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ATTEMPT AT A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF SHLOMO NAHUM PERLA. THE ACTIVITY OF REVISIONIST ZIONISTS IN THE FIRST YEARS OF POST-WAR POLAND

The purpose of this paper is to describe the political activity of Shlomo Nahum Perla (Polish: Szlomo Nachum Perła), who was a sympathiser of Revisionist Zionism, a right-wing movement founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky. The first part of the article presents basic information about Jabotinsky and Jewish political life in Poland in the first post-war years. The second part traces Perla's political activity and briefly discusses the presence of Jabotinsky's supporters in post-war Poland.

Vladimir Jabotinsky lived from 1880 to 1940. He was born in Odessa¹ into a family partially assimilated to Russian culture. Influenced by the activities of Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), one of the founding fathers of Zionism, and in response to the rise of anti-Semitism in Tsarist Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, he became a supporter of the ideology propagating the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. During the First World War, he co-founded two military organisations that supported the efforts of the Entente states, i.e. the Zion Mule Corps and the

¹ Ch. King, *Odessa. Geniusz i śmierć w mieście snów*, transl. H. Pustuła-Lewicka (Wołowiec, 2016), pp. 16–17.

Jewish Legion.² After the war, Jabotinsky participated in the work of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO). In the mid-1920s, he started forming his own group. In 1925, together with his supporters, he created a faction within the WZO called Revisionist Zionism. It represented a right-wing vision of Zionism.³ In 1935, Jabotinsky's supporters left the WZO and set up the New Zionist Organisation, which was active until 1946.⁴

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 put an end to the centuries-long presence of a large Jewish population in Poland. Revisionist Zionists participated in the Jewish anti-German resistance movement. This is evidenced, among other things, by their involvement in the uprisings that broke out in the Bialystok and Warsaw ghettos.⁵

At the turn of 1945, before the imminent defeat of the Third Reich, an unsuccessful attempt was made to rebuild the Jewish community in post-war Poland. It was related to the temporary revival of Jewish political parties that had been present in interwar Poland. Eleven Jewish parties were active until the turn of 1950. They can be categorised according to their attitude towards Zionism and their legality. The Zionist parties included: the centre-right and religious Mizrahi, the centrist Ihud, the centre-left Hitachdut, the socialist Poale Zion-Right, the radically socialist Hashomer Hatzair (youth movement) and the Marxist Poale Zion-Left.⁶ The

² See R. Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea: Stories and vignettes of the Jewish Legion* (New York, 1965); J.H. Patterson, *With the Judaeans in the Palestine Campaign* (London, 1922); V. Jabotynski, *Dzieje Legjonu Żydowskiego* (Cracow, 1934).

³ See J. Perelman, *Rewizjonizm w Polsce 1922–1936 r.* (Warsaw, 1937); M. Wójcicki, "Podstawy teoretyczne ideologii rewizjonizmu syjonistycznego oraz ich wpływ na kształt myśli państwowej ruchu," *Jewish History Quarterly* 3/223 (2007), pp. 294–309; V. Jabotinsky, *Państwo żydowskie* (Warsaw–Cracow–Poznan, 1937).

⁴ V. Jabotinsky *Nowa Organizacja Syjonistyczna* (Cracow, 1936).

⁵ See also M. Arens, *Flagi nad gettem. Rzecz o powstaniu w getcie warszawskim*, transl. by M. Sobelman and J. Stocker-Sobelman (Cracow–Budapest, 2011); *Ruch podziemny w ghettach i obozach (materiały i dokumenty)*, ed. B. Ajzensztajn (Warsaw–Lodz–Cracow, 1946); R. Walewski, *Jurek*, ed. P. Wiczorek, transl. M. Sobelman (Warsaw 2020); D. Libionka, L. Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy, opisywacze. Wokół Żydowskiego Związku Wojskowego* (Warsaw, 2011).

⁶ See D. Flisiak, *Wybrane materiały ideologiczne i propagandowe Syjonistyczno-Socjalistycznej Partii Robotniczej Poalej Syjon-Hitachdut. Przyczynek do badań nad lewicą syjonistyczną w pierwszych latach powojennej Polski (1944/45–1949/50)* (Chrzan, 2021); N. Aleksiu, *Dokąd dalej? Ruch syjonistyczny w Polsce (1944–1950)* (Warsaw, 2002); G. Berendt, "Zjednoczenie Syjonistów Demokratów 'Ichud' – 'z biało-niebieskimi sztandarami w morzu czerwonych sztandarów'," in G. Berendt, A. Grabski, *Między emigracją a trwaniem. Syjoniści i komuniści żydowscy w Polsce po Holocauście* (Warsaw, 2003), pp. 101–223.

parties that rejected Zionism included the socialist Bund and the Faction of the Polish Workers' Party at the Central Committee of Polish Jews.⁷ In addition, three parties operated illegally: two groups opposed to Zionism, namely the centre-right Jewish People's Party and the right-wing religious Agudath Yisrael,⁸ as well as a group made of the followers of Revisionist Zionism.⁹

One of the people responsible for the operation of the Revisionist Zionist structures in post-war Poland was Shlomo Nahum Perla, born to Hawa and Moses in Brzeziny near Lodz on 3 December 1911.¹⁰ His father was a teacher of Judaic subjects and politically a supporter of Zionism. Shlomo had a younger brother, Eliezer.¹¹ In 1912, the family moved to Warsaw, where Shlomo attended one of the city's humanities secondary schools, and from 1932 to 1936, he studied law at the University of Warsaw. In the mid-1920s, he joined the Revisionist Zionist Masada, a youth group of Jabotinsky's followers; after 1930, he became a member of the Warsaw branch of Betar.¹² He was the head of the Cultural Department and later a deputy commander of Joel Krelman's branch. Next, he co-created local branches of Betar in the Muranów, Praga and Mokotów boroughs of Warsaw.¹³ From 1935 until the second half of 1937, he wrote for *Trybuna Akademicka. Niezależny organ młodej żydowskiej inteligencji* [Academic Tribune. An Independent Periodical of Young Jewish Intelligentsia]¹⁴ – a bi-monthly magazine addressed to Jewish

⁷ A. Grabski, *Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944–1949)* (Warsaw, 2004); M. Rusiniak-Karwat, *Nowe życie na zgłiszczach. Bund w Polsce w latach 1944–1949* (Warsaw, 2016).

⁸ Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter AŻIH), Zionist Organisations, 333/580, Bulletins, *Biuletyn Poalej Emunej Isroel Be-polin*, Lodz, 1946, 1947; G.C. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem, 1996); K. Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto, 2011).

⁹ Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Łodzi (Branch Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Lodz), pf 10/414, Sytuacja operacyjna we wrogim środowisku żydowskim na terenie Łodzi, 1958–1961, p. 199.

¹⁰ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN), 01236/1041, Interrogation minutes, 1949, p. 29.

¹¹ D. Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów w Polsce w latach 1944/1945–1950* (Lublin, 2020), p. 78.

¹² J. Chrust, *Regulamin Betaru* (Lvov, 1934); *Encyklopedia palestyńska*, vol. 1, no. 5 (Cracow–Warsaw, 1939), pp. 291–297; D.K. Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children. Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionist* (Princeton, 2017); A. Sołtysik, "Uwagi na temat koncepcji politycznych Bejtaru," *Studia Żydowskie. Almanach* 6 (2016), pp. 45–56; V. Jabotinsky, *Ideologia Bejtaru* (Lvov, 1935).

¹³ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 77.

¹⁴ Libionka, Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy*, p. 276.

students. Consistently with the political line of the Revisionist Zionists and other Jewish parties, Shlomo published articles condemning plans to introduce ghettos and decried anti-Jewish incidents.¹⁵ After the pogrom in Brest-on-the-Bug in the first half of May 1937, he wrote:¹⁶

Brest played the role of an ominous flash of lightning that, for a moment, lit up the sky piled with clouds, threatening us with a deluge. [...] What took place on 13 May could only have happened due to the fact that, during the last six years, both the intensified political agitation of the National Democracy across the country and the ONR¹⁷ sharing with it anti-Jewish attitudes both in practice and theory, managed to organise young people under their banners. It is no secret to anyone that vocational, secondary and tertiary education institutions spill out hundreds and thousands of graduates every year [...], remaining under the formative and political influence of Polish, racist nationalism.¹⁸

From the mid-1930s, Perla supported the activities and the methods of operation of the New Zionist Organisation. From 1937, he supported the idea of Jews actively defending themselves against attacks by the Arab population in Palestine.¹⁹ During his political activity, he contacted, among others, Menachem Begin,²⁰ Henryk

¹⁵ S.P. [S. Perla], "Nasz przegląd," *Trybuna Akademicka. Niezależny organ młodej żydowskiej inteligencji* 10 (1935), pp. 1–2.

¹⁶ W. Śleszyński, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Brześciu nad Bugiem 13 maja 1937 roku* (Białystok, 2004); S. Rudnicki, "Dokument kontrwywiadu o pogromie brzeskim 13 maja 1937 roku," *Jewish History Quarterly* 2 (2009), pp. 221–234.

¹⁷ Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (National Radical Camp).

¹⁸ S. Perla, "Pluzje czy samoobrona narodowa," *Trybuna Akademicka. Niezależny organu młodej żydowskiej inteligencji* 3 (1937), pp. 3–4.

¹⁹ Jabotinsky's followers, seeing the threat from Arab nationalists and Muslim fundamentalists, established the paramilitary organisation Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel) in Palestine. Its representatives participated in Jewish self-defence and carried out retaliation attacks. See T. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British mandate*, transl. H. Watzman (New York, 2001); V. Jabotinsky, *Der islam un Erets Yisroel* (Varsha, 1929); *idem, Dos araber-problem un Erets-Yisroel* (Varsha, 1929).

²⁰ Menachem Begin (1913–1992) was born in Brest-Litovsk. In interwar Poland, he was one of the responsible for the development of Betar. After 1948 he was an Israeli politician, and between 1977 and 1983 he was the first prime minister in the history of Israel not to be associated with the Zionist left. See M. Begin, *White nights: The Story of a Prisoner in Russia, with investigation files declassified after the collapse of the Soviet Union*, transl. H. Szafir (Cracow–Budapest, 2010); D. Gordis, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul* (New York, 2014); A. Perlmutter, *The Life and Times of Menachem Begin* (New York, 1987).

Strasman,²¹ David Wdowiński,²² and Michał Strykowski²³. When Germany and the Soviet Union occupied Poland, Perla remained in Warsaw. After the German occupation authorities established the ghetto in October 1940,²⁴ he stayed on the “Aryan side.”²⁵ This was possible thanks to help from his friend Karolina Modzelewska and others. Perla tried to support his close ones confined in the ghetto financially. Unfortunately, in 5 April 1942, his brother was arrested by an officer of the *Polnische Polizei im Generalgouvernement* (known as the blue police) and handed over to the German gendarmerie, after which he was jailed in prison on Gęsia Street.²⁶ Then, in July 1942, his parents were deported to the German extermination camp in Treblinka.²⁷ From April 1943 until the end of 1944, Perla stayed with Karolina Modzelewska in Józefów near Warsaw. The change of location was necessary because some blue policemen were blackmailing him.²⁸

The (illegal) radical right-wing Zionist organisations first attempted to restart activities in February 1945. This was when Shlomo Perla, who was staying in Lu-

²¹ Together with his wife Alicja, they were representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia, which, due to the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland, supported the fastest possible creation of a Jewish state. After Poland's defeat in 1939, Henryk, a lieutenant in the 8th Light Artillery Regiment, was taken prisoner by the Soviets and was executed in Kharkov in the spring of 1940. See L. Weinbaum, *A Marriage of Convenience. The New Zionist Organization and the Polish Government 1936–1939* (New York, 1993), pp. 51–52, 54–55, 87, 123, 134, 136–138, 140–141, 151, 184–186, 208.

²² On Wdowiński's work for the development of the Zionist right, see S. Łoza, *Czy wiesz kto to jest? Uzupełnienia i sprostowania* (Warsaw, 1983), p. 336; Perelman, *Rewizjonizm*, pp. 100, 112, 167, 183, 265, 267, 273. Also check the Jabotinsky Institute Archive (hereinafter JIA) in Israel, P266-1, *Wdowiński David, Biographical Details*, 1964–1980; D. Wdowiński, *And We Are Not Saved* (New York, 1963).

²³ Strykowski was one of the founders of the Jewish Military Union in the Warsaw Ghetto. In interwar Poland, he published in the *Trybuna Akademicka*. See M. Strykowski, “Sursum corda!,” *Trybuna Akademicka. Niezależny organ młodej żydowskiej inteligencji* 3/4 (1939), pp. 4–5.

²⁴ B. Engelking, J. Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw, 2001), p. 57.

²⁵ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 77. Basic information about Jews living outside the ghettos: M. Grądzka-Rejak, “‘Myśmy się nawzajem poznawały po oczach.’ Z badań nad strategiami przetrwania kobiet żydowskich funkcjonujących ‘na powierzchni’ po tzw. aryjskiej stronie w okupowanym Krakowie i okolicach,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2015), pp. 51–74; G.S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy (1940–1945)*, transl. E. Olender-Dmowska (Cracow, 2007); L.J. Weitzman, *Living on the Aryan side in Poland. Gender, Passing, and the Nature of Resistance in Women in the Holocaust*, ed. by D. Ofer and L.J. Weitzman (New Haven CT, 1998), pp. 187–222.

²⁶ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 77.

²⁷ Libionka, Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy*, p. 277. For more information see Engelking, Leociak, *Getto warszawskie*, pp. 661–689.

²⁸ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 77.

blin at the time, bumped into Perec Laskier²⁹ and Tzvi Kantor, pre-war activists of right-wing Zionism.³⁰ Soon afterwards, they moved to Lodz. In the first half of 1945, through Laskier, Perla met Tobiasz Berkal,³¹ Niusa Lubocki-Długi³² and a man named Margules, with whom he decided to recreate the structures of the radically right-wing Zionists.

Creating political structures was not easy, primarily because finding activists who had survived the German occupation was necessary. In mid-May 1945, there were around 25–30 of Jabotinsky's supporters from pre-war Lodz. They organised two secret commemorative meetings: one was dedicated to the fifth anniversary of the death of Vladimir Jabotinsky, and the other to the 41st anniversary of the death of Theodor Herzl.³³ At the end of that year, about 50 or so people were working in the structures of right-wing Zionists in Lodz. The organisation was made of cells which were divided into groups (*plugi*) with no more than 15 people in each.³⁴

The number of people in the Revisionist Zionist organisation and the extent of their activities increased when, after the horrors of war, Jews began returning from the Soviet Union. Many Jabotinsky followers went to Szczecin or settled in towns and cities in Lower and Upper Silesia.³⁵ The group operating in Lodz came into contact with the newly arrived Jews through emissaries, and from there, the or-

²⁹ Perec Laskier (1910–1963) – in interwar Poland he was a member of the Betar command, and from autumn 1939 until February 1942 he participated in the recreation of the Zionist Revisionist structures in the Warsaw Ghetto. Then he was in the ghetto in Czestochowa. After 1945, for several months he was involved in the activities of right-wing Zionists in Poland. Then he left for Palestine. See Libionka, Weinbaum, *Bohaterowie, hochsztaplerzy*, pp. 38, 265–266, 298–299.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³¹ Tobiasz Berkal was born in 1908 in Lodz, graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Warsaw. During the Second World War, as Paweł Ostrowski, he was a member of a sabotage group of the Polish underground commanded by Andrzej Sudeczko. He took part in the Warsaw Uprising. In mid-1948, he left Poland and settled in Munich. His further activities and date of death are unknown. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³² For more about this person see I. Kowalski, *A Secret Press in Nazi Europe: the Story of a Jewish United Partisan Organization* (New York, 1969), pp. 130, 264, 321, 386.

³³ AIPN, 01236/1041, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 32.

³⁴ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 82.

³⁵ Right-wing and left-wing Zionists along with Bundists and religious Orthodox Jews were persecuted by the Soviet authorities. See P. Gontarczyk, "Żydowski antykomunizm kontra komunistyczny antysemityzm. Postawy opozycyjne i opór Żydów wobec władzy sowieckiej na Kresach Wschodnich RP na przykładzie wybranych dokumentów białoruskiego NKWD," *Glaukopis* 2/3 (2005), pp. 327–338; A. Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego. Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej, wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1941* (Warsaw, 2006).

ganisation spread to central and western Poland. The Revisionist Zionist structure was divided into four regions,³⁶ each headed by commanders. Until 1948, the Lower Silesia district was led by Joel Koniarski, Abram Wienryba, and a certain Chackielewicz, the Upper Silesia region was commanded by Moshe Goldszmis, Pincjas Wabnik, Moshe Bajzman and Menachem Goldkom; the Szczecin region was headed by Adam Ajnbinder, Lipa Kielich and a person named Charlin, while those in the Lodz region were under the command of Michał Prochownik, Icchak Sikuler and Abrasha Gurwicz.³⁷

Activists living in the various provinces were divided into groups of up to seven people. They were to be headed by a politically aware person with organisational experience. The activities of the districts and cells were assessed during inspections carried out by the leadership of the structures. In 1947, there were about 1,500–2,000 Revisionist Zionists underground activists in Poland.³⁸ New members were not admitted for fear of being unmasked.³⁹ Some of Jabotinsky's supporters used pseudonyms; Perla acted as "Stefan" and "Abner", Berkal as "Tuwim", Sikuler as "Kozik," and David Draznin⁴⁰ as "Arnold".

Congresses served as a sort of summary of the Revisionist Zionists' activities. They were held secretly in various places, e.g., Lodz and Bytom, from December 1945 to July 1946. They were usually attended by activists of the movement operating in a given district and were intended to discuss the current situation in Poland and Palestine and in the World Zionist Organisation. Participants of the meetings also paid tribute to Jabotinsky and the victims of the Holocaust.⁴¹

³⁶ AIPN, 00231/102, vol. 1, Information on the elimination of the leadership of the illegal Zionist Revisionist organisation in Poland, n.d., p. 101.

³⁷ AIPN, 01236/1041, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 38.

³⁸ J. Adelson, *W Polsce zwanej ludową w Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce. W zarysie (do 1950 roku)*, ed. J. Tomaszewski (Warsaw, 1993), p. 434.

³⁹ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 85.

⁴⁰ Dawid Draznin was born in Grodno on 25 October 1910, to Samuel and Estera née Janowska. He had a brother Michael and sisters Jochewet and Jelin Mirian. In the Second Polish Republic, he was a lawyer and a member of Betar. In autumn 1939 he was arrested and exiled by the NKVD to Kazakhstan. In 1946, he returned to Poland and took part in the recreation of Revisionist Zionism. See A. Gontarek, "Na usługach UB Dawid Draznin," *Kolbojnik. Biuletyn Gminy Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej w Warszawie* 2/71 (2013), pp. 27–28.

⁴¹ See JIA, K7a-13/12/1, Museum of Combatants and Partisans, Escape – Documents, Protocols, Correspondence, 1944–1947; JIA, B33-4/1, Betar Poland, Protocols from Betar Conferences in Lodz and Silesia, and from the First Conference Following World War Two, 1946.

It is worth emphasising that, after 1945, some of the pre-war members of Betar did not join the underground Revisionist Zionist structures but chose to be active in other Jewish parties:

- In the kibbutz in Lodz, run by Poale Zion-Right, there were nine Betar members repatriated from the Soviet Union.⁴² Their youth organisation was called Dror (Freedom).⁴³
- In the Wrocław kibbutz associated with the Hitachdut party, there were several Betar activists and sympathisers of right-wing Zionism.⁴⁴ The lecturer and educational instructor at this centre was a person named Hiler, a member of Betar. The youth organisation of this party was called Gordonia.⁴⁵
- In towns such as Bytom, Katowice and Lubawka, activists of the Ichud party included followers of Revisionist Zionism.⁴⁶ In Legnica, Fima Atlasowicz, who originally hailed from Białystok, was a member of the executive of the centrist Zionists. At Perla's request, he formed a group of followers of Jabotinsky's idea.⁴⁷ The Frenkel family lived in the town of Lubawka.⁴⁸ Leon Dajksel, a supporter of Jabotinsky, kept in touch with them.

In the first months of their activities, an important task was to recreate the contacts of Polish Revisionist Zionists with the structures of Betar in Western Europe, which were being rebuilt after the war. This happened thanks to Perla's trip in mid-1945 to Germany, occupied by the victorious powers. He set off intending to find his brother, who was rumoured to be in one of the German camps.⁴⁹ In Munich, by chance, he encountered David Wdowiński, who, having survived the war, did not want to return to Poland.⁵⁰ Perla began to establish cooperation

⁴² "Instrukcja MBP dla rozpracowania partii i organizacji działających w społeczeństwie żydowskim z 1946 r.," ed. A. Namysło, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2/6 (2004), pp. 342, 351.

⁴³ Aleksiu, *Dokąd dalej?*, p. 201.

⁴⁴ AIPN, 0259/447, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 49.

⁴⁵ Aleksiu, *Dokąd dalej?*, p. 201.

⁴⁶ Employees of the Ministry of Public Security who were keeping an eye on Jewish parties, were also convinced of the presence of right-wing Zionists among the Ichud activists. See "Instrukcja MBP," p. 357.

⁴⁷ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 91.

⁴⁸ AŻIH, Zionist organisations, 333/75, a list of ransomed members of "sheklev", p. 22.

⁴⁹ This attempt failed. See Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów*, pp. 124–125.

⁵⁰ After the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was crushed, Wdowiński (1895–1970) was taken prisoner by the Germans. He was incarcerated in the labour camp in Budzyń, among other places. After 1946, he went from France to New York, where he taught psychiatry and psychology at the New School

with supporters of Vladimir Jabotinsky living in Munich. It was easy because, until October 1945, Wdowiński was recreating the structures of the Revisionist Zionists and was a member of the Central Committee of Bavarian Jews. Then, after travelling through Italy and France, Wdowiński went to the United States.⁵¹

Perla did not return to Poland until the end of August 1946. It happened due to a chance meeting in Munich with Shlomo Komlos, a Hungarian activist of Betar, who offered him a job in rebuilding right-wing Zionism in Hungary.⁵² At the end of 1945, Perla found himself in Budapest. He continued the unsuccessful search for his missing brother and pushed through the idea of establishing a kibbutz in Budapest for children and adolescents who had lost their parents during the Second World War. In the next two months (until the end of March 1946), about 40 people inhabited the newly established kibbutz. This place had its own regulations and a programme of activities whereby people with appropriate qualifications were sent to work in factories or to attend courses of the Society for the Promotion of Skilled Trades and Agriculture Among Jews.⁵³

In mid-1946, Perla visited the Polish Repatriation Mission operating in Budapest, asking for a document enabling him to return to Poland. He received it at the end of June. Finally, at the end of August, he returned to Lodz via Parkany, Bratislava and Zebrzydowice.⁵⁴ It should be emphasised that during this travel, he used false data, presenting himself as Meir Finkielsztejn so as not to expose himself as a supporter of Jabotinsky.⁵⁵

From 1946 to mid-1948, Jabotinsky's followers in Lodz published a bulletin entitled *Wiadomości* [*Yediot*, News] once every month or two. Ten issues of the bulletin, stretching to 10-12 pages each, were printed. The texts were both in Polish and Yiddish and dealt mainly with Palestinian and ideological problems.⁵⁶ The

for Social Research. L. Weinbaum, "Epizod z biografii Dawida Wdowińskiego," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 9 (2013), pp. 501–507; J. Wiszniewicz, *A jednak czasem mówiam sny. Historia pewnej samotności* (Wołowiec, 2009). See also JIA, P266-31, Wdowinski David, Concentration Camp Journal (Photocopy), 1944–1945.

⁵¹ JIA, P266-2, Wdowinski David, Immigration Documents to the United States, 1947.

⁵² See more JIA, B25-1, Betar Hungary, History of Betar Hungary, 1948–1991.

⁵³ AIPN, 01178/1778, Curriculum Vitae, 1949, p. 81.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵⁶ AIPN, 0259/447, Interrogation file of the suspect, Warsaw, 17 May 1949, p. 91.

information came from the Revisionist Zionist daily *Hamashkiv* [The Observer] printed in Palestine, six issues of which were posted to Poland, to Tobiasz Berkal. An additional source of information was *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [Information Bulletin], published by Jabotinsky's followers in Paris and sent to Poland to David Draznin's address. The people responsible for publishing *Wiadomości* included Perla and Draznin.⁵⁷

Perla's attempt to participate in the illegal activities of the paramilitary organisation Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel) in Poland should be mentioned. In the first half of 1947, he received a letter from Icchak Sikuler⁵⁸ proposing cooperation with Etzel in this part of Europe. Perla's tasks were to include translating propaganda materials that came from Palestine and Etzel units in France.⁵⁹ Until mid-1947, Perla, along with Wiktor Urbach and others, established several Etzel cells in Polish cities: Cracow, Bytom, and Lodz. It can be assumed that each of them had about ten people. Primarily they carried out propaganda activities and organised aliyah (immigration) to Palestine or France. After 1948, Etzel's activities gradually petered out,⁶⁰ and from the end of 1947, due to his poor health, Perla no longer participated in any political work.

In 1948, as a result of the aliyah of Jews from Poland to the newly established state of Israel, the number of Revisionist Zionists decreased. At the end of March 1948, about 150–160 of them were there.⁶¹ In September 1948, the leaders of this movement (including Perla) decided to establish contact with the employees of the Israeli embassy in Warsaw. The reason was the desire to obtain promises enabling them to immigrate to the Jewish state.⁶² Until the first weeks of 1949, Perla and Ozjasz Raczka kept in touch with Yisrael Barzilai,⁶³ Azriel Uchamin, and Pinchas

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ He left Poland in March 1947.

⁵⁹ AIPN, 01178/1778, Irgun affairs, p. 109.

⁶⁰ For more, see JIA, K18-2/22, Etzel Diaspora Headquarters, Paris, Correspondence with Poland Branch, 1948; D. Flisiak, "Działalność członków paramilitarnej organizacji Irgun Cwai Leumi w Polsce w latach 1945–1948," *Kwartalnik Bellona* 3 (2018), pp. 41–50.

⁶¹ AIPN, 01178/1778, Organisational activities from the end of 1948 until March 1949, p. 104.

⁶² AIPN, 00231/102, vol. 1, Excerpt from the interrogation of the suspect Shloma Perla from 24 March 1949, p. 98.

⁶³ In 1933, Yisrael Barzilai (1913–1970) left Poland for Palestine. Between 1948 and 1951, he was an envoy of the State of Israel in Poland. After returning to Poland, he joined the Mapam party. In 1955–1961, he was a member of the Israeli Parliament, in 1955–1961 and 1966–1969 he was the minister of

Dagan.⁶⁴ However, Barzilai, who supported left-wing Zionism, disapproved of the Revisionist Zionists' efforts. The difficulties associated with the attempt to obtain the documents were presented in Raczka's account.⁶⁵

The post-war activities of Polish Revisionist Zionists were discontinued at the turn of March and April 1949, when the communist security services arrested three people responsible for the operations of this political group: Ozjasz Raczka, David Draznin and Shlomo Perla. It can be assumed that one of the reasons for the disintegration of the structures of right-wing Zionists was the attempt undertaken by Draznin in the second half of 1947 to legalise the activities of the Revisionist Zionists.⁶⁶ He contacted a Ministry of Public Security employee in the person of Major Arkadiusz Liberman,⁶⁷ which resulted in the communist services infiltrating this illegal organisation.⁶⁸

In March 1950, Draznin was sentenced to three years in prison for illegal political activity.⁶⁹ He shared a cell with Wiesław Chrzanowski, a prominent anti-communist activist.⁷⁰ Perla was sentenced to four years of prison. Ozjasz Raczka's account contains the following information about the trial:

The court composed of a professional judge, two jurors, and a prosecutor – all Poles – treated the defendants decently and with much respect. All the defendants declared that they were Zionists and members of the Jabotinsky's movement. They emphasised that they had not interfered in Poland's internal affairs, had not acted

health. See *Who's Who Israel*, ed. P. Dagan (Tel Aviv, 1960), p. 103; *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje – kultura – religia – ludzie*, vol. 1, ed. by Z. Borzymińska and R. Żebrowski (Warsaw, 2003), p. 149.

⁶⁴ Azriel Uchmamini and Pinchas Dagan were representatives of the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement. AIPN, 00231/102, vol. 1, Memorandum, pp. 112, 113.

⁶⁵ JIA, G33-5/1, Hatzohar Poland, Imprisonment of Hatzohar (Zionist Revisionist) Activists in Poland – Recollections, 1949–1951, pp. 2–4.

⁶⁶ Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów*, p. 185. Another reason could have been an attempt undertaken in 1948 by officers of the political police to keep an eye on the Zionist right in Szczecin and Lodz. See *ibid.*, pp. 182–188.

⁶⁷ JIA, G33-5/1, Hatzohar Poland, Imprisonment of Hatzohar (Revisionist Zionist) Activists in Poland – Recollections, 1949–1951.

⁶⁸ Gontarek, "Na usługach UB," p. 28.

⁶⁹ Among the detained and adjudged guilty were Lipa Kielich, Majer Kąkol, Mojżesz Juszkiewicz and Maks Mittelman. Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów*, pp. 191–199.

⁷⁰ M.J. Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955. Współistnienie, zagłada, komunizm* (Warsaw, 2000), p. 437. For more on the correspondence between Draznin and Chrzanowski after 1956, see Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów*, pp. 211–214, 216, 250–251.

and had no reason to act against the ruling system. They asked for a sentence that would let them to immigrate to Israel immediately. None of the defendants repented. Nor did they renounce their Zionist worldview. The attitude of the accused made a great impression on both the court and the public in court.⁷¹

Shlomo Perla was incarcerated in Warsaw I prison. He performed construction work, keeping himself apart from other detainees.⁷² He was released on 2 December 1952, and no longer engaged in political activity, afraid of being arrested again. He kept in touch with Draznin.⁷³ From the end of December 1952 until January 1953, he stayed with Diana Grynbaum, who lived in Warsaw on Rakowiecka Street. He returned to Lodz at the end of January 1953, and at the turn of February, he found a job as a planner in a haberdashery and leather cooperative. In the second half of that year, he changed his place of employment twice: in September, he started working in Konstaktyńów Łódzki in the “Żakard” cooperative, and two months later, he found a job as a planner in one of the chemical cooperatives in Lodz.⁷⁴

In 1956, another wave of Jewish emigration to Israel began.⁷⁵ It is known that as late as 1960, Perla was assessed by political police officers as a person of potential “operational value.” He was financially supported by his cousin, who lived in Israel.⁷⁶ Before 1967, he left Poland and ended up in Canada.⁷⁷

The life of David Draznin took another path. After being released from prison, he settled in Lodz, and in 1957 he left for Israel. There he joined the Herut (Freedom) party founded in 1948 and led by Menachem Begin. It was a political continuation of the Irgun Zvai Leumi organisation.⁷⁸ In 1963, when Władysław

⁷¹ JIA, G33-5/1, Hatzohar Poland, Imprisonment of Hatzohar (Zionist Revisionist) Activists in Poland – Recollections, 1949–1951, p. 6.

⁷² AIPN, 01178/1778, Opinion, Warsaw, 12 May 1953, p. 133.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, An agent’s denunciation (oral), 3 March 1953, p. 121.

⁷⁴ Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów*, p. 208.

⁷⁵ On the departures of Polish Jews to Israel after 1956, see P. Madajczyk, “Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce po II wojnie światowej,” *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2/6 (2004), p. 47; E. Węgrzyn, *Wyjeżdżamy! Wyjeżdżamy?! Alija gomulowska 1956–1960* (Cracow, 2016).

⁷⁶ AIPN, 01178/1778, Agent denunciation, 31 August 1953, p. 136, 173.

⁷⁷ AIPN, 2911/1, Information concerning Shlomo Nahum Perla, n.d., p. 3550.

⁷⁸ Gontarek, “Na usługach UB,” p. 29. For basic data on the presence of the Zionist right in Israel see Y. Shapiro, *The Road to Power: Herut Party in Israel*, transl. R. Mandel (Albany, 1991); C. Shindler, *Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream. Power, Politics and Ideology from Begin to Netanyahu* (London–New York, 1995).

Bartoszewski visited Israel, Draznin and other followers of Jabotinsky organised a ceremonial banquet in his honour.⁷⁹ In the second half of 1967, Draznin took his own life.⁸⁰ This was most likely motivated by the fact that one of his subordinates had committed embezzlement.⁸¹

* * *

Perla's life can be divided into two distinct stages. The first of them takes place in the interwar period, when the young Zionist worked for the sake of the vision of a Jewish state created by Jabotinsky. Perla's activities during that time were discontinued with the outbreak of the Second World War. During the global conflict, he was a victim and witness of German repressions against the Jewish population. At the same time, his wartime fate shows the diverse attitudes of Poles towards their fellow Jewish citizens. On the one hand, the threat posed by some blue policemen, and the help obtained from Karolina Modzelewska, on the other, should be emphasised here.

After 1945, Perla participated in an attempt to rebuild the structures of right-wing Zionism. In the realities of post-war Poland, Revisionist Zionists could not operate legally. Until mid-1946, Jabotinsky's followers focused on organising four districts and conducting propaganda activities. In the following months, they were involved in the Bricha movement organising the emigration of Jews. The end of the movement came in March 1949. One of the reasons was Draznin's failed attempt to legalise the party. In the first half of 1949, many people were detained by the Ministry of Public Security's secret police. Perla was sentenced to prison and released in 1952. After that, he avoided political involvement. Unlike most Revisionist Zionists active in post-war Poland, he did not go to Israel, but to Canada.

The documents that have been obtained made it possible to draw a portrait of Perla's political activity, but not much is known about his private life, e.g. related to starting a family. During the Second World War, he lost his parents as well as contact with his brother, whom he never saw again. After the war, he focused on his political activity (until 1949) and then, after being released from prison, when he moved from Warsaw to Lodz to find a job. He left Poland before 1967.

⁷⁹ W. Bartoszewski, *Środowisko naturalne, korzenie, prep. M. Komar* (Warsaw, 2010), p. 240.

⁸⁰ JIA, K25-4/1, Biographies, Various Individuals – Letter Daled (Hebrew), 1944–2017, pp. 1–2.

⁸¹ Flisiak, *Działalność syjonistów-rewizjonistów*, p. 217.

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SUMMARY

At the beginning of the Polish People’s Republic, attempts were made to recreate the Jewish community. All these efforts failed. They included the legal reconstruction of most of the Jewish parties that had functioned in interwar Poland. An exception were the Revisionist Zionists, i.e. the followers of Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky. At the begin-

ning of 1945, representatives of this movement began illegal activities in Poland that lasted until mid-1949. The study outlines the functioning of the Revisionists Zionist after the war, giving information about the political activity of one of the leaders of this movement, Shlomo Nahum Perla. The programme basis of right-wing Zionism is also discussed.

KEYWORDS

Palestine • Poland • Jabotinsky • anti-communism