

Document A: “Every Individual a King”, *Raphaella Bilski Ben-Hur (1993)*

The key to Jabotinsky’s corpus of general thought is the assumption that the supreme value was the individual, and after the individual, the nation. Jabotinsky’s conception of “individualism,” which he had evolved since his youth, stood in sharp contrast both to etatism, which regarded the state as the supreme value and the individual as a tool of the state, and to totalitarianism, which championed large-scale intervention by the state in the life of the individual – fascism, for example, incorporating both these elements. Thus Jabotinsky espoused:

the idea of “individualism” ... upon which, if my maker had blessed me with sufficient wisdom and knowledge to formulate a philosophical system, I would establish and construct my entire system: in the beginning, God created the individual; every individual is a king who is equal to his fellow individual – who also is a “king”; it is better that the individual sin against the public than that society sin against the individual; society was created for the good of individuals, and not the contrary; and the future end of days, the vision of the days of Messiah – is the paradise of the individual ... and “society” has no purpose other than to help whoever has fallen, to comfort him, and to raise him up.

The nation, not mankind, was of secondary importance to the individual. In contrast to the universalism of Marxism and socialism. Jabotinsky maintained that in the beginning God created the nation and not humanity. Thus he averred: “I believe with complete faith that in the competition between these two, the nation takes precedence,” and that “likewise, the individual takes precedence over the nation.”

This approach emphasized man’s freedom and his mastery over his fate. Therefore, he could not morally be compelled to dedicate his life to building the state. Such a crucial decision – to subjugate one’s life to the service of the nation – had to be the decision of each individual, derived from his rational conviction that this indeed was the right thing to do. When man himself decided to dedicate his life to his nation, his freedom was in no way compromised. In this, Jabotinsky’s view differed fundamentally from that of the early fascism of the late nineteenth century and from the mature

fascism of the 1930s, which considered the individual a tool of the collective entity – that is, of the nation or state.

Source: Every Individual a King, The Social and Political thought of Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky, Raphaella Bilski Ben-Hur, B'nai B'rith Books, Washington, D.C., 1993, p. 15.

Document B: “*Lone Wolf*”, Shmuel Katz (1996)

A pogrom did take place, in Kishinev, a city which, through the horror of the event – and its shame – achieved an infamous place in modern Jewish history. Kishinev marked a turning point in the style and scope of Russian pogroms and was to serve as the exemplar for their future development. Previously pogroms had consisted largely of robbery, looting and general violence. At Kishinev, from the sixth to the eighth of April, 1903, for the first time murder was added. Fifty Jews were killed, hundreds were injured, many women were raped – and the state authorities encouraged the rioters, the rapists and the murderers.

Jabotinsky’s reaction to the news from Kishinev was startling. It is Kornei Chukovsky who recollects that “that savage event which horrified the civilized world marked the turning point in his life. Jabotinsky,” he recalls, “stormed into the *Odesskiya Novosti* office late one spring afternoon and angrily upbraided us, the non-Jewish members of the staff, accusing us of indifference to that terrible crime. He blamed the whole Christian world for the Kishinev pogrom. After his bitter outburst he left, slamming the door behind him.”

A flood of contributions for the relief of victims poured into the *Odesskiya Novosti* offices, and Jabotinsky went to Kishinev to distribute food and clothing. He visited hospitals, talked to eyewitnesses and burrowed through the ruins.

Source: *Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky*, Vol. 1, Shmuel Katz, Barricade Books, New York, 1996, p.46-47.

Document C: “The Jabotinsky Story: Rebel and Statesman,” Joseph B. Schechtman (1956)

[Bialik’s] poem, comparable only to the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy in the bitterness of its invective against Jewish meekness and cowardice, caused a deep and lasting spiritual upheaval in wide Jewish circles. But it was available only to those who understood Hebrew. In 1904, Jabotinsky translated the poem into Russian. He put into this translation all the deep feeling of his own soul, all the fire of his indignation, and all the intensity of his pride. So imbued was this Russian version of Bialik’s poem with the spirit and personality of its translator that it came to be regarded as an original poem of Jabotinsky’s rather than the translation it was supposed to be.

Since the censorship at that time would not permit the printing of this rebellious piece in Russian, it had to be mimeographed. L. Sherman, who lived at the time in Odessa, recalls that “the national Jewish youth and the members of the self-defense corps would come together and read aloud the Russian translation of that stirring poem. The one who obtained a mimeographed copy was fortunate, but even luckier was he who had the privilege to hear Jabotinsky declaim the poem at one of our secret, illegal meetings. The present writer remembers that many of the younger generation learned Jabotinsky’s translation by heart and would recite excerpts from it in their private conversations and group discussions. ... Most impressive was Jabotinsky’s poetic introduction to the poem. ...

Once, in that town, under a heap of garbage
I noticed a piece of parchment –
A fragment of the Torah.
I picked it up and carefully removed the dirt.
Two words stood out: *Be’erts Nokhriya*, “In Alien Land.”
This scrap of parchment
I nailed above the door to my own home.
For in these two words out of the Book of Genesis
Is told the entire story of the Pogrom.

Source: *The Jabotinsky Story: Rebel and Statesman*, Joseph B. Schechtman, Thomas Yoseloff Books, New York, 1956, p. 78-79.

Document D: “Lone Wolf”, Shmuel Katz (1996)

[“Your New Year”, article by Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky, January 3, 1908]

Long ago I had a strong sense of the beauty in the sovereignty of a free person, who has no label on his forehead, who owes nothing to anybody on earth, whose attitude to members of his own people is the same as to members of another people, the sovereignty of a man who moves according to his own will and not that of others. Today I still see its beauty. But for myself, I have given it up. My people had a custom, cruel but profound: when a woman married, she cut off her hair. As a custom – you have here a primitive act. But there exists, even if seldom, a supreme love, which longs to sacrifice everything, even beauty. Maybe I, too, could float on the wings of wonderful freedom, sing charming songs, bathe in the cheap favor of your applause. But I want this no longer. I have cut off my locks because I love my faith. I love my faith, I am happy in my faith, my happiness is such as you have never known and such as you never will know, and I want nothing more.

Source: Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky, Vol. 1, Shmuel Katz, Barricade Books, New York, 1996, (“Your New Year” First Published Odesskiya Novosti, 1908), p.75.

Document E: “*The Jabotinsky Story: Rebel and Statesman*,” Joseph B. Schechtman (1956)

Jabotinsky went to Bordeaux. There, one wet morning, he read in a poster on a wall that, on October 30th, Turkey had joined the Central Powers and begun military operations.

This piece of news radically changed Jabotinsky’s entire outlook. His own evidence as to the position he had taken in the first months of the world conflict is rather contradictory. In *The Story of the Jewish Legion*, written in 1928, he states that until that morning in Bordeaux he had been “a mere observer, without any particular reasons for wishing full triumph to one side and crushing disaster to the other.” His desire at that time was stalemate, and peace as soon as possible. In his *Autobiography*, which was written in 1934, we find a different emphasis: “From the first moment I hoped and prayed with all my heart and soul for the defeat of Russia. If the fate of the war had depended on me in those weeks, I would have decided: quick peace in the West, without victors or vanquished – but first of all Russia’s defeat.” Whatever Jabotinsky’s initial position, Turkey’s entry into the war converted him into a “fanatical believer in war until victory” of the Allied Powers and made this “his” war. It gave final shape and direction to his ever-growing conviction that “where the Turk rules neither sun may shine nor grass may grow, and that the only hope for restoration of Palestine lay in the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.” He drew the only possible logical conclusion from this premise: whatever the outcome of the war with Germany (at that time he did not predict that Germany would be beaten into unconditional surrender), Turkey would be defeated and sliced to pieces: “stone and iron can endure a fire; a wooden hut must burn, and no miracle will save it.”

Source: The Jabotinsky Story: Rebel and Statesman, Joseph B. Schechtman, Thomas Yoseloff Books, New York, 1956, p. 201-202.