Chapter 6
When Fantasies Meet Realities

A second, likewise holy law must be fulfilled, given to us and thereby to all other people of the earth by scripture ... “There should be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you!” No people in this world have suffered so terribly from the transgression of this high law than the people of Israel dispersed among all peoples. This tough lesson must not be forgotten! We should and must take into our heart the inhabitants of the Holy Land in full brotherhood. We should treat them as full citizens with all rights, without any exception. Otherwise, we prove all those right that in past, present and future will breach and have breached our full civil rights. Here, too, the pinnacle of science only just attained what the genius already realized three thousand years ago. Protection of national minorities is its last word. ... The Jew, the victim of all injustice, is designated through Jacob’s blessing to realize justice. This conviction kept him upright through unspeakable torment, now the time of fulfillment has arrived.¹

The final chapter of this book returns to trace Oppenheimer’s biography more closely to shed new light on some more well-known aspects of his Zionist engagement. The tension between Oppenheimer’s German and Jewish nationalism has always fascinated his biographers. Most emphasized the former while downplaying the latter as a brief chapter in Oppenheimer’s life. A further biographical focal point often presented, but not resolved, was the tension between Oppenheimer’s German and Jewish patriotic sentiments and his liberal universal approach. This chapter revisits these tensions drawing on the findings from the inquiry into Oppenheimer’s Zionist network, the Alteandelnd circle, regarding the entanglement with German colonial and racial discourses and the alignment of the two nationalisms. It deals with these issues by examining Oppenheimer’s ethnic conception of Judaism and the resulting political implications concerning minority rights of Jews vis a vis Arabs, as well as Poles and Germans.

Further, it places Oppenheimer in conversation and debate with other political and national camps within the Zionist movement at large and German Zionism in particular. After Herzl’s death Oppenheimer needed to find new political allies. Most prominent were members of the Austrian Poalei Zion. His ideas are examined here in the context of other Zionist thinkers and parties with whom he interacted. With changing political tastes, the influence of a generation seeking to gain recognition for Jews as Germans dwindled. A young generation of German Zionists more in tune with changing political sentiments in Germany now strived for recognition by accentuating the differences between Jews and Ger-

¹ CZA A161–15.
mans, and by demanding a pronounced disassociation of Zionism from German politics. Finally, this chapter demonstrates how Oppenheimer and others, undeterred by the new generation’s ascent, transferred key concepts and attitudes developed by the Altneuland circle into new situations in which Jewish national interests and German imperial aspirations became entangled. It examines how the attempt to knit Zionism into a German imperial and colonial context was carried forward into the First World War, culminating in the collapse of that very empire.

Oppenheimer and the Austrian Poalei Zion

Several factors brought Oppenheimer closer to the Austrian Poalei Zion. First, Oppenheimer’s fusion of social utopia with national distinctions, while retaining a materialist focus on class issues, appealed to those holding an Austro-Marxist outlook “whose distinctiveness lay precisely in the recognition of national frameworks as legitimate vehicles for the advance toward socialism.”² Oppenheimer’s veneration for Austrian Social Democrats such as Karl Renner, father of the first Austrian republic, and his expert on citizenship issues Rudolf Laun brought him closer to the ideology of the Austrian Poalei Zion.³ This outlook was shared by other branches of Poalei Zion. For example, American Poalei Zion emphasized that “progressive nationalism” and socialism can go hand in hand since “socialism is international and not cosmopolitan.”⁴ Unlike Oppenheimer they used the term “cosmopolitanism” as assimilation. Nevertheless, they shared with him the goal of preventing the loss of Jewish distinctiveness and self-respect.

Another important convergence was Oppenheimer’s focus on rural reform and the creation of a Jewish farming class to counteract the degenerated socio-economic Jewish existence in the diaspora as an urban proletariat. In 1906 Shlomo Kaplansky, a key ideologist in the Austrian Poalei Zion, invited Oppenheimer, who already established himself as the leading Zionist land reform expert, to contribute to Der jüdische Arbeiter, the party newspaper which he edited. Kaplansky disapproved of the Russian revolution’s land reforms and deemed them incompatible with the industrial focus of Marxist ideology. He preferred that Zionism adhere to a different socialist agenda.⁵

³ Shimoni, The Zionist Ideology, 190.
⁵ Franz Oppenheimer und der Zionismus, 3.
Finally, Austrian Poalei Zion sought to promote practical Zionism through its cooperation with Oppenheimer. Although the Zionist Organization had already officially adopted a practical approach supplementing its political strivings, and more specifically Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative advanced by Herzl, the implementation was impeded under David Wolffsohn’s leadership. It was only through the engagement of Poalei Zion, and especially of prominent Austrian Poalei Zion members such as Kaplansky and Nathan Gross, that Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative was finally established under a Zionist aegis.⁶

Oppenheimer expanded his propagandistic activity in Austria-Hungary. In 1907, near the end of his involvement in *Altneuland*, Oppenheimer delivered a lecture in Vienna at the Jüdischer Kolonisationsverein in which he displayed a deeper knowledge of Palestine’s economy, agriculture and nosology than ever before. The Jüdischer Kolonisationsverein aimed to enlist broader support for Zionist settlement among the non-Zionist and acculturated strata of Viennese Jewish society. Oppenheimer utilized *Altneuland*’s strategy of making colonization issues more appealing to a Jewish public by emphasizing the favorable economic prospects and promising returns on investment, as well as the prospects of Christian support. The goal was to encourage wealthier non-Zionist Jews to participate, not out of ideological but rather out of economic and even German patriotic inclinations.⁷ Oppenheimer was a very active and successful Zionist fundraiser, with the exception of his activities in the United States, or as he humorously called himself, the “Schnorrer King.”⁸

In 1907, at the Eighth Zionist Congress in The Hague, delegates of Poalei Zion returned Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative to the agenda. Gross and Kaplansky raised the question of the model of Jewish farmers that Zionism was then pursuing: Should Jews be installed as manor lords employing mostly cheap Arab laborers, or should the Jewish masses do the farming themselves

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⁷ Oppenheimer, *Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation in Palästina*, 4–7. Perhaps influenced by *Altneuland*’s statistical emphasis on the underpopulation of the Middle East and Palestine, especially in the articles of Trietsch, his close associate at the beginning of his Zionist involvement, Oppenheimer conveyed the impression that the land was “deserted.” His statistics of the Arab population were higher and more exact after the war. The higher numbers did not deter Oppenheimer in his belief that Arabs could be integrated into a Jewish society; see Franz Oppenheimer, *Bericht an die zionistischen Behörden ueber meine Reise als Gutachter nach Palästina in Maerz-April 1926*, CZA A161–15, 4–5.

in a cooperative form along the lines Oppenheimer suggested? Gross reminded
the congress that Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative was embraced by
Herzl and adopted by the Sixth Zionist Congress. With Warburg’s support,
Gross petitioned for the reinstatement of Oppenheimer’s cooperative. Oppen-
heimer was not present at the congress, having been sidelined by illness.
Adolf Böhm, another Austrian Poalei Zion delegate, gave a speech at the con-
gress about the importance of creating a class of sedentary Jewish agricultural
laborers for which Oppenheimer’s cooperative was most suitable. In his Zionist
historiography Böhm ascribed to Oppenheimer authorship of the theory that the
national character of a land is determined by its farmers and not the manor own-
ers.

Oppenheimer reached this conclusion during his experience as a young
physician in the province of Poznan, which was annexed by Prussia during
the eighteenth century. He regarded himself as a critic of Prussian settlement
politics in Poland. In his opinion, the “conquest by the sword” through the force-
ful settlement of ethnic Germans as gentry and independent farmers led to dis-
placement, oppression, mass poverty and moral decline among the local Polish
population. Furthermore, he argued, this policy had proved counterproductive to
the aim of national integration. Instead of Germanizing the local population,
Germanic settlers, both farmers and gentry, had adopted a predominantly Polish
identity within just two generations. Hence, according to Oppenheimer, Zionist
settlement politics should pursue the creation of a class of independent Jewish
farmers using cooperative models since the “lower class in Palestine must be
Jewish or else the land will never become Jewish.”

Gross and Kaplansky were also drawing on the experience of Germanic set-
tlements in Central and Eastern Europe, and to some extent of Poles and Ukrai-
nians in Eastern Galicia. In his speech at the Eighth Zionist Congress, Gross
warned that “every hundred Jewish families attract six thousand Arabs; if this
continues, we shall fall victim to the same fate as the Germans in certain Slavic

9 Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 48–51.
10 In the first volume of his history of the Zionist movement Böhm defended the installation of
a technocratic administration in the first phase of Oppenheimer’s cooperative model. He de-
scribed the Moshav Ovdim as resembling Oppenheimer’s second phase of worker independence;
see Adolf Böhm, Die zionistische Bewegung bis zum Ende des Weltkrieges, vol. 1, Die zionistische
Bewegung (Tel-Aviv: Hozaa Ivrit, 1935), 236–237, 239 and 445. For a short biography of Adolf
Böhm, who was the most profound disciple of Oppenheimer among Zionist settlement activists,
see Penslar, Zionism and Technocracy, 118.
11 Oppenheimer, Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes, 94–95.
12 Die Welt, January 10, 1908, 10.
lands.”¹³ The threat of assimilation through Jewish dispersion throughout the globe, expressed in *Altneuland*, also loomed over settlement in Palestine. Economic development was expected to improve the living standards of local populations and attract Arab immigrants unless prohibitive action was taken. The “conquest by the plow” aimed to counteract this process by normalizing the Jewish professional pyramid with a wide farming basis that extended deep into the countryside and away from metropolitan areas. Allegedly, this did not entail exclusion of local populations from integrating into the farming class. As will be shown in the next section, Oppenheimer believed that a strong basis of Jewish farmers would protect Jews from assimilation and perhaps facilitate Arab acculturation into the new Jewish culture.

The Eighth Zionist Congress paved the way for practical settlement and the establishment of Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative by incorporating the CEP into the Inner Actions Committee as a distinct department called the Palästina Ressort, headed by Otto Warburg. This was followed by the opening of the Palestine Office in Jaffa, headed by Arthur Ruppin, and subsequently the Palestine Land Development Company funded by the JNF and private companies for purchasing and brokering land¹⁴ and preparing cooperative settlement.¹⁵ In 1907 Jakob Thon, secretary of the Palestine Office, became editor of *Altneuland*, which had reverted to its old-new name, *Palästina*.¹⁶

Even if Oppenheimer was not the sole proponent of the cooperative idea within the Zionist movement, he was certainly perceived as its instigator. According to Shafir, this was Oppenheimer’s “tremendous” Zionist legacy: “It was not the establishment of the Degania *kvutza* then that was epoch-making, notwithstanding such interpretations by historians, but the setting up of Oppenheimer’s settlement-cooperative.”¹⁷ This was manifested in Ruppin’s promotion of different forms of collective and cooperative settlements on land acquired by the JNF for creating an independent farmer class.

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¹⁴ Private entrepreneurship played an important role in colonial enterprises including Germany’s. For the role of private capital in the early settlement of Palestine, see Kats, *The “Business” of Settlement*, 217–224.
¹⁵ Even if Oppenheimer’s cooperative model was ultimately not emulated, Shafir emphasized its importance for the masterminds of early Zionist settlement; see Shafir, *Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 158.
¹⁶ Interestingly, the 1907 volume of *Palästina* was listed as fourth. The editors either disregarded the years before *Palästina* was taken over by the CEP or considered the second volume of *Palästina* spanning the years 1902/1903 to be two volumes.
Like Oppenheimer, Ruppin was also influenced by the ethnic and class conflict in Poznan, where he spent his childhood. This had left the memory of “the permanent struggle between the Polish majority living on the land and the dominant, mainly urban, German population.”\(^{18}\) In his memoirs Ruppin wrote: “when I established ![\[1\]]{} the kvutza at Degania, I thought that in this fashion the idea of the Siedlungsgenossenschaft, which was advocated by Franz Oppenheimer in the 1903 Congress, was realized, though Degania might have diverged from Oppenheimer’s rules in a few particulars. For me, the cooperative side of this settlement was the essential aspect; the rest was incidental.”\(^{19}\) According to Ruppin’s biographer Etan Bloom, Ruppin’s main divergence from Oppenheimer’s model was his hands-on management style of Degania. Ruppin sought direct contact with local workers, in contrast to Oppenheimer’s management from afar through a mediator. The comparison between Degania and Merhavia shaped the collective memory of the labor movement and the historical narrative of Zionist settlement. The competition between the two management styles probably led to the Palestine Office’s reluctance to support Merhavia.\(^{20}\)

In 1909 the Austrian Poalei Zion nominated Oppenheimer as a delegate on their behalf to the Ninth Zionist Congress in Hamburg. According to Kaplansky, Oppenheimer was unable to secure a nomination in the German delegation.\(^{21}\) Although Oppenheimer’s cooperative plan was frowned upon by the German Zionist leadership, a large portion of the money for the Erez Israel Siedlungsgenossenschaft Fund, created at Oppenheimer’s initiative at the Ninth Zionist Congress, came from the rows of German Zionists.\(^{22}\) Also, farmers from Palestine, whose voice and Hebrew tongue were almost unheard at prior Zionist congresses, traveled to Hamburg to express their support for practical settlement and the implementation of Oppenheimer’s cooperative schemes. Of significant note was a speech by a female pioneer, another rare sight at the podium of the Zionist congresses thus far, which caused a great stir among the delegates.\(^{23}\)


\(^{19}\) Cited in Shafir, *Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 178. The exclamation mark in the brackets appears in the original.


\(^{21}\) Kressel, *Franz Oppenheimer*, 54. For more on the efforts of Kaplansky and Gross to advance Oppenheimer’s cooperative settlement within the ZO, see Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy*, 116–118.

\(^{22}\) Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy*, 119.

Oppenheimer agreed to the utilization of capital from the Erez Israel Siedlungsgenossenschaft fund for other communal settlement forms, such as the kvutza at Um Djumi, a communal experiment of a more communist streak. Oppenheimer regarded it with the openness of a scientist in search of a control group enabling comparison with his model.²⁴ He considered this kvutza – which later became Degania ultimately overshadowing Merhavia – too small and intimate to be considered a real alternative to his extendable cooperative settlement.²⁵ Hence, his support for Um Djumi, regardless of the warnings he expressed at the Hamburg congress about the problematic way communist-inclined workers view cooperative administrators as “capitalist exploiters.”²⁶ This issue, as well as the question of Arab labor, would be detrimental to Oppenheimer’s Zionist cooperative experiment Merhavia.

Zionism and Cosmopolitanism

The threat of Jewish assimilation was a driving force for Oppenheimer and other German Zionists. This was a higher priority for them than mass emigration or the founding of a Jewish state.²⁷ Oppenheimer joined the Zionist movement out of desire to restore Jewish self-assurance and even “mastery” within a European order, as well as disdain for what he considered to be futile attempts at complete assimilation. He abhorred baptized Jews who adopted the cultural code of anti-semitism and pretended to be Aryan.²⁸ However, the threat of assimilation was not limited to Europe. During the Ninth Zionist Congress in Hamburg in 1909, Oppenheimer was commissioned to implement his cooperative model in Palestine, with Merhavia founded in the following year. In his speech at the congress, Oppenheimer reminded the delegates of Herzl’s endorsement of his cooperative model shortly before his death. He reiterated the benefit of his plan to what he understood as the purpose of Zionism: the transplantation of Eastern European Jews without them assimilating into the general population – which in the case of Palestine meant becoming Arabs or Turks – through agriculturally oriented cooperative settlement.²⁹

²⁴ Shafir, Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 179; Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 84.
²⁶ Verhandlungen des IX. Zionisten-Kongresses, 202.
²⁸ Oppenheimer, “Stammbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein,” 139.
Oppenheimer was not condescending towards Arabs. Sometimes he regarded them romantically as noble nomads, possibly of a higher culture than the Ostjuden who were accordingly in danger of assimilating into Arab culture. When describing Herzl’s appearance, he did not use the Moses imagery, as many in Eastern Europe did, but rather envisioned him as Harun al-Rashid.\(^{30}\) Even when talking about Arabic “vengefulness,” Oppenheimer did not seek to villainize Arabs but to romantically portray the bloodshed as a sort of evolutionary service. In his view, this provided pioneers with the experience of heroic sacrifices, improving the ability of the Jewish race to defend itself.\(^{31}\)

To prevent assimilation, Oppenheimer planned to settle Eastern European Jews in the countryside, not as manor owners or agricultural laborers but as farmers. The settlement cooperative would create an environment in which they could learn the necessary farming skills together with values necessary for national cohesiveness and citizenship that Ostjuden allegedly lacked. Furthermore, his analysis of the emergence of the state demonstrated that with the merging of the gentry and the lower classes into one society the language of the gentry was more likely to disappear or at the very least become a hybrid of common peasant language.\(^{32}\) Oppenheimer believed this would make the peasantry lack the backbone of national culture, leading him to conclude that long term nation-building could only be attained with the plow and not with the sword. Oppenheimer argued that Arabs should not be excluded from the farmer class, lest they fall into the hands of nationalist Arab bourgeois instigators. Hence, Oppenheimer was a rare Zionist promoting a plan not only for the integration – but ultimately for the assimilation – of Arabs into a future Jewish national culture. It was the duty of the Jew, due to past exclusion, to include others in their future society and prove to Europe that an inclusive nationalism was possible.\(^{33}\) This good example would hopefully benefit Jews remaining in Europe by positively inspiring their host nations.

In contrast to Herzl, Oppenheimer did not envision a complete, albeit gradual, wave of Jewish migration beginning with the working classes of Eastern Europe and culminating with the wealthier Jewish classes of Western Europe, once the living standard in Palestine improved. Herzl asserted that only those migrating would be entitled to proudly continue calling themselves Jews. The “Israelites” remaining in Europe would be free to fully assimilate into their respective

\(^{32}\) Oppenheimer, *The State*, 89.
nations. With their decision to stay they would have unquestionably proven their loyalty to their fatherlands. According to Herzl, the diversion of Jewish migration to a Jewish state would further benefit those wanting to assimilate, since the growing presence of Ostjuden in Western countries was perceived as fueling antisemitism.\(^{34}\) Oppenheimer, on the other hand, doubted that the bulk of German Jewry would ever emigrate, unless their situation dramatically deteriorated. Yet they should still be able to call themselves Jews and even consider themselves Zionists. Furthermore, “every Western Jew who still wants to be called Jewish” must become a Zionist to avoid assimilation while remaining in the diaspora.\(^ {35}\) The Zionist movement was “the master blood of our race, the pride in our past, the feeling of the holiness of our accomplishments and the defiance that stiffens our necks against unjust violence.”\(^ {36}\)

In his essay “Zionism and Cosmopolitanism,” Oppenheimer compared Zionism to the Maccabean uprising, a popular Zionist image, portraying it as a national uprising against an imperialism that strangled national distinctions under the bogus banner of world civilization. Oppenheimer did not oppose utopian hopes for world peace and social consolidation, or even of a global civilization. Zionism as a movement “striving to revive again all eternal human values that the past of our nation created” could not be opposed to this idea, as it was originally a Jewish one formulated by the prophets of Israel.\(^ {37}\) One of Oppenheimer’s main contributions to Zionism was fusing it with universal socialist ideals.\(^ {38}\)

Oppenheimer, who favored a synthesis of socialism and capitalism, also aimed at a synthesis of nationalism and humanism in his utopian vision to create the “cosmopolite.” Oppenheimer used cosmopolitanism as an almost messianic ideal despite contemporary society’s negative connotations of the term. To Oppenheimer it meant “what the old pious times called God’s realm on earth.”\(^ {39}\) He thought the way to achieve cosmopolitanism was through national differentiation. Oppenheimer expounded that philosophers had described this in different ways. For example, Hegel’s idea of thesis and antithesis required nations to clearly differentiate themselves before reaching the ultimate redemptive synthesis. Herbert Spencer’s idea of an organic process of differentiation and integration deeply influenced Oppenheimer’s conception of state formation, in

\(^{34}\) Herzl, Der Judenstaat, 18–23.

\(^{35}\) Oppenheimer, “Stammesbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein,” 142.


\(^{38}\) Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 10.

\(^{39}\) Oppenheimer, “Zionismus und Kosmopolitismus,” 2.
which social groups metaphorically form different organs of society. On an international level, the different nations were comparable with different organs of humanity, or at least of Europe, inasmuch as Oppenheimer quoted Nietzsche’s interpretation of “cosmopolite” as the “good European.”

For organic evolution into a tolerant world civilization, individual nations would have to retain national distinction for the purpose of cooperation: “Just like a socialist society is only imaginable ... as a ‘Freibürgerschaft,’ i.e. as a self-governing and self-administering society of free people without absolutism, class and clerical hegemony, so is Zionism only imaginable ... as a national Jewish polity with Hebrew language and independently evolved Jewish culture!”

Therefore, Zionism’s mission according to Oppenheimer was to resist a hierarchical imperialism founded on slavery and domination by trailblazing an alternative utopian union of equal and proud master nations. The Jews with their anti-slavery ethos and their gift of Monotheism to the world belonged, he argued, among the ranks of master nations. Zionism was to be the vehicle enabling the Jewish people to take a leading role once again. And a Zionist success in creating “colonies ... that will realize humanities’ dream of fraternal equality in freedom and happiness, colonies that we hope will bear witness once again to the messianic mission of Judaism,” could be the first step towards another Jewish gift to the world: a new world order of equal nations. This cosmopolitan world would be rooted in national aspirations.

In equating Jewish uniqueness with a universal mission, Oppenheimer was drawing on modern Jewish thought associated with the struggle of the Wissenschaft des Judenums and other Maskilim to undermine European ghettoization of Judaism. According to Oppenheimer, only territories in close vicinity to Europe were capable of cultural advancement and successful colonization. The effect would, however, not be unilateral. Turning Palestine into a “blooming center of free world commerce of the future” would act as an impetus to positive transformation in Europe. Thus, Zionism for Oppenheimer would be intricately linked

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44 According to Oppenheimer, this would be the fourth gift after Judaism, Christianity and Islam; see Oppenheimer, “Zionismus und Kosmopolitismus,” 5.
45 Heschel drew on Amos Funkenstein’s differentiation between the notion of uniqueness as being different in premodern Jewish self-understanding and being universal in Jewish modernity; see Heschel, “Revolt of the Colonized,” 66. Shimoni discussed the cultivation of “ethnicism” while striving for Jewish integration and a universal horizon of Judaism during the Haskala period; see Shimoni, The Zionist Ideology, 15–18.
to a utopian vision for Europe, even though its settlement scheme would unfold on the threshold of the continent. There is a certain similarity here to the idea propagated in Sha’are Zion that the transformation of Palestine would begin at its threshold. It also corresponds to Oppenheimer’s plan to transform Germany, not through revolution but through “inner colonization,” a transformation of rural areas which would gradually transform life in urban areas as well.

For Oppenheimer, the messianic Jewish mission in the modern era was the same as in antiquity: utopian pioneering. Echoing Herzl and the Freiland ideal, Oppenheimer wrote: “If we only want, it could become reality – and an example for the world tattered and bleeding due to class and racial antagonism. Millennia ago, redemption was already prophesized to humanity for the time when God’s people return to their land. Since this great moment finds not a small breed, let us now realize the old blissful prophecy.” Oppenheimer, whose Jewish name was David, imagined that he was a descendent of the regal house of David. Should Zionism succeed in creating a socially rehabilitated Jewish people, assisted by his settlement cooperative, “it will prove that a Messiah from the house of David will rise to realize God’s realm on earth.”

Quotes from non-Jews in Altneuland such as Pastor Möller from Cassel lent weight to the argument of the Jews’ historical role as world liberators: “Courage and bravery formed the most outstanding characteristics of the people that defended its freedom most persistently against violent Romanism. Galilea was also the origin of the most determined national party: the Zealots.” The same Galilea was now, in Oppenheimer’s eyes, the birthplace of free and strong Jews that even the “proud Bedouins of the desert” consider their equals.

Oppenheimer’s numerous messianic references take the struggle one step further when linked with his opinion on the role of religion in state formation. During state formation, culture, language and religion were hybridized. The god of the master class was the most revered, with the gods of the subjugated either serving him in a pantheon or becoming his enemies. Oppenheimer’s emphasis on the Jewish people gifting the world three religions complemented his perspective on Jewish moral law and biblical land division becoming the foun-

46 Oppenheimer, “Pflanzungsverein ‘Palaestina,’” 353.
47 Cited in Sonder, Gartenstädte, 93–94.
49 Oppenheimer, Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes, 36.
51 Altneuland 1 (1904): 375.
52 Oppenheimer, “Galiläa,” 19.
53 Oppenheimer, The State, 89–90.
dations of a future world unity. This, in turn, fulfilled the messianic faith and equated Jewish universality with obtaining a dominant position in the new world order, thus counteracting assimilation pressures.

However, in his focus on Jewish antiquity Oppenheimer was not trying to promote Jewish myth. Nor did he obtain his ideas from traditional interpretations of Mosaic Law. Oppenheimer was part of what Anthony D. Smith called the “messianic assimilationists” among nationalist intelligentsia who try to realize their “messianic-like faith in a common humanity” by fusing it with ethnic thought. The messianic overtones of his colonial fantasies aimed to fight assimilation by cultivating pride in Jewish heritage. For Oppenheimer, Zionism was a vehicle of class struggle that aimed to redeem proletarian Jews from their horrid conditions and make them democratic subjects of a nation-state. Zionism's goals were not unique, yet “it is of no small pride to us that our class interests here have fully parallel goals to those of mankind and humanity.” The uniqueness that Oppenheimer ascribed to Zionism – and historically to Judaism – was radicalism in social issues. This made Jews an important agent of transformation. For this reason, he suggested that from the start Zionism adopt radical proposals benefiting workers such as exhaustive profit sharing and secure prospects for gaining full land ownership. Oppenheimer reinterpreted Mosaic Law as land reform, with class issues at its essence:

What the National Fund does today ... is in its spirit the exact implementation of the old regulations of biblical land law ... The purpose must be to permanently reestablish the old cooperative equality of the nation with which they immigrated to Palestine and preserved over the centuries. We do not want to introduce to the Holy Land the curse of capitalist corrosion and not class hatred. We have enough on our hands with the racial antagonism between ourselves and the Arabs and Turks.

Oppenheimer’s exegesis is reminiscent of his Altneuland colleague Nossig, who reinterpreted Mosaic Law as trailblazing hygienic guidelines. The common thread between Nossig and Oppenheimer was imbuing Jewish law and scripture with a modern, scientific air. According to Oppenheimer, the prophets of Israel were social innovators giving new inspiring interpretations to Mosaic law. In his account, one of these prophets, Jesus, ultimately introduced the Jewish spirit

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54 Shimoni, The Zionist Ideology, 10–11.
57 See chapter 4.
of freedom into the Greco-Roman world, which had already been prepared for it by Hellenistic cosmopolitanism.

Oppenheimer also gave empirical examples from colonial undertakings to reinforce his insight that the psychological mindset of a society founded on slavery was detrimental to the state. These included the situation in South and Central America, as well as a comparison with Queensland in which dark-skinned slaves toiled in sugar cane plantation and the other Australian provinces in which slavery was forbidden. According to Oppenheimer, recent times had only seen one example for such a radical and innovative undertaking to restore cooperative, free spirit: Rahaline. It was this utopian cooperative that inspired Herzl and Oppenheimer alike and kindled the bond between them. However, Rahaline ultimately failed. Oppenheimer warned that the Zionist endeavor could fail, too, if the cooperative cosmopolitan spirit were to fail to transcend national boundaries:

We must beware of praying to idols and dancing around the golden calf so that God’s bane will not send us again on a desert wandering for an unforeseeable length of time. No one has suffered more from the spear’s right of conquest than the Jewish people who were dispersed throughout the world by the Roman spear. Not the right of the spear would create his empire and land again, but only the peaceful, sweet and gentle right of the plow. We must not introduce authority into Palestine but rather its eternal historical counterpart the cooperative.

Merhavia and the Controversy over Arab Labor

In 1910 Oppenheimer traveled to Palestine for the first time to familiarize himself firsthand with the land and promote the cooperative idea among Jewish workers. Oppenheimer observed farming methods of Jews, Arabs, Templers and the Russian proselytes. He raved about the physical transformation of Jewish urban intelligentsia into muscular pioneers who could protect themselves from occasional Arab assaults. The children born in the land were to be its new masters, the core of a “future Volkssiedlung,” according to Oppenheimer: “It is observable that they are the children of the highest race in the land. They ‘stride’ – to use a Freytagian expression – ‘with master feet on their own ground and soil.’” With the reference to Gustav Freytag, Oppenheimer placed Jewish set-

60 Franz Oppenheimer und der Zionismus, 3.
tlers in the context of Freytag’s asserted racial and cultural superiority of German colonists in Eastern Europe.62

Oppenheimer used his travel report, printed in Die Welt, to promote his settlement cooperative, emphasizing the extensive freedom cooperative workers should have. Aware of potential conflict with the communist-inclined workers of the Second Aliyah, Oppenheimer wrote that workers could decide for themselves on their preferable administration. They should have the right to make any mistake they like except for privatizing communal lands.63 Another potential issue of dispute Oppenheimer singled out was the role of women in the cooperatives. He recognized there were few Jewish women farmers, apart from Russian converts. Therefore, Oppenheimer preferred to start the cooperative experiment with bachelors. Once established the cooperative could be extended to include families with limited farming roles for women.64

Shortly after Oppenheimer’s Palestine visit, the Palestine Land Development Company purchased a large plot of land in the Jezreel Valley close to the Afula train station. Ruppin allocated a third of it for Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative, which was founded the following year. The author and Almeneuland contributor Yehoshua Radler-Feldman, who also worked at the Palestine Office, named the cooperative Merhavia to express its redemptive character for the distressed Eastern European Jews.65 The name, literally meaning “God’s expanse,” was taken from Psalms 118:5: “When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place.”66 Oppenheimer fundraised for the cooperative and was involved in planning details. In September of 1910, he suggested that agronomist Salomon Dyk be appointed administrator of Merhavia. Even

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64 Oppenheimer, “Bericht über meine Studienreise in Palästina,” Die Welt, July 22, 701–703. The role of families and children was intensely disputed in the early days of collective settlement. Merhavia had a relatively high share of families among its labor force. However, it lacked privacy and capacities to support these families leading to tensions and strife within the cooperative. See Josef Rabinovitz, “ha-ko’a/peratzia be-merchavía,” in Sefer Merchavia: ha-ko’a/peratzia, ed. Eliezer Lubrani (Tel-Aviv: Vatiki ha-ko’a/peratzia, 1961), 81–87. Oppenheimer also claimed that the difficulties in accommodating families was one of the reasons for the failure of the cooperative. However, with a note of male chauvinism he attributed the quarrels to the incorporation of women into the cooperative; see Oppenheimer, Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes, 168.

65 Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 92.

66 New International Version Translation.
though Dyk’s tenure in Merhavia was short-lived and highly controversial, the relationship with Oppenheimer lasted until the final dissolution of the cooperative. After the First World War, Oppenheimer appointed Dyk as director of Bärenklau, the settlement cooperative that he founded in the Province of Brandenburg in 1920.

The socialist Jewish press in Palestine closely followed the developments around Merhavia. Prominent figures of the Yishuv such as David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, head of Palestine’s Poalei Zion, and the agronomist Yitzhak Wilkanski contributed to the discussion. Local leaders of Poalei Zion, whose Russian federation renounced official Zionism in 1909 due to its alleged capitalist and bourgeois agenda, propagated the importance of Oppenheimer’s cooperative model for the Jewish proletariat. Ben Gurion was less optimistic. He regarded Dyk’s import of workers from Slobodka in Galicia, instead of recruiting or even consulting with local Jewish workers and their representatives, as a bad omen. Freedom and self-determination of the workers were at the center of discussion, an issue which Oppenheimer preemptively addressed in his Palestine travel report. Hardened agricultural laborers of the Yishuv now set on Merhavia to ensure Zionist enterprises would not follow in the footsteps of the allegedly authoritarian administrators of the Rothschild and JCA farms against whom they already led many strikes and conflicts.

Yet conflict plagued the entirety of Merhavia’s existence, from the initial occupation and the ensuing eviction of Arab tenants in 1910 – accompanied by violent disputes with Arab neighbors and arrests by Ottoman authorities – until the end of the First World War, when it was converted into a kibbutz due to its high debt levels. The workers from Slobodka shipped in and trained by Dyk were not immune to the predominant communist spirit among the workers of the Second Aliyah. They resisted differential pay according to individual productivity, a decisive element in distinguishing Oppenheimer’s cooperative from other forms of communal settlement in Palestine. Dyk’s authoritarian style and resentment of Marxist workers was a source of continual conflict, strikes and dismissals, ending with his replacement in 1914 by labor leader Josef Rabinovitz, who granted extensive independence to the workers. Despite their con-

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67 Yitzhak Wilkanski (later Elazar-Volkani), an agronomist who intricately studied Oppenheimer’s cooperative plan, compiled a report on Merhavia for the Palestine Office in 1916. He wanted to translate some of Oppenheimer’s writings into Hebrew to incorporate them in his Hebrew agricultural library project; see CZA A161–14. Wilkanski was instrumental in honoring Oppenheimer’s contribution to Zionist settlement; see Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 145.

68 Penslar, Zionism and Technocracy, 113.

69 Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 70–84.
flict with Dyk, the workers’ leadership kept consulting with Oppenheimer on the development of the cooperative. Oppenheimer used his personal connections with German military authorities to assist them during the First World War.⁷⁰

Dyk’s unadapted transplantation of German agricultural methods to Palestine might have played some role in the cooperative’s failure.⁷¹ However, this was conjoined with a number of debilitating conditions: infertile soil; an isolated and disease-infested location; lack of growth; inadequate provisions for families; Arab attacks; and a war economy that included the encampment of ten thousand Ottoman soldiers near the cooperative.⁷² Not only Ottoman soldiers but also a Bavarian aviation unit was stationed in the vicinity of Merhavia. The Bavarians helped protect the cooperative from Arab attacks.⁷³

This is not the place to continue recounting the full history of Merhavia and Oppenheimer’s role in it,⁷⁴ because this is not a work on Zionist settlement history but on the discourse surrounding it and its significance for German-Jewish identity. Considering Oppenheimer’s views on racial and colonial issues in Germany, however, it would be appropriate to expound on one aspect of the discourse around Merhavia, namely the question of including non-Jewish Arab workers. Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative, which aimed to promote Jewish labor and the creation of a Jewish farming class, became a physical and ideological battleground for the exclusivity of Jewish labor. It was here that the fantasy of being a benevolent and humane conqueror promoted in Altneuland crashed into a conflicting ideological reality. Yet the flattering self-image was not shattered by the encounter with indigenous people but by the encounter with the settlers.

The socialist-inclined pioneers of the Second Aliyah immigrated to Palestine from Eastern Europe hoping to find employment in agriculture. They were quickly confronted with an economic reality in which Jewish enterprises preferred to hire experienced Arab peasants who were also cheaper. The sensitivity of Merhavia’s workers to a differential wage system was rooted in an ethnic conflict over

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⁷⁰ CZA A161–17; CZA A161–18.
⁷¹ Dyk’s nomination was already in dispute due to his dishonorable dismissal from the Jewish training farm at Steinhorst and alleged homosexuality; see CZA A161–13. According to Penslar, the fact that he was ultimately instated demonstrated the lack of educated administrators willing to take a position in Palestine; see Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy*, 121–122.
⁷² Ruppin officially requested the garrisoning of Ottoman units in Jewish hubs for their protection; see Friedman, *Germany, Turkey, and Zionism*, 196.
labor, not only in communist ideology. In this capitalist system Arab peasants seemed to have a natural advantage. The settlers expected Zionism’s nation-building institutions to promote their cause on national domains by prohibiting Arab labor, putting long-term national goals above short-term economic ones.

Until the founding of Merhavia, the ZO and JNF did not pay much attention to practical issues such as Arab labor and evictions, given that their agricultural estates were still very small compared to private enterprises. Only in 1911 did the ZO begin instituting a consistent policy promoting Jewish labor at the expense of Arab labor. However, Ruppin, Bodenheimer and other leading members of the ZO still doubted the economic feasibility of an exclusively Jewish labor market. Ruppin was especially apprehensive when it came to evictions of Arab tenants. He was concerned that this would fuel popular Arab resistance to Zionism. The general attitude, exemplified by Kaplansky, was one of assurance that the life of Arabs – and especially Arab farmers – would generally improve due to Jewish economic activity and the introduction of modern agricultural technology, with Arab evictions greatly minimized.⁷⁵

This corresponded to the optimism often expressed in *Altneuland*. Out of the *Altneuland* settlement experts, Aaronson and Oppenheimer were most outspoken in favor of utilizing Arab labor. In his agricultural research station at Atlit, Aaronson even refused to hire Jewish workers. He opposed the ideological-fueled agenda of creating a Jewish farming class. He opposed Jews performing such menial tasks, instead of focusing on agricultural administration. Similarly, he saw no need for economic segregation as long as Jewish predominance would be retained.⁷⁶

Oppenheimer, who was a strong proponent of the Jewish farming class ideology, opposed racist inclinations within Zionism. He envisioned a “Levantine Switzerland” where Jews, Arabs and all other ethnic groups would coexist harmoniously and without bloodshed. As a sociologist focused on analyzing and combating antisemitism, he described the turn to national chauvinism within Zionism as a “photographic negative” of antisemitism, as “imitation par opposition.”⁷⁷ Yet Oppenheimer’s position was an ambivalent balancing act. Oppenheimer was considered one of the main architects of the concept of nationalization through labor, as symbolized by the plow. For him, too, Jew-

ish predominance within this farming class was a prerequisite. As late as 1916 he criticized philanthropic farms in Palestine for attracting too many non-Jewish laborers.  

Nationalization through labor was incomprehensible without extensive exclusion of Arab workers, even if this came short of total exclusion. In 1911, a bloody clash occurred in Merhavia, leading to the death of one Arab and the injury of another. In repercussion local Arabs instigated a series of thefts and infiltrations of the settlement. In the spring of 1914, a full-fledged conflict over Arab labor erupted in Merhavia. This was not an isolated incident but one of several disputes between Second Aliyah pioneers and settlement administrations, of which the most notable was the strike at Sejera at the beginning of the same year. The cooperative workers demanded that Dyk replace Arab laborers he hired for menial tasks such as weeding and hoeing with modern machines, claiming that this was more efficient.

This was also the strategy pursued by Warburg for the sake of employing solely Jewish workers in Migdal, which was founded parallel to Merhavia on an estate bought from Catholic Germans who had abandoned their settlement plans on the site. To facilitate the expansion of Warburg's cotton plantations, Yehiel Tschlenow, who codirected the superordinate Ge’ulat ha’Aretz [land redemption] Company with Warburg, and the estate manager Moshe Glikin devised a plan to hire Yemenite Jewish laborers instead of Arab ones.

In his report on the conflict in Merhavia, Ruppin, who acted as arbitrator, wrote that, according to Dyk, the workers’ sole motivation was nationalistic. Since Dyk was the administrating agronomist, he accepted his judgement, allowing the hiring of Arab day laborers. The workers accepted Ruppin’s decision for the time being while appealing to the board of the Erez Israel Siedlungsgenossenschaft and Kaplansky in particular. The workers accused Dyk of undermining not only the national task of the cooperative but also its educational purpose of training cooperative members to become independent farmers capable of managing their own affairs. They requested the immediate implementation of the second phase of the cooperative: self-administration by the workers. The board accepted their claims, endorsing their negative attitude towards Arab labor and

80 Kats, The “Business” of Settlement, 184–186.
82 Kats, The “Business” of Settlement, 247–270.
renewing their commitment to promoting independent Jewish farmers. Since Dyk apparently failed in the latter, he had to be replaced.\textsuperscript{83}

As mastermind of Merhavia, Oppenheimer made his dissenting opinion on the incorporation of Arab laborers very clear to the Zionist leadership, now based in Berlin since the replacement of David Wolffsohn with Otto Warburg as head of the ZO. He continued to support Dyk at meetings of the Inner Actions Committee and Erez Israel Siedlungsgenossenschaft and ridiculed the policy of buying solely Jewish goods for having a negative overall outcome. The extra expenses of transporting them to Palestine came out of Jewish pockets and ended up in English, French and even Arab hands. Further, the Jewish workers hypocritically calling for a boycott of Arab labor ultimately spent their money on Arab products such as cigarettes and oranges.\textsuperscript{84}

In January 1914, Tschlenow, who headed the Inner Actions Committee, rebuked Oppenheimer for supposedly saying in a lecture in Prague about Merhavia that “Berlin decided to sweep the Arabs out of the land, thus provoking an Arab pogrom in Palestine.” In the correspondence that followed, Tschlenow expressed his agreement with Oppenheimer’s position on the question of Arab labor. He stated that the land belonged to its two Semitic peoples who should entertain neighborly relations.\textsuperscript{85} Oppenheimer argued that the Arabs are a “white race” whose language is related to Hebrew, and who had accepted Moses as a great prophet. It was “dumb,” he claimed, to treat them as an inferior race and behave like “victors in a conquered land,” thus importing the negative “European mentality.”\textsuperscript{86} Oppenheimer also believed that the indigenous Muslim population was free from imported Christian-European antisemitism.\textsuperscript{87} His equation of Semitic – Arabic or Jewish – with being white or Aryan was also reflected in his description of Herzl as “a handsome, tall man of the noblest type of pure Semite, as it is still realized today in the highest classes of noble Arabs unmixed with Negro [sic] blood, the type that even strongly völkisch-minded ‘Aryans’ of today have learnt to regard as a race closely related and almost equal to them.”\textsuperscript{88}

Tschlenow replied that his reproach only concerned Oppenheimer’s claim that the Inner Actions Committee ordered the expulsion of Arabs. Oppenheimer should not have made such allegations in public before confronting the inner circles, especially considering his authority as a renowned settlement expert. Op-

\textsuperscript{83} Kressel, \textit{Franz Oppenheimer}, 127–134.  
\textsuperscript{84} Oppenheimer, \textit{Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes}, 167–168.  
\textsuperscript{85} CZA A161–10; CZA A161–14.  
\textsuperscript{86} CZA A161–16, 3.  
\textsuperscript{87} Oppenheimer, \textit{Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation in Palästina}, 5.  
\textsuperscript{88} Oppenheimer, \textit{Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes}, 210.
penheimer urged the Inner Actions Committee or the Palestine Office to publicly display their dismay at the exclusion of Arabs through action, and not in words alone.⁸⁹ In July of the same year Oppenheimer suggested the *Jüdischer Verlag* publish a book with his Zionist essays and lectures, such as *Zionismus und Cosmopolitismus* and *Stammesbewussesein und Volkbewusstsein*. He suggested the title “On the Jewish Problem” but was turned down because it was “in sharp contrast” to their “national propaganda.” The publishing house promised that once the conflict with the “national rivals” quieted, they could once again publish works that go against the grain of “the present dominant views.”⁹⁰

Preventing people from access to farmland ran against the basic tenant of Oppenheimer’s philosophy that the bane of capitalism lies in class-motivated land enclosure which the settlement cooperative was meant to break. He disapproved of the “conquest by the plow” becoming a new justification for land enclosure, which he associated with the “conquest by the sword.” Yet despite his attempts to curb the escalating ethnic conflict, Oppenheimer did not address the fact that exclusion was inevitable when his instrument of universal utopia was deployed in the service a national cause. The settlement cooperative was a means of establishing a firm and widespread grip of an ambiguous Jewish-European culture which, as a secondary but not essential goal, might result in a certain acculturation of other ethnic groups in its vicinity. Oppenheimer’s ambiguity might have also resulted from the fact that his main focus was sustaining the ethnic and cultural preservation of a Jewish minority in Europe.

Oppenheimer stood unwavering by his colonial fantasy of conquest without conflict, even as the realities of settlement began tearing all hopes of peaceful coexistence. As bloodshed continued, Oppenheimer doubled down on his faith in the universal messianic vision of class liberation, instead of subjection, steeped in the Jewish diasporic experience. He made this poignantly clear in a letter he sent to the *Jüdische Pressezentrale* in Zurich at the end of 1920, the year in which violent riots were setting the course of the conflict for years to come:

> What matters to me most is the question of the Arabs. If the Jews are not capable, without hesitation, of treating the Arabs not only as equals but rather as brothers, that is incorporating them in all privileges and cooperatives, they justify retroactively all excesses of antisemitism and destroy their own work economically and politically. Economically because the task lies in not tolerating a class of “free” workers in the land but equipping them all with means of production instead, and politically because otherwise there will never be peace and quiet in the land. When the pariah among the nations, the Jew, does not have the moral virtue to establish the perfect model of cohabitation of multiple nations,

⁸⁹ CZA A161–10; CZA A161–14.
⁹⁰ CZA A161–14.
he deserves nothing better than the wreckage of all his hopes. May the great hour find a great race.\textsuperscript{91}

**Oppenheimer's Break with German Zionism**

Shortly after Oppenheimer’s death, his son, Ludwig Yehuda Oppenheimer was in contact with Martin Buber about publishing the excerpt above together with an essay on his father’s warnings about the Arab question in *Ba’ayot Hazman*. This was the organ of Agudat Ihud advocating a binationalist vision for Palestine in the 1940s to which many former Brit Shalom members of German Jewish heritage contributed.\textsuperscript{92} Zionist historiography has struggled with this binationalist conception in its midst. Some historians denied Brit Shalom’s link to Zionism and even portrayed it as anti-Zionist.\textsuperscript{93} Others argued that Zionist historiography later appropriated Brit Shalom “in its desire to promote an image of the Zionist movement as seeking peace.”\textsuperscript{94}

Over the years, Buber published several of Oppenheimer’s essays and books, most importantly his magnus opus *The State* in 1906 in a sociological series intended as popular science called *Die Gesellschaft* [Society]. Their paths crossed every now and then over several decades. However, in the years leading up to the First World War, they came into open strife over the aims of German Zionism despite their mutual passion for social utopias, cooperative lifestyles and binational conceptions of Zionism.

One of the essential principles of Zionism was that Jews were one nation and not merely coreligionists. The complex relationship between German and Eastern European Jews was a central issue for Oppenheimer and other German Zionists.\textsuperscript{95} In Oppenheimer’s recollection it was at the Zionist congresses that he en-

\textsuperscript{91} CZA A161–8.
\textsuperscript{92} CZA A165–95. The text was ultimately not published in *Ba’ayot Hazman* because Ludwig Oppenheimer could not comply with the deadline. It was published in German on January 15, 1976, and included a manuscript from June 20, 1920, as well. According to Ludwig Oppenheimer the latter was his father’s reaction to the San Remo conference, which foiled the Faisal-Weizmann agreement for Arab-Jewish cooperation. Oppenheimer therefore appealed to Zionists not to give up hope for cooperation between Jews and Arabs; see L. Y. Oppenheimer, *Aus der ersten Zeit des Zionismus. Die Warnungen Franz Oppenheimers*, January 15, 1976, JMB 2000/298/19.
\textsuperscript{93} Shumsky, *Ben Prag li-Yerushalayim*, 22.
\textsuperscript{94} Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin*, 314.
\textsuperscript{95} For a comprehensive overview of the East-West complex, see Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*. Aschheim discussed Oppenheimer’s essay “Stammbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein” on pp. 96–98.
countered for the first time Ostjuden who “were not beggars.” The congresses sensitized him for the enormous differences in the Jewish world. He considered the delegates he encountered as empirical evidence of the Jews’ extreme physical adaptation to their host nations and the gaps between their mentalities. In great foresight, he remarked that the real challenge in uniting all these different groups would surface once they all lived together on one land. According to Oppenheimer, the integration of East and West required recognition of the extreme differences between these two “organs” of the Jewish people and their differing Zionist approaches. While the Ostjuden sought in Zionism their redemption from physical annihilation, the Westjuden were looking for redemption from assimilation.

Mutual respect for each other’s aims was crucial for successful cooperation. Oppenheimer implored Zionists of Eastern European creed to respect the wishes of German Zionists to engage in the movement without intending to immigrate to Palestine. Their contribution of capital and “intelligence” would be crucial not only for fulfilling the territorial purpose of Zionism but also for the required transformation of the Ostjude into a “human being,” Oppenheimer wrote condescendingly. As a social engineer Oppenheimer did not believe that individual Bildung could succeed in educating the masses. Versed in a medical discourse connecting supposed Jewish ineptitude with alleged physical deformity, Oppenheimer concurred with Zionists such as Nordau promoting physical education as the key to creating “new muscle Jews.” His unique addition to Jewish physical education was cooperative farming as another efficient tool in “creating citizens of the future community” and instilling the formerly oppressed with the necessary masculine “master virtues” for their self-liberation. German Zionists could help the supposedly ill-bred Ostjuden, who were designated as the primary agents of Zionist colonization, by creating a system to cultivate these virtues. They would serve as technical managers, as “enlightened despots,” until their brethren were ready for self-administration. Kurt Blumenfeld remembered Oppenheimer making this distinction between the roles in a conversation they had

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98 The distinction between *materielle Judennot* and *geistige Judennot* was widespread among German Zionists. Oppenheimer was not alone in distinguishing between two different Zions; see Poppel, *Zionism in Germany*, 28–29.
Oppenheimer’s Break with German Zionism

at the Ninth Zionist Congress: “You must know that Zionism is a project in which we direct and the Ostjuden must be the actors.”¹⁰³

Oppenheimer’s differentiation between West- and Ostjuden, as well as his modular understanding of identity, were best articulated in his essay “Stammesbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein,” published in early 1910. The essay sparked a heated debate exposing a growing rift among German Zionists.¹⁰⁴ In the essay, Oppenheimer grappled with the concept of a Jewish national character, using terms he already started developing in his 1907 article “Der Zionismus.”¹⁰⁵ He used the contemporary popular term Stammm,¹⁰⁶ meaning tribe or clan, to refer to what today could be described as ethnicity¹⁰⁷ and was at the time was increasingly denoted as race. In addition, he dealt with a younger Zionist generation’s growing doubts about the benefits of emancipation and their drifting towards völkish ideas.

Hoping to counter radicalization tendencies, Oppenheimer asserted that, for the most part, German Jews could not become national Jews. For him, only Eastern European Jews could possess a Jewish Volksbewusstsein, or peoplehood, based on common language, shared customs, professions and a culture which could be transplanted to Palestine. In contrast, Westjuden could only possess a Stammesbewusstsein, a recollection of a magnificent past preserved due to it being a source of pride. The Volksbewusstsein of their host nations was thus, he believed, more dominant than a Jewish one, and these two types of consciousness were completely independent from each other. As Oppenheimer saw it, however, possessing Stammesbewusstsein was enough to be considered a non-assimilationist, and was even better than religious sentiments as a source of solidarity between German and Eastern European Jews.¹⁰⁸ Yet despite the various sociological categories of his modular identity structure, Oppenheimer stumbled in describing his immersion in German culture

¹⁰³ Blumenfeld, Erlebte Judenfrage, 52.
¹⁰⁴ For a list of many of the participants in this debate, see Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 60 – 62.
¹⁰⁸ Oppenheimer, “Stammesbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein,” 139.
without using the term “assimilation”: “I am not an assimilationist [Assimilant], but I am assimilated [assimiliert].”¹⁰⁹

Although even completely assimilated Jews could still take pride in their Jewish heritage, as Oppenheimer’s examples below demonstrate, he admitted that it was the failure of emancipation in Western Europe, and especially Germany, that made assimilation more a result of antisemitism than a deliberate decision. In Oppenheimer’s opinion, as culturally advanced as Germany was, it still lagged behind America, England and France in its adherence to liberal values. To explain this, Oppenheimer divided the concept of Volksbewusstsein into the subcategories Kulturbewusstsein [cultural consciousness] and Nationalbewusstsein [patriotic consciousness], thus creating a modular and graded model of identity that was open to further forms of consciousness, e.g., Reichsbewusstsein [imperial consciousness] or märkisches Heimatbewusstsein [Brandenburgian home consciousness] upon which, the future leader of the German revisionists, Richard Lichtheim taunted: “Why not [add] Berlin residential consciousness? and English parliamentary consciousness? and a feeling for French painting?”¹¹⁰

According to Oppenheimer, even though educated German Jews were Western European in their Kulturbewusstsein, Prussia was only a step-fatherland for them due to widespread antisemitism, limiting their Nationalbewusstsein, or patriotism. In Eastern Europe, he argued, extreme antisemitism also made it impossible to develop any Nationalbewusstsein besides a Jewish one. However, Eastern European Jews retained a Jewish Kulturbewusstsein too, since their Jewish culture was still more developed than the supposed barbarism, which Oppenheimer elsewhere called asiatische Brutalität,¹¹¹ or “euphemistically called Russian or Romanian ‘culture’”¹¹² of their immediate surroundings:

We cannot be Jewish by culture because the Jewish culture, as it has been preserved from the Middle Ages in the ghettos of the East, stands infinitely lower than modern culture which our [Western] nations bear. We can neither regress nor do want to. But it would be impossible for the Eastern Jews to be Russian or Romanian. ... They must be Jews by culture ... for the mediaeval Jewish culture stands exactly as far above East European barbarism as it is beneath the culture of Western Europe.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Jüdische Rundschau, June 19, 1914, 270.
¹¹¹ Oppenheimer, Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation in Palästina, 4.
Prescient of the German-Jewish identity complex in the state of Israel, Oppenheimer argued that a German Jew living in a future Zionist society would adopt a Jewish *Volksbewusstsein* once this society had attained a higher cultural level, but will then possess a German, instead of a Jewish, *Stammesbewusstsein.*

Discussions about Eastern European Jews were also a way for German Jews to deal with their own identity. According to Yfaat Weiss, German Zionists could not reach a consensus about their own national Jewish character, but they could define the Ostjuden by common accord. Even though Oppenheimer argued that Western Zionists were acting altruistically towards their brethren in the East, he saw in Zionism an opportunity for German Jews, too. Zionism, he thought, could transform not only the Ostjuden but also German Jews into aristocrats who would be an active force in world history, superior both to the antisemites slandering them and to the Jewish assimilationists mimicking them. He thus believed that the Zionist project should promote Jewish *Stammesbewusstsein* among German Jews without threatening their German *Volksbewusstsein*, since these were nonconflicting, independent feelings. According to Oppenheimer, Western Zionists were “thinking ... about the good name of the old tribe that is today defiled and should be restored to glory through a national creation that will irrefutably prove the high cultural value of its blood to all haters and enviers.”

We can thus conclude that the transformation of German Jews did not entail the adoption of the new Jewish culture they were helping to create, but the strengthening of their standing in their homelands in their own eyes and in the eyes of non-Jews. Bodenheimer expressed this in a letter to Wolffsohn asking him to openly endorse a protest resolution by Oppenheimer, Friedemann, Struck and other German Zionists against Zionist “hyernationalism.” He wrote: “The creation of a Hebrew language and unique culture hub in Palestine under no circumstance requires a national affirmation of Hebrew language and culture in the current countries of Jewish residency.” We can thus say that these acculturated

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117 Letter from May 24, 1914, in Jehuda Reinharz, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus, 1882–1933* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981), 129–130. Oppenheimer would have disapproved of Bodenheimer’s designation of Germany as his current land of residency [*jetziges Wohnland*]. At the Delegiertentag in Leipzig the following month, Oppenheimer rejected Lichtheim’s use of the term “Wohnland,” supposedly implying that his roots in Germany could easily be transplant-
first-generation German Zionists were mediating a self-determined space for the integration of Jews as a proud ethnic minority in Germany and Europe. As Solveig suggested, “hybrid agencies ... deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy.” The hybrid identity of German Zionists, comprised of German Volksbewusstsein and Jewish Stammesbewusstsein, made them into Oppenheimer’s cast off “clan of bastards,” predestined to lead the revolution of all the oppressed starting with the Ostjuden.

The following two examples best demonstrate Oppenheimer’s conception of hybridity or bastardness imbued in the universal mission of Zionism. First, Oppenheimer proclaimed that the best expression of Stammesbewusstsein was Benjamin Disraeli’s novel Tancred, a book which he designated as “the Song of Songs of Zionism, i.e., Palestine-Zionism, and of Semitism.” Oppenheimer was struck by the homage of the son of a baptized Jew who rose to become “England’s most influential and most successful prime minister,” impressing even the likes of Bismarck. Duke Tancred, “the highest offspring of the highest aristocracy of the world,” escaped from empty English civilization, only to rediscover on Mount Sinai in the desert the old-new mission of establishing human equality once proclaimed in God’s law “in Arabia and Palestine.” Quoting Disraeli’s description of Christianity as “the spiritual colony of Arabia” which has lost its primal quest, Oppenheimer cherished the “triumphal” transvaluation of metaphors such as desert and forest, as well as of Jewish influence, through “countless generations of cultural bearers ... high ancestors already at a time ... when Europe and especially England were still swamp and woodland inhabited by painted savages.”

The second literary example of Oppenheimer’s Stammesbewusstsein stems from Oppenheimer’s own pen. In his novel Sprung über ein Jahrhundert published in Bern in 1934 under the pseudonym Francis D. Pelton, Engineer Hans Bachmueller finds H. G. Well’s time machine embedded in the stone hill behind ed in expectation of the moving’s truck impending arrival; see Reinharz, Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus, 140; jüdische Rundschau, June 19, 1914, 270.


119 See Oppenheimer’s conception of the Jews as a bastard race in chapter 2.

his hermitage while building a wine cellar. Bachmueller travels a hundred years into the future. Among the people he encounters is an exemplary farmer who turns out to have Jewish as well as Spanish, Italian, Polish and Tartaric blood. He was a descendant of “Reb” Veitel Ephraim, the philanthropic minter who served the Prussian King Friedrich II. Oppenheimer described Ephraim’s descendants as having so deeply assimilated that all had abandoned Judaism. Many of them even rose to nobility in various European nations. Nevertheless, they kept the memory of their Jewish blood alive through family gatherings in which they ceremonially forgave each other for their abandonment of Judaism. This was necessary to retain inheritance rights in the Ephraim line or, metaphorically speaking, to strengthen their bond in a common heritage.

Like in Tancred, the story described redemption of European culture through Judaism. One link in the chain between Ephraim and the farmer was plagued by his conscience causing him to display the socialist inclinations of prophetic Judaism by voluntarily giving up his estate for the establishment of a settlement cooperative. The transformation was, however, only complete when the farmer married into a peasant family and adopted the supposedly rough nature of peasants. By agreeing to the marriage with Ephraim’s noble descendant, the farmers gave up their racial purity, thus transforming their lineage too and contributing to dismantling class divisions. Not the Jew but the farmer was portrayed by Oppenheimer as practicing endogamy, in line with völkish romantic idealization of the farmer. When talking about his heritage, the exemplary farmer lent “racial crossbreeding” authoritative endorsement by quoting Bismarck’s alleged support of crossing an “Aryan stallion and a Semitic mare.” He even quoted the popular nineteenth-century antisemitic writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain: “We are all Mischlinge [mixed breed], ‘bastards of racial chaos.’” However, Oppenheimer gave a positive twist to the Mischling concept, contrary to Chamberlain’s ideology.¹²¹

While many first-generation German Zionists who composed the leadership of the association supported Oppenheimer’s distinction between German patriotism and Jewish pride, as opposed to nationalism, the majority of ZVfD members, many of them originating from Eastern Europe, did not. Buber and other young Zionists criticized Oppenheimer’s “Stammsbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein” for what they understood as a passive conception of heritage, lacking in choice

The dissidence was expressed by the ascending leadership of the second generation who called for clear boundaries between Jews and Germans as well as dissimulation. The appointment of Blumenfeld as secretary of the ZVFd epitomized the generational change accompanied by a post-assimilationist radicalization of German Zionism. The young generation wanted Zionist propaganda to emphasize the movement’s Jewish national character. At the Posen convention of 1912, members of this generated succeeded in passing a declaration that all Zionists must commit to personally immigrate to Palestine.

Oppenheimer and Adolf Friedeman were especially vocal against what they considered to be a Zionist declaration of faith. They felt that the movement was deviating from the Herzlian Program that had been laid out in Basel and being transformed into a religious sect, in which they were becoming “second class Zionists.” At the Leipzig ZVFd convention in 1914, Oppenheimer underscored that Herzl vindicated his views as Zionist-conform. Yet the influence of Oppenheimer’s generation within the ZVFd was diminishing. The movement’s radicalization caused Oppenheimer to distance himself from the ZVFd – but not from Zionism as a whole. He was involved with Merhavia until it ceased to be a cooperative at the end of the First World War. He felt that the massacres of the 1920s in Palestine exposed the dangers of radical nationalism and caused the movement as a whole to strive towards reconciliation, inclusion of non-Zionists, and the realization of his utopian “Levantine Switzerland.” In 1926 he traveled to Palestine on behalf of the ZO to inspect and report on the conflict with the Arabs, as well as on the industrial and agricultural development of Palestine.

A German-Backed Jewish Autonomy in Poland

With the extension of German influence eastwards in the First World War, into areas with large Jewish populations, new opportunities arose for first-generation

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122 Die Welt, April 1, 1910. Oppenheimer made this distinction also in other places, such as in Oppenheimer, “Der Genossenschaftsfond,” 1364.
123 Reinharz, Fatherland or Promised Land, 130–135.
124 For more on the radicalization of German Zionism and the adaptation of palestino-centricism, see Reinharz, Fatherland or Promised Land, 144–170; Lavsky, Before Catastrophe, 25–45.
125 Jüdische Rundschau, June 19, 1914, 268–270.
126 Oppenheimer, Erlebtes, Erstrebttes, Erreichtes, 216.
Zionists to promote their conceptions of a hybrid German-Jewish identity and to communicate it to the general public. They found new allies in the German diplomatic service, as well as in liberal German Jewry. While their newfound allies in the German Jewish establishment helped propagate hybrid identity forms, many German Jews resisted the ethnic and nationalist elements of this new identity, preferring to view the link between Eastern and Western Jews as one of co-religionists.

During the war, both generations of German Zionism focused on the plight of their Eastern European brethren. The generations were, however, divided in their approach. Members of the first generation joined forces with liberal Jews for the incorporation of Polish Jewry into the German Empire. Once that possibility seemed less feasible, they opted for securing them minority rights. This approach was not a break with their prior Zionist undertaking, but a manifestation of “autonomist Zionism,” which sought to renew Jewish cultural-national autonomy in the diaspora within multinational federations or empires. Representatives of the younger generation, with its romantic conceptions of the national vitality of the Ostjude, deplored attempts to subject Eastern European Jews’ nationalism to a German one. They made public the utilization of Jews as slave laborers by the German authorities and aspired to promote revolutionary spirit among Eastern European Jews, encouraging them to join Poles as an independent national party in case of an uprising against the Russians.

On August 4, 1914, the day the German offensive on the western front began, ZVfD cofounder Max Bodenheimer contacted the Auswärtiges Amt [Foreign Office] with a suggestion to create an East European Federation composed of the different ethnic groups, including Jews as a buffer between Germany and Russia after victory. The suggestion was received enthusiastically, leading to personal discussions between Bodenheimer and experts on Polish affairs in the military and diplomatic service. On August 17, the Deutsches Komitee zur Befreiung der Russische Juden [German Committee for the Liberation of Russian Jews]

128 E.g., the main journal of the Centralverein, as well as books such as Hermann Cohen’s *Deutschtum und Judentum* published in 1916; see Panter, *Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 273–274.
133 Martin Buber established a separate committee called the Jüdische Nationalkomitee for this purpose; see Protokoll der Komittesitzung von 25.9.1914, LBI MF13 reel 1.
134 Friedman, *Germany, Turkey, and Zionism*, 230–231.
was founded by a number of first-generation Zionists, including Bodenheimer, Oppenheimer, Klee, Friedemann and Struck – to the dismay of the Inner Actions Committee which pursued an agenda of neutrality. While Bodenheimer was supportive of the ZO precept of neutrality, with Oppenheimer’s election as committee chairman its pro-German stance was established. However, either in respect to ZO wishes, or due to a distancing of the German authorities from the federation plan, the committee was renamed Komitee für den Osten [Committee for the East] (KfdO) in November of the same year.¹³ The committee was then opened to non-Zionist members, somewhat blurring its Zionist connection. Members included Eugen Fuchs, chairman of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, Maximilian Horwitz, chairman of the Verband der Deutschen Juden, Berthold Timendorfer, president of the B’nai B’rith lodges, and Moritz Soberheim, vice-chairman of the Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund. Oppenheimer’s distinction between an ancestry-based ethnic identity in the West and a national one in the East became the guiding principle of the KfdO. Eugen Fuchs utilized it in his own wartime expressions of Jewish identity between faith and homeland.¹³⁶

The KfdO published the biweekly Neue Jüdische Monatshefte between the fall of 1916 and spring of 1920 as an “open floor for anyone,” emphasizing its supposed impartiality. It was edited by first-generation Zionists and leaders of the Liberal Jewish establishment: Oppenheimer, Friedemann, Fuchs, Alexander Eliasberg and the anti-Zionist philosopher Hermann Cohen. Although a full examination of the journal is long overdue, the focus in this segment is on Oppenheimer’s articles and his column called “Soziologische Tagebuchblätter” [Sociological diary pages] in which he addressed a lay audience in a concise and comprehensible manner. Oppenheimer dealt with Jewish themes that had interested him throughout his life, including race, antisemitism, Jewish capabilities to farm and the settlement of Palestine, as well as his sociological principles and their relevance in interpreting current events during the war. The thesis of this study is that there are continuities of strains of thought from Altneuland in Neue Jüdische Monatshefte, linking Jewish and German national interests within an imperial framework.

¹³ For more on the attempt of the Zionist executive to disassociate itself from the KfdO, see Reinharz, Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus, 171–173; Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 234–236. Friedman suggested that the committee was renamed due to a shift in the military situation that caused the German authorities to prefer direct negotiations between Jews and Poles over unilateral declarations for Russian Jewish liberation; see Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 233.

¹³⁶ Aschheim, Brothers and Strangers, 157–158.
According to Oppenheimer, Jews living in multinational empires like Austria-Hungary – or other regions where national conflicts masqueraded as racial conflict such as Prussian-occupied Poland – portrayed themselves as a nationality for political expediency. This depiction was strengthened by their relative proximity to the large Jewish population of the Pale of Settlement.¹³ In contrast, the Jews of Germany did not need to emphasize a univocal national belonging. Further, German and Jewish nationalisms were not exclusive or conflicting. On the contrary, the KfdO considered Jewish national interests to be congruent to German imperial interests.¹³ This is comparable with Altneuland’s agenda equating Zionism with German patriotism by linking the movement’s aims with those of German colonialism. In its numerous publications, the KfdO strove to prove the affinity of Jews and Germans. In the words of Steven Aschheim:

Eastern European Jews were portrayed as pioneers of German culture and commerce in the East, natural partners and allies in Germany’s Polish policy. Propaganda arguing for the symbiosis of Ostjudentum und Deutschtum was so common that it became clichéd ... Yiddish suddenly became evidence of Jewish loyalty to German language and culture, rather than an example of linguistic “mongrelization.”¹³

KfdO propaganda primarily targeted German military authorities on the Eastern Front, purporting to bestow them with necessary cultural skills for their new posts. However, the KfdO did not regard their activity as tactical manipulations on behalf of Jewish interests. They deeply believed that establishing a Jewish autonomy was “the best way to Germanize the East.” This would accomplish the following two goals. First, it facilitated German imperial expansion. Second, it served to educate the Ostjuden by investing them with Prussian virtues and especially discipline.¹⁴ The perception of the Ostjuden as filling the linguistic and demographic prerequisites to be a nation, while still needing an education to nationhood, was an important element and a further similarity to the Altneuland nation-building project in Palestine.

Another similarity was the attempt to engage the German colonial discourse and to forge alliances with German colonial and imperial figures. While Altneuland targeted scientists and colonial technocrats, the KfdO collaborated with the military occupation authorities, including the top brass. There was, however, some mutual support between proponents of German imperial expansion overseas and proponents of expansion in Central and Eastern Europe. Prominent ad-

¹³ Aschheim, Brothers and Strangers, 157
¹³ Aschheim, Brothers and Strangers, 158.
¹⁴ Aschheim, Brothers and Strangers, 158 – 159.
vocates of the latter, such as Friedrich Naumann and Paul Rohrbach, lauded Zionism’s potential for Germany’s foreign policy as heralds of German culture and commerce in the Middle East. In an address to the Prussian Parliament, Rohrbach argued that Germany’s support for Zionism would counterbalance British support for Arab nationalism as a vehicle to undermine the Ottoman Empire. Rohrbach’s address opened a series of weekly lectures on the matter by guest speakers, including Martin Buber. Numerous publications and essays by Zionists such as Tritsch and Blumenfeld, as well as non-Jewish experts on Turkish affairs, attempted to shape public and policymaker opinion on the matter.

Zionism was also perceived as a valuable asset in Eastern Europe, not only in the Middle East. Some advocates of imperial expansion in Europe advanced schemes similar to the KfdO’s Eastern European Federation. They hoped to hasten the decomposition of the multinational Russian empire and thus facilitate German military conquest. One of them was Carl Heinrich Otto Sprenger. Sprenger edited the journal Osteuropäische Zukunft, organ of various German associations promoting national rights for different ethnic minorities in the Russian empire. In a petition to the Auswärtiges Amt, Sprenger portrayed the Zionist movement as the most influential international movement in Eastern Europe. Sprenger suggested utilizing Zionism to Germany’s advantage in espionage, trade, demoralization and sabotage. He highlighted that the organization’s headquarters were in Berlin and its leadership pro-German, while the foot soldiers were scattered beyond enemy lines.

The KfdO was wary that connecting them with sabotage and open insurrection would endanger Russian Jewry. Bodenheimer and Oppenheimer managed to gain an invitation to meet general Erich Ludendorff and Field-Marshall Paul von Hindenburg at Ober Ost [short for the Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East]. They were initially favorable to the idea of an Eastern European Federation, which would include a Jewish autonomous region, preferring it to the establishment of a Polish state. In his petition to Ludendorff, Oppenheimer implored him to assist in the advancement of the Jewish people for the sake of Germany’s greatness, not only from the military but also from the humanistic per-

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141 Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 253–255.
142 The full name of the journal published between 1916 and 1918 was Osteuropäische Zukunft: Zeitschrift für Deutschlands Aufgaben im Osten und Südosten. It represented the following associations: Donau-, Balkan-, und Schwarzmeerländerverband (Dubvid) in which Sprenger was on the board, Verband deutscher Förderer der ukrainischen Freiheitsbestrebungen, Deutsch-Finnländischen Vereinigung, Deutsch-Georgische Gesellschaft, and Deutsch-Nordischer Verband.
143 Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 200–201.
144 Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 232–233.
KfdO efforts resulted in Ober Ost creating two positions for experts in Jewish affairs [Referat für jüdische Angelegenheiten] who were in contact with different levels of the administrations.

Although in his memoirs Oppenheimer relished the relationship with top officers such as Hindenburg, towards the end of the war he became increasingly critical. Oppenheimer held Hindenburg personally responsible for sabotaging the Kaiser’s proclamation of a Burgfrieden out of class-based fear that the integration of broad layers of society, including Jews, would endanger the privileges of the nobility. The military’s Judenzählung [Jewish census] greatly bolstered antisemitic campaigns. Practicing self-censorship amid war, Oppenheimer only alluded to the dreadful consequences of this unleashed antisemitism. Its result was a general loss of humanity, leading to the starvation and enslavement of occupied peoples in Eastern Europe and especially of Jews. Oppenheimer contrasted the rise of antisemitism in Germany with an apparently positive turn by Austrian authorities who were impressed by Jewish demonstrations of loyalty and military prowess. In an apologetic attempt to rationalize German moral deterioration, Oppenheimer emphasized the strangeness of Ostjuden and the necessities of a war economy. He claimed that hostilities were magnified by the intimate Jewish-German affiliation, since small dissimilarities spur more hate than large ones. The linguistic and cultural affinity in which the KfdO invested its hopes were now portrayed as a bane underscoring the unbridgeable gap between Jews and Germans. Nevertheless, the KfdO did not abandon the wish for reconciliation.

In their correspondence with German officials, the KfdO emphasized the link between Jewish affairs, German imperial politics in the East and Germany’s relationships with Western powers. For example, Oppenheimer wrote to State Secretary Paul von Hintze in the Auswärtiges Amt to explain how antisemitism in Germany – in the form of the Judenzählung and discrimination against Eastern European Jewish immigrants – was causing Jews in Eastern Europe to adopt anti-German sentiments. In contrast, the Allied support of Zionism, as well as appointment of Jews to diplomatic positions, was increasing their favor among Eastern European Jews. Oppenheimer suggested the German government actively

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145 Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 159.
146 One of these positions was occupied by KfdO member Hermann Struck beginning in 1917; see Panter, *Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 285; Francis R. Nicosia, “Jewish Affairs and German Foreign Policy during the Weimar Republic: Moritz Soberheim and the Referat fur jüdische Angelegenheiten,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 33 (1988): 262.
fight antisemitism and appoint Jews to government and diplomatic positions also in Western capitals, thus openly reaffirming German Jewry’s patriotism and effectively counteracting this negative trend in Jewish support for Germany.¹⁴⁹

At the suggestion of the KfdO, the Admiralty assigned two German Zionists to the Information Service in the United States, entrusting them with improving pro-German attitudes among American Jewry. Isaac Straus managed to win the confidence of German ambassador Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff and enlist Jews of German origin in his efforts to influence German officials. The most prominent recruit was Jacob Schiff, an influential banker and philanthropist who cofounded the American Jewish Committee, an organization concerned with pogroms against Russian Jews. In letters to the ambassador and the under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, Arthur Zimmermann, they demanded trust-building measures towards Jews in domestic policy, in Ober Ost and in Palestine. They argued that recognition of Jewish nationality would crown these efforts and create “a strong counterweight” of German affiliated culture in Poland and Palestine.¹⁵⁰ At the suggestion of the KfdO, Reichstag member Ludwig Haas was appointed as head of the Jewish Department in the German civil administration of Poland.¹⁵¹

The KfdO adopted strategies discussed in Altneuland in connection with German Catholics to secure their domestic position by underscoring the way persecution at home was perceived in the colonial periphery and other European powers including the United States.¹⁵² From the other direction, imperial institutions also seemed to perceive utilitarian similarities between these two religious minorities. In correspondence between the Auswärtiges Amt and the German High Command, a supposedly rigid hierarchy within the Zionist movement – with the Berlin headquarters on top and Eastern European Zionists on the bottom – was portrayed as reminiscent of the absolute obedience within the Jesuit order.¹⁵³ The correspondents were apparently oblivious of the intense strife within the Zionist movement.

¹⁴⁹ Francis R. Nicosia, “Jewish Affairs and German Foreign Policy,” 264–265. One such example was the appointment of Henry Morgenthau by Woodrow Wilson as American ambassador in Constantinople. Wilson urged him to assist Jews to improve their perception of the United States of America; see Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 194.
¹⁵⁰ Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 204–207.
¹⁵¹ Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 234.
¹⁵² See chapter 5.
¹⁵³ Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 201.
Another achievement that outlived the First World War was the entrusting of KfdO member Moritz Sobernheim to the newly created Referat für jüdische Angelegenheiten in the Auswärtiges Amt. According to historian Francis R. Nicosia, it “began its existence more or less as an official German government version of the Komitee für den Osten, with aims and tasks that were generally similar, if somewhat broader, in scope.”¹⁵⁴ In the Auswärtiges Amt, Sobernheim propagated the KfdO precept that the relationship with Zionism was not only important for German imperial interests in Eastern Europe but also for Germany’s interests in the Middle East, where Zionist influence was growing.¹⁵⁵

The small successes at advancing German Jewish interests within a German imperial complex exacted a high price from Polish Jewry. Russian authorities suspected Polish Jews of collaboration with the enemy, which they used as a pretext for mass deportations of Jews from the war-zone.¹⁵⁶ National Polish circles were also alarmed by the possibility of the creation of a German-backed Jewish autonomy, associating Jews with German imperial interests.¹⁵⁷ With the proclamation of a Polish kingdom by the Central Powers on November 5, 1916, Polish Jews were officially recognized as a religious minority, and in the eyes of the German military administration, as a nationality. The Jüdische Rundschau called on Polish authorities to demonstrate their national maturity by granting Jews equal rights and even cultural autonomy as a national minority.¹⁵⁸

Oppenheimer rejected accusations in Polish papers that throughout history the settlement of Jews in Poland had been an instrument of German domination, and that the promotion of Jewish nationalism with an intent to establish autonomy in Poland was a new stage in this conquest. Yet his reproach was not addressed to Polish critics, but to German readers. Oppenheimer’s argument entailed a warning to German authorities that an attack on the Jewish minority by Polish nationalists was the first step in attacks on all minorities in Poland, including the German one. Additionally, it linked the fates of German and Jewish “colonists” in Poland in the same way those fates were linked together in Altneuland. In his rebuke Oppenheimer also engaged in historical revisionism. He focused on the colonial productivity motif, albeit not agriculturally, to legitimize both Jewish and German settlement in Poland, arguing that it was German

¹⁵⁴ Nicosia, “Jewish Affairs and German Foreign Policy,” 265.
¹⁵⁵ Nicosia, “Jewish Affairs and German Foreign Policy,” 265–267.
¹⁵⁶ Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 234–35.
¹⁵⁷ Panter, Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg, 271.
¹⁵⁸ Panter, Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg, 276. This proclamation was issued in the midst of deteriorating relations between the German administration and the Jews in the Ober Ost administrative area and an even worse one between Jews and Poles. See ibid. 269–271.
and Jewish artisans who in the Middle Ages developed trades and crafts in Poland, contributing to the flourishing of cities and the training of Polish craftsman. In a similar manner, he claimed, labor, economic and cultural progress legitimized settlement in Palestine of both Templers and Zionists.

Oppenheimer was optimistic about the integration of national minorities. After all, he was a social utopian who believed that solving the social problem through the elimination of land enclosure would ultimately solve the Jewish question and all other group conflicts. He agreed with Austrian Social Democrat Karl Renner that while special provisions for proportional political representation of minorities might be necessary at first, once cultural-linguistic autonomies were enacted the persuasiveness of national agitation would be reduced and economic and social issues would dominate the political discourse. As head of the KfDo, Oppenheimer advanced an autonomy concept which was not territorial, but rather cultural-linguistic, within larger tolerant, liberal states or empires would not interfere in matters of society. This was the tenor of his utopian novel Sprung über ein Jahrhundert as well as his conception of a “United States of Europe.”

In the same manner, Oppenheimer demanded a cultural autonomy for Poles within the eastern provinces of the German Empire, quoting Hans Delbrück, whose tolerance was interlinked with the military expediency of generating recruits from Ober Ost and the new German backed Polish state. Oppenheimer agreed that an official state language was important for military prowess, as well as for jurisprudence and other state functions. However, he adhered to a liberal conception of the state in which the concept of tolerance, originally emerging in a religious or better confessional context, would be extended to cultural-linguistic groups, i.e., ethnicities. Sociologically speaking, Oppenheimer regarded culture and language as “the inner consciousness of a shared identity” of modern human beings. These elements, he thought, played the role religion did, or still does in “primitive” societies, even replacing it. In a sense this

164 Oppenheimer, “Nationale Autonomie für die Ostjuden,” 366.
was the political ramification of Oppenheimer’s modular identity concept that he expounded upon in “Stammsbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein” and other essays.

Belonging to an ethnicity was a voluntary choice and not an ascription, according to Oppenheimer, since people living in heterogeneous territories were often multilingual with ties to various cultures. He thus felt it was the responsibility of the state to allow people to officially declare their ethnic belonging and to legally enable mobility between different ethnicities, as in religious conversions. Such a step would also protect multilingualism, which in heterogeneous regions with ethnic conflicts like Bohemia, was regarded as a Jewish phenomenon, according to Shumsky. Shumsky argues that nationalists fueled antisemitism by associating Jews with the rival ethnicity, or by accusing them of “Judaizing” their ethnicity by contaminating it with cosmopolitanism.

According to Oppenheimer, when it came to the Jews in Poland, whose greater part was residing in urban centers not connected by a noteworthy rural Jewish population, claims to a territorial autonomy were impertinent. Even a linguistic-cultural autonomy would be improbable, he argued, since Jews were always immersed in other cultures. He asserted that even in predominantly Jewish cities not a day passes without the Jew conversing in other languages in the market and in other daily routines. The focus of autonomous aspirations should thus be securing a low and mid-tier Jewish education system in Yiddish which would cultivate Jewish history, literature and art, as well as Hebrew. This would allow for a self-conscious Jewish acculturation into Polish culture and subsequently the attainment of Polish citizenship, along the model of Jewish emancipation in Germany. Oppenheimer’s emphasis on the importance of Jewish education was a revision of his earlier readiness to accept an exclusive Polish education system. His alleged neglect of even the most basic principles of Jewish autonomy almost led to Bodenheimer’s resignation from the KfdO.

Oppenheimer did not view Eastern European Jews as one people, but rather as less homogeneous than German Jewry due to a more radical division between the acculturated Jewish bourgeoise, whose path to assimilation was barred, and religious Jews. Yet he saw the German authorities’ plans of restructuring Jewish communal life hierarchically as potentially uniting Polish Jewry in a way German Jewry “has been for many years futilely pursuing,” resulting in a fragmented rep-

165 Oppenheimer, “Nationale Autonomie für die Ostjuden,” 364.
168 Reinharz, Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus, 176.
presentation through private organizations.\textsuperscript{169} This comparison belied that, in reality, efforts on behalf of Polish Jewry primarily served attempts at unifying German Jewry. In December 1917, with the conclusion of the armistice between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers, and the beginning of peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk, liberal German Jews and moderate Zionists formed the Vereinigung jüdischer Organisationen Deutschlands zur Wahrung der Rechten der Juden im Osten [Union of Jewish Organizations of Germany for the Protection of the Rights of the Jews in the East] to address Germany’s apprehension to vouch for the rights of Jews in Eastern Europe. Oppenheimer took a leading position in this new coalition.\textsuperscript{170}

**Enduring Entanglement in the Aftermath of the First World War**

In November 1917 Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration of support in creating a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. This required a complicated balancing act from German Zionists who wished to show their enthusiasm over the open recognition of their goals by a great power without being suspected of disloyalty to Germany. A counterdeclaration by the German government seemed to be the best solution to dilemma.\textsuperscript{171} After all, during the war Germany had repeatedly supported Zionist activity and interceded on behalf of the Zionist cause with their Ottoman allies.\textsuperscript{172}

Faced with a shift in Jewish public opinion, the Central Powers, in whose dominions more than half of world Jewry resided, took to the defensive. In an interview published in the *Vossische Zeitung* on December 31, 1917, more than three weeks after the British conquest of Jerusalem, the Ottoman grand vizier Talaat


\textsuperscript{172} For example, the German government exempted Zionist representatives from military service. Zionist nationals of enemy countries were initially tolerated in Berlin. The German government allowed financial assistance to the Jews of Palestine and interceded with the Ottoman authorities for the reopening of Zionist financial institutions as well as the further immigration of Russian Jews; see Friedman, *Germany, Turkey, and Zionism*, 191–192 and 208–209.
Pasha repudiated the British declaration and presented the prospect of ending immigration restrictions to the parts of Palestine still under Ottoman control. It was important for him to convince German Jewry of his sincerity, and so about a week after the interview he spoke at a conference of German Jewish leaders. On that very same day, January 5, 1918, the undersecretary of state at the Auswärtiges Amt, Hilmar Freiherr von dem Bussche-Haddenhausen, declared Germany’s support for the Ottoman declaration, as well as recognition and support for the civic and cultural aspirations of Jews as a minority in Eastern European countries. ¹³ Later that year the first Pro-Palästina-Komitee was created as an alliance to fight British expansion after the war. ¹⁷⁴ Prominent advocates of German imperialism such as Paul Rohrbach and Bernhard Dernburg continued to support the Zionist cause during the Weimar Republic. Both joined the second Pro-Palästina-Komitee founded in 1926. ¹⁷⁵

Franz Oppenheimer, together with Adolf Friedemann and Moritz Sobernheim on behalf of the KfdO as well as Otto Warburg and Arthur Hantke on behalf of the ZVfD, were invited to the Auswärtiges Amt to receive the declaration.¹⁷⁶ The overlap between ZVfD and KfdO memberships made the distinction between the two organizations difficult, although the latter was officially a non-Zionist organization. The fact that most of Palestine’s Jews possessed Russian citizenship added to this ambiguity.¹⁷⁷ Yet it was exactly Zionism’s supposed international influence that made Zionists the Foreign Office’s preferred Jewish advisors dur-

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¹⁴ Egmont Zechlin also demonstrated how Zionist positions were integrated into Germany’s policies towards the Middle East even during the war; see Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 434–437.
¹⁵ Both Dernburg and Rohrbach gave lectures on behalf of the second Pro-Palestine Committee. While the members of the first Pro-Palestine Committee were predominantly non-Jewish, the distribution between Jewish and non-Jewish members was more equal in the second. It included many politicians from different parties including Konrad Adenauer who would later become the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. See Walk, “Das ‘Deutsche Komitee pro Palästina,’” 162–163, 168 and 187. Blumenfeld recounted his hesitation to enlist Dernburg’s support for the committee due to his Jewish father who converted to Lutheranism. Dernburg sensed this hesitation and told Blumenfeld to count him with the Jewish member of the committee since he felt that he was anyways perceived as a Jew. See Blumenfeld, *Erlebte Judenfrage*, 173–175.
¹⁶ The declaration was printed in its entirety in the KfdO mouthpiece, *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, “Eine Erklärung der deutschen Regierung,” January 10, 1918, 147.
¹⁷ At the very beginning of the war, Bodenheimer communicated with the Ottoman ambassador in Berlin on behalf of both the KfdO and the ZO; see the letter from August 27, 1914, Reinharz, *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus*, 153–154.
ing the First World War. Oppenheimer tried to draw a clear line between the responsibilities of the ZVfD and the KfdO in a commentary to the declaration. He explained that the KfdO was the addressee of the part of the declaration that deals with the “protection of the Jewish minority in the Slavic East.” He cautioned against overestimating the declaration since Germany was not able to grant the Jews of Poland any rights. He was, however, interested in the significance the declaration had for Germany.

In his opinion, the declaration revealed the changing mindset of German leaders who were now pursuing integration of groups of varying languages and ethnic origins without oppression instead of a parochial insistence on homogeneous language and culture. He argued that this resulted from the realization that advocacy for minority rights was expedient for Germany’s own foreign policy interests in a post-war Europe. It provided leverage in territories with a German ethnic minority such as Belgium, Poland, Lithuania, as well as Alsace and Lorraine. The situation was even more extreme, he argued, for the Austrian-Hungarian empire, for whom promoting minority rights would be the only means of survival. Oppenheimer emphasized the exemplary behavior of German minorities in Transylvania and in Bohemia in their relationship with majority culture.

Oppenheimer thus reiterated Warburg’s hopes, expressed in Altneuland, that Germany’s imperial aspirations would eventually lead it to embrace plurality. According to Warburg, ruling foreign peoples required a deeper understanding of their cultures and the creation of an English-like colonial bureaucracy. In contrast, Oppenheimer emphasized the preservation of cultural influence where the “conquest by the sword” had failed. The imperial undertones of Oppenheimer’s essay were recognized by the Polish press, which repudiated Oppenheimer for allegedly claiming that Germany’s declaration aimed at establishing a Jewish cultural autonomy in Poland. In his defense Oppenheimer reinforced the sole right of the forthcoming Polish state to decide on minority rights. Yet he ex-

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178 The Hilfsverein, which was active in disseminating German culture among the Jews of the Orient, vehemently fought Zionist encroachment on what until the First World War was their exclusive turf. In futile attempts to shake the foundation of the Zionist-German relationship, Hilfsverein representatives questioned the loyalty of such an international organization – much to the confusion of German diplomatic circles. See Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 247–251.


pressed his hopes that Poland would join the shifting trend towards recognition of minorities. This would be the new litmus test for belonging to the “civilized nations” of Europe.¹⁸²

Oppenheimer also pleaded with the German government to intercede on behalf of the Romanian Jews. He claimed that if Germany failed to act, the United States, other Western nations and even the “new Russia,” would. According to Oppenheimer, although the emancipation of Romania’s Jews was inevitable, an intercession on their behalf would help restore the “dignity of the German Empire.” He claimed that Bismarck used this formulation during the negotiation of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin on the issue of granting full citizenship to the Jews of Romania. The essence of Oppenheimer’s argument was that if the government truly wished to return to the successful imperial politics of Bismarck, they should remember that support of Jewish emancipation on the fringes of Germany’s sphere of influence was an important element of it.¹⁸³ Interestingly enough, Oppenheimer was trying to reframe the acceptance of Woodrow Wilson’s principles of minority rights not as a symbol of Germany’s defeat but as a return to the values that led to the zenith of the German Empire and now to its salvation.

Oppenheimer suggested that by establishing itself as the protector of minority rights, Germany would gain influence among diverse minorities in Eastern Europe and improve its position in future peace negotiations. Instead of appearing as cowering before the demands of others, Germany could self-confidently make demands of other nations. To further contrive German intellectual ownership on the concept of minority rights, Oppenheimer referenced the German-Austrian international law expert Rudolf Laun’s statement that allegedly undemocratic Germans were the authors of the only two constitutions that guaranteed equality to national minorities: Austria and Switzerland. Although the German Empire was admittedly not on par with the other “Germanies,” making such reforms after the war would not be a concession of their defeat and betrayal of their Germanness but its natural expression.

Oppenheimer further suggested that a German fervor for minority rights would be a form of resistance. He again cited Laun’s description of German insistence on national differentiation as a cultural weapon in the propagandistic fight against Western “imperialism hypocritically masked as pacifism.”¹⁸⁴ With

¹⁸³ Franz Oppenheimer, “Die Judenfrage in Romanian,” Neue Jüdische Monatshefte, April 10, 1918, 293.
this nationalistic fervor, Oppenheimer abandoned his prewar admiration for rational English colonization. The underlying agenda in *Altneuland* for synchronizing Jewish and German patriotism in the context of a liberal German imperialism now resonated in the rallying cry of German-speaking Zionists against the incorporation of Palestine as a colony in the British Empire.

Accordingly, Oppenheimer tried to lower Zionist expectations from the British. Oppenheimer compared Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George to the Assyrian King Cyrus who, all for the sake of power politics and the creation of a “bridgehead” and “buffer-state” between the great powers, allowed the Jews to return from the Babylonian captivity and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. He warned that being a pawn in global politics would more likely lead to a renewed catastrophe than to a peaceful and long-lasting reunion of the Jews with their old homeland. In a mixture of historical materialism and prophetic lamentation over yet another imminent loss of Zion, Oppenheimer warned that it was only if the ruling class of the victorious nation, whose identity was now clear, were to suffer a fatal setback, that “the last aerial bomb of this world carnage would blow open the gate in the ancient wailing wall, sealed since millennia, so that the redeemer could rejoicefully enter the jubilate Jerusalem.”

Other Central European Zionists shared Oppenheimer’s pessimism concerning Palestine’s future under English rule. In an effort to forge an intellectual alliance to combat “the infiltration of imperialism, mercantilism and other demons in Palestine,” Martin Buber invited Oppenheimer to contribute to an anthology he was preparing that “should draw attention to the imminent danger, but also paint a picture of the Gemeinschaft that we mean and want.” Buber also approached Hugo Bergmann, Max Brod, Markus Reiner, Arthur Ruppin and other Zionists who shared a community-oriented vision for Palestine. Ultimately, the essays were printed in Buber’s journal *Der Jude*, founded in 1916 in opposition to the KfdO, and its journal *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*. Oppenheimer’s cooperation, albeit indirect, with main protagonists of the Prager Bar

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185 *Verhandlungen des IX. Zionist-Kongresses*, 199.
Kochva association was not surprising. He shared their intellectual attempt to establish a bridge between ethnic-nationalism and liberal cosmopolitanism. The difficulty in comprehending this attempted reconciliation was demonstrated by historians of Zionism often dealing with only one of these aspects while ignoring the other.\textsuperscript{189} Additionally, they shared an adherence to the political concept of ethnic-cultural autonomy, despite the collapse of the prewar imperial order, and interpreted the Balfour Declaration accordingly.\textsuperscript{190}

Researchers agree that the multinational ambiance of the Habsburg empire, together with Central European liberalism, were the main sources of the binational conceptions of the Prager circle.\textsuperscript{191} Yet their anti-British and anti-imperial posture exposed a further source of this world view beyond possible notions of loyalty to the German and Austrian empires. They shared with Oppenheimer and the \textit{Altenuland} circle the main staple of German colonial fantasies: a depiction of themselves as a benevolent conqueror. These socialist-inclined Central European Zionists dreaded the incorporation of Palestine into the British empire. Although they were themselves colonizers in their ethos, they perceived themselves as protecting the land from colonialism.\textsuperscript{192}

The Viennese trained civil engineer Markus Reiner wrote: “We will not tolerate the Holy Land being turned into a production place for ‘surplus value’ flowing to Europe.”\textsuperscript{193} The aversion from the future role of Palestine as a colony supplying resources to the British empire and its role in power politics was reiterated by Hugo Bergmann’s comment: “The tune of a ‘buffer state’ tinges in our ears far too much. We do not want to make Palestine into a ‘bridge.’ We want to be spared from the strife of this capitalist world, from its quarrel over strategic safeguards, sales markets and trade routes.” This was, however, not a total rejection of the legitimizing colonial discourse on economic development and industrialization by the Prague Zionist Bergmann, who at the time was in London fundraising for the founding of a Jewish National Library in Jerusalem: “We don’t want to counteract the work methods of capitalism, but rather the capitalist mindset. Factories and machines do not make capitalism. Capitalist is the spirit.”\textsuperscript{194}

The authors feared that economic upswing and increased immigration to Palestine would endanger their elitist conception of Zionist pioneers fulfilling

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{189} For a comprehensive review of Zionist historiography in this regard, see Shumsky, \textit{Ben Prag li-Yerushalayim}, 21–22.
\item \textsuperscript{190} Shumsky, \textit{Zweisprachigkeit und binationale Idee}, 247–248.
\item \textsuperscript{191} Shumsky, \textit{Ben Prag li-Yerushalayim}, 17–18.
\item \textsuperscript{192} Lappin, \textit{Jüdische Moderne}, 287.
\item \textsuperscript{193} Markus Reiner, “Der Industrialismus,” \textit{Der Jude} 3 (1918–19), 471–472.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Hugo Bergmann, “Die wahre Autonomie,” \textit{Der Jude} 3 (1918–19), 369–370.
\end{itemize}
the romantic, antibourgeois and anticapitalist German notion of *Gemeinschaft*. Oppenheimer shared this view of capitalism as a spirit of alienation from labor, as well as from other human beings, ruining any sense of *Gemeinschaft*. He emphasized that capital is not a thing but a relation between people that must be done away with: “Thereby we would achieve all that we wish, not only economically but also social-psychologically. What poisons and embitters our life is the kind of economic competition amid which we live. It incites man against man, class against class, people against people. It is the notorious villain that ignited this world war.”¹⁹⁵ According to Bergmann, a specific Zionist economic approach was crucial for the creation of a community of mutuality instead of opposition. He reminded the readers that “‘Palestine’s colonization’ is not the goal of Zionism; it is ... only a pretext. The goal is the creation of a new type of Jew! In place of the Jew who is addicted to things and prays to the dead should arise the Jew whose life is rooted in spirit, who is willing to make sacrifices, filled with love, enthusiastic.”¹⁹⁶

Steeped in biblical precepts of social justice and a romantic ideal of old Israel’s communal life and law, the new Jew, as envisioned by this intellectual circle, should bring a new revelation to the world, or in the words of Buber: “True *Gemeinschaft* is the Sinai of the future.”¹⁹⁷ Oppenheimer was among his brethren in imagining Zionism as the beginning of a utopian realization for the whole world. Even though the utopian vision propagated in *Der Jude* rejected class struggle, an important motive in Oppenheimer’s utopian vision, the goal of reconciling a *Gemeinschaft*-oriented nationalism with a universal socialist outlook and biblical Judaism was shared nonetheless by Oppenheimer.¹⁹⁸

Another Prague Zionist, Max Brod, known as the administrator of Kafka’s literary inheritance, expressed his hopes for overcoming all negative elements of nationalism through socialist Zionism: “I see the task and universal meaning of Jewish nationalism in giving ‘nationalism’ new meaning ... By eliminating social injustice and imperial-expansive volition in this community, a living example would be set that wrongs associated with and supposedly intrinsic to nation

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¹⁹⁷ Martin Buber, “Wege und der Weg,” *Der Jude* 3 (1918–19), 368.
¹⁹⁸ Franz Oppenheimer wrote about biblical land reallocation; see Oppenheimer, “Bodenbesitzordnung in Palästina,” 500. Bergmann wrote about the equation of labor with religious worship; see Bergmann, “Die wahre Autonomie,” 371. Beyond the essays discussed here, biblical obligations of social justice were dealt with extensively in several issues of *Der Jude*. The journal attempted to create an intrinsic link between socialism and Judaism to counteract Karl Marx’s association of Judaism with capitalism; see Lappin, *Jüdische Moderne*, 274–276.
alism today – are nevertheless abatable and not intrinsically national.¹⁹⁹ Despite the atrocities of the First World War, a war which Buber initially celebrated in patriotic fervor, Buber still advocated for nationalism without which the Zionist movement had no sway. His remedy for the faults of nationalism was the recognition of international frameworks:

Every nation ... is its own master and its own judge ... But on these most bloody of earthen days began already the demise of this dogma. Understand us correctly, the perception of the nation as a fundamental reality of human life cannot be deleted from human consciousness anymore and also should not be. But it must and will be supplemented by the recognition that no people on the earth is sovereign. Sovereign is only the spirit.²⁰⁰

Oppenheimer was not free of the paradoxes emanating from the attempted reconciliation of nationalism and universalism. His main credo of a peaceful “conquest by the plow” aimed at creating a Jewish farming class with a dominant Hebrew culture that would inevitably supplant indigenous farmers and their cultures. Yet, as the fulfillment of Zionist fantasies seemed within reach, Oppenheimer stood out by not sticking to amorphic terms of a brotherhood of nations and anti-imperialism, which was at its core oriented at other European nations.

Oppenheimer was one of the first contributors to Der Jude, together with his student Fritz Sternberg, to point clearly to the national conflict between Jews and Arabs that Zionism must transcend, a theme that the journal continued to address.²⁰¹ Evoking the Jewish experience of demanding recognition as “guests,” Oppenheimer called for adherence to the same principles as “hosts.” Oppenheimer drew on the demographic and geographic familiarity with Palestine he had developed in his work in Altneuland, his years of activity in Merhavia, and the journal’s overall optimistic belief in economic development as a means to cooperation. He used this to criticize the ongoing exclusion of Arabs from the nascent Jewish community, which he had already experienced firsthand, in the attempt at implementing a national-universal utopia at Merhavia:

The reader who is not hopelessly prejudiced will recognize ... how wrong anti-Arab politics were also from a purely economic aspect, driven by the nationalistic sentiments of Palestine’s workforce. This policy was also most preposterous when considering aspects of social peace and political security, in addition to being ethically reprehensible. The Jewish country should be a place of justice and happiness for all, and there is truly enough space in the country to promote the prosperity of 600,000 Arabs as well, thus winning them over as de-

²⁰¹ Arthur Ruppin was another early contributor on the matter; see Lappin, Jüdische Moderne, 254–255.
pendable friends ... These seem to me to be the principles of Jewish colonization ... The war has taught us what the united power of the people is capable of achieving – let us harness it for goals of peace and culture in the service of the Most High and the realization of the highest, ancient ideal of our people, that was always simultaneously national and universal.²⁰²