

Daniela Bartáková

Body, Sex, and Building the “New Hebrew Man”: The Jewish Pioneer Youth in Interwar Czechoslovakia

Jewish pioneer youth in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Introduction

The paper will focus on the activities of two Jewish pioneer Zionist youth movements in interwar Czechoslovakia: Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair. Based on the statute of the movement, Tchelet Lavan initially emerged as a Jewish scouting movement, apolitical, orienting itself to nature and scouting.¹ While the origin of the Tchelet Lavan movement lies in the German movement Wandervogel and their eponymous organization Blau-Weiss, which aimed to shake off the restrictions of the traditional bourgeois life of the German-speaking Jewish youth and to bring them back to nature,² the Hashomer Hatzair originated in Poland in 1913 as Hashomer and merged with the Austro-Hungarian Jewish students organization Tzeirei Zion in 1917. The movement gradually became anchored in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, where it was established as an amalgam of Zionists Hashomer and Kadimah movements.³

Even if Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair both operated within Czechoslovakia, their members came from different geographical areas and social milieus. While members of Tchelet Lavan mainly stemmed from middle-class and well-assimilated families of the German-speaking territories of Bohemia and Moravia, in contrast Hashomer Hatzair members were from traditional Jewish families of the

1 Prague City Archives, Prague (PCA), SK XIV/595: Tchelet Lavan, 1923–1941; 620. Statute.

2 See Karpe, Richard: The beginnings 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*. Edited by A. Sinai, G. Amir and N. Margol. Israel 1996. pp. 16–22; Kasperová, Dana and Tomáš Kasper: *Německá mládežnická hnutí a spolky mládeže v ČSR v letech 1918–1933* [German Youth Movements and Organizations in CSR in 1918–1933]. Praha 2016. pp. 48–90.

3 See Mešťan, Pavol (ed.): *Hašomer Hatzair – Dejiny hnutia* [Hashomer Hatzair – History of the Movement]. Bratislava 2001; Jensen, Angelika: *Sei stark und mutig! Chasak we' emaz! 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung “Hashomer Hatzair” 1903 bis 1943*. Wien 1995; Bartáková, Daniela: *Comparative Study of Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair in Czechoslovakia*. MA Thesis. Budapest 2011. [https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2011/bartakova_daniela.pdf].

eastern part of Czechoslovakia. In the second mid of the 1920s, both movements divided their sphere of activities by a territorial agreement. Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia became the sphere of activity of Hashomer Hatzair while Tchelet Lavan operated in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Both movements encountered in the field of Hechalutz and cooperated especially when organizing shared agricultural training centers (hachsharot).⁴

Both movements strengthened Zionism and its Palestinocentric policy during the First World War, and it was in the 1920s that the radical concept of socialist Zionism was adopted. In the framework of the Zionist movement, the Jewish pioneer youth did not develop a new political program. "The uniqueness of the youth movements did not express itself in new ideological abstractions but in the realization of the national and social aims formulated by the Zionist and Socialist Zionist ideologies."⁵ Alongside its scouting activities and focus on nature, the pioneer Jewish youth struggled to change various aspects of the everyday and cultural life of Jewish society and collective and individual identity. It focused on the practical realization of the goals set, and on fulfilling the conception already proposed. The uniqueness of these movements lay especially in their activism. The Jewish youth demonstrated its negative attitude towards the Zionist leadership's inactivity, and a rejection of its orthodox grandparents' generation, and of the Zionist parents' generation and their inertia. The pivotal task of the movements' philosophy was the concept of self-sacrifice. Pioneers were supposed to be ready to give up all social and material comforts, and they should prepare themselves for a new Jewish community life in Palestine. In memoirs of one of the Tchelet Lavan members, Fritz Beer, we can read: "The aim was 'reform of life', a revolt against bourgeoisie, chauvinism, hypocrisy, against the alienation of nature – we were united in our resistance against the materialistic values of life."⁶

Zionist youth thus attempted to transform the existing concept of Jewish life in the Diaspora. This was to be achieved through the realization of national and social goals. Alongside scouting activities, the Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair gradually focused on aliyah, a hachshara program, the conception of hagshama atzmit (self-realization through physical work), and kibbutz formation – i. e., the princi-

4 Cohen, H.: Tchelet Lavan in the years 1935–1939. In: *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan. The History of the Youth Movement Tchelet Lavan – El-Al Netzach in Czechoslovakia*. Edited by A. Sinai, G. Amir and N. Margol. Israel 1996. p. 58.

5 Oppenheim, Israel: *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization: The Zionist Youth Movement in Poland*. Boulder 1989.

6 Beer, Fritz: ...a tys na Němce střlel, dědo? [Did You Shoot at Germans, Grandpa?]. Praha 2008. p. 55.

ples that correlated with the idea of Palestinocentrism.⁷ A strong emphasis was placed on non-exploitative agricultural and physical labor, self-defense and self-reliance within both movements. And last but not least, an integral part of shaping the new collective identity was via orientation to Jewish culture and an invention of Modern Hebrew.

In this paper, I will analyze some didactic and educational materials of both movements, considering how they implemented an ideological program to fulfill the goals set by pioneer youth movements. And last but not least, the issue of the role and status of women in the documents of the movements will be discussed.

The crucial documents used in this article are from the archives of Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk, and consist of the didactical material *Chinuchejnu* from October 1939, reflecting various educational documents from the period 1914–1939.⁸

Implementation of an ideological program

As mentioned above, the Jewish pioneer youth's activities revolved primarily around scouting. After the First World War and especially during the 1920s, activities focused on the *hachshara* training centers and leaving for Palestine – *aliyah*. In this field the cooperation between Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan started and flourished. The Jewish youth learned about various fields of Zionism: the cultural Zionism of Ahad HaAm, political Zionism of Theodor Herzl, the philosopher Martin Buber, and especially about Socialist Zionism, including the teachings of leading Socialist Zionist ideologists Ber Borochov and his reversed pyramid, Joseph Trumpeldor, Aron David Gordon, and Nachman Syrkin among others.⁹ Practical re-

7 Wein, Martin: Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Palestinocentrism and Landespolitik. In: *Judaica Bohemiae* XLIV1 (2009). pp. 5–47; Mintz, Matityahu: Work for the Land of Israel and ‘Work in the Present’: A Concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradiction. In: *Essential Papers on Zionism*. Edited by Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira. New York 1996. pp. 161–170.

8 I would like to thank Ms. Jitka Radkovičová, who conducted research and oral history interviews with former members of Jewish pioneer youth movements; she kindly provided me with the documents from Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk.

The article consists of parts of the unpublished manuscript of my PhD thesis *Židovská pionýrská mládež v meziválečném Československu mezi sionismem a komunismem – budování vyvoleného těla* [Jewish Pioneer Youth in Interwar Czechoslovakia between Zionism and Communism – the Building of Chosen Body]. Olomouc 2020.

9 See Borochov, Ber: The national Question and the Class Struggle. In: *The Zionist Idea: a historical analysis and reader*. Edited by Arthur Hertzberg. Philadelphia 1997. pp. 352–366, here p. 356; Avi-

alization of the goals of Socialist Zionism, *hagshama* and the focus on the individual and his/her development became a crucial issue with regard to the development of the Jewish nation as a whole. As such, there was an emphasis on the role of the individual within a community, and the community itself. Didactic materials were well systematized and prepared accordingly. To implement the ideological program most effectively, a new system of self-criticism of movements' members – *sikumim* – was introduced. The specific objectives were divided into sub-segments. The youth were the "implementers" of these objectives. These sub-segments included: hygiene, order and tidiness; the aesthetic appearance of members; the aesthetics of the club room or camp; politeness towards leaders, strangers, parents; independence, etc. Other sub-segments were improvement of Modern Hebrew, *zofit* (hebr. scouting activities), quality of bulletins, knowledge competitions (in the field of biology, history, sociology, psychology), and *atzmaut* (hebr. independence) of individuals and the whole group.¹⁰ All the activities were adapted to particular age groups, whose leaders were responsible for the results achieved and thus subjected to regular criticism. This criticism was intended to bring about improvement and uplift the whole group. This *sikumim* involved carefully recording the successes and failures of specific groups at regular intervals. Results were collected and reported using statistics, which were of great importance within youth organizations and across the entire Zionist movement.¹¹

The *moatza* (hebr. central institution/council) was responsible for the ideological content and educational materials of particular movement units – nests (*gdud*) and groups (*kvutza*). It was the *moatza* where statistical data from respective nests and groups were gathered and surveys of movement members organized. These surveys included information about family members, their education, the family's financial situation, school activities, or movement members' housing situation. Although participation in these surveys was voluntary, failure to take the survey was supposed to be recorded in members' personal records. Such practices were essential for the movements, especially with regard to national interests, such as when it came to selecting candidates to leave for Palestine.¹² Both movements were open to a younger generation (*bnei midbar*). In contrast to the older groups, their educa-

neri, Shlomo: *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*. New York 2017. pp. 147–158.

10 Pergericht: *Sikumim – resumovanie* [Self-criticism]. In: *Chinuchejnu*, 1914 –1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 24, preserved in: Archives of Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk, Kfar Masaryk (KM).

11 Pergericht, *Sikumim*, p. 24; For the role of statistics in Zionist movement in general, see Bloom, Etan: *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*. Boston 2011.

12 Kalif: *Výchova k samostatnosti* [Education for independence]. In: *Chinuchejnu*, 1914 –1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 29, preserved in: KM

tional, ideological program mainly took the form of children friendly games and fairytales. The central pillar of both movements was youth between 13 and 17 years of age. They were educated at a more scientific level.¹³ Teaching and various activities were adapted to this specific age of social and sexual maturity. Emphasis was placed on the psychological changes that members were undergoing. The youths received lectures in national and collectivistic education, Zionism (mostly Socialist Zionism), the history of the Jewish nation, Modern Hebrew, and the concept of new human in form of the new Hebrew Man. Movement members got acquainted with works by Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer, Ber Borochov, Moses Hess, Zionist leaders like Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, and many others, and few Jewish historians, e.g., Simon Dubnov. The youths' education at this age was intended to establish a romantic connection with Eretz Israel, and more specifically with the concept of *kibbutzim*. It was a set of social attitudes, nationalism, and a collectivistic way of life. These attitudes also encompassed sexual education and the emancipation of girls, as often mentioned in didactic materials.

Body and sex

Body and sex – a detailed medical examination and analysis of both – is apparent in both movements' educational materials, with a focus on their legalization and normalization for the Zionist movement's needs. It was not just the acceptance of Nordau's construction of “New Hebrew” and the associated acceptance of the negative stereotype of the diasporic Jew, degenerated, neurotic, and sexually paralyzed. In addition to Max Nordau and his book *Degeneration*¹⁴, the youths became acquainted with Hans Blüher, Maurice Fishberg, or Magnus Hirschfeld who himself gave several lectures to the Jewish youth in Tchelet Lavan kvutzot in Palestine.¹⁵

13 Rabinov, Baruch: Systém Bné Midbar [System of Bnei Midbar]. In: Chinuchejnu, 1914–1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 43, preserved in: KM; Margol, Nanne: Educational Methods. In: Sinai, Rhapsody, p. 146.

14 Nordau, Max: *Entartung*. 2 volumes. Berlin 1892 and 1893.

15 On the conception of the “New Hebrew” and shaping an individual as well as national body see Nordau, Max: *Degeneration*. New York 1905; Stanislawski, Mitchel: *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle – Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky*. Berkeley 2001; Presner, Todd S.: *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*. London 2007; Mosse, George L.: *The Image of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford 1988; Biale, David: *Eros and the Jews – From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America*. London 1997; Bloom, Arthur Ruppin; Weiss, Meira: *The Chosen Body. The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society*. Stanford 2002.

As David Biale stresses, in order to understand sexual relationships and experiences of the Jewish pioneers, “[...] we need first to look at their ideologies, which contained a contradictory mix of hostility to both traditional and bourgeois marriage together with affirmation of the family, and of sexual liberation together with fanatical puritanism”.¹⁶ Pioneer Zionist movements promoted the sexual revolution and full gender equality in all spheres, including marriage. The role of women within both movements was widely discussed – especially the so-called emancipation of *bachurah* (hebr. girl). Here, the movement’s ideological leaders invoked the model of girls’ self-emancipation, not their mere assimilation. And they expressed hope that in *kibbutz* societies, women would finally be able to develop their values “[...] and become active co-decision-makers in human society.”¹⁷

At the very beginning, the status of women was neither an issue nor a part of the educational program of these movements. However, girls joined the ranks of pioneer Jewish youth in the early 1920s and their number steadily grew. In 1923, the Center for Girls (*Merkaz Labanot*) was established in Teplice, following the *Hechalutz* training farm for girls in Germany. *Merkaz Labanot* aimed to improve girls’ position within the movements, and the “girl question” was supposed to be solved by means of girls’ work only.¹⁸

“How can a woman, as a woman and a Jew, be freed from the false assessment she has received in society?” This is a question asked by Blanka Schuster, a member of *Tchelet Lavan* and author of several texts devoted to women’s issues within pioneer Zionist organizations, in her article entitled *Zum Nachdenken über unsere Mädchenfrage*.¹⁹ She went on to argue that although a middle-class life gave a woman a better opportunity to take care of her soul, it did not allow her to prove her real value. Only a new life in a new society in Palestine would give her this opportunity.²⁰

In the methodological materials, we read about the need to build a deep understanding between both sexes and the need to create the proper relationship be-

16 Biale, David: *Zionism as an Erotic Revolution*. In: *People of the Body*. Edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz. Albany 1992. pp. 283–307, here: p. 290.

17 Schönfeld, Elijah: *Základy [Basics]*. In: *Chinuchejnu*, 1914–1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 8, preserved in KM; Krass, Andreas: *Magnus Hirschfeld in Palestine – The Journey of a German Jewish Sexologist* (February 14–March 13, 1932). In: *Queer Jewish Lives Between Central Europe and Mandatory Palestine*. Edited by Andreas Krass, Moshe Sluhovsky and Yuval Yonay. Bielefeld 2022. pp. 183–220.

18 Margol, Nanne: *The Place and Influence of the Girls in the Movement*. In: *Sinai, Rhapsody*, pp. 163–166.

19 Schuster, Blanka: *Zum Nachdenken über unsere Mädchenfrage*. In: *Bundesblätter* (1926, Tischri 5867). pp. 8 f.

20 Schuster, *Mädchenfrage*, pp. 8 f.

tween boys and girls within youth groups. The authors called for girls’ activation and demanded that they should be allowed to serve as active leaders within both movements.

The authors of the educational materials often expressed concern about the position of girls in movement ranks and sought a solution in psychology and psychoanalysis. Madrichim themselves saw the women lag behind in various social activities. They perceived the gap between boys and girls to be widening, and that this, thanks to the “biological tragedy of a woman”, could lead to both a natural and a psychological tragedy.²¹ To comprehend and understand the sexual instincts of youth appropriately, their libido, sexuality, and relations between both sexes, the leading members and authors of didactic material often used the works of leading experts on the subject such as Sigmund Freud or Carl Gustav Jung.²²

Silberthal, one of the sex education methodology authors, called for a more accessible sexual atmosphere within the movement. Based on the psychological and psychoanalytical works, he saw adolescence as a period of “anarchy of tendencies”. Further, he stressed to the movement leaders that sexual urges and sexual energy penetrate all youth tendencies. And although he mentioned the importance of sexual abstinence within scout organizations, he warned against excessive oppression of sexual urges, which might lead to future neurosis in kibbutz life. He considered sex education to be one of the essential pillars of the ideology of pioneer Zionism because its neglect could harm the future of the whole project of socialist Zionism in Palestine. “I repeat one more time [...], the creation of the open, free, and deepened life – this is the basement for building up proper relations between a boy and a girl.”²³ Only this way a healthy society in Palestine might be created. The author called for the creation of a mutual deep and free atmosphere in the field of sexual education and for a transformation of the education system for women.²⁴

This specific point of view, this rejection and criticism of both sexes’ inequality, was also apparent among women. Irena Stedlerová, a member of Hashomer Hatzair, introduced her image of a scout woman in the article *Jak si představuji dívčí skauting u nás* (*My image of girls scouting in CSR*): “What is our task? First of all, we want to gather and unite all girls who are ready to walk hand in hand with us

21 Silberthal: *Výchova bachury* [Education of bachura]. In: Chinuchejnu, 1914–1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 60, preserved in KM.

22 Špira: *Náš postoj k psychologii* [Our attitude to psychology]. In: Chinuchejnu, 1914–1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 33, preserved in KM.

23 Silberthal, *Výchova bachury*, p. 63.

24 Silberthal, *Výchova bachury*, p. 63.

for the implementation of scout laws, which aim to raise spoiled bourgeois girls into brave and fearless girls who are not afraid to face all obstacles that stand in their way.”²⁵ Further, she calls for the girls to be perfect women standing equally and no less resiliently among their brothers. “Scout life is a life of spring freedom, the enjoyment of youth, the discharge of children’s desires and the culmination of the joy and beauty of youth.”²⁶

Quite problematic became the women’s question within the Zionist movement. Besides other reasons, it was due to the various forms of women’s movements that got stronger, especially after the First World War, that the Zionists promoted a certain measure of women’s equality within their ranks.²⁷ Although pioneer Zionism called for gender equality, it also deemed it crucial for women to fulfill their traditional roles. At least, some inconsistency was apparent here. On the one hand, the movements were supposed to “create” strong, brave, and equal women, and on the other, Zionism accepted the coveted role of a woman as a strong and healthy mother of a future strong and healthy nation. The women’s question is more complex and goes beyond the scope of the given text. However, as Meira Weiss stresses: “For many women, the revolutionary turn of Zionism therefore culminated in a return to a traditional gender role, namely, mothering.”²⁸ According to many Zionists, only sexuality in the name of procreation was a real *hag-shama* (hebr. fulfillment).²⁹

Particular branches of pioneer youth organizations thus educated their members that they had to sacrifice their family life and erotic ties to fulfill national goals and contribute to the cult of the “New Hebrew”. A private sexual life became the property of the nation.³⁰ “Sexual liberation” became an integral part of the conception of “New Hebrew” that was pursued by both movements. This conception was discussed in the pages of the *Galil Solel* journal, where the ideal type was described as decent, cultural, and free of all prejudices given to him/her by bourgeois society. “We have not overcome low social prejudices, as is apparent from the

25 Yad Yaari – The Centre for Research and Documentation of HaShomer HaTzair Movement and of the Kibbutz Artzi Federation, Givat Haviva (YY), (1) 4.2.–2.: Židovské skautské hnutí “Hašomer Hacair” v ČSR, Moravská Ostrava 11.2.1938. Irena Stedlerová: Jak si představují dívčí skauting u nás [My image of girls scouting], p.5.

26 YY (1) 4.2.–2.: Židovské skautské hnutí “Hašomer Hacair” v ČSR, Moravská Ostrava 11.2.1938. Irena Stedlerová: Jak si představují dívčí skauting u nás, p. 5.

27 See more Strobach, Vít: Židé: národ rasa třída: Sociální hnutí a “židovská otázka” v českých zemích 1861–1921 [Jews: Nation, Race, Class: Social Movements and the “Jewish Question” in the Czech Landsin 1861–1921]. Praha 2015, p. 206.

28 Weiss, Chosen Body, p. 2.

29 Biale, Zionism, pp. 289 f.

30 Biale, Zionism, pp. 284 f.

one issue: how far is our worldview in the question of sex? Either all social prejudices remain, or by our new moral they mean a completely free way of life!"³¹

One of the prominent leaders and a proponent of the leading ideology of Hashomer Hatzair in the interwar period, Meir Yaari, promoted ideological principles of community coexistence based on economic cooperation between members, and strong erotic ties among them. "Bourgeois domestic eroticism" was seen as an enemy of the whole community. For Yaari, private property, but also private erotic life, were undesirable. However, the pioneering concept of "New Hebrew" promoted by Yaari was not about free sexual life. It was rather about the mutual connection among men and women and among all members with strong bonds. In addition, a part of the female membership of the Second Aliyah complained that women within the movement were regarded as mere sexual objects. As David Biale points out further, girls criticized that the relations between the members were either sexual or sibling in nature. The desired goal was to build a healthy youth community united by a strong national idea.³² Desire was to be channeled into the concept of youth reinforced by a national idea.

Among Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan members, some inconsistencies in sexuality issues were apparent. On the one hand, sex education was common in both movements, as was an effort to eliminate sexual desires between movement members. Chalutzim and chalutzot were supposed to become a new family to each other. On the other hand, anti-puritanism, emphasizing the nature of sexuality, circulated in both movements. An important representative of Hashomer Hatzair, Ruvén Špira, emphasized the goal of moral education within a movement in the form of free education and education to freedom.³³ A similar attitude is also demonstrated by an unknown author in an article titled *Lebensreform oder besser Lebensform*, as it becomes apparent in a rather long quotation:

Wie sieht das Neue aus? Rauchen – Trinken. Gegen das Rauchen sind wir vor allem nicht nur aus gesundheitlichen Gründen, sondern deshalb, weil das Rauchen bei den meisten Menschen ein Mittel ist um die eigene Person in ein bestimmtes Licht zu stellen. Und Sexualität – ich könnte seitenlang schreiben – aber wer würde das abklopfen. Wir sehen, dass die Menschen ihren Trieben nachgeben. Trinken – Die Antwort sollt Ihr Euch selbst geben, oder habt Ihr noch nie Betrunkene mit anderen Blicken als nüchterne Menschen angeschaut? [...] Rauchen und Trinken mit den Menschen, die wir sein wollen, gar nichts zu tun und so erübrigt sich.³⁴

31 YY (1) 4.2.–2.: Noviny Galilu Solel [Galil Solel journal] no.1 vol. 2, Žilina, November 1931, p. 2.

32 Biale, Zionism, p. 295.

33 Špira, postoj, p. 35.

34 YY (1)3.2.–2.: Hašomer no. 15, 1929. Lebensreform oder besser Lebensform, pp. 12f.

Sexuality, lifestyle and moral standards were often discussed within both movements. This was apparent, for example, in a complaint by an unknown leader of the Hashomer Hatzair section (gdud). The author criticized a lack of Hebrew education of movement members, and an inattentive social upbringing. "Many gduds have not seen a difference between our movement and scouting. They did not know what a Shomer means. There were also cases of smoking, face powdering, and dancing."³⁵

As is apparent, the issue of a healthy lifestyle became quite vivid within both movements: no smoking, abstinence, sports, healthy eating, and healthy sexuality. After all, it was an integral part of the phenomenon of that time – Lebensreform. Young Jewish pioneers were warned to avoid café life, dance parties, bourgeois dressing, and alcohol. The pioneer Zionists promoted Lebensreform with a view to their main goal – leaving for Palestine and the establishment of kibbutzim, which was preceded by the organization of training camps – hachsharot. In this respect, it was part of the productivization of the Jewish body.

As early as 1919, leading Zionist member Arthur Ruppin wrote in his article *Die Auslese des Menschenmaterials für Palästina* about the need for a careful selection of human material for Palestine. It became necessary to pay attention to the profession, state of health, and individual characters of candidates.³⁶

Since Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan members were supposed to build a new and healthy, chosen body in Palestine, only appropriate candidates were selected to leave Galut for Eretz. Each applicant had to undergo a selection procedure, including psycho-technical tests. The process also included a questionnaire completed by the candidate and by the leader (madrich). The questionnaire evaluated the candidates' intelligence, organizational skills, independence, agility, and physical fitness. Questions about candidates' character were also common. Thus, all aspects of the candidate's life, including his/her family, financial situation, social relationships, and family members' economic and social status, underwent detailed examination. It also covered areas of candidates' leisure time, interests, and favorite literature.

In the methodology called *The Road to Psychological Research* from 1939 by Cvi-Tova, we can read about the importance of each candidate's psychological examination at the individual and collective level. It was thus necessary to observe behavior, intellect, character, and interaction with other members. As Cvi-Tova further stated, the investigation methods justified insight into the completely private

35 YY (1)1.2.–2.: Zápísnica z moacah galilu Brenner [Notes from the moacah of galil Brenner], 23 August 1930.

36 Ruppin, Arthur: *Die Auslese des Menschenmaterials für Palästina*. In: *Der Jude* no. 8–9 vol. 3 (1918). pp. 373–383.

and most secret areas of each member, using his/her diaries, letters, and listening in on private conversations.³⁷

As part of this data's systematic collection, the so-called pinkas lamناهel (notebook of movement leaders) was supposed to be kept. Alongside general information about members (such as name, family, age, appearance, health status, family size, parental employment, names of school friends, relationship to teachers), each madrich was supposed to observe individuals during meetings and collect information about his/her relationship to the opposite sex – and record anything remarkable in this behavior. The second part of the notebook contained general information about the abilities of the individual, quality of lectures, a bibliography, as well as information on the “aesthetic appearance of each member”.³⁸

In the words of Meira Weiss, Jewish pioneer youths, and therefore the concept of pioneering in general, were a form of “false consciousness” covering normative and ideological control over the individual. Each individual's fulfillment depended on the realization of the Zionist movement's national goals.³⁹

From testimonies of movement members

In the testimonies of Hashomer Hatzair and Tchelet Lavan members, we can find motivations for joining the movements, as well as mentions of reflections on sexual issues. Young Jews reflected on their entrance to the movement as an opportunity for social mobility, rejecting bourgeois lifestyle or traditional orthodox life. They were searching for a sense of belonging, fulfillment of scout and Zionist ideologies, better orientation as they matured, and how to deal with the sexuality of youth. All these aspects were reflected in the book *Jakob Edelstein* by Ruth Bondy, dedicated to a prominent member of the Tchelet Lavan movement and later Jewish elder of the Theresienstadt ghetto. Edelstein recalled his participation as a “license to sexual freedom” and as a revolt against the limitation of the bourgeois lifestyle of the parents' generation.⁴⁰

A certain naivety was apparent in activities within Tchelet Lavan, as demonstrated in memoirs by another former member, Fritz Beer.

37 Cvi-Tova: Cesta k psych. skúmania [The way to the psychological examination]. In: Chinucejnu, 1914–1939 (October 15, 1939). p. 36, preserved in: KM.

38 Cvi-Tova, Cesta, p. 36.

39 Weiss, Chosen Body, p. 6.

40 Bondyová, Rut: *Jakub Edelstein*. Praha 2001. p. 44.

Fifty years later, in Israel, a participant showed me a photo with the inscription *Kiwi, The Sexual Question*. The pictures showed a group of boys and girls listening enthusiastically [...]. I, who had never been next to an undressed woman before, spoke to my audience about the women experienced during 'fulfillment', as we shyly called orgasm back then. Graff's hormone-secreting secretory vesicles began to have an effect on them. I had no idea what the glandular vesicles were, Graff's, or any others, but I had to make a big impression on the audience.⁴¹

His memoirs also reflect the fact that the older movement members organized lectures for younger age groups by themselves, and sometimes it was difficult for them to understand and explain particular topics and issues.

In some testimonies, we can also find objections to sexual morality practiced within movements. One of the former members of the Czech-speaking branch of the Tchelet Lavan movement, El Al, describes practices within the movement and her reasons for subsequently leaving the movement: "[...] they started telling us about politics and the things we had no idea about, [...] we were so young at that time [...]. But at the end we left, because what we didn't like there, there were too many contacts between boys and girls."⁴² The narrator also mentions sexual contact between boys and girls, which bothered her and caused her to leave. She was fourteen years old at the time.

Conclusion

Although it is complicated to trace all aspects of the training activities of young Jewish pioneers from Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair in interwar Czechoslovakia, based on didactic materials, we can see that a good deal of thought went into education, the didactic materials themselves, and activities. In the compendium of the documents, we can find educational topics from general scouting and Zionist education, psychological education, and didactical materials on the education of girls and sexuality. However, from the documents mentioned, it is also apparent that the authors of these didactic materials were young Jewish pioneers themselves, and it is easy to discern some degree of naivety and superficiality of interpretation. A certain discrepancy between educational brochures and materials on the one hand, and reality on the other, was also apparent.

⁴¹ Fritz, Némce, p. 57.

⁴² Archiv židovského muzea v Praze [Archives of The Jewish Museum in Prague], Prague, Oral History Collection, tape no. 153: E.G., woman.

An integral part of the ideological program of the Jewish pioneers was the conception of the “New Hebrew Man” on its individual and collective – national level. Against the backdrop of the question of the body and sexuality, Jewish youth were concerned with the women’s question – the woman’s position within the movement and at the national level. Even in women’s questions, a certain inconsistency was apparent within both movements. On the one hand, equality between sexes was broadly discussed, and women themselves were struggling to discuss this issue. On the other, the role of the man and woman in both movements was not constant and transparent. Jewish youth had a degree of freedom in the possible interpretations of materials, and something always crucial was what individuals were looking for specifically within the ranks of the movements. In the testimonies of former movement members, we find few notes on this issue today.

And last but not least, we can find instructions on carefully selecting candidates for emigration to Palestine. Still, we can only guess whether and to what extent these instructions were binding in the decision-making process for emigration to Palestine. As apparent from testimonies of former movements members, for most members Hashomer Hatzair and Techelet Lavan activities mainly constituted holiday adventures and leisure activities.

Bibliography

Archives

Prague City Archives (PCA), Czech Republic.

Archives of The Jewish Museum in Prague, Czech Republic.

Archives of Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk (KM), Israel.

Yad Yaari, The Centre for Research and Documentation of HaShomer HaTzair Movement and of the Kibbutz Artzi Federation (YY), Givat Haviva, Israel.

Research Literature

Avineri, Shlomo: *The Making of Modern Zionism, The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*. New York 2017.

Bartáková, Daniela: *Comparative Study of Tchelet Lavan and Hashomer Hatzair in Czechoslovakia*. MA Thesis, CEU, Budapest 2011.

Bartáková, Daniela: *Židovská pionýrská mládež v meziválečném Československu mezi sionismem a komunismem – budování vyvoleného těla [Jewish Pioneer Youth in Interwar Czechoslovakia between Zionism and Communism – the Building of Chosen Body]*. (Unpublished PhD Thesis) Olomouc 2020.

Beer, Fritz: *...a tys na Němce střílel, dědo?*. Praha 2008.

- Biale, David: *Zionism as an Erotic Revolution*. In: *People of the Body*. Edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz. Albany 1992. pp. 283–307.
- Biale, David: *Eros and the Jews – From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America*. London 1997.
- Bloom, Etan: *Arthur Rupp and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture*. Boston 2011.
- Borochov, Ber: *The national Question and the Class Struggle*. In: *The Zionist Idea: a Historical analysis and reader*. Edited by Arthur Herzberg. Philadelphia 1997. pp. 352–366.
- Bondyová, Rut: *Jakub Edelstein*. Praha 2001.
- Cohen, H.: *Tchelet Lavan in the years 1935–1939*. In: *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan. The History of the Youth Movement Tchelet Lavan – El-Al Netzach in Czechoslovakia*. Edited by A. Sinai, G. Amir and N. Margol. Israel 1996. pp. 58–60.
- Jensen, Angelika: *Sei stark und mutig! Chazak we' emaz! 40 Jahre jüdische Jugend in Österreich am Beispiel der Bewegung "Hashomer Hatzair" 1903 bis 1943*. Wien 1995.
- Karpe, Richard: *The beginnings 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*. Edited by A. Sinai, G. Amir and N. Margol. Israel 1996. pp. 16–22.
- Kasperová, Dana and Tomáš Kasper: *Německá mládežnická hnutí a spolky mládeže v ČR v letech 1918–1933 [German Youth Movements and organizations in CSR in 1918–1933]*. Praha 2016.
- Krass, Andreas: *Magnus Hirschfeld in Palestine – The Journey of a German Jewish Sexologist (February 14–March 13, 1932)*. In: *Queer Jewish Lives Between Central Europe and Mandatory Palestine*. Edited by Andreas Krass, Moshe Sluhovsky and Yuval Yonay. Bielefeld 2022. pp. 183–220.
- Margol, Nanne: *Educational Methods*. In: *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan. The History of the Youth Movement Tchelet Lavan – El-Al Netzach in Czechoslovakia*. Edited by A. Sinai, G. Amir and N. Margol. Israel 1996. pp. 144–155.
- Margol, Nanne: *The Place and Influence of the Girls in the Movement*. In: *Rhapsody to Tchelet Lavan. The History of the Youth Movement Tchelet Lavan – El-Al Netzach in Czechoslovakia*. Edited by A. Sinai, G. Amir and N. Margol. Israel 1996. pp. 163–166.
- Mešťan, Pavol (ed.): *Hašomer Hacair – Dejiny hnutia [Hashomer Hatzair – History of the Movement]*. Bratislava 2001.
- Mintz, Matityahu: *Work for the Land of Israel and 'Work in the Present': A Concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradiction*. In: *Essential Papers on Zionism*. Edited by Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira. New York 1996. pp. 161–170.
- Mosse, George L.: *The Image of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford 1988.
- Nordau, Max: *Entartung*. 2 Volumes. Berlin 1892/1893.
- Nordau, Max: *Degeneration*. New York 1905.
- Oppenheim, Israel: *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization: The Zionist Youth Movement in Poland*. Boulder 1989.
- Presner, Todd: *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*. London 2007.
- Rupp, Arthur: *Die Auslese des Menschenmaterials für Palästina*. In: *Der Jude* no. 8–9 vol. 3 (1918). pp. 373–383.
- Schuster, Blanka: *Zum Nachdenken über unsere Mädchenfrage*. In: *Bundesblätter* (1926, Tischri 5867).
- Stanislawski, Mitchel: *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle – Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky*. Berkley 2001.

- Strobach, Vít: Židé: národ rasa třída: Sociální hnutí a “židovská otázka” v českých zemích 1861–1921 [Jews: Nation, Race, Class: Social Movements and the “Jewish Question” in the Czech Landsin 1861–1921]. Praha 2015.
- Wein, Martin: Zionism in Interwar Czechoslovakia: Palestinocentrism and Landespolitik. In: *Judaica Bohemiae* XLIV-1 (2009). pp. 5–47.
- Weiss, Meira: *The Chosen Body. The Politics of the Body in Israeli Society*. Stanford 2002.

