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## THE IDEA OF THE WELFARE STATE ACCORDING TO ZE'EV JABOTINSKY

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### **Abstract**

The topic of the present work is the attitude of one of the Zionist thinkers at the beginning of the 20th century, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, to the idea of the welfare state. The relations between liberalism and social democracy in the research of democracy are relations of rivalry between two different approaches that discuss the degree of governmental regulation that should be implemented on the life of the citizen, also in the economic field. Jabotinsky was the ideological thinker of the secular right in the Land of Israel and in Jewish communities around the world, and his thinking still has dominant importance on the different actions of the political organizations that belong to the Israeli right today. Therefore, this research study will examine his manner of reference to the topic.

**Keywords:** *Zionist movement, Jabotinsky, Social Redemption, Western economy, welfare state, global economy*

### **Introduction**

According to his writings, Jabotinsky saw that the socialist movement, which during these years was at the head of the Zionist movement, was implementing in the field the

Zionist ideology and building a Jewish community that included institutions, an economy, and a fighting force. However, he identified that the socialist movements in the Zionist Congress were acting according to the thinking of the ideological thinker Karl Marx in the building of the Jewish State. In other words, they were working to strengthen the workers' class for the class war against the bourgeoisie, after which there would be the dictatorship of the proletariat that would create absolute equality between the classes in the population .

Jabotinsky claimed that it is impossible to integrate Jewish nationalism and socialist ideology, which negates nationalism and demands national equality. Jabotinsky called the political-ideological ideas of the left parties in the Zionist Congress *shatnez*, a word that means the mixture of unsuited things.

Therefore, from the intention to create ideological opposition to the Zionist-socialist movements, Jabotinsky decided to write a complete ideological doctrine from the basis about the Jewish state that would be established. The thought included explanations detailed on the rational and scientific level on every possible aspect in the Jewish state, which included areas such as methods of government, economic policy, legal institutions, and a welfare policy .

The research method of this work will be qualitative, and the data that the researcher will collect will be performed using content analysis of two articles, "The Crisis of the Proletariat" (written in two parts), and "The Social Redemption", which were written in the 1930s, according to the model of Martin Bauer . The research will be performed in two tracks. In the first track, the researcher will perform content analysis of the economic analyses of Jabotinsky of Western economy in the 1930s, after the economic crisis of 1929, and the place of the proletariat in this

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space will be examined. In the second track, the solutions Jabotinsky offered for the worker class translated into welfare ideas will be examined.

**Review of the Literature and Research Hypothesis**

The objective of the research is to examine precisely how Ze'ev Jabotinsky addressed the principles of the welfare state. The work examines Jabotinsky's opinions about the structure of the global economy of the first half of the 20th century and his opinions about the need for the degree of intervention of the state in the economy.

The research question is as follows. Did Jabotinsky support the idea of the welfare state? According to the literature, it seems that the theory that accepts the liberal thought of Jabotinsky in the fields of government and society is not expressed in his economic approach. This possibility was examined only by the researcher Rafaela Bilsky Ben-Hur (1988) in her book *Every Individual Is a King – The Social and Political Thought of Ze'ev Jabotinsky*, which is the only book until today on the research literature that addressed the economic thought of Jabotinsky.

Bilsky Ben-Hur maintained that at the basis of Jabotinsky's economic approach is the approach that supported the social democratic theory, which holds that the state needs to implement a maximalist welfare policy and is the main factor responsible for the elimination of poverty and the assurance of every person's minimal living conditions. Bilsky Ben-Hur even defined Jabotinsky in her book as "the father of the welfare state".

The research hypothesis is that the opinions of Ze'ev Jabotinsky were that the welfare principles are essential only because of the gradual process of the replacement of working hands by machines in the global business sector. In other words, in contrast to Bilsky Ben-Hur's approach, the research hypothesis will contradict her argument in that it claims that Jabotinsky identified in the years after the economic crisis of 1929 that the private business economy throughout the world is hiring for work a steadily decreasing number of workers. Therefore, the proletariat, whose abilities for work are its hands, will suffer distress and will need the assistance of the state in order to survive.

**On the Crisis of the Proletariat**

When Jabotinsky went to analyze the global economy according to the alternative theory he presented, in his article "The Crisis of the Proletariat" he focuses on the analysis of the global economic situation of the 1930s, which suffered from mass unemployment after the crisis of 1929.

In his analysis of the economic situation in the years after the economic crisis of the year 1929, which influenced Europe, Jabotinsky focused on an alternative analysis to the Marxist analysis, similar to the alternative theory he presented to Marxist materialism. Namely, like the Marxist materialism led to the opinion that the crash of 1929 symbolizes the historical stage in which the bourgeoisie will decline and the proletariat will rise, Jabotinsky shows that according to his historical materialist theory, the crisis of 1929 shows the historical stage in which the proletariat will gradually decline and the bourgeoisie will rise.

"We have learned: the value of a product is measured first and foremost in the quantity of the work of a person that was invested in its production; the profit of the capital derives from

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the same source – a certain surplus of work, for which the manufacturer did not pay the worker, rather he took this surplus to himself. This was taught to us not only by the Marxist professors but in essence also those who negate Marxism: I, for example, heard in my youth lectures of M. Pantaleoni, who believed fully in another theory – the theory of border benefit, but he went on so much in the argument with Marx to the point that in the students' memory primarily Marx was assimilated, and not von Böhm-Bawerk. All this derived from the atmosphere of those days; not the psychological atmosphere, not the fashion for socialism, but an atmosphere of the economy in essence. The main point in which there was truly 'work', or in other words the proletariat – the duration of the work day, the level of his work salary, strikes, organization; and especially – the multiplicity of its number, which grows every day."

"Not only the professors and the books, but rather life itself teaches us that the problem of the global economy is primarily the problem of the proletariat, and that all the 'questions' entailed by it are on the proletariat: how to make their life and work easier, how to divide the income between it and the capital owner, when the order of reason is to recognize in the 'entire people' (we would identify this concept innocently, without any statistic basis, from the participation in sorrow, with the concept of the 'proletariat') to recognize the 'entire people' as the one sole owner of the means of production and the instruments of production."

Consequently, Jabotinsky objected to the approach of the socialists who supported an economy managed by the State and negated every aspect of initiatives, since they relied only on facts and numbers and did not take into account the person's psychological aspects, which derive from evolutionary motives that cause him to initiate new inventions to expand his kingdom beyond his present situation.

"If we take this into account, there will not be in the world any initiative: not in financing activities, not in the building of society and kingdom, not even in the thinking of practical subjects. Those who proposed to act according to this opinion maintained that the right of initiative needs to be given to laymen alone; regarding experts, what it is necessary to do is not to seek advice from them (between this and that, they will say at all times – it will come to nothing), but to give them clear invitations: it was decided, know, to do this and this, using these and these actions, and it is not to be argued, but only to find the numbers or the formulae."

Therefore, Jabotinsky asked the following question. Does the global economic crisis after 1929 herald the decline of the bourgeoisie or the decline of the proletariat? His answer was that the economic crisis symbolizes the decline of the proletariat.

"What is now happening in the world, might it just not be 'a crisis of the global economy' or 'a crisis of capitalism', but something narrower, the crisis of the proletariat?"

He explains through the argument that the crisis symbolizes the replacement of hands and feet by machines. Therefore, the direction in which humanity is striding is not the development of physical activity but the development of mind and spirit, and the practical meaning is the invention of new machines for industry.

"The technique undercuts the feet of labor, or in other words, it makes the proletariat less and less necessary." Jabotinsky argues that the global unemployment will not be resolved, since there is no need for a mass worker class for manufacturing, according to proper economic

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calculation. All the luxuries (playthings) can be produced by machines, and the merchandise that one hundred workers would produce today is manufactured by half or a quarter of this number.

However, he emphasizes that it is still necessary to have a proletariat but it needs to change and to upgrade. There will be no need for workers like machines but there will be a need for people to operate the machines. In other words, people will still be necessary to press the buttons.

“This side in the situation is already clear and apparent. In the world, they say, there are twenty million people lacking work, or even more, and no serious person believes that ‘when the crisis is over’ they will all be restored to jobs. If fire would come from the heaven and consume all the reserves of merchandise in the world, from produce to tractors to women’s mitten, and quickly, instead of ‘overproduction’ then there would be general and global hunger for merchandise – even then they say, not for the rest. There is work for masses of those seeking it, for more than one half of this tremendous number. Again there isn’t in them the need, they say, for the production according to wise economic calculation. All that is needed for the world – all the food, all the clothing, all the machines, and even all the toys – it is possible to produce now using a far reduced amount of a person’s work, than the potential work ability that the global proletariat embodies today together. In layman’s theory I write here humbly: ‘they say’, and this humility is not necessary at all. This is clear: everybody knows that the same amount of merchandise, which twenty years ago would be produced by one hundred workers is today, thanks to the stratagem of technique (and organization) in many industries can be produced by fifty workers, and in some of the industries, ‘they say’, even twenty-five and even fewer. And if today this is the trend, tomorrow it will be even stronger. The unmediated work of the person is in its first generations. The almost only factor of production – not long ago still the main one in factors – is rapidly becoming the second factor in importance. The day is near and the role of the unmediated work of the person, the role of physical effort in actuality, will be reduced, in the creation of the values of merchandise, to a near zero degree – to a size that aspires, supposedly, to zero. In shoe factories, established in Czechoslovakia, today the participation of the work in the value of every single pair of boots, ‘they say’, is not very far from zero. Certainly, it will never reach the zero – somebody will always be needed to press a button – but there is no doubt that the importance of the role of the proletariat, as a factor in production, now declines tremendously. The chance reflected: the proletariat, in its decisive majority, is gradually becoming a class that socially is not needed. A huge and powerful group, which fills a tremendous role in all the collective life of humanity, loses now gradually its economic benefit, its *raison d’être*. The ‘crisis of the proletariat’, is the disease of the world rooted in it?”

**Social Redemption – The Five Components of Jabotinsky**

Jabotinsky explains in his article “Social Redemption” (in the article he writes about a conversation that he held with a socialist Zionist student in France) that the true goal of the idea of welfare was distorted by socialism. He maintains that socialism “attempted to go in the incorrect direction” since the way to solve the problems caused to the worker class in the capitalist method because of lack of education is not to give this class preference over other

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classes but to attempt to solve the problem of poverty that this class endures so that it can integrate in the capitalist method.

In this context, Jabotinsky maintained that it is necessary to differentiate between the idea to solve the poorness of the proletariat class in the population and the idea to bring them to a preferred status in the population at the expense of other classes.

**“Jabotinsky:** What is the meaning of the concept of ‘social redemption’?

**The Socialist:** I do not understand, why do you ask questions that everyone recognizes and knows, and you among them. The meaning of ‘social redemption’ is that the workers themselves will be ‘givers of work’ of themselves, or in other words, will belong to the state – the land, the factories, the machines – all the productive riches of the nation and the citizens will work for themselves, then there will not be room for exploitation, and the socialist question will be resolved.

**Jabotinsky:** My friend, you begin again with the same eternal mistake: they talk to you about the social question and you speak about the question of the workers.

**The Socialist:** It’s the same thing. The meaning of the social question is the arrangement of the situation of the hired workers. **Jabotinsky:** This is not the same thing, the social question is broader and deeper than the question of the hired workers. The question of the hired workers is only a part of the social question, and this for a long time is no longer the most important part, and in the future its importance will be reduced further.

**The Socialist:** Yes, yes, I know your view. You argue that the employed workers are not now the poorest and worst off...” **Jabotinsky** maintained that the true goal of the social revolution is to destroy the poverty of the worker class that is required to work less and less because of the technological advancement and the income is made up by the state. Therefore, it should be emphasized that his intention was not complete economic equality but the supply of basic living conditions to the poorest (the five components).

**Jabotinsky:** Yes, and you yourself know, that this is true, and therefore I say: ‘Eliminate the poor – eliminate those who need to be strengthened. The only ones to be strengthened in the social question are the poor. The poorer the person, the more he needs to be strengthened; the single role of the social reform or the social revolution is the destruction of poverty. However, there is a second reason, for which the time of the ‘hired worker’ has stopped being at the center of the social question, and this is the fact that the class of hired workers is a class that has the natural tendency to shrink more and more. Every step of the technical progress makes hundreds and thousands of people superfluous, since in their place the work can be done by a new machine with a dozen overseers. In another fifty years, and perhaps even sooner, the entire world will face such a situation, all their material needs of humanity can be provided in millions of such supervisors who will work, it is possible five hours a day and it is possible only three hours a day, it is possible four days a week and it is possible only twice a week. And “their work” will be to press an electric button from time to time. All this you know yourself, although you still do not want to believe in this. Thus it will be, and otherwise it is impossible that it will be. If you want, I will remind you again, that this is written further in the Bible: that the ‘work’ in terms of the means of production, the sweat of labor for bread and water, is a ‘curse’, and from the first day of human culture man has begun to fight this curse, attempting to cast the

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curse of the hard labor on nature and on machine. And now a person stands not far from the final victory, and this a 'worker' will do in the near future, something expensive, and no sociologist or social facility will consider addressing such small things. Before you there is a completely different question: what to do with the tremendous majority of people who will then not be 'workers'.

**The Socialist:** I have already heard these prophecies, and I do not believe them, but let's assume for a moment that this is indeed the case, and there is 'enslavement' to the machine, the Golem, as you call it, and most people can stop working. How do you solve the social question? How do you then absorb the social order into the sacred principle (I hope that for you too this principle is sacred): a person who does not work does he not have the right to enjoy even a little of the good in this world?

**Jabotinsky:** I will begin first with a comment that I mock your 'sacred' principle. It is not sacred at all. I do not see any sanctity in the situation in which a person needs to pay with hard labor even for the most elementary possibility of not starving. Why? He asked for nothing from society, for it to go him a favor and permit him to be born? He was not asked, it was not for his benefit that he was tossed into the world, that he has the 'desire to eat', that rain falls on him and that in the winter he is cold. When I force somebody to go to war, I need to assure for him, at least, bread, clothing, and a roof over his head; and this is the only 'sacred' thing in the entire question. The person has the right for bread, clothes, a roof, and so on, simply since he is a person, the question of whether he 'works' has no belonging to here. And I think that this outlook of mine is far closer to 'sacred', to the pure morality and simple human emotion than your principle: if you do not work, then die from starvation.

As previously stated, in this sense Jabotinsky broadened the Popper-Lynkeus theory (which spoke about three basic needs) through the creation of five basic needs. (In Hebrew, these five components are known as the five 'mems', since the Hebrew letter 'mem' begins each word ( , , , , ). These are housing, food, education, health, and clothing.)

In contrast to the social idea, Jabotinsky understood that the sole possible solution for the end of the unavoidable trend in the world is to end the inventions (Communist solution). However, he maintains that there is another solution, a more bourgeois solution, which calls to instill in the worker class the ability of invention and entrepreneurship.

"The Socialist: If so, then what is the nature of the remedy for the social redemption according to this principle of yours, which gives equal rights to all idlers?"

**Jabotinsky:** The nature of the remedy is included in two short and simple laws. First, every person who wants for any reason receives from the state a certain minimum of his needs – a minimum that society will find adequate for a certain country and in a certain period of technical culture. Second, to ensure this minimum, the state has the authority to recruit people and to expropriate materials and objects to a degree that ensures the mentioned minimum. And this is all.

**The Socialist:** It is possible, that this is 'everything', and however the redemption is not clear to me. Jabotinsky: I will clarify further. I draw for myself that the thing that we call by the name 'the elementary needs' of the regular person – the same thing that today he needs to fight for and to seek a livelihood and to make noise, when he does not find this livelihood –

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includes five things: food, housing, clothing, the possibility of educating the children, and the possibility of being healed in the case of sickness. In Hebrew this can be abbreviated as the five 'mems' – food – housing – clothing – education – health. Regarding each one of these needs there is in every state and in every period a known concept of the sufficient minimum. The obligation of the state, according to 'my medicine' needs to be: every person who announces that he needs the 'five mems' needs to receive them. This is the first of 'my' two laws. Hence, it is necessary to conclude that the State must always have the possibility of providing the five 'mems' to each one of the citizens who requires them. From where will the state take them? The answer is 'my' second law: the state will take them by force from the nation like it takes today other taxes and forces young people to serve in the military.

**Jabotinsky:** According to 'my medicine', the government will keep an account, according to which there will be the need to ensure in the coming year for the five 'mems' approximately so many people, in other words, there will be the need for such and such food needs, such and such housing, textiles, and so on. For this purpose, there will be the need for such and such money and such and such work hours (certainly not many 'work' hours, since the very work will be done by the machine), and the state will impose every year on its citizens a suitable degree of taxes or expropriate a suitable number of private factories and recruit for the 'social service' a suitable number of young people. Although I am not a great statistician, I am certain that all this will be far less expensive than what maintaining the military costs. And with this the social question will be resolved.

The Socialist: Too childish and simple is the matter in your opinion ...

**Jabotinsky:** Since the true 'social question' is simply far more than you draw it for yourself. You think that the role of the social reform is infinitely complicated. It is necessary to supervise every single point of the ten thousand different relations between people, classes, and parties. And I tell you, all this is certainly superfluous. The State has only a single and special role: not to allow people to starve or to sleep under the sky when they are barefoot or naked. In short, 'to eliminate poverty'. And you have only one means: to promise the five components to anybody who lacks them, to promise it not through complicated and convoluted regulations but in a simple way, direct and concrete: to give, finished.

**The Socialist:** How is this 'finished'? – to leave the rich their riches and the poor to be satisfied with your minimum? And what about the question of the protection of the workers, the limitation of exploitation – what will happen to all the same thing that generations of socialist dreamers fought for?

### Summary

Two conclusions can be drawn from the review of the two articles of Jabotinsky, "The Crisis of the Proletariat" and "Social Redemption". The first conclusion is that technology will change work, and the second conclusion that the five components ('mems') were intended only for the non-educated workers and not for all the population, but namely only for those who will fail or will not succeed in being educated bourgeoisie. Bilsky Ben-Hur, who in her comprehensive book *Every Individual Is a King* spoke about the maximal welfare state in Jabotinsky's thought, was mistaken in her conclusion, since it is possible to clearly identify that in Jabotinsky's

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opinion, the five components became necessary only when he identified that in the future the unemployment in the Western countries will be massive because of the replacement of working hands with machines and in parallel the lack of desire of the proletariat (which derives from the Marxist ideology) to obtain an education and advance individually in status.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Jabotinsky supported the ideas of welfare from liberal motives. In other words, he did not support the five components because of his belief in a maximalist welfare state or alternatively his belief that the state needs to intervene at very high levels in the economy so as to help every person as a person. Rather, his social thought derived, first and foremost, from a bourgeois-liberal belief that holds that the bourgeois class can adjust to every situation because of its individualism and education, and in contrast the workers' class will be in crisis and will suffer from mass unemployment although the business sector will continue to increase.

Therefore, it can be seen from the analysis of the articles that Jabotinsky maintained that for the Zionist proletariat to avoid a crisis, two parallel processes need to be performed, both in the Jewish community and in the future Jewish state. The first process is for the state to publicly help this class fill its most basic needs, which are expressed in the five principles (clothing, health, education, food, and housing), while the second process is the adjustment of the proletariat class to the new situation, namely the workers will need to increase their education and skills beyond merely physical activity.

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