BOOK REVIEW

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

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Paula Rayman's study was prompted by the question: how did the social and economic development of Israel change the way of life of kibbutz members and the structure of the kibbutz? Or in her words: "...this book concentrates on the relationship between the kibbutz and external institutions. Primary attention is given to the effects of the dominant national and international systems of development and modernization on local communal patterns of resource allocation, social structure, and overall quality of life" (p. 3). The issue is, of course, an important one, especially since very little research has been done in this field. But, unfortunately, Rayman's study makes no significant contribution to answering the question that she herself posed. For instance, no one will learn from Rayman's book *how* the kibbutz pioneers of the 1930s became the kibbutz aristocrats of the 1970s. (For those who are interested, there are some valuable hints in Yonina Talmon's excellent study of the kibbutz.)

The book is mainly a survey of the history of Kibbutz "Har" (a pseudonym for the sake of anonymity). She divides Har's forty years of history into four periods: the first years, the transition period, the regional cooperative organizations, and the recent years. Each period corresponds to about a decade in the history of Har, and together they cover the various stages in the development of this kibbutz in response to development in Israel. For persons who are totally unfamiliar with the history of the kibbutz movement or of Israel, such an overview may be of some benefit. But such readers must take into account a number of weaknesses that appear throughout. The three central ones are: lack of focus and direction; the facts presented are frequently trivial and in many cases inaccurate; absence of method of correlating or explaining the facts. In addition, Professor Rayman's style and general approach seem to be aimed at a knowledgeable audience, yet the knowledgeable reader will soon discern that the author did not do her homework.

Let us begin with the last point. Professor Rayman calls the kibbutz "Kibbutz Har" because she wants to preserve anonymity. But since she describes at length the history of the kibbutz and provides maps of the area in which Har is situated, any Israeli eleventh-grade student can easily identify Har. The history of "Har" is taught in most high school courses on contemporary Israel. If she had chosen one of the neighboring kibbutzim, she would have succeeded better in disguising the community's identity.

An example of a striking inaccuracy is the following sentence: "The content of kibbutz socialist ideology, most clearly articulated by A.D. Gordon and Martin Buber, is a protest against the market mentality of the industrial order and a movement toward

an egalitarian human community" (p. 4). It is incorrect to say that Martin Buber influenced or articulated kibbutz ideology. The only work which Buber wrote about the kibbutz was one chapter in his *Paths in Utopia*, and there he did not articulate its ideology. He discussed the kibbutz as part of his understanding of utopia. Furthermore, until the early 1950s Buber wrote in German, and since most kibbutz founders hailed from Russia, very few of them could read his work. Even among those few who did read Buber, he was not influential and did not articulate their ideology. Menachem Gerson, one of Buber's close pupils, has explained at length that Buber had scant influence on kibbutz ideology, even among his pupils who settled on Kibbutz Hazorea. Menachem Dorman has added additional insights on Buber's lack of influence. As far as A.D. Gordon's influence is concerned, is he the person who most clearly articulated kibbutz ideology? The ideology of the *Hashomer Hazair* kibbutz movement, for example, which comprises about a third of all the kibbutzim in Israel, was formulated mainly by its leaders, Hazan and Yaari, and was Marxist, and to a great extent anti-Gordonian. Moreover, to the extent that Buber and Gordon did articulate the essence of kibbutz life, they were more concerned with creating a new religious community than in protesting against a market mentality. They were not social scientists, but deeply religious thinkers who saw the kibbutz as a way of life according with their religious beliefs. Nothing of this is mentioned by Rayman.

Perhaps I should add that such inaccuracies appear about every ten to twenty pages. The linking of Landauer, who was an anarchist, to the kibbutz movement is preposterous (p. 251). The author errs on simple facts as well. No kibbutz groom gets married, even today, in a suit (p. 144).

Professor Rayman has amassed facts about Har and set them beside the economic and social development of Israel. Is not this task in itself worthy of commendation? The answer must be negative when the facts lack any focus or accompanying insights. Furthermore, the author points to no development whatsoever, be it Marxist dialectical or Western causal development. In short, she teaches us nothing. The facts remain as inert and unrevealing as the rocks that dot the road up to Har.

Even the facts are presented in trivial fashion. For instance, she writes (pages 80-81):

> A consistent ethos of heroism, of being part of a national colonization effort, and of being "bridgehead soldiers", enabled the community to struggle through the limits imposed by a barely subsistence economy. The sense that history was on its side was a critical, forceful factor in the development of the new community.

Leaving her rhetoric aside, the author's job as a social scientist rather than a politician is to show how an "ethos of heroism...enabled the community to struggle through the limits imposed by a barely subsistence economy." She should define those limits, analyze them and record responses to them. Her job is also to explain in detail what the members of Har meant when they sensed that history was on their side, and how that became a "forceful factor in the development of the community." She does not do any of this. Thus, even if these facts are correct, Professor Rayman has expressed them at a most superficial level.

In summary, as Talmon, Bettelheim, and Spiro have shown, the kibbutz movement is worthy of serious social research; the findings of such research have implications extending beyond the kibbutz movement itself. But such research will not be forwarded by mere raking together of facts, as in Professor Rayman's book.

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