BOOK REVIEW

THE KIBBUTZ – A VIEW INTO THE FUTURE AND A REFLECTION INTO THE PAST

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THE KIBBUTZ COMMUNITY AND NATION BUILDING, *by Paula M. Rayman.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. 308 pages.

KIBBUTZ MAKOM, *by Amia Leiblich.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1982. 318 pages.

Professor Rayman presents a case study of a kibbutz on the Lebanese border, in which she stayed twice, in the early and mid-seventies. She emphasizes the interrelationship between the changes within the kibbutz and the changes in Israeli society. The author differentiates between three basic periods: the early years (before the War of Independence), the years of transition (between 1948-1967), and recent years. The growing tension between the kibbutz's original values of equality, collectivism and self-labor, and the need to survive in a market-oriented environment are described in detail. The internal changes in the kibbutz towards a more heterogenic community are shown to be a further stress on the original collective ideology and its practice. (A special chapter describes the regional economic, educational and municipal organization in the region of the target kibbutz.) The regional setting, which has developed only recently, is perceived as the natural experiment field for attempts to solve these tensions. The local community and the national umbrella organization display greater difficulty in legitimizing such changes.

The importance of this topic needs no additional comment: the kibbutz continues to be the focus of world-wide interest, as a "venture into Utopia that has not yet failed" (Buber, 1949), struggling to maintain its uniqueness on one hand, and its powerful position in Israeli society on the other. Professor Rayman's presentation of this struggle is praiseworthy, as she does not impose her own preconceptions, as did some earlier writers on the kibbutz (Bettelheim, 1967; Spiro, 1970). She achieves this openness, however, at the price of poor organization of too many facts, meandering between the case study approach and a general overview of the kibbutz movement. The author was apparently unable to decide at whom precisely the book was aimed. For the reader who knows some facts about the kibbutz, the overview is redundant, while for those unacquainted with the subject, the case study is not a very good entry point into her discussion. It is no longer necessary for every book about the kibbutz to start from the

very beginning. Professor Rayman's reference list speaks for itself. The only chapter that presents important new data is that on the regional setting. However, even here the author fails to refer to the variability of regional organizations of the kibbutz movement (see, for example, Bar-On and Niv, 1980). . It is difficult to judge the impact of the fact that she writes as an outside researcher. Perhaps collaboration between foreign and local researchers could yield more interesting hypotheses testing and theorizing. One last point: there is no sense in ensuring the kibbutz's anonymity by using a pseudonym, if all the neighboring settlements are referred to by their real names. In a small country like Israel anonymity is almost unattainable.

Professor Leiblich's book is also a case study: it is based on more than one hundred interviews that the author conducted with members of three generations living in Kibbutz Makom. The author succeeds in constructing the whole story of this community as related to her by the members, including the different perceptions and interpretations of critical events in its history. For example, she provides an excellent account of the political division of the community. In the early fifties (after the death of Stalin) this was a dark period in the annals of many kibbutzim. The members of Makom hardly mentioned that period, but when the author interviewed people who had left Makom during that period, all of them told heartbreaking stories.

Professor Leiblich did an excellent job of interviewing. Members were willing to tell her what they had never told one another. The hardships of the early phase, together with the unique sense of primacy, are vividly presented in these pages. So are the problems of being newcomers who tried to enter the closed group of founders. Professor Leiblich succeeds in conveying the reflections of one hundred members on their own community. Hers was the first account of its kind, but since its publication, several communities have started to prepare such accounts for their fortieth or fiftieth anniversaries. However, they may not be able to compete with the special acceptance which characterizes Professor Leiblich's interviews and writing.

As the kibbutz (like the State of Israel as a whole) has no model from which to learn, external theories fail again and again to describe accurately the development of this unique phenomenon. The ability of the members of the kibbutz to develop their own "theory in practice" (Argyris and Schon, 1974) becomes a crucial question. This book contributes to this goal even though it focuses on the past.

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