

Wege und Ansätze zur Erreichung des gemeinsamen Ziels anzubieten imstande war. Konnte das Weltbild des Einzelmitglieds von weit rechts bis gemäßigt links reichen, wurden alle in der Ideologie der jüdischen Nation vereint. Die schwierige wirtschaftliche Lage in Litauen und die erhebliche Zunahme des litauischen Nationalismus beunruhigten das Land und verursachten eine Krise im Wertesystem der jungen jüdischen Generation, die, erzogen zu einer Gesinnung der Eigenstaatlichkeit für das jüdische Volk, sich selbst als verloren ansah, da sie in Litauen keine positive Zukunftsperspektive mehr erkennen konnte. Dieses ist einer der Hauptgründe dafür, dass es in Litauen so zahlreiche zionistische Organisationen gegeben hat.

Der Erfolg der Zionistischen Organisation in Litauen war indes auch von subjektiven Faktoren bestimmt. Durch das aktive Bemühen, alle Bereiche des jüdischen Lebens abzudecken und auf alle Fragen, die sich aus den zeitlichen Umständen und der sich verändernden geopolitischen Lage ergaben, Antworten geben zu können, gelang es den Zionisten, die Vorstellung zu vermitteln, dass ihre Vision von der Zukunft gleichbedeutend mit dem Schicksal der Juden sei. Die Zionisten waren nachgerade erfolgreich, andere davon zu überzeugen, dass Jude zu sein bedeute, einer einzigen, normalen Nation anzugehören, die – wie alle anderen – Ideale hat, aber auch konkrete Zielvorstellungen und Interessen. Das Programm der Zionistischen Weltorganisation konnte zwar den Weg zur Verwirklichung dieser Vision weisen; die Erfahrungen der Zionistischen Organisation in Litauen belegen aber darüber hinaus, dass diese Verwirklichung von jedem einzelnen Juden selbst schrittweise vorangebracht werden konnte.

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#### SUMMARY

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*“Here and Now”: Conditions and Scope  
for Impact of the Zionist Movement  
in Lithuania, 1906–1940*

This article gives a survey of the continuously altering frameworks and scope for impact of the Zionist movement in Lithuania during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which represented a period of unparalleled opportunities for the development of Jewish politics in the emerging republic. Thus, it focuses primarily on the political development of the Zionist organization, its attempt to direct the internal transformation of the Jewish masses, and the changes in its ideological and practical program in the face of new historical and political circumstances. The starting date of the period encompassed relates to the fact that, in 1906, the central Zionist office for all of Russia was shifted to Vilna (Vilnius). Although this

was due to external factors, Vilna and the Zionist activists working there ensured the sustained development of the Zionist movement on Lithuanian territory and put into practice an important principle of Zionist ideology, “work in the present” (*Kegnvalt arbet*). The study ends with the year of the first Soviet occupation of the Lithuanian Republic, when Zionist organizations were closed and many of their leaders were deported. A look at this period of more than three decades offers a retrospective view of the Zionist movement in Lithuania, displaying the opportunities for political action which were influenced by the geopolitical and legal changes in the region.

Emphasis is given to a thorough analysis of Zionist ambitions and to the political reality at the dawn of the young Lithuanian state, with particular reference to the medium-term effect of the first Lithuanian Zionist conference which took place in Vilna on December 5–8, 1918. Not only did this decide that all active Zionist organizations unite to form one Zionist Union of Lithuania; it also adopted four “Political Resolutions” and six “Decisions Concerning Lithuania,” which, inter alia, entailed a claim for constitutionally warranted national autonomy as well as a determination of the position to support the re-establishment of a Lithuanian state and to join the ranks of the *Taryba*, the Council of State, exercising the legislative powers according to the 1918 democratic Constitution of Lithuania.

The appearance of a new independent Lithuanian state on the political map launched a new period in the history of the Jewish community in this region. The revival of Jewish politics started a fight for influence on the Jewish street, and as a consequence, as elsewhere in the world, the Zionist movement in Lithuania was not a united movement for long. It broke into competing political factions, whose influence varied over time. The Zionist movement in Lithuania was represented by General, Socialist, Religious and Revisionist trends. Its branches spread very quickly and were active even in the smaller *shtetls* from the early 1920s until the 1926 coup d'état, which marked a regression in the constitutional life of the state and largely undid what the Zionist movement had achieved politically.

In so far as the demise of the Jewish national autonomy movement put an end to active Zionist politics, the Zionists had to relocate the implementation of their programmatic ideas in order to strengthen other possible spheres for propagating their ideology. More intensive support of economic, social, cultural, and educational associations became their main work, which at least ensured that they would maintain those positions in which they had retained some scope for impact. The political rhetoric of Zionism had been focused on the image of Palestine as the historical Jewish homeland, on the role of the individual in history, and on the future of the Jewish nation in Eretz Israel; challenged by a retrograde constitutional practice, Lithuanian Zionists succeeded in convincing the others that being Jewish meant to be a member of a single, normal nation, which has ideals, as well as concrete interests “here and now.”