in Palestine. Moreover, there were apparently unmistakable indications of a growing militancy toward Arabs among certain circles in the Second Aliyah even before the Young Turk Revolution. Thus, for example, the clash in Jaffa (Purim 1908) preceded the revolutionary events in Turkey in June of that year. The organization Bar Giora, a secret quasi-military order that had far-reaching plans for the future in Palestine along the lines suggested by Vladimir Dubnow, was established in 1907.

The 1908 clash in Jaffa can serve as a model example for elucidating the attitude of Second Aliyah immigrants toward Arabs. In Jaffa, the main port of entry to Palestine, there was a growing concentration of Jewish workers, newcomers from Russia. In 1908, the second wave of the Second Aliyah immigrated to Palestine in the wake of the failure of the 1905 revolution in Russia and the ensuing disappointment and resurgence of reactionary politics. The city of Jaffa did not welcome the Jews; local Arab youth had grown accustomed to harassing Jews out walking the streets of the town. Yet in contrast with earlier incidents, this time, the Jews reacted. A group of young people organized and laid an ambush for the attackers. When they again assaulted a Jewish youngster, his friends rushed to his assistance, returning the blows many times over. After empty bottles were hurled at them from a nearby store, they did not hesitate to enter the premises and give the Arab there a severe beating. This triggered a series of incidents. The Arabs took revenge, and the "Muscovites" (as the new immigrants from Russia were nicknamed by the Arabs) responded in kind; Turkish soldiers intervened, firing on the workers, beating them, and arresting a certain number. Following the intervention by Jewish notables, the case was finally resolved.<sup>62</sup>

In itself, such an incident, featured in headlines in the Diaspora as the "Pogrom Against Us," was without much importance. But it can function to shed light on the differences in style, conduct, and guiding ideas between Second Aliyah immigrants and their predecessors. The psychological bent of mind and methods of action that these immigrants brought with them had been conceived and nurtured in the revolutionary climate of Russia. Their thinking and sentiment had been tempered by the riots that came on the heels of the 1905 revolution. They had directly experienced the abortive attempts at self-defense, the helpless and futile effort to protect and defend Jewish life and dignity. Their extreme sensitivity regarding Jew-



ish dignity was quite understandable. "The workers envisioned a simple, but exalted and great, mission: to raise the desecrated honor of the Jewish name in the eyes of the neighbors."<sup>63</sup> Attitudes acquired in the Diaspora were transferred to the realities in Palestine. They were certain that the non-Jews whom they encountered in Palestine harbored the same feelings toward Jews as the Gentiles they had known in the Diaspora and that the enmity demonstrated by Arabs toward Jews flowed from the same irrational sources that had given rise to antisemitism. They concluded that just as it had been impossible to persuade the peoples of the world of the untruth that lay at the heart of antisemitism, convincing Arabs that Jews had not come to drive them out of Palestine was likewise an impossibility. And just as the hatred of Jews had been utilized in Russia as a means to awaken the people from the slumber of indifference and catalyze an uprising against the authorities, in Palestine the Arab intelligentsia was using the animosity toward Jews it had fostered in order to spur Arab nationalist sentiment.<sup>64</sup> Thus, it was reasoned, there was no sense in wasting words: The Gentile understood but one language, that of force. Only aggressive and courageous acts would liberate the Jews from attacks by their neighbors. Hence, when young people in Jaffa were injured by Arabs, in contrast with their predecessors, they were not willing to exercise restraint or to request compensation by the authorities. Rather, they preferred to take the law into their own hands. This was an additional pattern that characterized the Second Aliyah: One should not rely on assistance from the authorities or request compensation from any oppressor. The only true shield was genuine power.

The Russian revolutionary tradition was supplemented in Palestine by the feeling of being "lord and master." (It should be noted, however, that revolutionary impulses were not implemented exclusively against Arabs: The Petah Tikvah farmers were also alarmed to hear young people of the Second Aliyah speaking about "revolution" and "expropriation.") What Jews and even revolutionaries had been prepared to put up with in the Diaspora was regarded in Palestine as insufferable. They felt they were the initiators of a Jewish revolution; and as such, it was their duty to free themselves from the traditional responses of Jews to Gentiles. The transition from Europe to Palestine was associated with a profound sense of liberation. The concepts embodied in such phrases as "conquest of Palestine" or "freedom" were popular in the flamboyant speeches delivered at the time in the streets of Jaffa. Remarks along the lines of "One must not bow his head" or "It is forbidden to be meek" (a reference to Jewish behavior in the Diaspora) expressed the psychological need of those young people to underscore the difference between themselves in Palestine and their former identity in the Diaspora and to do so aggressively.<sup>65</sup>

The establishment of the organization Bar Giora can serve as an example of the influence of Russian revolutionary tradition. This secret order founded (as I mentioned earlier) independently of current events in Palestine, was meant to serve as a conspiratorial cell (along the lines of Social Revolutionary party tradition in Russia) for a variety of purposes, from advancement of the cause of Jewish labor to defence of Jewish affairs and interests. Two years later, the organization Ha-Shomer was set up as the legal and open arm of Bar Giora. This took place in conjunction with mounting unrest in the colonies in Galilee. However, the decision was not due

to the increasing tension there but was rather the outcome of internal developments within the secret organization, which continued to be the internal nucleus of the larger organization.<sup>66</sup>

The new activism found its expression in lively political activity, in violent responses to Arab provocations, and in the establishment of semimilitary organizations. In the final analysis, these expressed a tendency to respond with force to clashes with Arabs. That activism was not the product of Palestinian realities, but had been imported from the Diaspora. The young had not learned national pride in Palestine but had come there as an expression of revolt against the humiliation of the Jew. That activism derived its basic values from Russian revolutionary ideology and practice. Those values included a refusal to acquiesce in accepting the established order of things, a faith in the ability of a small avant-garde to change the course of history, a conviction that a historical mission liberates its bearers from the restrictions of simple morality in the name of higher justice, and a legitimation of the use of force for the sake of generating the desired revolutionary change. They believed that every revolutionary ideology harbors within it the legitimation of the use of violence, since the end justifies the means. Moreover, in every revolution, the active core constitutes a minority within a majority. This scheme represented an acknowledgement of the inevitability of violence. That was the worldview of the Bar Giora members.

Such a transfer of behavioral norms from the socialist to the nationalist sphere was not peculiar to the Zionist movement. An examination of the paths taken by national liberation movements in Eastern Europe reveals an amalgam of methods of action and arguments drawn from the nationalist and social arsenal without careful distinction as to what belongs where. The idea of the vanguard, as well as the right to use force, were equally popular among both the national liberation movements and revolutionary movements. It would not be far-fetched to assert that mutual inspiration between these two types of movement and the transfer of ideas, images, and ways of action were common and frequent. The Russian populists made use of the term *narod* (people) in the sense of workers of the soil. In populist ideology, the people was the true object of revolutionary liberatory activity. The blurring of definitional contours between national and class concepts in the thinking of this movement facilitated their alternate use. Therefore, it should not be surprising that Jewish *nationalist* activism in Palestine drew sustenance from Russian *revolutionary* activism.

The veteran settlers in Palestine wished to postpone the eruption of the Jewish–Arab conflict as long as possible, even if they assumed that it was ultimately unavoidable. Thus, they exercised caution and restraint in relations with their Arab neighbors.<sup>67</sup> However, the conclusion to be drawn from the activist concept was not only that a clash was inevitable but that it was already a reality, and that there was an intrinsic educational value in relishing the coming confrontation. The cautious method was classified by Y. Zerubavel, one of the leaders of Poalei Zion, as an indication of “Diaspora psychology”, unsuited for a free and independent Jewish life. In contrast, he praised the method of national confrontation as a natural stage in the process of ultimate Arab acquiescence to Jewish settlement. He viewed that confrontation as a necessary consequence of applying the concept of “Jewish labor”

and "Jewish guardsmanship," which pointed to the genesis of an independent Jewish entity in Palestine. Zerubavel argued that individual preference for adaptation or confrontation was a function of the socioeconomic status of the individual: The thinking of the farmer (or, as he put it, of the "Jewish landlord") tended to be based on calculations of utility, while the workers, "whose only capital and property is their healthy sentiment, strong muscles, and aspirations for salvation," were motivated by a healthy national instinct. For that reason, they did not shrink from confrontation.<sup>68</sup>

Rhetoric on the question of confrontation ranged across a broad gamut: Jews might be depicted as innocent victims of irrational hatred, as being "somewhat guilty themselves," or even as a revolutionary factor challenging the forces of the existing order. In any case, it is doubtful whether the Hebrew press was warranted in according hostile articles in the Arab papers such importance. No one was able to establish conclusively the existence of a direct link between these newspaper articles and the decline in the general level of security that occurred during that period in Galilee. The animosity of the *qaimaqam* (regional governor) in Nazareth and Tiberias may have expressed a national enmity, but may perhaps have been only a manifestation of traditional religious hostility toward Jews as infidels. As far as the conflicts between Sejera and its neighbors or Mesha (Kefar Tavor) and its neighbors were concerned, it is doubtful whether one can pinpoint any trace of nationalist motives. The readiness to interpret such incidents in that spirit, characteristic of Poalei Zion, was rooted in the transference of patterns of thought from "there" to "here," as was typical more generally of their approach to relations with non-Jews.<sup>69</sup> The Poalei Zion proclivity to think in terms of Marxist, deterministic concepts also contributed to presenting a potential confrontation as though it were already actually taking place.

Two contradictory tendencies were evident among the Second Aliyah immigrants. Many were inclined to indulge in excessive rhetoric, a lofty tone, and the use of heroic concepts. On the other hand, there was a diametrically opposed tendency among them toward low-keyed expression, modesty, an avoidance of high-sounding phrases. These two currents were clearly evident when it came to the topic of power and the romanticism of violence.

The romanticism of the fighter struck a chord among the members of, Ha-Shomer and the ranks of workers in sympathy with them. The activists of Ha-Shomer adopted bedouin dress, horse riding, rifles, and bullet belts, as had the adolescents in colonies. The bedouin male also served as a model for emulation in respect to their psychological attitudes toward reality (in so far as the young people understood and interpreted it). He symbolized the free soul who did not need to give account to anyone for his actions—the courageous nomad, a kind of Palestinian cowboy.<sup>70</sup> There was an incredible magic about carrying weapons: After all, what was a more eloquent expression of the change that had taken place in the position of the Jew than such an instrument, symbolizing the independence of its owner.<sup>71</sup> The symbols of a secret organization—with an oath of allegiance, binding unto death, a hierarchy, and initiation ceremonies in which weapons played a central role—added a touch of importance and aura of romanticism to the prosaic, dangerous job of the guardsman. His task entailed a nomadic existence, material

poverty and suffering on the part of his loved ones and family. An intentional coarseness of manner developed among these guardsmen, a sort of bravado expressed in rough speech and domineering behavior toward the fairer sex. "Masculinity," whose symbols were borrowed in part from practices and attitudes familiar to them from the surrounding Arab environment and appropriated in part from what they imagined as Cossack behavior (an additional paradigm they emulated) was manifested by a refusal to grant women equal rights. There was at least one of them who dreamed about Jewish women modeled after the bedouin female: Such women (unlike the Jewish girls) knew how to accept male authority and did not inconvenience the men with notions of egalitarian ideology.<sup>72</sup>

Ha-Shomer was singled out for criticism by circles in the Second Aliyah opposed to the parent party, Poalei Zion, as well as by people in the party itself. The choice of guard duty as a livelihood was interpreted by many as an attempt to shirk strenuous physical labor for an easier job.<sup>73</sup> In that perspective, the image of the fighter was seen as competing with the dominant image of the worker. In the scale of values predominant in the Second Aliyah, there was a clear preference for the latter. This is apparently the reason behind the open criticism voiced by Yosef Aharonovitz, one of the leaders of the party Ha-Poel ha-Tzair, and editor of the important periodical by the same name. His critique condemned Ha-Shomer for adopting Arab ways of dress, language, and mannerisms. The attempts by Ha-Shomer to create a special way of life of warriors, distinguished in speech by a distinctive argot (a mixture of Yiddish and Arabic) and more generally by a "non-bourgeois" life-style, were severely castigated for reflecting an undesirable mentality.<sup>74</sup> In general, symbols of an exclusive order of fighters were not granted legitimacy by the society of workers; yet the assigned task of Ha-Shomer as the defender of the Jewish colonies was given due praise.

The cultivation of symbols and myths of heroism was part of the trend to cultivate a "lofty tone" in the ranks of Poalei Zion. In 1911 the book *Yizkor* was published in remembrance of several guardsmen and workers. What they shared were the circumstances of their death: they had not died due to natural causes but had been killed by Arabs.<sup>75</sup> The material was hardly the stuff of which tales of valor are made: These men had been killed by Arabs waiting in ambush, and often there was no witness to the shooting. Aside from the fact that Jews went on guard duty willingly despite the risk of possible injury and the fact of their violent death, it is difficult to find sufficient mythopoeic motifs in the basic story of what occurred. Whether the book *Yizkor* in its Palestinian edition (it later appeared in various editions in Europe and the United States) had any significant influence remains doubtful. Echoes of it in the literature produced by the Second Aliyah are rare. But the volume is important as a signpost with respect to the use of imagery (as a first attempt at glorification of those who fell "in battle," in contrast to those who died in the struggle for survival in Palestine) and as the first example of a transference of patterns of remembrance from religious to secular tradition.

The prayer "Yizkor" is the memorial prayer said on the last day of Passover, Shavuot, Shemini Atzereth, and Yom Kippur, usually in remembrance of family members. Yet from the medieval period on, there has been an additional prayer in remembrance of martyrs. The prayer requests God to remember the souls of all

those put to death, “whose lives were terminated by being murdered, slaughtered, burned, drowned and strangled for the sake of glorifying the name of God.” It justifies the judgment and accepts the acts of God as something that does not require any explanation. There is no protest against the heavens. God remains the source of all authority, and supplication is addressed to him to preserve the memory of those put to death. The mirror image of acceptance of judgment is the passivity of those killed. There is no reference whatsoever to objections or resistance. The prayer has no national connotations. The supplicant usually utters the prayer for the sake of remembrance of his own relatives.

The book *Yizkor* took over the basic pattern of the prayer but challenged its components, giving a different content and meaning to the attempt to preserve the memory of those who were killed. One can already note that difference in the opening passage of the book: “Let the people of Israel remember.” Significantly, the prayer is no longer directed to God but to the people. This is a collective memorial service of the people, and the people is supposed to derive conclusions from the death of its heroes and apply them to its new life. Even if several of the editors of the volume did not intend to stress the contrast between the traditional “Yizkor” and this new version, Y. Zerubavel underscored the evident differences. Presenting a historical conception clearly based on Berdichevsky and his school, Zerubavel juxtaposed the ancient Hebrew people, situated on its land (and its active heroes, such as the brave Jews of Modi’in, Gush Halav, Massada, and the Bar Kokhba revolt) to the Jewish people in the Diaspora. The latter had held out its neck for slaughter and was distinguished by passive saints who died as martyrs. History in his conception was marked by a series of contrasts: valor versus holiness, homeland versus exile, activism versus passivism. Mount Meron, the place of burial of Simeon Bar Yohai (one of the Ten Martyrs) and Modi’in, the village of the Hasmoneans, symbolize the people’s past and future, respectively. Paraphrasing a verse by Bialik from “In the City of Slaughter” referring to the dead of Kishinev (“We did not know why, for whom and for what you died, / And there is no meaning in your death, as there was none in your life”),<sup>76</sup> Zerubavel wrote, “They lived well, and well they died—there was meaning in their life, meaning to their death.”<sup>77</sup> In his eyes, the fact that those martyred had lived as workers and free men gave their death a special value.<sup>78</sup> Since their death was not associated with any outstanding heroic deeds, it had to derive its uniqueness from the new life in Palestine. Just as there was an essential difference between life in Palestine and the Diaspora, death there was also fundamentally different.

One of the recurrent motifs in the collection *Yizkor* is the element of blood. At the end of the article dealing with immortality of the soul, a moderate Jew, Yehoshua Thon, declared the following: “National aspirations are not realized unless a person sacrifices himself for them. Without the seal of blood, not a single national hope has yet been realized in history.”<sup>79</sup> This motif returned in an article by K. L. Silman, a teacher at the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasia: “A people does not build its life except on the foundations of its past, and blood joins with blood.”<sup>80</sup> The need of a national movement for saints and heroes fused with the mysticism that links blood and soil. Passages from biblical scripture—such as “Blood crieth from the ground” (Genesis 4:10), “Behold the blood of the covenant” (Exodus

24:8), “For the blood is the life” (Deuteronomy 12:23)—forged the psychological background for absorbing two conceptions in which blood constitutes a central element. In one, blood is what establishes the covenant between man and his land. The graves are the source of the vital link with the land, and they generate the loyalty of man to that soil. In the second, blood fructifies the soil (in an almost literal sense) and heralds the creation of new life.<sup>81</sup> The close etymological connection in Hebrew between *dam* (blood) and *adamah* (soil) was instrumental in assisting this play on symbols.

It is likely this linkage of concepts has a German source. Yet it is possible that there is also some influence present from other liberation movements in Eastern Europe. More important in this case than the sources of influence is the mood reflected here. The longing for courageous deeds, the intuitive recognition of the importance of myths of bravery and of the symbolization of valor, exemplified in the case mentioned in the almost ritualistic utilization of concepts such as blood and soil, reflect a transfer for the first time of Berdichevskian vitalism to Palestinian soil. What is conspicuous here, however, is that it goes beyond what Berdichevsky wrote: The cult of heroes, death, and graves, the first traces of which can be seen in the volume *Yizkor*, are not found in Berdichevsky. The Palestinian reality endowed the historical heroes Berdichevsky had rescued from limbo with a new and far greater importance. The blood of modern heroes constituted the vital link connecting the glorious past with the rising future: “New graves are a sign that new life is forming in Palestine. . . . And who knows, there may be a mysterious thread being spun to connect Modi’in with Sejera, the ancient Zealots with the workers of today.”<sup>82</sup> It was thus only natural that the leaflet put out by Poalei Zion to mark the death of three guardsmen who had been killed in Galilee eulogized them in these words: “Offspring of the Maccabees, descendants of Bar Giora and Bar Kokhba, come to replace the fallen heroes, who died in a fight for their freedom and their people.”<sup>83</sup>

In this context, it is useful to recall the transformation undergone by poems. “Neither the fire nor the sun, but our blood / Will turn red your mountains, O Zion!” is a line from a poem by Sarah Shapira, a Hebrew poet in Russia (a contemporary of Yehuda Leib Gordon, who had a high opinion of her work and even dedicated a poem to her). She published her poems in the 1880s and 1890s, including “Zion, Let There Be Neither Dew, Nor Rain,” set to music and sung during the First Aliyah. It does not contain a hint of militant romanticism. It is all tears and longing, nothing more, and contains the original of the line I have quoted: “Neither the fire nor the sun, but our blood / Will turn your skies red, O Zion!” It appears that this change was not accidental. The blood on the mountains contains an element of concreteness that is lacking in the distant symbolism of red skies. Removed from its naive context and in its “corrected” form, the line is quoted in the volume *Yizkor* by K. L. Silman.<sup>84</sup> The desire to fall as a victim in the Judean mountains is, he maintains, what brought him and his comrades to Palestine. This line, in Silman’s version, is repeated and quoted by Y. Zerubavel as an example of the correct spirit with which the young should be inculcated.<sup>85</sup> To what extent this phrase made an impression on contemporaries can be seen from the fact that many years later, Ben Gurion used it as a motto in his memoirs about the period of the Second Ali-

yah, when he was a worker and guardsman in Judea and Galilee.<sup>86</sup> The transformation of this verse from a sentimental poem lacking any “new Jew” militant content is instructive: It indicates just how much contemporaries were searching for romantic symbols and slogans to hold on to and how they adapted what they found to their specific needs.

Another poem composed in the Diaspora also took on a new vitality in Palestine, namely Tchernichovsky’s “Shadows Are Spreading.” The poem, set to music, was often sung, but was not viewed as a popular song; rather, it was seen as a hymn expressing the profound hopes harbored by the immigrants of the Second Aliyah. Berl Katznelson, for example, customarily used the pen name Asir Tikvah (Prisoner of Hope), an expression taken directly from that same poem. Ben Gurion, who had little active interest in poetry, cited lines from this poem in a letter he wrote to his father shortly after he arrived in Palestine. The passage he quoted registered the great hope that a new beginning would emerge in the East.<sup>87</sup> An article published in *Ha-Shilo’ah* described the experiences of a young teacher in one of the colonies in Judea. The teacher stressed the importance of creating a bond of emotional identification between the young children and Palestine. This was done by the reading of legends on the destruction of the Second Temple that took on a meaning both historical and contemporary in the context of Palestine; work in the vineyards created the attachment to the landscape. He described how children broke forth in spontaneous song; and of all the stanzas of Tchernichovsky’s poem, they specifically sang the one that went

On the Jordan and in Sharon,  
The Arabs camp.  
This will be our land.  
And you will be among the builders.

The context is totally innocent, and the passage does not contain any militant references. Yet it would seem that the fact this was sung in Judea by children who applied the poem to their own circumstances by changing the last line to “We are among the builders” is quite instructive and indicates the presence of a significant change: When Tchernichovsky described the Arabs as a part of the Palestinian scene, his words were devoid of concrete substance. That is not the case when children who meet Arabs on a daily basis sing them.<sup>88</sup>

The use of passages from poems written in the Diaspora as a part of the new mythology found its best-known expressive manifestation in the slogan adopted by Ha-Shomer, “In blood and fire Judea fell, in blood and fire shall Judea rise again”. That line, from a poem by Yaakov Cahan mentioned earlier, “The Hooligans,” also underwent concretization in the transition from the Diaspora to Palestine. When Cahan wrote about the mythical uprising of the ancient Zealots, he was describing an apocalyptic vision. But when the members of Ha-Shomer adopted the myth of “blood and fire,” there was another significance. It would appear there was some basis in fact to complaints by farmers that members of Ha-Shomer had contributed to an unnecessary heightening of tension in relations with Arabs on a number of occasions.<sup>89</sup>

Despite all the aggressiveness, both in word and deed, within groups of the

Poalei Zion, and especially in the ranks of Ha-Shomer, it is impossible to overlook the restraining influence that their socialist ideology had on their relations with Arabs in Palestine. Their aggressiveness was directed more at rivals in the Jewish camp (particularly farmers) than at Arabs. From its very beginning, the dispute about the Arab question was an internal Jewish affair, influenced by ideological, economic, and political positions within the Jewish community. The thinking of the Poalei Zion did not include any sense of superiority to the local Arab population. The stereotypes of Arabs that were common among the farmers are rare in the literature of Poalei Zion. The Jews are called to sacrifice and heroism; but their potential rivals lack identity, character, and substance. This was not accidental: As stated, although Poalei Zion drew their views in part from the realities in Palestine, they derived them to a greater degree from the European models they had transferred to the new situation. The socialist workers had feelings neither of love nor of hatred for the Arabs. The more acute the matter of Arab labor became, the wider the gulf became and the less amity there was in relations between Jews and Arabs. The workers kept to themselves and avoided becoming better acquainted with the Arab laborers. For that reason, no stereotypes surfaced. The self-image of Poalei Zion as universalists prevented them from consciously cultivating hostile feelings toward Arabs. Showing animosity toward members of other peoples was delegitimized in their ideology. Consequently, the “emphasis on blood” along the lines of Zerubavel and associates should be interpreted more as a call for bravery and sacrifice that was directed toward Jews and less as an expression of fear or enmity toward Arabs.<sup>90</sup>

The trend toward an “elevated tone” was characterized by a kind of hidden optimism that existed parallel to the pessimistic prophecy regarding inevitable confrontation. That conflict was conceived as a vital phenomenon that could strengthen the healthy instincts of the people in its process of renewal. The belief was that ultimately it would also lead, after much suffering, to Jewish victory. Missing from the exploits of bravery and presentation of the victims in the *Yizkor* book was the element of tragedy. Its absence stemmed from the fact that Zerubavel and his comrades were guided by a deep inner conviction, namely, that the death of those victims would serve instrumentally to lubricate the wheels of the Zionist revolution and was therefore a welcome sacrifice for the sake of the advancement of humankind.

The histrionics of Poalei Zion were symptomatic of a tendency for them to take themselves far too seriously—apparently a common failing of every extreme ideological movement. Such a theatrical stance also stemmed from their inclination to picture themselves as the masters of the situation in Palestine—that at a time when they were nothing more than a negligible minority. That tendency, not confined to socialist circles but also prevalent throughout the rest of the Jewish community, prompted sarcastic responses. “The ‘Arab question’—how ridiculous that formulation is! Americans have the Chinese question, and we have the Arab one,” Brenner commented derisively.<sup>91</sup> The writer A. Reuveni related a story about an old Jewish woman who came to Moscow. After a drunken Russian had given her a shove, she turned toward the heavens, commenting, “Lord of the Universe! When will we finally be rid here of the Gentiles?”<sup>92</sup>



The most pointed expression to that “special Palestinian brand of ‘Thou hast chosen us’”<sup>93</sup> and its mockery was given by Brenner in two of his most important literary creations dealing with the Second Aliyah, the story “Bein mayim le-mayim” (Between the Waters) and his novel *Mi-kan u-mi-kan* (From Here and There). If the mood of colonial optimism created a certain perspective on reality in the consciousness of farmers, causing them to disregard the risks and dangers, and if, in the consciousness of a particular circle of socialists, historical determinism created a kind of barrier to reality, Brenner was unblinking in his acute analysis: A writer whose nature it was to peer into the abyss without recoiling, and to force others to do the same. The attempts to repress, disregard, and embellish reality served as grist from which to construct his cruel exposure of the factual and psychological truths hidden behind the optimistic facades.

Like most of the immigrants of the Second Aliyah, Brenner had been brought up in the Pale of Settlement; and the models of Jewish–Gentile relations they imported with them to Palestine were also a part of his consciousness. But while fellow Second Aliyah immigrants tried in consciousness to reshape a seemingly new set of values, Brenner, with characteristic intensity, offered virtual proof that there was no difference between “here” and “there,” that it was all the same. Both in Palestine and back in Russia, the Jew was the alien, and the Gentile was lord of the land. Here and back there, Jews lived a life divorced from nature and from working the soil and were dependent on the work performed by Gentiles. Here and back there, Jews considered themselves superior to the Gentile but in actuality were inferior. Here and there, the Jew was weak and cowardly, the Gentile courageous and powerful. Here in Palestine and back in Europe, the fear of violence at the hands of the majority hung like a knife in the air.

As a writer, Brenner loathed idealization. His descriptions of Jews prompted many to think that he was afflicted by Jewish self-hate (which was far from the truth). He applied that same acute, penetrating, merciless criterion when dealing with Arabs. In contrast with his associates, such as Rabbi Binyamin, or Yitzhak Epstein, or well-wishing Jewish journalists, he was not enchanted by the romantic magic of the Orient.<sup>94</sup> Brenner was fully capable of sketching a pastoral picture of the Palestinian countryside, with a young Arab as part of the landscape.<sup>95</sup> With a sympathetic pen, he delineated the beautiful figure of an Arab woman, a pot on her head, and accentuated her vitality, in contrast with a “young man from Galicia, without a drop of blood.”<sup>96</sup> This vignette was meant to symbolize the rootedness and earthiness of the Arab as contrasted with the rootlessness and contemptibility of the Jew.

However, that same skillful hand depicted the filth and abomination of Arab society as his eyes saw it. His approach to Arabs was totally external. Acquaintance with them was based primarily on visual impressions. For Brenner, the dirt and filth symbolized the characteristic feature of that society. The narrow lanes, the pus in the children’s eyes, the bloated stomachs, the men sitting idle in coffeehouses—these were the features marking Arab social reality as he encountered it. The degeneracy of that society was also expressed in the image of perverted eros: intimations of pederasty and sodomy.<sup>97</sup>

Brenner’s disgust was accompanied by envy. Despite all their misery, the Arabs

were the true native sons of Palestine, while the Jews simply lived there, and nothing more:<sup>98</sup> “The murderer is a native of the land, . . . of the land . . . his language is the language of the land, . . . he stands in his land . . . kills in his land. . . . While he . . . he . . . the victim, . . . he and his brother—are strangers here, strangers.”<sup>99</sup> Brenner underscored the weakness of the Jews, their inability to stand their ground in an encounter with Arabs. There were those capable of the “herosim” of whipping some wretched Arab workers in a Jewish colony. However, when the confrontation takes place outside the colony, on the highway, man against man, the Jew is unable to stand up to his adversary. In the two meetings described by Brenner, he gives the Jews the numerical advantage. Nonetheless, the Jews flee for their lives, abandoning to their fate anyone unable to escape.<sup>100</sup> The strength of the Jews is in brave talk; but when action has to be taken, then the sons of Hagar, seemingly wretched, overpower the man who “thinks he’s a hero.”<sup>101</sup> The distance between lofty talk about a courageous stand and heroic deeds on the one hand and stark reality on the other is accentuated by Brenner in his description of the reaction by people from the colony to information regarding an attack. Once it was learned that only a Jew had been injured, “the predominant thought, not expressed in words, was that it was good he had not fired his pistol and that no Arab had been killed, since if that had been the case, the Arabs would have been ‘taking his blood’ in revenge from every Jew in the colony.”<sup>102</sup>

“Did you ever see people scrambling over the cliffs of mountains, climbing, getting stuck, falling—and yet talking away incessantly all the while?”<sup>103</sup> That sentence expressed Brenner’s basic criticism of the leaders of the small and weak Yishuv. The leadership, including a significant segment of the Labor movement, had as yet failed to prove their constructive abilities. But they had already demonstrated ample aptitude for self-praise and self-embellishment. These were perhaps sufferable behavior on the part of someone in the Diaspora unfamiliar with the facts of life in Palestine, but it was completely unacceptable coming from anyone who lived there. Brenner settled accounts with the “lofty tone” school in his description of the memorial service for a guardsman<sup>104</sup> by paraphrasing a verse from David’s lamentation over King Saul, “the national hero who was slain upon high places.”<sup>105</sup> Like a sarcastic echo to the remarks by Zerubavel quoted earlier, Brenner stated:

The chairman of the meeting . . . integrated the event in the idea of national rebirth, told about all the victims who had fallen on the fields of our revival, and consoled both himself and the world by high rhetoric to the effect that the young hero had not died in the land of slaughter from which we had gone forth. Rather, he had fallen on the fields of Israel, where our prophets and heroes have tread from time immemorial. . . . Someone who had been a worker [i.e., he no longer worked] jumped up once again and swore that every movement demands its sacrifices and that all of us, we are all prepared to fill the ranks, to replace the one who was slain. . . . Another person, with a liberal profession, spoke about what lesson we had to learn from this and in which direction we should accordingly aim our actions. That is to say, militia, . . . arms, . . . ah.<sup>106</sup>

In several barbed lines, Brenner debunked all the pomposity and heroic rhetoric of the Poale Zion. The contrast between the lofty words and the empty deeds under-

scored the baseless pretentiousness of the national myth that preceded the formation of the nation.

Brenner presented the relations between Jews and Arabs as though it were a Palestinian version of the generations-old conflict between the Gentile as aggressor and the Jew as victim. The encounter at a crossroads between the sons of Aryeh Lapidot (modeled on A. D. Gordon, one of the key figures of the Second Aliyah, unique in his moral attributes) and an Arab expressed all the traditional motifs of Jewish weakness: The Arab is riding on horseback, while the Jews are walking. One of the two Jews is a hunchback. The encounter takes place in a situation marked by a total lack of communication. The Arab addresses them, but they are unable to understand him. One of them reacts like a “new Jew”—he pulls out his pistol. Yet drawing that pistol indicates nothing but a semblance of any genuine readiness to fight, because the Arab, effortlessly, proceeds to disarm the Jew, striking him with a club and kicking him several times for good measure. The other Jew, the hunchback, reacts in typically Jewish fashion: He attempts to flee. Yet suddenly, he remembers that it would be good to sit down, since that is exactly what they used to do when they encountered dogs back in Europe—the animal that was the terror of Jews in the Diaspora. The Arab, after stabbing him with elegant nonchalance, empties the pockets of the two brothers. And then he “galloped off on his horse straight for his nearby tranquil village.”<sup>107</sup>

The encounter on the open highway with an Arab on horseback armed from head to toe was a traumatic experience for the Jews of the Yishuv. Moshe Smilansky from Rehovot also described such a meeting, with similar motifs. The helpless Jew is attacked by a bedouin tribesman on horseback and is ordered to hand over his money. The Arab calls him by the contemptuous term *Yahud*; and when he refuses to hand over his money, the attacker beats him with a whip. The author exclaims, “My God! . . . To beat him here, *in his own land*, a few steps from his colony.”<sup>108</sup> The humiliation hurt no less than the actual blows. The basic feeling of belonging and, even more, of being the master of the house had suffered a mortal blow. The self-image of the new Jew was undermined as a result of his inferiority when faced with the Arab attacker. No talk about bravery and heroism could replace the instinctive feeling of security that a Jew expected to sense upon arriving in Palestine.

The quasi-colonial reality and the socialist militancy combined to divert attention from the central problem: By coming to Palestine, the Jew had not succeeded in exchanging a life on the verge of extinction for a secure existence; rather, he had exchanged one situation of existential threat for another. The Zionist press in the Diaspora appears to have cooperated in concealing that feeling of a basic lack of security. Only infrequently, in remarks made by those who had left Palestine, could one find an open and candid admission that fear of the Arab had indeed been one of the reasons for leaving.<sup>109</sup> Yet although little was said about this, there was an operative element that can be termed the concept of the *volcano*, that is, the feeling that they were living in the shadow of a live volcano. This feeling was an important component of the psychological infrastructure of the Jewish community in Palestine. After his sarcastic description of the guardsman’s memorial service, Brenner added: “The feeling is that some sort of truth, the truth of reality, is hovering over

people's heads and hiding behind the accentuated phrase 'Thou hast chosen us', that special Palestinian 'Thou hast chosen us'. . . . It appears that the world does not see that truth, is afraid of it, disregards it, does not wish to know about it—and even has no interest in knowing. But the truth continued to hover, and remained hanging in the breach: volcano, volcano."<sup>110</sup>

The words Brenner placed in the mouth of the wife of Aryeh Lapidot, the mother of the hunchback murdered by the Arab on horseback, disclose the shock felt by the Eastern European Jew, who had hoped to sit beneath his vine and fig tree, when he finally encountered the grim, menacing reality of Palestine:

"But what is the conclusion?" asked the old woman in a husky voice once, twice. And no one answered her, since they did not understand the question.

Yet she herself knew what she was asking. Her throat, parched from crying, could no longer shout, "My son! my son!" . . . Her small brain was clear and she knew what she was asking. Aryeh used to say, 'Let's forget Russia, land of blood and slaughter, land of our disgrace.' . . . But it turned out that there's no difference. . . . Exile is everywhere. . . . There is no difference, . . . no security. . . . Are we secure here? The angel of death has eyes everywhere—and what is the conclusion?<sup>111</sup>

The crucial difference between *exile* and *homeland* was the sense of security. Yet it turned out that as the old woman said, there was no security anywhere. The smoldering reality of the volcano cast a shadow of doubt on the usefulness of the Zionist enterprise. Why should so much be sacrificed if in the end, instead of a "safe haven"—that expression which Herzl included in the Basel Programme, the platform of the Zionist movement—a new existential situation is being created, replete with new dangers? "You want to provide refuge for an injured sparrow in a rooster's coop?"—with this question, Brenner challenged the various optimists who, in the manner of Nehama Pukhachewsky, denied that any danger existed.<sup>112</sup>

Brenner's uniqueness lay in his exposure of the quivering nerve of fear as a constant condition: "It was a good moment—the colors of the sky were captivating, and the young girl from the colony said 'Shalom!' with all her charm. But the dread would sally forth, it had to—with what will come—the next moment, tomorrow at dawn, the day after tomorrow toward evening."<sup>113</sup> However, when he had to draw certain conclusions from the shock of that encounter with Arabs, he did not react like many others who, for that same reason, had picked up and left Palestine. Instead, Brenner completed the transference of the model of Jewish–Gentile relations to the situation in Palestine. Not only was the Arab "another kind of Gentile that one had to suffer from." Not only did Jews in Palestine remain in the same weak position they had been in the Diaspora. Not only was existence in Palestine no more secure from the fear of a pogrom than in the Diaspora. Brenner endeavored to explain Arab animosity toward Jews using the same reasons of hatred for the Jewish people that existed everywhere.<sup>114</sup> As a consequence, by dint of that same reasoning, he concluded, "Whatever will be with all the Jewish communities throughout the world, will also happen to us."<sup>115</sup>

This fatalistic conclusion was in total contradiction with the pretension of the Zionists that they could establish another and different existential reality in which

the Jew would be the master of his own fate. It stands to reason that Brenner's intention was both to restrain those who praised "lofty heroism" and silence those who believed that acts such as the establishment of an Arab newspaper or any sort of political activity could bring about some change in the state of the core of the volcano.<sup>116</sup> The undermining of Zionist conventions was for him just a by-product.

Brenner was perhaps the only one who gave pointed and pungent expression to the feeling of fear in Palestine. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that he expressed the hidden perceptions of many of the men and women of the Second Aliyah. It was no accident that Berl Katznelson, the most important leader of the Second Aliyah, regarded Brenner's novel *Mi-kan u-mi-kan* as the work that expressed the very essence of that wave of immigration.<sup>117</sup> However, those feelings of insecurity and anxiety surfaced only rarely in the writings of the time. It seems that the immigrants of the Second Aliyah viewed them as a kind of self-evident, concomitant phenomenon that was best not talked about too much. Similarly, they were not overly attracted by the rhetoric of heroism as evidenced by Zerubavel and Poalei Zion. The hero of the Second Aliyah was not the fighter but the worker, who prepared himself for physical labor and sacrificed himself in a daily struggle for survival. Arabs were perceived less as national rivals and more as competitors in the job market. To the extent that there was any thinking about the future of Palestine (and such ideas were rare, as far as can be judged from opinions preserved in writing), those thoughts remained very vague and lacked a sense of reality.

It would appear that A. D. Gordon was expressing the opinion of many when he spoke about competition between Jews and Arabs in terms of peaceful competition: "Palestine will belong to that side that is better able to suffer for it and to work upon its soil."<sup>118</sup> Speaking of Arabs, Gordon said, "They can indeed harm us, but it is not in their power to remove us from the path." In this context, he did not attribute any importance to the power of the fist. The expression he coined that became a popular phrase among the people of the Second Aliyah was "We need valor, supreme valor."<sup>119</sup> Gordon's concept of heroism did not entail physical prowess but was centered on psychological bravery, a courage that did not recoil from difficulties; it advocated taking a strong stance but one not marred by provocativeness. Self-sacrifice, the virtue that was characteristic of the spirit of the Second Aliyah, would ultimately also prove decisive in the struggle with the Arabs. Perseverance, forbearance, the bravery of the worker in his daily struggle—these were the factors that would decide the future destiny of Palestine, not deeds of bravery in the histrionic, exhibitionist sense.<sup>120</sup>

The period leading up to World War I can serve as a kind of laboratory for studying the moods crystallizing in the wake of the encounter of Zionist immigrants with realities in Palestine. The psychological, conceptual, and cultural makeup of those arriving was decisive in determining the way they interpreted that reality. It appears their basic approach was little changed by Palestine; rather, they burdened the facts they encountered with their previous outlook on the world. The models of Jewish-Gentile relations were applied to the realities in Palestine in differing nuances but were linked with the traditional model. On the other hand, the first attempts were made during that period to transfer the new approach to Jewish history, power, and bravery to the situation in Palestine. The application to concrete

reality of concepts whose authors regarded them largely as abstract ideas led to both a vulgarizing and a sharpening of those conceptions. The mythological Palestine was supposed to guide the builders of the concrete land. But the truth is that matters were more potential than actual—conceptual kernels of future possibilities.

The Second Aliyah also entered the history of the Yishuv as a period in which the quasi-colonial model was rejected by Jewish settlers in favor of a settlement model aimed at the creation of a separate Jewish community, autonomous, having as few connections with the Arab community as possible. That decision, which ultimately would prove of far-reaching significance for a political solution to the question of Palestine, was more theoretical than actual in the period under discussion. The Jewish community in Palestine was too small for any type of autonomy. Yet it contained a legitimation for preserving and augmenting distance from the Arab community in the personal and national spheres. That distancing was also of great importance in the crystallization of images, stereotypes, and psychological attitudes toward Arabs.