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YAD TABENKIN

The Research Institute of the United Kibbutz Movement, 1985

**YITZHAK
TABENKIN**

**THE KIBBUTZ
A NON-UTOPIAN
COMMUNE**

*The kibbutz is a way of
life for Man
and a way of settling
the Land of Israel*

Y. Tabenkin

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INTRODUCTION

This book is a collection of Yitzhak Tabenkin's speeches and talks on the principle of the commune and on the kibbutz way of life.

Incidentally, Tabenkin was not in the habit of writing any articles and notes and most of his ideas were transmitted orally at the various courses of the kibbutz study centre in E'fal, or during public discussions. He would later edit them for publication.

Tabenkin was a prominent figure of the Kibbutz Hameuchad movement, which became one of the two components of the United Kibbutz Movement in 1981. His wording "Kibbutz Hameuchad" could of course apply to the kibbutz movement as a whole.

One of the founding fathers of modern Israel and among the pillars of Socialist Zionism, Yitzhak Tabenkin's work has so far not been published in English.

The reason that comes to mind is the fact that his theory was never systematically formulated. We believe that the time has come to present the readers with his credo on socialism etc. Indeed, we hope that Yad Tabenkin will, in the near future, present the scientific world with such a work.

This collection opens with a short biography written by Arie Segoli, who devoted many years to the collection of Tabenkin's speeches. We are grateful to the translator, Hanna Lasch, who had to cope with the tremendous job of translating some of the very difficult concepts unique to the Israeli experience. We also wish to thank Eli Avrahami, who advised us and Prof. Richard Israelovitz, who was kind enough to read the manuscript.

Finally, our thanks to Yad-Tabenkin for making this publication possible.

Shimon Mahler

ON YITZHAK TABENKIN

by ISRAEL GALLI

Yitzhak Tabenkin was the teacher who taught us human values as well as Jewish and universal ones. He was an intellectual but also a man of action. His whole being was devoted to the life of this nation, its problems and its image, and to the life of the individual within the social design. He was convinced that we, as a movement, must always be at the centre of national events and interpret them ideologically and politically. His theory was focused on the science of humanity, nation and state — his target was social and national change. He believed in a Jewish revolution which would find its expression in the establishment of worker's settlements, of communes, deeply rooted in the land. He taught us to aspire and achieve understanding with our Arab neighbors, yet not to depend on their agreeing to a treaty, thus neglecting the plans for our future.

He was our tutor in everything concerning our right to self-defence and independence...

Tabenkin's whole life was devoted to the salvation of our people through work and to the deepening of our roots in the land. But the core of his belief was in the brotherhood of man. Jewish solidarity was paramount even under conditions of social and ideological differences.

The first imperative was the realization of one's potentials.

Tabenkin felt that there was no conflict between this solidarity and the need to stand up for one's beliefs, even if it led to schisms. He supported a free struggle of ideas as long as it was conducted responsibly. He taught us a human Zionism and Socialism, one which would treat our non-Jewish neighbors with respect.

(Speech at study-day at Yad-Tabenkin, June 1982)

YITZHAK TABENKIN

by A. SEGOLI

Among the founders and leaders of the Labour movement in Eretz Israel, Yitzhak Tabenkin was unique in his consistent adherence to the way of life he chose as a young man.

He started his Zionist activities in the early years of the 20th century when Socialist Zionism was dominated by two outstanding figures: Berl Borochov, leader of the Labour Zionist party "Poalei Zion" in Russia, and Nachman Syrkin, who led the American party. Tabenkin, being younger and one of their disciples, nevertheless dared to oppose them on several cardinal points. In retrospect he was right.

He agreed with both Syrkin and Borochov on their assessment of the Jewish reality in the early 20th century and on the need for a territorial solution to the Jewish problem. He questioned, however, some of their basic assumptions.

For example he disagreed with Borochov mainly on the role of the Pioneer movement "He'Halutz" in establishing the Jewish homeland. He objected strongly to Borochov's relying on what Tabenkin called a *Stoicheion** process to achieve

* From the Greek, implying an unorganized, unintentional force of nature.

Zionism, and in further opposition to Borochov, he proposed that the Russian Zionist Labour party "Po'alei Zion" join the Zionist movement, and attend the Zionist Congress. All this at a time when these ideas were not yet established in the official program of "Po'alei Zion". He opposed Syrkin when the latter went along with the territorialists (a movement aiming at a Jewish center in *any* country) insisting that Eretz Israel was the only place in which the Jewish problem could satisfactorily be solved.

When the controversy over Uganda* split the Zionist movement, Po'alei Zion too was divided between the "Eretz Israelis" and the "Territorials". Tabenkin, in opposition to Syrkin, wholeheartedly believed in the unique place of Eretz Israel in the past as well as in the future of the Jewish people. His regarding of Eretz Israel as the promised land was a matter of "principle" from an historical, national, physical and psychological point of view. He adhered to this principle throughout his career: 1) especially in 1937-38 when the idea of dividing the country between Arabs and Jews caused

* In 1904, after the Ottoman Empire had officially refused to let Palestine be settled by the Zionists, Herzl proposed Uganda as an alternative place for a Jewish state.

violent discussions; 2) during the 40's when the partition of Eretz Israel was proposed in order to found a Jewish state in only a part of the country; and 3) after the 6-Day War when he advocated settlements in the "West Bank territories". Throughout, Tabenkin believed in the idea of the entire Eretz Israel as a place for Jewish colonization.

Tabenkin's advocacy of a personal involvement in the Zionist pioneering movement led naturally enough to his own Aliyah (immigration) to Eretz Israel where he became a manual laborer. He was in basic sympathy with A. D. Gordon's idea of regarding labor as of superior value from the socialist and national as well as from the ethical personal aspects.

During his first years in Eretz Israel, he concentrated on manual labor, removing himself from any public activity. Later when he became involved in the activities of the kibbutz movement, he would often return to work on his kibbutz (Ein Harod). He considered himself to be a laborer even though he became extremely active in the labor movement's leadership. He identified completely with the worker's problems and aspirations, their life and struggles. He always mourned the fact that he was no longer one of them, in the personal and physical sense.

A SENSE OF URGENCY

The "Worker's Settlement" movement was at the core of Tabenkin's ideology. (he believed that the kibbutz and moshav should be founded on self-employment and opposed the hiring of outside workers which he regarded as capitalist exploitation).

He had evolved his "Weltanschauung" even before he arrived in Eretz Israel. This included the principles of work and self-employment, self-defence, and the rebirth of the Hebrew Language.

His involvement with the settlement movement began as soon as he arrived in the country, and he based his theory on the actual situation with which he was confronted. He regarded colonization and the settlements as the cornerstones of the rebirth of the Jewish people, as the mainspring for a new way of life. Settlements were to be the central aspect of the kibbutz and also the foundation of the nation's policy.

He evolved his settlement theories in light of the need for a speedy economic development, e.g. in agriculture as well as in industry, at sea, as well as in mines and factories. Yet, above all, he insisted on the importance of agriculture in the country's development.

Zionism, for him, spelled settlements.

At the Histadrut convention of 1927 he defended his

beliefs. Arlosoroff had lectured on the Maximalist-Socialist-Zionist concepts of the time. He had heard a story abroad needing the kibbutznik, who while milking a cow would be convinced that he was indeed realizing Zionism... Tabenkin was upset because he really did believe in the strong connection between everyday activities in the settlements and Zionist realization. Tabenkin's name is closely connected with the concept of "Catastrophic Zionism". This term was minted many years before the Holocaust and gave voice to the feeling of urgency and danger from a catastrophic event threatening all Jews in the diaspora. Tabenkin was driven by this feeling of urgency and he called for a faster tempo in constructing, in building and in settling the country.

NO WAY BACK

From his days in the diaspora as a member of Po'alei Zion, Tabenkin had believed in the need for self defence. When he immigrated to Palestine, from Russia, he joined the "Ha-Shomer", the Jewish underground defence organisation. He objected, however, to the tendency of "Ha-Shomer" to turn professional and demanded a general civil defence organization. In the founding convention of the Histadrut he raised this question saying, "We are here to defend ourselves not only as workers but as human beings. We must defend our lives as well as our national and individual honour". His attitude towards Jewish defence values was strongly

expressed when the Upper Galilee settlement Tel Hai was attacked by Arabs in 1920. Tel Hai later became the symbol of Jewish self-defence. Tabenkin fought against abandoning any settlement, big or small under any circumstances. His conviction grew during the 1936 disturbances. He was among the first who proposed leaving the security of the fenced-in settlements and actively attacking the marauding Arab gangs.

During the War of Independence he repeated his call not to abandon any of the endangered settlements. He was extremely suspicious of external defence forces and believed in complete independence and self-reliance in matters of security. To his mind, it was a question of the Jewish national honour.

Tabenkin became one of the pioneers of Jewish Activism. It was this movement which created the Jewish voluntary forces in World War I and the Palmach in World War II. These special fighting units of the underground Haganah were mainly recruited from kibbutzim and other worker's settlements. When the State of Israel was established he continued to promote an active military defence policy.

Tabenkin's life was an ongoing struggle for equality, collectivism and mutual aid. He regarded the kibbutz as the ideal way of life in which these values would be realized. He proclaimed that kibbutz was essential for other reasons as well. Kibbutz was an instrument but also a value *per se*. It was of vital importance in setting the country and in

“conquering” work for the Jewish labourers who were threatened by underpaid Arab labour. Kibbutz meant the ingathering of the exiles and the absorbing of the new-comers into a new way of life. Kibbutz meant equality and collectivism. It was *the* means for realizing Zionism Socialism. Tabenkin regarded the kibbutz as a way of life not for an elitist group, but for the multitudes who would settle the country according to the principles of maximalist socialist Zionism. To his mind, kibbutz was the universal way of life of the future.

Tabenkin never wrote down any of his theories and he never published his ideas. These were all transmitted orally. His speeches were topical and related to the problems of his time and place. Yet when we study his speeches, we discover the consistency of his convictions. These stand out among all the topical problems he deals with.

Matters of principle were discussed when the problems which engendered them arose. After decades they still seem fresh. When we debate today the problems of Jewish settlements in the Golan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, we can perhaps hear Tabenkin discussing the place of Eretz Israel as a whole in the rebirth of the Jewish nation....



**1. A DOCTRINE
OF LIFE**

A scientific approach to the kibbutz phenomenon is called for. These kibbutz studies will have to be made up of all those elements on which a scientific approach is usually based. It has to be objective and truthful because science is a quest for truth.

Kibbutz is undoubtedly a reality. There are the settlements run by the human collectives. These have to be studied rather than admired or detested. The concept of kibbutz may be understood via its formation and structure; its physical and chemical make-up, just as though we were examining a tree. Our attitude has to be scientific and objective. We are out to discover the truth.

Some may point out that a human society is far removed from an inanimate object of study. Sociology is less objective than geology, chemistry, physics, etc. When we set out to regard a human society scientifically we very soon come across ontological difficulties. A person's relations with his surroundings are voluntary and subjective. His emotional attitudes may interfere with clear, independent thought. Nevertheless, an objective attitude should be possible.

Human thought on social sciences is hazy. It is difficult to realize that a given society is developing in a certain direction while the person himself is actively involved. There is a certain conflict between the object and the subject. It is extremely difficult for a member of a society to become the object of study.

It is easier to understand the external world rather than try to fathom oneself. The case of kibbutz study is therefore even more complicated. After all, kibbutzim have existed only in Israel for approximately seventy years. They consist of a comparatively small number of individuals, many of whom have joined quite recently. They live a very intensive life which makes it even harder to analyse.

Considering these factors we have to make a very special effort in order to overcome dogmatic attitudes.

Kibbutz study is not an alternative to living on a kibbutz. Social and biological circumstances make us choose our way of life. Just as in the case of a man who seeks the shade of a tree, in the heat of the day, without bothering to know why the tree grows or why it gives shade. Nevertheless, by studying the tree he could find ways to grow more and shadier ones.

The brain is not the source of man's activities. These are caused by his environment and his reality. Yet the brain is the means by which life may be enriched, made easier and profounder. A man is flesh and blood rather than an abstract idea or a thought. His spirit and ratio elevate him to a higher sphere.

Neither the kibbutz ideal nor the kibbutz way of life were the only factors that made people join the kibbutz. It was the combination of these which made the kibbutz experiment feasible.

Kibbutz study is important for kibbutz members themselves. Living, as they do, in a hostile environment, their own attitude somewhat hesitant, and having been indoctrinated with alien values, kibbutz studies are of vital importance.

In the diaspora, Jews needed the Bible as protection against

Christian doctrine. Bible study became the focus for every Jew. It was a spiritual necessity.

The kibbutz ideal spells out, self realization. The kibbutz is here to stay and may be studied as any other social phenomena in the world.

Let us therefore, set out to observe kibbutz as a reality rather than an abstract idea. Let us examine its form, its organization, its special character, and its attitudes towards its environment.

What does the kibbutz mean to its members, how is it regarded by the external world, the people, the country, what is its interaction with the socialist movement, the force that gave it birth?

The reply to these questions cannot be metaphysical. They have to be answered through materialistic realism because kibbutz is a real historic entity.

Scientifically we can approach kibbutz through sociology. What is the Kibbutz Ha Me'uhad? Kibbutz Me'uhad is a social and political organization with the aim of building settlements and turning its members into settlers.

Kibbutz Me'uhad is a *Zionist* phenomenon — a union of communes and a builder of communal settlements whose aim is to colonize the country in order to establish a territory for the Jewish people. Zionism is the moral and physical function of the kibbutz.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is a *communist* body, e.g. a society in which communism is the basis for interaction between its members. Communism is one of the features of the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

Kibbutz is an *educating* entity. It educates its members, its

second generation and attracts others, so that they may join the kibbutz. (In this aspect kibbutz differs from the Kolchoz in U.S.S.R. or the moshavim).

The Kibbutz Me'uhad has a definite Jewish national character. It is a working community which is based on advanced technology.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is a non-separatist movement on a nation-wide basis. It regulates the dispersion of its members and its settlements all over the country.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is a moralistic society. Without doubt there are special kibbutz mores and behavior. Each and every society has its own morality, e.g. slave morality, master morality, aristocrats' morality, and thieves' morality. The Kibbutz Me'uhad has its own notion of good and evil. This is moulded by our Zionist labor orientation.

These definitions are needed as building blocks for our study of the truth.

We have stated that the kibbutz is a colonizing organization.

This is its most outstanding characteristic without which it has no existence.

Colonization means:

- (a) Causing the land to change its nature, subjugating it in order to make it a place fit for human life. In other words, exploiting nature for the benefit of its settlers.
- (b) Turning the people into farmers who make a living from the land by subjugating it.

The Kibbutz is not an ideology anymore, per se, it is a fact of life and finds its expression in Jewish settlements throughout the country.

The party is a body of people united by an idea. The kibbutz is *not* a party. It is more than anything a colonizing body. It is made up of people from several parties, yet its ideology is settlements.

On quitting the Gedud Ha'avoda*, we redefined the concept of kibbutz. After many discussions within the Gedud Ha'avoda we realized that a definition of a "General Commune" would be too broad. We therefore specified that it is a communist colonizing body whose aim it would be to settle all its members in large colonizing settlements. This definition still stands.

There is nothing throughout the world which can be compared to the colonizing by kibbutzim. Many countries have and are being colonized. This in most cases is an uncontrolled flow of individuals not motivated by official planning. On the other hand, in the U.S.S.R., virgin lands were settled through government effort and planning but not by a colonizing movement. There are ideological movements that influence governments to organize colonization. These movements are not both the organizers and the settlers.

The kibbutz is unique in that it is a body of settlers who do both the colonizing and the organizing.

No American commune ever regarded itself as a movement. They were not a national phenomenon as the kibbutzim, but a local one.

Sociologically therefore, the kibbutz is unique.

Does this uniqueness imply that the kibbutz is not affected

* Gedud Ha'avodah means Work Battalion. This was a collective of pioneers in the early 20th century who went from one settlement to another in search of work, sharing their income. They did not regard permanent settlement as their priority.

as every other society by social and economic laws?

Definitely not. Marxist laws apply to hired labor on the kibbutz as elsewhere.

When we state that the "kibbutz is unique" we wish to point out mainly the fact that kibbutz is a voluntary phenomenon. Anyone can join or leave at will.

What does "voluntary" imply? It means — a choice of action, consciousness of one's will as opposed to the subconscious which motivates animals. Man of course has instincts too, but most of all he has a will of his own. Free will is never capricious. Free will incorporates all man's needs, his wishes. A voluntary movement caused thousands to immigrate to Palestine, without being compelled by any exterior forces. Aliyah to Palestine is therefore a voluntary movement. Yet it is not free from exterior influences, from a historical imperative.

So far we have characterized kibbutz as a voluntary sociological phenomenon. This is in contrast to some other political parties which were created through external pressure. Some parties, even though they may be voluntary, are different in other ways: for example, the socialist parties in those countries in Western Europe, where they are not at the helm of the government. In the U.S.S.R. and other socialist democracies, there is a strong pressure to join the party, but this is not automatic, and one needs credentials and is examined politically before being accepted for membership.

There are organizations of people for diverse reasons; sports clubs, chess club, vegetarians, esperanto speakers.... These people organize because of a definite need to belong to that special group. A person may belong to one group today and leave it on the following day. This is, therefore, an

arbitrary social phenomenon. A person would not join a party arbitrarily but because of personal interests. There are those who are forced by conditions to join — farmers, bourgeois, or aristocrats. A person belongs to one or the other because of economic political conditions.

In the case of the kibbutz it is hard for outsiders to realize that it is a voluntary organization. Members join because they wish to, unlike the Kolchoz, where people are forced to belong. When the kibbutz becomes non-voluntary and its members feel forced to belong, it ceases to exist.

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Nevertheless kibbutz is a *historical imperative*. Even though membership is voluntary, its very existence is not. Nor is its existence arbitrary. It was a historical imperative which created kibbutz. (E'fal, 1962)

IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE ACTION

The history of kibbutz as I see it, is the history of an ideology; this in spite of the fact that in the beginning there was no ideology. It all began with the action.

The roots of kibbutz ideology are to be found in Judaism, Zionism, Communism, and Socialism.

Our history begins in the 20th century. No one had a plan. Joseph Bussel had no preconceived idea of the Kevuza. I had no preconceived idea of the Kibbutz Ha Me'uhad. The

ideology grew from within. A movement does not have a single date of birth. We may indeed depict three dates to celebrate our birthday:

- 1903-1904, the years of the "second Aliya": the conquest of labor (from the underpaid Arab laborers who were employed by Jewish landowners of that period). The forming of work contractor groups who were responsible for the job that had to be done.
- 1907-1990 the years of Segera and Degania. A beginning of farming and the first groups which formed collectives. These were now responsible not just for the day's labour, but for the farm and its production.
- 1927 the foundation of a nation-wide organization of the collective movement.

Our movement was an antithesis to the settlements of the "First Aliyah" and to the political Zionist activity, which was mainly middle class and religious. It is hard to imagine our movement without the rejection of the conviction which in that period regarded the political activity as the most important factor in settlement, rather than seeing colonization as an imperative of establishing the state.

Our movement was born as an antithesis. Its activities made it into a movement. Its development brought about the conquest of labor, the formation of contracting groups and the farming commune.

The movement was not alienated from the historical progress it was part and parcel of the Zionist movement and the Labor party...

(Social Science Seminar, January, 1967).

A PERPETUAL REVOLUTION

The kibbutz evolved through suffering and struggle. The struggle of a nation that had suffered territorially, spiritually and physically. From the abyss of trouble and danger, the very peoples who were weaker from a socio-national aspect than all the others. In the twilight between capitalism and socialism, between imperialism and the birth of nations; during the period of the worst inhumanity and a new humanity evolved.

The very depth of the dangers, the very intensiveness of the struggle for existence, both individual and national, brought about this creation, the kibbutz, which to my mind, is of the utmost importance to the future of humanity.

Kibbutz is a form of collective existence on a voluntary basis. The kibbutz, the Jewish defence organization, Zionism, the founding of a state, all these may be found elsewhere but the combination of them, the revolution and change at such a tempo, the moral and spiritual upheaval, these are unique.

Some may call it a miracle, but it is not. It is just extraordinary in terms of the life of individuals, of peoples and of nations in the last century.

I consider the kibbutz to be the most profound voluntary transformation of a human community, not because of economic necessity, nor under any other form of pressure, but from an internal motive, a love of man and a love of the collective.

It evolved from the individual's identification with his people, his country, his culture.

There is nothing like the kibbutz, of which the Jewish people can be proud of. The kibbutz evolved from the

principles of the Jewish faith and social-humane culture.

Every movement that strives to change peoples way of living, a life of private property to a collective way of live, must carry within it a perpetual revolution; be it economical, political or even moral and cultural, otherwise its aims will not be realized.

The uniqueness of kibbutz is in that it is not only a revolutionary idea for mankind, the Jewish people, human civilization, it is not just an idea, but a personal, moral and voluntary realization.

... Kibbutz faces continuous perils. There is always the danger of "adapting" to the needs of new comers, of fitting the idea to circumstances that may arise.

It is hard to predict what forces may stand in our way. This is because of our uniqueness, and because of the tragic and complicated fate of our people.

There is no doubt, a wide margin of error in this case. But there is no error in my stating that without ideological direction the kibbutz ceases to exist.

The kibbutz itself is the ideological basis for the political party, and the youth movement. But the kibbutz itself has to be based on ideology. The economic, political, monetary or population problems are not the only aspects of its existence.

(From a lecture — Course "C" E'fal).

"A SOCIAL CHRONOLOGY"

The principle or organization is not arbitrary. It is connected with the essence and the content. It is part and

parcel of the essential universe, and of human society. It is the inter-relationship between existing things.

Organization of thought, of a society, of an activity, is not the first step; it is the result.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad, by that name, has existed since 1927. But it was preceded by Kevuzot that were established in 1907 and 1908 and who realized that their existence depended on organization on a wider, national basis.

It was not a question of speculation or thought, rather the reality of those days which prompted them not to organize on a local level.

In those early days there were four types of kibbutz: the collective in Segara, Degania, Kinneret and the Oppenheimerian Cooperative in Merhavayah.

The Second Aliya lasted from 1902 — 3 till the final stages of the First World War in 1917. The first years were devoted to the "conquest of work".

1907-1912 were the years of the formation of the Kevuzah. 1912-1917 saw the consolidation of the labor party.

These stages are, naturally, not definite. 1907 was not the end of the "conquest of work"; the collective settlements were not all established by 1912 and the labor party is still consolidating nowadays.

Yet from a sociological chronology, we may safely assume that this was a workers' Aliyah. The waves of immigration before and after would not qualify as such.

(E'fal January 1962)

ROOTS AND ORIGINS

There are diverse opinions as to when the Kibbutz Me'uhad was founded.

I would like to point out some of the early beginnings. After all, we have our "family tree" as every movement. Kibbutz had its origins and roots somewhere.

I believe that Kevutzat Kinneret and the collective of Segera were the beginning of the large Kevutza. Those who left Kinneret joined the Gedud Ha'avoda (see footnote page 4). This was an ideological continuation as well as a personal one. The Kevutzot that had been founded by "Ha-Shomer" (The Jewish Defence Organization) also joined Gedud Ha'avoda because it was a country-wide organization.

When Gedud Ha'avoda split, the minority established Ein Harod. Both sides altered their constitution according to their outlook. I believe therefore that the Kibbutz Me'uhad is a direct continuation of Gedud Ha'avoda.

A year and a half later, there was another split in Gedud Ha'avoda to the left and to the right. The "left" side disintegrated after about a year when most of its members left the country and returned to the U.S.S.R. The so called "right" re-united with Ein Harod.

In 1927 Kibbutz Ein Harod merged with several kibbutzim from Poland, Galicia and U.S.S.R. to found the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

Historically, chronologically, organizationally and formally, we are therefore a continuation of Gedud Ha'avoda. The most determining factor, though, is that the ideal and the people have their roots in the "large Kevutza" which evolved from the Segera collective. It was founded on

the idea of a colony which would not be established on agriculture only, but would embrace public work, construction, and industry as well.

In fairness, I must mention the commune founded by Trumpeldor in Migdal.

They never established a settlement of their own and those who remained in the country joined the Kibbutz Me'uhad eventually. One of them was Zvi Scharz who stressed the "family element" of the Kevutza, thus turning the Kevutza into a "family".

This period saw the consolidation of the various Kibbutz movements. Differences of opinion gave rise to a different ideology and an organizational framework which is still intact today.

There was a clear division between us, who would later become the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and between the small intimate Kevutza and between the organic kibbutz which in the form of Kibbutz Artzi Ha-Shomer ha'Tza'ir had its roots in that youth movement. We were searching for a way to develop the country while absorbing as many newcomers as possible in our settlements.

Though the discussion was theoretical it soon had a very practical aspect in that each and every group had to decide how many members it would accept and how much it would grow. We chose the option of maximum growth, in all parts of the country, doing every sort of work, at all times...

(E'fal, May 1950).

THE HAGANAH AND THE COMMUNES

One of the mainsprings of the collective settlement was the Haganah (the Jewish self defence organization). Wherever a person has to face extreme hardships, the individual's weakness calls for a social setting which takes into account the entire needs of the individual and is responsible for them. A communal way of life, in which mutual assistance is widespread, evolves in times and in places where man undertakes a special all-demanding task.

When the individual faces danger as well, society accepts full responsibility. Thus a communal relationship evolves.

Our collectives were faced with the problem of self defence from the very beginning. No settlements could develop without security. The foreign rulers of Palestine, the Turks, and later the British, could not provide any safeguard. We could never rely of them. We, therefore, had to combine work and defence, Both became an integral part of our lives.

"Ha'Shomer", the first defence organization which combined colonization with defence, was also the first to establish communes. "Ha-Shomer" did not actually own to any communist principles. The facts of life, the single person's weakness when faced with underpaid Arab labor, a foreign environment and a threat to his property, made for collective organization. Ha'Shomer undertook the responsibility for the individual's needs because it needed the entire individual's contribution.

"Kevuzot Ha'Kibbush" were groups sent by Ha Shomer to ensure the Safety of those tracts of land that had been bought by the Zionist Movement. They settled there temporarily and formed the first "defence settlements" — these in time led to

the "border settlement"; vital for us who live as we do, in a country of borders, where danger lurks everywhere. Kefar Giladi, on the Northern border near Metullah, was thus established in memory of Israel Giladi, (one of the founders of Ha Shomer).

I am not sure whether the members of "Ha Shomer" could have predicted what the commune would be like. It was not a question of ideology, rather a step by step procedure dictated by circumstances. These also brought about organization on a country-wide basis. When Gedud ha-Avodah was founded it was natural for almost all Ha Shomer members to join.

(E'ral 23. 5. 50)

OBJECTIVE HISTORICAL FACTORS

... Our Kibbutz movement was established because of objective historical factors which would provide the needs of the Jewish people and the country. These factors are constant, even growing. As in any revolutionary movement we too know ups and down but from a historical perspective our movement is on an upward trend.

This trend has been continuous since the days of Sejerah, the first collective, and until today it was perpetuated. Our way of personal realization and pioneering day after day wherever and whenever, through the establishment of new settlements and a maximal exploitation of the economic and social possibilities inherent in the country and individuals.

... The process of life in our country bids us form settlements. The kibbutz movement exists because of this imperative.

The kibbutz of today evolved because it adapted its socialist ideology to the building of a society and to the

continuous process of settlement, which affects the country and the fate of all the people.

JUST LIKE OTHER NATIONS?

The kibbutz brought many Jewish people to live a life in nature, to regard work as a "value" *per se*, to participate in the establishment of a new society where everyone is equal and all jobs are equal too. A way of life where everyone is secure because each and everyone devotes his whole person and his whole personality to the protection of his life, his values, his humanity. This way leads to a new future for mankind and for nations. It was all brought about without coercion, through free will.

The kibbutz way established settlements, collectives, educational institutions, it gathered exiles from all countries. We created a new humane and national culture, an international understanding and solidarity. We renewed festivals, paved a way of understanding between different social classes, different age groups, and between people from east and west. We brought pioneers to work in agriculture, in industry, to join the army, to create literature and art. We were the founders of political parties and national movements.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, we fought against the trend of governmental control.

There grew a belief that all personal responsibility and action were superfluous, when the individual and his society were weakened because of that so called "normalization" of "being just like other nations". This belief caused the whole kibbutz movement to be isolated from the main stream of activities.

("Ba-Kibbutz" 1964)



2. VOLUNTEERING AND THE HISTORICAL IMPERATIVE

The phenomenon of volunteering is typical to those individuals who are especially sensitive to the processes of history. They stand in the front line of its realization. Volunteering does not clash with the laws of history. The sensitive person feels the historical imperative first, he therefore is a prophet of historical movements and its pioneer.

The three central ideas of Kibbutz Me'uhad namely, Zionism, collectivism and volunteering on a personal basis, demand a special form of organization. This organization has to be adapted to the way of life dictated by the need for colonization, of ingathering of the exiles, a communal life, and self-realization. The open Kibbutz, is one which accepts everybody, which develops all the branches, does all kinds of works, is active everywhere. The open Kibbutz does not limit the numbers of its members unless economics or other external reasons dictate it. (E'ral, 1962).

A VISION OF INDIVIDUAL PIONEERING

... The Kibbutz is a vision of individual pioneering. People join the Kibbutz with the intent of self-realization. Yet, the personal ambition is dependent on objective conditions.

Every movement causes some of its members to turn the general ideology into their personal vision. These are the pioneers. They are the ones who undertake a historical mission.

Until Socialism and Socialist Zionism are realized, the Kibbutz is a phenomenon of individual pioneering.

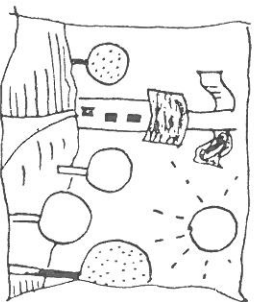
(From a lecture 1933).

A LIFELONG MISSION

The verity of our life is inherent in our mission. Each and everyone of us is an emissary when he realizes his mission.

A person is the emissary of his generation, for his generation, when he recognizes his mission in life. He grows strong with the power of his humanity. Man alone has a lifelong mission.

(At a party for his book "The Way of my Mission").



3. THE FORCE OF AN IDEA

AN UPRIGHT HUMAN LIFE

...The kibbutz is a free way of life. A person lives on kibbutz from choice and he can live there as an upright human being. A State can compel its citizens, a union may enforce certain rules because of its narrow interests. Man cannot stand upright during his entire life from morning till night, from childhood until his grand-children's childhood, while he is being suppressed, while he is not able to express his opinions, while he is opposed to the political attitude of his comrades.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad was not founded for anti-Zionists. A communist party member may join a union because he will find protection there. But just as he could not live in just any religious church could he live on a kibbutz; after all, kibbutz is much more encompassing than the church. No one can live on kibbutz and hide his political opinions for long.

The kibbutz member has to feel free to live according to his conviction, he and his children have devoted everything to their kibbutz which in turn is the only provider of their needs.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is a colonization movement, its aim is settlement and its means are settlements.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad strengthens the Jewish people. It is a means for economic and materialistic prosperity, for cultural renewal and an aim towards security. The most rewarding experience for a kibbutz member is to see the level of production on his kibbutz rise, and to watch the personality of the new Israeli developing within the framework of a socialist-humane society.

Kibbutz is the apex of human experience, the only commune in the world which has not been founded by the social democracies nor by Bolshevism.

Revolt against authority was one of the foundations of kibbutz. A kibbutz member can neither enjoy wielding power over others, nor stand any authority over his person. The kibbutz is a place in which power struggle is unthinkable. In a situation where peoples' lives are so profound, there is no place for man ruling man.

Some political parties regard kibbutz as just another form of organization like unions, societies, town halls, where an election campaign is won by the majority. This is completely averse to all that the kibbutz stands for.

The entire kibbutz movement has succeeded in raising the achievements of man whether at work, on the farm, in society or in creating a new Israeli personality. This was made possible because kibbutz is a place for creation and not a place for power struggle.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is the most serious attempt to steer a multitude of people on to a road of productivity, of work and settlement. It is an attempt to create one national culture out of the many in the Diaspora. It is an experiment that enhances human pride, productivity and values.

(Speech at Kibbutz Me'uhad convention January 1951, in Petah Tikva).

THE FOUNDATIONS

We defined our principles at the Yagur convention in 1936. They are a kind of summing up after the years of experience in building a new society:

- A combination of self-employment and work outside the kibbutz.
 - A combination of agriculture, crafts and industry,
 - Mutual aid and responsibility.
 - The ingathering of the exiles.
 - Absorption of new comers as an ongoing concern.
 - The establishment of large and expanding communist settlements, utilizing all the economic sources available and enabling productive work for all.
 - Complete authority of the kibbutz movement over all its settlements and members.
 - Zionist — Socialist education of the kibbutz members.
- (Speeches Book 2, page 198).

THE MEANING OF REALISTIC PRINCIPLES

... We are a part of history. Even if we should alas, disappear, kibbutz will forever remain an integral part of this country. We are asked, "Why do you require ideals and dogmas? All your problems can be solved logically, theories are only encumbersome...."

Nevertheless, we are a revolutionary — historical movement, striving to be actively involved in shaping our life. We cannot regard life's phenomena without giving it an ideological meaning, without shaping it according to our principles. If we did, we might lose our direction and even get lost altogether.

Taking the easy way of solving each problem as it arises or sidestepping it, we could end up at an altogether different destination.

We are not Utopians, we are guided by realistic principles, measuring each principle according to its realistic value. Concrete problems are confronted with our dogma and principle, the major one being our colonizing function.

Being a factor in Israel's history was of the most decisive interest of kibbutz. Our settlements are not arbitrary. They reflect a vital process in the Jewish life of this country.

REVOLT AGAINST 2000 YEARS OF HISTORY

... We regard kibbutz as a way of changing man's ability, his personality, his powers, through circumstances provided by his nature, by the period, by his people and this country.

Man's powers are not the same when based on an individual relationships or on a collective — equalitarian basis, one which values each person's life.

Thousands regard the kibbutz as a way of life, a humane and beautiful one for every man. Yet, they ignore the priorities of our national existence, of Zionism, of the need to

free man from exploitation, the realization of socialism and the enrichment of the human spirit — all of which are inherent in the kibbutz way of life. They see kibbutz as only one of several alternatives, one which can raise the standard of living of its members, without any ideological motive.

There is, of course, a possibility to live on the kibbutz without ideals, but I am convinced that the collective way of life in itself is of an inherent value for mankind. There is an abyss between a person who identifies with his society and one who negates it. Kibbutz, in more senses than one, revolts against 2000 years of human history.

(From a lecture, April 1933).

AN OBLIGATORY STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIALIST SOCIETY

... Once the individual's wish for self fulfillment is locked to the chain of historical development leading to socialism, it is enhanced with value. The kibbutz is part of such a chain and the historical imperative leads to socialism.

As soon as the age of socialism is reached and all private property is abolished, the kibbutz will cease to be a phenomenon of individual pioneering. It will become a fixture of life. The kibbutz ideology is only a stage in the development of a socialist society.

This is why we regard the individual pioneering effort as a valuable and obligatory stage in the development of a socialist society.

(From a lecture, April 1933).

ON THE ROAD TO ACHIEVEMENT

The ultimate purpose of the kibbutz is also measured on a daily basis of achievement. This is the most outstanding aspect of the kibbutz as a social phenomenon. The kibbutz as pioneering soil reclamation, as self managers of farms and concerns. The kibbutz as the creator of a worker's comradeship, of collective education, of economic cooperation. The kibbutz as searchers for a way of life in which we may achieve the maximal collaboration within the framework of the capitalist economy that engulfs us.

The abolishment of private property within the kibbutz calls for a different set up in the family unit, in education, in the attitude towards work, in contact with nature and in cultural activity.

Therefore the ultimate aim is achieved through the ongoing educational process on a daily basis of kibbutz life. (From a lecture April 1933).

THE IDEAL AS A SOURCE OF POWER

... What turned the new immigrants on, what gave them strength and motivation? How were the young people in the diaspora infected with the Zionist dream? Which is the showpiece shown to English gentlemen as well as to socialist and non socialist visitors from abroad? Who arouses interest and respect in high commissioners as well as in youngsters from the youth movements? Who if not the Jewish Collective. This reality of a group of Jews who with their love for the land and their people, elevated themselves to such heights that they

created a new way of life doing away with injustice and loneliness. They founded the collective as a means of colonization and defence, as a way to a new relationship among men.

They created an ideal way of life and turned it into a source of power; this gave them strength to found the "Halutz" in the diaspora, to build "Hakshara Camps" (places where young people could gain experience in farm work and collective living). This was the power that established a youth movement which would, in turn lead the waves of immigration to Israel. (Speeches B page 212).

★★★★

...The 20th Century is a period of spiritual and moral change. New yardsticks of good and evil are set up. Man's culture and his personality are developing in different directions. Within this vast struggle the tiny Israeli kibbutz is tossed about on the waves of revolution.

The kibbutz was spawned by the socialist and humanitarian revolution of the 20th century, whose aims are the abolishment of class distinction, a furthering of the union of nations, an attempt to conquer the universe and nature, as well as man's fate.

The kibbutz is part of the Jewish movement of the ingathering of exiles in Israel, of an attempt at creating an equalitarian society which would progress towards national independence, and a humanitarian spiritual and moralistic culture.

The kibbutz is a phenomenon created by this revolutionary process. It will stand and fall with it...

(May, 1963).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

... My aspiration is to base Kibbutz studies on a foundation of reality and truth. The reflection of both in man's morals and his thoughts will affect his behavior and attitude. This is the meaning of doctrine

A doctrine is made up of principles, elements, history and problems.

A historical perspective is of vital importance as it is in the studies of all precise sciences.

When we mention Degania and Gedud Ha-Avodah, we are not sentimental; we recall them in order to study the way the present came into being, and how the kibbutz evolved.

AN EVERLASTING RELATIONSHIP

... Every commune is of the public's interest and affects its life, if there is an involvement with a social class or movement.

The kibbutzim are the harbingers of the abolishment of private property. This is of concern to the whole working class. The interest of the kibbutz is identical to that of the working class.

This relationship is not a passing phase. It is based on the conscious pioneering spirit of a fighting movement.

(April, 1933).

The most outstanding features of kibbutz are its settlements. These are to be the foundations of a Zionist Socialist reality in the establishment of Israel.

The theory of constructing an industrial complex within the kibbutzim grew from the need of centralized settlements.

We were convinced that the kibbutz could not be alienated from the colonizing efforts of the country. This is why we go wherever there is need for us, whether to settle or work at special jobs.

(Ein Harod Convention, August, 1934).

A VOLUNTARY ETHICAL ROAD

... Every social movement is, in the end, dependent on the ethics of its members. This is of more importance than their ideology or psychology. A man is willing to sacrifice his life on values of ethics and morality. All human development calls for ideological and psychological education, but most of all for an ethical education.

Communism will not be realized without tackling the ethical aspects, even though it is based on economic and social conditions, on technical and scientific levels and on man's conquest of nature.

We are blessed with the knowledge that our collective is founded on an ethical and voluntary basis

(E'fal May 1964).

COOPERATION BASED ON EQUALITY

... Speaking at Degania's anniversary, Ben Gurion said that the value of kibbutz is in its collectivism rather than its struggle to achieve equality. To his mind equality is against human nature; men are not created equal and therefore they have no equal rights.

In that case is the kibbutz movement for collectivism or for equality?

In order to answer this question we have to examine kibbutz from a historical point of view. The communes were based on equality, they were founded in order to colonize our land, conquer work. The prevailing conditions called for collectivism which in turn is based on equality rather than on inequality.

The interrelationship of members on all levels in the commune is based on equality. There was no ideal of equality to start with. It all grew out of a necessity, out of the prevailing conditions at the time, out of the need to conquer the land.

The Histadrut (The Federation of labor) constitution is based on the principle of equality too. Though it is realized on a different level, equality is not a formal arrangement. It has to be instilled through education and ethics.

To my mind the principle of "all men are equal" is also one of the tenets of Jewish religion and tradition. Every man is equal before God. The Socialist Party has always maintained that although men are not created equal in their abilities and talents, they have, nevertheless, equal rights.

Equal rights, is an ethical imperative. Man has to fulfil his destiny in the prevailing conditions.

Is the kibbutz an ethical idea only? To my mind the kibbutz evolved out of the need to adapt to the Jewish resettlement of Israel, while creating a new class of farmers and laborers who make a living from an arid land with no natural resources. The kibbutz evolved out of the necessity to mould a new culture, and to create economic and physical security while each of its members contributed as much as he could to the common effort.

Thus our movement of togetherness and equality crystallized.
(Ba'Kibbutz, 1963)

THE HISTORICAL DESTINY

When I say that the kibbutz has "a historical destiny" I mean that it has a historical mission, a historical duty to perform. This a human concept of the word.

... To me the concept of "destiny" does not mean that something was "meant to be" but that there is some sort of relationship between life's phenomena, a kind of life unity which retrospectively seems to have been fated.

Every man has a mission in life, be it on an individual level or on a national one. His life's mission is voluntary. His choice to perform it is made from an ethical motive.

Kibbutz was the avant-garde movement of our nation in the early 20th century.

If kibbutz were not established on a voluntary basis it would not have the ethical potentials it has.

Nowadays, after the establishment of the State of Israel, the voluntary aspects of kibbutz are even more profound.

(Seminar Efal May 1964).

... From the start of the kibbutz movement it was divided as to the social concept on which it was based. Our aim was to renew society through collective creation and through a continuous educational process. This was not dependent on any special characteristic of our members, or on any preconceived notions. It was not conditional on an elite social class but on an ongoing process of creation.

Personal, social, and cultural lives are interwoven. We face the historic task of creating large collectives based on the ingathering of the exiles. The people forming these collectives have different cultural backgrounds. The commune is the way of forging them into a modern society while establishing farming collectives and colonizing the country.

We therefore must by on our way, and while we advance we shall forge our society, a society fit for everyman. This was the idea of Kinneret, Trumfeldor believed in it and so do we.

(Speeches B, page 129)

ON COOPERATION

... We strive to achieve an organic way of life on kibbutz by working and living collectively, by constant absorption of new comers and through a bathos of creation inherited from our collective suffering.

ON SECURITY

... Our minds and thoughts are constantly devoted to the need for security. This and colonization are closely interwoven in our collective awareness. The Palmah no doubt, resulted from this; without the Palmah we would not have been able to defend our borders.

It was not chance which dictated the location of our settlements at the expense of economic viability, we chose those sites with mostly their security in mind.

(E'fal, Jan. 1967).

SELF EMPLOYMENT AND HIRED LABOR

... We based our life on self employment, this leads to our negating hired labor.

Even after some kibbutzim took on hired labor they did not exploit them as capitalists do. After all we never stopped working alongside the laborer, usually doing the harder job. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference between self-employment and hired labor. In the capitalistic society which surrounds us, all of man's needs are supplied by another's labor — therefore labor equal goods.

In the attitude of kibbutz, work does not equal goods, rather work is a value per se. Values are a human concept and the attitude towards work is unique at a time when hundreds of thousands of people have given up their way of life as non-workers and have had to become laborers themselves.

The aspect we have of hired labor is therefore not the result of a negative attitude towards work rather the outcome of our positive attitude towards self employment.

(Course "C" E'fal).

ON EDUCATION

... Our way moulds a new Jewish human being in Palestine. He is a farmer and a soldier, a man of culture and ethics. Ours is a humanistic attitude which believes in man, and aspires to educate him so that he may achieve a change in the history of the Jews and of the whole world.

We have educated thousands and even if there are doubts and question marks, we have moulded a man who is of spiritual and ethical perfection.

Our kibbutzim have no tradition yet. We never selected our members, everyone is welcome wherever he may come from. Our settlements are secure social units and they prove that everyone can find his place with us, within in our "way of life for a multitude".

Saying this we don't claim kibbutz to be the one and only option. There are many variations and we fight for hegemony only via our strength, ability and success.

Building a form of self-employed worker's farm, we have achieved economic success even though we went to the borders rather than to the fruitful but densely settled coastal areas.

The future of mankind hangs on work and equality. We believe in free collectives as ideals for the future of our country and of other nations as well.

The hundreds of kibbutzim are an objective educating factor. Our way of life frees the newcomer from the confinement of his loneliness and gives him a chance at an active, creative life in natural surroundings. The kibbutz is an experience in which every member identifies with its aims and perspectives. This too is an educating factor. But then we also need formal education, and the highest kind that is available. Our target is to establish flourishing farms on which every dunam yields a maximal crop, every machine is full exploited, and every worker has a college degree.

Our schools can compete with all Israeli high schools in that they educate responsible independent persons who rely not on religion and fate, but on themselves as humane beings whose strength lies in their being equal and united.

(From a speech at the Givat Brenner Convention on Education 15th December, 1966).



4. THE POWER OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

KIBBUTZ AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The commune is one of the ways to achieve our aims of rebuilding the Jewish homeland. It is of value per se because it is based on equality, cooperation, and man's supremacy. In the collective there is no waste of energy through competition and by fighting one's rivals. Cooperation is conquering nature and harnessing it to man's needs, this is the ideal of socialists, and the dream of many intellectuals who are not, but, who believe in humane and religious ideals.

Our generation is indeed blessed in having been chosen to create our new homeland. We fight for our national existence, settle our country, and thus create a new man. Yet not Zionism alone is our driving force. We started out with the need to "conquer" work. Only later did we take the road of settling the land and creating independent farms. Nevertheless the value or our mission is not purely Zionist. We discovered an additional, not less important, value in the unity of men, who collectively undertook the responsibility of creating and sharing on the basis of equality. This human and socialist value grew out of the needs of the first settlers and became an ideal that created the Kibbutz Me'uhad.

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is an integral part of the labor movement. Both are rooted in the beginnings of the second Aliyah and continued to be formed and forged into organizations during the third Aliyah.

There is no ignoring the importance of "togetherness": Some of you may regard it as a drawback, but our movement is based on brotherhood and our aim is to achieve a way of life based on the togetherness of people.

(Speeches Bk. II, p. 223-224)

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS NOT IDENTICAL IDEAS

Authority is wielded by the Kibbutz Movement in order to elevate its members onto a higher level. Authority helps them integrate into life in Israel, get used to hard labor, learn the language and be part of the labor movement. This authority is accepted voluntarily, and if there are those who object, it usually is not against the concept of authority rather against some of its objectives.

Kibbutz Me'uhad does not expect its members to have collective ideas, or identical opinions. A person's thoughts are his own. But we expect our members to adhere to our collective actions and in most cases ideas and actions are identical.

A movement of thousands can not achieve collectivism in ideas. Most of us believe in Marxism and Darwinism yet we would never cast out those who do not...

(Speeches Bk II page 127).

BRANCHING OUT

In no way are our sons lesser men than the old timers. They are physically stronger, and outshine their elders in their ability to work and in their valor and daring. But they love their homes ignoring wider horizons. We dreamt of building a home for Israel but if we neglect the ideological aspect of our beautiful homes and ignore the fact that they are part and parcel of greater movement, we neglect our wider horizons.

The local kibbutz with its landscapes becomes their ideal. This is not enough in order to face the world with its different ideas, the world our sons meet on leaving for the army. These young people are not educated in a youth movement which would instill ideals in them and provide them with a way of life.

In the kibbutz there have recently been signs of neglecting any ideological thoughts and most members are happy to live their everyday life on a local basis. There is not harm in a positive relationship with your own kibbutz, but as long as there is a need for new settlements, as long as the collective is the means of rousing others in this country to build and settle the borders, we cannot afford to concentrate on our local problems.

Our existing kibbutzim have to be the source, the root, from which our sons may spread out and grow, as young people should.

(Ba'Kibbutz 1964)

OUR "IMPERIALISM"

...How does the Kibbutz Me'uhad's "Imperialism" manifest itself? It is through our striving to always be the first to tackle any hard or dangerous job. The Kibbutz Me'uhad never neglects any pioneering prospects. This is why our kibbutzim were the first to settle by the sea, start the fishing industry, join the police force, work in the stone quarries or in Sdom (the lowest spot on earth, where the temperature is unbelievably high, and where "salt" and other minerals were mined at a time of no air conditioning or even proper houses).

We were imperialists in that ours was the initiative to organize illegal immigration and to do everything in order to enhance the prosperity of the country and of our collectives at the same time...

The power of our kibbutzim is not measured by their numbers but in their places on the map...

(Speeches Bk II page 250)



5. THE KIBBUTZ ENVIRONMENT

OUR STANDARD OF LIVING

...A high Standard of living will not contribute to the strength of the kibbutz; it will not protect it from instability. The origin of the present crisis is in the doubts that we have about in the advantages of the Kibbutz. When we stop believing in our uniqueness, in our revolutionary mission, in our ability to build, we can no longer expect any stability.

We opted for our values. It was from free choice that we created kibbutz.

THE WORK AT SEA

... We were the pioneers to work on the sea. None of our members were born sailors or fishermen. Yet the very fact that we were a colonizing movement, made us realize that Jews do not require only the land but the sea as well. We have to conquer the sea with our fishing boats and our merchant ships. Only thus can the country be protected from the sea. Our members left their homes and volunteered to do these difficult jobs without any prior experience. They faced all the many hazards of life at sea because it was an ethical imperative and it was made through personal choice...

(Eital, Jan. 1962)

EQUALITY BUT NOT SIMILARITY

The first kibbutzim were unique in that they were formed by bachelors. There were hardly any families. I doubt whether there are settlements anywhere in the world, that were built by single people. After all, the family is the cornerstone of any society. Our families were left behind in the diaspora and when we arrived in this country we felt awkward among the local Jews, who lived in the towns or in the villages. Although we were one people, we did not belong.

We therefore started out on our own and as equals. Thus, equality became the cornerstone of our collectives. It was out of necessity and need. We had nothing, neither work nor property, but we were equal. All around us there were land owners, farmers, officials and Rabbis, a society that stressed the difference between people. We had to overcome their criticism and suspicion and struggle with the hardships of poverty and unemployment at the same time.

We never consciously considered our need for equality. It was just one of the realities of our hard new life. We were equal yet remained individualists. We were not alike one another. This goes for women members too.

The formal concept of equality cancels any special rights for whatever reason. The ideological concept of equality stresses the individual's rights to be himself. In the early days we were mistaken in thinking that women's equality depended on her being just like a man, doing the same kind of work, facing all the hardships like him, dressing like men, and behaving like him.

Male supremacy was not created by nature. There exists a completely natural dependence between the sexes. Man

cannot exist without women and vice versa. There is no continued life without the mating of the sexes. Nature never meant one to dominate the other. But in a society of domination — there can be no equality between men and women.

The collective being founded on the principle of equality between all members, regards everyone, women too, as equal but not identical. Man's individualism is of extreme importance. Man or woman has to foster it. In our kibbutz society there are no private property, no authorities, no dependence on others.

Our way of life is based on the abolishment of class distinction, of domination over other races, but most of all we are concerned with the inequality between the sexes.

We therefore reject those religious laws which dictate man's supremacy over women.

(Efal. 28. 7. 50).

COMMUNISM AND ETHICS

The kibbutz was not built with any preconceived ideas in mind. It developed while adapting itself to the conditions prevailing at the time. Our background in the diaspora has not prepared us to overcome the conditions we met, or the establish new relationships. We had to find a new way and thus tried communism.

During the years the collective developed in accordance with the need of free workers. The communist elements of kibbutz are ethical ones. They are different from State controlled communism. Our communism is an internal need of every member. In order to remain viable, our ideology had to adapt to change while fighting an economic — political —

revolution. Man is influenced by his religion, his countries constitution, his education but most of all he is motivated by his personal interests.

At a time when there is no state constitution the importance of the ethical aspects of man's relationships is cardinal.

No doubt that is the reason why kibbutz regards the ethical values of its members as of the utmost importance. The collective is established on a voluntary basis and therefore has to rely on its members ethics. There is bound to be a continuous selection and those who leave the kibbutz may perhaps weaken it temporarily.

We are convinced that life is sacred and that therefore all men have an equal right to live. This is the foundation of our communism and we say to each and every members: "Give according to your ability and you will receive according to your needs."

We must go on educating ourselves and our fellow members so that we may always remember the equality of others. This ongoing process is necessary because for generations man has been instilled with completely different values.

(Efal, 16. 7. 50).

THE KIBBUTZ WAY OF LIFE

No doubt, life on a kibbutz has to be socially self contained. Every kibbutz needs its own school, its own childrens houses and nurseries, social clubs, etc. Economic cooperation leads to cultural and social self sufficiency and independence.

The Kibbutz Meuhad regards each kibbutz as a self contained economic-social-cultural and educational unit.

(Speeches Bk II, page 193).

Each kibbutz is bound to be sociologically different from its neighbouring kibbutz. It may be bigger or smaller, it may be homogeneous as to its members country of origin, or have a membership from all over the diaspora. Its members may all be highly educated or made up of young people from lower class families who hardly completed their basic schooling. All this is going to affect the way of life on each kibbutz and of every member in it.

And the way of life is going to determine the tempo of its technological development, as well as its cultural, artistic and ideological make-up. It is going to affect its school and its Youth Aliyah groups (young people who are brought to kibbutzim from abroad, or from broken homes in Israel) No individual kibbutz can therefore be similar to another.

(Speeches Bk. II page 233)

KIBBUTZ FACTORIES

... I was asked about the place of industry on kibbutz. After all, this is a capitalist business venture! But one may ask the same question about agriculture: the fields of Deganyah could be tilled by any capitalist land owner or even by a cooperative of laborers, for instance by a moshav (a form of cooperative settlement which also disowns exploitation of hired labor).

All those who admire our collective way of life from the humanistic, socialist and national aspect, will understand the importance of kibbutz industry. They will realize that handicraft, transportation, industry and agriculture are all part and parcel of the same collective unit — the Kibbutz.

(Speeches Bk II, page 252).

★★★★★

So far, we have kibbutzim with a membership up to a thousand members. We have no idea how life on an even larger kibbutz would be organized. We can attempt to envision a communist city and will in the future strive towards establishing one in our kibbutz way.

This city may be founded either through the combination of several kibbutzim, or slowly grow from a number of communes in towns. Whatever time it takes, we believe in the kibbutz way of life for the multitudes...

(Speeches page 254).

KIBBUTZIM: A BIG AND GROWING CONCERN

The ideology of Kibbutz Me'uhad may be summed up as the establishment of big and growing kibbutzim, both as to the number of its members and the size of the farm. It means a continuous dynamic development programme for each kibbutz with every member actively participating.

Kibbutz promotes the idea of a Zionist-Socialist commune, a collective in which a large and growing number of members cooperate in order to achieve the common goal.

When we stress the idea of a "big and growing kibbutz", we seem to be saying that there is no limit to such a kibbutz. This of course is a misunderstanding. The individual kibbutz is limited by the cultivation area at its disposal and by all the other economic factors. Nevertheless, we intend each kibbutz to grow to the limit of its capacities in order to absorb as many members as possible and enhance their material and cultural lives. Our ideals are those of every human being in our world; namely a continuous development of man's capacities, his supremacy over nature, his living a productive life of settling an arid land, his realizing a dream...

(Speeches, Bk II)



6. A WAY OF LIFE

THE POWER OF IDENTIFICATION

.... Everyone is dependent on his social environment. This dependence leads to either a harmonious relationship or to hate and war. There can never be a complete identification between the individual and his social environment in a capitalist set up.

We in kibbutz have to cope with this problem too. The abolishment of private property does not necessarily lead to a profound change in man's character attitudes. Nevertheless, as soon as the physical conditions are altered there occurs a change in man's spiritual make up. When the individual identifies with his environment, his powers of creation, his physical and spiritual power grows. (E'fal, April 1933)

ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

What is communism? It is the concept of a person identifying with his society, and the society's identification with each individual. However, the society in question has to control all its members' needs, there must be no psychological disharmony. A feeling of unity between each individual and his environment is paramount. Society must be a part of each members' personality, his way of life, as well as a condition for his well being.

If the society is in difficulties, each member is affected. But in a prosperous society the individual's well being is assured. Collectivism is not the cardinal element of our communes. In the history of mankind there have been several collective

societies. It is equality which is the mainspring of kibbutz; the equality between old and young, between the boy and the oldtimer, between the sanitation worker and the general secretary. Each and every member is a part of the whole and fulfills a necessary function for the well being of all. This is a humane sort of equality not a functional one.

Equality was a cardinal concept of the primitive communes, it is important for the future ones as well.

(Efi'el, Feb. 1962)

A STAGE IN HISTORY

History is continuous change and the commune is not the last chapter of development. There will be further stages in the history of mankind even after the abolishment of private property and the collective ownership of the means of production.

The kibbutz is one such stage. It differs from all other societies because of the complete identification of the individual with his society and because of having abolished the individual's direct responsibility for his personal existence....

(Efi'el, March 1962)

THE POWER OF LOVE

... Our strength lies in the identification of the collective with each individual, his life, his happiness and sorrows.

Kibbutz is the torch-bearer for our people. It carries the light for every Jew — and even if there is a feeling of crisis, these are only the birth pangs. Nothing better than the kibbutz has been created anywhere yet.

Our life is saturated with love. A love for all the Jewish people, a love of life, a love of our country, a love for our fellow human beings and for mankind the world over.

However, do we have enough love to bring others to live in our homes? Can we find the strength to open our hearts to newcomers and accept them so that our kibbutz will be a home for any more?

We have not yet discovered the road that bridges kibbutz and the people of Israel. We built the kibbutz not for the select few. A strong belief in ourselves is needed if we want to reach out and conquer. (At Tabenkin's 65th Birthday party, January, 1952).

A CONTINUOUS TENSION

Man is our single most important tool. Man's strength lies in his attitudes towards the environment. Our values can never be taken for granted, we have to struggle day after day to maintain them. Our society is never stable.

There is a continuous tension to achieve the unity and strength of our collective.

(Speeches Bk II page 229).

MAN'S NEEDS

Man's needs are manifold. We have not yet discovered all

the fountains from which he is nourished. We have to find a way to grant an education to each member, to bring him the joy of culture of art, poetry, and music to make living worthwhile.

(Ein Harod 1927).

ON EDUCATION

I remember all those whose life was changed here in Ein Harod. I can see the German Youth Aliyah kids who learned how to work, who became Jews, who died a hero's death in our wars, who went to work as stevedores in the ports, who became less rigid in their social ways — who have joined our collective as full-fledged members.

I remember those young Polish immigrants who adapted to our way of life and to a new culture.

I remember those who came from Yemen, those very few with an Oriental background who dared to join our collective way of life. I see in front of me many members who took their first steps in a Jewish socialist-workers collective here in Ein-Harod. They are our equals now.

I therefore regard our kibbutzim primarily as places of education.

(Speeches B. page 218)

ON EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

... Our communes are surrounded by an alien world. This alien world is not just external — it is internal too, it is inherent within the soul of each and every kibbutz member.

Generations of capitalist influences of a family life based on private ownership — these have left their mark and we are faced with a problem.

The Kibbutz can not afford to let its family units be founded on private property. After all, the abolishment of private property is the cornerstone of collective ownership by the kibbutz.

Our institutions of collective education have to fight not against families outside the kibbutz, but against the inherent trend of private ownership handed down to us by the Jewish family spirit in the diaspora.

We must tell each of our members, sons, that there is a new purpose in his life. Ours is not the power of money or of property, but the brain and brawn of our members. These will produce everything we may need, even money, but they can never be bought with money.

(E'fal, January 1967).

...I was asked what part the kibbutz has played in the development of Israel. In other words, what is the Zionist message of kibbutz? Besides establishing a home for the many new immigrants who join kibbutz, besides building an ethical society on a high level, there is the consideration of the value of kibbutz towards its members as individuals, or as Jews and socialists.

Any kibbutz members who regard national security as the problem of the I.D.F. (Israel Defence Forces) and the Border Police, who believe Zionism to be the concern of the Zionist parties and the Jewish Agency, who leave socialism to the Labor Federation, is mistaken. Kibbutz is not just concerned with fulfilling the needs of each individual. Kibbutz has an

historic mission too, a mission of Zionist Socialist and humane values.

(E'fal, June, 1962).

ON THE STANDARD OF LIVING

Technical development will raise the standard of living. The more we prosper the bigger our needs and expectations. Items which only a few enjoyed in the past, will become standard.

This also goes for all those cultural needs which are today enjoyed by only an aristocratic minority — books, theatre, music, art, will all become essential for everybody.

We are striving to achieve a high material and cultural standard of living. This is, of course, dependent on our rate of production. We must never forget that in order to maintain our independence, we must live strictly within our means.

... (E'fal, Feb. 1962)

THE AUTHORITY OF PUBLIC OPINION

Our prosperous farms and settlements are based on the voluntary contribution of each and every member. Yet we also rely on the authority of internal public opinion in order to achieve this. Our members may not relax after their daily 8 hour shift at their jobs. Everyone is expected to be actively involved in our social-political or cultural life and contribute according to his or her ability.

A society based on the principle of collectivism, has to rely on a internal democratic system. This can only function if

there is a voluntary discipline actively supported by each individual.

(Speeches B, page 79).

ON STUDYING

Our way is the way of the future. We, therefore, have to include the entire knowledge of civilization, its technological and scientific progress, in the kibbutz.

Our agricultural and industrial progress has been achieved not just because of our collective ownership or the principle of equality, but because of the priority with which we regard studying. Everyone who is sent to study, is free from any economic cares, is free from worries. If we were to stop the process of raising our intellectual level we might lose our way...

(E'fal, 1967).

ON KIBBUTZ ARTISTS

... Kibbutz way of life entails voluntary creation and a belief in ideals and ideology. It has to provide answers to each and every individual's needs.

This applies to kibbutz artists as well. There is no dividing factor between the artist and the kibbutznik. We have only one God, in art, in politics, in economy, in all other aspects of our life.

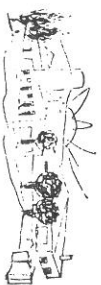
Art does not exist without freedom. We cannot expect the artist to create to order. His work must be done from a personal choice... An artist who gives us joy as spectators, enriches us. We have fought for the right of an artist to work

at his craft, we must therefore grant him the right to show his creations even if they are not to our taste. We must be openminded and accept new trends in art, in its content as well as in the materials used. They are inherent in our collective humanity.

(Talk with kibbutz Artists. August 1958)

Kibbutz life is not easy, it is not a "life of plenty", yet we are not consumed with envy of our neighbours outside the kibbutz. In spite of the hard times, we would never consider changing our way of life... Although we are far from being perfect, we feel a deep feeling of satisfaction while realizing our Zionist-Socialist dream.

(Speeches B, page 199).



**7. KIBBUTZ —
A HISTORICAL
REALITY —
NOT A UTOPIA**

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is an all-encompassing way of life. The individual interest of every member, is of concern to the society as a whole. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to let the individual's interest effect all our discussions. Even mundane matters are concerned with the spiritual — ideological — social and cultural aspects of life. We are Jewish laborers, we have humanistic aspirations — all of which we achieve through our kibbutz way of life.

When we are concerned with the very existence of kibbutz, all political problems are relegated to the background. The kibbutz is the cornerstone, the foundation not the result of our political life.

The kibbutz preceded the State of Israel. The establishment of the collective came before there was any state authority. It was not a coincidence that the establishment of the kibbutz movement led to the solving of problems of paramount national importance. The kibbutz created new perspectives towards social, economic and personal attitudes. Man's horizon was widened. His whole way of life was influenced.

It all started from the moment the kibbutz ceased to be an incident in a person's life and became a way of life. This entailed a different attitude towards economic, national and social problems. It enabled each individual to fulfill his mission in life and enhanced each person's value in the collective. A hundred people in a commune are much more powerful than a hundred individuals elsewhere. The collective is a source of strength and of viability.

The kibbutz movement established our agriculture and industry. It founded a new system of education including our youth movement.

This is where the political parties came in. The first

kibbutzim were not politically affiliated. They were the ones who designed the various parties:

The Kevutza set up the programme and aims of "Hapoel-Hatzair". The "Ha-Shomer" communes established the path of "Po'alei Zion", in Palestine.

"Abdut ha-Avodah" was founded as a result of the prevailing conditions and needs; it was backed by the kibbutz settlements and paved the way for the "Histadrut".

This raised the question of the place of kibbutz in the complex of national priorities. To our way of thinking kibbutz is of singular importance because of its economic viability and because of its collective and individual strength.

Hence the controversy between Berl Katzenelson, a prominent labor leader, and Kibbutz Me'uhad. In his lucid way, Berl voiced the opinion of many in the labor movement, who regard kibbutz as "just a way of life", one of many, but without any special national priorities. But for us kibbutz has a special value. The commune in which every individual identifies with the collective, is a revolutionary set-up without equivalent.

I am not going to claim that without kibbutz there is no solution to the problems of the existence of the Jewish people. But no doubt, the kibbutz way of life promises a broader foundation and a different tempo of establishing the National Jewish homeland.

Kibbutz is no longer a utopia. It is a valuable reality in the life of our people, our country. Kibbutz is a historical fact of life...

(E'fal, 1962)

A HISTORIC EXPERIMENT?

... The kibbutz fulfills an important experimental function in the realization of Socialism. The abolishment of private property has also brought about the abolishment of the society's control over the individual. Many of the opponents of Socialism and the commune predict in their books, speeches and fantasies that a socialist society is going to turn man into a robot. A person will have to take orders from his first day to his last.

We claim that kibbutz has an experimental value. Because it is the first experiment in the world of a society functioning without any outside authority over the individual, a society on a voluntary basis. I realize of course that the religious and utopian communes had an important experimental value too. But they were centred around a religious ideal rather than a social one. The Israeli kibbutz was established by an objective process of development — it is integrated in the pioneering way of life; it is an organic part of the Zionist revolutionary process, it therefore, has a future. (E'fal, 1962).

THE KIBBUTZ — AN ONGOING PROCESS

... If we sometimes have an uncomfortable feeling caused by those aspects of life that we inherited from our capitalist environment, we must try to overcome it. Any doubt about the lack of private property, any fear of a social anarchy, have to be dealt with. We have to keep in mind that revolution is usually a single act, a dramatic one! But our building a new society is an ongoing process one that requires a patient as well as a psychological, educational and ethical attitude.

(E'fal 1962)



8. IT'S A GOOD LIFE

What is Kibbutz? How was the Kibbutz Me'uhad forged into one entity with thousands of individual members?

The Kibbutz Me'uhad is a union of settlements, a collective of thousands of blue collar workers, old-timers and children, young boys and girls in the youth movements. All of these united to form the Kibbutz Me'uhad. But even being all of this the kibbutz is also an idea, a way of life, an ideology.

This ideology has to be studied and studied intensively; in courses and seminars or through life's experience. But even then there is no guarantee that you'll become a full fledged kibbutz member.

One of the Jewish sages defined the Jewish law in one sentence "Love thy neighbour as you love thyself." We on kibbutz go on from there. We have raided the flag which will lead us to a new way of live. This is where we started, in Ein Harod, the Spring of Harod. Jews have lived here for many centuries. This is where Gideon smit the Amalek, where Saul and Jonathan fell. And at the foot of the same Mt Gilboa in the valley of Jezreel, the kibbutz Me'uhad was created.

On our coming to Erez Israel, we were not the first. We met with the "old Yishuv" those Jews who had been living in Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias, and Jaffa. They had come here to keep their ancient laws, the Torah. I respect them for it, but we came to this ancient land with the same love to create new laws, a new heritage. They studied law from scrolls and letters, we rewrite ours on the landscape, on the hills and the valleys, releasing the ancient land from its arid desolation.

But by the time we arrived there was a "new Yishuv" here too! All those who were familiar to us from the diaspora, men of property, keen on making money and who believed in private enterprise. They claimed that the whole world was

founded on private property and capital and saw no reason for Eretz-Israel to be different.

Not so the kibbutz; We said "No" to capitalism. We said "No" to the city, to a life surrounded by walls, far from nature and green fields. We said "No" to the crowded way of life in highrising houses, to the loneliness of the individual within the masses. We said "no" to alienation from our land.

But we said "yes" to a different Kind of life, life in a kibbutz, a place with industry but also with a highschool and an art centre. A place where people would dance not because they had been paid to do so but for joy and a feeling of achievement, a dance in which the many individuals would become an integral part of the whole country. No Capitalism, no jobs threatened by unemployment; no slavery and trudgery of a farmer, of the Arab Felach or the Russian Muzick, but a collective effort for the benefit of each and every one. "No", to exploitation and competition but a toiling in ones own factory for ones own community, for one's own future in the kibbutz.

No exploitation, but a high standard of efficiency, aided and abetted by machines, science, and new techniques, and the creation of property not as a means in itself, but in order to safeguard a standard of living of one's family, one's children, one's friends, for the prosperity of all... In the early twenties, when we first raised our flag, we had no land, no money, no profession. We were poor as mice, living in tents, but we had a dream. Our dream promised salvation to our people to Jews as well as to all humanity. We believe that the kibbutz can absorb all the people, it is not a place for the elite...

We were poor in earthly possession but rich in spiritual ones. Today, no one is hungry or barefoot. We have a roof over our heads. We also have a cemetery and roots.

We still look odd to our brothers. We are a new kind of Jew and therefore hard to understand. But ours is a good life and perhaps the multitudes will join us some day in the future, when they decide to give up the rat race. It is a good life. We have to believe in ourselves, in our values, — because without those we are nothing.

(Speech at a gathering of kibbutz youngsters Ein Harod October, 8th 1959).

GLOSSARY

ACHDUT-HAAVODA — The large Zionist Socialist Labour Party of the 1920's which later merged with Hapoel Hazair to form the Mapai Labor Party.

ALIYA — Immigration to Israel, lit. "Going up to a higher step".

AVODA — Work, labor.

BERL KATZENELSON — One of the three main leaders of the Zionist labor movement, which were: David Ben Gurion, Berl Katzenelson and Tabenkin.

COMMUNISM, COMMUNIST — Tabenkin uses these words not in the usual political sense, but for a movement (or an idea) of a communal way of life.

DEGANIA — One of the first kevuvtot, situated near the lake of Kinneret, founded in 1909.

EIN HAROD — The first large kibbutz, founded in 1924, in the beginning a part of Gedud Ha'avoda, later the nucleus of the Kibbutz Hameuchad.

GERMAN YOUTH ALIYA — Youngsters who were brought from Hitler-dominated Germany and were absorbed mostly in kibbutzim.

HAGANA — The general underground self-defence organisation of the Zionist movement, and recognised by the majority of the Jewish population of the Land of Israel. Founded in 1920.

HAG'SHAMA — or **Self-realisation** — An expression used by the pioneers who dreamed of a new way of life in Eretz Israel.

HAKHSHARA — Center for agricultural training and other preparations — for pioneer youth in the Diaspora.

HAPOEL HATZAIR — A non-marxist socialist zionist party which emphasised humanistic socialism.

HA-SHOMER — One of the first underground self-defence organization during the Ottoman rule in Palestine.

J. TRUMPELDOR — One of the heroes of Jewish self-defence. Was killed in 1921 at the defence of Tel-Hai. Was one of the instigators of the idea of settling Israel by communes.

KEVUTZA-KEVUTZOT (Plur) — Small intimate commune — in contradiction to the large and open kibbutz.

KIBBUTZ ARTSI — A left-wing kibbutz federation which was founded by the members of the Hashomer Hazair youth movement (1927).

KIBBUTZ MEUCHAD — Kibbutz movement, founded in 1927, of which Yitzhak Tabenkin was the spiritual leader. The largest kibbutz movement until 1951, with a high political interest, affiliated with the Labor Party.

KINNERET — Also one of the first kevuvtzot, not far from Degania.

MOSHAV — Cooperative (non-communal) settlement, based on small family farms.

OPPENHEIMER'S COOPERATIVE IN MERHAVIA — Oppenheimer was one of the ideologists of cooperative farming. Merhavia was based on his ideas. Today Merhavia is a kibbutz affiliated to the Kibbutz Haarti.

POALEI ZION — A marxist socialist zionist party which began its way in Russia and later became a part of the Achduth Ha-Avoda Party.

SEGERA — collective at the beginning of Jewish settlement, founded by I.C.A. as a training farm.

SYRKIN NACHMAN — Zionist leader in Russia 1868. Active in revolutionary circles.

TZAHAL — (Tzava Hagana L'Yisrael) — The "Israel Defense Forces" — IDF.

YISHUV — The pre-state Jewish community in Palestine.
