

CHAPTER 12

The Creation of the Relations between Israel and Brazil from a Pioneering Perspective: Between Diplomacy and Kibbutz

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INTRODUCTION

In May 1953, the Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Sharett, visited Brazil. In his report to the government following his return from his South American tour, Sharett related that in his speech at the official, festive dinner held in his honor in Rio de Janeiro, he applauded several things that were being done in a similar manner in Brazil and in Israel. A settlement project was being carried out in Brazil, and in Israel: “There, they are pioneers, and so are we; they are a country surrounded by sister nations, but not of the same people, and we are, too.” Brazil was a country that consisted of people who came from diverse cultures, and so was Israel. On the following day, the speech was praised in one of the Brazilian newspapers, although the writer noted that the comparison was original but questionable, since the foreign minister did not mention the difference between “us,” the Brazilians, and them: “they,” in Israel, “turn the desert into a blooming garden, while we turn a blooming garden into desert.”¹

1 Protocol of the Government of Israel, May 17, 1953, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter ISA). Sharett spoke before representatives of the Brazilian Journalists Association in the presence of senior members of the Brazilian foreign ministry, including Osvaldo Aranha, the Brazilian ambassador to the United Nations who chaired the famous session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 29, 1947. For Sharett’s speech and for the program of his visit to Brazil, see ISA, FO 6/236.

There is no need to adopt the teasing, disparaging analysis of the journalist or the unnecessary and stereotypical condescension that Sharett presented to his colleagues in the government of Israel disguised as a humorous anecdote. He added, on the same occasion, a few more disparaging words about “the well-known Brazilian laziness” in agricultural work,² in order to focus on what was perceived as one of the main issues on the Israeli agenda at that time — settlement in the frontier areas, and especially in the Negev region. This paper presents a bi-dimensional discussion, which will examine the development of Kibbutz Bror Hayil as a settlement in the northwestern Negev, in which immigrants of the pioneering Zionist youth movement Dror from Brazil concentrated in the 1950s, against the background of the early formation of Israel’s diplomatic relations with Brazil. While the focus of the political aspect will be on the Israeli angle, the events concerning Bror Hayil will be anchored in two different points of view: that of the young pioneers, who were preparing for their *aliyah*, and that of the emissaries, who were facilitating the *aliyah* from Brazil on behalf of the *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* kibbutz movement. The decision to focus the discussion on Bror Hayil stems from the fact that this kibbutz symbolized and expressed the continuous connection and attachment between Brazil and Israel, from both the Brazilian (Jewish and non-Jewish) and Israeli perspectives.³

The question presented for discussion here is what we can learn and conclude from observing Israel’s national and Zionist experience in the early days of its independence by diverting the historical gaze from what happened in the new centers of the Israeli sovereign civil society and political power, to a combination of peripheral elements not dissociated from the mainstream but which conducted a dialogue with it, albeit from a secondary position. This combination of elements includes a youth movement—which was secondary on the Israeli scene; a kibbutz movement with little political importance; a distant land of emigration, lacking roots in Israel’s reality; settlement in a region that was at the margins of Zionist consciousness; and establishing diplomatic relations with a country that was perceived as nonessential for securing the young State of Israel’s existence. The implied assumption of this form of observation is that a discussion focusing on what was, admittedly, peripheral, may contribute to an understanding of various components in the general picture of Israel in its early days. Without dealing with these elements,

2 Protocol of the Government of Israel, May 17, 1953, ISA.

3 See Sigie Friesel, *Bror Chail: História do Movimento e do Kibutz Brasileiros* (Jerusalem: Organização Sionista Mundial, 1956); Avraham Milgram, ed., *Fragmentos de Memórias* (Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 2010).

we could miss important factors in understanding the nature and character of the process of structuring the new nation.

The issues we discuss constitute a layer in the historical writings about Israel–Brazil relations, and about the Jews who emigrated from Brazil to Israel in the second half of the twentieth century. The research of these subjects is in its initial stages. The topics discussed simultaneously touch on several spheres of research concerning the history of the Jewish minority as one of the minorities in the Latin American world, the manner in which Zionism and Israel were perceived in the Diaspora, the annals of the *aliyah* from South America and its absorption in Israel, and the history of the *kibbutz*.⁴ In a key article written by Moshe Kitron in 1971, he noted that the immigrants from Latin America did not receive adequate preparation. This lack of preparation was apparent even in the areas of humor and sarcasm—which attested, in the Israeli immigration society experience, to a somewhat appropriate measure of attention to newcomers—except, maybe, for a pleasant smile on hearing their melodious accent. Kitron stressed this in light of the fact that, up to that time, about 37,000 Jews had come on *aliyah* from South America, compared to 25,000–30,000 Jews who had come from North America. According to his calculations, proportionate to the size of their respective Jewish populations, Latin America’s contribution to *aliyah* was at least eleven times greater than that of North America. At a time when the hegemony of the labor movement was still at its peak, Kitron added that the South American *aliyah* contributed to increasing the population of the *kibbutz* settlement innumerable more than all the *aliyah* from the Western countries combined since the establishment of the state.⁵ His words are still valid and appropriate today, and serve as a foundation for our discussion.

The time frame for the following discussion, from the late 1940s until the second half of the 1950s, is somewhat similar to that of the historian Nachman Falbel, who identified the years 1945–57 as one of the sub-periods in the history of Brazilian Jewry. The focus of Falbel’s study, however, apart from the establishment of the State of Israel, was the immigration of Jews to Brazil (from

4 See, in the first three contexts, Donald L. Herman, *The Latin-American Community of Israel* (New York: Praeger, 1984); Raanan Rein, “Waning Essentialism: Latin American Jewish Studies in Israel,” in *Identities in an Era of Globalization and Multiculturalism: Latin America in the Jewish World*, ed. Judit Bokser Liwerant, Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Yossi Gorny, and Raanan Rein (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 120–21; Misha Klein, *Kosher Feijoada and other Paradoxes of Jewish Life in São Paulo* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

5 Moshe Kitron, “Oley America Halatinit Beyisrael: Tahalichim, Shlabim Uve’ayot” (“The Immigrants from Latin America in Israel: Processes, Stages and Problems”), *Gesher* 69 (1971): 236–37.

Egypt and Hungary), rather than from Brazil to Israel, as in this study.⁶ The historical writing about the Jews of Brazil in the twentieth century is constantly expanding, and it deals, simultaneously, with three kinds of Jews: those who were absorbed in Brazil, those who lived in Brazil, and those who emigrated from it to Israel. Jeffrey Lesser points to the immigration of Jews to Brazil and the complex diplomatic contacts that made this immigration possible in the period between the two world wars, as a basic means for understanding the duality that exists toward the Jewish community in contemporary Brazil. It includes latent and transient anti-Semitic elements, together with a warm, embracing attitude, stemming from the Brazilian mentality and cultural climate, as well as from an inherent interest in Brazilian politics to be portrayed in a positive light in the eyes of the world.⁷ I intend partially to adopt the pattern of research discussion suggested by Lesser, albeit with a different objective, which is to examine the immigration from Brazil to Israel, and one of its factors, namely, the formation of diplomatic relations between the two countries. I will place the main emphasis regarding the topic of immigration on observing that part of it that originated in the youth movement and directed itself to the kibbutz.

A common tendency in the research of the history of the kibbutz during the period of statehood is marking the establishment of the State of Israel as a breaking point in the annals of, perhaps, the most original, revolutionary, and humane of the universal contributions of Zionism in the twentieth century. This quest generally prefers to focus on Degania and Ein Harod, on *Hashomer Hatzair* and *Hamahanot Haolim*, on *Hakibbutz Hemeuhad* and *Hakibbutz Haartzi*, on Tabenkin and Yaari. It is clearly reflected in the titles chosen by Henry Near, the most prominent historian of the kibbutz movement, for the chapters of his book, *Rak Shvil Kavshu Raglay: Toldot Hatnua Hakibbutzit (Just a Trail My Feet Cleared: History of the Kibbutz Movement)*. The book discusses the first decade after the establishment of the state: “The End of Pioneering” and “Politics and Crisis.”⁸ Indisputably, in terms of their status and influence, these were the dominant kibbutzim, personalities, and movements on the kibbutz scene.

6 Nachman Falbel, “A Propósito da Periodização da História dos Judeus no Brasil,” in *Judeus no Brasil: Estudos e Notas* (São Paulo: Editora Humanitas, 2008), 27.

7 Jeffrey Lesser, *Brazil Vehashe'ela Hayehudit: Hagira, Diplomacia Vedeot Kdumot (Brazil and the Jewish Question: Immigration, Diplomacy and Prejudice)* (Tel Aviv: Loni Cohen, 1997). See also Keila Grinberg, ed., *Os Judeus no Brasil: Inquisição, Imigração e Identidade* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005).

8 Henry Near, *Rak Shvil Kavshu Raglay: Toldot Hatnua Hakibbutzit (Just a Trail My Feet Cleared: History of the Kibbutz Movement)* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2008), 422–68.

My claim, however, is that this perspective leads us to overlook a central dimension in the history of the kibbutz, without which a very important component in understanding the value and place of the kibbutz in the early days of the State of Israel, and its role as the bearer of the national message among the Jewish people, is missing. Although kibbutz life at that time was characterized by the tendency to improve the standard of living, preserving the movement framework of mutual guarantee, withdrawing inwardly, and shifting “the center of gravity of the kibbutz to its social destination as the nucleus of the future society,”⁹ these represented the reality of only a part, however considerable, of the kibbutzim. The prominent sociologist of kibbutz research, Eliezer Ben-Rafael, pointed to the fact that a negative correlation developed in the 1950s between the processes of growth of the material wealth of the kibbutz and the gradual attrition of its social prestige and its national role as a revolutionary, pioneering avant-garde.¹⁰ At the same time, however, we should note that in the young and gradually ripening periphery of kibbutz life, there were also kibbutzim that flourished, grew, and developed, in those very days, where the main emphasis was placed on pioneering, self-sacrifice, austerity, and adhering to the ideal spiritual life. This ideal lost its glamour, little by little, in the older and more established kibbutzim, and among a considerable part of the most prominent kibbutz activists and leaders. In absolute numbers, the kibbutz population grew during the first decade of the State of Israel from 49,140 persons to 78,634, a modest growth in proportion to the scope of the immigration in that period to Israel, which tripled its population, from 650,000 to 2,000,000. This was not the case, however, with regard to the number of kibbutzim. During this period, 106 new kibbutzim were established (more than half of them in the first year of the state), in addition to the 125 existing ones.¹¹ This new and young kibbutz periphery nourished and fertilized the kibbutz in a variety of ways, and served as a rousing and challenging element within it. While the pioneering flame faded in a substantial part of the older and relatively developed kibbutz settlements, it blazed anew in Mefalsim and

9 Anita Shapira, “Hakibbutz Vehamdina” (“The Kibbutz and the State”), *Iyunim Betkumat Israel*, 20 (2010): 195–99; Zeev Tzahor, *Itzuv Hayisraeliyut (The Formation of Israeliness)* (Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 2007), 107–12.

10 Eliezer Ben-Rafael, “The Kibbutz in the 1950s: A Transformation in Identity,” in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. S. Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 269–72.

11 See Near, *Just a Trail*, 604–607; Henry Near, “The Crisis in the Kibbutz Movement, 1949–1961,” in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. Troen and Lucas, 245–51.

Gaash, in Kfar Szold and Kissufim, in Lehavot Haviva and Or Haner (and other kibbutzim—these are mentioned, among other reasons, because of their rousing names). In my opinion, the idealistic dreams of the members of the kibbutzim in this periphery, and their struggles to realize them, merit being part of the numerous factors to be considered in the description and analysis of the history of the kibbutz in the first decade of the State of Israel's existence. In order to identify and outline the potential of this way of looking at the history of the kibbutz in the period discussed here—which, of course, is worthy of being studied with a variety of emphases that exceed the bounds of the present discussion—we will examine below the creation of the close link between the Dror youth movement in Brazil and Kibbutz Bror Hayil.

BEGINNINGS

The Dror (“Freedom”) youth movement was founded in Russia, in 1911. Its first branch in Brazil was established in the city of Porto Alegre on October 5, 1945. The Brazilian branch of *Dror* was created under the influence of the Argentinean one, led by Kitron; shortly thereafter, branches of the movement were opened in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. As was common among parties of the Israeli left, the youth movements associated with them also underwent numerous splits and unifications. Dror merged with the youth movement *Gordonia* in 1952, and was named *Ihud Hanoar Hahalutzi* (“The Union of Pioneering Youth”), and this movement merged with *Habonim* (“The Builders”) in 1957, and created the *Ihud Habonim* movement. However, in the minds of its members in Brazil, the movement has always been, and remains to this day, identified by its first and original name—Dror,¹² and this is the name we will use below.

Carla Bassanezi Pinski described the process of the formation of the Dror movement in Brazil, focusing on the local social, ideological, and cultural factors, and relying on an extensive corpus of evidence.¹³ Her work is compatible with

12 Vittorio Corinaldi, “Shishim Shana Dror, Gordonia, Habonim” (“Sixty Years *Dror*, *Gordonia*, *Habonim*”), in *Shishim Shana: Aliyah—Habonim Dror Brazil, Kibbutz Bror Hayil*, ed. Haim Zamir (Bror Hayil, 2008), 9; Haim Zamir, “Reshita shel Tnuat Dror Bibrazil” (“The Beginning of *Dror* Movement in Brazil”), *ibid.*, 13–15; Friesel, *Bror Chail*, 19–20; Shlomo Bar-Gil, *Bereshit Haya Halom: Bogley Tnuot Hanoar Hahalutzot Me’america Halatinit Batnua Hakibbutzit, 1946-1967* (*In the Beginning There Was a Dream: The Graduates of the Pioneering Youth Movements from Latin America in the Kibbutz Movement, 1946-1967*) (Kiryat Sde Boker: Ben-Gurion University Press, 2005), 28–29.

13 Carla Bassanezi Pinski, *Pássaros da Liberdade: Jovens, Judeus e Revolucionários no Brasil* (São Paulo: Contexto, 2000); hereafter: Pinski, *The Birds of Freedom*.

a common approach in the research of youth movements, as manifested in Shlomo Bar-Gil's book about the absorption of the graduates of the pioneering youth movements from Latin America in the kibbutz movements, and stressing the main elements that appear repeatedly, as a leitmotif, in their history. The first element was the optimistic view of reality that characterized these immigrants, who innocently believed that they were joining the realization of an ideological Zionist-socialist outlook, which was just and worthy from a humane point of view. Second, their unique interpretation of the term "pioneering" as an ideal and, at the same time, as an element that defined their individual and collective identity. Their pioneering was not manifested in innovativeness, nor was it perceived as clearing the path for others, but, rather, it was a strong expression of the extent of their commitment to the realization of the national goals of the Jewish society in Israel, which they valued over personal preferences and interests.¹⁴ The actual embodiment of this kind of pioneering was reflected, in the early 1980s, in around 40 kibbutzim that contained groups of immigrants from South America, who were the core population in about ten of them.¹⁵

In December 1952, the first of eight *aliyah* groups of the graduates of the Dror youth movement in Brazil, which gave Bror Hayil its identity as "the Brazilian kibbutz," started its absorption there. Bror Hayil was founded on April 19, 1948, and it was the first kibbutz erected in the midst of the Israeli war of independence, and the last to be founded before the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14.¹⁶ The kibbutz is located about fifty kilometers north of Beer Sheva and fifteen kilometers east of Ashkelon. Its founders were immigrants from the Zionist movement in Egypt and numbered about 140. Due to economic difficulties, the end of the Zionist movement in Egypt—which had been intended to supply more human resources to the kibbutz—and the split within *Hakibbutz Hameuhad*, to which Bror Hayil belonged, the settlement experienced a severe crisis in 1951.¹⁷ The kibbutz then joined the *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim*, which was created as a result of the split and was associated with Mapai, and was left with only fifty-six members and twenty-six candidates for membership, most from Egypt and the rest from Morocco. In a meeting held on November 26,

14 Bar-Gil, *In the Beginning There Was a Dream*, 2, 130, 138.

15 Roberto Soldingier, *The Absorption of Latin American Immigrants in Kibbutzim*, Research Report, June 1981, 3.

16 "A New Settlement in the Negev Controls, Since Yesterday, a Rioting Village which Disrupted Jewish Traffic," *Davar*, April 20, 1948; Near, *Just a Trail*, 380.

17 Dov Rosenhak, *Darki Bibror Hayil (My Way on Bror Hayil)* (Tel Aviv, 1988), 43–58.

1951, with the representatives of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim*, the members of the executive of Bror Hayil (all from Egypt) said:

Among the followers of *Mapam* who left last year there were many veteran, active members. Many of those who remained are irresponsible. In particular, many women don't want to work, and are here only because of their husbands—without whom the kibbutz cannot manage. The members don't want to accept responsibilities in this situation. The immigrants from Morocco should not be accepted. They come and leave, and turn the place into a transit camp. There is no hope for *aliyah* from Egypt in the near future, and so the conclusion is that it is necessary to bring to the kibbutz an organized group, preferably not from the Oriental countries, otherwise, they cannot survive in this place. They demand the Brazilian Group.¹⁸

If they refuse to come, they added, then they would be interested in getting other groups, but the members of Dror from Brazil were their first choice. In mid-1952, *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* decided that the graduates of the youth movement Dror from Brazil would indeed serve as the alternative human reservoir that would enable Kibbutz Bror Hayil to survive and develop. They previously had been intended to go to Kibbutz Mefalsim (near Gaza), and they even stayed there for some time. However, due to the tension that arose between them and the graduates of Dror from Argentina, who constituted most of the members of Mefalsim, most left, enlisted in the *Nahal*, and were sent for agricultural training, first on Kibbutz Kinneret, and, later on, Kibbutz Afikim. The choice of Afikim was not coincidental, but, rather, stemmed from its character as a large, nondoctrinaire kibbutz, with intellectual openness and economic diversity—elements that suited the mentality and frame of mind of the members of the Brazilian Dror movement, as well as their pioneering aspirations.¹⁹ When *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* confronted them with the dilemma of either establishing a new kibbutz near Safed or returning to the Negev and joining an existing kibbutz, the members of the Dror movement from Brazil chose the second option. Amir Plot, one of the Dror members waiting in Brazil for his or her turn to come on *aliyah*, relates in his memoirs that, deep in their heart, they hoped for two things: first, that the choice would be Bror Hayil, because of the attraction

18 Report of the visit of the Economic Committee of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* in Bror Hayil, September 11, 1951, Yad Tabenkin Archive (hereafter: YTA), 7/294/3; visit of the representatives of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* in Bror Hayil, November 26, 1951, *ibid.*, 7/294/4.

19 Friesel, *Bror Chail*, 57–63; Rosenhak, *My Way*, 66–68; Corinaldi, “Dror,” 11.

of realizing the vision of making the desert bloom, and secondly, that they would succeed in changing the name of the kibbutz, which was hard for them to pronounce, since the sound of the Hebrew letter *het* does not exist in Portuguese. In the tone characteristic of the dominant temperament among his associates in the movement, he summarized: “Well, you can’t get anything in life...”²⁰ But here we put the cart before the horse, and we should first turn to the Lapa Conference, in which the shape and uniqueness of the Dror movement in Brazil were formed.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE DROR MOVEMENT IN LAPA, SÃO PAULO

Numerically, at the beginning of their activity in the 1940s, the Zionist youth movements in Brazil consisted of a few hundred youths in their teens and early twenties. The formal Israeli body that maintained contact with the representatives of the youth movements in Brazil in the early 1950s was the JNF and its emissaries, who were constantly in touch with the Youth and Pioneer Department of the Zionist Organization. In the reports submitted to the Zionist institutions in Jerusalem, the activity of the pioneering youth movements, especially that of *Hashomer Hatzair* and Dror (which turned, in the meantime, into *Ihud Hanoar Hahalutzi*), was defined as “swimming against the current.” According to the emissaries’ estimates, the Jewish youth of the age addressed by the youth movements numbered about 13,000, and slightly more than 10 percent of them were active in those movements, i.e., 2,500 youngsters, about half of them members of *Hashomer Hatzair* and the other half members of Dror. Although their relative numbers were small, the youth movements were perceived as “the most dynamic factor in the Zionist life of Brazil, with all their weaknesses.” The pioneering youth of the Dror Movement were proudly described by the senior activists of *Poalei Zion–Hitachdut* party (the world extension of Mapai) as “intending to accept the great heritage of the Zionist-socialist realization.”²¹

20 Amir Plot, *Tamid Bitnua: Yoman Ishi Bamasa Hatzioni (Always in the Movement: A Personal Diary in the Zionist Journey)* (1998), 43.

21 See, for example, the letters of Yaakov Efrat to the Youth and Pioneer Department, January 3, 1950, February 19, 1950, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter CZA), KKL5/17760 (the first quote is from here); letter of Itzhak Netter to the Chief Bureau of the JNF, January 20, 1951, *ibid.*; letter of Fishel Chernia, Y. Petter, and others to the Central Bureau of the JNF, November 13, 1953, *ibid.*, KKL5/21074; K. Charmatz, “The First National Conference of *Poalei Zion–Hitachdut* Party in Brazil, *Davar*, March 5, 1950 (the second quote is from here).

At the beginning of 1949, funded by the Zionist Organization, three training farms were established in the state of São Paulo for the members of Dror, *Hashomer Hatzair*, and *Beitar*, in order to give them initial practical preparation for the collective and agricultural life that they were expected to lead in Israel. On the ideological level, the training farm was intended to reinforce the attachment of the members of the movement to the ideological framework to which they belonged, and to assist in consolidating their outlook on national phenomena and social problems in the Diaspora and in Palestine. It was also supposed to shape their personality, and sharpen their awareness of the link between rendering the Jewish economic life more productive and the patterns of the national Jewish existence. The Dror training farm, which was initially named Itufaba and later Ein Dorot, was located about fifteen kilometers from the town of Jundiai, and about seventy kilometers from São Paulo. Yaakov Efrat, the emissary of the Youth and Pioneer Department, reported to his superiors in Jerusalem about the training farms of *Hashomer Hatzair* and *Dror*:

One can feel that there is a group of people here who have given up their studies in order to reach their destination. Life on both training farms is vigorous. Plans for the future are drafted, and agricultural programs are established, just like on a kibbutz in Israel. . . . Of course, both movements have many problems, and the main one is how to delay the process of assimilation, which is advancing fast among the Jewish youth. But the training farm is a ray of light in the Brazilian Jewish environment. Any investment is worthwhile in order to give these youth more possibilities to develop and to influence others.²²

The establishment of the training farms did not come about without controversy. Due to the limited numbers of youth joining the pioneering movements in comparison to the numerical potential, Bernardo Cymeryng (later known as Dov Tsamir), one of the heads of Dror in São Paulo, maintained that *aliyah* should not be carried out prematurely, and that training farms should not be established at that time. Instead, the youth should stay longer in Brazil, and extensive ideological work should take place

22 Letter of Yaakov Efrat to the Youth and Pioneer Department, February 19, 1950, CZA, KKL5/17760. On the creation of the idea of the training farm, as a central tier in the life of a Zionist pioneering youth movement, see Israel Oppenheim, *Tnuat Hehalutz Bepolin, 1917-1929 (Hehalutz Movement in Poland, 1917-1929)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 239–305, 421–500.

among the Jewish youth during that time, in order to increase the number of members in the movement. *Aliyah* should start only after a few years of deepening the ideological education and expanding the circle of activists. The founders of the Dror Movement in Porto Alegre and Rio de Janeiro led the opposite trend. Prominent among them was Yosef Etrog, who claimed that if *aliyah* were postponed, it might never be carried out at all, and, moreover, since the members of the *Hashomer Hatzair* Movement in Brazil were getting organized for *aliyah*, in order to help the kibbutzim of their movement fighting in the war of independence, Dror should not lag behind. Cymeryng consulted on this matter with Yosef Almogi, a senior Mapai activist (and later, government minister and chairman of the Jewish Agency), who was visiting São Paulo. Almogi thought that *aliyah* should be carried out soon, but recommended that Cymeryng stay in Brazil and lead the movement for a little longer.²³ In the second national convention of the Dror Movement in Brazil, which was held in August 1948, the decision was made in favor of establishing the training farm, and the first group of members who were preparing for *aliyah* was formed. In retrospect, it seems that the training farm did not equip the graduates who were getting ready to leave for Israel with the professional and practical tools it had been meant to provide. However, from the individual point of view, staying there was valuable, since it detached the person from the psychological, emotional, and familial obstacles that, up to the last minute, hindered the realization of the crucial step of *aliyah*. For the Dror movement in general, the training farm expressed, symbolically and concretely, the movement's aspiration to create and develop one farming-agricultural settlement base associated with Israel.²⁴

Nineteen members, who were part of the first pioneer group of the Dror movement, came on *aliyah* in January 1950. They were first accepted, as mentioned above, by Kibbutz Mefalsim, and in July they were followed by the rest of the first *aliyah* group, which altogether numbered forty-three members.²⁵ *Davar* newspaper reported that

the departure of the pioneers of *Dror* turned into a national demonstration in honor of the State of Israel. Many came to the farewell party for

23 Dov Tsamir (Bernardo Cymeryng), "As Encruzilhadas no Caminho" (hereafter: Tsamir, "The Junctions on the Way to the Destination"), in Milgram, *Fragments of Memories*, 45–46.

24 Corinaldi, "Dror," 10.

25 Letter of Yaakov Efrat to the Youth and Pioneer Department, February 19, 1950, CZA, KKLS/17760; Friesel, *Bror Chail*, 28; Rosenhak, *My Way*, 72.

those who were leaving, and multitudes of Jews crowded the ports of Santos [the port town of São Paulo State] and Rio de Janeiro, and accompanied with applause the pioneering group of Jewish youth from Brazil, who were going for self-realization in the State of Israel.²⁶

As mentioned above, this was the second group that departed, but it seems that an event that had taken place two months earlier was the main reason for the public attention it received.

The main challenge that the Dror movement faced, following the decision of the veteran and senior activists of the movement to immigrate to Israel, was the creation of an intergenerational system that would be self-nourishing and would repeatedly create a new, central team of activists, who would lead the movement until their turn for *aliyah* came, and so on. The actual dilemma was how to integrate the steps that had been agreed upon, of *aliyah* to Israel and joining the kibbutz, as an inherent part of the socialist Zionism in which they believed, within the greater whole of an ideological, mission-oriented, articulated, and binding system. The goal was for members of the movement of different age groups to see themselves within this framework, directly or indirectly, as part of a multifaceted fabric, which laid before them a continuous life course, in Brazil and in Israel alike.

On May 1, 1950, the central group of activists of the Dror movement, numbering about forty youngsters, assembled in order to discuss the question of where the movement was heading in light of the *aliyah* of its first graduates. Because of heavy rainfalls that day, the group could not meet in *São Bernardo* (a suburb of São Paulo), and the gathering was therefore moved to an unpopulated synagogue in Lapa, a São Paulo neighborhood. The guard on duty allowed the group to hold the meeting there, after its members explained to him that they came to protect him from injury by anti-Semitic bodies.²⁷ It was quite a strange meeting of interests between Judaism, nationalism, anti-Semitism, and socialism. The meeting lasted for three days, and focused on the dilemma presented by Cymeryng, who was later to serve as the internal secretary of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* in the second half of the 1960s. At that time, he was the secretary of the Dror movement in Brazil and its dominant personality. Should the central activists of the movement dedicate most of their time and energy to academic studies, and be involved with Zionism and movement education in their spare time, or should they rather devote

26 K. Charnatz, "Events of Brazilian Jewry," *Davar*, July 13, 1950.

27 Friesel, *Bror Chail*, 49–51.

themselves first and foremost to the activities of the movement? The second alternative required most of them to quit their academic studies, if they had already begun them, or to give up their intention of engaging in such studies for the next few years. The basic issue was whether the realization of Zionism meant, for them, *aliyah* and settlement in Israel, or whether it was a theoretical, abstract matter, which youngsters engaged in as part of their leisure culture. Personally, and on the family level, this burdensome dilemma compelled each one of them to decide whether the activity in Dror was, essentially, a pleasant but nonbinding ideological and philosophical discourse, or whether it meant a radical commitment to change their priorities and way of life. Cymeryng, who chaired the lengthy discussions, lost his voice at some point. He had to whisper, as if in a surrealist play, in the ear of David Perlov, his successor at Dror—who later became one of the pioneers of Israeli cinema—and the latter repeated, in his booming voice, the positions expressed by Cymeryng, who was tirelessly demanding that his comrades reach a clear-cut decision—“What do we do now?” Cymeryng’s immediate objective was to urge a large group of graduates to undertake full-scale engagement in the activities of the movement, in order to spread its Zionist–socialist doctrine, and recruit new members, in their late teens, to its ranks. His main concern was that the more its members got used to seeing the existence of the State of Israel as a routine fact, the enthusiasm that characterized Dror’s activity at that time would gradually wane. He feared that there would be a separation, in their life course between their ideological belief in Zionism and socialism, and the practice of academic studies, professionalization, starting a family, and getting settled in Brazil. On the spiritual level, he wanted to impress on them the idea that Zionism was at a revolutionary stage, which demanded personally from each one of the Dror members an immediate revolutionary decision regarding their future way of life.²⁸

After a number of disagreements and crises, the resolution passed at the Lapa Conference was that the movement demanded of its members, excepting three, who were considered to be researchers with particularly promising potential, to dedicate themselves, for the time being, to the activities of the movement, and to relinquish their academic studies. The three exceptions were Vittorio Corinaldi (who was later the chief architect of the Planning Department of the United Kibbutz Movement), Jorja Sussman (later a professor of nuclear energy

28 Ibid., 44–54; Eyyatar Friesel, *The Days and the Seasons* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 41–42; Pinski, *The Birds of Freedom*, 70–78; Tsamir, “The Junctions on the Way to the Destination,” 46–47; Vittorio Corinaldi, “Há Caminhos que Levam de Roma a Jerusalém,” in Milgram, *Fragments of Memories*, 128–30; “Testimony of Nuchem Fassa,” interviewed by Markin Todder in Zamir, *60 Years*, 20.

at the Weizmann Institute of Science), and Yosef Kochinski (Katzir) (later the director of the premature babies' ward at Rambam Hospital in Haifa). In order to finance their activity, the members were required to undergo a process of "proletarianization," as they called it, and find themselves a temporary livelihood, so they could allocate part of their income to a common fund that would help Dror operate. More than twenty members, headed by the leaders of the movement, immediately obeyed the Lapa Conference resolution. This decision aroused angry reactions from many of the activists' parents, who were upset that their children were giving up on the development of their personal careers for vague ideas. Nevertheless, within a short time, the Lapa Conference resolution turned Dror into a weightier factor than would have been warranted by its numerical size in the Jewish community of São Paulo. The movement was now perceived as a body with a clear and decisive worldview, with members who were determined to actually realize the values toward which they were educating the youth in the community, and whose time was fully dedicated to spreading their views, and to fostering everyday behavior that fit their values. It was a revolutionary move in their personal lives, and they felt entitled to be regarded as having actually joined the undercurrents of the Zionist revolution, while still in Brazil.²⁹ This was conspicuous in a fundamental article, expressing the movement temperament of Dror, which was published in the movement organ a few weeks after the Lapa Conference. The article, written by Nuchem (Nahum) Fassa, later the director general of *Kupat Holim Clalit* (general health services organization), clarified the meaning of the Lapa resolution for the members of Dror:

We did what was right and what was needed. We and those who feel like us can certainly be satisfied, knowing that we follow the way of the youth who came on *aliyah* before us, who fight, and are still fighting fascism all over the world, the pioneering youth from the Warsaw ghetto, the pioneers of the Galilee, the Negev, and the Jerusalem hills . . . and the youngsters who left the Hebrew University and joined the Haganah and Palmach.³⁰

"The war on studies," according to Cymeryng, was indeed a difficult decision on both the personal and collective level, "but it purified the atmosphere of the movement, brought its activists closer together, and created uniform

²⁹ See the sources in the previous note.

³⁰ Nuchem H. Fassa, "O Unico Caminho," *Dror*, June 1950, in Milgram, *Fragments of Memories*, appendices (unnumbered).

psychological conditions in favor of pioneering.” The concrete meaning of *aliyah* and agricultural settlement on kibbutz—following the path cleared by their predecessors, the settlers and fighters—placed this concept within the focus of the movement life of Dror. Although it stemmed from Dror’s internal needs, it served as a lever for enhancing its presence in the Jewish community, and helped the movement establish itself in the Brazilian–Jewish landscape as a body aspiring to become “a mass movement,” enlisting its activists to recruit more and more youngsters to their ranks, especially for the older age groups.³¹

THE MEETING BETWEEN PIONEERING ZIONISM AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

From the end of 1952, the members of the Brazilian Dror movement who immigrated to Israel began to be absorbed by Kibbutz Bror Hayil. A few months later, the members of the movement in Israel and its leadership in Brazil made a joint decision that the new immigrants would be directed only to Kibbutz Bror Hayil from then on. The Brazilian *Hashomer Hatzair* movement, on the other hand, preferred to distribute its graduates among a number of kibbutzim, hoping that it would facilitate their absorption and integration into the Israeli kibbutz reality. Several considerations guided Dror and Bror Hayil in their decision. First, they wanted to concentrate all the activists of the movement, tier upon tier according to their various age groups, in a kibbutz that identified with its method, and was committed to dedicating human and organizational resources to the realization of its outlook in everyday life. Second, they wished to preserve the practical and ideological cooperation between the members of the movement who were already in Israel and their comrades, who were engaged in educational activity in Brazil and in preparing the next groups for *aliyah*. Third, they sought to create a large kibbutz, with many members, which would promote a dynamic, continuous, and long-range process of building links between the motherland and a settlement with clear-cut Brazilian emphases, in terms of culture, mentality, language, and so on.³²

The decision to anchor formally the link between the Brazilian Dror movement in its various forms and Bror Hayil was taken in mid-1953. At that time, there were indications of a certain wane in the initial enthusiasm that had followed

31 Dov Tsamir, “Kavim Ofyaniyim Behitpat’huta shel Hatnua Habrazilait” (“Characteristic Directions in the Development of the Brazilian Movement”), in *Kuntres* (periodical of *Ihud Hanoar Hahalutzi*) 28, July 14, 1956, YTA, 7/180/7 (hereafter: Tsamir, “Characteristic Directions”).

32 Ibid.; Tzvi Chazan, *Netivim Vegaaguim (Paths and Longings)* (Tel Aviv, 2007), 106–7, 128–31.

the establishment of the State of Israel that was now replaced by the routine of ordinary days, which generated a crisis regarding the concrete meaning of Zionist awareness. As in other parts of the Diaspora, the circles of Zionist youth in Brazil were also burdened by a double dilemma: Did the establishment of the state mean that there was no more need for Zionism? And if, for various reasons, they could not implement their announced plan to immigrate to Israel, were they obligated to leave the ranks of the movement?³³ For Dror, which required its graduates to realize the obligation of *aliyah*, this situation necessitated a constant turnover of the central activists of the movement since the leaders immigrated to Israel with the groups. Numerically, this decision proved to have been justified, since the movement consistently succeeded in producing a new, worthy leadership out of its own ranks, and, at the same time, expanding its activity, as data from 1956 attest. In Argentina, with its 400,000 Jews, there were 23 branches of *Dror*, including 1,222 members, while in Brazil, which had a Jewish population of somewhat more than a quarter of that of Argentina, the *Dror* movement consisted of seven branches, with 1,020 members. From 1952–56, 378 graduates of *Dror* immigrated to Israel from Argentina (230 of them stayed on a training farm before their *aliyah*), and 234 came from Brazil (143 of them after staying on a training farm).³⁴

The organizational–ideological approach was intended to ensure that a large group of Brazilians would live on one kibbutz, and that they would serve, for a long time, as a means of contact with the Jewish community in Brazil, and as the pioneering and dominant factor of Brazilian Jewry in Israel. This approach was supposed to feed the process of the gradual demographic development of Bror Hayil, and present to the members of *Dror* in Brazil a real and concrete pioneering ideal. This approach was not limited to the spheres of the kibbutz and the youth movement, however, but rather influenced the process of strengthening the relations of the Brazil's Jewish community with Israel, as well as the diplomatic relations between the two countries. A clear expression of this trend occurred in the areas of formal and informal cultural contact, in which the members of *Dror* and Bror Hayil played a somewhat passive role. From the perspective of the heads of the Jewish community of Brazil, the activity of the Zionist youth movements was one component in a wider array of Jewish community operations. In the Zionist context, these included the Jewish schools, in which part of the instruction was carried

33 K. Charmatz, "Hinuch Vetarbut Bibrazil" ("Education and Culture in Brazil"), *Davar*, February 16, 1953.

34 "Havrey Hatnua Behul" ("The Members of the Movement Abroad"), *Kuntres* 30, July 22, 1956, YTA, 7/180/7.

out in Hebrew, the educational activities initiated by the JNF emissaries, the fundraising campaign for Israel, the yearly Israel Independence Day ceremonies, and the Portuguese language monthly *Brazil–Israel*. This periodical, edited by Berta Kogan, was published in Rio de Janeiro in thousands of copies, and was likened in *Davar* newspaper to “the ‘paper bridge’ of Messianic times in Jewish legend,” connecting “the faraway Brazilian Jewry and the State of Israel.” As part of this aggregate, an institute for historical research of the Jewish settlement in Brazil, and another one for imparting Jewish culture, were founded in Rio de Janeiro, as well as the Union for Brazilian–Israeli Cultural Relations, which began operating in parallel to a similar body located in Tel Aviv.³⁵ Arie Aroch, a painter and diplomat, served as the director of the Section for Cultural Relations in the foreign ministry department of information (and was later Israel’s third envoy to Brazil). He noted that the union founded in Rio de Janeiro, as well as its counterpart in Tel Aviv, undertook the role of distributing Brazilian culture in Israel, and not just the Israeli culture in Brazil—quite unlike similar bodies operating in other countries.³⁶ The sponsors of the rich activity of these unions were senior personalities in both countries. Thus, for example, the Brazilian foreign minister spoke at the opening ceremony of the institute in Rio de Janeiro, held in the auditorium of the Brazilian foreign ministry in the presence of senators and senior public figures. In Israel, the honorary president of the union was the minister of education, Ben-Zion Dinur. Its council included the painters Mordecai Ardon and Arie Aroch; the president of the Technion, Yaakov Dori; the brothers Aharon and Ephraim Katchalsky (Katzir), both professors at the Weizmann Institute of Science; Professor Gershom Scholem; the president of the Industrialists’ Association, Arie Shenkar; Minister Yosef Burg; and Zalman Shazar. Binyamin Mazar, president and rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who headed the Union for Israeli–Brazilian Cultural Relations, reported that as part of the union’s activities (which included exchanges of contacts and exhibitions in the areas of painting, architecture, photography, literature, and so on), its members

35 See, for example, Z. Ben-David, “Hayahadut Vehatzionut Bibrazil” (“Judaism and Zionism in Brazil,” *Davar*, September 28, 1951; letter of the Latin American section in the foreign ministry to the Israeli legation in Rio de Janeiro, May 16, 1954, ISA, *Het Yzadi*-16/2390; Israel Amitai, “Mossad Tarbuti Brazil–Israel” (“A Brazilian-Israeli Cultural Institution”), *Davar*, June 20, 1954; letter of Aharon Faskin, director of the Institute for Hebrew Culture to the Head Bureau of the JNF, November 4, 1955, CZA, KKL5/22478.

36 Letter of Arie Aroch to the Israeli legation in Rio de Janeiro, April 2, 1954, ISA *Het Tzadi*-16/2390.

would visit “Bror Hayil, the kibbutz of immigrants from Brazil, in the northern Negev.” Mazar updated the members of the union council:

The members of this kibbutz, most of whom were born in Brazil and speak Portuguese as their mother tongue, have brought with them a little of the taste and culture of their country of origin, and our intention is to enable the members of the Union to breathe in some of this atmosphere.³⁷

As part of the joint activities mentioned above, the well-known Brazilian writer and journalist José Lins do Rego visited Israel in August 1955, and consequently published a series of articles about Israel in the prominent Brazilian newspaper, *O Globo* (*The World*). His visit to Bror Hayil, which was guided by two Brazilian youths from São Paulo who had become members of the kibbutz, was, in his own enthusiastic words, one of the highlights of his stay in Israel—and not just because they talked to him about soccer, and “entertained him with the warm, human friendliness, typical of a Brazilian home.” Through do Rego, millions of readers of the newspaper were exposed to the “kibbutz of the Brazilians,” located in the Negev, which served as a model of a way of life in which “humanness, rather than brutality, is the essence, while giving each person responsibility, in a harmonious way.” The writer, according to his own testimony, was deeply moved by what he saw on Bror Hayil—there, and not in any other place he visited throughout Israel, not even at the holy sites of his Christian religion in the West Bank. He sealed his ode with the statement that the social life created on the kibbutz was the closest and purest illustration he had ever seen of the Greek word “symphonia.”³⁸

From the Israeli public point of view, it seems that this cultural activity reached its peak in June 1956, with the exhibition opening of the works of the Brazilian painter Candido Portinari, considered the “Picasso of Brazil.” The exhibition took place at the initiative of the two unions for cultural relations between Brazil and Israel, and enjoyed the patronage of the foreign minister, Moshe Sharett, one day before he left his office, on the eve of the Sinai campaign. About 160 of Portinari’s oil paintings, drawings, reproductions, and photographs were exhibited for four months, successively, at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, the

37 Letter of B. Mazar and Y. Laron to the members of the council of the Union for Israeli-Brazilian Cultural Relations, April 19, 1955, ISA *Het Tzadi*-16/2390.

38 José Lins do Rego, *Roteiro de Israel* (*Centro Cultural Brasil – Israel*, Rio de Janeiro, 1955), 31–32. The efforts to bring do Rego to Israel lasted more than a year. See Amitai, “Mossad Tarbuti Brazil-Israel” (“A Brazil-Israel Cultural Institution”), *Davar*, June 20, 1954.

Tel Aviv Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Haifa, and the Museum of Art, Ein Harod. In the catalog that accompanied the exhibition, the Brazilian envoy to Israel, Nelson Tabajara, noted that “Portinari is the faithful expression of Brazil.” He commended the unions for the cultural relations between Brazil and Israel, which understood that “no other Brazilian artist can surpass him, both in terms of his level and in terms of his ability to be the faithful interpreter of all those things that make Brazil and its people so different from all the other nations of the American continent.”³⁹ Portinari stayed in Israel for ten days on the occasion of the opening of his exhibition at Bezalel. He traveled to various places, and, on leaving, said that “on Kibbutz Bror Hayil, with its immigrants from Brazil, I felt at home” (he also gave the kibbutz one of his paintings as a gift), but added politely that “everywhere in Israel I felt at home.” Following his visit, in December 1957, a book of paintings and drawings, based on his experience in Israel, was published, and it concluded with an impressive painting of kibbutz life.⁴⁰

However, daily life on the dull frontier of the northern Negev lacked the luster of visiting dignitaries. Two days after Sharett reported to the government about his visit to Brazil, the executive of Bror Hayil asked the executive of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* for an urgent addition of buildings for the growing population of the immigrants of the Dror movement from Brazil. The request specified that the kibbutz had 118 members, who lived in 15 wooden shacks, comprising 38 housing units, and only 3 buildings, which included 12 housing units.⁴¹ Throughout the 1950s, the prominent activists of Bror Hayil urged the bodies of the Jewish Agency that were in charge of new settlements, and the authorities of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim*, to solve the burdensome housing problem, arguing that their kibbutz was “an absorbing, creative, and developing kibbutz, which serves as an educating model of *aliyah* from the South American countries.” In a letter written in March 1956, Dov Tsamir, the kibbutz secretary

39 “Tzayar Brazilai Leyisrael” (“A Brazilian Painter to Israel”), *Davar*, April 19, 1956; “Taaruchat Portinari Nifteha Biyerushalayim” (“Portinari Exhibition Opened in Jerusalem”), *ibid.*, June 17, 1956; “Nifteha Taaruchat Hatzayar Portinari” (“The Exhibition of the Painter Portinari Opened”), *ibid.*, July 23, 1956; Nelson Tabajara, “Hakdama” (“Introduction”), in Portinari, *Tziurey Shemen Verishumim [Oil Paintings and Drawings] 1940-1956* (Association of Museums in Israel, Israel, 1956). In May 1956, an exhibition with a similar format, of Brazilian architects, took place at the Bezalel Academy, sponsored by the unions for cultural relations between Brazil and Israel. On that occasion, a painting by Portinari was given to Bezalel as a gift. “Nifteha Taaruchat Architectim Brazilit” (“An Exhibition of Brazilian Architects Opened”), *Davar*, May 15, 1955.

40 “Hatzayar Portinari Azav et Haaretz” (“The Painter Portinari Left the Country”), *Davar*, June 26, 1956; Candido Portinari, *Israel* (New York, 1957), 141.

41 Letter of the Bror Hayil executive to the executive of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim*, May 19, 1953, YTA, 7/294/4.

and its dominant personality, stated emphatically that Bror Hayil was “the first kibbutz of Brazilian Jewry, and, as of now, is the only address for this Jewish center, which enables us to attract a continuous stream of movement members, as well as relatives of our young members.” In this spirit and “without excessive arrogance,” he and his comrades demanded that the settling bodies examine their situation not according to the regular standards, but, rather, in light of the great opportunity presented by Bror Hayil serving as “a very serious center of attraction” for pioneering immigrants from Brazil, considering that “the people and the vision are there.”⁴² An indication of this was the swift increase in the population of Bror Hayil, despite the fact that the members of the Egyptian group were leaving one after the other. The kibbutz grew from 201 persons in 1955 to 471 in 1958, with an anticipated addition of 90 more in 1959. Its inhabitants nurtured the vision of developing a large-scale kibbutz in the Negev from the immigrants of the Brazilian Dror movement, like Afikim or Givat Brenner, with more than a thousand members. Tsamir and Nahum Fassa, the farm manager, utilized the leitmotif of “the Brazilian Kibbutz” to the utmost, as an argument for additional investments and grants being given to Bror Hayil. In a letter that they sent simultaneously to Levi Eshkol, the finance minister and head of the Department of Settlement of the Jewish Agency, and to Giora Yoseftal, the minister of labor, in June 1960, they wrote:

Today we cannot accept applicants from Brazil or from Israel. This month, for example, we expect fifteen people from Brazil and four families from Israel who asked to join us, and many more will follow them. We do not know how to accommodate them. It is important to stress that it is not just that the kibbutz needs these people for its existence and development, but also, these people from Brazil, and others like them, can be absorbed now only on Bror Hayil, and about the importance of *aliyah* and absorption from South America there is, certainly, no need to elaborate.⁴³

42 See, for example, letter of the executive of Bror Hayil to Raanan Weitz, director of the Department of Settlement of the Jewish Agency, January 16, 1956, YTA, 7/52/11; letter of Dov Tsamir, secretary of Kibbutz Bror Hayil, to Bassin, the Technical Department of the Jewish Agency, March 12, 1956, *ibid.*; Ephraim Bariah, the executive of Bror Hayil, to Raanan Weitz, September 29, 1956, *ibid.*, 7/52/12; letter of Nahum Fassa, farm manager of Bror Hayil to Miriam Altmann, the Economic Committee of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim*, April 21, 1960, *ibid.*, 7/160/4.

43 Letters of Dov Tsamir and Nahum Fassa to Levi Eshkol and to Giora Yoseftal, June 9, 1960, YTA, 7/160/4; report of the Economic Committee of *Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim* about its visit to Bror Hayil, July 16, 1957, *ibid.*, 7/52/12. The local economic and social aspects

CONCLUSION

The tension between the sublime and romantic idealistic dream of creating a worthy and just lifestyle and life patterns, and the hard, meager rural reality, was an inseparable part of the process of the realization of Zionism, and was easily discernible by anyone who visited Bror Hayil in the 1950s. However, the Brazilian Dror movement members' personal and group ability to struggle with the challenges of the time and overcome the obstacles lurking on the sidelines was conditional on and reinforced by the cultural background and social temperament—the products of “the motherland”—which they had brought with them, and which united them in a single living environment on Bror Hayil. In the 1950s, about 470 members of Dror movement immigrated to Israel, and around 300 of them were absorbed in Bror Hayil. They constituted a considerable part of the Jewish immigration from Brazil to Israel during that period.⁴⁴

In 1952, when the monthly *Brazil–Israel*, the prominent periodical of the Jewish community, marked two years of publication, several of the Israeli government ministers sent letters of congratulation. Yosef Burg, a member of *Hapoel Hamizrahi* party and the minister of health, who had visited Brazil in 1951, said in his greeting:

Although Brazil has a great political tradition, nevertheless, its tasks in building its country have a distinctive “pioneering” character, meaning that only by devoting all the energy to the constructive projects of drying the swamps, eradicating illiteracy, and annihilating disease, especially tropical diseases, can settling the land be promoted. In this mission, which I called by its Hebrew name *halutziyut* [“pioneering”], there is something in common between the State of Brazil and the

of the reality on Bror Hayil go beyond the scope of our discussion in the present paper, and dealing with their actual context is basically trivial, since such problems were, naturally, common in any kibbutz settlement.

44 Ibid.; Pinski, *The Birds of Freedom*, 88. There is substantial disagreement between the data of different bodies concerning the extent of *aliyah* from Brazil during the period under discussion. While, according to Kitron, who relies on the data of the Jewish Agency, the *aliyah* from Brazil between May 1948 and December 1961 included about 1,600 persons, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics, only about 1,060 Jews came to Israel from Brazil between 1948 and 1960. See Kitron, “The Immigrants from Latin-America in Israel,” 241; *The Central Bureau of Statistics*, vol. 57 (Jerusalem, 2006), 238–39.

State of Israel, and the Jews who live in the land of Brazil can play an important role in the contacts between the two countries, by exchanging information and experiences.⁴⁵

Sharett (who also published a letter of congratulation in the same issue) probably took his comparison between Brazil and Israel, quoted in the beginning of this paper, from here. At around the same time, Sprinzak, the Speaker of the Knesset, wrote to Yosef Perlmutter, who was about to go to Argentina as an emissary. Perlmutter was a member of Kibbutz Mefalsim, which had absorbed immigrants from Argentina. Sprinzak wrote that “we need, once again, a new cycle of pioneering *aliyah*, a stream of daring young forces, who, together with our native Israelis, will attack all the difficulties of the historic mission [the establishment of the State of Israel], and invigorate all the active forces in Israel and among the Jewish people.” He estimated that “of all the countries and places of dispersion that have been left to the Jewish people . . . the only source today from which a stream of pioneering *aliyah* can and should erupt is South American Jewry.” Sprinzak felt that the pioneering immigrants “should rise and renew the days of the Second and Third *Aliyah*—without questions or conditions they will come, toil, and highly elevate the message of the redemption of the people.”⁴⁶ In this manner, as noted above in the wake of the Lapa Conference, Nahum Fassa described the spirit surging among the members of Dror, and the historical sequence that illuminated their decision to abandon their academic studies on the way to realizing two missions—*aliyah* and kibbutz. At the same time, Sharett’s statement regarding the unique quality inherent in the pioneering youth from South America, as well as that of Sprinzak quoted above, did little to refute Ben-Gurion’s disparaging remark that, in fully representing the life and place of the kibbutz in the Israeli society in the first decade of the existence of the State of Israel, he was “deeply ashamed” of the kibbutz movement because of the excessive focus on the politically left turn taken by *Hakibbutz Hameuhad* and *Hakibbutz Haartzit*. Following the Holocaust, the ability to mobilize pioneering efforts dissipated, and the establishment of the State of Israel marked the beginning of the end of the pioneering driving force that had pushed Zionism to its political and social

45 Letter of Yosef Burg to the editorial board of the monthly *Brazil-Israel*, February 6, 1952, *Brazil-Israel*, April 1953.

46 Letter of Sprinzak to Yosef Perlmutter, December 20, 1951, in Sprinzak, *Letters*, vol. 3, 46–47.

achievements. However, the pioneering urge continued to make ripples at the geographically remote ends of the Zionist reality. This source of pioneering energy was utilized only to a limited degree; among other reasons, because the revolutionary and pioneering emphases were constantly being eroded in the process of shaping the Labor movement.

In the context of the discussion of the great *aliyah* of the 1950s, it is appropriate, therefore, to clarify. These historical events teach us that even when—according to the evaluation of senior activists at the top political echelon of the Labor movement—there was a pioneering human reservoir that could have been developed and expanded according to the circumstances of that time in a manner that clearly and directly would have benefited the realization of the worldview of the kibbutz and the Labor movement, it was done only covertly. The real gap between the knowledge and understanding in principle, and the actual ability to realize the promising potential of the pioneering *aliyah* from South America in general, and from Brazil in particular, seems to indicate that there is a need for “more caution, less arrogance, and a lot more intellectual modesty” than what has become common in academic research regarding the description and analysis of the hidden desires, the statements made in documented forums, and the operational steps taken, in the area of *aliyah* from various countries in the 1950s. These patterns of thought and conduct were precisely those that Dov Tsamir, the “prophet” of the Dror revolution in the 1950s, asked to adopt when examining the bridge that was being built between Jewish communities in the Diaspora—in Brazil, in this case—and Israel since, through that bridge and relying on those patterns, “the great reservoir, from which the country will draw its powers,” was going to be created. Tsamir spoke in a symposium about Israel and the North and South American Jewry that took place at the Hebrew University in early May 1967, when the imminent war was not yet visible on the horizon.⁴⁷

Two years later, in May 1969, sixteen years after Sharett’s visit to Brazil, the eighty-two-year-old Ben-Gurion also visited. Ben-Gurion used to apologize, at the beginning of his speeches in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, for the fact that he did not understand what had been said before his turn to speak came, since it was usually in Portuguese. He noted that even a Jew could not understand the languages of all peoples. Ben-Gurion, who had a great fondness for studying

47 “Israel Likrat Tafkaideha Batfutzot” (“Israel Facing Its Tasks in the Diaspora”), a conference held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on May 2–3, 1967, *Bitfutzot Hagola* (Winter 1968), 81.

a variety of languages, never learned Portuguese. In a speech he delivered at a public assembly at the “Hebraica” club in Rio de Janeiro on May 19, Ben-Gurion said, in a similar spirit to that of the words of Dov Tsamir, two years earlier, that the integrity of the Jewish people depended on the intimate relations that Jewish communities in the Diaspora would maintain with Israel. A sociologist once asked—Ben-Gurion told his listeners—whether distinguished scientists, such as Albert Einstein, for example, would be willing to immigrate to Israel, or whether they would prefer America, England, or France. Ben-Gurion answered: “there are those who want to receive and enjoy, and those who want to create and give.”⁴⁸ These words of Ben-Gurion were accurately relevant to the personal choice and to the decisions made by the members of Dror movement in Brazil in the 1950s.

48 “Speech of MK David Ben-Gurion while Visiting Brazil,” May 18–25, 1969, BGA, Division of Speeches and Articles.