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THE POLITICAL CRYSTALLIZATION OF ZIONISM IN THE
ROMANIAN DIASPORA: CONFIGURATIONS, PROGRAMMES,
STANCES

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Abstract

Zionism or the national manner of solving the Jewish problem – a result of the failure of Jewish emancipation in Eastern Europe or of their integration in the West – essentially represents the movement for restoring a Jewish State in Palestine, which was initiated at the First Zionist World Congress in Basel in 1897 and finalized through the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948. Zionism, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, begins its political crystallization in the interwar period, under the influence of European political currents and ideas. Our study aims at analyzing these types of Zionism – center, left or right –, at comparing their programmes and the influence that they had inside the Romanian Jewish Diaspora.

Keywords: Jewish diaspora in Romania; political currents and ideas; Romanian interwar society; the formation of the State of Israel; interethnic relations;

1. INTRODUCTION

“Zionism”, derived from the term of *Zion*¹, expresses the ideal of the return of the “chosen people” in Eretz Israel – the land promised by God to the Jews. This ideal was preserved over the centuries among the Jewish population in exile – the *Diaspora* (in Greek) or *Galut* (in Hebrew) (Buber, 1997). Zionism became an essential part of Hebrew messianism ever since the time of the Prophets, as Judaism was based on God's absolute sovereignty over nature, history, and peoples – *gentes* (in Greek) or *goyim* (in Hebrew). The failure of human (Jewish) society in knowing God brought with it punishment, because for the Prophets the Creator was both Love and Castigation. In its essence, *prophetic messianism*

¹ In *The Old Testament* or the Hebrew Bible (*Tanah*), *Zion* (*Tzion* or *Ṭion* in Hebrew) indicated both a fortified settlement from the time of King David as well as the mountain or hill on which this fortress was situated. On site, archaeologists have identified King David's fortress in the south-east of modern day Jerusalem. For Jews, Mount Zion became the symbol of the lost state.

promised the people of Israel the end of exile and the return to the "Holy City" when "Zion shall be redeemed by judgment, and its inhabitants returned to faith by righteousness" (Isaiah 1: 27).

And yet, although it was prefigured in Judaism, modern political Zionism was to a greater extent born as a result of the failure of Jewish emancipation or integration in the European society, a process that meant exactly giving up the political implications of this Messianic theology – it is not possible to wish to be a citizen of an European country while also continuing to consider yourself as being exiled in that country. On the other hand, modernization was accompanied by the secularization of the European society and state, a phenomenon that had an impact on all religions, whether it was Christianity or Judaism. Secularization implies an exclusion of religion from the public sphere, which is known as the Jewish Enlightenment: "Be Jewish inside your home and a man outside of it" (Eisenberg, 1993: 266). The struggle of the Jews in Europe after the 1789 French revolution to obtain equal rights and freedoms ends in failure and in an increase of anti-Semitism. The new realities determine European Jews to revise their attitudes and to move from civil claims to national ones, more precisely they intend to form a Jewish national state.

Political Zionism was born as a reaction to the lack of rights, the continued oppression and persecution of the Jews in Eastern Europe and, at the same time, to the growing deception of the failure of their Western assimilation. The merit for coalescing all the groups on the continent into a single organization belongs to Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the initiator of the first Zionist World Congress held in Basel in 1897. The Congress defined the principles and objectives of the new Zionist World Organization, establishing that the movement is aimed at legally obtaining and guaranteeing the existence of a home for Jews in Palestine.

Beyond any other interpretations, modern Zionism renounced the old conception that Jewry was an exclusively religious community; from then on, the Jewish problem was above all a national problem that could only be solved through political means (Nordau, 1897: 194-196).

Being a political movement, modern Zionism could not claim unity of thought on the means to achieve the Jewish national state or on its forms of organization. That is why, especially after the First World War – when various ideologies emerge and grow in Europe and worldwide, in a wide range from the extreme left to the extreme right – the Zionist movement, in turn, suffers influences from these currents, from the Marxist left, the center or the extreme right, from secular movements to cultural and religious ones. Their diversity was given by the fact that the father of modern Zionism, Teodor Herzl, had only indicated that the solution to the Jewish problem was in Palestine and not in the Diaspora. Otherwise, matters of a social nature (whether the Jewish nation's structures in Palestine would be bourgeois or socialist) or those concerning the Jewish identity (whether in Palestine the emphasis was to be put on state, nation, culture, religion, or values) had remained free for interpretation.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The impact of Zionism and Zionist ideas on the Jews in Romania has been a research direction that has experienced temporary historiographical fluctuations. Until the enforcement of Communism in Romania, the great effervescence of the sympathizers of this current was more focused on translating and printing in Romanian the works of the great European Zionist leaders from the end of the XIXth century and the first half of the XXth century or by publishing monographs about them – Theodor Herzl (Herzl, 1896), Leon Pinsker (Pinsker, 1899), Nahum Sokolow (Sokolow, 1916), Chaim Weizmann (Weizmann, 1945), Ahad Ha'Am (Aberman, 1946), Arthur Ruppin (Bainglass, 1947). Also, there were series of publications related to general information (Schweig, 1915), to the important moments in the history of the Zionist World Organization or the Jewish Agency (The historical meeting in Zürich, 1929), or the institutions coordinating the colonization of Palestine (Schweig, 1912). Under the conditions of the interwar political crystallization of Zionism, various Zionist groups tried to make adherents in the Romanian Jewish Diaspora by publishing and spreading brochures in which they publicized their ideas and leaders, with the followers of the right-wing Zionist leader Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky (Jabotinsky,

1930; Jabotinsky, 1931) being the most active. Romania's transition to Communism (1945-1948) restricted the possibility of popularizing Zionism to left-wing Zionism, which seemed to enter the patterns of Marxism, thus receiving the acceptance of Moscow (David, 1946; Danzig, et al.). As for the history of Zionism, generally and not with particular reference to the Romanian case, one of the few works that appeared until 1948 is that of Th. Loewenstein (Loewenstein, 1934).

During the Communist regime, Zionism became one of the forbidden subjects for Romanian historiography. In this period, the attempts of some foreign historians to re-establish the course and amplitude of Zionist ideas in Romania were poor and sporadic, perhaps with the exception of Eliezer Ilan's work, written in Romanian in Tel Aviv (Ilan, 1968). The collapse of Communism brought the matter of Zionism back to the attention of researchers, but the analysis undertaken by a number of valuable specialists were limited to discussing the impact that Zionism had, in general, on the Jewish community in Romania (Benjamin, 2010: 279-296; Benjamin et al., 2010; Iancu, 1996; Iancu, 2000; Kuller, 2004; Rotman et al., 2010), without analyzing its political crystallization in the interwar period, the programs of the various Zionist groups operating in the Jewish Diaspora in Romania, or the electoral disputes surrounding the election for the Zionist World Congress.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our study intends to answer a number of questions, not unrelated to one another. Firstly, to what extent did the solution of rebuilding the Jewish national state or the Zionist solution become popular among the Jewish community in Romania. Secondly, to what extent was the interwar breakup of Zionism in multiple currents felt among the Jews in Romania. Last but not least, how did these Zionist movements function in Romania, what were their programs, and whether they arose disputes, animosities, and dissensions within the Jewish Diaspora in Romania.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study aims at adding to the knowledge of Jewish history in Romania by analyzing the role of Zionism as an alternative to anti-Semitism in the interwar period, as well as its ability to attract, after its political crystallisation in the indicated timeframe, the elements inclined towards certain political ideologies, especially to the left (Marxist).

5. RESEARCH METHODS

Stories mirror a path taken by a character capable of reaching a superior status (that of a king for instance). Our research primarily combines the inductive and analogical methods. In the first case, in order to draw conclusions we intend to look at the facts by using archival funds. In the second case, we must bear in mind that Zionism was a movement that encompassed Jewry worldwide, and therefore its effects are not only observed among the Diaspora in Romania.

6. FINDINGS

Zionism strongly influenced the lives of Jewish communities, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. In the Romanian space (both in the Old Kingdom and in the provinces united into Romania in 1918) the Howewe-Zionist current, which prefigured Herzl's political Zionism, had been very popular. The idea of the return of the Jews to Palestine (not necessarily to form a state of their own) had been advocated after 1880 by the Hibbat Zion movement, placed under the authority of Leon Pinsker (1821-1891). In favor of this practical Zionism (thusly named to distinguish it from Herzl's 1897 political Zionism), Howewe Zion societies (translatable as "The Lovers of Zion") were set up in the Romanian port cities of the Danube's maritime sector, and the first national meetings held in Focsani between December 1881 and January 1882 were attended by 51 delegates representing 32 Zionist societies. The headquarters of the Zionist Central Committee in Romania were set up in Galați, where most of the leaders of practical Zionism – Samuel Pineles, Isac Loebel, H. Schein and others – lived. Up until 1919 most Zionist congresses in Romania took place in Galați, Brăila and Focșani, the predominance of these urban centers inside the Zionist movement also being related to the role played by the ports at the Mouth

of the Danube as Jewish migration points towards the United States, Western Europe and Palestine (Benjamin, 2010: 280-283). It has been estimated, without very accurate data, that between 1899 and 1904 approximately 50,000 Jews left Romania, with another 40,000 until the start of the First World War (Iancu, 1998: 37).

By the end of the first world conflagration, the Jews of the Old Kingdom as well as those in Russia (Nouzille, 2006: 104-107), to which the state authorities constantly refused to grant full political and civil rights, adopted to a fair extent the utopian ideals of practical Zionism, and after 1897 those of Herzl's political Zionism.

In a first phase, Zionism was a general trend, initiated by Herzl himself. According to his vision, the Jewish state could be founded within international politics through dialogue and cooperation with the great powers. Herzl believed that the legal recognition of the Jewish state, rather than its geographical location itself, was more important, Herzl's name also being linked to the establishment of the instruments of the future state's formation – a political forum (the Jewish Agency or the Zionist World Organization), a bank, a form of national loyalty involving certain obligations, a press organ, a central body, and a leader (Neusner, 2001: 216-217).

At first the representatives of this general current, subsequently named centrists, did not consider the formation of a political party. At the XIIth Zionist World Congress held in Karlsbad in 1921, the first in the interwar period, the popularity of these representatives was very high – about 73% of the delegations chosen by the Jews of Palestine and the Diaspora came from their ranks. Building on this worldwide popularity, the centre denomination, known as General Zionists, imposed and maintained Chaim Weizmann as the president of the Zionist World Organization for the most part of the period between 1920 and 1946. Under the pressure of the growing popularity of left-wing Zionism, much better defined ideologically and organizationally, as well as for some practical reasons, the General Zionists will also define themselves as a political formation in 1931. A few years later, in 1935 the centrists will be represented in Palestine and in the Diaspora by two political parties – the Union of General Zionists and the Federation of General Zionists – which will address the Hebrew middle class, Chaim Weizmann himself being enrolled in the latter. In spite of these organizational measures, the popularity of the General Zionists gradually declined, and by the XXIst Zionist World Congress held in 1939 it only had 32.4% of the total number of elected delegates (Ahituv, 2003: 375-376).

A second trend, asserted ever since the beginning of the Zionist movement, promoted the views of Ahad Ha'Am. His theory on the Jewish joint popular culture emphasized Zion as a spiritual center that had the capacity to unite all Jewish groups. Ahad Ha'Am's cultural Zionism led to the reconciliation of religious Jews and secularized (political and laic) Zionism. The struggle to constitute a nation and to have a national state did not prevent Jews from being loyal to the Jewish tradition and the Jewish religion (Neusner, 2001: 216-218). From a political point of view and derived from Ahad Ha'Am's cultural conception, religious Zionism led to the formation of Mizrachi (or "the Spiritual Center") in 1902 in Vilnius, which relocated its commandment to Palestine in 1904 (Dieckhoff, 2005: 206-208). Members of this trend began by building their own network of schools and institutions, parallel with secularized Zionists, at the same time organizing and conducting their own immigration campaigns. In Weizmann's opinion, Mizrachi encouraged the drawing in of a faulty standard for the Jewish immigrant, namely the wealthy ghetto resident, especially from Poland, who did not intend to work the land but sought to settle in the Palestinian urban centers where he could open capitalist businesses or engage in real estate speculation. The Mizrachi formation was also favored by the new immigration conditions imposed in Palestine in 1922 by the British government. In theory, emigration could be unlimited, but in practice it had to reflect the economic capacity of the country (Palestine) to absorb new arrivals, which translated into the introduction of a \$2,500 fee for each Jew that received an immigration visa (Johnson, 2005: 348). Throughout the interwar period, Mizrachi's influence at the Zionist World Congress was considerable, with an attainment ranging from a maximum of 18.55% of the mandates in 1921 and a minimum of 12.33% in 1939 (Ahituv, 2003: 375).

A third major trend inside the Zionist world movement was the Socialist one. Socialist Zionism had great influence in the Jewish world, especially in the Jewish Diaspora of Central and Eastern Europe, because it brought together the two powerful systems of ideas from the first half of the XXth century –

Zionism and Socialism. The roots of Socialist Zionism are to be detected in the causes of the second great wave of migration to Palestine, the "second Alia", which ran from 1904 to 1914. More precisely, the surge of Russian pogroms after 1903 and the failure of the 1905 revolution determined many young Jewish people in Russia to regard Palestine as their last hope. Politically, many were adherents to the Marxist ideas based on collectivism, and others were social idealists and romantics. Once in Palestine, they discover a harsh reality: Jewish farmers from the first wave of emigration preferred to hire Arab workers, which were better acclimatized and cheaper, rather than the young Europeanized Jewry. The social realities of Palestine reactivated Socialist ideas: the Jewish problem could not be solved within a capitalist setting, but by returning to their collectivist roots. For these reasons, the Socialist Zionists were almost permanently in conflict with Chaim Weizmann, the president of the Zionist World Organization and the centrist representative of the General Zionists (Johnson, 2005: 347-348).

The type of emigrant that left-wing Zionists sought to attract was that of the pioneer (*halutzim/halutim*), the one who was willing to do all the hard work so as to no longer depend on the Arab worker. Despite the ideological conflict, left-wing Zionists were forced to work with the movement's bourgeois structures and with Chaim Weizmann. The lands, which Jewish pioneers exploited by Marxist model, were acquired by Keren Kayemet le-Israel (the "Jewish National Fund"), a foundation that internationally collected steady contributions from the Jewish masses of the Diaspora, to which more consistent sums donated by Jewish capitalists were added. The pioneers (*halutzims*) set up a network of cooperative agricultural colonies (*kibbutz*) and political parties that decisively influenced the political activity of the Jewry both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. The first leftist parties were established in 1906: *Po'alei Zion* ("The Workers of Zion") and *Hapoel Hatzair* ("The Young Worker") (Eisenberg, 1993: 308). Amongst some of the most important leftist Zionists was David Ben Gurion, who had a central role in the forming of *Mapai* ("Workers' Party of the Land of Israel") and in the *Hitahdut* union movement (Johnson, 2005: 347-348).

The influence of left-wing Zionism gradually increased in the Diaspora and Palestine, a reality also reflected in the number of mandates which were obtained at the World Zionist Congresses – from 8% in 1921 to 42.5% in 1939 (Ahituv, 2003: 375).

Another important current, appearing relatively later than the others, was that of the right-wing Zionists known as the Revisionist Zionists. Its leader, Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, after leaving the Zionist executive in 1923, set up the Revisionist Zionist Alliance in 1925 with the intent to change Chaim Weizmann's moderate politics. For Jabotinsky, the absolute priority of Zionism was not the appearance of institutions (Chaim Weizmann) or the social selection of immigrants (David Ben Gurion), but the increase in their number, meaning that the emigration of Jews from the Diaspora to Palestine had to be achieved in the least time and in mass (What is the Revisionist Zionists' program, 1925: 4).

Jabotinsky treated the preference that the other Zionist currents had on the colonist model that they wanted with contempt. "A follower of *Brith Trumpeldor* [or *Betar*, the youth organization of the Revisionist Zionists, n.n.] may be a stone carver, a teacher, an engineer, or a policeman – above all he remains the pioneer (...). The pioneer may be both one and the other, or today one and tomorrow another (...)" (Jabotinsky, 1931: 7).

The declared aims of the Zionist revisionist ideology included: applying permanent pressure on Britain, which governed Palestine under the mandate of the League of Nations, including petitions and mass demonstrations, for the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the river Jordan; that control over immigration be in the hands of Jewish politicians and not in those of the British authorities; the re-establishment of Jewish regiments and the introduction of military training for young people. Indeed, this tendency towards militarization and ultra-nationalist ideology included Revisionist Zionism in right-wing political trends (Kaplan, 2015). Each of these Zionist currents also created their own *Halutian* youth organizations which operated both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. Of these, *Gordonia* or *Dror* and *Hashomer Hatzair* promoted leftist ideas; *Hanoi Hatzioni* represented the centrist group (the General Zionists); *Brith Trumpeldor* or *Betar* was in the political right; and *Hamizrachi Hatzair* and *Bnei Akiva* were inspired by the religious Zionist ideas. Beyond any considerations regarding the political ideology they promoted, these Jewish youth organizations played an important role in the Diaspora, including

Romania, by being the most effective means of spreading active Zionism – through recruiting young Jews to be sent to Palestine (Ahituv, 2003: 377-378).

The tensions in the Zionist movement reached a critical point in the early 1930s. In 1931, Weizmann was dismissed as president of the Zionist World Congress, following the instigation of the Mizrachi party. But by far the greatest accusations and mutual blames were to be made between the left and right Zionists. Revisionists accused those around Ben Gurion of complicity with the British and with betraying the cause of the Jews. They were in turn called fascists by Socialist Zionists, and Ben Gurion called Jabotinsky "Vladimir Hitler". Eventually, the Revisionists left the international forum in 1935 and decided to establish a parallel institution called the New Zionist World Organization, which in that same year led to Weizmann's return as president of the old Zionist World Organization (Johnson, 2005: 350).

All these disputes could not take place without leaving an effect on the Jewish community in Romania. First of all, not all Romanian Jews were Zionists. The conflict between the two great Jewish political forces in interwar Romania – the Union of Native Jews (from 1923 on, the Union of Romanian Jews, president Wilhelm Filderman) and the Zionist group (constituted in a political party in 1931 under the name of the Jewish Party) – also reflected on all decisions which had to be adopted by Romanian Jews both here in the Diaspora and in the name of the Zionist ideal. If up until the First World War the political lines between integrationism and Zionism were not so clear and the transition from one group to another, from one trend of ideas to another could easily be made, after 1918 intransigence was the main character trait of the new generations of Zionist militants, coming from the ranks of the students that had been radicalized and politically trained in the anti-Semitic beatings that had taken place around universities immediately after the first world conflagration. Amidst the young "distances began to be marked and struggles widened under the empire of vitality and Zionist exclusivism" (Schafferman, 1986: 129-130).

The formation of Greater Romania determined both the strengthening of the Zionist movement as well as a certain customization of the Jewish communities. Thusly, from the perspective of support for the Zionist cause the most active Jewish communities were those in the Old Kingdom, Bessarabia and Bukovina. Moreover, after 1918 the Zionist Federation's headquarters were transferred from Galați to Bucharest in 1919, and Adolf Bernhardt replaced H. Schein as leader (Iancu, 2000: 211).

Between 1919 and 1930, during which the Zionist Federation was led by Adolf Bernhardt, the centre Zionists – internationally affiliated to Chaim Weizmann and the General Zionists – dominated the Old Kingdom, gaining the majority of votes. Without having a clear political ideology, the centre Zionists were active in the Romanian Diaspora, especially in the wake of elections for the Zionist World Congresses, through delegates sent from the centre and through the influence of leaders of local Jewish communities in major cities. In fact, the centrists focused on achieving local Jewish community leaderships. For example, Adolphe Bernhardt cumulated the Zionist Federation presidency with the vicepresidency of the Israeli Community in Bucharest (Iancu, 2000: 234). As long as they controlled the Zionist Federation in Romania (until the early 1930s), the centre Zionists also promoted their ideas through the Hanoar Hatzioni youth organization ("the Young Zionist") or through all associations opened in local communities (Iancu, 2000: 231).

During this time, throughout the interwar period left-wing Zionism managed to attract the vast majority of Jews with Marxist sympathies. As expected, Socialist Zionism permeated and became very popular among the Israeli communities in Bessarabia, but also in the other provinces, while registering the greatest influence in the region between the Pruth and Dniester rivers. In Bessarabia, archive documents mention the left-wing Zionists under various names: the Palestinian Workers' Party, the Hitahdut Society, the Zeira Zion Organization, and Po'alei Tziyon; or by the Zionist halutzim youth movements Gordonia and Hashomer Hatzair (Odessa Region State Archives, 873: ds 33, 56, 93; Odessa Region State Archives, 891: ds 559, 563). Bessarabia's economic backwardness and the population's orientation towards agriculture – including trade, as this too was based on the export of agricultural products – made the region between the Pruth and Dniester rivers to be a recruitment centre for halutzim, for the pioneers to be sent to Palestine to exploit the agricultural land. For these reasons the Zionist movement, which embodied the great dream of salvation, knew a greater effervescence in Southern Bessarabia than in the counties of the Old Kingdom. The large number of followers, especially among the Jewish youth, generated a very vivid political struggle between the Zionist trends, especially visible

during the 1930s. The predominance of the left-wing Zionist ideas in Bessarabia is relevant by analyzing the provincial preponderance of the members of this organization: in 1928 – 9.7% in the Old Kingdom; 15% in Bukovina; 75.3% in Bessarabia (Iancu, 2000: 232).

Alongside the centrist and Socialist Zionists, the revisionist current makes its debut in the Romanian Diaspora following the 1925 visit of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky. The Revisionist Zionist Party of Romania was founded on this occasion, with Abraham Feller as its first president, also the founder of the "New Roads" (Drumuri Nouă) party magazine, which was printed in Galați. The 1933 rupture between Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky and Meir Grossman, another leading international revisionist Zionist, reflected onto the Romanian movement. Here, a part of the revisionist Zionists remained loyal to Jabotinsky and his creation – the New Zionist World Organization, while others passed on to Meir Grossman and his party – the Organization of the Jewish State (Iancu, 2000: 233).

Religious Zionism was present within the Romanian Diaspora through the Mizrahi organization or Hamizrachi Hatzair ("Young Mizrahi") and Bnai Akiva. Both of these were religious movements whose slogan was Tora Ve-Avoda ("Religion and Work") (Iancu, 2000: 232). In Romania the popularization of this organization was made through rabbis. The Galați branch was opened in 1924 (DJANG, Galați City Hall: ds. 87). In other cities branches were opened later on, although the organization operated alongside synagogues even in the absence of these official structures. For example, in April 1935, in Chilia Nouă, with a section of the society yet to be opened, funds were still being gathered for Mizrahi in synagogues and Jewish assemblies. On this instance, it was promised that he who collects the largest amount of money by August of that year (1935) will win a free ticket to Palestine (Odessa Region State Archives, 873: ds. 93).

Trends and dissensions between these Zionist movements, inside Palestine as well as worldwide, were also reflected in the Romanian Jewish Diaspora. Thereby, we see a decrease in popularity for centre Zionists amid the growth of left-wing (especially in Bessarabia) and right-wing currents (especially in the Old Kingdom). Thusly, the 1930 elections for the leadership of the Zionist Federation in Romania are lost by Adolf Bernhardt and the centre Zionists. The opposition, composed by those around the "Renaissance" circle, which constituted the majority, along with a small group of revisionist Zionists, received 44 votes, compared to the 22 gained by the centrist group. The result generated a change in the leadership of the Zionist Federation in Bucharest, the ensuing presidents being: Samuel Stern-Kohavi (1930-1932); Mișu Weizmann (1932-1933); Leon Mizrahi (1933-1934) and Filip Rozenstein (1934-1935). The instability of their mandates was brought on by the relatively shortlived coalitions made up by various Zionist groups. In was only in 1935, under the authority of Zionist world leader Joseph Sprinzak, which had come to Romania especially for this purpose, that there was a restructuring of the Zionist movement. In order to avoid large fluctuations and disagreements between groups, a Central Committee, chaired by Chief Rabbi I. Niemirower, was formed, in which all the political directions of the Romanian Jewish Diaspora were represented, except for the Jewish State Party (the Revisionist Zionists) which refused to join (according to the model adopted by Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky at the level of international Jewish organizations leadership) (Iancu, 2000: 233-234).

The biggest disputes between these Zionist currents were recorded around the periodic appointment of delegates who were to represent the Diaspora of Romanian Jews at the Zionist World Congresses. S. Avni, one of the witnesses present, sadly remarked that despite a facade of democracy the appointment of delegates was still done through direct negotiations:

"Up until today I am heartily ashamed with the way the campaign for the Zionist organizations election took place in the Romanian cities. We suddenly stopped being poor. Gold flowed like a mountain stream. Tons of publications were glued to the walls. Enthusiastic speakers spoke seven times a day. Whoever listened to them could actually believe that the fate of the Jewish people depended on the listeners voting the orator's list. As if all the troubles of the Jewish people would be resolved if a certain askan from Bucharest will go to the Basel Congress. In every locality, the weak (in one of the cities we were the weak, in another Mapai, in the third the revisionists, etc.) saw to it that the elections got canceled. Finally, the 15 delegations were divided at the debate table" (Schafferman, 1986: 146).

Looking beyond the author's pathetic tone, the description is typical for a political campaign in which opponents use every means to gain as many votes as possible. The gradual transition of Zionism

from currents to political parties was accompanied by an ideological and psychological charge that instilled a certain degree of fanaticism and political exclusivity to the members of the various groups. Therefore, the dividing lines, firstly between Zionism and the other Israeli political organizations in the Romanian Diaspora, and afterwards even between Zionist currents and parties themselves are increasingly difficult to overcome.

7. CONCLUSION

In the Romanian space, the solution of rebuilding the Jewish national state became popular among the Jewish communities ever since the phase of practical Zionism (after 1880, Howewe-Zionism) or of political Zionism (developed by Herzl in 1897). The political crystallization of Zionism after the First World War and its break into several currents reflected in the Romanian Diaspora. Against the backdrop of centre Zionism's decline, left-wing Zionists (especially in Bessarabia) and Revisionist Zionists (right-wing, especially in the Old Kingdom) grew in popularity in early 1930s Romania.

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