

And not enough attention is paid to the economic and social system and people's daily lives. That may also be due, however, to the fact that there are still considerable gaps in the research on this period and on these problems in particular. Then again, the author's assessments are also influenced by the assumption of the regime's inevitable collapse.

The political evaluations also become clear, even though they are not identified as such. For instance, Schroeder is not very persuasive when he puts a much more negative gloss on intra-German relations during the centre-left coalition period (1969–1982) than during the Kohl era. (Most researchers generally see continuity throughout these years.) Whether the author's tendency towards not always balanced but certainly unequivocal judgements will help to make his book into the intended standard reference work remains to be seen. In any case, some of his insights do not take us beyond what we could read years ago in Hermann Weber's studies.

*Beatrix Bouvier*

STERNHELL, ZEEV. *The Founding Myths of Israel. Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State.* Transl. by David Maisel. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1998. xv, 419 pp. £25.00.

This book is an important contribution to the historiography of both Labour–Zionism in Palestine during the British Mandate and of the ideological creation of Jewish nationalism in general. Based on meticulous empirical research, and on a penetrating textual analysis of the ideology and practices of the political leaders of the Labour movement, it exposes the importance of Labour's nationalist approaches in the complex construction of the Jewish community in Palestine and of pre-state institutions. It places Labour's Zionist nationalism in the larger context of European integral nationalism, and demonstrates the basic nationalist assumptions and intentions which guided the mobilization of Labour's institutions and social bases in the cause of building a Jewish national home. Apart from long-established critiques of leftist circles outside and inside the Zionist movement, and some earlier and no less important historical treatments of Labour's major role in the Zionist project, this emphasis on the overriding nationalism of Labour was long overdue. Furthermore, it adds, though recurrently in a provocative manner, to the wide-ranging attacks on Labour's pre-state non-democratic practices and non-socialist stances. Hardly ever before has there been so clear and detailed an ideological explication of the intended social costs of state-building in Palestine, of the manipulative practices of Labour–Zionism's professional politicians, and of the myths which served in political mobilization. No wonder that the original Hebrew publication of the book in 1995 triggered a heated debate in Israeli historiographical and sociological circles – focusing as it did on Sternhell's total discarding of the socialist elements in Labour's ideology and praxis, on his contextualization of Labour–Zionism in European National Socialism, and on his devastating attack on Labour's pretensions to uphold universalistic values and to build a new and equal Jewish society in conflict-ridden Palestine. It is one of merits of the book that a historical treatment of central factors impacting the mentality and identity of some of the main architects of Israeli society brought about such public interest, responding forcefully to the paucity of Labour

historiography in Israel and, no less significantly, to urgent calls in Israeli society for social and political rethinking of its past.

This rethinking and supposed myth-breaking is offered by Sternhell's threefold argument. First, that under the leadership of the founders and politicians of Labour Zionism, the Labour movement was unable either to contain Zionist aspirations for territorial expansion or to build a just and an egalitarian society in Palestine. Secondly, that these failures were not the consequence of objective conditions which were beyond Labour's control, but the result of a conscious ideological choice made at Labour's initial formation, which continuously informed its practices throughout the period of the British Mandate. Finally, that this choice was never fed by a unique ideology (propagated at the time as Labour's constructive socialism), but overwhelmingly by a local version of organic nationalism and nationalist socialism. The latter, Sternhell argues, consciously abandoned the universal aims of socialism and the creation of an alternative for capitalism in favour of the particularistic objectives of Zionist nationalism. These arguments are substantiated by analysing, on the one hand, the writings, speeches and platforms of the main ideologues and leaders of the Labour movement such as Aaron David Gordon, David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson; and, on the other hand, by sketching Labour's policies on a variety of political, social, economic, and cultural issues as outlined in the actions of the politicians and the *Histadrut* as a whole. These sources allow Sternhell to decipher the way of thinking of Labour's ideologues and leaders and their true intentions; but also to expose their manipulative discourses, hidden assumptions and blatant discursive and non-discursive tools of social and political mobilization for the non-socialist, non-democratic nationalist cause. For the admirers of Labour's pre-state leaders and state-builders, and for those who, for one reason or another, believe in the ideological formulations, social building and heroic legacies of the Labour movement, this explication is truly shattering. But beyond this integrative portrayal, does the book really offer any interpretative and methodological novelty? Does it really provide what Sternhell defines as a revolutionary correction of a politically- and historiographically-distorted past?

The book is about a Labour movement but can hardly be considered a Labour history. Rather, it is an ideological and a power-political history of a small elite of Zionist nationalist state-builders who sought to manipulate socialist ideologies and socially progressive policies. The latter purported to mobilize Jewish immigrants to Palestine for the national cause of building a Jewish state – at the expense of the local Arab population, and even of the social and mental needs of individual Jewish immigrants. Whatever socialism there was in this elite's political vocabulary, whatever aspirations it had for social change in the Jewish diasporic situation, these, so Sternhell contends, only served to mask the real and power-schemed orientation to erect a nationally-powered society that would serve the elite's nationalist and socially manipulative ideology. In this way Sternhell's angry diatribe against the powerful Labour elite and its national project turns into a history of a local explication of a form of a socialist nationalism, while abandoning any pretension towards being a history of those led by this elite. But can any nationalism of Labour, including European Labour with which Sternhell compares his case (and which was no less national), be explained while ignoring the experiences of its social bases and their formative influence on what Labour leaders said and did?

Undoubtedly the Jewish Labour movement in Palestine was national, and its role in bringing about the establishment of a Zionist state was crucial. This was already being

argued, however, by Labour's elite itself before the 1920s, and more vocally throughout the period of the Mandate. Moreover, the leaders were proud of it, and never concealed the fact that their social and political policies had Zionist materialization at their core. Their notions of land conquest, ousting Arab workers from the Jewish economic sector, and of segregating Palestine's economy along national lines, so as to assure the absorption of Jewish immigration and Palestine's demographic transformation, were outspoken, and openly served in recruitment and mobilization. Scholarly readings of Labour's attacks on workers' individualism, and on Jewish communists and strikebreakers, of Labour's massive attempts at persuading Jewish employers to prefer Jewish workers over Arab ones, long ago gave a clear impression of the extent of the presence of nationalist thinking in Labour's discourse and practices. National terminology fed Labour's institutional building (such as the *Histadrut's* labour exchanges and sick fund), and in reading the speeches, daily letters, and platforms of leaders such as David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson (well documented in excellent biographies of them), it would be hard to ignore the role played by Zionist thinking in justifying and legitimizing the submission of the social to the national. Workers' individual interests were often restrained for the sake of central control, for the enhancement of collectivism and for the realization of Labour's national aims in Palestine's labour market. This restraint was, however, far from hidden – it featured widely in autobiographies and biographies, and the rich workers' press during the Mandate (in Hebrew and Yiddish) referred to it continually. Furthermore, historians and sociologists, in numerous publications since the 1970s, exposed the national aspects of inequality in the Labour movement, focusing on issues such as labour market strategies, discrimination against women, the contradictory roles of Labour as an employer, and the discouragement of trade unionism and workers' militancy against employers. Analysis of these matters began long ago to explicate the processes and mechanisms (and not only the leaders' policies) which affected the preference of the national over the social.

Moreover, could a revolutionary rereading of the texts and policies (which Sternhell promises) ignore a much-needed juxtaposition with the mountain of texts produced by the rank-and-file of the Labour movement? The basic, though unspoken, assumption of Sternhell's excellent exposition of Labour's nationalism is that what Labour's leaders thought, wrote, said and did reflected the reality of Labour's experience during the British Mandate. No doubt the *Histadrut* was politicized from the start. The leaders controlled the dominant *Achdut Ha-Avoda* Party which, in the early 1930s, turned into *Mapai*, the Labour Party which dominated the political life of the *Yishuv* and Israel for many years. The Party dominated the *Histadrut*, the unions and the *Histadrut's* social and cultural institutions, and, from the 1930s onwards, also central facets of the Zionist movement. No doubt the *Histadrut* was a centralized and hierarchical organization, operating as it did through a variety of country-wide and local institutions, again dominated by politicians and bureaucrats. But was this skeletal and structural nature of Labour reflective of the reality of workers' lives, of the conditions which affected Labour's institutional building, and the processes which affected workers' nationalist attitudes? The picture was in fact much more complex and polymorphous. In many ways the *Histadrut* had to exert tremendous efforts to control and mobilize its social bases. Despite its national-driven ideology, which was oriented towards social selection, it hardly controlled the social structure of the incoming Jewish immigrants. Its ideology of social formation often lagged behind the changes in the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of incoming immigrants, veteran labourers and skilled workers. The local

Labour Councils, though heavily dependent on *Histadrut* budgets, were in unceasing conflict with the power centres in Tel Aviv, and Jewish workers in Palestine's towns were far from being an easily mobilized and obedient mass. The most salient example of this was the leaders' attempt to exclude Arab workers from Palestine's Jewish labour market. Throughout the Mandate period this project failed, despite Labour's national ideology and contacts with the Jewish middle class. It failed not only because Jewish employers resisted raising their labour costs, and not only because Jewish workers found it hard to compete with Arabs workers' skill and low wages, but also because the *Histadrut* found it difficult to control its own members and contain the labour market survival strategies of workers at large. It seems that Labour's nationalist mobilizing project determined the centralist nature of the *Histadrut* and its social control mechanisms not only because ideologically it intended to do so, but no less because it faced insurmountable resistance at the local level. The hegemony of the politicians was often contested both by local Labour bureaucrats and by workers themselves, and these conflicts often provoked feelings of frustration among the political leaders that the ideological paths they paved did not correspond to the reality of workers' experiences and needs. This was one of the causes of the further centralization and bureaucratization of the *Histadrut*. The latter evidently entailed not only non-democratic practices but also a widening of the gap between leaders and led which affected Labour's cohesion. To draw, as Sternhell does, a synchronic portrayal of the Jewish working strata and of the *Histadrut* would fit the national and social engineering orientations of Labour's elite, but does not necessarily correspond to the polymorphic historical reality, and to the complexity of origins and motives which constructed the national identity of the Jewish worker.

Another question which Sternhell's approach is too narrow to answer is that of the totalitarian nature of *Histadrut* institutions. Why did the nationalistic Labour elite need social and cultural institutions to achieve its national goals at all? Why was it necessary to employ so much institutional force to coerce its social bases and enforce its policies? Moreover, why was it necessary to produce and reproduce so many masking devices and manipulative schemes? Labour's social and cultural institutions achieved much more than mere social control. They often sprouted not because of the elite's policies but despite them. These institutions allowed (despite the leaders' intentions) the evolution of local decentralized and uncontrolled local "institutional kingdoms" that placed *Mapai's* political and electoral hegemony under strong pressures. Finally, though these institutions served in the making of the state, their economic and social failures during the Mandate period affected Labour's national path much more than its initial ideological designs. Labour's complex institutions were meant to serve Jewish workers "from cradle to grave". But their rich variety produced not only mobilization for the national cause and the filling in of an institutional vacuum, but to a large extent also a significant defensive umbrella for immigrants and workers who experienced serious threats to their survival in Palestine partly entailed by the Zionist project itself. Why were these institutions necessary for the realization of Zionism? Why cater for the social needs of the worker in employment – health, accommodation, insurance and the like – and supply these services with Labourist language? If Sternhell could have contextualized Labour's institutions not only in the national project, but also in the defensive needs of the Jewish workers and of the weak Labour institutions in a "hostile" labour market, the whole picture of the nature of the *Histadrut's* project would seem different. Furthermore, what is lacking in Sternhell's explanation is that the workers' labour market

weaknesses and their inability to limit the power of employers forced them and their leaders to defend themselves not only by creating a variety of protective institutions, but even a language of a solidarity and moral community. No one doubted at the time that this language excluded class struggle, and avoided serious and committed cooperation with Arab workers and supra-nationalistic values. But these exclusionary discourses and practices were not only the consequence of an elite-inspired ideology, but of workers' daily reactions to objective conditions. As in the question of Labour's control, here also only a social history of Labour's nationalism can clarify the picture which a history of ideas as such cannot.

Furthermore, the questions Sternhell so skilfully provokes cannot be answered fully by the methodology he uses. While it is important to analyse what the elite said and attempted to do, it is misleading not to refer to what it failed to do; in particular, to the conditions in which it operated and to the wider system of Labour's external relations with Arab workers and Jewish employers on the one hand, and internal relations with its own rank-and-file on the other. The elite on which Sternhell focuses was undoubtedly ideologically motivated, but it was also pragmatic and responded to its own weaknesses, to changing circumstances, and to the impact of factors which were often beyond its control. Its nationalist policies and practices cannot therefore be analysed only on their own terms. Labour's failure to persuade Jewish employers to prefer Jewish over Arab workers was more the consequence of the power of private capital in the local Jewish economy, and much less of Labour's own doings. Despite the mobilizing powers of the *Histadrut* Labour Councils in the towns vis-à-vis Jewish workers, and despite the growing recognition by Jewish employers of the legitimacy of the *Histadrut* labour exchanges, Labour could hardly be described as having total control over its membership. The nationalism of the rank-and-file of the *Histadrut*, its meaning to the everyday life of the workers, and the role it played in creating bonds among them, was much more a complicated phenomenon than a mere acting out of the what their leaders said. This raises some further questions. If Labour leaders marketed a certain vision of social renewal only in order to mobilize Jewish immigrants and workers for the national cause, why was so much effort exerted to mask its true intentions? Was the social base so resistant or militant that such manipulations were badly needed? Moreover, if the elite's socialism was nothing but an empty creed, why was it used in the first place? Was the nationalist creed not sufficiently strong and convincing so that another set of ideas was needed to assist it? Sternhell's book does not confront these questions because the only context he refers to is that of the political and bureaucratic elite. A history of the national identity of any political and social movement cannot stop short at that.

It is crucial to remember that within the contexts of Labour's national declarations and policies, of its segregationist and discriminatory practices, and of its blatant forms of elitist condescension (oriented significantly not only against Arabs but also against oriental Jews, Jewish women, communists and individualists in general), a certain social experimentation took place which could not be thrown out with the bath water. When we look at the fate of Jewish immigrants and workers in Palestine's urban sector, particularly in Arab-dominated towns, this social experimentation cannot be ignored. It was largely focused not on creating a socialist alternative as such, but on defending the rank-and-file. The *Histadrut's* defensive frameworks, though serving Labour's national aims well, did many other things too; and they failed, not necessarily because of ideological distortions or discursive manipulations, but because of economic, social, political, and cultural conditions which Sternhell totally ignores. Trade unionism, hardly

mentioned in the book, well illustrates the point. From the start the *Histadrut* was hostile to unions as leaders feared their militancy. They were suspicious of potential class contacts between Arab and Jewish workers, and opposed both the unions' threat on Labour's national consensus with employers, and their interesting closed-shop anti-immigrant orientations. But the restraint of trade unionism was not only a consequence of ideology and political phraseology, but also of conditions on the ground. The British threats to militancy surely played a role, as did the fears of many Jewish workers that cooperating with Arab workers might influence their working conditions. No less important were the fierce conflicts among the ranks of the Jewish workers, and the resistance of Jewish employers to union representation at the workplace, a resistance which had more to do with their employment traditions than with Labour's ideology. A fine history "from above", this book would surely benefit from some history "from below".

David De Vries

HARVEY, NEIL. *The Chiapas Rebellion. The Struggle for Land and Democracy*. Duke University Press, Durham [etc.] 1998. xviii, 293 pp. Ill. Maps. £34.00. (Paper: £11.95.)

Since the onset of the Chiapas Rebellion in 1994, many books have been published about the intricacies and the social context of the Zapatista rebellion in this most backward state of the Mexican federation. This multi-level analysis of the complex Chiapas situation is certainly one of the best documented among such works.

Harvey began his study of Chiapas with extensive fieldwork almost ten years before the onset of the Zapatista Rebellion by examining several *chiapaneco* peasant organizations and their impact on the political system through their ability to erode the established corporatist and clientelist patterns of authoritarian political control and to promote respect for constitutional rights. Following his experiences with and analysis of the pre-1994 peasant mobilization, the next logical step was to ask the same questions about the popular movement EZLN, the "well-organized indigenous army with a mass base support" (p. 3) that started its rebellion on 1 January 1994. Did the EZLN break with existing patterns of rural protest and pave the way toward political change? In Harvey's poststructuralist view it did so through its break with established corporatist citizenship, which had sought to determine and regulate acceptable political behaviour in Mexico for many decades, and by presenting a new citizenship and rights which are not so much the reflection of liberal-constitutional rights as the result of a continuous process of construction and transformation in the course of multiple local struggles.

He reveals this course of action through a series of long-term case studies of communities restructured in the continuous process of resistance and involvement with Latino (i.e. non-indigenous) society and the state. In highland villages, the state and the ruling party supported Latino and indigenous *caciques*, expelling or forcing young dissidents to migrate. In adjacent, more peripheral zones, the role of the state was weaker and enabled Latino elites to manipulate the state-led introduction of agrarian reform to their advantage. Conversely, the state's weakness provided opportunities for resisting these Latino elites. Here, the elites tried to force out dissidents, and the tropical Lacandon forest area became the refuge for migrants from the highlands and the sur-

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