

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TCHELET LAVAN AND HASHOMER  
HATZAIR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA  
(1918-1938)**

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## 1. Introduction

In this theses, I will provide a survey of some specific aspects of identification strategies of Jews in the fin de siècle Bohemia and the First Republic of Czechoslovakia. I will attempt to adumbrate an appropriate framework for possible determination of Jewish identities in Bohemia in the given period. For the sake of the analysis of the left-wing Zionist youth movements Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan, I would like to point out some specific phenomena characteristic for the origin of the youth movements in general and pioneer youth movements in particular. I will attempt to outline particular motivations of Jewish youth to adopt specific identification strategies and politics of identity.

I have been dealing with the issue of the Jewish pioneer youth for a few years. In contrast with my previous work, I intend to contextualize the results of previous research into the broader social and political framework, thus to adumbrate the motivations of the Jewish Zionist youth to particular identification strategies. Most importantly, I will focus on the encounter of the Jewish youth with radical socialism.

In the analytical part of my thesis I will examine the development and social-psychological factors of the origin of youth culture in general and the role of the pioneer Zionist youth movements in particular. I will outline the basic ideological conception of the Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair, the precursors of both movements, its conceptions, basic characteristics, and historical development. Both pioneer movements played a crucial role in fulfilling the goals of Jewish nationalism, as these were set up by the Socialist Zionism; in addition, they played a central role in “the process of productivization and mobilization” of the Jewish people so that they could build a new society in Palestine, based on agricultural

and working classes.<sup>1</sup> Within the framework of their ideological program, Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair emphasized the educational and physical labour program focusing on *hahsharah* and *alyiah* organization. I will survey the development of both movements from their origin till the end of the 1930s.

The last part of my thesis will be dedicated to a comparative analysis between the two movements, their social environment, and convergence and divergence in their organizational and ideological structure. Zionist Youth movements presented a special option for self-identification of Jews in Czechoslovakia. The political activity of the Jewish Zionist youth Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan endeavored to foster their Jewish national identity in Czechoslovakia, as well as in Palestine. The crucial importance of both movements lied in their ability to combine the so-called *Landespolitik* (work for the present) with Palestino-centrism. Furthermore, both movements were leftist (Marxist); and, therefore, Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan provided a specific approach to a radical leftism in Czechoslovakia, as well as in Israel. Many of its members were inclined to affiliate with the Communist movement, which provided them with a universalistic concept of group identification. I intend to analyze in detail some of the relevant milestones in the relation of Zionism and Communism in Czechoslovakia, which might have caused the change of the identification strategy of one part of the Jewish Zionist youth.

I am aware of the fact that dealing with the phenomenon of identity formation is a complex issue. For the purpose of the study, I suggest that we turn our attention to the language of Jews (Jewish narrative) and focus on investigation of personal texts, official documents, newspaper articles, oral sources, and testimonies. Thus, we might be able to uncover the development of an identity conception; i.e., an individual, social, and experiential understanding of the “life-

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<sup>1</sup> Israel Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization: The Zionist Youth Movement in Poland* (East European Monographs, 1989), V.

world.” The method of semantic analysis, the analysis of dichotomous structure of speech could help us to overcome a superficial evaluation of collective and individual identities. We should not allow a shallow assessment of an “influence of Judaism” and stereotypes about “Jewish mentality” as factors and preconditions valid in the process of Jewish identification strategy formation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vít Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad „rudou asimilací“ českých Židů” (Muse upon “Red Assimilation” of Jews in the Czech Lands) (M.A. Thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2007), 5-6.

## 2. Road to Jewish Nationalism

With the ideas of Enlightenment a scientific and philosophical revolution began, as well as a progress of knowledge, and a reshaping of society's moral values. These new societal and human values were also applied to politics. The principal ideas of the modern age, the period of criticism, were progress, revolution, liberty and democracy. The new values and the essence of the period of modernity lie in the ability of man to create a better future, in a rational manner.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in the course of the process of modernization a breakdown of institutional life occurred – religious, moral, legal and economical principles disintegrated. The process of modernization affected significantly existing rights of the Jewish society, and the societal changes led to integration of Jews into the majority society. Jewish communities reacted to the gradual process of societal changes and modernization in different manners. Various struggles for the (re)definition of Jewish identity were apparent throughout the Habsburg Monarchy. These were intensified hand in hand with the national awakening of particular nations.<sup>4</sup> Since 1867 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire “(...) *patriotism and loyalty to the dynasty rather than an ideology of shared nation-ness bound subjects and later citizens to the greater polity.*”<sup>5</sup> Within this crumbling “prison of nations” many emerging nations had to adopt a policy against its minorities, and vice versa.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Zeev Sternhell, “Modernity and Its Enemies: From the Revolt against the Enlightenment to the Undermining of Democracy,” in *The Intellectual Revolt Against Liberal Democracy 1870-1945*, ed. Zeev Sternhell (Jerusalem, 1996), 11-29.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert S. Wistrich, “The Jews and Nationality Conflicts in the Habsburg Lands,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 22, No. 1. (1994): 119-139.

<sup>5</sup> Pieter M. Judson, “Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe – Introduction,” in *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, ed. Peter M. Judson et al. (Oxford, 2005), 2.

<sup>6</sup> See *Ibid*, 1-18.

The process of modernization of the Czech society went hand in hand with liberalism and capitalism. Traditional social bindings and particular identities gradually disintegrated, and the society was searching for a new identity corresponding with the new socioeconomic relations. Such a new identity seemed to be included in the concept of nationalism – its import into the Czech lands and the following independent development led to the emergence of two particular national societies – the Czech and the German.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the period of political and economic liberalization which enabled economical and social emancipation of the Czech Jews. Simultaneously it was the German speaking liberalism, and therefore it was considered by the Czech national movement to be a tool of German oppression. At least until the decline of the Habsburg Monarchy a significant part of the Czech Jews inclined to the German language and culture. Nevertheless there was a part of the Jews and Jewish organization which pursued to tie together with the Czech cultural and political publics. And thus, at least since the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the German-Jewish relations became problematized.

The highest percentage of the Jews lived in the cities where German speaking population constituted the majority, or in those Czech cities where the German speaking elites were dominant. In German liberal circles economical and cultural clubs were initially open to the Jews, and Jews often attained prominent positions within these institutions. Overall we can say, that in spite of the Czech national dream the German and Jewish symbiosis never occurred. The perception of Jewish particularity, their different social and demographic development, and the specificity of traditions were still apparent within the framework of integral nationalism. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Jewish minority found itself in an unsure position; the majority society regarded them as a foreign element in their own *national body*, and the assimilation or any forms of cultural pluralism were rejected. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

the integral nationalism containing antisemitic prejudices became a platform of most of the political parties. The political non-affiliation of the Jews meant their political isolation.

## 2.1. Identification strategies of Jews in the Czech Lands

I assume that as far as the issue of identification strategies of Jews in Bohemia is concerned we can apply the model which was used by A.M. Weisberger with regard to the Jewish minority in Germany at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Transformation of Jews, their economical development and the changes of their demographic structure, were at the latest from the 70s confronted with antisemitism, which presented an instrument of policy reflecting (not only) the crisis of liberalism. Thus, the Jewish minority found itself in an uncertain position: on the one hand its inner cohesion and a sense of group belonging (identity) released; on the other hand, they did not “manage” to assimilate, or more precisely, they did not have a chance to finish the process of assimilation.

Thus, Weisberger used the concept of “*marginal man*” for explaining the Jewish position within majority society. According to this concept, the individual/group cannot be accepted by the dominant culture due to certain prejudices. The individual/group had already adopted some elements of the dominant culture in an effort to be accepted by this dominant culture, therefore, their return to their own culture is impossible. „*Thus the marginal person is caught in a structure of double ambivalence: s/he can neither leave nor return to his/her original group; s/he can neither merge with the new group nor slough it off.*“<sup>7</sup>

Here, the marginality is being understood as a conflict of two cultures. Marginal man remains in an ambivalent position, Weisberger defined four positions of marginality of Jews in the fin

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<sup>7</sup> Adam M. Weisberger, *The Jewish Ethic and Spirit of Socialism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), 41.

de siècle Germany: 1) *assimilation* (an effort to assimilate); 2) *poise* – an endeavor to poise among cultures, an acceptance of some cultural elements only; 3) *return* – return to traditions which were reinterpreted in relation to a new position of minority (this option was typical for Zionism); 4) *transcendence* – an example of transcendent solution of ambivalent position of Jews was socialism.<sup>8</sup>

As adumbrated above the Jews in Bohemia and Slovakia had a choice among several identification strategies. German assimilation seemed to be more natural for them, especially with respect to previous policy of Habsburgs in the Czech Lands. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews did not have to manifest their identity through political organization, an identification with German nationalism was not required, and their loyalty to the Habsburg monarchy was thus demonstrated.

Czech nationalism was in its formative stage and an active participation in the Czech national movement was required. The inclination toward the Czech nationalism represented another possibility for Jews in their identification strategy.<sup>9</sup> The gradual decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire caused the loss of a hitherto existing political and linguistic orientation of Jews. The need to prove the affiliation to a national group increased gradually and became more intense and desirable during last two decades of century. A new cultural situation occurred: German policy and language were not fully replaced by Czech dominance yet, and the Jews were looking for a new way to adapt themselves to this new situation.<sup>10</sup> To German and Czech assimilation we can add other identification strategies/alternatives – Jewish Nationalism/Zionism and socialism.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Marie Zahradníková, “Hledání identity židovského obyvatelstva v Čechách v letech 1870 – 1914” (Searching for Identity of Jewish population in Czech Republic, 1870 - 1914.) (MA. thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2000), 25.

<sup>10</sup> See Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 131-170.

### 2.1.1. Socialism and Zionism – a synthesis

Herein, I would like to add to the Weisberger's conception a synthesis of socialism and Zionism, which has a crucial importance for the issue of pioneer Zionist youth movements. Zionism was rejected by most of the Marxist or socialist schools – from the point of view of Marxism Zionism represented a pure bourgeois utopian vision, which tempted Jewish workers to abandon the world proletariat revolution.<sup>11</sup> However, within the framework of the socialist camp some attempts of theoretical justification of particular forms of Jewish nationalism appeared soon.

One of the first intellectuals who pursued to interconnect Jewish nationalism with socialism was co-founder of the German Social Democratic Party and “Marx's communist rabbi” Moses Hess.<sup>12</sup> In his first works Hess identified Judaism with capitalism, but probably due to the awareness of the growing danger from antisemitism in Germany he changed the character of his works. As S. Avineri pointed out, Hess' works involved even the Marx's *On the Jewish Question*. In *Rome and Jerusalem* Hess introduced the conception of Jewish society in Palestine, and he identified the Jewish question with a national problem. The pillars of the Jewish state should have been based on the public ownership of soil and instruments of production, Jewish society was to be based on the cooperative and collectivist principles.<sup>13</sup>

The issue of justification of (not exclusively Jewish) nationalism became a focal point for Austrian Marxists in the period preceding the World War I, among other things it was caused by the multinational character of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austromarxism legitimated the force to national and cultural structures, and recognized some peculiar class elements in the multi-ethnic context of the Habsburg Empire. This justification resulted from the works of

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<sup>11</sup> See Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*. (Brandeis University Press, 1995), 162-235.

<sup>12</sup> Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*. (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 139-150.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

O. Bauer and K. Renner, who conferred the right of self-determination (or cultural autonomy) to many nations in the monarchy, regardless of the fact that the territorial autonomy of these nations was unattainable.<sup>14</sup>

The right to an autonomous national program for the Jews was conferred by K. Renner. The break-point in the ideological development of Jewish nationalism was represented by negotiation about the establishment of autonomous Jewish state in Russia. During the First World War the synthesis of socialism and Jewish nationalism, including Zionism, culminated and part of the Socialist camp conferred Jews to be a nation that has the right for Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most influential leftist Jewish intellectuals was Ber Borochov, whose work had an essential impact on the shaping of the concept of socialist Zionism. His ideas were based on the studies of prominent Austromarxists, whose argument was “(...) *that in the context of multinational societies, class emancipation may have to go hand in hand with national emancipation, since so many of the socially oppressed were also oppressed because of their nationality. Nationality is thus embedded in the social structure of such societies, and is not merely “superstructural.”*”<sup>16</sup>

Borochov elaborated the concept of conditions of production and the national issue in various historical perspectives. “*We, therefore, come to the formulation and explanation of the following two sorts of human groupings: (1) the groups into which humanity is divided according to the differences in the conditions of the relatively distinct productions are called societies, socioeconomic organism (tribes, families, peoples, nations); (2) the groups into which the society is divided according to their role in the system of production itself, i.e., according to their respective relations to the means of production, are called classes (castes,*

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> See Shimoni, *The Emergence of Zionism*, 162-235.

<sup>16</sup> Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, 142.

*ranks, etc.*).<sup>17</sup> The class struggle occurs always within national society group, and it always has its specific character in a particular historical context, which is granted by the specific history of a particular national society. Further, he emphasized the other phenomena of the class struggle within the national struggle. He elaborated the concept of an ethnic group which is dominated by a dominant group. The dominant group is trying to enforce its inner class structure to the subjugated group. In this case the twofold subjection occurs: on the one hand there is a class subjection – the dominant bourgeois group comes to power, and on the other hand there is linguistic and national subjection. *“According to this view, only after being emancipated from foreign subjugation can the proletariat of an oppressed nation start waging a real class struggle within its own society. So long as national society is subjugated, the class struggle remains distorted, and therefore national liberation is necessary for carrying out a successful class war.”*<sup>18</sup> Borochochov applied the concept of national and class structure on the case of the Jewish nation. He set apart three particular societal clusters and elaborated their characteristics. First, the upper bourgeoisie that is strongly predisposed toward assimilation. Relationship of the members of upper bourgeoisie toward Zionism is usually philanthropic, if it even exists. The second group is the middle class, including intelligentsia – this group has a strong feeling of Jewish consciousness and Jewish nationalism, the relationship of this group’s members to Zionism is cultural, intellectual. It is being marked as ineffective, as a so called *Salon-Zionismus*. The third group is the working class with the lower middle classes in the process of proletarianization – this group has the biggest potential for building of the new state in Palestine, creation of an independent economical structure and infrastructure. Borochochov introduced the concept of a territorial solution of the Jewish question; he rejected the possibility of emigration that could only

<sup>17</sup> Ber Borochochov, “The National Question and the Class Struggle” in *The Zionist Idea: a historical analysis and reader*. ed. Arthur Hertzberg (The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1997), 356.

<sup>18</sup> Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, 144.

prolong and relocate the agony of the Jewish nation.<sup>19</sup> Borochoy stressed the lack of Jewish representation within the ranks of the primary economic sphere; therefore he emphasized the activities of pioneering. „*It was necessary first to have a wave of pioneers motivated by idealism, the desire to redeem the nation and revive the Hebrew language and culture. Returning to the soil of their traditional homeland, they would therapeutically lay the foundation for the process that would follow with deterministic momentum.*“<sup>20</sup> His ideas were set in motion by the pioneer Zionist youth.

## **2.2. Politics of identity, Zionism, Socialism and the Jewish question in the years of transition**

However *marginality* might be perceived as a conflict of two societies (cultures) – majority and minority – one should bear in mind also the narratives and decisions of individuals, as well as various other factors. Dealing with the issue of politics of identity, we should take into account the cultural uniqueness of particular communities, as well as the complexity of political and societal structures and relations. Thus, politics of identity mean a strategy of collective action, which occurs in a consequence of the common experience of *misrecognition* (or nonrecognition) and leads toward the articulation of specific demands. These demands result from the assertion of particular rights derived from the principle of equality and from the specific concept of collective identity. The demands pursue to change the procedure and factors of social evaluation, in an effort to prevent the experience of *misrecognition*.<sup>21</sup> “*The*

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Shimoni, *The Emergence of Zionism*, 183.

<sup>21</sup> See Vít Strobach, “Poetika českého nacionalismu a politika identity českých židů mezi národem, rasou a třídou (1876-1921)” (The Poetics of the Czech Nationalism and the Policy of Identity of the Czech Jews between Nation, Race and Class, 1876-1921.) (Phd diss., Charles University in Prague, 2011), 13. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition* (Princeton University, 1994).

*politics of identity target the shaping and maintenance of cultural rights of individuals, who lay claim to the articulation of identity within a particular society and culture. (...) This is interconnected with a struggle for the change of social practices, mostly the formation of coalitions, where at least some common values exist.*<sup>22</sup>

The strategy of collective action by which Jews pursued political equality, had various shapes. On the one hand, there was a struggle for integration into the appropriate political structures – i.e. those structures, where the conceptions of national identity and racial criteria were not promoted vehemently. Among these political structures were the declining liberal political parties, and above all the socialist political parties, where Jews (as individuals) had a chance to achieve equal status, while they identify themselves with the common targets of socialist politics. On the other hand, there was a strategy of collective (political) action in the form of Jewish nationalism – Zionism, which promoted a particular Jewish identity and sovereignty of Jewish nation in Palestine.<sup>23</sup> All of the strategies of political action mentioned above were radicalized during the First World War.

Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire did not have to deal significantly with their national identity until the First World War. Marsha Rozenblit distinguished a so-called “*tripartite identity*” of Jews in Austro-Hungary Empire – including plural/permeable political, cultural and ethnic identities. This concept ceased to exist shortly before the Great War. During the war, Jews had an opportunity to manifest their loyalty to Austria, but the end of the war brought them a feeling of uncertainty, an identity crisis. In the new social constellation of Czechoslovakia, Zionists got the chance to solve the issue of Jewish identity. „*They urged all Jews in Czechoslovakia to continue the old Austrian tripartite identity in a new form: Jews should be Czechoslovakian by politic loyalty, German or Czech by culture, and Jewish by*

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<sup>22</sup> Strobach, “Poetika českého nacionalismu”, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 100-102.

*national identity*.<sup>24</sup>

The inclination of the Jews toward socialism might be considered as an alternative to the national radicalization of the society as well as the political parties and organizations. During the War national tensions increased, and anti-German and anti-Jewish sentiments became apparent especially among the lower social classes; it was demonstrated by the hunger riots that occurred again in various Czech cities. The Jews were blamed for the social and economic problems; they were depicted as profiteers and bourgeois.

At the end of the war the Czech society and political parties called for “*National unification*” and struggled for “*national survival*.” Even the Czech Social Democratic Party negotiated about its unification with radical nationalist parties subjecting to antisemitism. In spite of that, the Jews did not abandon socialism but the cooperation of the traditional “Jewish defenders” with radical nationalists brought them some new dilemmas. This development could lead toward the strengthening of the Zionism on the one hand; and toward the radical breaking up with the Jewish identity on the other hand. An integral part of this development was the adoption of supranational identification strategy.<sup>25</sup>

As mentioned above, World War I had a significant impact on the issue of Jewish identity formation. At the end of the war, national radicalization went hand in hand with anti-German and anti-Jewish disturbances, similar events occurred in Slovakia where strong Hungarian irredentism and anti-Jewish riots became apparent. The political development of a multinational Czechoslovakia contributed to the strengthening of the Zionist camp on the one hand, as well as to the social radicalization of (not only) the Jewish population on the other hand.<sup>26</sup> The Balfour Declaration, the Russian Revolution, and Wilson's declaration strongly

<sup>24</sup> Marsha L. Rozenblit, “The Dilemma of National Identity. The Jews of Habsburg Austria in World War I.”, Available from: <http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/yb03/14rozenblit.pdf>, 157.

<sup>25</sup> See Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad „rudou asimilací,” 68-77.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

affected the whole situation. If before the war Zionism was the movement of a minority among Jews only, after the war its ranks significantly enlarged. And if before the war Zionism was kept predominantly among university students, after the war the vigorous role of Jewish student organizations decreased, and the focus shifted on the organizations of a national character, to working class and youth movements.

### **2.3. The Jewish minority issue and the First Republic of Czechoslovakia**

The Habsburg Monarchy disintegrated into the individual national states regardless of the proportional representation of the various minorities. Although the Republic of Czechoslovakia was established as a national state, where the Czechoslovaks constituted the state nation, it was *de facto* a multinational state. Among the strongest minority groups were Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews and Poles.

The Republic of Czechoslovakia was the only European country that enabled its citizens to declare the Jewish nationality in the population census even if they did not use Hebrew or Yiddish as their vernacular. Since the former Austro-Hungarian manner of determining nationality based on the consorting language was not appropriate any more, the definition of nationality resulted in the following decision: “*Nationality shall be understood as tribal affinity the main sign of which is usually the mother tongue.*”<sup>27</sup> The possibility to choose freely one's national affiliation in Czechoslovakia was quite liberal in contrast to other countries where the Jews demanded national recognition on the basis of their religious, cultural and linguistic distinctness.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Gabriela Šámalová, “Nationality in the census in Czech lands”, last modified May 17, 2011, [http://www.cvym.cas.cz/upl/nase\\_spolecnost/100023se\\_samanova-narodnost%20EN.pdf](http://www.cvym.cas.cz/upl/nase_spolecnost/100023se_samanova-narodnost%20EN.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> See Kateřina Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé? Národní identita Židů v Čechách, 1918-1938* (Czechs, Germans, Jews? National identity of Jews in Bohemia) (Praha: Paseka, 2005), 27.

The concept of minority politics in Czechoslovakia results from several international peace treaties; we have to contextualize the issue of Jewish national minority into the broader international context. As mentioned above, the Balfour Declaration and Wilson's Declaration had a significant impact on the development and activism of the Zionist movement. Before the foundation of Czechoslovakia, representatives of Bohemian Zionist Organization established the Jewish National Council (JNC) as a non-elect organ that advocated the Jewish interests in the nascent republic. Representatives of JNC demanded recognition of the Jewish identity and an accommodation of the cultural differences of Jews. The Council “*called for the recognition of the Jewish nationality, minority rights for Jews, their full civic equality, and the democratization and unification of Jewish religious communities under a supreme Jewish organ.*”<sup>29</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, Zionist representatives initially cooperated with Jewish socialists, “*At that time Jewish socialists largely compromised to join the “bourgeois” Zionists in the wake of heightened national feelings and because the struggle for national rights was at stake.*”<sup>30</sup>

The debate about the Jewish national rights was affected significantly by the Paris Peace Treaty, where the representatives of the Jewish National Councils of some European states together with the deputies of the American Jewry (i.e. *Comité de Délégations Juives auprès de la Conférence de la Paix/ Conference of Jewish Delegations at the Peace Conference*) addressed their demands for the recognition of the Jewish national rights with the supreme representatives of the all European states. The recognition of the Jewish national rights became a subject of controversy between the Jewish delegates; the French and British deputies fought for recognition of the Jewish rights in the religious sense, not the national

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<sup>29</sup> Marie Crhová, “Jewish Politics in Central Europe: the Case of the Jewish Party in Interwar Czechoslovakia,” Available from: [http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/02\\_crhova.pdf](http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/02_crhova.pdf), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Marie Crhová, “Modern Jewish Politics in Central Europe”, (Phd. diss., CEU Budapest, 2007), 40.

one.<sup>31</sup>

The controversy ended in the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye of September 1919, dealing with the protection of all minorities. The Treaty guaranteed equal rights to all inhabitants of the nascent countries without distinction of origin, nationality, language, and race. Although the Jews were not explicitly acknowledged as a “national minority,” the same rights as to a state nation were to be guaranteed to all “*racial, religious and linguistic minorities*.”<sup>32</sup> But the 8<sup>th</sup> article of the Treaty was not included in the Czechoslovak constitution – this article guaranteed to all minorities a treatment equal to the national majority. In practice, rights of minorities were in fact identified as national minority rights, not national rights.<sup>33</sup>

The delegates of the JNC led negotiations with the Czechoslovak delegation in Paris, pursuing to include the so-called Jewish Articles (dealing with the Jewish cultural and religious freedom) into the treaty with Czechoslovakia; but their inclusion was refused by the Czechoslovak political representation that insisted “(*...*) *minority rights be widely defined and in conjunction with general civil rights*.”<sup>34</sup> According to M. Crhová “*The reason for the refusal was probably an apprehension that this step would set a precedent for the other minorities of Czechoslovakia, primarily the Germans, Hungarians, and Poles, who had exhibited irredentist tendencies since the founding of the state in October 1918.*”<sup>35</sup>

The paragraphs No. 130-132 of the Czechoslovak Constitution from 1920 were dealing with the rights and duties of the national minorities; with respect to the obscurity with the definition of the term *nation*, particular national minorities of the Czechoslovak State were not enumerated in the document. The term *nation* was not defined by the constitution clearly;

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<sup>31</sup> Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 29-30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Jaroslav Fiala, “Etnická skupina, nebo národní menšina?” (Ethnic group or National minority?), in *Nezapomenuté historie (Unforgotten histories)*, ed. Zdeněk Machát et al. (Doplněk: Brno, 2007), 155.

<sup>34</sup> Crhová, “Jewish Politics in Central Europe”, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

since the Constitutional document dealing with the issue of nation and national affiliation accepted the phrase “*regardless of the race, language or religion,*” the perception of national characteristics was up to the decision of individuals. Thus, the affiliation to the (not only) Jewish nationality became a matter of the individual's decision, regardless of the measure of religiosity or one's vernacular.<sup>36</sup>

Language and culture used to play a decisive role in the process of national determination. The former Empire was reluctant to guarantee autonomous rights to the minorities in an anxiety about its disintegration, and an analogous position might have been held by the nascent national states, including Czechoslovakia. The protection of minorities was under the auspices of the League of Nations, which pursued to safeguard the universal individual rights and some of the particular collective rights. “*But the conjunction between the minority rights and the demand for their equality with respect to their collective membership was not expressed at all.*”<sup>37</sup> Although the multinational Republic of Czechoslovakia guaranteed universal equal rights to all its citizens regardless of their group (national) affiliation, in crucial issues the preference of the state nation (Czechoslovaks) was apparent.<sup>38</sup>

### **2.3.1. The orientation of Zionist politics in Czechoslovakia**

Cultural Zionism was the predominant current among the Jewish Zionist organizations in prewar Czechoslovakia. Its strongest representative was the intellectual organization Bar Kochba (however its ideology was *de facto* an amalgam of cultural and political Zionism). Socialist Zionism was perceptible too – since 1907 the active representative was Poale Zion.

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<sup>36</sup> Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Fiala, “Etnická skupina, nebo národní menšina?” 155.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 156.

The revisionist offshoot appeared as in the 20s, especially in the eastern part of the republic.<sup>39</sup> During and after the war, Zionism split into various branches, and its ranks extended significantly. *“To be sure, it was the Jewish nationalists (i.e. Zionists, D.B.) who took greatest political benefit of the war’s outcome, triumph of the principles of self-determination, and emerged as the single strongest spokesman for the Jewish communities in the new states.”*<sup>40</sup> Zionists represented the main agent of Jewish political mobilization in the nascent republic. By political mobilization of Jews, I understand *“(…) the activities of political parties, youth movements and nonpolitical organizations (civil associations, cultural and social support funds, and so on) that declared as their aim the protection of the rights and interests of the Jewish population, and which sought to cultivate a distinctively Jewish identity, national or religious.”*<sup>41</sup>

Since Zionism played a crucial role in Jewish national politics in Czechoslovakia, its elemental political concept was dealing with a twofold dilemma - whether Zionists should participate in interior politics of Czechoslovakia – the so-called *Landespolitik* (*“i.e. Jewish involvement in Diaspora politics, meaning participation in national, as well as municipal politics for the purpose of recognition of rights for Jews as a national group”*);<sup>42</sup> or whether they should adopt the policy of Palestino-centrism exclusively. The cooperation between the Jews in Diaspora and the Jews in Palestine became an important issue, as well as the fostering of Jewish nationalism on both fronts.<sup>43</sup> Zionist movement in Diaspora had to strive to recruit new members, it had to produce a new reservoir of young Jews, who were willing to settle in Palestine and thus to participate in building up the new independent Jewish state and nation. These goals could be achieved through the concrete political actions only.

<sup>39</sup> See Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 175-195.

<sup>40</sup> Crhová, “Modern Jewish Politics in Central Europe”, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Crhová, “Jewish Politics in Central Europe,” 1.

<sup>42</sup> Crhová, “Modern Jewish Politics in Central Europe”, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Crhová, “Jewish Politics in Central Europe”, 4.

A distribution of power and spheres of interests among the particular organizational structures of the Zionist movement in Czechoslovakia led to some changes in Jewish politics: the JNC (and later on the Jewish Party) was concerned with *Landespolitik*. And the Territorial Federation (an umbrella institution of all Zionist organizations in Czechoslovakia) focused on Palestino-centrism.<sup>44</sup>

In the prewar period the World Zionist movement did not pay attention to the internal politics of individual states (*Landespolitik*), they did not produce a particular program. The growing antisemitism, the events in Russia, and the impact of the First World War modified the politics of Zionist movement, and its attitude towards *Gegenwartsarbeit* (i.e. work of the present time). The *Gegenwartsarbeit* embodied all cultural and political activities of Zionists in the Diaspora, it represented an essential part of the policy, that aimed to foster a new life in the national homeland – in Eretz Israel. The *Landespolitik* became an integral part of the *Gegenwartsarbeit* (“Return to Judaism before the return to the Jewish Land”<sup>45</sup>). Zionists had to adapt themselves on the *Gegenwartsarbeit* on the one hand, and they pursued to keep legitimacy and concrete traditions of their cultural life in the Diaspora on the other. Thus, in an effort to fulfill its particular goals, Zionists balanced successfully between the keeping of their particular values and the development of the effective political activity. Though Zionism is considered to be a secular movement, it was (and is) a bearer of deep religious traditions, which has achieved a unification of various Jewish religious congregations and thus the foundation of a Jewish national state.<sup>46</sup>

As outlined above the youth Zionists movements were among the various agents of Jewish

<sup>44</sup> Martin J. Wein, “Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Palestino-Centrism and Landespolitik,” in *Judaica Bohemiae* (XLIV-1. Židovské muzeum v Praze. Praha, 2009): 10.

<sup>45</sup> Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 175.

<sup>46</sup> See Matityahu Mintz, “Work for the Land of Israel and “Work in the Present“: A Concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradiction,” in *Essential papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinherz et al. (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 161-170.

national politics. This thesis is dedicated to the role and activities of pioneer youth Zionists movements Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan, both movements were bearers of social Zionists conception, both movements endeavored to foster Jewish national identity in Czechoslovakia, as well as in Palestine, and both movements reflected the complex issue of nationalism in Czech Lands.

### 3. Jewish Zionist Youth

Dealing with the issue of (Jewish Zionist) youth movements we should take into account some general aspects, characteristics, and socio-psychological factors of youth. We have to look at cultural definitions of youth which, in contrast to the biological processes of maturation, are dependent on the particular societal characteristics. In cultural definitions of age and age differences two factors are especially important. First of all, we have to take into account the social division of labour in each society, which is based on the particular age and age difference. Based on age people occupy social positions and roles in the society. Furthermore, the cultural aspects of aging determine the shaping of self-identity, and self-perception. In every age we acquire particular qualities and behavioral patterns, we learn our limits and abilities. The process of acquiring new abilities and personal characteristics – the process of personal transition – is connected to the cosmic, societal time. Searching for purpose in the process of personal transition leads to the identification with the rhythm of nature, cosmos, with the development of society.<sup>47</sup>

Youth represents an important phase in the process of human evolution, a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, the phase of getting a status within society. In the stage of youth the individual's personality (self-identity) is shaping, individuals acquire psychological mechanisms.

The youth is defined as a period “*of role moratorium*”, i.e. the period when the person is allowed to hold various ascribed roles simultaneously. At the same time, during this period youth is confronted with the cultural and social values of the surrounding society. Thus, youth

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<sup>47</sup> See Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Archetypal Pattern of Youth”, *Daedalus*, Vol.91, No.1, Youth: Change and Challenge (Winter, 1962), 28-46.

could be considered as a repository of major social values and primordial qualities of the society, because at that time the identification of individual with values and symbols of the society is usually reached.<sup>48</sup> *”The transition from childhood and adolescence to adulthood, the development of personal identity, psychological autonomy and self-regulation, the attempt to link personal temporal transition to general cultural images and to cosmic rhythms, and to link psychological maturity to the emulation of definite role models – these constitute the basic elements of any archetypal image of youth.”*<sup>49</sup>

Thus, age is considered to be an important criterion for allocating roles in a society, which is related to the social organization and cultural orientation of the society. As mentioned above, among the most important aspects in the character of society is the division of labour - *“(…) the simpler the organization of the society, the more influential age will be as a criterion for allocating roles”* and vice versa. Another aspect is derived from the major value orientations and symbols of society, dependent on the extent to which a society accents its orientation, values, range of activities, *“(…) which can be defined in terms of broad human qualities and which become expressed and symbolized on specific ages.”*<sup>50</sup>

The cosmic harmony in the development of human society was disrupted by the transition from the traditional societies to the modern societies. Social mobility, migration, urbanization, industrialization, modernization, and the establishment of national states affected a previous societal harmony; and moreover, hitherto existing principles of division of social labour, became now replaced by the principles based on the citizenship. The new societal structures were not based on the principles of family bounds and kinship anymore; the political, social and economical functions in modern societies were represented by various different structures

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 33.

(political parties, associations, clubs etc.) which were open to everyone regardless of family bounds, kinship or age. In the modern society *“The children's identification and close interaction with family members of other ages does not assure the attainment of full self-identity and social maturity on the part of the children. In these cases, there arises a tendency for peer groups to form, especially youth groups; these can serve as a transitory phase between the world of childhood and the adult world.”*<sup>51</sup> Family membership ceased to be a sufficient element for identity development and full social maturity. The youth tended to develop and shape their identity within the ranks of youth movements and organizations. The process of seeking a self-identification of youth was usually accompanied by generation conflict.

The modern social development and specific social and political conditions initiated the emergence of various youth organizations and the youth culture per se. These occurred in the consequence of weakening of the importance of age as a criterion for the allocation of societal roles; the social roles became allocated on the basis of knowledge, skills, specialization etc.

The process of modernization, societal changes and the development of nationalism gave rise to the various youth movements and organizations; among them spontaneous groups, students, ideological, semi-political movements, youth rebellion organizations connected with the Romantic European movements - a typical example was the German youth movement Wandervogel, which became an ideological precursor of the Zionist movement Tchelet Lavan. Other types of youth movements were adult-sponsored organizations, that focused on education and cultivation of body and character moulding; a typical example was the Boy Scouts movement, which became a precursor of the Hashomer Hatzair movement.<sup>52</sup>

Thus Youth organizations substituted various roles; their formation reflected a problematic

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 36-37.

and uncertain orientation of youth in the cultural values and symbols of society – these movements were reactions to the “*emergence of the problems and stresses of adolescence on modern society.*”<sup>53</sup> Among these stresses we may include biological (maturity, body change and its (mis)reflection, sexuality), social and cultural problems. Furthermore, the orientation in the values of the society is usually accompanied by strong idealism. These phenomena led the youth toward an effort to communicate with adults on the one hand, and toward an endeavor to be recognized on the other hand. Therefore various ideologies of youth organizations manifested differences and discontinuities between youth and adulthood, and emphasized the unique role of youth, purity of their social and cultural values; all this in an attempt to overcome dislocation between personal transition and societal and cultural time.<sup>54</sup>

This development is characteristic within the period of change of criteria for the allocation of roles in society and weakening of the concept of time, for the modern societies. Youth had to focus on the exploration of mutual relations between personal temporal changes and cosmic/societal progression that led (in an ideal case) toward a balanced identity. In this period, period of identity crisis the youth was searching for some way of contextualizing themselves within the broader social, cultural and political context, and setting of balance between external factors and inner personal development. “*It is in these youth movements that the forging of youth's new social identity has become closely connected with the development of new symbols of collective identity or new social-cultural symbols and meanings.*”<sup>55</sup>

As a consequence of the fading importance of age, the feeling of uncertainty and problematic orientation of youth in the cultural values and symbols of society led to the development of youth movements and organizations. Dealing with the Jewish youth organizations in the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 42.

Czech Lands we have to contextualize the origin of the youth movements with the social and political phenomena, such as the crisis of liberal values, and perpetual antisemitic excesses in the fin de siècle Bohemia. Thus, the emergence of the Jewish youth movements can be seen as a reaction to the specific development of modernity and general societal changes on the one hand; and identity crisis which the Jews in Bohemia perceived since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as an effort to shape one's own identity on the other hand. At that time the disintegration of the liberal organizations, difficulties with the assimilation programme of the Jews and their exclusion from various political subjects, organizations and institutions accentuated the need to found particular Jewish organizations.<sup>56</sup>

Youth movements have played a crucial role in various nationalistic movements all around Europe – including the Zionist movement. We can divide Jewish Zionist Youth movements in Czechoslovakia according to their specificity and orientation, thus we can analyze some characteristic patterns of social life of the Jewish Youth.<sup>57</sup> I am going to focus in detail on the pioneer Zionist youth, its social role, ideology and specificity.

The first type of Zionist youth movements was so-called “*working youth*” movements - whose aims were educational activities of their members above all, focused on the Jewish history and the Hebrew language. The representatives of this group were among others organizations Bar Kochba and Theodor Herzl. The second type of Youth organizations focused on the *recreational activities, sport and leisure-time, without definite “social” aim*. As typical representatives of this orientation might be considered Makkabi, Makkabi Hatzair, Hagibor.

<sup>56</sup> Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad rudou asimilací,” 52.

<sup>57</sup> Similar conception was used by Shmuel Eisenstadt for analysis of social life of youth in Israeli social structure. I assume that for the purpose of my thesis I can use his conception with some petty modifications. See Shmuel. N. Eisenstadt, “Youth, Culture and Social Structure in Israel,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jun., 1951): 105-114.

And the third one is *pioneering type*, which emphasized Zionism and socialism, and which oriented its activities toward agricultural preparations and communal settlements. Typical representatives of this cluster were Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan.

Although all of the Zionist youth movements had various specificities and characteristics, all the different types of movements had also some features in common. Above all, all these movements operated outside the sphere of family and school, they all attempted to organize formal specific youth groups, which would focus on activities different from those in family or at school, and thus these movements pursued to foster new types of identification among the Jewish youth. Among the differences we can examine especially their set up goals and their orientation toward a modification of the social status of members.<sup>58</sup> Thus, within the ranks of youth movements (not only) Jewish youth did not claim none the more than to shape their identity/self-identification, they pursued to find their place within the social and cultural world, and they attempted to interconnect their particular social and political values.

In particular, since the Zionist programme became accentuated within the ranks of various Jewish organizations, the Jewish pioneer youth movements considered themselves to be a repository of the social values and qualities of the Jewish society. The pioneer youth accentuated purity of their ideals and cultural values especially in relation to the passivity of the older Zionist generation. The uniqueness of the pioneer youth movements was in the practical realization of the set up goals, as these were defined by the ideology of Socialist Zionism. Thus, in the framework of the Zionist movement, the pioneer organizations did not come up with new goals, but they struggled for its practical realization, “productivization and mobilization” of the Jewish nation in an endeavor to create a new agricultural and working class in Eretz Israel.<sup>59</sup> Thus, on one hand there was a passive approach of the older Zionist

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>59</sup> Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization*, 1-7.

generation toward the Jewish national programme, and on the other hand the active approach in the form of the struggle for productivization of the Jewish pioneer youth. This can be seen as one dimension of the generational conflict. The breakup with the traditional religious milieu/bourgeois milieu of the young Jewry on behalf of Zionism could be seen as another one.

The pioneer Jewish youth fought for a change of various aspects of the social and cultural life of the Jewish society; they offered a new concept of (collective) identity and social values. One of the pivot attributes of the Zionist pioneer philosophy was the concept of self-sacrifice; the pioneer was considered to be a man ready to give up all material comforts, social amenities, one who is prepared to begin to lead an ascetic life. This self-sacrifice was for the sake of the welfare of the whole community (the Jewish society). Another major attribute of the pioneer image was the strong emphasis on non-exploitative agricultural and manual work for the sake of the rejuvenation of the Jewish nation in an endeavor to create a new national entity. Stress was put on the self-defence and self-reliance, i.e. on independence from external protection. Last but not least, the orientation on cultural creativity and revival of the Hebrew language were also attributes of the pioneer ideology, which respected shaping of the personal as well as the collective identity.<sup>60</sup>

### **3.1. Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan – Shaping of the movements**

As mentioned above the origin of the Tchelet Lavan movement lies in the German romantic movement Wandervogel – the ethos of the movement was to shake off the restriction of

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<sup>60</sup> See Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Israeli Identity: Problems in the Development of the Collective Identity of an Ideological Society,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 370, National Character in the Perspective of the Social Sciences (Mar., 1967): 116-123.

traditional social conventions and bourgeois life and return to nature. The number of members increased significantly within a short period, its followers came from middle-class families. At that time, the integration of the Jews into the various German societies and organizations encountered with the radical German nationalism, which went hand in hand with antisemitism. Various German movements adopted Aryan paragraphs or *numerus clausus*, or they discussed possibilities of acceptance of the Jews into their ranks. It was the case of Wandervogel as well, in one of their manifestos we can find: “*We want neither Slaves, Wallachians, nor Jews in our ranks, because it is our duty to preserve the purity of our race, surrounded as we are by foreigners and half-castes.*”<sup>61</sup> At one of the movements' conferences the Jews were denoted to be an undesirable race within the German society; the natural reaction of the Jewish youth was the formation of particular Jewish scouts organizations, imitating the ideas of Wandervogel.<sup>62</sup> A typical example was the movement Blau-Weiss. The Prague branch of Blau-Weiss was founded in 1913 and its activities were initially organized together with the sports club Makabi. Their mutual cooperation did not last long, since the autumn of 1913 Blau-Weiss operated independently.<sup>63</sup>

Richard Karpe contextualized the origin of the movement with the increasing antisemitism within the German movements on the one hand; and with a specific “revolution” within the Bar Kochba movement on the other hand. The membership of the Blau-Weiss was recruited primarily from the Bar Kochba movement, and thus its impact on the Blau-Weiss was significant. In an effort to relieve Bar Kochba of its overall intellectual character a part of its

<sup>61</sup> Richard Karpe, “The beginning of “Blau-weiss” in Bohemia and its development during the first world war,” in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan. The history of the Youth Movement Tchelet Lavan- El Al-Netzach in Czechoslovakia*, ed. Amos Sinai et al. (Israel, 1996), 17.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Karpe, “Hitahvutah shel Tchelet Lavan beBohemiah vehitpatchut bemilchamat haolam harishonah,” in *Rapsodiah LeTchelet Lavan – korot tnuat hanoar Tchelet Lavan- El Al beCzechoslovakiah Hashomer Hatzair Noar Tzofi Halutzi (Netzach) (Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan. The history of the Youth Movement Tchelet Lavan- El Al-Netzach in Czechoslovakia)* (Israel: Haemunah letoldot Tchelet Lavan – El Al be Czechoslovakiah, 1993), 51-61.

anti-intellectual membership formed an opposition to the intellectual majority and started to promote anti-bourgeois politics and return to nature. Although the Blau-Weiss movement did not initially adopt the ideas of Zionism, the studies of Hebrew and Jewish history were included within their program since the beginning, and Zionist education was gradually added; without any doubts it happened under the influence of the Bar Kochba intellectual elite.<sup>64</sup>

The individual branches of the Blau-Weiss movement arose all around Bohemia and Moravia quickly, they were under the leadership of the German mother cell. In the turn of the years 1919/1920 the leadership of the German Blau-Weiss promoted a strictly militant hierarchical structure resulting from the ideology of the Boy Scouts by general Baden Powell. This attitude evoked dissatisfaction within various movement branches, which even strengthened after the introduction of the slogan “*Der Balau-Weiss ist eine Armee auf dem Marsch.*” After the movement's conference in Mühlberg (1920) the Austrian and Czechoslovak branches separated from the German mother cell.<sup>65</sup>

In 1919 the Czechoslovak movement branch appeared under the name *The Association of Jewish Youth Techelet Lavan (Jüdischer Wanderbund Blau-Weiss)* that soon transformed itself into the *Association of the Jewish Youth Techeleth Lawan in Prague*. Its goal was to educate the Jewish Youth physically, spiritually and morally, to form a healthy and conscious Jewish youth through the organization of walking tours, meetings, parties, lectures, and through the mediation of other educational activities in the spirit of the Jewish education.<sup>66</sup>

The roots of the Hashomer Hatzair movement can be found in Galicia in the eve of the World

<sup>64</sup> See Ibid. Richard Karpeles, “Zur Geschichte des Techelet-Lawan,” *Bundesblätter*, Tebeth 5687, 39-41.

<sup>65</sup> Karpe, “The beginning of “Blau-weiss,” 17.

<sup>66</sup> AMP, Spolkový katastr, PŘ, SK XIV/342: Blau-Weiss.

War I. The process of secularization and modernization in the traditional religious milieu of Galicia did not lead the Jews toward assimilation, but gradually toward Zionism. Prior to the war the idea of Zionism was not widespread. The Jews were searching for a variety of identification strategies which could help solve their feeling of uprootedness. Zionism represented an alternative to the difficult process of assimilation on the one hand, and toward the growing antisemitism on the other. The first Zionist organizations in the area had focused on the sport activities and scouting. It was the case of the precursors of the Hashomer Hatzair movement as well.<sup>67</sup>

In Poland the Hashomer Hatzair movement was founded as an amalgam of the Jewish guards' organization Hashomer and the Tzerei Zion. The Hashomer movement was established in 1909 (in Palestine), fostering scout and athletic activities and ensuring defense of the first Jewish settlements in Palestine.<sup>68</sup> The Tzerei Zion was founded in 1903 as an educational movement focusing on Jewish nationalism. In 1913 both organizations merged into the Hashomer movement, the name Hashomer Hatzair was adopted in 1919.<sup>69</sup> Since the beginning the movement oriented itself to the Baden Powell ideas of the scout program, it reflected the ideas and activities of the German Wandervogel as well. The movement gradually focused on Zionism, and accentuated the program of “normalization” of the Jewish nation in the spirit of socialist Zionism.

The Hashomer Hatzair movement got to Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia together with the migration wave of the *Ostjuden* during the World War I. Although before 1918 several

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<sup>67</sup> Daniela Bartáková, “Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu (1918-1938) – komparativní studie sionistických mládežnických organizací” (Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan (1918-1938) – a comparative analysis of Zionist youth organizations) (M.A. Thesis, Palacký University Olomouc, 2010), 64.

<sup>68</sup> Since the beginning the political orientation of the movement was leftist – wide range of the movements were electorate of leftist Poale Zion Party. See Lotta Levensohn, *The First Jewish Watch in Palestine*. (Palestine Publishing Co. Ltd., Tel-Aviv, 1939).

<sup>69</sup> Elkana Margalit, “Social and Intellectual Origins of the Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement, 1913-20,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 4, No. 2. (Apr., 1969): 25-46.

Zionist movements already existed in Slovakia, especially in Bratislava, we could say, that it wasn't at least until the 20s when the Zionism ceased to be perceived as a marginal movement. In Slovakia the ideas of the Baden Powell's scouts (the ideology, uniforms, flags and programme – which also focused on the Jewish history) were widespread by Leo Kalmar throughout the organization Hashomer, influenced by the Polish Zionist pioneers. In the Eastern part of Slovakia and in the Subcarpathian Ruthenia a movement with a similar ideology was the Kadima, originally a Hungarian speaking one. We have to perceive the origin of these movements in the context of the War and the coming of Eastern refugees, who brought along the ideas of pioneering, and scouting.<sup>70</sup>

At the beginning of the 20s the intellectual circle *Obroda* (the Revival) was founded by a former legionary Július Gross in Bratislava. The circle was inspired by the ideas of M. Buber, A.D. Gordon and other front Zionists. Its activities became blended together with the activities of the Hashomer movement, which therefore adopted Zionism. The Hashomer movement grew quickly and operated all around Slovakia except its eastern part. In 1925 the movement organized its first summer camp in Banská Bystrica, where the Jewish youth from the Kadima participated too. The camp had a significant impact on the further development of the movement. The first group promoting the ideas and organization of *hahshara* was formed there, and after the mutual cooperation of both movements during the summer camp proved to be satisfactory the Hashomer and Kadima movements united. In December 1925 the common platform of the Hashomer Kadima promulgated striving for education of the Jewish youth, fostering the *hehalutz* activities and supporting the productive work of the Eretz as well as of the Diaspora.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Bartáková, “Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu”, 69.

<sup>71</sup> *HaShomer HaTzair beCzechoslovakiah: Perakim betoldot HaTnuah, 1920-1950*. (Givat Havivah, Israel, 1986), 4-6.

See also Livie Rotkirchen, “Slovakia II., 1918-1938,” in *Jews of Czechoslovakia, Historical Studies and Surveys*, Vol.I. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1971), 85-124.

The following year, under the leadership of Gross, the movement split. In November 1927 Gross proclaimed the origin of the militant revisionist Brit Trumpeldor (Betar).<sup>72</sup> The second part of the movement formed the Hashomer Hatzair branch. “*Since that time, the leftist Hashomer Hatzair and rightist Brit Trumpeldor represented the major axis of the youth movements in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. None of them took roots in the Czech Lands.*”<sup>73</sup>

### 3.2. World War I and its impact on the movements

World War I had a significant impact on the development of both movements. As mentioned in the first chapter, before the war the Zionist movement was not reflected considerably in the field of international politics, even among the European Jewry. As a consequence of the so-called *twofold revolution*<sup>74</sup> (i.e. the Russian Revolution and the Balfour Declaration) the situation had changed. Thanks to the Balfour Declaration Zionism became even more accentuated among the Jews, and the ranks of various Zionist movements strengthened. It was the case of Blau-Weis in Czechoslovakia too.

The war events and their impact on Zionism had another important dimension, it was the issue of the Eastern European and the Galician refugees. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of former pogroms Jews considered the Russian Empire to be a synonym for Jewish oppression. The Kishinev pogrom and the Beilis Affair were accentuated above all. During the war many Austro-Hungarian Jews became volunteer soldiers in an effort to fight

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<sup>72</sup> See Oskar K. Rabinowicz, “Czechoslovak Zionism: Analecta to a History,” in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia. Historical Studies and Surveys*, Vol.II. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1971), 104.

<sup>73</sup> Ješajahu A. Jelinek, *Dávidova hviezda pod Tatrami. Židia na Slovensku v 20. storočí (Davis star under the Tatra mountines. Jews in Slovakia in the 20th century)* (Praha: IPEL, 2009), 224-5.

<sup>74</sup> Henry Near, “Experiment and Survival: The Beginnings of the Kibbutz,” *Journal of Contemporary History* (Vol. 20, No. 1 (Jan., 1985): 187.

against the Russian enemy, their typical slogans were “*Revenge for Kishinev*,” “*Holy war*” etc. A significant part of the membership of both movements also went “*to fight against the Cossacks*.”<sup>75</sup>

The issue of Galician refugees was another important factor in the history of both movements, especially of the Hashomer Hatzair. During the war Galicia became a part of the firing line, as a consequence of that hundreds of thousands of Galician Jews ran away inland. The migration wave of *Ostjuden* affected the Czech and Moravian territory, Eastern parts of the budding republic, and above all Vienna. The attitude of Prague's Jews toward the Galician Jewish refugees was ambivalent but in the end the Zionist organizations (especially the women's ones) organized charitable and educational actions supporting the refugees; among the supporters of these charitable actions were the Tchelet Lavan too.

The political situation of the Galician Jews was difficult, their national consciousness was weak and they had to face up to the growing antisemitism. The Jews were accused of cooperation with Bolshevism on the one hand, and avoiding the military service on the other hand. It was the environment in which the core of the Hashomer Hatzair movement was shaping. “*They (the Galician Jews – D.B.) longed for roots and community identification because they were tense, perplexed, rootless, isolated, lacking security and without the least confidence in the maintenance of the contemporary social pattern and their own future social and professional status*.”<sup>76</sup>

As mentioned above Vienna became the main shelter for the Galician refugees, who at the same time pursued to maintain contacts with their homeland. The years 1915-1918 - the so-called Vienna-Galician period of the Hashomer Hatzair – was an important period for organizational and development moulding of the movement. It was in Vienna where the

<sup>75</sup> Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad rudou asimilací,” 70.

<sup>76</sup> Margalit, “Social and Intellectual Origins of the Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement,” 30.

Galician Jews encountered the ideas of Zionism, its various branches and organizations including Blau-Weiss. These contacts became symptomatic; here the Galician Jews adopted some ideas of German romantic movement, they encountered the works of front Zionists' intellectuals as M. Buber or A.D. Gordon and it was the Vienna center from where the first Galician Jews emigrated to Palestine. The Galician refugees widespread the ideas of the Hashomer Hatzair to other destinations, including Eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia.<sup>77</sup>

A contextualization of the development of both movements into a broader historical and social framework is a crucial issue for understanding of their further evolution. As I already mentioned in the first chapter, the end of World War I and the following years were a token of nationalization, and social and political radicalization of the society.

The majority of the Tchelet Lavan members came from a German-language environment, altogether they came from the cities with a significant Jewish-German speaking population. Since the German political representation struggled for the affiliation of particular Czech territories with Austria, the Germans became depicted by the Czech nationalists as the main national enemies. This trend had a significant impact on the Jewish German-speaking minority in the country. The identity crisis of the Jews in Czechoslovakia who found themselves in the environment of the strong Czech-German antagonism, was intensified by the German anti-Jewish hostility which was apparent in the Sudetenland region above all. In this area the necessity to form the Jewish youth organization was very acute. The growing inclination of the Jews toward Zionism could have been perceived in connection with the

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<sup>77</sup> See Angelika Jensen, *Sei stark und mutig! Chasak we'emaz! 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung „Haschomer Hazair“ 1903 bis 1943* (Vienna, 1995), 54-88. See also Bartáková, "Hašomer Haczair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu", 64-67.

Jewish identity crisis and Czech-German antagonism of that time. Altogether, a period of national frictions might have had a positive impact on the development of the Zionist movement in Czechoslovakia, when a part of Czechoslovak Jews identified themselves with the Zionism instead of the German (i.e. Austrian) nationality/identity.<sup>78</sup>

In the Eastern part of the republic the inclination of the Jews toward Zionism had a different development. After the founding of Czechoslovakia some of the former Hungarian provinces with orthodox religious communities became a part of the republic. Zionism in Slovakia presented an alternative way to the other identification strategies as were the Slovak and Hungarian nationalism, which were also accompanied by national frictions and anti-Jewish disturbances. However, its origin had a slower development in comparison with the Western part of the Republic. Jewish communities in Slovakia originated under specific cultural and political conditions in contrast to those of Bohemia and Moravia; their religious organization had its specificities and particularities.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the Zionists who were seeking for new members across the wide spectrum of Jewish religious communities and organizations might have been seen as an agent of unification of the heterogeneous Jewish communities in Slovakia.<sup>80</sup>

After the origin of the Republic several existing Jewish national movements adopted the particular ideological platforms of Zionism under the influence of the Czech, Moravian or Viennese Zionist centers. The internal political situation on one hand, and the particular Jewish communities on the other underwent the process of transformation. As a consequence of the War, due to the problems with Galician refugees, and also because of the increasing antisemitism, the Zionists had to adapt their politics and their national programme. The

<sup>78</sup> Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad rudou asimilací,” 85.

<sup>79</sup> See Robert Büchler, “Židovská komunita na Slovensku pred druhou svetovou vojnou” (The Jewish community in Slovakia before the World War II.), in *Tragédia slovenských Židov*, ed. Desiderius Tóth (Banská Bystrica, 1992), 5-26.

<sup>80</sup> Bartáková, “Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu”, 68.

*Landespolitik* of Slovakian Zionism had to grapple with the considerable influence of the orthodox communities, with the radical nationalist outbursts in particular areas, and also with the dominance of the Czech Jews in the field of the general Czechoslovak Jewish politics.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the development of Zionism in Slovakia was a slow and gradual process.

One of the first pioneers of Zionism in Slovakia was Max Brod who in 1919 visited several Slovakian cities promoting the Czech and Zionist orientation of the Jews. His success was not great. One year later, the activities of Jeremijahu Oskar Neumann achieved a greater success. Neumann, the Czech Tchelet Lavan movement member attempted to set up the Slovakian branch in Bratislava by merging the Banot Devora and Tzerei Zion. It became clear soon that the mentality and the class origin of the Jewish youth in Slovakia differed from that of the Tchelet Lavan, and thus the Tchelet Lavan did not succeed in the East at all.<sup>82</sup> As mentioned above, the activities of Leo Kalman had a much more significant impact on the formation of Jewish Zionist youth activities in Slovakia than the work of Neumann. In the beginning, Neumann criticized Kalmans' work with Zionist youth: *“At that spiritual structure of the Jewish youth in Slovakia was affected only by the external effects of the Scout Movement: nice uniforms, vigorous military discipline, flags and the other things, while the deeper educational ideas and the great ideal of Hehalutz remained misunderstood and was not included into the work program at all.”*<sup>83</sup> Neumann was involved in the Zionist activities in Slovakia, and contributed to its expansion there. It was Neumann who built-up the program structure of the Hashomer Hatzair during the 20s and pursued to interconnect Slovakian Hashomer with the Subcarpathien Kadima movement.<sup>84</sup>

The Jewish scout movement in Slovakia recruited its members from the ranks of Orthodox

<sup>81</sup> See Jelinek, “*Dávidova hviezda pod Tatrami*,” 215-217.

<sup>82</sup> *HaShomer HaTzair beCzechoslovakiah: Perakim betoldot HaTnuah, 1920-1950*, 3. To the social background differences between both movements see the next chapter.

<sup>83</sup> See Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 256-257.

<sup>84</sup> See Ibid, 256-259.

and Neologue Jewish communities. It was not only the scouts organization who led the Jewish youth off the Jewish religious communities, but also other (political) organizations including the Communist Party. In an effort to leave the current social milieu the Jewish youth did not hesitate to abandon their religious traditions.<sup>85</sup> Even within the ranks of the Blau-Weiss the pro-communist tendencies were apparent; the revolutionary atmosphere of the post-war period was described by a former movement member as follows: “*In their innocence, they believed that “the days of the Socialist-Communist Messiah” had arrived, and they left the Zionist movement and Blau-Weiss.*”<sup>86</sup>

As mentioned in the first chapter, from the point of view of the identity crisis the political reorientation of the Jews in Czechoslovakia, i.e. their inclination toward socialism and radical leftism can be seen as a solution of their identity dilemma; at the same time, it can be seen as a solution of their particular social dilemma - the poverty in case of the Hashomer Hatzair, the bourgeois lifestyle in case of the Tchelet Lavan. Since the end of the war the Jewish youth was influenced by the Balfour Declaration and the Russian Revolution. The middle way between them seemed to be the amalgamation of socialism and Zionism, which became the ideological platform of both movements. These events gave momentum to the overall character and further development of both movements.

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<sup>85</sup> See Ruven Šapira, “Od skautskej organizácie po hnutie mládeže (1920-1938)” (From the Scout Organization to the Youth Movement, 1920-1928), in *Hašomer Hacair - Dějiny hnutia (Hashomer Hatzair – History of the movement)* ed. Pavol Mešťan (Bratislava: SNM – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 2001), 20-39.

Bartáková, “Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu”, 69.

<sup>86</sup> Philip Boehm, “Tchelet Lavan” a school for practical Zionism (a personal story), in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 17.

### 3.3. The post war period – “moulding of the noble society and national ideals”

In the beginning, Hashomer in Slovakia was a romantic movement where the Jewish youth was searching for new values of life. Its inner ideology was shaping gradually but in the end, the members considered themselves to be a society based on the social and ideological cooperation – the so-called *eda*.<sup>87</sup> Due to the contacts of Hashomer movement with Polish pioneers and Palestinian *shlihim*\* it focused on the Palestino-centric politics without any particular aims in Diaspora. “*It did not pursue any political work concentrating solely on the education of the young Jews for his final settlement in Eretz Israel where he would help to build up a purely socialist society.*”<sup>88</sup> The movement became one of the strongest youth Zionist movements in Czechoslovakia, although limited itself to the Eastern part of the Republic exclusively.

After the war, in the leadership of the Tchelet Lavan movement there was the young pioneer generation that opposed its bourgeois liberal parents’ generation ideologically and practically, pursuing to build up a new life style. “*The reform of life style was the goal of the movement, the rebellion against bourgeoisie, philistinism, hypocrisy, against a disaffection with nature – the aversion to materialistic values of life was our bound.*”<sup>89</sup> The reorientation of the movement from romanticism toward the ideas of *Hehalutz* and practical Zionism was promoted gradually, especially thanks to the movement's front ideologist Hans Lichtwitz, and through the encounter with ideologically analogous movements.<sup>90</sup> Still, it was a long-distance before the movement adopted the ideology of *Hehalutz*. “*From the little we did know, it was*

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<sup>87</sup> See Ofer N. Nur, *Hashomer Hatzair in the 1920s : from avant-garde to elitism* (Universitat Hefla. Forum Posen leheqer mahshava politit yehudit, eropit we-yisreelit, 1967), 11.; See also Shimoni, *The Zionist ideology*, 224.

\* Palestinian kibbutz emissaries.

<sup>88</sup> CZA, A87-100, Oskar Rabinowicz's estate, 73.

<sup>89</sup> Fritz Beer, *...a tys na Němce střílel, dědo? (Did you shoot on the Germans, Grandpa?* (Paseka, Praha – Litomyšl, 2008), 55.

<sup>90</sup> See Wein, “Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia,” 2009, 5-47.

clear to us without a shadow of doubt: „our“settlement would be communal, similar to the example set by Deagnia. We were confronted by only one dilemma: HOW? How should we organize ourselves, how to send our members to be trained? How and when to prepare for Aliya? Who should be the first to go to be trained, and who should go on Aliya first. For us, Tchelet Lavan had remained, at least during the first years, a romantic-youth movement, with a social-educational-Jewish orientation.”<sup>91</sup>

The origin of *Hehalutz* – the worldwide federation of pioneer Zionist youth – can be found in Eastern Europe. Since the communist regime prohibited the activities of the movement in Russia the center of the movement moved to Poland, which soon became the model for other branches. Its ideology resulted from the works of J. Trumpeldor and A.D. Gordon, B. Borochoy and N. Syrkin. The term *halutz* means the pioneer, avant-garde; it has a connotation of the goal-seeking person, pursuing to achieve and set up social projects. Among the goals of the movement was organization of training centers, where the *halutzim* will be trained in agriculture, and preparing for the emigration to Palestine and for the life in the collectivist settlements – *kibbutzim*. The focal point of the movement was the mobilization and productivization of the Jewish nation in an effort to establish a Jewish agricultural and working class. The key term in the ideology was *hagshama* - “ (...) implied the conscious choice to fuse one’s own search for personal fulfillment with the national need.”<sup>92</sup> Although the emigration to Palestine, an agriculture development in Eretz Israel and the infrastructure building were the general ideas of the Zionism, it was the pioneer Jewish youth who set in motion the practical realization of the national goals, as these were formulated by (socialist)

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<sup>91</sup> Philip Boehm, “Tchelet Lavan” a school for practical Zionism (a personal story), in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 28-29.

<sup>92</sup> Shimoni, *The Zionist ideology*, 234.

Zionist ideology.<sup>93</sup>

Both movements approached to the ideas of *Hehalutz* during the World War I, in the following decade the movements' ideology was consolidating, and the membership of both movements enlarged significantly. It was in the first half of the 20s that the first training group preparing itself for the *aliyah* was found among the members of the Tchelet Lavan – it was the group *Avoda* (The Work); two years later, the *Bibracha* group followed, and then many others.<sup>94</sup> In practice, the goals of the *Hehalutz* were fulfilled especially in the second half of the decade, and during the 30s. Thus the new era of structural changes and the new goals was set up, the epoch of the orientation on *Hehalutz* and *hahshara*.

### 3.4. Searching for new allies

After the Tchelet Lavan adopted the concept of *Hehalutz*, it began to search for new cooperation allies in the field of *hahsharot* activities. Since the mid of the 20s the mutual cooperation and interconnection between both movements became apparent.

At that time, Hashomer Hatzair represented an influential organization with tradition, consistent educational concept and a world-wide activity; many of its members had already had experiences with the *kibbutz* life. The ideological conception of the movement was supported through the organized work of the front members and emissaries from the Palestinian *kibbutzim*, such as the prominent members Jechiel Grünberg (Alias Chilek Hariri) or Meir Yaari.

In 1927 Hariri visited summer camp of the Slovakian movement branch in Vyhnie giving a

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<sup>93</sup> Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization*, 1-7.

<sup>94</sup> See Bartáková, "Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu," 45-63.

public lecture there about the set up goals of the world movement Hashomer Hatzair, importance of *hahsharot* and Palestino-centric ideology, and spirit of the socialist Zionism. The Jewish youth from Hashomer was pushed toward abandonment of their university education aspirations; instead of university studies the youth were to devote themselves to the movement's ideology and to focus on the emigration to Palestine.<sup>95</sup> After this camp, the first *hahshara* center in Nemeskürt (today's Zemianské Sady in Slovakia) was founded cooperating with Palestinian *shlihim* - they organized educational activities, agricultural training, and fundraising. After the training, many of the participants emigrated to Palestine and joined the existing *kibbutzim* of the world movement Hashomer Hatzair.<sup>96</sup>

Since 1928 the activities of Hashomer Hatzair spread to the Subcarpathien Ruthenia where these were supported by the Hebrew gymnasium in Munkács under the leadership of its director Chaim Kugel. The gymnasium became a bastion of the Hashomer Hatzair movement. With regard to the traditional religiosity in the area, the ideology of the movement, Palestino-centrism, and the preparation of youth for the collectivism were stressed with a revolutionary accent.<sup>97</sup>

Since the second half of the 20s, a special territorial agreement existed between Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair, dividing their particular spheres of influence. Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia were the scope of the Hashomer Hatzair, while Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia became the scope of Tchelet Lavan. Both movements cooperated with the Zionist organization and *Hehalutz* - it was the field of *hahshara* where the activities of both organizations interfered considerably.

After the *hahshara* in Nemeskürt the ideological platform of the movement consolidated. This

<sup>95</sup> See Akiva Nir, "Sionistická organizácia, mládežnícké hnutia a emigrácia do Palestíny v rokoch 1918-1945" (The Zionist organization, the youth movements and the emigration to Palestine between 1918-1945), in *Tragédia slovenských Židov*, ed. Desiderius Tóth (Banská Bystrica, 1992), 27-43.

<sup>96</sup> For detailed development see Bartáková, "Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu", 45-81.

<sup>97</sup> See Podrobněji *HaShomer HaTzair beCzechoslovakiah: Perakim betoldot HaTnuah*, 40-42.

was also a consequence of the international movement development; while in April 1927 the *kibbutz* federation of the Hashomer Hatzair movement established Hakibbutz Haartzi in Palestine. Organization committee of the federation negotiated the situation of the Jews in Diaspora and its solution resulting from the Borochof ideology. Affiliated *kibbutzim* agreed on the consensus in the economical, social, cultural and educational sphere. After the approval of the proposal to support training centres fostering the ideas of collectivism and educational activities, it became clear that the *kibbutz* became a model unit and core of the Jewish society, the constructivist tool for the settlement politics. The united *kibbutzim* of the Hashomer Hatzair created an umbrella organization of the movement and its educational centre, in an endeavor to achieve a formal affiliation of the movement members to its principles, and thus to create an ideologically uniform membership. The *kibbutz* federation considered itself to be an organic unit representing a synthesis of pioneer and revolutionary socialism, it pursued to serve as a tool of the national and the class struggles, and as a prototype of the future socialist society.<sup>98</sup> “*The outcome of Ha-shomer Ha-tzair's radical politicization was a unique ideological alchemy of constructive socialism, nationalism, and Marxist rhetoric.*”<sup>99</sup>

In the view of the Tchelet Lavan movement, Hashomer Hatzair represented an attractive partner with fixed organizational structure and established goals; both movements started to cooperate within the *hahsahrot* training centres and its organization. Nevertheless, the relationships among the particular branches of both movements were not always positive. It was the sphere of politics in Palestine and the matters of the affiliation to the particular *kibbutz* federation that became a focal point of convergences and divergences between the two movements. These clashes were even supported by the different social origin and class status

<sup>98</sup> To the political activities of the Kibbutz Haartzi see YY, (1) 4.2.-2.; see also Avraham Yassour ed., *The History of the Kibbutz. A Selection of Sources – 1905-1929*. (Merhavia, 1995), 21-23, 190-193.

<sup>99</sup> Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*, 225.

of the organizations' members.<sup>100</sup>

### 3.5. The Thirties

At the turn of the decade, the Zionist movement underwent a period of a certain disappointment due to the British politics in Palestine. Since the end of the 20s there was an extensive economic depression in Palestine and a high percentage of unemployment, the situation was further deteriorated by Arab riots. At that time, many European countries were hit by the world economic crisis, which enabled Hitler's ascendance to power and the rise of antisemitism. As a consequence of these events many Jews abandoned Zionism; this phenomenon was apparent even among the members of the Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan whose members, because of their specific (Marxist) ideological training abandoned the Zionist movement and joined the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia or in Palestine.<sup>101</sup> It was also the period of the mass Jewish emigration from Palestine due to the disappointment from unfavorable social, economical and political situation there. Therefore *Hehalutz* focused on intensification of ideological training.<sup>102</sup>

In spite of this development, it was during the thirties when the Zionist movement in Czechoslovakia, or more precisely in its Eastern parts began to flourish. Although the Zionists pursued to awake self-consciousness and nationalism among the Jewish youth, they achieved a success thanks to the organization of *aliyah* above all; the Jewish youth wanted to abandon the environment of poverty and backwardness and Zionism presented an ideal agent for the fulfillment of their yearnings to build up the Jewish Land.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> For detailed analysis of the politics and inner development of the kibbutz' federations and its impact on the movements see Bartáková, "Hašomer Hacair a Tchelet Lavan v Československu", 45-81.

<sup>101</sup> I am going to deal with the issue of the Jews and Communism in detail in the next chapter.

<sup>102</sup> See Vili Cur, "Al hajahdut vehatnuah hehalutziut beCzechoslovakiah" in *Shomrim tamid – Hashomer Hatzair beCzechoslovakiah, 1920-1950*, Josef Rav ed. (Yaad Yaari: Givat Havivah, 1994), 319-322.

<sup>103</sup> Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 256-259.

In the field of the *Hehalutz* movement the mutual cooperation between Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan continued also in the thirties. A braking point in their relationship represented the world conference of Hashomer Hatzair held in Vrútky (Slovakia) in 1930, where Meir Yaari presented the program concept of the movement. At the conference, due to the disagreement in the area of Palestine politics and the organization of the *kibbutzim* the Hashomer Hatzair movement split up. One part of the movement promoted functioning of the *kibbutz* as a political and ideological basis of the movement, while the second part saw in the *kibbutz* “only” social, economical and cultural unit of all persons concerned. The activities of the federation Hakibbutz Haartzi and its platform were discussed too; while one part of the movement identified with the platform of “ideological collectivism”, the second part relinquished the world movement Hashomer Hatzair and joined the kibbutz federation Hakibbutz Hameuchad affiliated to the Palestine Working Party. In December 1930, the schism gave rise to the Hashomer Hatzair Noar Tzofi Halutzi (Netzach) organization, to which the Tchelet Lavan movement inclined.

After the affiliation of the Tchelet Lavan to the Netzach significant changes within the Tchelet Lavan occurred immediately, the movement adopted the educational program of Netzach, the cooperation with Palestinian emissaries intensified, and improvements and innovation of the organization activities under the leadership of the experts from Eastern Europe began.

F Beer, a contemporary, reminisces on the work of one of the emissaries: *‘The representative of Hechaluz was a young Russian Jew who had lived in a kibbutz for many years. We had mostly heard all he had to say; how they’re making the desert blossom with a spade and a hoe, how they’re overcoming the heat and their own inexperience, about setbacks and disappointments, about the immeasurable joy of the first harvest and of the first calf born in a*

*cowshed which they had built themselves. He spoke in Yiddish, with sentiment, his accent and words, that were rooted in old German, were alien to us. When he would lose all hope, he would get new strength by walking through the orange groves and cowshed. Yes, there was dirt, sweat and stench; but also a new kind of joy, even in the 'bit of stinky cow manure, because it was a Jewish cow's stench.'*<sup>104</sup>

As mentioned above, as a consequence of the deteriorating political situation in Europe both movements intensified their activities in the sphere of *Hehalutz*, especially in the field of the *hahshara* and *aliyah* programmes. The unfavorable situation became even worse when professor Theodor Lessing was assassinated by the Nazis in Mariánské Lázně during the World Zionist conference in 1933 which was being held there. After that, a variety of Zionist movements intensified their activities in organizing emigration to Palestine. Thus, we can consider the thirties to be a period of the urgent pedagogical-*hehalutz* blossom.

It was apparent, that due to these events pioneer Zionist organizations accentuated a necessity to cooperate with other Zionist organizations involved in the emigration activities. Since the middle of the 30s the Zionist movement was unable to satisfy the demands of the applicants for emigration, and to provide sufficient amount of places in *hahsharot*. Most of the candidates for emigration came from Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair and thus they had sufficient education in the field of Zionism, which was an advantage compared to those applicants, who wanted to approach the *hahshara* without any previous Zionist-educational training. It caused another controversy between the Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair. The Tchelet Lavan (under the auspices of the Kibbutz Hameuchad; Netzach) struggled for the admission of all *hahshara* candidates, whilst Hashomer Hatzair (Hakibbutz Haartzi) insisted on a previous Zionist education of the candidates. The controversy had a significant impact on

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<sup>104</sup> Beer, ...*a Tys na Němce střílel, dědo?*, 60-61.

the whole *Hehalutz* movement.<sup>105</sup>

In the thirties, the revisionist Betar and its programme of the shortcut *hahsharot* presented an important competition to the youth Zionist movements in the area of *hehalutz* activities. The rivalry between Betar and Hashomer Hatzair was apparent since the split of their mother organization Hashomer Kadima. The attitudes of the Zionist-leftist organizations toward Betar were ambivalent; being aware of the fact that they were not able to ensure an analogous success by themselves they appreciated the achievements of Betar in the organization of youth emigration to Palestine. But on the other hand, Betar was often strongly criticized by the Zionists for its militarism, which culminated when Betar introduced new uniforms resembling the Mussoloni's phalanx uniforms after Hitler's coming to power.<sup>106</sup>

In the second half of the thirties, both movements established contacts with other youth Zionist organizations participating in the organization of youth emigration - *Alyiat Hanoar* (among these organizations were Makabi Hatzair, Bnei Akiva etc.) and illegal immigration - *Alyiat Bet*, where Betar was dominant. After the inception of the Munich Agreement, the contract about mutual cooperation between Hashomer Hatzair, Tchelet Lavan and Makabi Hatzair was concluded, under the auspices of the Makabi movement, which soon withdrew from the agreement and the pioneer Zionist organizations were found illegal.

### 3.5.1. EI AI

One short sub-chapter belongs to the history of the Tchelet Lavan movement in Czechoslovakia. Tchelet Lavan was predominantly an organization of the German-speaking Jews. Hand in hand with the growing Nazism in Germany, the German irredentism became

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<sup>105</sup> See Yeshayahu Jelinek, "Jewish Youth in Carpatho-Rus': Between Hope and Despair (1920-1938)," *Shvut*, No.7 (23) (1998), 146-165.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

apparent in Czechoslovakia again, it was apparent even within the ranks of the Tchelet Lavan: „*Wir müssen der Mentalität der čechischen Bewohner Rechnung tragen, die mit Recht das Deutschsprechen in ihren Gemeinden als Provokation ansieht.*“<sup>107</sup> The issue of the Jewish identity in Czechoslovakia became acute again; it was also the topic of Martin Buber's speech held in Prague in 1937. Even during his lecture the basis for the Czech Association of the Jewish Youth El Al was found from the initiative of Paul Kohn, who organized fundraising for his emerging discussion group. In the beginning, the movement had about 50 members, its leadership organized trips and published promotional materials, but above all it pursued to bring the Czech speaking Jews toward Zionism, and thus to manifest rejection of assimilationists' tendencies. „*El Al would try to penetrate the Czech-speaking, assimilated circles of youth and instruct them on halutzic spirit and discipline.*“<sup>108</sup> The movement was quite successful, the following year it had about 200 members and the membership was growing. According to the movement's articles, it was the association of the Jewish youth, pursuing to foster Jewish tradition, science and art, in an endeavor to uplift the physical and moral ability of the Jewish youth. Its official programme reflected the scouting activities as well.<sup>109</sup>

Since the beginning, the movement inclined to *Hehalutz* and *alyiah* program, and it had contacts with Palestinian *shlihim*. Therefore the Makabi Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan became interested in the movement and pursued to ensure cooperation. In February 1939, after the mutual negotiations the majority of the El Al movement joined the Tchelet Lavan, Netzach and Kibbutz Hameuchad, whereas the minority joined the Makabi Hatzair. After joining Tchelet Lavan, Netzach became one of the biggest youth organizations in Bohemia and

<sup>107</sup> The movement's circular, 1936. ML, III-54A-437-1.

<sup>108</sup> Otto B. Kraus, “El Al Divertimento,” in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 257.

<sup>109</sup> AMP, SK XXII/2705, El-Al.

Moravia, it had about 1400 members.<sup>110</sup>

### 3.6. Summary

The Jewish Zionist youth, as well as the Gentile youth movements and organizations pursued to change various aspects of the social and cultural life of their respective society, they held hope for the society's future, and youth represented a bearer of cultural values and social creativity.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the Zionist pioneer youth was shaping a new collective Jewish identity. Beside the other factors, we can see the emergence of Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzait as a rebellion of the youth against their parents' generation and against the character of their particular social milieu.

At the time of their proto-Zionist period, the members of these movements tended to demonstrate their aversion to bourgeois life of their parents' generation (Tchelet Lavan), or tended to escape from traditional religious milieu (Hashomer Hatzair). Both movements originally emerged as non-Zionist and apolitical movements, orienting themselves to nature and scouting. They only adopted Zionism and its Palestino-centric policy during the First World War, and it was in the 20s that the radical concept of socialist Zionism was adopted. But we have to bear in mind that in consequence of the World War I the overall social radicalization of the population and its move to the political left was a wide-spread phenomenon. Both concepts (Zionism and Socialism) were solving the problem of Jewish identity, which became for the Czech Jews more acute during the World War I, as I attempted to adumbrate above.

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<sup>110</sup> "Tchelet Lavan and El Al in the Years 1939-1941 a Memorandum," in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 275.

<sup>111</sup> Eisenstadt, "Archetypal Pattern of Youth", 41.

The revolt against their parents' generation (as well as their later activities within the Zionist movement) might be perceived as a typical pattern of youth. It was apparent within the ranks of both movements, which tempted the youth from their homes and confronted them with revolutionary ideas, supported their abandonment of their social milieu, and encouraged them to emigration. Among the revolutionary appeals of the Jewish Pioneer youth movements toward their members we could find slogans: *“Do not listen, son, to the moralizing of your father; do not obey the instructions of your mother.”*<sup>112</sup> Of course, the Zionist program and the call for *alyiot* had a negative reflection among the parents, and sometimes the negative reflection was apparent even in schools. In Eastern Slovakia there were schools prohibiting the participation in Hashomer movement to their students, or even schools organizing lectures for parents about the “dangerousness” of these youth movements.<sup>113</sup> In reaction the youth organization were publishing circulars pursuing to strengthen self-confidence of youth, and encourage their participation within the ranks of the movements, and thus to build up and foster the higher societal values in the principles of socialist Zionism and its goals.<sup>114</sup>

There is also another dimension in the perception of the unique role that the pioneer Zionist organizations used to play. In the framework of the Zionist movement the Jewish pioneer youth did not come up with a new political programme, they focused on the practical realization of the set up goals and fulfilling conceptions already proposed. The uniqueness of the Zionist youth movements lied in their activism, in the way the Jewish youth demonstrated their negative attitude towards an inactivity of the Zionist leadership.<sup>115</sup> The existence of the Jewish Zionist youth movements was the revolt against the orthodox grandparents' generation, as well as the revolt against the Zionist parents' generation and their flabbiness.

<sup>112</sup> Giora Amir, “Na úvod” (Introduction), in *Hašomer Hacair - Dějiny hnutia (Hashomer Hatzair – History of the movement)* ed. Pavol Mešťan, 11.

<sup>113</sup> Notes of the movement members, 1930. YY, (1) 2.2.-2.

<sup>114</sup> The circular of the *ken Trienčany*, YY, (1) 4.2.-2.

<sup>115</sup> Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization*, 1-7.

Zionist youth attempted to transform the existing concept of a Jewish life in Diaspora. It was to be done through the realization of national and social goals. The Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair movements organized the movements' branches in Diaspora, and gradually focused on *aliyah*, *hachshara* programme and *kibbutz* formation – i.e. the principles correlated to the idea of Palestino-centrism. While the mainstream of Czechoslovakian Zionists – the General Zionism – accented the *Gegenwartsarbeit* (work for the present) as the focal point of their activities. This programme was adopted in the second half of the 20s and intensified during the following decade.

The pioneer Zionist Youth movements played a crucial role in the process of reshaping Jewish identity, but a special dimension of the pioneer activities lay in the process of shaping Jewish collective identity through the building of a new image. Beside some practical concepts and ideas of *Hehalutz* movement (*aliyah* orientation, formation of *kibbutzim*, *hagshama*) Jewish youth was led to the fostering of values designed for collective life, for the welfare of the community (Jewish society). Among the basic elements was the concept of self-sacrifice – i.e. the voluntary renouncing of personal comfort, social comfort and the dedication of life to asceticism for the benefit of future generations. The focal point of activities was the work in agriculture and production, in endeavor to revitalize the Jewish nation, and to create a new type of Jew, a new national entity.<sup>116</sup> Thus, the pioneer activities pursued to foster the ideological welfare of the whole community.

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<sup>116</sup> See Eisenstadt, “*Youth, Culture and Social Structure in Israel.*”.

## 4. Hashomer Hatzair versus Tchelet Lavan

As outlined in the previous chapters, although Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan originated from different social backgrounds, both movements had much in common; they both found a way to the ideology of socialist Zionism and became active participants and co-producers of the *Hehalutz* movement. I would like to focus back on the important milestones in the history of both movements, on similarities and differences of their respective social milieu, their common activities, denominators and discrepancies; in particular I am going to focus on the subtle way of the Jewish youth to the leftist ideology that set up new goals and values. Thus, I would like to come back to the particular phenomena that influenced the identification strategies of the Jewish Zionist youth.

### 4.1. Basic characteristics

The historian Ezra Mendelsohn distinguished two basic types of Jewish communities in Eastern and Central Europe. The first one, the East European type, was characterized by a weak measure of acculturation and assimilation; the communities were traditional – Orthodox, usually preserving Yiddish. As far as socio-economic characteristics were concerned, these Jews were lower-middle class and proletarian, with high birth rate and low intermarriage rate. If a certain degree of acculturation and secularization had occurred, it did not lead to assimilation but usually to Jewish nationalism. The second one, the West European type, was characterized by a higher measure of acculturation and assimilation; if its members inclined to Judaism, then it was usually to the reform or liberal stream. Their typical

demographic and socio-economic characteristics were: a high degree of urbanization, middle-class societal structure, low birth rate and a high rate of intermarriage.<sup>117</sup>

The Republic of Czechoslovakia consisted of five former regions of Austro-Hungarian Empire; Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia – the ancestral dominions of Austria; Subcarpathian Ruthenia and Slovakia (i.e. Upper Hungary - the former dominion of the Hungarian part of the Empire). The emergent Republic united regions with a disproportional economic structure and different political tradition. On one hand, there was a highly industrialized territory of the Czech Lands, with a high degree of modernization and a liberal political tradition, where the majority of the population was middle-class. On the other hand, Subcarpathian Ruthenia represented one of the most economic backward regions in all of Europe; lacking a high or middle class population, strongly religious; Magyarized to a certain degree, it was a clear counterpart to the Czech Lands. And finally, Slovakia which stood between the two models; except of the fact that national consciousness here was more apparent than in the Eastern part of the Republic; it was anti-Magyar, but also uncertain about its cultural and linguistic bonds with the Czechs. The regional and demographic differences of this multinational Czechoslovakia were apparent also within the Jewish communities. Thus, for the regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia the Mendelsohns' western type of the Jewish communities was characteristic; the Subcarpathian Ruthenia represented a typical example of the eastern type; and Slovakia lay somewhere between the western and eastern models.<sup>118</sup>

In this way we can define the basic social and demographic milieu of the Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair respective memberships. The members of Tchelet Lavan originated from Bohemia and Moravia, it encompassed the territories fitting to the Mendelsohn's western model of Jewry; whereas the Hashomer Hatzair membership was shaping among the Jews in

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<sup>117</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars*, 6-7.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 131-146.

Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia – the areas characterized by the eastern type and “in-between” type of Jewry. Since the social and economical characteristics of the Czech regions coincide with Mendelsohns' types of the Jewry, we can divide the membership of particular movements accordingly; and at the same time the social and political differences between the territories corresponded to the differences between the movements' memberships, these factors were apparent during the whole course of their mutual encounters.

#### **4.2. Motivations of the Jewish youth for joining a movement**

When dealing with the ideological motivations of Jewish youth for joining the ranks of Zionist movements, we have to take into account their individual motives as well. Therefore, I would like to concentrate on a few testimonies of members of both movements. But we have to bear in mind that the membership of the particular movements was shaped among different social classes of the Jewish youth. Also we have to take into account the fact, that the Jewish youth Zionist organizations underwent the process of development; the motivations of the first generations for joining the movement differed from the motivations of the next generations, which entered the movement with different organizational structure and ideological characteristics.

The Jewish organization Blau-Weiss was founded by the German speaking urban youth; by their participation in the movement Jewish youth demonstrated a protest against the current circumstances, as well as the aversion to their parents' bourgeois generation; and above all, the youth manifested their interest in nature and scouting. At that time, “return to nature” became a motto of various national and gymnastic organizations all around Europe. According to the Zionists, in the course of history the Jews were “violently” pulled away from

their natural evolution, from the harmony with nature, even in a more radical way than other nations. This situation had a significant impact on their physical and psychological condition; and thus “bodybuilding”, by the words of Max Nordau, became one of the primary tasks of the Zionist movement in general.<sup>119</sup> Quite logically, the Jewish Zionist youth organizations were involved in this issue. Hand in hand with the programme of “bodybuilding,” the aesthetic of the male and female body and sexual relationship became integral part of the movements' educational program. The ideas of the “sexual revolution” found a considerable response also among the Jewish Zionists; it was reflected even at the world conference of the Hashomer Hatzair movement held in Vrútky (Slovakia) in 1930; as mentioned by one of the former participants “(...) *there were even some peculiarities* (in the conference programme – D.B.) *such as the enjoyment of nudism (Nacktkultur) within some parts of the movement* (...).”<sup>120</sup> The issue of sexuality and eroticism was not an eccentricity of Zionism, these issues were apparent even within other national movements which may have served as precursors and inspiration to Zionism.<sup>121</sup>

Generally speaking, it was the German neo-romantic Wandervogel movement, where the question of sexuality was strongly reflected among its membership. One of the leading theoreticians of the movement Han Blüher and his book *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen* emphasizing the strong homoerotic bonds between the members had a significant impact on the Jewish youth movements.<sup>122</sup> The ideological leader of Hashomer Hatzair Yad Yaari, after his emigration to Palestine, laid out the principles of an erotic ideology of the commune; his concept of the community was based on the economic as well

<sup>119</sup> See George L. Mosse, “Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 27, no. 4 (Oct. 1992): 565-581.

<sup>120</sup> Šapira, “Od skautskej organizácie po hnutie mládeže,” 29.

<sup>121</sup> To the issue of the body and nationalism see George L. Mosse, *Confronting the Nation. Jewish and Western Nationalism*, (Hanover&London: Brandeis University Press, 1993).

<sup>122</sup> And it was Magnus Hirschfeld, the leading figure in Germany fight for homosexual rights who wrote an introduction to the book.

as erotic bonds between its members and thus he claimed the existence of the community without erotic bonds between its members as impossible.<sup>123</sup> “*The ideology of erotic liberation was always a means to realize the broader nationalist goals of Zionism; (...) Sexual liberation was a necessary part of the revolt against the bourgeois, assimilationist culture of the Diaspora; it was not a means of individual fulfilment.*”<sup>124</sup> Thus, the scarification of family life and erotic relations on behalf of the fulfilment of national goals was considered to be “the highest Mitzvah” in the eyes of the pioneer Zionists and their ideology; an abandonment of the personal comfort and self-sacrifice for the welfare of the next generations was an integral part of the pioneer philosophy.<sup>125</sup>

Even during the pre-war period it became apparent, that the radical policy and programme striving for a rigorous social change will find its place within the youth movements. World War I and the particular inner development of the Jewish youth organizations enabled the adoption of socialist Zionism; and since the 1920s, *Hehalutz* ideology and the *hahsharot* programme affected the ideological programmes of both movements. But we have to bear in mind that apart from a variety of socio-political factors, structural phenomena and the particular inner development of the movements which led the youth into their ranks; the affiliation to Zionism was also dependent on a wide scale of individual motivations. On the one hand, these motivations had to blend with some specific characteristics of Zionism; but on the other hand, they may have caused the later brake up of the individual with the Zionist movement.

One of the former members of Tchelet Lavan Fritz Beer evaluated his motives for entering the movement as the only solution to his desperate situation - he had no friends, which changed

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<sup>123</sup> David Biale, "Zionism as an Erotic Revolution," in *Eros and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 185.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

after his joining the ranks of the movement: “*I had as many friends as I wanted, wherever the branch of our movement was situated – in Brno, Prague, Ústí and Vienna – I had friends who were thinking and feeling, who had doubts about themselves, and who were looking for the same thing as I was, who took me seriously (...). It was the first time in my life I had an opportunity to identify myself with a group (...) I belonged to something.*”<sup>126</sup> Another motivation reflects an aversion to the bourgeois morality and an inclination to the sexual revolution. In the book dedicated to Jacob Edelstein<sup>127</sup> Ruth Bondy writes: “*(...) the membership of youth organizations presented for the majority of young people a license for sexual freedom, as a symbol of rebellion against the prohibitions and restrictions of their middle-class homes.*”<sup>128</sup>

In case of the Hashomer Hatzair movement (Hashomer and Kadima), we have to keep in mind that its membership came from the economically less developed part of the Republic, where the religious environment was more traditional. The generational conflict was not necessarily in token of “social revolution” there; but the acceptance of secular authority and involvement in political movement promoting non-religious goals may have led to a major controversy with the traditional milieu. We can find a specific motivation in Štefanie Lorándová’s testimony. She had been the member of the scout movement Junák; but since she accompanied one of her friends to a Hashomer movement meeting, she recognized in the Hashomer movement a way of becoming independent of her parents.<sup>129</sup>

Even in the case of the Hshomer Hatzair membership the Jewish youth joined the movement because of their feeling of uprootedness, marginality and social inequality; these phenomena were strongly reflected within the movement itself. One of the witnesses of Hashomer

<sup>126</sup> Beer, ... *a tys na Němce střílel, dědo?*, 54, 56.

<sup>127</sup> Jacob Edelstein was member of Tchelet Lavana and leading personality of Zionist movement in Czechoslovakia.

<sup>128</sup> Ruth Bondyová, *Jakub Edelstein*, (Praha: Sefer, 2001), p. 44.

<sup>129</sup> Vojtěch Vykouk, “Štefanie Lorándová. Život ve víru dvacátého století” (*Štefanie Lorándová. Living in the midst of the twentieth century.*) (M.A. thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2009), 25.

considered the affiliation to the movement as a “natural”: “*We were looking for something that could have provided us with a chance, a hope (...) It was an automatic evolution: the Jewish youth was looking for a membership (...) everyone was split into classes, we, the poor ones, we found our place in Hashomer Hatzair.*”<sup>130</sup> “*The target of Hashomer was to train a young Jew, who was the counterpart of a coward Jew, victim of pogroms, persecuted for centuries (...) We had no intention to deny our Jewishness anymore (why did we betray it during Communism, during the Slánský trial?)...*”<sup>131</sup> The way the author emphasized class and social origin of the movement's members is rather interesting; these factors were considered to be a decisive factors of individual members for affiliation to the particular Jewish organizations.

### **4.3. Organizational and ideological training**

As already mentioned, during the 20s both movements adopted the ideas socialist Zionism and became active in field of *Hehalutz*. I would like to adumbrate briefly the crucial organizational and ideological structure of both movements, their mutual convergences and divergences.

With respect to their set up goals and ideologies, we can find their organizational structures and educational materials almost analogical. The membership was divided to particular clusters according to age criteria; the youngest age group was about 10-12 years old, middle age group was 13-16 years old, and the oldest age group was between 16-17 years old; the members over 17 became usually active in *hanhaga-harashit* – the leadership.<sup>132</sup> According to the particular age clusters, an educational program was formulated; alongside the scout

<sup>130</sup> Interview of the author with Ctibor Rybár. Prague, January 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Ctibor Rybár, *Do půlnoci času dost. (By the midnight enough time)* (Praha: Akademia, 2008). p. 95.

<sup>132</sup> See Pavol Mešťan ed., *Hašomer Hacair - Dějiny hnutí (Hashomer Hatzair – History of the movement)* (Bratislava: SNM – Múzeum židovskej kultúry, 2001), 188; Nana Margol, “Educational Methods”, in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 144-155.

activities the education focused on Jewish history, the Hebrew language and the highest age-group had to undergo a special socialist-Zionist educational training. Based on the archival sources, we can say that the educational materials of both movements were similar; the leadership was dealing with dialectical materialism, with the works of Karl Marx, Karl Kautsky, Friedrich Engels, Max Adler, Otto Bauer; they studied Borochovism, history of Bolshevism etc;<sup>133</sup> these and other materials were an integral part of the curriculum for the inner cabinet of leadership determined for the leading positions. “*Learn the quotes from Marx or Kautsky, it was told to the youth socialists, and if you stay in front of the audience, nervous and perplexed, you can start with these. Those, who know the quotation will be surprised pleasantly, those who don't know it, they will prick up their ears. Meanwhile, you can get over the stage fright, and then you will be able to continue.*” This was an advice to Jakob Edelstein at leadership meeting of the Tchelet Lavan movement.<sup>134</sup>

Another form of interaction between both movements was enacted within the *Hehalutz* movement; as mentioned above, the majority of emigration applicants came from the Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair; since the 20s, both movements coordinated their training programme for emigration, which became the crucial sphere of mutual cooperation. Thus, the common training centres were joined by the Jewish youth from totally different social and religious milieus (see Mendelsohn's Jewish community types above); the encounters of the youth from different backgrounds and with different mentality led to numerous mutual clashes among the participants. The “western” Jews approached their “eastern” pioneer counterparts with disdain and contempt; for the “eastern” *halutzim*, the training camps often represented a mere “transfer station” for their social mobility – after the ending of the *hahsharah*, many of them pursued to settle in the Western part of the Republic. Thus, the mutual reluctance within

<sup>133</sup> Educational materials for the *Tzofim Bogrim*, ML, III-54A-437-1; CZA S5/2279.

<sup>134</sup> Bondyová, *Jakob Edelstein*, 30.

both movements was becoming more and more apparent.<sup>135</sup>

Since the middle of the 20s most of the training centres were relocated to the Eastern part of the Republic; due to the populous Jewish minority, there was a potential for new members of the Zionist movement. At the end of the 20s and in the following decade, the orientation of youth organizations on the emigration to Palestine became even more accentuated; the focus was put also on the socialist programme and *hehalutz* activities. Zionists stressed the unique role of the youth within the society that led to the revolt against their parents' generation. Through the various pamphlets, the Jewish youth was encouraged to emigrate to Palestine irrespective of their family bonds; these pamphlets called for the revolt of youth against their parents, abandonment of their social milieu and therefore the family life.<sup>136</sup>

Among the archival materials of the Tchelet Lavan movement, we can find documents about the selection of candidates for emigration including questionnaires about the qualities and abilities of the candidates, and their psychological profile. The questions focused on general information about the candidate as well as the private issues from the candidate's intimate life. Although the individual candidates had a chance to apply to a particular position within the working sector, the final choice was dependent on the psychological expertise and the reference from the leaders of a particular *ken*; this practice was legitimized by the “national interests”, i.e. by the building of national state in Palestine as a general goal of Zionism.<sup>137</sup>

Due to the coming war, the pioneer Zionist youth movements started to cooperate with other Zionist organizations in the field of illegal immigration. In the course of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia, approximately 5 500 Jews emigrated to Palestine; without any doubt the activities of *Hehalutz* had played a crucial role in this area, but as the historian Martin Wein pointed out: “Overall, *aliyah* never became a major element of Czechoslovak Jewish life,

<sup>135</sup> See Jelinek, “Jewish Youth in Carpatho-Rus.”

<sup>136</sup> YY, (1) 4.2.-2.

<sup>137</sup> ML, III-54A-437-2.

however, and *halutzim* remained a minority in the Zionist minority in the Jewish minority.”<sup>138</sup>

The Jewish nationalism never became a dominant ideology of the Czechoslovak Jews; the whole procedure of emigration policy, the long waiting lists and limited number of certificates seemed to be frustrating and demoralizing. Alongside these bureaucratic obstructions, the attendance of the *hahshara* programme caused many family difficulties; and thus, no wonder that the part of the Jewish Zionist youth saw their attendance of the Zionist movement in general and in the programme of summer *hahsharot* in particular, as a kind of activity hobby. The practical realization of the set up goals - the *hagshama atzmit* - were not necessarily identical with the life tasks of the Jewish Zionist youth. It was apparent even within the testimonies of the movement members; thus, for example the witness of the Tchelet Lavan movement Fritz Beer stated: “*Although the re-stratification and the emigration to Palestine in the role of an agricultural worker was the target of Tchelet Lavan, it did not mean anything to me at first. Czechoslovakia was my homeland and the world seemed to me to be untouched, as yet.*”<sup>139</sup> Beer originated from a German speaking bourgeois family; he also described his experiences from the *hahshara* training centre he participated at in 1928 nearby Opava. “*The first day of my introduction into the honorable task to transform a stony desert into the blooming garden was very encouraging. I collected garbage on a meadow after a summer fete. (...) After I quit it in the evening with a broken back, the meadow looked exactly the same as that morning. The next day I was taken to the field to hoe some beet. (...) It seemed easy for the seventeen year old keen reader to spud the dry soil by the gruber – as far as to the seventh beet. By the eighth one my back started to hurt, by the thirty-first I had blisters on my hands and after the forty-second one my knees were trembling. (...) I was finishing my row at the moment as the others were starting their third or fourth row. When they brought us milk*

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<sup>138</sup> Wein, “Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Palestino-Centrism and Landespolitik,” 18.

<sup>139</sup> Beer, ... *a tys na Němce střílel, dědo?*, 56.

*and bread for lunch I fell asleep with exhaustion. In the afternoon I was thinking about the desert in Palestine, and that every lousy painfully hoed beet was a stroke to the world anti-Semitism. It helped! - at least for the following quarter of an hour.”*<sup>140</sup> The memory of the *hahshara* of a former Hashomer Hatzair member is very similar, Ctibor Rybár said: “*I remember the great collective, entertainment and fun, and also aversion to manual labour – we had to work manually a lot in the hahshara. To wake up at 5 or 6 a.m. and go to work (...) I did not particularly like it!*”<sup>141</sup> None of these witnesses ever emigrated to Palestine.

#### **4.4. Zionism versus Communism**

On the Czechoslovak political scene, Zionism fought for the “souls” of the Jewish pioneer youth especially with the Communist movement, which lured (not only) the members of Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan into its ranks. The subject-matter - Jews and Communism – has come up several times along the course of this work, now I would like to pay a bit more attention to the issue.

Due to the ideological programme of the Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair the inclination of a part of the membership towards Communism was facilitated. As mentioned above, the pioneer Zionist youth organizations presented themselves as educational and scouting, pursuing to foster an interest in nature, to build up a prototype of the “new Jew”, proud of his Jewishness and devoted to the pioneer movement; this “new Jew” would be willing to fulfil socialist values and ideas of the equality of all human beings. The “borders” between the two ideologies – Zionism and Communism - were more permeable than it might seem at first sight.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 61-62.

<sup>141</sup> Interview of the author with Ctibor Rybár, Prague January 4, 2010.

The reflection of socialism (Communism) and Zionism within the ranks of youth movements should be perceived in the context of the identity crisis of the Czechoslovak Jews. From the point of view of the Jewish youth, Zionism may have been seen as an integral part of the general process of national liberation of the oppressed people of Europe. This phenomenon can be perceived within a wider context of transformation of religious values. *“In the case of the Jews, it is expressed in the aspirations of certain segments of the population, especially among the youth, to exchange the old traditionalist expectations of waiting for the Messiah for that of voluntaristic activism (...) This new approach meant replacing the Messianic traditionalist and religious principle with a secular one which also contains pseudo-Messianic elements as part of a national ideality of the Nation as collective redeemer.”*<sup>142</sup> It was a process of transformation from the traditional expectations of the Messiah to the application of one’s own will; a passive expectation turned into a political activism. This process altered traditional ways of identification in terms of collective as well as individual identification.

Some historians speak about similar quasi-Messianic elements even in the case of the Jewish identification with socialism and communism. Adam M. Weisberger considered Judaism to be one of the pivotal factors of revolutionary political thinking, which later became apparent within both socialist and Zionist movements.<sup>143</sup> We should beware these judgements and oversimplifications and try to avoid the essentialization of particular phenomena (Judaism). We should focus more on the process of transformation of political discourses and on the role of specific religious elements and motives within this process. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that Zionism as well as Communism offered a universal concept of group identity, both of the ideologies promised a new society based on universal equality; in particular states and

<sup>142</sup> Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization*, 1.

<sup>143</sup> Weisberger, *The Jewish Ethic and Spirit of Socialism*, 114.

territories, the lack of these values was strongly perceived by the young Jewish generation. Laurent Ruckers considers the clash of two ideologies – Communism and Socialist Zionism – as a product of the struggle for legitimacy of claims on the conception of universalism. The universalistic aspirations of Communism were expressed quite clearly. Zionism endeavoured to unify Jews in the Diaspora, struggling for creation of the new nation in Eretz Israel. “Zionism, as well as Communism, built up on the universalistic demands, creates new bonds between individuals and groups, which did not exist before, and encourages them to change their present identity in favour of a new fusion, which counteracts to the pre-existing particularism.”<sup>144</sup> The universalism of socialist Zionists and Communists pursued to create and activate (Jewish) working class for the benefit of their conception of new society. Whereas Communists create a new universal social order based on the equality of all human beings, the socialist Zionism seek to change the present social order and endeavoured to create a national state. Communism saw in Zionism a specific “*obsessional particularism*”, and provided the Jews with a new opportunity. Jews could assimilate themselves within the working class, and thus contribute and participate to the revolutionary struggle for liberation of mankind.<sup>145</sup>

#### 4.4.1. Communism in the “Jewish street”

Immediately after the end of the World War I, the Czechoslovak nationalism and social tension strengthened, which was accompanied by the formation of institutional structures of the emergent state. The problem of so-called German and Hungarian irredentism came out again, when the Germans and the Hungarians refused to express their loyalty to

<sup>144</sup> Laurent Rucker, *Stalin, Izrael a Židé*. (Stalin, Israel and Jews) (Rybka Publishers, Prague 2001), 18.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

Czechoslovakia. In the period of the postwar economical crisis and frustration the Communist Party began to shape. It was in this period, when a new putative enemy of the Czechoslovak nation was created – the Jew-Bolshevik.<sup>146</sup> “*The Jew Socialist*,” the “*Jew revolutionary element*” and “*the Jew banker and capitalist*” became depicted as a parasite on the Czech national body; and moreover, this figure was very often interconnected with the figures of the German or the Hungarian – traditional enemies of the Czechoslovak statehood. The mythologema of the so-called *Judeo-Bolshevism* was created to explain the success of the communists' propaganda effort among the Czech workers; *Judeo-Bolshevism* was depicted as an “infection” or a “disease” of manipulated masses; of those masses, which were under the influence of this foreign element. *Judeo-Bolshevism* became an instrument for legitimization of the politics of “national unity,” and also a tool for disintegration of the communist movement in Czechoslovakia. The myth of *Judeo-Bolshevism* was partially based on disproportional representation of Jews in the leading positions of Czech and other European radical socialist and communist parties and organizations. Nevertheless, we can't assert that this fact was the whole basis of the myth, it would be an improper simplification; we have to take into account the whole political and social situation of the Czech society.<sup>147</sup> Further, I would like to focus on the particular reasons of the Jewish youth for their inclination toward socialism/Communism, as well as some general social and political phenomena.

Beside the ideology as a merely false picture of the social reality reflecting through its specific point of view only a certain reality (and in this case playing with the theories of the world Jewish conspiracy); there was a lot of individuals and organized Jewish groups, which identified themselves with radical socialism and Communism in reality. Without any doubts,

<sup>146</sup> The mythologema of Judeo-Bolshevism was apparent especially in time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the Bavarian Soviet Republic.

<sup>147</sup> Vít Strobach, “Tělo, židovství, bolševismus a český nacionalismus (1918 – 1920)” (Body, Jewishness, Bolshevism and Czech nationalism 1918-1920) *Střed* (2/2010), 23–53.

the strongest Jewish leftist organization in Czechoslovakia was Poale Zion which was active even before World War I. After it restored its activities in the postwar period, it started to operate within the JNC. As the Czech historian Marie Crhová emphasized, prior to the Paris Peace Conference, Prague's Poale Zion was invited to the congress of Socialist Internationale, “ (...) where they met Czech comrades of the social democratic and national socialist party. This was the first time when the Zionists were recognized as representatives of a separate nation (...).”<sup>148</sup> After the War the Poale Zion supported the territorial claims of Czechoslovakia.

Although the Poale Zion proclaimed the class struggle against the Jewish bourgeoisie as well as other socialists: “(...) they had a common ground with the Zionists at that time, namely recognition of Jewish nationality, cultural autonomy, preservation of Jewish school system, grasping of the religious communities from the bourgeois hands and turning them into people's communities, establishment of technical schools to thwart the business-profile of the Jewish population in Diaspora.”<sup>149</sup> Based on this program Poale Zion was willing to cooperate with other parties of the JNC in Czechoslovakia.

While in Bohemia and Moravia Poale Zion asserted itself easily, in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia due to the traditional milieu, it became popular later on, as well as the Zionist movement in general. Nonetheless, in the beginning of the 20s the Czech Poale Zion Party underwent a crisis due to an inner dispute about affiliation to the Third International. The crisis culminated in a split of the party; the Jewish Communist Party had arose from one of its parts, led by its front activist Rudolf Kohn. Although the existence of the Jewish Communist Party did not last long, its activity was admirable, as it was apparent on their propaganda activities in Bohemia, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. The Party was

<sup>148</sup> Crhová, “Jewish Politics in Central Europe: the Case of the Jewish Party in Interwar Czechoslovakia,” 45.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

founded in spring 1921 but it was already in the autumn of that year when it integrated into the Communist Party. It was on the Merging congress of the communists' organizations in Czechoslovakia.

In apprehension of expansion of communism into the ranks of Zionist movements, the Zionists came up with a “leftist” Zionist alternative. A part of the Zionist youth became interested in the political program of *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialistischer Zionisten* (A.G.S.Z.) which originated from the *Hitahdut* movement<sup>150</sup> and that profiled as a quasi-party similar to the popular Poale Zion.<sup>151</sup> Within the A.G.S.Z. the front members of both youth pioneer organizations were active – let us mention for example Haim Hoffmann (Yahil), Jakob Edelstein, Oskar Karpe, Hanz Lichtwitz, Chaim Kugel et al.<sup>152</sup> The foundation of A.G.S.Z. proved to be an appropriate alternative to the part of the membership of the Jewish Zionist youth who in fact never intended to emigrate to Palestine for various reasons, and who considered the Zionist-political activities in Czechoslovakia to be meaningful.<sup>153</sup> As we will see further, this “alternative ideological proposition” of Zionists was only partially successful, the pioneer Jewish youth was still leaving the ranks of Zionism the behalf of Communism.

The Czechoslovak Communist Party was founded on the Merging congress at the turn of October and November 1921 under the pressure of the Communist International. At the Merging congress the leader of the Jewish Communist Party Rudolf Kohn gave a critical speech about Palestine and the Zionist movement in general. During his speech, Kohn spoke about the exploitation of all the proletariat including the Jewish one by the dangerous Jewish capitalists who pursue “(...) *to build up capitalistic state in Palestine and set up there an oasis*

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<sup>150</sup> See Rabinowicz, “Czechoslovak Zionism: Analecta to a History,” 55-64; 69-87.

<sup>151</sup> In 1928 within the Poale Zion Party the Jewish socialist youth movement was founded where the majority of Tchelet Lavan members participated. See Yehuda Manor, “Foundation of JSY and its unification with Tchelet Lavan” in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 129-130.

<sup>152</sup> Rabinowicz, “Czechoslovak Zionism: Analecta to a History,” 69-76.

<sup>153</sup> Hanan Cohen, “Tchelet Lavan in Years 1926-1930,” in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 58-60.

of the Jewish capital.”<sup>154</sup> “Our primary task is (...) to lead there a revolutionary class struggle against imperialist Jewish-capitalist powers that cooperate with the English imperialism (...).”<sup>155</sup>

Kohn's presentation was the last time when a spokesman of a particular Jewish (national) organization gave a speech within the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Surprisingly (and somewhat hazy), Kohn classified the Jews to be one of the *national* components of the Czechoslovak state. Simultaneously, Kohn urged the Communist Party to recognize the Jews to be a particular nation; thus the Communists should redress the reluctant position of social democracy toward the Jewish question and their attitude to antisemitism.<sup>156</sup> At the official level, the Czechoslovak Communist Party partially satisfied the request when the Jews were stated on the list of the nationalities that cooperated on the foundation of the Czechoslovak Communist movement.<sup>157</sup>

Kohn also stressed the foundation of the Jewish Communist Section (Evseksiya) of the Soviet Communist Party and appealed to the foundation of a similar section within the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Among the conditions requested by Kohn on the congress was: “(...) *the International recognizes particular conditions of the Jewish proletariat (...) it recognizes the peculiar movement of the Jewish proletariat (...) and obliged to the communists' parties (...) to constitute a special institution for this issue (...).*”<sup>158</sup> The Communist International was supposed to approve autonomous (Jewish) national politics in those areas where the Jewish inhabitants constitute a majority (a mass), and thus, where the

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<sup>154</sup> Miroslav Čihák and Renata Wohlgemuthová eds., *Protokoly ustavujícího a slučovacího sjezdu KSČ, 14.-16. května 1921; 30. října-2.listopadu 1921.* (Protocols of constitutive and merging congress of KSČ, May 14-16 1921, October 30-November 2, 1921) (Svoboda: Praha, 1981), 101. See also Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad „rudou asimilací,” 113.

<sup>155</sup> Čihák and Wohlgemuthová eds., *Protokoly ustavujícího a slučovacího sjezdu KSČ*, 100-101.

<sup>156</sup> Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad „rudou asimilací,” 114.

<sup>157</sup> Čihák and Wohlgemuthová eds., *Protokoly ustavujícího a slučovacího sjezdu KSČ*, 273-274.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 270.

activities of the communists' agitators will be more effective – Kohn was referring to Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia.<sup>159</sup>

In the end, with respect to the politics of the Third International, the Jewish Communist Party relinquished its program. Thus, the Jewish Communist Party of Czechoslovakia definitely refused the program of colonization of Palestine on the Merging congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; and from that time on a special focus was put on the campaign among the Arab and Jewish proletariat and revolution struggle of all workers in Palestine. Finally, even the negotiations about the acceptance of the particular Jewish Communist Party as the legitimate member of the Comintern was rejected in 1922. The issue of existence of particular Jewish communist organizations (Jewish sections) was dependent upon the conditions set up by the Communists' mother cells of the individual states. After the acceptance of the 21 conditions of the Comintern even the Czechoslovak Communist Party became a centralized party, with unified leadership and party institutions. And it was the Jewish Communist Party that together with other factions advocated this centralized model of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

Resulting from the aforementioned, the Jewish membership of the Communist Party came from the Marxist's Poale Zion - or the Jewish Communist Party above all; but the membership reservoir was much broader. Alongside the members of these parties, there were many non-Zionist Jews who joined the Communist movement – these came from the ranks of former Czech and German social democrats, from The Association of the Czech Marxists' Students (*Marxistické sdružení studentů českých*), or from The Free Association of Socialist Academics (*Volné sdružení socialistických akademiků*) etc. During the 20s and 30s a considerable number of foreign students applied to the Czech and German universities due to the *numerus*

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<sup>159</sup> Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad „rudou asimilací,“ 114.

*clausus* at their home universities – it was also among these students where the membership of the Communist Party began to shape. Also at the beginning of 20s the so-called Progressive Group (*Progresivní skupina*) was found merging above all the Eastern European Jewish students. The Progressive Group was affected by the radical socialism, and according to some witnesses it achieved a considerable success in the political struggle with Zionism on academic grounds. The organization took control over some of the Jewish academic institutions, and later on became a part of the so-called *Kostufura (Komunistická studentská frakce – The Communist Students Fraction)* and the Communist Party.<sup>160</sup>

The affiliation of the organizations and groups mentioned above to Communism could be contextualized with the protest against contemporary Czech and German chauvinism, which was apparent especially in universities. As well as in the case of Zionism, the affiliation with Communism should have been perceived as generational protest against the bourgeois lifestyle of parental generation, and as a particular manifestation of the revolt against the social inequality and injustice. One of the witnesses of the Progressive Group and a former prominent member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Stanislav Budín reminisces on his decision making about the affiliation to a particular social movement: “*We longed for love based on a close friendship, based on common work for the benefit of mankind – but we could not agree on the fact, whether it will be the common work on the building of the Jewish state in Palestine, or the common work somewhere else in the world on the formation of the equal socialist society.*”<sup>161</sup>

All of the groups mentioned above represented the source of the communist elites – these organizations became a source of the communistic educated leadership, functionaries, bureaucrats, ideologists and journalists of the Communist party.

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<sup>160</sup> See Stanislav Budín, *Jak to vlastně bylo (How it was in fact)* (Prague: Torst, 2007), 51-68.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 33.

#### 4.4.2. Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair – a reflection of Communism

In the course of the 30s, Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavana faced up to the mass leaving of their members to the Communist Party. It came to light that in some cases a dual membership existed (i.e. in the Zionist organization as well as in the Communist Party). The leadership of both Zionist movements came up against anti-Zionist campaign of the Communist Party, and organized “communist-hunting” actions within their ranks. Unfortunately, we don't have enough archival materials and official evidence about the issue of the so-called “red assimilation” and its solution within the Tchelet Lavan movement; in this respect, the most valuable source represents the book “*Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*” containing the memoirs of the movement's members. Amos Sinai remembered the movement's brochure from 1933 “*Hadracha nad Organization,*” which was published exclusively for the leadership of the movement dealing with the defence against the red assimilation and the consequences of the strong impact of the Communist ideology on the movement and its membership.<sup>162</sup>

The issue of Communism was strongly reflected within both of the pioneer Zionist youth organizations. The wide range of both movements' members recall “the struggle with a false Messiah in the form of Communism” within its ranks. “*In those days, several ideological struggles were taking place, (...). The struggle with Communism was the most difficult of all. Up till then, the Socialism of our youth Movement was based solely on the desire for social justice. It was mainly Utopian or Reformistic Socialism, which we attained by a deep analysis of the situation of the Jews in Diaspora. We took a stand against „Red Assimilation.*”<sup>163</sup>

Another former movement member of Tchelet Lavan Pinda Shefa remembers: “(...) *I must*

<sup>162</sup> Amos Sinai, “In the Face of a Changing World,” in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 87-129. The author's essay is based on the archival materials of the movement.

<sup>163</sup> Uri Nahari, “Everyone's Friend (In memory of Krebsch (Karl Liebstein – Eliahu Livneh 1902-1963),” in *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan*, ed. Amos Sinai et al., 77-78.

mention the bitter and stubborn battles over ideology and politics that were waged, particularly with the Jewish Communists, who split off from the Halutzic-Zionist Movement, as they could not see their way to fulfilling its aim.”<sup>164</sup> Although we don't have any statistical data on the mass leaving of the Jewish Zionist youth on behalf of the Communist Party, based on some testimonies and few archival material we can say that this phenomenon became a serious problem which affected also the *Hehalutz* movement.<sup>165</sup>

In the post-war period the Jewish youth reflected the so-called “*twofold revolution*” - as mentioned by the former member of the Hashomer movement “*After the foundation of USSR the youth generation stood in front of the challenge to build up a new world. In the humiliating atmosphere of the Diaspora, the Balfour Declaration filled up the Jewish hearts with the hope to realize a two thousand year old dream and to achieve a national autonomy in the land of the ancestors. The heroic building-up of the USSR on the one hand, and the heroic legends of Hashomer (...) on the other hand, invoked enthusiasm in the hearts of the young Jews in Central Europe (...).*”<sup>166</sup>

The former member of Tchelet Lavan Fritz Beer was one of those members who abandoned Zionism, he was 18 years old when he joined the Communist movement. “*They had a clear, and as they told me, a scientific solution for all questions, from the substance of essence to the Gypsy question (the communists – D.B.). Anti-Semitism? It will be defeated by the class struggle. A feud between Czechs and Germans? The trick of bourgeoisie pursuing to hinder the common class front. An unhappy love? It doesn't exist in the classless society. (...)* “*In the international proletariat solidarity you will find more dearly brotherhood than among yours*

<sup>164</sup> Pinda Shefa, “The Prague Gdud in the Twenties,” in *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>165</sup> The issue is mentioned in testimonies by Fritz Beer, Stanislav Budín, Richard Karpe, Uri Nahari, Pinda Shefa, Akiva Nir, Ctibor Rybár, Amos Sinai, Štefanie Lorándová etc. Alongside it, we can find various pamphlets of both movements dealing with the issue (YY, (1) 4.2.-2.; ML III-54A-437-4), and secondary literature – see Angelika Jensen, Margalit Elcana, Ješajahu Jelinek etc.

<sup>166</sup> Jaakov Ronen, “Kibuce Hašomer Hacairu v ČSR sa pripravujú,” in *Hašomer Hacair - Dějiny hnutia*, ed. Pavol Mešťan, 40.

*Blue-Whites” one of them told me. He could not suspect how deeply he hit me. If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Soon after that I joined the Communist Party.”*<sup>167</sup> Based on Beer's description, we can regard a wide scale of issues the young man was dealing with; these issues were articulated and solved by the specific language of Zionism as well as Communism in an endeavour to attract the youth into its' ranks.

Throughout the existence of both movements, they had to face a decrease of their membership because of the “red assimilation” phenomenon at least twice; it was apparent especially in the post-war period and the situation repeated in the 30s again. Among the best known representatives of Tchelet Lavan who left the movement for the sake of Communism, were Rudolf Slánský, Bedřich Geminder, and Otto Schling. From Hashomer Hatzair we can mention e.g. Eduard Goldstücker, or Ctibor Rybár. According to some statements and pieces of evidence, the movements were infiltrated by Communists who pursued to lure the youth away from Zionism and thus to disintegrate the particular Zionist organizations.<sup>168</sup>

At the end of the 20s both movements underwent a difficult test; an uneasy situation in Palestine, the British politics there and the economic crisis led to the deflection from Zionist movement. An important role enacted a development in the USSR which had a significant impact on the particular sections of the Communist parties. At that time, due to the inner development in the Soviet Union the position of the Communist Party to Zionism deteriorated. With respect to the situation in Palestine, Zionism was labelled as a specific politics of British imperialism and a counter-revolutionary movement. Since the Stalinist centralized model of control became enforcing in the Soviet Union, the persecution of (quasi)independent organizations and movements, religious communities (including the

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<sup>167</sup> Beer, ...*a tys na Němce střílel, dědo?*, 73.

<sup>168</sup> See Angelika Jensen, *Sei stark und mutig! Chasak we'emaz! 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung „Haschomer Hazair“ 1903 bis 1943* (Vienna, 1995).

Jewish communities), national organizations (including the Zionist organization) and Hebrew culture became apparent.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union succeeded in keeping (at least a partial) support from the Western Jewish public; alongside with the continuing struggle against anti-Semitism, the projects of autonomous Jewish territories were developing. It became apparent gradually, that these factors played the role of propaganda only. The most important and most widely known project of an autonomous Jewish territory was Birobidjan, which should have achieved a status of autonomous republic. “(...) *the goal of the Autonomous Jewish territory and the promised republic was to demonstrate that the real answer to the Jewish question was not Zionism, “but the communist building-up of the real Jewish socialist culture.” The Birobidjan should have been the country of the Jewish proletariat, the same was that the USSR was the country of the world proletariat; in hidden meaning it said that Palestine is not the real country of the Jewish proletariat.*”<sup>169</sup>

Since the end of the 20s the process of Bolshevization and Stalinization had started in the USSR due to the intraparty controversy.<sup>170</sup> The Czechoslovak Communists Party as an integral part of the Third International reflected the situation in the Soviet Union and beside the anti-Zionist propaganda began to promote the plan of Birobidjan. The programme resounded especially in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. For the Eastern Jewry “(...) *Zionism served first and foremost as a means of escape and only later as a path toward national renewal.*” “*The outbreak of anti-Jewish riots in Palestine, which led Carpatho-Rus’ Jews to take more pessimistic view towards aliyah, marked a turning point for the Communists. Their aggressive*

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<sup>169</sup> Laurent Rucker, *Stalin, Izrael a Židé*, 32.

The plans of foundation of Birobidjan were set up in 1923, the project itself was introduced at 1928.

<sup>170</sup> See Pavel Marek, “Komunistická strana Československa“ (The Czechoslovak Communist Party), in *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861-2004*, eds. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek et al. (I. díl. Brno: Doplněk, 2005), 711-746.

*campaign to persuade Jews to settle in Birobidzahn (USSR) was very positively received.*<sup>171</sup>

In the 30s, all around Czechoslovakia the particular branches of The Society of the Birobidjan friends (*Společnost přátel Birobidžanu*) were founded – among other places they were in Prague, Brno, Svalava, and Uzhgorod; a few hundred of Jews moved to the Soviet Union.<sup>172</sup>

The Birobidjan project affected even the Western intellectual environment. We can perceive its success in the West as a consequence of the growing antisemitism and Nazism.

According to Akiva Nir, one of the former members of Hashome Hatzair, at that time, the most discussed books reflecting the political contest among the membership were *Untergang des Judentums* by the Communist Otto Heller and *Palestina-Birobidschan: das Ende einer Illusion* by the Zionist Jicchak Ronkin.<sup>173</sup> Both sides published various propaganda materials including theoretical and fiction tomes; according to Akiva Nir the success of Birobidjan project among the Eastern Jewry might have been caused by the strong antisemitism in the area (Nir also mentioned a typical example of anti-Semitic excess in this region – it was a suggestion of parliamentary Karol Sidor in 1937 to relocate all Jewish inhabitants to Birobidjan).

Judging by the testimonies of the movement's members, at that time, both movements had to revise their attitude toward the concept of socialism in general. *“On the one hand, there was the revolutionary and dictatorial approach developed in Soviet Communism, while on the other, there was a democratic and reformistic Socialism.”*<sup>174</sup> At the same time, the movement's leadership focused on an ideal concept of socialist Zionism. As Sinai pointed out, the movement had to re-evaluate its hitherto existing concept of socialist Zionism, and perhaps due to the successful activities of Betar, focused on the programme of defence of the Jewish

<sup>171</sup> Jelinek, “Jewish Youth in Carpatho-Rus’: Between Hope and Despair (1920-1938),” 155.

<sup>172</sup> See Strobach, “Zamyšlení nad „rudou asimilací,” 135-6.; Jelinek, “Jewish Youth in Carpatho-Rus,” 155.

<sup>173</sup> Nir, “Sionistická organizácia, mládežnícké hnutia a emigrácia do Palestíny v rokoch 1918-1945,” 27-43.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 112.

settlements in Palestine. A part of the Tchelet Lavan membership started to incline toward the *Hagana* organization. Alongside the old-new emphasis on the concept of the shaping of the new society, equality etc., it became apparent that Zionists pursued to delimitate borders between the goals of socialist and Communist ideologies. Simultaneously, they pursued to partially militarize the Zionist youth groups and promote the model of the so-called authoritative socialism.

Similar controversies about the phenomenon of the “red assimilation” were apparent within the Hashomer Hatzair too; at that time many circulars dealing with the issue of struggle with Communism were published. Various circulars were dealing with the ideological differences between the movement's ideology and Communists ideology, *“Although we follow the same social goal, we differed from Communism in the three points; first one is the implementation of the new order, the second one is the colonial politics, and the third one is the solution of the Jewish question. (...) The Jews themselves delimited (...) the Jewish question as a national-economical problem. Jewish schools, and the revolution are not everything. The state has to take care of the re-stratification of the Jews. We don't see that the Russian state has taken care of the re-stratification of the Jews, because the Jews were disadvantaged by the revolution, and excluded from economical positions”*.<sup>175</sup>

Alongside the phenomenon of the masses leaving of the movements for the sake of Communism in the 30s, the movements had to face up to yet another problem. Judging from other pamphlets, at that time the Zionist movement in general was undergoing a crisis, which was caused by the unfavourable British politics in Palestine and closing the borders; due to these phenomena a part of the Zionist pioneer youth began to incline to the Revisionist wing. (Moreover, in the 30s the Zionist Revisionist were quite successful in the organizing of illegal emigration to Palestine.) Although the Revisionists represented a serious competitor to both of

<sup>175</sup> YY, (1) 4.2.-2. (Michtav hasbara, č. 3, My v Erecu)

the pioneer organizations, the pioneer Zionists did not pay that much attention to this issue as to the issue of Communism. Perhaps a decrease of membership for the sake of another Zionist organization seemed to be more acceptable, than the inclination of their comrades to Communism. Overall, the Revisionist organization was still perceived as an integral part of the one national unit; thus, we can perceive this phenomenon as a part of the nationalistic radicalization of the movements, or at least their leadership, which defined itself against the Communist threat.

At that time, the pamphlets dealing with the “communist question” were not rare; their rhetoric reflects a deep depression resulting from the unexpected success of Communism within the ranks of the movement: *“How come our movement in Slovakia succumbed to the particular influence, as well as the wider masses? As a youth movement, we should have learned the elements of revolutionism (...) People, who even two months before joining the movement were not Marxists, and two months later preached Communists phrases. People, who don't have the courage to come and say: “these are our doubts – answer that!” It is a miserable defection! (...) In our point of view, the fact that for some people Communism represents merely a way back to the bourgeois life is above all clear; it has made from Communism a reactionary movement!”*<sup>176</sup>

Unfortunately, we can only speculate about the number of members who joined the Communist ranks in the course of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia. In this respect, there is a serious lack of statistics; based on the archival materials, circulars, and testimonies we can assume that this phenomenon was really across-the-board. At the very end, let me notice a small curiosity: *“Even in the depth of their Stalinist infatuation in the 1950s, Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim celebrated Passover with haggadot in which odes to Stalin, „who pulled us*

<sup>176</sup> Nespapers of Galil solel, XI/1931, roč. II., č. I. Str. 2. YY, (1) 4.2.-2.

*out from the house of slavery“ , alternated with rites of spring associated with Passover- all in the eclectic nature of the traditional haggadah.”<sup>177</sup>*

We should look upon the penetration of Communism among the Jewish minority in the Eastern part of the Republic in the context of socio-economical development and disintegration of traditional structures tied with orthodox communities and rabbinical authorities. The inclination toward Zionist movement might be seen as a chance for the Jewish youth to abandon the traditional social milieu, rather than it represented an attractive ideology for the Jews. The Zionists lured the Jews using the emigration to the “Promised Land”; while the Communists pursued to discredit Zionism by the assertion that Zionism is an integral part of bourgeois ideology, and they made a counterproposal in form of a socially equal world.

In the Western part of Czechoslovakia the inclination of the Jews toward Zionism and Communism should be perceived in connection with the identity crisis of the Jews, which was even strengthened by the Czech-German antagonism. This became a more serious problem than the disintegration of traditional religious and communities structures. A period of national conflicts in the emergent Republic might have had a positive impact on the Zionist movement, when a part of Czechoslovak Jews identified themselves with the Zionism instead of the German or Czech nationality/identity. The same could be said about the inclination of the Jews toward Communism. In contrast to the Eastern Jewry the Bohemian Jews did not have to solve their economical situation; the ideas of “Promised Land” and the “class struggle” represented the recognition of equal rights and an alternative identity strategy.

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<sup>177</sup> Shlomo Avineri, “Zionism and the Jewish Religious Tradition,” in *Zionism and religion*, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (Published Hanover, NH : University Press of New England, 1998), 6.

## 5. Conclusion

I attempted to provide an insight into the problem of Jewish identity strategies in the period of the fin de siècle Bohemia and the First Czechoslovak Republic. Using the case study of the Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelel Lavan I attempted to prove that in the process of identity formation Jews could have reflected social contacts and social and geographical mobility in their decisions. In addition, in process of identity-shaping of each individual we have to take into account subjective feelings as well as the power and political aspects and a specific narrative, which mediates the particular collective identity.

The process of modernization, societal changes and the development of nationalism gave rise to the various youth movements and organizations. I tried to contextualize the general patterns of youth (the Jewish youth organizations in particular) with the social and political phenomena, such as the crisis of liberal values and perpetual antisemitic excesses in the fin de siècle Bohemia. Thus we can see the emergence of the Jewish youth movements as a reaction to the identity crisis, which the Jews in the Czech Lands experienced since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as an effort to shape one's own identity on the one hand, and the collective identity of the Jewish nation on the other. The inclination of Jews toward socialist Zionism or socialism could be seen as a result of their identity crises.

I tried to outline some crucial milestones in the development of both movements. The so-called twofold revolution - the Balfour Declaration and the Russian Revolution - had a significant impact on the ideological development and political orientation and activities of Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair. Both events promised the radical solution of the “Jewish question.” Socialism represented a bearer of universal human rights and equality; in

the case of Zionism, the building of a national state and emigration stood in the center of its policy. If we look back to the Zionist movements' activities in the inter-war Czechoslovakia, we realize that *aliyah* never became the relevant solution for the majority of the Czechoslovak Zionists and remained on the periphery of their action strategies. In spite of this, the *Hehalutz* activities had a significant impact on the Jewish pioneer youth. The *Hehalutz* movement in general and Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair in particular became agents of practical realization of Zionist ideas. The significant importance of the Jewish pioneer youth lied in their ability to combine *Landespolitic* with Palestino-centrism.

The feeling of uprootedness of the young Jewish generation of all classes, the traditional/bourgeois lifestyle of their parents' generation was replaced with Zionist ideas or anti-religious Socialism. The individuals were looking for social equality, self-realization, and fulfillment of ideological conceptions, which were inculcated within Socialist Zionism as well as radical Socialism/Communism. The alternation of socialist Zionist and Communist identities could be seen as a consequence of interchangeable narratives of their ideologies. Although the detailed analysis of these narratives might prove that correlation and common denominators of socialist Zionism and Communism represent a very controversial phenomena, both ideologies are bearers of particular common contents. While during crises these ideologies confronted each other, they both attempted to solve difficult life situations of the same social group.

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