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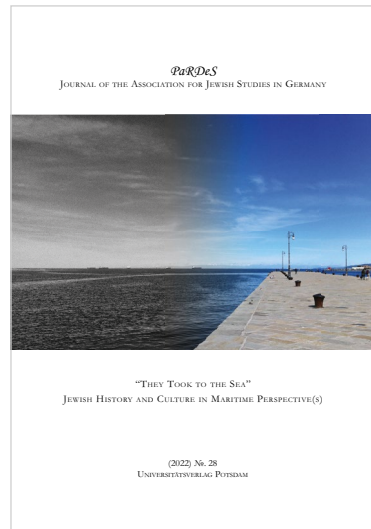
“They Took to the Sea”: Jewish History and Culture in Maritime Perspective(s)

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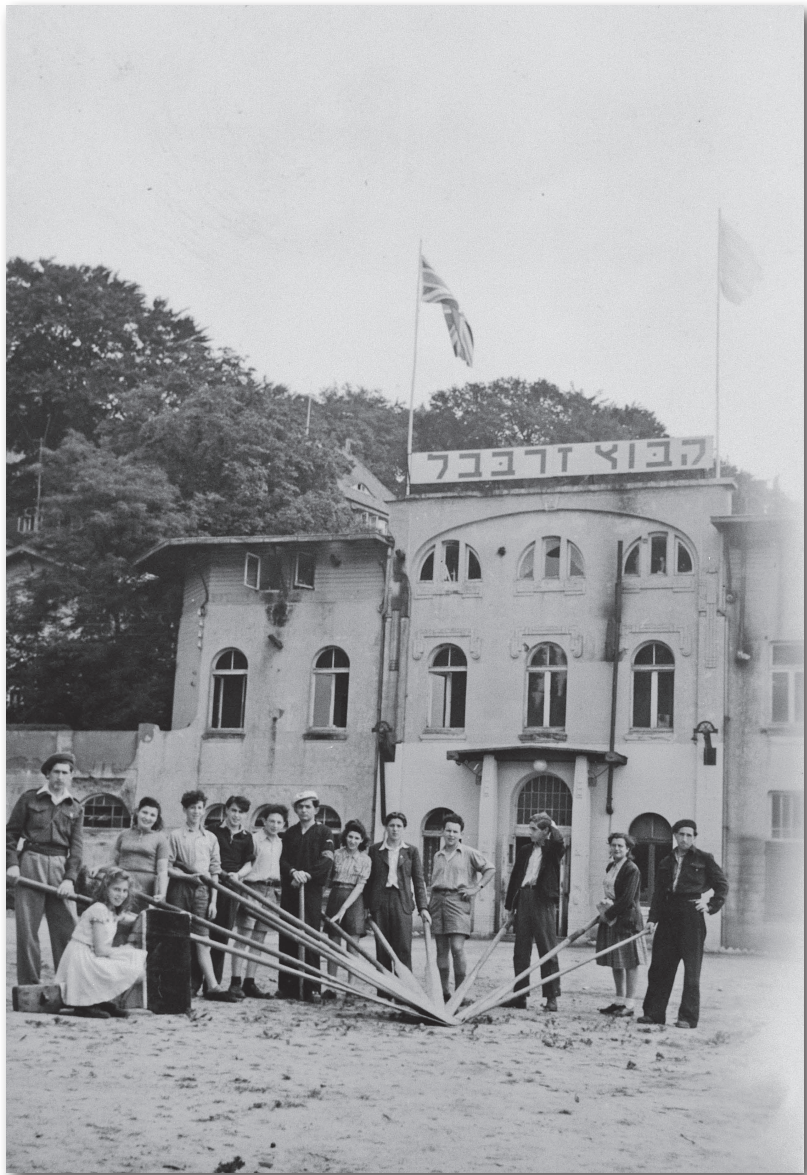
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“Creating a Maritime Future”: Hamburg and the Revival of Jewish Seafaring and Fishing Traditions in the 1940s and 1950s

by Björn Siegel

Abstract

This article explores the importance of the port city of Hamburg in the evolving discourses on the creation of a maritime future, a vision which became influential in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. While some Jewish representatives in the city aimed at preserving and intertwining Hanseatic and Jewish traditions in order to secure a Jewish presence in the port city under the pressure of the Nazi regime and thereafter, others wanted to create new emigration opportunities, especially to Mandatory Palestine, and create a Jewish maritime future in Eretz Israel. Different Zionist organizations supported the newly evolving maritime ideas, such as the “conquest of the sea”, and promoted the image of a Jewish seafaring nation. Despite the difficulties in the 1940s, these concepts gained influence post-1945 and led to the foundation of the fishery kibbutz “Zerubavel” in Blankenese/Hamburg. However, the idea of a Hanseatic Jewish future also remained influential and illustrates how differently a “Jewish maritime future” was imagined and used to link past, present and future.

1 Introduction

In early March 1946 survivors of the Shoah lobbied for the refoundation of the Jewish Community in Hamburg and proclaimed it a “necessity” to rebuild Jewish life in Germany after the “national-socialist terror against our Jewish fellow men”.¹ The newly formed board of the Jewish community aimed at re-establishing a community based on democratic values and Jewish traditions

¹ For the reprint of the original letter (Hamburg, March 1946) and the citation [all translation in this article are by the author], cf. Uwe Lohalm, ed., “Schließlich ist es meine Heimat ...”: Harry Goldstein und die jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in *persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag, 2002), 96.

which could redefine a Jewish future in the Hanseatic port city. The port of Hamburg and its strong connection to the maritime world evolved as central elements in the proposed recreation of a Jewish future in Germany post-1945.

The newly evolving Jewish community of Hamburg, however, was not the only one to instrumentalize Hanseatic traditions and its imbedded maritime images in order to create a Jewish future after the Shoah. In the same year, in which the new Jewish community in Hamburg called for participation, the German branch of the Poale Zion movement initiated the foundation of a maritime *Hachshara* training center in the port city, which was about to educate a new elite, restart Jewish seafaring traditions and offer a different path to the future post-1945.

By examining the early discussions of a Jewish future in the port city of Hamburg and studying the attempts to reinvent Jewish traditions of seafaring and fishing at the Elbe River post-1945, the article sheds new light on the debates on a Jewish future in Germany after the Second World War. Moreover, it discusses the role of maritime traditions in the processes of a so called Jewish national regeneration and, thus, illustrates the importance of the “sea” in the creation of a Jewish future.

2 A New Beginning

On July 8, 1945 twelve Jewish survivors of the Shoah came together in order to reconstruct Jewish life in the war-torn port city of Hamburg. Just two months after the city’s surrender to British troops and the final declaration of the end of the war (in Hamburg) on May 3, 1945, the idea of rebuilding a Jewish community after the Shoah mirrored the strong cultural and emotional connection and – as Ina Lorenz described it in her study – “the strong willingness” of the Jewish survivors to stand one’s ground [“ein starker Behauptungswille”].²

The election of a communal board on September 18, 1945, which is understood as the actual moment of the Jewish community’s refoundation post-1945, led to the appointment of Harry [Heimann] Goldstein as head of the

² Ina Lorenz, “Wiederaufbau im ‘Land der Mörder’: Die zwölf ‘Gründungsväter’ der Jüdischen Gemeinde,” in *Aus Hamburg in alle Welt: Lebensgeschichten jüdischer Verfolgter aus der ‘Werkstatt der Erinnerung’*, eds. Linde Apel, Klaus David, and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Hamburg: Bölling und Galitz Verlag, 2011), 164–187, here 167.

community.³ Goldstein, who was born and raised in Waldenburg (Silesia), moved to Hamburg in 1906/07 and served in the German Imperial Army during the First World War. He became a leading member of the local branch of the Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten [Association of Jewish War Veterans] and sponsored Jewish sports group such as “Schild”. Moreover, he became an influential organizer of welfare services in the Jewish community until the dissolution by the Gestapo in 1943. Protected by his marriage to Clara Goldstein (née Rohweder), he survived oppression and persecution in Nazi Germany and established himself as a spokesperson for Jews in the Hanseatic port city shortly after the end of the Second World War.

In a speech given on November 4, 1945 Goldstein described the “gigantic mass murder” organized by Nazi authorities and commemorated the murdered community members. However, he hoped “that their suffering and death may not have been in vain, but may be a blessing for our beloved homeland, to which we feel closely connected despite all that has happened.”⁴ In several speeches and lectures he glorified the history of Hamburg’s Jewish community and stated names of prominent local rabbis. He also stressed the importance of Jewish intellectuals and businessmen such as Gabriel Riesser, Albert Ballin, Max Warburg and Leo Lippmann, who had influenced the society of the city. His strong emphasis on being rooted in Hanseatic history implied a strong connection to the port city, its history and maritime traditions. While he aimed at reconnecting the Jewish presence in the city post-1945 with Hamburg’s Jewish and maritime historical past, he knew that these links had been undermined by the brutal persecution, oppression and annihilation of Jewish life during the Nazi reign. In the time of the Nazi regime, the sea had become a space of emigration and a route for Jewish refugees fleeing persecution and oppression.⁵

³ Arno Herzig, “Vorwort,” in *“Schließlich ist es meine Heimat ...”: Harry Goldstein und die jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos*, ed. Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 7–11, here 7.

⁴ Harry Goldstein, “Ansprache Harry Goldsteins anlässlich der Gedenkfeier für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus am 4. November 1945 im Krematorium in Ohlsdorf,” in *“Schließlich ist es meine Heimat ...”: Harry Goldstein und die jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos*, ed. Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 46–48, here 48.

⁵ For this issue, cf. Joachim Schlör, “Reflexionen an Bord: Die Schiffsreise als Ort und Zeit im Dazwischen,” *Jahrbuch für Exilforschung* 35 [Passagen des Exils, ed. Burcu Dogramaci and Elizabeth Otto] (2017): 54–68; David Jünger, “An Bord des Lebens: Die Schiffspassage deut-

In addition, in the 1930s and 1940s Goldstein witnessed that various Zionist groups, such as the *Hechaluz* movement (founded in Germany in 1922), had initiated maritime training centers [“Seefahrts-Hachscharah Zentren”] which promoted seafaring and fishing.⁶ These efforts to revive maritime traditions were based on a very different historical narrative than Goldstein’s promoted vision: Goldstein on the one hand stressed the role of Albert Ballin, General Director of the Hamburg-America Line (HAPAG), and his strong affiliation to Germany and its maritime ambitions. The turn towards the “sea” by the *Hechaluz* and other Zionist groups on the other hand promoted the sea on a different level, which challenged Goldstein’s understanding of a Jewish present and future in Hamburg pre- and post-1945.

3 A Zionist Turn towards the Sea

With the foundation of the maritime training centers across Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s Zionist groups, such as the *Hechaluz* movement, aimed at offering new emigration possibilities to German Jews, which were confronted with growing measures of oppression and persecution by the Nazi regime.⁷ While the majority of German Jews, e.g. Goldstein, still hoped for a *modus vivendi* with the regime, the evolving focus on maritime labor and traditions reflected a new attitude of several leading Zionists towards the “sea” due to its potential economic resources and its important symbolic value to the Zionist movement.

In 1933 David Ben-Gurion, influential member of the Zionist movement, lobbied for a “second adventure” following the “people of the city’s conquest of the land”. For him the “conquest of the sea” was the next and logical step in the formation and regeneration of the Jewish nation.⁸ Three years later

scher Juden nach Palästina 1933 bis 1938 als Übergangserfahrung zwischen Raum und Zeit,” *Mobile Culture Studies: The Journal* 1 (2015): 147–166.

⁶ The *Hechaluz* consisted of different Zionist groups, such as the Poale Zion, and became an important movement in Germany, cf. Knut Bergbauer, “Auf eigener Scholle’: Frühe Hachschara und jüdische Jugendbewegung in Deutschland,” in *Hachschara und Jugend-Alija: Wege jüdischer Jugend nach Palästina*, eds. Ulrike Pilarczyk, Ofer Aschkenazi, and Arne Homann (Gifhorn: Medienagentur Knecht GbR, 2020), 23–54, here 32–33.

⁷ For more details, cf. David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit: Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

⁸ David Ben-Gurion, “Towards the Sea,” *Davar*, October 31, 1933, 7 (Hebrew). For more information, cf. Maoz Azaryahu, “The Formation of the ‘Hebrew Sea’ in Pre-State Israel,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7, no. 3 (2008): 251–267.

Moshe Shertok, a member of the Jewish Agency, also urged Jews across the globe to “continue the work of turning the Jews into a seafaring people.”⁹ In a similar vein, Meir Dizengoff, mayor of Tel Aviv 1921–1925 and 1928–1936, strongly supported the foundation of Tel Aviv port and, in so doing, became another vital spokesperson for a maritime Jewish revival.¹⁰ Consequently, several Zionist groups founded initiatives to promote Jewish shipping and fishing industries or maritime-related sports associations.¹¹ Especially the *Hechaluz* movement began to establish maritime training centers in Germany and Europe in order to form and educate a new, “sea-oriented” Zionist elite.¹²

In the last months the Hechaluz turned its special attention precisely to the maritime hachsharah, it is because the land and its necessities, the struggle for the economic independence of the Jewish Yishuv, the construction of the port of Tel Aviv and the expansion of Jewish shipping primarily determine the career choice of its chawerim.

The struggle for the economic independence of the Yishuv must not refer solely to the economic sectors associated with the land. Without the conquest of the sea, we will always remain dependent. A people living on the shores of a significant sea cannot live permanently without this branch of the economy without facing serious economic disadvantages and damage. Therefore, the sailor is communally and socially as valuable to the normal structure as the farmer and agricultural worker. And just as agriculture was developed years ago, today the conquest of the sea is one of the most important Chaluzian tasks.¹³

Other reports portrayed the overall importance of the maritime *Hechaluz*’ training centers for the Jews in the diaspora and the formation of a Jewish future.¹⁴ The *Hechaluz* even praised the specific role of the port city of Hamburg in the process to revive Jewish seafaring and fishing traditions. The existing

⁹ Anonymous, “Marine Day at Levant Fair,” *Palestine Post*, May 29, 1936, 1.

¹⁰ Anonymous, “And there will be a Port in Tel Aviv,” *Ha’aretz*, May 20, 1936, 1 (Hebrew).

¹¹ For a broad study, cf. Kobi Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism’s Maritime Revolution: The Yishuv’s Hold on the Land of Israel’s Sea and Shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin/Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

¹² For early maritime initiatives, cf. Samuel Tolkowsky, *They Took to the Sea: A Historical Survey of Jewish Maritime Activities* (New York, NY/London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 261–277.

¹³ Anonymous, “Seefahrts-Hachscharah: Aus der Arbeit des Hechaluz,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, February 9, 1937, 4.

¹⁴ Anonymous, “Auf dem Wege zum Beruf: Jüdische Jugend berichtet über ihr Arbeitsleben,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, March 18, 1938, 6.

Beth Chaluz [home for Zionist pioneers, founded in 1932] and the different opportunities in the port to work in “sea-related fields”, such as shipping and fishing but also ship loading and building, were described as important assets. Next to the maritime training centers on the Danish island of Bornholm and in the Italian port city of Livorno, Hamburg emerged as a central point of reference for the “Zionist maritime revolution” organized by the *Hechaluz*.¹⁵ Moreover, in competition with other maritime training initiatives, e.g. in Civitavecchia/Italy (organized by Revisionist Zionists) or the city of Danzig (today Gdańsk/Poland; led by Gustav Pietsch and “Gordonia”/Zebulun), the port city of Hamburg evolved into a major hub for Zionist maritime training.¹⁶

All these efforts were not only ideologically driven but also aimed to counterbalance British immigration policies for Mandatory Palestine. Under the British authorities a specific immigration quota had been installed which strictly regulated immigration and linked it to the economic capacity of the Mandate.¹⁷ Consequently, the *Hechaluz* had to deal with a strong opposition by the British Mandate authorities due to the strict immigration regime. Moreover, it also realized that the Nazi regime increasingly undermined the efforts to create a new Jewish future “on the sea”.

Despite the rising measures of persecution and the ongoing policies of oppression by the Nazi regime, the port city of Hamburg continued to play an important role within the Zionist maritime revolution due to its still existing German-Jewish shipping and towing companies.¹⁸ Zionist representatives had lobbied for the support of several Jewish shipping experts, such as Lucy Borchardt, owner of the Fairplay Dampfschleppschiffahrtsgesellschaft

¹⁵ Cf. Anonymous, “Zur Schulentlassungen: Berufsbildungsstätten für jüdische Jugendliche,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, March 4, 1938, 7.

¹⁶ On the role of Danzig, cf. Susanne Zeller, “Das Schicksal von Kapitän Gustav Pietsch (1893–1975): Ein Mitglied der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei wird zum Retter für Juden,” *Mitteilungsblatt Yakinton. Journal für die Jekkes in Israel* 308 (2021): 5–10; Dennis Riffel, “Flucht über das Meer: Illegal von Danzig nach Palästina,” in *Überleben im Dritten Reich: Juden im Untergrund und ihre Helfer*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2003), 154–165; Jaroslaw Drozd, “Gdynia to Neve-Yam: The Jewish Fisherman’s Courses within the Bays of Gdansk and Puck in the Interwar Poland,” in *Studia Maritima*, Vol. XXVI, ed. Edward Włodarczyk (Szczecin: Polish Academy of Sciences Committee of Historical Sciences University of Szczecin, 2013), 55–68.

¹⁷ There is a rich research literature on this topic, for details, cf. e.g. Dvora Hacohen, “British Immigration Policy to Palestine in the 1930s: Implications for Youth Aliyah,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 2 (2001): 2006–218.

¹⁸ Anonymous, “Der Stand der Seefahrts-Hachsharah,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, July 20, 1937, 7.

(Hamburg), and Arnold Bernstein, who had established the Arnold Bernstein Shipping Company (Hamburg) as well as the Palestine Shipping Company (Haifa) with its well-known ship “Tel Aviv”.¹⁹ Hamburg therefore provided training opportunities, for example for stewards, sailors or engineers, but also fishermen and seamen.²⁰

The hope to build up an independent merchant navy and form a new maritime elite while also establishing fishery industries on the Palestinian coast and promoting Jewish ports in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jaffa as well as creating a Jewish maritime future were driving forces in all the different efforts and initiatives, e.g. by Lucy Borchardt and the *Hechaluz* representative Naftali Unger.²¹ In his auto-biographical work “Margot”, Unger spoke of “hundreds of Jewish youth” in the seafaring *Hachshara* in Hamburg, which was probably an exaggeration but nevertheless indicated the importance of the port city during the Nazi era.²² Accordingly, some of the *Hachshara* participants in Hamburg dreamed of their own *Hachshara* ship, a “hachshara kibbutz on the water”²³ as Avraham Barkai pointed out; a dream that was to become a reality only after 1945.

With the imprisonment of Bernstein in 1937 and his forced emigration to the USA as well as the flight of Borchardt to the UK and the dissolution of

¹⁹ Cf. Ina Lorenz, “Seefahrts-Hachshara in Hamburg (1935–1938): Lucy Borchardt – ‘Die einzige jüdische Reederin der Welt,’” in *Bewahren und Berichten. Festschrift für Hans-Dieter Loose zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Wilhelm Eckardt [also *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 83] (Hamburg: Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1997), 445–472; Björn Siegel, “Die Jungfernfahrt der ‘Tel Aviv’ nach Palästina im Jahre 1935: ‘Eine besinnliche Fahrt ins Land der Juden?’,” in *Ihre Wege sind liebliche Wege und all ihre Pfade Frieden (Sprüche 3,17): Die Neunte Joseph Carlebach-Konferenz, Wege Joseph Carlebachs. Universale Bildung, gelebtes Judentum, Opfergang*, eds. Miriam Gillis-Carlebach and Barbara Vogel (Hamburg: Dölling and Galitz Verlag, 2014), 106–125; Björn Siegel “Arnold Bernstein”: Biographie im Rahmen des Forschungsprojektes des Deutschen Historischen Instituts (GHI) *Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies (1720 to the present)* [Publikation 2014/2015], accessed June 15, 2022, <http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org>.

²⁰ Anonymous, “Der Stand der Seefahrts-Hachschara,” 7. Cf. Anonymous, “Zur Schulentlassung – Bildungsstätten für jüdische Jugendliche,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, March 4, 1938, 7; Anonymous, “Auf dem Weg zum Beruf – Jüdische Jugend berichtet über ihr Arbeitsleben,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, March 18, 1939, 6.

²¹ Rudolf Melitz, ed., *Das ist unser Weg: Junge Juden schildern Umschichtung und Hachscharah* (Berlin: Joachim Goldstein Verlag, 1937), 37–41; Lorenz, “Seefahrts-Hachshara in Hamburg,” 445–472.

²² Naftali Unger, *Margot* (Jerusalem: n.p. 1974; Hebrew), 59.

²³ Avraham Barkai, *Vom Boykott zur ‘Entjudung’: Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich, 1933–1943* (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer Verlage, 1988), 100–105.

the German *Hechaluz*, the idea of creating a Jewish maritime future in Hamburg came to an end. However, many Zionists continued to dream of such a future, which mirrored how strong “the ancient Jewish people’s relation to this mightiest and oldest of the elements”²⁴ was – as Raphael Patai described it in 1941. In their understanding the “sea” not only represented an important economic resource and a national asset but also linked the Jewish past and present to the future.

4 The Fishery Kibbutz “Zerubavel” – A Maritime Vision post-1945

In 1945 the left-wing Poale Zion movement discussed the ideas of a Jewish maritime future again. They hoped to support Shoah survivors by establishing a fishery kibbutz at the Elbe River and, in so doing, offer Jews, and especially Jewish displaced persons (DPs) from eastern Europe, new opportunities. Being aware of the maritime traditions of the Hanseatic port city, the Poale Zion movement realized that Hamburg not only offered a strong link to the maritime world but also evolved into a major rescue hub post-1945. Jewish survivors including young adults and children found refuge in several camps such as the DP camp Bergen-Belsen (Bergen-Hohne) or the newly established American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC, short “Joint”) Warburg Children’s Health Home in Blankenese/Hamburg. Under the leadership of the Joint and its representatives David Rothman and Erich Warburg, the later was founded on the Warburg family estate on the Kösterberg.²⁵

Survivors from Theresienstadt found a home here as did groups of children who had been liberated from different concentration camps. Many of them arrived from Bergen-Belsen in January 1946. Along with other Zionist organizations, such as *Ha’Shomer Ha’Zair*, *Koordinazia*, *Gordonia*, *Dror* or *Ha’No’ar Ha’Zioni*, the Poale Zion movement wanted to give these Jewish children and young adults a new family, grant them relief and education, but also offer them a professional career and a sense of belonging. Thus, in March 1946 the

²⁴ Raphael Patai, “Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 32, no. 2 (1941): 1–26, here 26.

²⁵ Cf. Ina Lorenz, “Ein Heim für jüdische Waisen – AJDC Warburg Children Health Home Blankenese (1946–48),” in *Jüdische Welten – Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart [Festschrift für Monika Richarz]*, eds. Marion Kaplan and Beate Meyer (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 336–358.

Poale Zion movement established the fishery kibbutz “Zerubavel” [Serubabel] in Blankenese/Hamburg with the support of the Joint and the Jewish Agency in order to revitalize Jewish fishing and seafaring traditions at the Elbe River, help traumatized and uprooted Jewish DPs and create a new maritime future (again).

By using the name “Zerubavel” the Poale Zion movement on the one hand linked their endeavor to the history of Zerubavel [Serubabel], the grandson of King Jojachin, who led the Jewish tribes out of the Babylonian exile to the Land of Israel and began to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. On the other hand, the name “Zerubavel” also linked their efforts to one of Poale Zion’s most important leaders Yakov Vitkin “Zerubavel” (1866–1967). He was born in Poltava (Russian Tsarist Empire, today Ukraine) and joined the Poale Zion movement at an early age. In 1906 he was elected to the movement’s “executive board” and had close contacts to other Poale Zion representatives, including Ber Borochov. He published Yiddish-language newspapers such as “Der Yiddisher Arbeter” and immigrated to Palestine in 1910.²⁶ While he did not negate the Jewish diaspora, he nevertheless considered living in Palestine to be the desirable goal for all Jews – ideas which Ber Borochov also supported.²⁷ Even though the Poale Zion movement remained a rather marginal phenomenon in Germany, Zerubavel succeeded to promote its ideas across the globe. Post-1945 he became a major spokesperson of Shoah survivors and DPs in Germany and Europe.²⁸ Thus, he also supported the opening of the fishery kibbutz in the “Elbkurhaus am Mühlenberg” in close proximity to the AJDC children’s home. The specific maritime link, which the kibbutz represented, attracted numerous young adults: in March 1946 70 participants,

²⁶ Yael Chaver, *What Must Be Forgotten: The Survival of Yiddish in Zionist Palestine* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 97.

²⁷ Shmuel Almog, “The Role of Religious Values in the Second Aliyah,” in *Zionism and Religion*, Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series 30, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (Hanover, NH/London: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 244–245. Cf. Jan Rybak, “The Radical (Re-)Interpretation of Jewish Class and Nation: Poale Zion and the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917,” in *Jewish Radicalism: Historical Perspectives on a Phenomenon of Global Modernity*, ed. Frank Jacob and Sebastian Kunze (Berlin/Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2020), 101–128.

²⁸ In 1915 he left Palestine and worked in the USA and the Soviet Union, but returned to Palestine in 1935. For more on the Poale Zion movement in Germany, cf. Momme Schwarz, “Eine jüdische Randerscheinung: Der Poale-Zionismus in Deutschland”, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.yadvashem.org/de/education/newsletter/7/poalei-zion-in-germany.html>.

in July 1946 81 and in November 1946 50 were registered.²⁹ Many of them had close connections to the AJDC children's home, which was described by the Yiddish-language newspaper *Unzer Sztyme* as "a children's colony in Erez Israel" despite its location in Blankenese.³⁰ Another article in *Unzer Sztyme* outlined the fishery kibbutz itself:

On the way back I visited the fishing school, which I took a closer look at. The fishing school, which has been in existence for 5 months, has proven during this time that it can train qualified fishermen. The comrades from the school are preparing for emigration in this way. The director of the school, Abraham Schweike, is an expert in his profession, employed as instructors are also some Germans, who already have many years of practical experience. At present, 80 comrades participate in a theoretical course at the school. But the most important thing is the practical work.³¹

5 Two Jewish Futures Collided

Similar to the Zionist group *No'ar Chaluzi Me'uchad* ("Nocham"), which established a naval training kibbutz in the DP camp of Deggendorf (Bavaria) in the American Zone, the Poale Zion movement opened its maritime training center in Hamburg/Blankenese.³² Under Abraham Schweike [Abraham Schweiko], who was born on July 6, 1914 in Chełm (Russian Tsarist Empire, today Poland), the idea of training a new elite and form out a maritime future

²⁹ "Jüdische DP Lager und Gemeinden in Westdeutschland – Hamburg: Fischerei-Kibbutz Serubavel (Hachschara)," accessed March 17, 2022, <https://www.after-the-shoah.org/hamburg-fischerei-kibbutz-serubavel-hachschara-fishery-kibbutz-zerubavel-hachsharah/>.

³⁰ Jizchak Tadmor, "Die Geschichte des Kinderheimes Blankenese von Januar 1946 bis März 1948," in *Kirschen auf der Elbe – Erinnerungen an das jüdische Kinderheim Blankenese 1946–1948*, ed. Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese (Hamburg: Klaus Schümann Verlag, 2010), 26–59, here 39 [pictures: 218].

³¹ Anonymous, "Blankenese – Izchkow," *Unzer Sztyme*, September 15, 1946, 3–4 cited in Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese, ed., *Kirschen auf der Elbe – Erinnerungen an das jüdische Kinderheim Blankenese 1946–1948* (Hamburg: Klaus Schümann Verlag, 2010), 222.

³² Cf. Noar Chaluzi Meuchad (Nocham)/Germany, "Announcement of the opening of a new session at Kibbutz Kovshei Hayam the sailor's Kibbutz at the Jüdische Marineschule in the Deggendorf DP Camp", n.p.; Yad Vashem Documents Archive, Item ID 4407428, M.1 – Central Historical Commission (CHC of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the US Zone, Munich, Subgroup M.1.P – Collection about Displaced Persons – DPs, File no. 786. Cf. Jim G. Tobias, "Die Eroberer der Meere," *haGalil onLine*, December 26, 2016), accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www.hagalil.com/2016/12/matrosen/>.

regained momentum in the Hanseatic port city.³³ Similar to the initiatives in the 1930s, the participants received theoretical and practical instruction in various fishing techniques, netting or fishery processing but also in navigation and ship construction. In 1946 a first report described the fishing kibbutz at the “Elbkurhaus” and the beginning renovations of the bomb-damaged location.³⁴ Thanks to the support of the Joint (David Rothman) and the newly established UNRRA, the kibbutz did become a reality and tolerated by the British Military as well as, later on, German authorities.³⁵ With a total of three brigades (30 persons each) and up to four fishing boats, the kibbutz members undertook trips of approximately two weeks on the sea or six days on the river.³⁶ Moniek Izbicki [Moritz Izbicki/Moniek Bicky], born on February 17, 1929 in Łódź, Poland, described the fishery kibbutz in the “Elbkurhaus” – flagged with a British banner.³⁷ Izbicki, who had survived Łódź Ghetto and the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, took refuge in the AJDC children’s home but also participated in the activities of the kibbutz.³⁸ In addition to the leader Schweike [Schweiko], it was above all the male and female “comrades” such as Izbicki, but also Moses Reisman [Moshe/Mosze Rajzman, born on January 25, 1923, in Łódź, Poland], Abraham Sandman [born on October 13, 1911 in Gostynin, Russian Tsarist Empire, today Poland], Gitl Glaser [Gisa Glaser, born on March 10, 1925 in Polien-Glod, Romania] and others, who implemented the ideas of a maritime future.³⁹

³³ A.E.F. D.P. Registration Record Sz wajko, Abram (DP Camp Hohne/Belsen, 14. 10. 1945), Bad Arolsen Archive, Nachkriegszeitkartei (A–Z), Sign. 03010101 oS.

³⁴ Norbert Wollheim, “Bericht – betrifft: Jüdische Fischereischule in Hamburg-Blankenese,” Lübeck (November 12, 1946), 12; Yad Vashem Documents Archive, Protocols of the Central Jewish Committee (CJC) regarding the daily life of the Jewish communities, the DP camps and the various Jewish organizations in the British Occupied Zone in Germany, 1946–1950, Item ID 3686775, O.70 Rosensaft Bergen-Belsen Archive, file no. 13, Microfilm code 99.1875.

³⁵ For a detailed study on the founding history, cf. Sigrun Jochims-Bozic, “*Lübeck is nur eine kurze Station auf dem jüdischen Wanderweg*”: *Jüdisches Leben in Schleswig-Holstein 1945–1950*, Reihe Dokumente – Texte – Materialien 51 (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 172–183.

³⁶ Anonymous, “Blankenese – Izchkow,” *Unzer Sztyrne*, September 15, 1946, 3–4 cited in Verein, *Kirschen auf der Elbe*, 222–223.

³⁷ Several pictures are stored at the Ghetto Fighters House Archives in Israel.

³⁸ For a picture, cf. The Fishery Kibbutz in Blankenese/Hamburg; USHMM Photo collection, Photograph Number: 64251.

³⁹ Anonymous, “Blankenese – Izchkow,” *Unzer Sztyrne*, September 15, 1946, 3–4 cited in Verein, *Kirschen auf der Elbe*, 223. For more on Gitl Glaser, cf. Walter Schiffer, *Das Andenken verlängern: Grabinschriften der jüdischen Displaced Persons auf dem Zelttheaterfriedhof in Bergen-Belsen* (Lich: Verlag Edition AV, 2017), 96–97, 263–266.

These efforts were acknowledged not only by eastern European Jewish DPs but also by “German Jews” in the Hanseatic port city and the newly appointed leader Goldstein.⁴⁰ Tensions arose between the representatives of the eastern European Jewish DPs in Belsen-Hohne and the newly established Jewish community in Hamburg. These conflicts were based on different understandings of being Jewish, the allocation of international aid and supplies and the reconstruction of Jewish life in Germany. While both Josef Rosensaft (Belsen) and Goldstein (Hamburg) supported the kibbutz, the different interests in forming out a Jewish future in the port city led to ongoing debates. Goldstein, who visited the kibbutz in June 1946, understood the importance of the place in creating a Jewish future but also stated that it was a “branch of the ‘Bel-sner’”. Thus, he not only criticized that it was used as a warehouse for black market activities, which caused troubles with the British Military and German authorities, but also questioned the use of maritime traditions in order to create a Jewish future in the port city.⁴¹

These discussions grew even stronger when immigration certificates for Palestine were released for children from the DP camp in Belsen-Hohne and representatives began to organize group transports in 1946.⁴² Especially the question of illegal immigration was discussed and led to further tensions with the British Military administration. On October 17, 1946, the British Labour MP Richard B. Stokes questioned the Minister for the Affairs for the Control of Germany and Austria, John Hynd, in the British House of Commons, about the provision of fishing boats for Jewish DPs in Blankenese.⁴³ Stokes’ inquiry linked the activities of the maritime training center “Zerubavel” to illegal immigration activities, although Hynd denied this in his response.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, a similar connection was made in the *Daily Telegraph* which called the fishery kibbutz a “cover of Jewish propagandists” and a place of illegal

⁴⁰ Lohalm, “Schließlich ist es meine Heimat ...”, 19, 102–103.

⁴¹ Lohalm, “Schließlich ist es meine Heimat ...”, 31.

⁴² Juliane Wetzel, “Zielort: Erez Israel – Jüdische DP-Kinder als Hoffnungsträger für die Zukunft,” in *Kirschen auf der Elbe – Erinnerungen an das jüdische Kinderheim Blankenese 1946–1948*, ed. Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese (Hamburg: Klaus Schumann Verlag, 2010), 17–25, here 21–22.

⁴³ Wollheim, “Bericht – betrifft: Jüdische Fischereischule in Hamburg-Blankenese,” 12.

⁴⁴ Cf. Helmut Schwalbach, “Fischerei am Anleger Dockenhuden: Der Kibbutz von Blankenese,” *Hamburger Klönschnack* 10 (2006), 18–20.

immigration work.⁴⁵ Even though Josef Rosensaft and Norbert Wollheim published a counterstatement in the *Daily Telegraph* (November 25, 1946) and tried to present the history and explain the ideas of the fishery Kibbutz to the public, the British Military administration announced the closure of the fishing school and the transfer of the remaining DPs to Neustadt/Holstein.⁴⁶

The announcement of the British Military administration was perceived as a “combat measure” and a threat to the propagated maritime future. Wollheim noted: “The kibbutz is determined not to vacate the school without resistance and has therefore asked the Central Committee for an immediate demarche before unpleasant consequences occur.”⁴⁷ According to the testimony of Paul Trepmann, the British Military authorities took over the kibbutz with the remaining participants almost two weeks later (November 21, 1946).⁴⁸ A report in *Unzer Sztyme* commented on these events with bitterness: “And on the German waters Germanic people are already living again and the English rulers no longer need to fear that perhaps a ship will sail from Blankenese to Israel with illegal emigrants.”⁴⁹ Wollheim and Rosensaft, who attended a meeting with Hynd at Norfolk House on November 25, 1946, protested against the procedure and treatment of the kibbutz and its students. The British authorities, however, referred to a supposed “creation of a naval school” in the near future, dismissed both representatives and, in so doing, destabilized the idea of a maritime future at the Elbe.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Anonymous, “Jewish Post in Hamburg: Palestine Traffic”, *Daily Telegraph*, November 18, 1946, cited in Schwalbach, “Fischerei am Anleger Dockenhuden,” 19.

⁴⁶ For the counterstatement, cf. Jochims-Bozic, “*Lübeck is nur eine kurze Station auf dem jüdischen Wanderweg*”, 176. For the closure and transfer to Neustadt, cf. Lennart Onken, “One step in the difficult task of rehabilitating those who have suffered under Hitlerism’: Die jüdische Fischereischule “Serubavel” in *Jüdisches Leben in Blankenese*, ed. Verein zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Juden in Blankenese (Hamburg, 2023 unpublished manuscript), 1–10.

⁴⁷ Wollheim, “Bericht – betrifft: Jüdische Fischereischule in Hamburg-Blankenese,” 13.

⁴⁸ Other sources documented that the kibbutz members had already abandoned the place. Lohalm, *Harry Goldstein und die jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg*, 31.

⁴⁹ Schwalbach, “Fischerei am Anleger Dockenhuden,” 18–20.

⁵⁰ Discussion with Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster – Staatsminister Hynd, November 25, 1946, Norfolk House, 4–5; Yad Vashem Documents Archive, Protocols of meeting of Central Jewish Committee (CJC) representatives with representatives of the British authorities, 1946–1950, Item ID 3686765, O.70 Rosensaft Bergen-Belsen Archive, file no. 5, Microfilm Code 99.1875.

6 Conclusion

Some of the participants of the maritime training centers pre- and post-1945 emigrated to Palestine, respectively the State of Israel, and fulfilled their dream of a maritime future. Others, like the shipping experts Arnold Bernstein and Lucy Borchard(t) or the head of the fishing kibbutz “Zerubavel”, Abraham Schweike [Schweiko], and the “comrade” Moniek Izbicki, emigrated to other destinations, for example the USA or the UK.⁵¹

While the dream of a Zionist maritime future did come to an end in Hamburg, Goldstein continued to lobby for a different vision. Goldstein, whom Hannah Arendt described in her Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Field Report (1950) “as a decent man” who worked hard for the “reconstruction of Hamburg community life”⁵², linked the Jewish present in Hamburg to the glorious, maritime past of the port city one more time. Moreover, Lady Rose Henriques, who traveled to Germany and Hamburg as a representative of the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain, published a report in September 1955 and stated that the people of Hamburg with “their seafaring character” and their enthusiasm for shipbuilding and ship launching were a unique and “sea-oriented” phenomenon. She praised the “Grand Old Man” [“der Große Alte”], as she described Goldstein, and saw him as an integral part of this unique Hamburg phenomenon. Moreover, she applauded his efforts to create a Jewish future in the city, intertwining Hanseatic and Jewish history.⁵³ While the Poale Zion movement had lobbied for a Zionist maritime future, Goldstein continued to promote a Hanseatic Jewish one in the port city. Both were eager to restore and cherish Jewish maritime traditions in the port city. However, these efforts, which relied on reinventing Jewish seafaring and fishing traditions, led to a very different understanding of a Jewish future.

⁵¹ On June 24, 1949, for example, Schweiko, his wife Brocha, and his daughter Jenta, who was born in Hamburg (June 17, 1946), emigrated to the USA via the DP camp Belsen-Hohne and the transit camp Bremen-Grohn. Cf. Refugee/Displaced Person Statistical Card, Szwajko, Abram, DP-Camp Hohne, June 29, 1948, Bad Arolsen Archive, Nachkriegszeitkartei (A-Z), Sign. 03010101 oS.

⁵² Hannah Arendt, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Field Reports, 1948–1951, Field report no. 18, February 15 – March 10, 1950 published by Hamburger Schlüsseldokumente zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte, <https://dx.doi.org/10.23691/jgo:source-126.de.v1>.

⁵³ Cited in Lohalm, “*Schließlich ist es meine Heimat ...*”, 35–38.