

Collections of this type may serve as a good source for BA and non-thesis MA students in relevant fields of study. However, they are not recommended for thesis-track MA or PhD students, and certainly not for seasoned researchers and scholars. For historians whose research examines not only representations of history but history itself, nothing can replace the non-selective viewing of archival material and the unmediated contact with the documents themselves, as long as they continue to exist. Despite the temptation for researchers in general and non-Hebrew speaking researchers in particular to rely largely or solely on these two collections when writing about the Sinai War, they should refrain from doing so.

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**David De Vries**, *Diamonds and War: State, Capital, and Labor in British-Ruled Palestine* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 349 pp., \$95.

For long-time followers of the Israeli economy, the diamond industry is usually associated with the Diamond Exchange in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, site of Israel's tallest building by the late 1960s, and with its value-added contributions to the Israeli balance of payments year in and year out. Rough diamonds are imported, polished diamonds are exported—often to the US market—and the difference in added value is so substantial as to merit a special set of line items in trade and financial statistics.

Diamond polishing and trading in Europe has usually featured a substantial Jewish participation, so it seems no surprise to find a major diamond industry in Israel. However, De Vries, in this important and exhaustively researched study of its origins, shows that the presence of a major diamond industry in Israel did not have to happen. In an era when elements of the Zionist movement and the British Empire were already in conflict (especially after the White Paper of 1939), the decision by British leaders in London to establish a diamond industry under the colonial state's umbrella was by no means inevitable, but was essential to the sector's growth from near zero in 1938 to a solidly based industry employing thousands of workers by 1945 that could withstand the turbulence of the post-war years.

A key player in the establishment of the industry was Netanya entrepreneur and politician Oved Ben-Ami (1905–1988). Many social and economic histories of the prewar through early post-war era focus on the

Mapai and Labor-Zionist factions in state-building, but De Vries properly gives credit to Ben-Ami's essential role in bringing the Palestine connection to the fore, by working with the British and the international diamond cartel to solve a vexing problem facing them following the outbreak of World War II. By the end of 1939, the German occupation of the Low Countries, including the diamond center of Antwerp, already appeared likely, and with it would come the loss of substantial foreign exchange earnings to the Allies, as well as access to industrial diamonds important for the war effort. Mandatory Palestine was a possible center for alternative production, assuming that trustworthy local investors willing to work with the British colonial state could be found. From De Vries's research of Ben-Ami's papers and official archives in London, we learn the tale of Ben-Ami's outmaneuvering the Zionist institution-backed factions to become the instrument of British policy in setting up the industry, first in his fief in Netanya, and later spreading to the larger Tel Aviv region.

Access to rough diamonds of various types has been a crucial factor for successful diamond cutting and polishing industries anywhere. Once Ben-Ami secured the agreement of the British and the diamond syndicate to provide rough diamonds exclusively through his channels, the Netanya group and the (all-Jewish) Palestine Diamond Manufacturers Association (PDMA) became the movers of a new and burgeoning industry that was to change the face of the Yishuv's class structure and labor relations. The skilled diamond artisans of the diamond industry hired by the Netanya capitalists (many of whom had no previous diamond industry experience) were unlike the agricultural and industrial workers unionized by the Histadrut in "red" Haifa and Tel Aviv. They were more likely to sympathize with the liberal Zionist model of labor organization and nation-building rather than that of the dominant Labor Zionist movement. The diamond workers' earnings brought them into a burgeoning middle class which did not share the outlook of the Histadrut labor organizers, and those organizers were thus unable at first to bring the diamond sector within its bargaining control.

At the same time, the British were careful not to alienate the Belgian government-in-exile in London, which was keen to prevent a potential rival from growing too fast during the war so as to intrude significantly into their post-war markets. Also, the British were ready to accept the PDMA's monopoly control over diamond manufacturing in Palestine because they were concerned over any leakage of diamonds into a black market in the Middle East potentially accessible to the Germans. With the PDMA and Ben-Ami, London felt that it had found associates who shared the empire's goals in the region and who could accept British restrictions on the industry's activities aimed at placating the Belgians.

Wartime growth in the industry did not follow a smooth path, with diamond supplies changing due to Belgian pressures. Subsequently there was labor unrest in the factories, as owners found themselves unable to live up to union contracts. De Vries's compact discussion of the often chaotic interactions between workers and management, as well as the complex and shifting relationships between the Netanya group and the larger Zionist establishment of the Jewish Agency, the Zionist Labor political movement, the (Jewish) Palestine Manufacturers Association, and the Histadrut, is helped by the book's useful list of abbreviations.

The author's emphasis on the politics of rough diamond supply is well placed. There were so many times, as described in the text, that the entire enterprise could have ended—indeed, it became moribund at times when supplies were interrupted. The strains on supplies as the Zionists moved toward post-war statehood became commonplace, and were a factor in bringing the Netanya group and the mainstream Zionist organizations into closer cooperation.

The author wisely maintains a focus on the industry itself, allowing outside events—the progress of the war in Europe, the German occupation, the Allied liberation of Antwerp—to intrude on the account only as they affect the industry in Palestine. The same is true of developments in mandatory Palestine itself where, for example, the King David Hotel bombing is mentioned only because major actors in the diamond industry regime from the British mandatory government were killed in the explosion. On another occasion, the British arrested and interned their theretofore loyal ally Ben-Ami in 1947 for his Zionist activities at a time when the Irgun Zvai Leumi was intensifying its anti-British operations and had hanged two British sergeants in Netanya.

The author has thoroughly researched the topic—indeed, sixty-plus pages are given to appendices and notes. The book will be useful for any collection devoted to industrial development, labor relations, and the social history of state-building in mandatory Palestine, and will be an essential reference book on how the Israeli diamond industry became established.

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