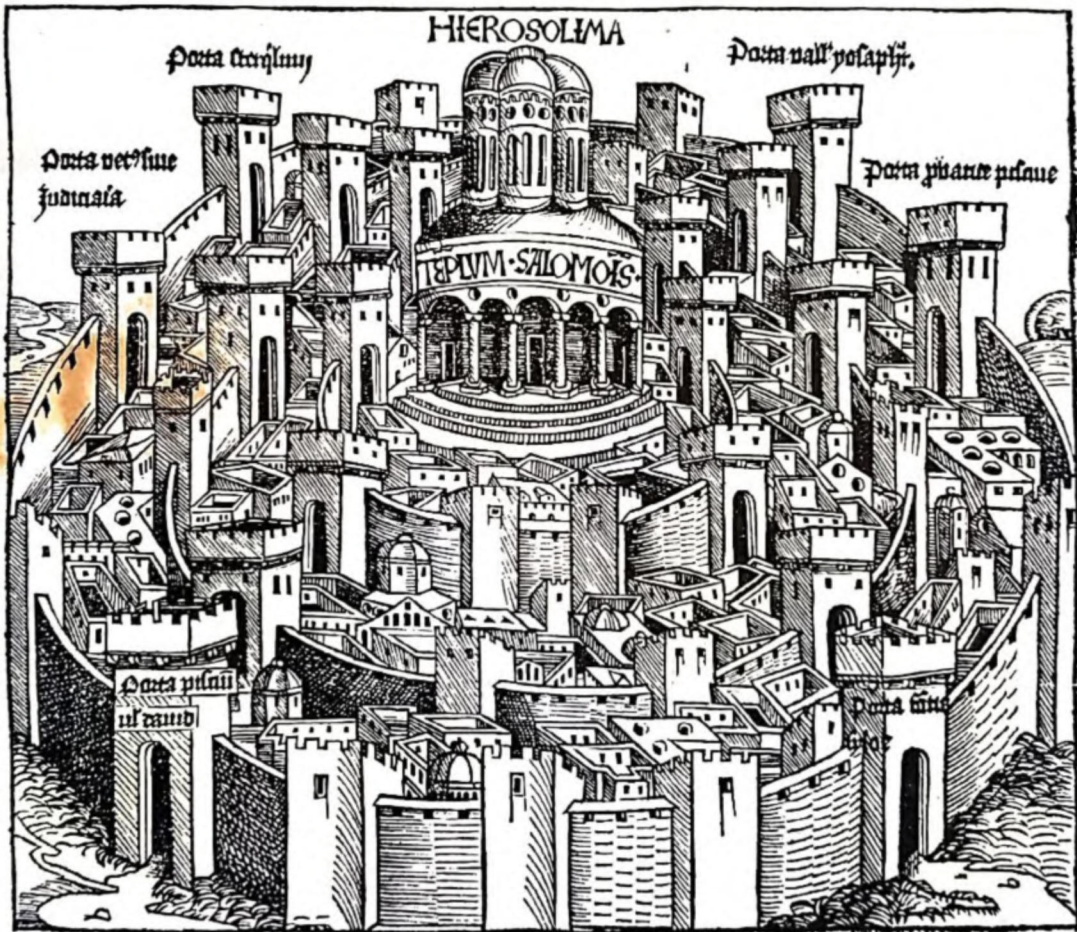


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## Jabotinsky Distorted

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The Jewish race is one of the primary races of mankind that has retained its integrity, in spite of the continual change of its climatic environment, and the Jewish type has conserved its purity through the centuries... The Jewish race, which was so pressed and almost destroyed by many nations of antiquity, would have disappeared long ago, in the sea of Indo-Germanic nations, had it not been endowed with the gift of retaining its peculiar type under all circumstances and reproducing it... Of the predominance of the Jewish type in cases of intermarriage with members of the Indo-Germanic race, I can quote an example from my own experience... for the Jewish type is indestructible. Nay, more, the type is undeniable, even in its most beautiful representatives... My own race (...) has played such an important role in world history and is destined for a still greater one in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Who is the chauvinist or 'integral nationalist' writing these racist lines? The reader may be surprised to learn that these were but a few of many similar observations in Moses Hess' *Rome and Jerusalem*. This is not the young Hess prior to his turning to Socialism, but the later one, who assures us, moreover, that 'the world-view, here outlined, (will be found) to be the underlying

\* I. Eldad (Scheib) was a prominent leader of *Loḥamei Ḥerut Yisrael*, the Stern underground group fighting the British Mandatory forces in Palestine during the 1940s. He is a gifted writer and editor and his translation into Hebrew of Nietzsche (seven volumes) is considered a masterpiece. This essay was published in the daily *ha-Aretz* in response to Avineri's article. The author's references to Avineri's article are to the Hebrew version, and their English rendering here does not verbally correspond to the English version of Avineri's article printed above (pp. 3-26).

<sup>1</sup> Hess, M., *Rome and Jerusalem*, transl. M. Waxman, (Bloch, N.Y., 1918), pp. 59-62.

basis of all my works. I have never held any other since I became a writer. It is the soul of my aspirations'.<sup>2</sup>

Another writer claims that

there are no superior races nor inferior ones, for every race has its own qualities, features and its own combination of characteristics... In my eyes, all people are equal. Of course, I love my people above all but it isn't 'superior', to my mind.<sup>3</sup>

This statement of belief was composed by Vladimir Jabotinsky.

Admittedly, quotations can be taken out of context and selectively presented to the reader. There is no doubt that quotations can be representative of a writer's central viewpoint. On the other hand, in the process of their extraction from the entire article they can be joined together with an essentially malicious intent of proving a certain thesis, a prejudice or worse, a wilful bias.

Piece by piece, Avineri has assembled disparate quotations in order to prove his main theme? Jabotinsky was an ultra-fascist. This definition is never openly presented as such for Avineri prefers to compose an image rather than an essay. He relies on the 'proof' that Jabotinsky upheld the theory of race - a more serious charge than fascism for in its original form fascism was not racist nor anti-Semitic - that Jabotinsky supported 'integral nationalism' (a 'cleaner' word than totalitarianism) and militarism, considered the state as a supreme value, preferred the corporate economic system to socialism and even opposed liberalism in its relation to matters of leadership and discipline.

### *Objectivity and Subjectivity*

After all these 'charges' an explicit reference to fascism would be superfluous. This, too, following an enthusiastic reference to Jabotinsky's rare and multiple qualities as if to emphasize the author's objectivity. If Avineri's image of Jabotinsky had been based on the main elements of Jabotinsky's ideas, activities and struggles and he had then related to the 'shadows' as if they were fringe aspects (despite the distortions we will cite below), the description might have been acceptable; or in any case, within the bounds of the permissible for a political adversary. Avineri, however, commits the opposite by taking out of context what is amenable to him and concealing or minimizing items disadvantageous to his approach.

Even a subjective historian, who was an admitted opponent of Jabotinsky but claimed to be intellectually honest, could not fail to see what were clearly Jabotinsky's main ideas and concerns:

1. the renewal of Herzlian state-Zionism;

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'An Exchange of Compliments', 1911, in *Nation and Society* (Hebrew), pp. 147, 158.

2. the advancement of the security aspect within Zionism, firstly defensive in character, then its Jewish Legion phase (in World War I) and then the fighting underground development (all this a result of the military idea conceived as a state attribute, a political asset and an educational value);
3. agitation for the rescue of European Jewry through their large-scale evacuation, even utilizing the aid of interested, if anti-Semitic, states (while Weizmann cooperated with the anti-Zionist British régime in a slow and selective immigration programme);
4. the establishment of *Betar* as an outstanding youth movement, especially in Eastern Europe, wholly Zionist and striving for *Eretz Yisrael* to the extent of initiating illegal immigration;
5. opposition to the expanded Jewish Agency of 1929 as a selling out of Zionism's primacy to a Jewish non-political plutocracy; and
6. leaving the World Zionist Organization over its refusal to unreservedly define the Zionist *Endziel* as a Jewish state.

It is as if in passing that Avineri mentions Jabotinsky's political programmes, leading today's reader, certainly a youngster or someone older who is not familiar with the annals of Zionism, to believe that those policies could never have been in dispute. These policies included the Jewish state as the goal of Zionism, the idea of a Jewish army, sounding the alarm in the face of the approaching catastrophe and the need for the immediate transfer of millions of Jews. Avineri's response to the foregoing is 'philosophical', i.e., a perspective of 'raising a demand in its proper time'. Thus, in 1935, the time was not ripe to lay claim to a state and yet, in 1937 and subsequent to the Peel Commission, the time had come. The bringing of millions of Jews was a wild idea but at the Biltmore conference in 1942, when millions had already been destroyed, the correct moment had arrived after all...

The fundamentals of Jabotinsky's ideology - a Zionism of rescuing millions, of statehood and an army - have become an inseparable part of the public domain. Consequently, they are of secondary importance for Avineri whose pivotal point, alleged fascism, is achieved by the method of a distorted, half-true quotation.

### *The Principle of Discipline*

Let us now examine his proofs.

True enough, Jabotinsky deals at length with the topic of military education and instruction. For him it was not only a necessity for self-defence (a realistic view in the light of Arab hostility) or a political asset (already during World War I; even Moshe Sharett,

relations with Nazi Germany. Furthermore, he did not visit with Mussolini (as did other Zionist leaders; Weizmann, four times), even when *Betar* was operating a naval training school in Italy where, by the way, some of Israel's naval commanders received instruction.

Jabotinsky recoiled without reservation, theoretically and practically, from all dictators and from totalitarianism. This is the fundamental historical truth regarding his character and teaching. He was an extreme individualist, almost a committed anarchist. 'Every person is a king' Jabotinsky formulated and this meant an inner freedom, the freedom of choice. Even the acceptance of the discipline which Jabotinsky desired had to be the result of a free decision by man as a man.

In the beginning, God created the individual. Every individual is a king equal to his fellow. It is preferable that the individual sin against the society than the society against the individual. Society was created for the good of individuals, not the opposite. The messianic vision is one of a paradise for the individual, a glorious anarchic kingdom, a contest between personal abilities... 'society' has no role but to help those who have fallen...<sup>6</sup>

And there is no contradiction between this 'in the beginning' and another similar aphorism of his, namely, 'in the beginning, God created the nation'.

This I phrased in opposition to those who consider that 'in the beginning there was mankind'. In the competition between the two, the nation comes first and yet the individual still precedes the nation. For even if the individual subjugates his entire life to the service of the nation - this, too, is not a contradiction in my opinion. This is his wish, what he has willed and not been forced to do.<sup>7</sup>

And what is liberation in the mind of one whom Avineri refers to as worshipping the state as supreme, a disciple of 'integral nationalism', etc.?

A revolution is what I call a liberating uprising but there is no liberation except in freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. There is no liberation without the right of every citizen to influence, to change the régime; no liberation without equality of rights for every citizen regardless of race, religion and class.<sup>8</sup>

My outlook is in essence the negation of the totalistic state. The state system which is the most normal and healthy as well as the most pleasant is the 'minimal state'. That state acts only in case of real necessity. There is no basis for limiting the right of self-expression in the area of ideas. My 'yes' does not prevent you from declaring 'no'. Of course, there is a need for extra flexibility. In times of war and crisis (economic as well as political), there might arise the need to expand the scope of what is to be considered the minimum. The

<sup>6</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'My Story', 1936, in *Autobiography* (Hebrew), p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'Class', 1934, in *Nation and Society* (Hebrew), p. 241.

instinctive ideal of man is a serene anarchy... As long as this ideal cannot be realized, democracy must be recognized as the form closest to the ideal.<sup>9</sup>

An individual – this is the supreme concept, the highest value, that which was created 'in the image of God'. The doctrine of communism states that man is part of the state societal mechanism. Our tradition has it that in the beginning, God created the individual... Man is intended to be free. Democracy's meaning is freedom and the goal of democracy is to insure the influence of the minority.<sup>10</sup>

The pivotal point around which Avineri seeks to prove Jabotinsky a fascist (that is, without mentioning the word) is his relation to class struggle and his suggestion to establish a 'parliament of professions'. The term 'corporatism', frequently used in Italian fascist thought as well as in the Portuguese variety, is not mentioned once in the selections Avineri has collected. In addition, Avineri ignores two significant themes in Jabotinsky's thought: his proposal of 'national arbitration' in matters of labour disputes in Palestine, or more exactly the Jewish community of Zionist endeavor. And there is no mention in Avineri's presentation – surely raising doubts about his intellectual honesty – of Jabotinsky's argumentation against strikes and lockouts. Jabotinsky held that at that time there did not yet exist a normal political economy, but one that was in the process of being built. The crucial function of that economy was to allow the maximum number of Jews to enter mandatory Palestine in the shortest possible time. This demanded financial investment, most of it private capital.

Industrial action on the part of both employees and employers during this critical period had to be prohibited. And note: Jabotinsky's intent in the prohibition of strikes was to limit it to the pre-state years when the *yishuv* was led by the World Zionist Organization, the *Va'ad Le'umi*, etc. or in other words, when the structure was voluntary. It was in this framework that Jabotinsky called for national arbitration according to the needs of Zionism and the *yishuv*.

Jabotinsky did demand 'Yes, To Break!', meaning, obviously, not the breaking of the Hebrew worker but the monopoly of the *Histadrut* labour federation. His call came against the background of the withholding of immigration certificates from members of *Betar* in the Diaspora as well as the interference in their employment situation in Palestine. He wanted to permit the establishment of additional trade unions; (do not all parties, including the religious, maintain separate trade unions in democratic France and Italy today?). When Jabotinsky expresses his support for the middle class (as in 'The Storekeeper'), he does so,

<sup>9</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'Introduction to the Theory of Economy – Part Two', *ibid.*, pp. 218–219.

<sup>10</sup> Jabotinsky, V., *Hayarden* (Tel-Aviv), October 21, 1938 quoted in Bela, M., *The World of Jabotinsky* (Hebrew), p. 67.

according to Avineri, because he is desirous of transplanting the diaspora economic order in Palestine. This is another example of Avineri's twisting of substance.

This was the first theme Avineri ignored in his treatment of Jabotinsky's struggle against the socialist labour movement in Palestine. The second is in Avineri's representation of Jabotinsky's view of the social vision of the state. 'Jabotinsky's alternative', writes Avineri, 'is not a liberal economy but an elitist corporative arrangement in the accepted sense of the 1920s and 1930s'.

In direct contradiction to this we find at the source, in all simplicity:

I dare to think, not only in 1923 but also in 1950, that three-quarters of the civilized world will yet cry out for the full realization of free bourgeoisie liberalism.<sup>11</sup>

And in 1932, he wrote that

Liberalism is bankrupt. Parliamentarianism's exalted ideals have been shattered... Is it so? We will yet see if Grandpa Liberalism has been buried along with the concepts of freedom, equality and the people's will. The fashion of the 'now' will disappear simply because it is evil and because liberalism's prescriptions for society are better and more practical.

True, these are not the remedies of a pharmacy or a hospital clinic. Occasionally, one falls sick and needs bitter medicine and maybe an operation, but one does not need to make the hospital regimen into a way of life. Injections, bandages and diets make up the hospital régime whereas life is eating what you want and going where you want. Today's therapy and surgery may be successful. It is possible, too, that they will prove misguided. But this I do not comprehend: masses, hysterically saluting in a chloroformed state, a castor-oiled salute in deranged nightshirt dress, this crowd is a gathering of good-for-nothings. Grandpa Liberalism will yet dance at their funeral and the funeral of its 'buriers' today.<sup>12</sup>

And yet this is not all, for Jabotinsky, in an attempt to coin an original Hebrew term for his idealized economic system, came up with the biblical Jubilee. In another such concept, *Pe'ah*, Jabotinsky saw the forerunner of the income tax. Jabotinsky's Jubilee principle was intended to be an attentiveness and a vigil over the individual, the family and the land that could never be sold for it belonged to the nation. This, he postulated, would be a permanent revolution and would prevent the formation of a land-owning class. He further stipulated five elements as the foundations of the Jubilee state (today, we would label this the welfare state) as follows:

The 'elementary needs' of normal man, which he must struggle for, must find employment to attain and if unemployed, must agitate for, are but five: food, housing, clothing, education and health... (and)

<sup>11</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'Doctor Herzl', 1905, in 'Early Zionist Writings' (Hebrew), p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'Grandpa Liberalism', *Heint* (Warsaw), October 14, 1932, quoted in Bela, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-275.

are the obligation of the state according to my 'prescription'. From where will the state derive the means to provide them? They will be taken from the nation just as taxes are collected and military service is compulsory...<sup>13</sup>

It is a vain search among Avineri's selected quotations for any reference to these ultra-liberal social ideas. Instead, Avineri's quite mendacious conclusion is that Jabotinsky was a proponent of an elitist régime. Every historian mentions the significant influence that Popper-Lynkeus had on Jabotinsky as regards the utopian society. It cannot be possible that Avineri is unaware of this. However, there is no allusion by Avineri to this and in its place we find references to 'corporatism' and 'elitism'.

### *Jabotinsky's Alternative*

We now proceed to yet another example of Avineri's questionable intellectual honesty. It is an issue which is very much in today's news. It should be obvious that the themes dealt with above, i.e., the social régime, the fate of European Jewry, the state, army ('every one of us must dedicate three years of his youth for army service on behalf of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel'<sup>14</sup>), that Jabotinsky's outlook was proven correct beyond any 'ism' which could be tacked on to his philosophy. In every instance, Jabotinsky led while others belatedly followed. But now to the subject of the Arabs.

'It would have been presumed', writes Avineri,

that one such as Jabotinsky who considers nationalism, the uniqueness of the national element, the national will to be separate from that which is foreign and national pride as the fulcrum of all historic and political development, would also be attentive to the yearnings of Arab nationalism. For one who was no stranger to Ukrainian nationalism, including its anti-Semitic expressions, it would have been thought that in his analysis of the Middle Eastern reality he would but try to take into consideration the appearance of Arab nationalism in Palestine and the neighbouring countries. But it is not so and anyone seeking in Jabotinsky a coming to terms with this topic will fail... The discussions regarding Arab nationalism are few and trifling. It would appear that anyone encountering this scanty material would be correct in his opinion that it reveals a certain amount of derision towards the Arabs. [See Avineri, above, p. 20. Edd.]

This may very well be the most blatant example of Avineri's distortion and concealment of Jabotinsky's teachings and thought. While Jabotinsky may not have filled volumes on this aspect of Zionism like other utopians in the Zionist movement, what he did write is first and foremost the very opposite of disparagement.

<sup>13</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'Social Redemption', in *Essays* (Hebrew), pp. 297-298.

<sup>14</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'What Must We Do?', 1905, in *Early Zionist Writings* (Hebrew), p. 207.



The writer of these lines is considered an enemy of the Arabs, one who wishes to banish the Arabs from the Land of Israel. There is no truth to any of this. It is my opinion that it would be impossible to do so. There will always remain two peoples here. Secondly, I am proud to be numbered among that group that drew up the Helsingfors Programme of ensuring minority rights. I am prepared to take an oath that it is not our intention to expel anyone from our land. It is another matter, though, whether peace can be achieved by peaceful means. This, however, is not dependent on our attitude to the Arabs but on their relationship to us and to Zionism.<sup>15</sup>

The date of these words should be carefully noted: 1923. And furthermore:

... I understand as well as anybody that we've got to find a *modus vivendi* with the Arabs; they will always live in the country, and all around the country, and we cannot afford a perpetuation of strife. But I do not believe that their reconciliation to the prospect of a Jewish Palestine can be bought either by the bribe of economic uplift, or by watered and obviously falsified interpretation of Zionist aims à la [Lord] Samuel [the British High Commissioner]. I don't despise the Arabs as do those who think that they will ever sell to us the future of their country, so long as there is the slightest hope of getting rid of us by hook and crook. Only when hope is lost will their moderates get the real upper hand and try to make the best of a bad bargain; and then I'm prepared to let even Kalvarisky (a central figure of the *Brit Shalom* - I.E.) lead the orchestra. But 'til then, just because I want peace, the only task is to make them lose every vestige of hope: 'neither by force, nor by constitutional methods, nor through God's miracle can you prevent Palestine from gradually getting a Jewish majority' - that is what they must be made to realise, or else there will never be peace...<sup>16</sup>

It is difficult to compromise between two truths, between two beliefs. Our faith is deep; so is theirs...<sup>17</sup>

There is no precedent in history of a native population accepting a colonisation project by foreigners. In opposition to the colonisation by one nation coming from abroad, the local people will fight; always, everywhere and without exception...<sup>18</sup>

Neither to the Arabs of Palestine nor of the neighbouring countries can we offer 'compensation' for the Land of Israel. And so, voluntary agreement is out of the question... Settlement can only develop under the protection of a force independent of the local populace, behind an iron wall which the local residents cannot breach... In this respect, there is no difference between the 'militarists' and 'peaceniks' among us. The difference that does exist is that the former desire a force composed of Jewish soldiers whereas the latter would do with a force of British bayonets... This is not to say that

<sup>15</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'On the Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)', in *On the Way to Statehood* (Hebrew), p. 253.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Col. F.H. Kisch, July 4, 1925, Central Zionist Archives, S 25-2073 (in the original English).

<sup>17</sup> Speech before the *Va'ad Le'umi*, Tel-Aviv, October 17, 1928, in *Speeches*, Vol. II, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'Parliament', *Ha'aretz*, July 21, 1925, quoted in Bela, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

no agreement can ever be reached with the Arabs of *Eretz Yisrael*; only that it will not be a voluntary one. As long as the Arabs preserve a glimmer of hope that one day they'll be rid of us, they will not relinquish it, not for sweet words or alluring promises, precisely because they are not a rabble but a living people...<sup>19</sup>

### *A Problem of National Contraposition*

Taking all things into consideration, it is not to Avineri that I turn but rather to the conscientious reader, whatever his views: is the above an indication of derision or of disrespect of the Arabs of *Eretz Yisrael*, or is it perhaps the complete opposite? Whoever hopes to succeed in deceiving the Arabs that we do not desire a state here or even a majority, buying them persistently with the advantages that would accrue to them in the fields of employment, culture, technology, health, socialism – it is he who mocks them, wanting to purchase their nationalism, their national aspirations, and not Jabotinsky. In this case, it is clear who was the realist and who the mystic.

In this connection, I wish to cite the judgement of a young leftist Israeli historian, certainly no friend of Jabotinsky:

In praise of Jabotinsky, it must be said that he was practically the only one in the Zionist camp who preferred a courageous and exact formulation of the Arab problem, defining it as a problem of national contraposition. 'I respect the Arabs', said Jabotinsky in 1926, 'and while we have an ancient culture, etc., they too possess proper feelings for our homeland and between these emotions a clash must exist'. These words brought him a compliment from the Arab side: 'he is the sole Zionist who does not deceive us and who understands that the Arab is a patriot, not a prostitute'.

There was an element of honesty in Jabotinsky's outlook, in his refusal to accept convoluted and nebulous Zionist terminology in connection with the Arab question. He preferred, rather, to represent matters in a straightforward fashion. Ben-Gurion reached this stage years later...<sup>20</sup>

I leave it to the reader with some principles to decide where is the honesty, the understanding and where was the unwillingness to understand. For it was the same Jabotinsky whom Avineri claims never saw or involved himself in regional affairs but was fully wrapped up in his Anglophilia, who in 1929 wrote the following:

Here in Palestine, either England gets along with us or gets out. The future of the Arab countries is clear to us. Sooner or later, in negotiations or in blood and fire, they will liberate themselves, one after another, from European rule... This will be the destiny of Egypt... and all her neighbours... England will be pushed out of Palestine as well.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> 'On the Iron Wall', *op. cit.*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>20</sup> Elam, Y., *An Introduction to Zionist History* (Hebrew), pp. 60-61.

<sup>21</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'A Duella Maana', *Doar Hayom* (Tel-Aviv), October 23, 1929, quoted in Bela, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

Like most Zionists, Jabotinsky surely considered England an ally because of shared interests. However, he did not hesitate (contrary to Avineri's proposition that until his final days, Jabotinsky clung to his stand regarding the essential partnership of interests between Zionism and Britain) to speak in terms of a rift with England, as early as 1929, in the aftermath of that year's Arab riots against the *yishuv*. There is ample proof for this although it was certainly with a heavy heart that he arrived at this position. He believed that there were elements in England – as there are in the United States today – who opposed the Arab orientation so inimical to Zionism (interestingly enough, Labourites like Wedgwood and Strabolgi). In addition, and here we are faced with another example of Avineri's portrayal of Jabotinsky as a totalitarianist, it is a fact that England's democratic and liberal tradition appealed to him tremendously. His very being was disgusted with the various suggestions of the extremists within his own party who proposed that contacts be made with totalitarian régimes. It should also be unnecessary to note that he agreed to the preparations for an anti-British revolt towards the end of his life, the seeds of which can be traced back to 1932.<sup>22</sup> There were other alternatives for Jabotinsky who addressed Britain '... if you are tired – go in peace. There are other great democracies.'<sup>23</sup>

I have not covered all but if need be, I am willing to prove point by point that Avineri has committed an act of distortion against Jabotinsky's image and outlook. His article is an act of malice aforethought. While he does cement brick to brick, quotation to quotation, it is all out of context, out of connotation and in contradistinction to Jabotinsky's worldview. It is a true masterpiece of malevolence.

My concern in taking upon myself the task of replying to Avineri was to honour and respect the truth as well as Jabotinsky. Mine is a plaint against a man of science, not a plaudit of Jabotinsky's vindication on every topic. To the contrary and almost paradoxically, one of the reasons for my breaking with Jabotinsky together with other 'radicals', as Avineri phrases it, had nothing to do with anything he has 'found'. Few were those in Zionism who were so correct in their prognosis as was Jabotinsky. Zionism followed the lead of the essential Jabotinsky but with a ten-year delay. That delay proved most costly.

Yes, Jabotinsky's attraction to England was a result of his admiration for Europe and its culture. He was fully opposed to those who called for an 'integration' into the East we live in. Continuously, he reasoned that this 'East' could not help us. We are Europeans if only because of the fact that what is called European culture is largely an outgrowth of what we contributed to it. He did

<sup>22</sup> Bela, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–333.

<sup>23</sup> Jabotinsky, V., 'The Partner', *Jewish Herald*, February 10, 1939, quoted in Schechtman, J., *The Jabotinsky Story*, Vol. II, p. 333.

favour Nordau's view that we must proudly expand Europe's boundaries to the Middle East. This attitude, which approximates the truth, Avineri denigrates. I did not know, however, in how bad a light Avineri viewed this principle. He himself, despite current fashion, seems to wish to liberate himself from this culture. But that is *his* prerogative.