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A *Polytropos* Zionist: The life and literary production of Zakharia Klyuchevich Mayani

ОПЫТНЫЙ, СТРАНСТВУЮЩИЙ СИОНИСТ: ЖИЗНЬ И ТВОРЧЕСТВО ЗАХАРИИ КЛЮЧЕВИЧА МАЯНИ

Резюме: Kalejdoskop pseudonimów, za którymi ukrywał się Zakharia Klyuchevich Mayani na stronach rusko-żydowskiego tygodnika „Rassvet”, является отражением его многогранной личности. Историк, археолог, лингвист, преподаватель, политический деятель, журналист, карикатурист, художник, поэт, сценарист, биолог — трудно найти область, которой он бы не занимался. Спектр языков, которыми он владел или пользовался как автор, столь же широк: от родного русского до квази-родного французского, через английский, иврит, немецкий, идиш, польский, древнегреческий, турецкий по албанский и этрусский. Количество материалов, оставленных этим разносторонним автором, огромно. Переписка на разных языках (итальянском, русском, английском и французском), дневники и театральные сценарии (иврит, английский), эссе (французский), поэзия (французский, русский и иврит), авторские пособия по языку (французский-иврит, русский-иврит), наброски, картины и газетные вырезки — все это хранится в Институте Жаботинского в Тель-Авиве. Анализируя обширный материал, автор статьи пытается нарисовать портрет *ish eshkolo*, интеллектуала ренессансного типа, забытого историками литературы, сионизма, искусства и археологии, возможно, именно из-за сложности проследить его разнообразную деятельность и псевдонимы.

Ключевые слова: Захария Ключевич Маяни, „Рассвет”, русско-еврейская журналистика, еврейская община.

DOŚWIADCZONY, WĘDROWNY SYJONISTA: ŻYCIE I TWÓRCZOŚĆ ZACHAREGO KLUCZEWICZA MAJANIEGO

Streszczenie: Kalejdoskop pseudonimów, za którymi ukrywał się na łamach rosyjsko-żydowskiego tygodnika „Rassvet” Zachary Kluczewicz Majani jest odzwierciedleniem jego wielowymiarowej osobowości. Historyk, archeolog, językoznawca, nauczyciel, działacz polityczny, dziennikarz, karykaturzysta, malarz, poeta, scenarzysta, biolog — trudno znaleźć dziedzinę, w którą by się nie zagłębiał. Spektrum języków, które opanował lub wykorzystywał jako autor, jest równie szerokie: od ojczystego rosyjskiego, do quasi-rodzimego francuskiego, przez angielski, hebrajski, niemiecki, jidysz, polski, starożytną grekę, turecki, aż po albański i etruski. Ilość materiału pozostawionego przez tego wszechstronnego autora jest ogromna. Korespondencja w różnych językach (włoskim, rosyjskim, angielskim i francuskim), pamiętniki i scenariusze teatralne (hebrajski, angielski), eseje (francuski), poezja (francuski, rosyjski i hebrajski), autorskie podręczniki językowe (francusko-hebrajski, rosyjsko-hebrajski), szkice, obrazy i wycinki z gazet — wszystko to przechowywane jest w Instytucie Żabotyńskiego w Tel-Awiiwie. Poprzez analizę ogromnego materiału autorka artykułu stara się nakreślić portret *ish eshkolo*, renesansowego typu intelektualisty, zapomnianego przez historyków literatury, syjonizmu, sztuki i archeologii, być może właśnie z powodu trudności w śledzeniu jego różnorodnych działań i pseudonimów.

Słowa kluczowe: Zachary Kluczewicz Majani, „Rassvet”, dziennikarstwo rosyjsko-żydowskie, społeczność żydowska

Zakharia Klyuchevich was born on March 18 (31 according to the Gregorian calendar), 1899 in Melitopol, in today's south-eastern Ukraine. He was the son of Solomon Israelevich (1870–?) and of Sara (Golda/Olga, née Markovna, 1875–?) Ravich. After the Russian Revolution of October 1917 his parents, along with the rest of their children, remained in Russia and, either expediently or voluntarily, adopted the Soviet way of life. Zakharia's younger brother, Alexander Solomonovich (1903–1990), acquired some fame in the homeland by becoming an accomplished chemist and making a career in that field. After graduating from Kazan University in 1928, he subsequently taught in different years (1934–1941 and 1960–1977), worked at the Kazan Oil and Fat Factory named after Mulla-Nur Vakhitov (1928–1934, 1941–1948), and headed the department of inorganic and analytical chemistry at the Kazan Veterinary Institute (1947–1960). Sometime after he had moved to Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan (then: the (autonomous) Tatar Soviet Republic), his parents joined him; they lived there for many years, and were buried there.

In 1918, Zakharia Solomonovich completed eight years of study at the Simferopol's Merchant Society Commercial School (in Crimea). In the same year, after graduating, he entered the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the Simferopol Taurida University. In 1919 and 1920, under the guidance of Professor Meyer, he worked as an assistant in the bacteriological laboratory of that university. Without having completed his studies, he decided — the only one of his family to do so — to move to Palestine.

Zionist sentiments had been strong in him for a long time. In 1916, he became a member of the Tseirey Zion (Youth of Zion) movement, and on August 20, 1920, he was certified a member and the secretary of the Taurida Regional Centre of the Zionist Organization.² In the same year, Zakharia decided to leave Russia and go to the land of his forefathers in order to participate there in the establishment of what was to be, in the words of the Balfour Declaration, a “national home.” His path to Palestine passed through Constantinople, where members of the White Army were stationed as well as others who had not wanted to remain under the rule of the Bolsheviks in the south of Russia.

Once in Constantinople, Zakharia completed special courses to be a driver and a supervisor of construction workers. These courses were established for the Jewish immigrants to Palestine by the Pal-

¹ JI-ZMA, P 305-1. Klyuchevich's parents lived in Kazan when he wrote one of his first “last” wills when already living abroad, assigning to them all his belongings. In an application for an American visa in 1947, Z. Klyuchevich mentions his mother as living at that time in Kazan; his father was no longer alive.

² JI-ZMA, P 305-2.

estine Office, and covered subjects such as construction of roads and highways, drainage and irrigation, measurement of land, and drawing. In January of the same year he received financial support from the Constantinople Branch of the Joint Committee for the use of Jewish Refugees. Zakharia's fascination with Eretz Israel and the expectation of moving to the promised land of his Zionist dreams must have influenced him in composing, in January 1921, while still in Constantinople, the short poem "Migdaliada. Vospominaniya o druze" (Migdaliada. Memories about a friend).³ It should be said that the sweetness of poetic melodies had been exciting Zakharia for a long time, and he began to write poetry while still in his youth. It must have seemed impossible for him to respond to some events in any other way than with a poetic word and image, such as the news that came from the Russian capital about the collapse of the Tsarist Empire. Then, inspired by this violent surge to freedom, the eighteen-year-old Klyuchevich reacted to this event with the following verses:

*When in the spring of the 17th year,
In the midst of eternal cold, frost and ice floes,
A flower of an invisible breed bloomed,
We all suddenly experienced as one
Joy, in which there are no reasons,
And with it the desired Freedom!*⁴

Now, being on the way to the Promised Land, he drew up its mental poetic image, which was kindled by his artistic imagination. Palestinian landscapes and a new language beckoned and excited him with an unsolved mystery. And although these poems were rather immature in literary terms, they betrayed their author's passion for travel literature's impressions, of which there would be many in his future life.

From the point of view of the lyrical narrative, "Migdaliada..." is a description of the Sea of Galilee as an earthly paradise, where almost every element of the composition gives rise to interlingual puns. At least three languages are involved in the figurative-linguistic construction of the text: Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish. So, for example, the author uses the Hebrew words *bachurim* (boys) and *bachurot* (girls) rendered in Cyrillic, thus emphasising their strong integration into Russian speech usage. Or another example: the Russian word for 'noise' rhymes with the

³ JI-ZMA, P 305-13.

⁴ Afanasiy Mamedov, "Rastsvet tsvetok nevidimoy porody: Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya i yevrei," *Lekhaim*, February 20, 2017, <https://lekhaim.ru/events/rastsvet-tsvetok-nevidimoy-porody-fevral'skaya-revoljutsiya-i-nbsp-evrei/> [accessed 17.11.2019]. Unless stated otherwise, translations are mine.

Hebrew *kumkum* (teapot). The very title of the poem contains a certain play-on-words effect: the combination of the Hebrew word *migdal* (tower) with the suffix *-iad*, is used to give an epic scope. The allusion to the Tower of Babel becomes even clearer when the latter is defined by the author as “the tower of the nations.” The Sea of Galilee is transformed in the poem into an allegory of the Tower of Babel, which is semantically reinforced by an indication of the motley and noisy population living on its shores, which simultaneously resides in mythological, biblical reality and in actual, natural reality. The freedom of the lyrical element allows for the combining and mixing of pastoral and realistic elements. This *divertissement* reveals the author’s penchant for a comic manner of writing, and making a sophisticated joke, and his dry humour.

Klyuchevich first set foot in the Land of Israel in March, 1921. He must have stayed in Haifa, in the north of the country, where he had friends and family, for a few months, and then moved to Jaffa. A few months later he arrived in Jerusalem, where on September 27, 1921, he was registered as an immigrant (residence address: Ramban Street, 45). In Jerusalem, he enrolled at the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, having decided to devote himself to painting. He joined that circle of “intelligent youth from Russia,” which is described in his letter to the editors of the weekly *Rassvet* reproduced below. Perhaps this decision to settle in Jerusalem and hone his drawing skills was influenced by his friend Semyon (unfortunately, his last name could not be established), whose letter with a similar proposal was preserved in Klyuchevich’s archive⁵ (Semyon calls him in this letter Klyuch; the nickname that in the future would become one of the literary pseudonyms of our hero, and, apparently, was very popular amongst his close friends).

From the papers deposited in JI-ZMA, it is clear that, while living in Jerusalem, he supported his relatives who remained in Melitopol with money transfers, and made efforts to resettle them in Eretz Israel. However, an entry visa was denied.

We learn of Klyuchevich’s transfer south to Jaffa, that followed his arrival in Eretz Israel, from one of his cousins, Alexander Kiselev,⁶ who lived in Haifa. We know from him about the fates of Klyuchevich’s family during those years:

⁵ JI-ZMA, P 305-6.

⁶ Alexander Kiselev/Kiselgoff was one of the commanders of the Haganah in Haifa and held a key post in the Electrical Company in Israel. He met there Eugene Ratner, who had an important role in the Haganah. I contacted Eugene Ratner’s son, Mark Ratner, in November 2022 and he confirmed that “Sasha [Alexander] Kiselgoff was indeed a close friend of [his] father. They met in Haifa, in the early twenties. Sasha was a strong man, and I thought he was born in Crimea because he became the leader of Crimean Jews who were active in the Haganah, and in which Sasha was one of local commanders. Sasha was a close friend of

Haifa, 12/1/1922

Hello Zakhar! [...] Upon arrival, I immediately began to look for you, collecting information, but all paths led to Jerusalem and no further. And now I'm getting a letter.⁷

Well, I'll start right away about your relatives. In advance, I ask you not to be amazed at the scarcity of information: as you will see later from my "autobiography," I was not at home much.

A week after the occupation of Melitopol by the Reds, I arrived [there] from Kharkov. Found everyone alive and well. The appropriation of the goods also touched you, but later [your family] managed to get most of them back. [Your] father got a job and continued to trade and seemed to earn pretty good money.⁸

Klyuchevich's connection with the Parisian Russian-Jewish weekly *Rassvet*, to which he soon after became a permanent contributor, started with a spontaneous application. In the two letters cited in the following pages a great emphasis was placed on what a powerful influence the said publication had on the author of the letter himself and the circle of his peers, namely the Jewish youth who arrived in Palestine not only from Russia, but also from other lands. Both of the letters quoted next are drafts of those that accompanied the poems by Klyuchevich, who hoped to have seen them printed in *Rassvet*. It was not possible to find replies to them, but

Alexander Zayed, one of the heroes of Palestinian Jews, murdered in 1938. Sasha knew Joseph Trumpeldor personally, since he was sent, aged 19, to search for Trumpeldor, to organise the self-defence of the Jewish community in Crimea during the civil war in Russia in the early twenties, in which occasion Sasha was deeply struck by the high standard of Trumpeldor's personal behaviour" (Michael Ratner's email to me, November 1, 2022).

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Ratner, he provided details regarding his direct acquaintance with Klyuchevich's cousin: "He was from Crimea, where he was born and raised, but not realising his nationality so much until one day he returned home and boasted to his father that he had beaten the Jews. His father scolded him, saying that he himself was a Jew. Alexander was then sent from Crimea to look for the Zionist hero Trumpeldor. For two days, Sasha travelled by train in search of Trumpeldor to persuade him to come to the Crimea to organise Jewish self-defence. At the time, Trumpeldor must have been somewhere in Russia or Ukraine. Alexander managed to persuade him to go with him and they went by train together for a whole day. In the evening they stopped at the station and went out to drink tea with sugar from the samovar. In order not to lose their seats, they filled the seats with their suitcases, but on their return they found them occupied by two Jews who refused to vacate the seats. Alexander, who was a very large young man, became very angry and threatened the two insolent Jews, saying he would jump on them and throw them off the train. It was at this moment that Trumpeldor lifted him with one arm with martial force and ordered him to let them be, since the Jews did not have to fight each other. So Sasha and Trumpeldor stood on the train all night until they arrived at their destination. Two years later, Trumpeldor would die at Tel Hai." This story according to Ratner proves the veracity of the tales of the death of Trumpeldor and his extraordinary personality and strength. Sasha Kiselgoff told this story to Ratner in private. Kiselgoff became a very close friend of another important figure of Palestinian Zionism, Alexander Zayed. The latter came to Palestine from Siberia, and the two met in Palestine in the early 1920s. He taught other halutzim how to defend themselves against the Arabs" (Michael Ratner, telephone conversation with author, November 2, 2022).

⁷ Apparently, Zakhar, having learned that A. Kiselgoff was in Eretz Israel, wrote him a letter.

⁸ JI-ZMA, P 305-6.

in both cases the poetic debut of the young poet in the Russian-Jewish weekly did not materialise. However, it makes sense to quote both letters (more precisely, as it was said, their draft versions) in full.

In the first of them, relating approximately to September 1923,⁹ Klyuchevich turned to the editorial office of *Rassvet*, which was at that time in Berlin. The letter said:

I am from Taurida, an ex-student of the Taurida University (in Simferopol) who has already been working in the resurrected Palestine for two and half years since I came from Russia. Recently, for the first time, I have come across two volumes of your journal from 1922, and I read them avidly. After a fair period of time, I decided to go back to the good old days, and on this occasion I am sending you three poems of mine, from those that I wrote at that time. I have never tried to print my poems either in Russia or abroad. ~~Let's see how this first pancake comes out.~~¹⁰

If my creations rest in the editor's basket, then such is fate. But if you print them, then I'll get two author's copies and an invitation to send more. If I am entitled to some additional fee as a result (of course, in this case I am not claiming any specific amount immediately, that is, after the first contribution) I will dare to ask you to send to Russia a parcel of equivalent value (some kind of food or money) to the address I specified.

So farewell (and I'm afraid, forever).

Sincerely
Z. Klyuchevich
Address: P<alesti>ne
Jerusalem
P.O.B. 318 Bezalel School of Arts
For Z. Mayani
Address in Russia:
Rus<sia>Ukr<aine>
Melitopol
Torgovaya, 60
S.I. K<lyuchevich>¹¹

We do not know the editor of *Rassvet* Shlomo Gepshteyn's¹² reaction to Klyuchevich's poems (it was he who managed the

⁹ Klyuchevich indicates in the letter that he had arrived in "resurgent Palestine" two and a half years before, from which this approximate dating can be deduced.

¹⁰ JI-ZMA, P 305-6. Crossed out in the text. This sentence is an adaptation of the Russian proverb rendered in English as 'The first pancake is always lumpy', which means, in an encouraging spirit, that the first attempt is usually a failure.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Shlomo (Solomon) Kalmanovich (Klimentyevich) Gepshteyn (1882–1961) was an architect, journalist, editor, and a Zionist figure. He was born in Odessa. In 1912 he graduated from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts with a degree in Architecture. Having joined the Zionist movement from a young age, he was a regular contributor to the magazines *Yevreyskaya zhizn'* and the Petersburgian *Rassvet*. From 1922 to 1924 he edited the weekly *Rassvet* in Berlin, which found a new, post-Russian life in exile. In 1925 he settled in Eretz-Israel, where he was engaged in architectural design of buildings, becoming one of the leading figures of the Tel Aviv Bauhaus, and collaborated in revisionist publications, mainly in the newspaper *Doar Hayom*. Author of a book about V. Jabotinsky, see: Shlomo Gepshteyn, *Zeev Jabotinsky: hayav, milkhamto, hesegav* (Zeev Jabotinsky: Life, Fight, Achievements), Tel Aviv: Ha-hanhala ha-rashit shel keren Tel Hai, 1941 and honorary president of the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv. His unfinished memoirs about the

weekly in those years). Most likely, it was negative, since the poems were not published. At the same time, the “farewell [...] forever,” as their author timidly and humbly suggested in the letter, did not happen. Klyuchevich’s real adventure with this publication began later, when he attained the position of a permanent contributor, after the weekly’s editorial office had relocated from Berlin to Paris and Vladimir Jabotinsky had become its editor-in-chief.

Upon sending his poem “To the Sun” to *Rassvet*, Klyuchevich accompanied it with the following letter:

I send you the poem “To the Sun” for publication. It was written back in 1920 at home (in Melitopol, Taurida province). Since March, 1921, I have been in Palestine. In the past I was a student of the faction Ts.[eirey] Zion, in the present I am a *halutz*.

I have long wanted to establish contact with you; to send you an article, a picture of our life. The life of our brothers, labourers, especially of the young intelligentsia from Russia, provides a lot of material. And this life — from within! — should be illuminated. And, of course, not from the point of view of an abstract, not shielded, state-owned “katheder-idealism.”¹³ I emancipated myself from that, *volens nolens* [willy-nilly]. But I remained a Zionist nonetheless. However, for two years I still have not written to you. Why so? Clear as day. A constant struggle for livelihood just to make ends meet.¹⁴

And if you have an hour of quiet leisure or feel restless then you have an overwhelming task; to master Hebrew!

Move forward one more inch. Like on the western front.

You must be aware that *Rassvet* plays a big part here in our midst. In some tent, that is rusted from the rains, and lopsided under the pressure of the wind, you will see it on a box that serves as a table. For many, this is the only outlet through which their native tongue comes to them from the “beautiful far away.” Many who do not know the local language, only learn from *Rassvet* about what is happening right next to them, in Palestine.

<the remainder of the letter is missing>¹⁵

The words of Klyuchevich about *Rassvet*, although partially utilised as a *captatio benevolentiae* of the reader (his desire to see his verses published and receive some payment for them), are significant enough to underline the role of the newspaper in Mandatory Palestine. The poem “To the Sun” was published in *Rassvet* many years later (see: Klyuch 1929). Zakhariah’s debut took place on

history of the Zionist movement in Russia were published after his death, see “Russian Zionists in the Struggle for Palestine: From Memoirs,” *Kniga russkogo evrejstva, 1917–1967* / Ed. Ya.G. Frumkin<et al.> New York: Union of Russian Jews, pp. 386–398.

¹³ Klyuchevich paraphrases the well-known term *Kathedersozialismus*, proposed by the German economist Heinrich Bernhard Oppenheim (1819–1880) as a struggle against the spread of Marxist teachings and the expansion of the social democratic movement in Europe.

¹⁴ Klyuchevich’s literal expression here is “a constant hunting for a piece of bread, not to get fat but just to survive.” In his style of writing, the use of idiomatic expressions is frequent.

¹⁵ JI-ZMA, P 305–6.

March 8, 1925, when the first in a series of his essays entitled *The Seminarist's Diary* was published under the pseudonym Klyuch,¹⁶ below which was the date of when it was penned: 10.2.25. His genre of choice was a diary which described the course of his own life in Palestine; the travel diary of a *flâneur*.

The fluency in the style of the narrator, testified to the unconditional literary talent of the young author. He knows how to give a broad view of events where necessary, and where it is more appropriate to focus on trifles and details, when to insert humour or, on the contrary, to give in to rhetorical heat. The printing of the *Diary* took about a year. The last essay in the series was published in January, 1926. It was crowned with a poem by the author, that described the entry into Jerusalem of British troops that put an end to the power of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1926, under the same pseudonym, *Rassvet* also started to publish his *Vkhananskie debri* (To Canaan's Thickets),¹⁷ a travel story of a trip to the outskirts of Jerusalem and to Hebron, a work that resembles a guidebook for tourists.

From that time on, the travel theme occupies a firm place in his work, later finding its expression in a series of essays by Klyuchevich, the *Palestinian Letters*, published in the Parisian *Posledniye Novosti* (The Latest News), which will be discussed later on in the article.

Klyuchevich's collaboration with *Rassvet* would last until the closing of the weekly in 1934. Under various pseudonyms, including Klyuch, his numerous texts would be published in it. It is clear that this pseudonym was formed by reducing his real surname to the root, intelligible to anyone who speaks Russian, through back-formation. However, apparently, the matter was not reduced to such an uncomplicated operation, and the secret semantics of the pseudonym had a more complex interpretation. The word *klyuch* in Russian has a number of meanings. It means key, both in its practical meaning, and in the figurative one: a secret code used when encrypting or decrypting messages. It also hints at someone with whose help you can open doors and penetrate into an unknown world that is beyond the limits of everyday life. In addition, it carries the meaning of the deciphering and transmission of hidden, or even hitherto secret, information. However, the further development of the pseudonym showed, when it was calqued into the Hebrew language equivalent and Klyuch, consequently,

¹⁶ Klyuch, "Dnevnik Seminarista," *Rassvet*, no. 10, March 8, 1925; no. 1, April 26, 1925; no. 26, June 28, 1925; no. 38, September 20, 1925; no. 41, October 11, 1925; no. 4, January 24, 1926.

¹⁷ Klyuch, "V khananskie debri," *Rassvet*, no. 25, June 20, 1926; no. 26, June 27, 1926; no. 27, July 4, 1926.

was transformed into Mayani (*ma'ayan* = spring). This stemmed from the intention to emphasise the creative forces bursting to the surface, just as a spring searches for the way out into the earth's surface.¹⁸

In addition to his passion for painting and venturing into the literary field, Klyuchevich was driven by the passion for perfect mastery of Hebrew. For this purpose, he entered the Beit-Hamidrash le-Morim Halvri in the Beit HaKerem neighbourhood of Jerusalem, a teacher-training college for prospective Hebrew teachers. The college was located not far from Jerusalem, in a picturesque valley called Beit HaKerem (now a district of the city). After completing his studies there and becoming a fully qualified teacher of the Hebrew language, he went to Africa to acquire work experience. There he lived until 1929, first in Tunisia, later on moving to Algeria, and from there to Morocco. We learn about his life in the Maghreb from the travel diary, full of orientalist fascination, entitled *Na kurerskom po Aldzhiru* (By Express in Algeria). This was yet another example of his penchant for the genre of travel literature.¹⁹ It was published in *Rassvet*. In his travel memoirs, he does not spare local religious Jews from his secular contempt:

“You must show me Constantine!,” I announced.

“I would consider it the greatest honour ... Do you want to see our rabbi?”

Found an attraction, nothing to say! To the very point.

Hiding a smile, I explained to him that I am more attracted to the beauty of nature because of the shortness of time.²⁰

In September, 1926, he was at his first stop in Northern Africa, Tunisia, to serve as a Hebrew teacher. During his period in Tunisia he also contributed occasionally to the French language revisionist Zionist weekly newspaper *Le Réveil Juif* (Jewish Awakening, Sfax-Tunis 1924–1940) published in Sfax. There, he printed historical articles such as “Ahad Ha’am et son rôle Historique” (Ahad Ha’am and his His-

¹⁸ Vladimir Khazan, “O nekotorych psevdonimach dejatelej emigrantskoj rusko-evrejskoj pechati (parizhskie ezhenedel’niki *Yevreyskaya tribuna* i *Rassvet*),” in Manfred Shrubna and Oleg Korostelev, *Psevdonimy russkogo zarubezhja. Materialy i issledovaniya*, Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2016, p. 85. Apparently, in the creative practice of Klyuchevich, one can point to some forms of “overcoming a pseudonym” and unmasking the author’s face: for example, one of the texts almost undoubtedly belonging to him, printed in *Rassvet*, is signed Z.K., so with the initials of his real name and surname; we are talking about an obituary essay dedicated to the Jerusalem doctor Ya. M. Dolzhansky (Z.K. 1928a). The reason why it was necessary to avoid the usual Klyuch was that in the same issue of the weekly there was a continuation of his travel essay *Na kurerskom po Aldzhiru*, signed Klyuch (see in the following footnote).

¹⁹ Klyuch, “Na kurerskom po Aldzhiru,” *Rassvet*, no. 23, June 3 (Algiers), 1928; no. 24, June 10, 1928; no. 22, May 5, 1928; no. 25, June 17 (Oran), 1928.

²⁰ *Rassvet*, no. 22, May 5, 1928.

torical role)²¹ and letters addressed to the director. In a letter signed as Z. Mayani, professor of Hebrew in Sfax, published in *Le Réveil Juif*, he emphasises the need to study Hebrew.²² He also resumed his active engagement in Zionist propaganda. We learn that from a letter of Jabotinsky's to Félix Allouche (1901–1978), the founder of *Le Réveil Juif*, a journalist and Zionist activist, who was a correspondent of *La Voix d'Israël*, one of the earliest journals of revisionist Zionism.

May 28, 1927

Dear Friend,

My compliments to Monsieur Mayani and to the director of *Le Réveil [Juif]*. An excellent response to Romano,²³ very effective, and very clearly combining the defensive with the positive propaganda of our ideas.²⁴

I would be very happy to visit Tunisia in the fall, *si fata sinant* ['if the fate allows'/ 'should the fate allow' in Latin in the text]. We'll talk about it after the Zionist Congress.

Will Tunisia be represented at the Basel Congress? And if this is the case, is there any hope of winning this mandate (or one of the mandates if there are several) for a revisionist delegate? The question is very serious; I would be grateful if you considered it together with Mayani and other friends. Even if our list did not accrue sufficient numbers to appoint a delegate, it would still be important to present it to the voters. This would give impetus to our propaganda and thus the votes in favour would not themselves be lost. The Action Committee has decided to allow the presentation of "world lists" for which we will count precisely those "remains" of the votes that a party was able to gain in various countries. Please consider the matter very carefully and communicate the opinion of your committee.

If you think it would be useful to put some well-known name at the top of the list, one of our Central Committee members for example, to increase the appeal; it would be feasible. Of course, this character will probably be elected elsewhere and he would give up his mandate to the holder of the second place on the list. It is perfectly fair according to our statutes, even in the case of a country that has only one delegate: we always vote for a candidate and his alternate.

To these two questions, I await your response.

I am very glad you can use my speech.

Your all-devoted

V. Jabotinsky²⁵

Despite Jabotinsky's appreciation of Klyuchevich-Mayani's political stances, *Rassvet* seldom printed his contributions on political matters, and preferred to publish his novels instead.²⁶

²¹ *Le reveil juif*, no. 124, January 21 (Tunis), 1927.

²² *Le reveil juif*, no. 122, January 7, 1927. That letter to the editor is signed as Z. Mayani, professeur d'hebreu à Sfax.

²³ Marco Romano (1872–1942) was a lawyer, journalist and Zionist activist in Bulgaria. He founded the first Zionist weekly in Bulgarian. Mayani's letter was a response regarding the revisionist struggle.

²⁴ Zakharia Mayani, "Les erreurs et les vérités du Dr. Marco," *Le Reveil Juif*, May 20, 1927.

²⁵ Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Letters [Igrat]*, in Hebrew]. Jabotinsky Institute in Israel. Jerusalem: The Jabotinsky Institute of Israel, 1998 [Vol. 5], 141; pp. 180–181 [in Hebrew, translated from the French].

²⁶ An entire cycle titled *Reflections upon Weizmann* was sent to the editorial board in 1927 and never published.

The name Zakharia Mayani never appears on the pages of *Rassvet*. The editor of *Rassvet* mistook the name and surname Zakharia Mayani as one of Klyuchevich's pseudonyms, leading to an unpleasant misunderstanding between him and the editor. From a letter sent to Mayani on December 27, 1927, and signed Vladimir Jabotinsky,²⁷ we may surmise that Zakharia Mayani was not a pseudonym, but Klyuchevich's new name. It was granted officially in Jerusalem on February 5, 1926. Jabotinsky heartily apologised to the young collaborator for any misunderstanding that had occurred. It happened because Jabotinsky, who until that time had not met Klyuchevich, found himself in some kind of situation of an involuntary *quid-pro-quo*, and reassured the collaborator that his security would be maintained despite the violation of anonymity of his writings: we did not find any article signed with that name on the pages of *Rassvet*. The essence of the misunderstanding is not entirely clear. Therefore, it will probably be more important to shift the focus to the truly friendly feeling with which the revisionist leader reacted to the difficult conditions of existence of the disseminator of Hebrew culture in that area. The letter (typed on *Rassvet*'s letterhead) read as follows:

Dear Comrade,

Sorry for this old-fashioned address, but I do not know your name and patronymic [отчество, *otchestvo*]. I am very sorry to have caused you trouble: I had no idea that you took Mayani as your surname so that officially that it would not become known from your correspondence with your parents. Knowing that your surname is Klyuchevich, I thought that both Klyuch and Mayani were literary pseudonyms.

In any case, I do apologise again and in future announcements of *Rassvet* I will leave only the pseudonym Klyuch.

Allow me, however, to reassure you a little: my relatives from Russia write letters to me at my full address, and so far this has not hurt any of them even in the times of crisis, when I was very persecuted on the other side.

I am firmly convinced that you will not punish *Rassvet* for my sin, and I expect from you, along with a letter of amnesty, the first correspondence.²⁸

To be honest, what saddened me most of all was the postscript of your letter about the reasons for your relocation to Tunisia.²⁹ I would very much like to be of service to you. Is it possible to effect, through the local Valonsi,³⁰ an improvement in your conditions there? Write to me.

Yours cordially,
V. Jabotinsky

²⁷ JI ZMA, P 305-10; JI-VJA № 1 17/2.

²⁸ Klyuchevich's first correspondence appeared in *Rassvet* only more than six months after this letter: it was the above-mentioned essay, *By Express in Algeria*.

²⁹ Perhaps some mistake has crept in here, and Jabotinsky is referring to Klyuchevich's move not to Tunisia, but from Tunisia to Morocco.

³⁰ Apparently, this refers to one of the officials who served in the relevant department of the Ministry of the Colonies of France, under whose protectorate Tunisia was in those years.

We are writing to you at your old address in Sfax and ask you to tell us your new address in Tunisia.³¹

It seems that it was precisely with this concern about Klyuchevich's living conditions in Tunisia that Jabotinsky asked for the support of the French historian, orientalist and professor at the University of Paris, Robert Brunschwig (1901–1990). The latter was supposed to get acquainted with Zakharia in this country, where from 1922 to 1930 he taught French in the local Lycée Carnot.³² The editor must have managed to stop the publication in time, thus avoiding the wrath of the journalist. Jabotinsky kindly enquired about Mayani's state of affairs, offering his help with customs and asking his new address in Tunis. It is difficult to understand the reasons behind Mayani's worry. Jabotinsky's interpretation of his motives must have been that of those where the use of pseudonyms was prevalent in the press of the Russian diaspora in the interwar years: the desire of authors to avoid reprisals in the Soviet Union.³³

Later diary entries³⁴ of the author reveal frequent misunderstandings with various personalities. His own notes and correspondence are witnesses to a complicated personality. He found it difficult to get along with other members of the editorial board of *Rassvet*. In his memories regarding Jabotinsky, for instance, Klyuchevich attributes to the leader of the movement a difficulty in tolerating Schechtman and his unbearable behaviour and approach (*schigas*, 'madness,' in Hebrew in the text), and Berkhin's "cowardice and mediocrity."³⁵

³¹ JI-VJA. 17/2/18.

³² Abdel-Magid Turki, "Robert Brunschwig (1901–1990)," *Studia Islamica*, no. 71 (1990), p. 6. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1595634> [accessed: 5.10.2022].

³³ Manfred Shrubal, "O funktsiyakh psevdonimov. . ." in: *Psevdonimy russkogo*, pp. 42–43.

³⁴ JI-ZMA, P 305-5.

³⁵ The reference is to Berkhin's article "Pravo na trusost" (M. Berkhin, "Right to cowardice," *Rassvet*, no. 47, November 22, 1931, that, despite the title, denies that the Jews of contemporary times should be cowards and not stand and fight the attacks of anti-Semites since the establishments of foreign countries, even in Eastern Europe, were at least formally on their side. The answer to his article came on the next number, *Rassvet*, no. 48, November 29, 1931. Blank replied that, on the contrary, the Jews should not descend to the level of hooligans and that the fight against them is the duty of states. The author of the letter to the editor was Reuben Markovich Blank (1868–1954), a Russian-Jewish scientist and activist. He founded the Committee for Assistance to Russian Writers and Scientists in France, and helped in various committees for assistance to the starving in Russia and Ukraine. In 1919–1924 he was the editor of the weekly *Jewish Tribune* (*La Tribune Juive: revue hebdomadaire: organe des juifs de Russie*), together with M. L. Goldstein). He wrote for the newspapers *Posledniye Novosti* and *Dni*.

In a short piece on "The Revisionist rally in Paris" Klyuchevich-Ben-Tavriya does not spare sarcasm and mocks Schechtman's melodramatic attitude: "In a concise speech, he castigates all our long-standing sins: everything that is done in Zionism is done without faith in itself, in the greatness and scope of its claims." Nr. 16/17 April 21, 1929. In the same issue he published the above-mentioned "To the Sun."

In Sfax on December 1, 1927, the Jewish Youth World Organization released him with a certificate after twelve months of service and three months' vacation time.³⁶ The trip took place after he left Tunisia, having had disagreements with the institution that hosted him,³⁷ to reach Morocco and his new teaching position in October 1928. Klyuchevich's move from Tunisia to Morocco was accompanied by great expectations in the local Jewish community. Addressing its readers on behalf of the Magen David Society, the newspaper *L'Avenir Illustré*,³⁸ in a rather upbeat and somewhat panegyric tone, informed its readers that what was going to transpire with the arrival of the young populariser and teacher of Hebrew, the graduate of the Jerusalem College, would be the advent of "golden age" of the systematic study of this language not only by children, but also by adults:

It is unnecessary to outline the efforts made by the Magen David association, especially in recent times, for the dissemination of the Hebrew language and literature in Morocco. [...] But it [the association] did not want to stop there: despite the financial burdens so heavy that it struggled to stay afloat, being supported only by the subscriptions and donations of its members, it decided to invite over a teacher who had studied in Palestine.

Today, our association is happy to be able to announce that this teacher is already within the walls of our institution. It is Mr. Zakharia Mayani, a teacher who graduated from the Normal School of Jerusalem and who has already taught for several years, that has earned him a skill; a first-rate proficiency in the subject.

May the modest Mr. Mayani not be angry with us, but it is important to us to demonstrate to him, at the first opportunity, how grateful we are. Our gratitude will undoubtedly be shared by the parents of the pupils who participate in the activity in which he has already been involved since his arrival a mere few days ago. We are also grateful for the sacrifices and deprivation he has imposed on himself for the sole purpose of collaborating effectively with Magen David.

There is even more: this association has decided to create a course for adults, which will commence on April 1, and the classes will take place on every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 8 pm to 9 pm. These courses will be provided by Mr. Mayani and will include the study of the Modern Hebrew language using the renowned Berlitz method.³⁹

³⁶ JI-ZMA, P 305-6.

³⁷ The author talks about this incident in the letter we publish herein and refers to it as "The Tunis affair."

³⁸ The first Jewish newspaper in Morocco, *L'Avenir Illustré*, was a weekly/bi-monthly published for almost fifteen years (1926–1940) in Casablanca. It was aimed at the Francophone public of students from the Alliance Israélite Universelle. It encouraged the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, and, as we shall see in this article, the study of Modern Hebrew. See <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/lri/1926/09?e=-----en-20--1--img-txIN%7ctxTI-----1>.

³⁹ The Berlitz method is a teaching method that focuses on using exclusively the target language as a medium and puts an emphasis on oral communication. See Gerhard J. Stieglitz, "The Berlitz Method," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 39, no. 6, 1955, pp. 300–310. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/319907> [accessed 4.10.2022].

The issue of *L'Avenir Illustré* was dated March 23, 1928, and it states that Mayani had come just “a few days” before. However, despite these bright hopes and expectations, in reality everything turned out to be much more problematic, and this stage in the life of Klyuchevich is perhaps the most difficult and painful in his biography in general. Light is shed concerning this period by Zakharia’s correspondence with Ben-Zion Dinur (Dinaburg; 1884–1973). He was a future major Jewish historian and political figure, and at that time a teacher (since 1923) at the same pedagogical college where Klyuchevich studied (the Jewish Teachers’ Training College of Jerusalem in Beit HaKerem, today’s David Yellin College of Education). Klyuchevich received his training there and Dinur, together with the teachers Epshteyn⁴⁰ and Zuta⁴¹ (also mentioned in the letter), was his mentor. Having already left Africa and moved to Paris subsequently, when his work experience had been concluded, in one of his letters to Dinur he described the vicissitudes of his teaching career, and explained the logic behind his itinerary by quoting the real-life changing fates. It does, therefore, make sense to present it here in full:

Z. Mayani,
rue Vineuse, 9 bis
Paris (16)⁴²
Paris, July 17, 1929

Dear Mr. Dinburg!

Daphni⁴³ wrote the following to me: “Mr. Dinburg told me that he had received a letter from Casablanca accusing you of all kinds of sins, and also that during my stay in Tunisia I brought Zionism and Hebrew into disrepute with my behaviour, and that it was a gross mistake to send us to Tunisia.”

I cannot go over it with a quiet mind. And I hope that you, my lord as a historian who knows that not only letters from individuals, but even historical documents, are sometimes nothing but forgeries and nonsense and will read the evidence with all possible impartiality. At least he will know the opinions of both parties.

If the imaginary errors created in the fantasy of human beings were to be added to the mistakes I really made, the earth would not carry me. Even so, for

⁴⁰ Yitzhak Epstein (1862–1943) was an Israeli teacher and linguist. He was among the founders of school instruction in the revived Hebrew.

⁴¹ Haim Aryeh Leib Zuta (1868–1939) was a Hebrew writer and educator. He was the principal of the first Hebrew school in Jerusalem.

⁴² The number of the Parisian city district (arrondissement).

⁴³ Aaron Dubnikov (1904–1968) nicknamed Daphni was a teacher, writer and Zionist activist. He wrote, among others, a book on the organisation and structure of the Zionist movement and one addressed to elementary school principals. He was a colleague of Mayani from Tunisia, wherein he taught in Begià (from Mayani’s diary, JI-ZMA).

a whole year I worked in Casa[blanca], and I succeeded in my work on the pedagogical level. I was very, very careful not to insult, God forbid, the religious feelings of the Western⁴⁴ idiots. I never gave them an excuse to prove me wrong. All that time I ate their coarse and greasy foods at the kosher restaurant even though it was detrimental to my health. During all the high holidays I would spend time with them in the synagogue (and seek solace in the beauty of the *piyyutim*⁴⁵); of course, I could not pretend to be a zealot among religious zealots, but I was not caught in heresy.

I had a total of about 80 students, the children of the “Hara” [ghetto] from the poorest stratum of the population.

Hebrew became lively and flexible in their mouths; the lessons were a pleasure for them. I was glad to motivate them to laugh cheerfully, or to listen compassionately to the stories I would tell them, and that were accompanied by drawings, group conversations and lively plays, all inspired by the story...

The owners of the Magen David company⁴⁶ (that had originally invited me) immediately commented on the results of my work. But there was no mutual understanding between us. The school was located in small rooms without light or air in an old and filthy house, filled with a number of begging and needy families. The stench of the toilet was always pungent in my class. And when the neighbours hung their laundry out to dry there was no air to breathe at all. I also worked during the days of the African heat, since I did not demand days off and of course they did not give me. I would suffocate...

The company actually had means. But Jewish negligence is unparalleled. In order to have the floor swept, I had to shout and threaten to strike... I informed the company's committee about this several times, and I did not get any answer. Besides, there was a conflict between me and the teacher who had previously run the courses, a narrow-eyed Jew from Safed who saw it as a serious blow to his dignity when I asked him to take the small room with his 10 students and make the big room available to me and my 35 students... [He was a man of] very limited personal value.

My work went on and on and I would imagine that suddenly the door would open and that during the class Mr. Zota would enter, and Mr. Dinbur, and Mr. Epshteyn. So I could point to my work with my finger and then there you, sir, would judge whether or not we are destroyers of Hebrew and if it was a mistake to send us abroad.

This was the case until the end of last winter. Then the old Zionist in Casablanca, the well-known public activist A. D. Levy,⁴⁷ urged me to leave the miserable company and get a more decent teaching position at the Alliance.⁴⁸ It was a safe and tidy job in a school built according to all the hygiene requirements with days off and so on. I refused. The reason: the Magen David company brought me to Morocco (paid my travel expenses) and it was not nice to aban-

⁴⁴ They are called “Westerners” as they are located west of Israel.

⁴⁵ Jewish liturgical poems.

⁴⁶ The company was founded in Casablanca in 1919 with the aim of reviving and spreading the knowledge of Hebrew. On its role and history see David Guedj's article “‘You are the splendour of women. And I appreciate you for that’: Belha Banderli's Hebrew work in Morocco: the life and legacy of Belha Banderli” [Hebrew], http://davidguedj.co.il/morocco/bella_banderly [accessed 1.08.2022].

⁴⁷ He must have been very supportive of Mayani since the latter lived at his place in Casablanca (his address on a few letters was “Monsieur Z. Mayani, chez A. Levy, C. P. 451 Casablanca, Maroc.”

⁴⁸ The Alliance Israelite Universelle is an international Jewish organisation noted, among other things, for establishing French-language schools for Jewish children throughout the Mediterranean, Iran and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th century.

don them due to material advantage. Thus my lord can see that I stand by the good name I have acquired in Morocco as a teacher.

Something like a month after that I got sick.⁴⁹ There were two reasons for this: the great humidity of the climate, and my working conditions. They found that I had had a pulmonary disease in the past. Everything was destroyed [...] I turned to the company and asked for a certain amount [of money] for medical purposes or for a return to Israel. Out of kindness, they gave me 1,500 francs (1,000 francs out of that came from the president of the company, a known millionaire who had always been an admirer of my work, whether in my presence or not), I left Casa[blanca] immediately and I drove to Marrakesh, where the air is healthier. I stayed about three months there and spent about 3,000 francs. That means I did not save the rest and, due to impossibility of completing my recovery, I went from there to Paris.

If so, what do they want from my soul, these idiots of God? If the thrust of their letter is supported, it will become clear to you, my lord that the disgrace is in its essence, which would be good. If he thinks that it has a grain of truth, he would kindly let me know what I am being blamed for and by whom, then I will demand from them an explanation so that I can clear my name.

The Tunis affair was indeed a sad one. I was caught in the act of "heresy." But it is nothing compared to the circumstances of my stay. They weakened my spirit and mind very, very much, I was depressed, and neurasthenia overcame me [...] Here, the winter work was a period of flourishing and successful work.

As long as the people of the town found teaching an innovation, they progressed nicely. But the budget of the Ha-Tsair Society did not have any real basis. After Pesach, when the students began to skip the lessons, and missed their educational opportunities, I decided to get away. They organised a meeting, they invited me and they told me clearly: my friend, take your stuff and go. It was seven months of work (instead of two years) and during that time they voiced no complaints against me and [expressed] no religious doubts.

I controlled my anger, and then I firmly demanded from them travel expenses and compensation. So they procrastinated, and left me for the summer days at Sfax, temporarily, without giving me any definitive answer. Despite the lessons I continued to give I felt superfluous, and saw that they were trying to get rid of me as soon as possible. It was such a disappointment after the enthusiasm of the first days. And the utter loneliness and compassion of the Tunisians only raised black bile in me... By the way: in Sfax there is only one kosher restaurant; a dirty inn (no Jewish family wanted to accept me as a boarder) packed with Arabs and those who do not know what it is to have manners while eating... After a while I got into a "do not care" mood. I saw the hypocrisy of all these Jews and any spiritual connection between me and them was severed... By chance, a month later the story became known in the city. The committee members jumped on me like tigers and immediately told me: Go! They honestly thought that I was terrorised; and would not dare to demand a single cent from them. But I was not scared. And I threatened them with taking the case to the English court and consulate and with all kinds of unpleasant legalities in the world. They were embarrassed, and they paid me the required amount. Therefore, they will take revenge on me until the seventh generation.

⁴⁹ Upon arrival in Eretz Israel, we know from correspondence that Klyuchevich was seriously ill for some four months. In a letter, a friend of his (known only as Iza) is reassuring him that he had nothing to worry about but his nerves, the actual reason for his distress.

As I see, my lord does not take into account our working conditions, the suffocating wall, the persecution of the empty and reckless students, the savagery of the children, the loneliness and emptiness of life. Nevertheless, we have shown the power and the richness of the living Hebrew (and I am talking about Daphni and about me, and not about Galili.⁵⁰ If those who wrote the letter dare to compare my work to theirs then they are just ignorant) by having educated many students. We had stories and conversations in Hebrew, etc., etc.

For decades, the Tunisians have seen all kinds of sages and rabbis from the Israeli sector. We will inform them that there are modern humans as well, that there are humans like them (for them the modern man is rich and nobody dares to open his mouth against him) and then they will pay for their indifference to the sons of Zion.

With utmost respect,
Z. Mayani⁵¹

A confirmation that Mayani, after seven months of working for Magen David, eventually accepted the offer of the Alliance comes from an official announcement of *L'Avenir Illustré*, October 19, 1928, which states "nous apprenons avec plaisir la nomination de M. Mayani comme professeur d'hebreu modern à l'Ecole de l'Alliance Israelite de Casablanca." From the letter we know about his move to Marrakesh in the spring of 1929 to improve his health, and the subsequent move to Sfax in the summer of 1929 before his transfer to Paris.

In a telephone interview granted to me in August 2022, Haim Saadon, a historian who is an expert on Judaism in Islamic countries and the Maghreb,⁵² who met Mayani in the 1980s in Eilat just before the latter died, confirms the impression of a difficult personality, as can be seen from the lines of this letter. The author was equally critical of institutions and of religion. During our conversation, the historian recalled that a strong anti-clerical and anti-religious sentiment was a striking feature of Mayani's personality.⁵³

However, what emerges from the letter to his teacher is also the authentic passion for teaching Hebrew that accompanied Mayani's entire career.⁵⁴ He was an advocate for the safeguarding of the traditional format of the Hebrew alphabet, in the face

⁵⁰ Yaakov Galili (1900–1996) was a writer, missionary teacher and Zionist activist in Tunisia and Iraq. See <https://benyehuda.org/author/1152> [accessed 1.08.2022].

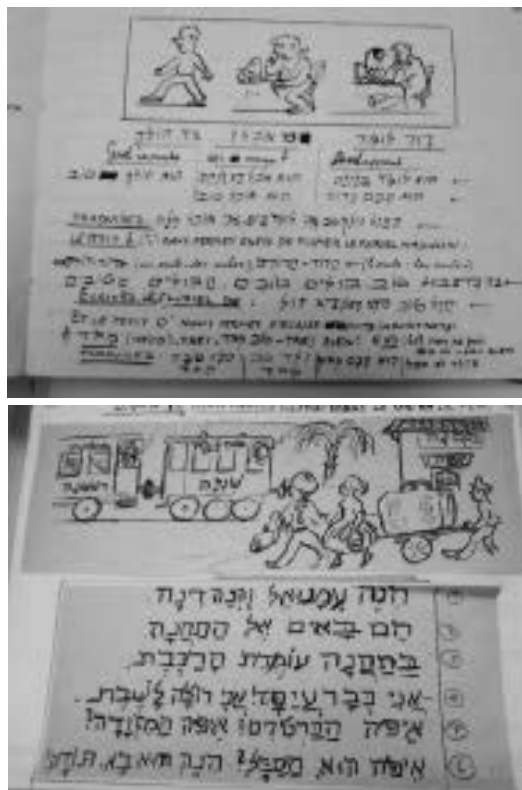
⁵¹ CAHJP P 28-11-89.

⁵² See for a list of his publications https://scholar.google.co.il/citations?user=3_lf81UAAAAJ&hl=iw.

⁵³ Haim Saadon, Zoom interview given to the author, August 1, 2022.

⁵⁴ Dr. Z. Mayani, *Shalom! Ivrit dlya nachinayushchikh. Nachal'nyy kurs yevreyskogo yazyka, vkladyayushchiy osnovnyy grammatiki* (Shalom: Hebrew for beginners. Elementary Hebrew course, including the basics of grammar). Publication of the information department of the Jewish Agency for Israel. Jerusalem, 1949.

of calls for its Latinisation.⁵⁵ Drafts found in his archive depict sketches of human characters carrying out everyday actions. A Hebrew caption followed by a French translation explains what action the character in the cartoon is performing. Then a further example in context is given, making the learning of grammatical rules of Hebrew playful and facilitating their memorisation thanks to the use of the figurative component. Mayani was the author of some textbooks for teaching Hebrew to foreigners.



The drawings in the upper image serve as an illustration of simple actions: walking, eating, and studying. French translations are provided underneath them. Full sentence examples follow. Vowel punctuation is provided, as in Hebrew children's book. The lower image shows an everyday situation in a random city where people go to the train station and have to ask where to buy tickets. Mayani's venture into the world of the arts did not stop there.

⁵⁵ See his article in *HaMetsuda* (The Fortress, a Hebrew language periodical of Betar that was published 1935–1938) in a section devoted to the discussion of the modernisation of Hebrew, Ben Taviya, "On the Nostalgia for Latinisation," *HaMetsuda*, February 2, 1936.

His archive is full of caricatures, drawings, and portraits. In a conversation with the author in his last years, Saadon learned that the latter had devoted himself entirely to painting towards the end of his life. Attempts to trace these works after his death in 1982, via his life partner, yielded no results.



A self-portrait of Klyuchevich, undated. Photo (Anna Balestrieri, July 2020)

His attempts in that field, though, began long before the 1970s; his first exhibition was announced, with fanfare, in Jerusalem at the end of December, 1941:

An exhibition was opened at Menorah Club of Zakaria Mayani's paintings. The painter presents thirty-three works: the Israeli country landscape (Kinneret, Jerusalem, the seashore, Metula, Jericho), Paris scenes of still life, portraits and in particular the personalities of the *halutsim*.⁵⁶

The interest Mayani demonstrated for the destinies of pioneers, like him, transcended the borders of literary curiosity and was transposed into his figurative world of arts. The reviewer identifies Mayani's talent as relying mainly on his skill as a landscape painter:

For the first time in Israel, Zakharia Mayani presents his oil paintings in an exhibition organised by him at the "Menorah" hall in Jerusalem.

Thirty-three canvasses are presented here and testify to his talent for painting everything that concerns the perception of the landscape and putting it on the canvas. In the painting of the landscapes lies the main talent of the painter. It is the wide horizon that gives him the opportunity to express himself vividly and faithfully. The pictures of living nature and the landscape give him a degree of boldness in choosing colours and he tries his best with

⁵⁶ [Unauthored] *Ha Mashkif*, December 22, 1941. Paragraph announcing the beginning of the exhibition.

success in unusual colours, as he knows the secret to their beautiful composition. [...]

From this modest and beautiful exhibition we learn that nature has found itself another painter, who penetrates deeply into it with a beautiful and clear vision.⁵⁷

From the article we learn that themes of Mayani's pictures were flowers, still lifes, and portraits, but that he reached his highest artistic level in representing landscapes, especially of the Sea of Galilee and of French and English landscapes that he must have immortalised during his years in Europe. His style is defined as "classic," and different from "the modern and modernistic trends."

It is thanks to the artistic sensibility developed in his own artistic path that Mayani gives his best in reviews in the field of visual arts. We recognise in his description of the Bezalel art school the words of a former student:

Bezalel, this enchanted castle, with its silent eucalyptus trees, with the monastic silence behind the crenellated walls, and with a huge menorah rising above Jerusalem on the tower. True, this tall seven-branched candlestick, upon close acquaintance, turns out to be wooden. Bezalel's exhibitions are disappointing in part; [...] Bezalel never created specific schools of art in Palestine, but on the other hand, it taught many the ABC of art and love of it. But how far, however, from the Jerusalem primer one does take away the path of their creativity for the young Palestinian artists. Paris, of course, reshapes them from head to toe. Some of them stray together with a pantaloons and get lost in a maze of searches. Others, more flexible and with greater commercial acumen, are suddenly seduced by primitivism and, having picked up some tricks in the field of the use of colour, having superficially mastered two techniques of the experts, they try to bend something to such a purely modern. For this purpose diligently copying those Palestinian impressions on which they, in essence, speculate.⁵⁸

Mayani was not commenting only on Palestinian-Parisian art: he also commented on theatre and on sculpture. This extract was on the artwork of Sarah Gorshein:

Recently, in the Parisian Salons, the busts belonging to this young sculptor have attracted attention. A native of Lithuania, she seems to vividly embody those characteristic features of the elite that distinguished them from the rest of the Russian state. This is an irresistible impulse towards higher forms of culture, without at all tending towards the renunciation of the centuries-old heritage of Judaism.⁵⁹

Mayani's journalistic efforts were also exercised in the field of interviews (with the directors of Habima, among others). One of these

⁵⁷ M. Kh., "Zekharia Mayani's exhibition" [in Hebrew], *Ha Mashkif*, December 28, 1941 (review).

⁵⁸ Ben-T.[avriya], "O kartinakh Musi Tulman," *Rassvet*, no. 2, January 10, 1932.

⁵⁹ Ben-T.[avriya], "O rabotakh Sary Gorsheyn," *Rassvet*, no. 50, December 31, 1931.

records Marc Chagall's two-and-a-half month trip to Palestine, at the invitation of Mayor Dizengoff, for the organisation of the Tel Aviv Museum of Arts. The interview is a sort of monologue of Chagall's impressions of Palestine and Jerusalem and his lack of hope for the success of the museum project due to the absence of competent staff.⁶⁰ *Rassvet* not only gave a lot of space to reviews of exhibitions, interviews with artists and visits by its journalists to art salons: it also published photographs of the paintings or sculptures.⁶¹

The last contributions to the "Maghreb" cycle were in July, 1930 with letters from Algeria. *Rassvet* published correspondences and novellas signed with his pseudonyms, Ben-Tavriya and Klyuch, until July, 1930.⁶² In a few editions, the author appeared at the same time with strikingly different material and different pseudonyms, a trick used by newspapers to give the impression of a greater variety of contributors.⁶³

From 1929 to 1931 *Rassvet* published excerpts from *Sasha Levin*,⁶⁴ a *Bildungsroman* that seems to have had autobiographical connotations. Young Sasha's discovery of the world encompasses self-questioning of his identity. The incipit states: "not every Jewish child has a Jewish childhood."⁶⁵ In Sasha's perception, religion is something confused: he learns from his mother, of whom he gives a quasi-angelical depiction, about God and Jesus Christ. While the former is clearly "someone very solid, grey-bearded, living in the sky so high that one could not even take a glance on him," the latter must have been "someone younger and simpler, although still quite incomprehensible." Among the autobiographical aspects there is also Sasha's passion for drawing and painting and the presence of a brother named Borya, with whom Sasha enjoys staging improvised theatrical performances. During one of these, he is surprised by his mother, who asks him:

⁶⁰ Ben-Tavriya. "M. Chagall o Palestine." *Rassvet*, no. 24, June 14, 1931.

⁶¹ See for instance Ben-Tavriya on the sculptor Shabbatai Tamari "Skulptor Sh. Tamari," *Rassvet*, 16, April 19, 1931, and on the painter Arnold Lakhovsky "O Tvorchestve A. Lakhovskogo," *Rassvet* no. 43, October 25, 1931.

⁶² *Rassvet*, no. 25, June 23, 1929; no. 27, July 7, 1929; no. 40, October 6, 1929; no. 27, July 7, 1930; no. 28, July 13, 1930; no. 48, November 30, 1930.

⁶³ Manfred Shrubu, "O funktsiyakh psevdonimov..." in: *Psevdonimy russkogo*, p. 42. Shrubu suggests that the use of cryptonyms was to "avoid repeating the same names of the closest employees too often." This function raises the significance of the role of Mayani in the newspaper *Rassvet*, considering that there are different editions in which he appears with different contributions and different signatures: *Rassvet*, no. 16/17, April 21, 1929; no. 25, June 23, 1929 (Klyuch, "Bibliografia" and Ben-Tavriya, "Sasha Levin"); no. 34 August 23, 1931 (Z. Ravich, "Razmyshleniya revizionista," Ben-Tavriya, Sasha Levin).

⁶⁴ Ben-Tavriya, "Sasha Levin," *Rassvet*, no. 24, June 16, 1929; no. 25, June 23, 1929; no. 27, July 7, 1929; no. 34, August 23, 1931.

⁶⁵ *Rassvet*, no. 24, June 16, 1929.

"What is it, what is the matter with you?," Mom asked.

He looked at her thoughtfully and as though from a height of unexpectedly attained greatness, and unexpectedly announced:

"Mom, I am Christ."

"What's up with you, Sasha! You mustn't say that! That's not good."

"Why so, Mom?"

"Because ... well, because, after all, you are a Jew. And then — after all, Christ died long time ago..."⁶⁶

In Sasha's understanding of the world, "to pray and to bow to them both was as easy and even pleasant as to eat, drink, and sleep."⁶⁷ It is not as easy for Sasha to deal with the external imposition to visit the Warsaw synagogue, of which he has an atavistic and inexplicable terror.

[...] in Sasha's soul remained nevertheless a very complex impression from this first visit to the synagogue in his life. He already knows that they usually pray there, and that others, Christians, have churches for that. And unconsciously, even with some disappointment, he felt that there was some profound difference between this seemingly majestic, but modest, and monotonously cleaned interior of the building and those high and magnificent cathedrals, through the wide-open doors of which he sometimes peered with trepidation, while walking in. There, everything was painted, decorated, coloured, shone, sparkled and played with a thousand tones. There, against a background of red velvet, the gold of the lamps was burning, there were white marble statues and bright images in sparkling frames in the magical half-darkness of the niches...⁶⁸

Sasha's perception seems to attribute superiority to the Christian religion through the pomp and sumptuousness of its churches in comparison to the austere and severe simplicity of the synagogue, but it is overturned by the appreciation of the mode of prayer. Orthodox women pray as "slaves," beating their heads on the ground and bowing, while the Jews enter the judgment house with their heads held high. Judaism is represented as a religion of knowledge and of justice, where the man shall be judged for his obedience to the laws of God, and stands with dignity, awaiting his judgment.

The novel is signed Ben-Tavriya, the pseudonym that became his most frequently used on the pages of *Rassvet*. In this case, the choice of the pseudonym might be connected to one of the uses identified by Stefan Schmidt, "to bring the author's name closer to the genre in which he writes, often in order to create an impression of authenticity."⁶⁹ The etymology is formed by the Hebrew word *ben*

⁶⁶ *Rassvet*, no. 34, August 23, 1931.

⁶⁷ *Rassvet*, no. 25, June 23, 1929.

⁶⁸ *Rassvet*, no. 27, July 7, 1929.

⁶⁹ In Manfred Shrubka, "O funktsiyakh psevdonimov..."; Shtefan Schmidt, "K poetike psevdonima. Kratkiy obzor issledovaniy...," p. 36.

(son of) and Tavriya, Taurida, the historical name of the Crimean Peninsula. The reference is to his geographical origin from southeastern Ukraine.⁷⁰ Identity questions seem to have troubled Klyuchevich-Mayani-Ben-Tavriya-Ravich all life long, since a basic feeling of estrangement and existential solitude can be traced throughout his literary work, and particularly in poetry, as we shall see later.

After this long, and in many respects unpleasant, journey through the Maghreb, Mayani moved to Paris. Those years marked the beginning of a largely unstable professional life. Despite his troublesome personality, Mayani acquired the respect and admiration of many visible figures, and not only in the Russian-speaking diaspora society.

This letter, that must have been the answer to a call for help from Mayani, belongs to Jabotinsky:

August 1, 1930

Dear Colleague,

Forgive me for not answering for a long time, and now I can't write anything positive. Looking forward to leaving for Prague.

In connection with the upcoming correspondence, we may need people in Paris. I can't promise anything, but maybe I can help you too.

If nothing else, write to me again in September and I will try to get in touch with organisations that support the intelligentsia. If what I'm thinking about in Prague doesn't work out, then I'll write to you myself.

Yours V. Jabotinsky⁷¹

Among Klyuchevich's admirers was the Russian *eser*⁷² and author Ilya Fondaminsky, an influential newspaper editor (*Sovremennye Zapiski* [Contemporary Annals], among others). In the correspondence between Fondaminsky and Vishnyak this evidence is confirmed (letter from June 13, 1930):⁷³

Dearest Marochka,

Do me a favour: read the attached article and try to fit it into some newspaper. It is written crudely, but lively, in a newspaper's style. And the author deserves all support. This is a young man of about 30, a Jew, an employee of *Rassvet*. There he wrote essays on Algeria and Morocco, under the pseudonym "Klyuch" and "Ben-Tavriya."⁷⁴ He is well known also by Berkhin-Benediktov. For

⁷⁰ Vladimir Khazan, "O nekotorych psevdonimach. . .," pp. 84–85.

⁷¹ JI-VJA, № 1 - 2/ 20/ 2. Jabotinsky's answers to Mayani's calls for economic help are numerous: JI-VJA, № 1 - 2/ 21/ 1 (He claims he does not have the funds to sponsor Mayani's participation in the 17th Zionist Congress in Basel).

⁷² An abbreviation (SR, *eser*) to identify the members of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party.

⁷³ Oleg Korostelev and Manfred Shrubna, "Sovremennye zapiski" (Parizh, 1920–1940), *Iz archiva redakcii* [Vol. 1]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011, pp. 533–534.

⁷⁴ In the footnotes to this letter, it is stated "The real name of the author is apparently Z. Ravich"; compare: Ravich Z. (Ben-Tavriya), *To, chto otkrylos' na mig* [What Unclosed for a Moment], Paris: Parabola, 1935, p. 533.

the past 10 years he has been toiling in pursuit of an income. He is very poor here. He was a guide at a perfume factory for 400 francs per month, but now is without a job. He makes a good impression. I met him by chance; he came to me. I want him to write and at least earn a penny. In *Rassvet* they don't pay.⁷⁵ I advised him to write about Algeria (he was there recently), so he did. What can be done? I could have sent it to Igor [Demidov] myself, but it is very difficult to get into *P[osledniye] N[ovosti]* and, most importantly, the manuscript gets lost in the editorial office. If you could ask Igor to read and answer in your presence, it would be good. If not, can you try through Khodasevich at *Vozrozhdenie*.⁷⁶ And finally, if this doesn't work out, couldn't you send it with your letter to *Segodnya*?⁷⁷ I understand that I am asking you a difficult task, but I want to help a person and I am sure that if you met him, you would also feel the need to help him. Don't get mad at me for caring, and do what you can. [...]

The letter corroborates many facts. Fondaminsky discloses Mayani's pseudonyms Klyuch and Ben-Tavriya (and Ravich, that he erroneously identifies as the real surname of the author, while it was actually his mother's maiden name) and confirms, based on his personal knowledge, that they belong to the author. The stay of Mayani in the Maghreb in the late-1920s and his job as a correspondent from there are further attested. It is said that work of the editing of *Rassvet* was largely on a voluntary basis, without pay. Archival materials, as well as Fondaminsky's words, testify that Klyuchevich's job hunting was relentless. His search for employment was frequently supported by letters of recommendation from friends and acquaintances, including important figures, such as Joseph Klausner.⁷⁸ The latter will form, with Klyuchevich, on April 8, 1938, a society of academics in Jerusalem called "Yavneh and Yodafat Alliance of National Academics" together with other intellectuals (the lawyer Dr. Ephraim Washitz,⁷⁹ the physician Dr. Yitzhak Landoi, the historian Mordechai Wilensky,⁸⁰ Mordechai ben Hillel HaCohen, Eliyahu Wierzbolovsky,⁸¹ and Zak Moshe). The goals of the associa-

⁷⁵ Yet another indication that in *Rassvet* work was largely voluntary.

⁷⁶ *Vozrozhdenie* was an émigré liberal-conservative newspaper founded in 1925 (It became a weekly in 1939 and ceased publication in 1940) by the economist and philosopher P. B. Struve, with the funding of oil tycoon A. O. Gukasov. The latter supported other newspapers in the emigration (such as *Posledniye Novosti and Dni*), but decided to create a new one since he was dissatisfied with their political orientation. See Richard Pipes, *Struve, liberal on the right, 1905–1944*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1980.

⁷⁷ *Segodnya* was a Russian-language liberal-democratic newspaper (Riga, 1919–1940) founded and owned by Yakov Brams and Boris Polyak.

⁷⁸ JI-ZMA.

⁷⁹ "Vishitz, Ephraim," in: David Kalai, *Sefer Ishihim: Lachsikon Eretz Yisraeli*, Tel Aviv: Masada — General Encyclopedia, 1337, pp. 209–210. Isaac Remba, *As the Cretans, Jabotinsky's contemporaries*, Ramat Gan: Harut Movement Publishing House, 1959, pp. 275–288.

⁸⁰ See <https://library.osu.edu/projects/hebrew-lexicon/03667.php>.

⁸¹ He changed his name to Eliyahu Meridor. He was one of the leaders of the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (Etzel), a Jewish underground organisation, in Jerusalem.

tion were: “fostering the social life and academic tradition among its members; the creation of classes for common scientific investigations; the resolution of the problems of national education, and cultural activities between people from all levels of society.”

Klausner’s friendship with Mayani and high opinion of him dates back to earlier years.

He addressed a letter to the well-known British Egyptologist Flinders Petrie⁸² to intercede on Mayani’s behalf:⁸³

[On Prof. Dr. Joseph Klausner’s Talpiot letterhead]
Jerusalem, 9 January 1942
Professor Flinders Petrie,

Most honoured sir,

Though I have not had the chance to know you personally, and have only got to know you through your well-known books, which I have very often studied, I take the liberty of recommending Dr. Z. Mayani to you.

I know Dr. Z. Mayani through his thesis and from conversations I have had with him on scientific topics; I can testify that he is a man of science, with views of his own, a seeker after scientific truth.

In my opinion he is worthy of every possible assistance that can be given him, in order to enable him to continue his research work on the Hyksos, on which he has been working these several years, during which he has apparently obtained interesting and noteworthy results.

I thank you in advance, and I heartily wish you the best of health.

With all respect and appreciation,

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

It is unclear whether it was Fondaminsky’s influence and Vishnyak’s recommendations or Klyuchevich’s growing reputation as a writer that led to the debut of the latter as a columnist of *Posledniye Novosti*. In any case, *Posledniye Novosti* started to publish his cycle *Palestiniskie pisma* (Palestinian letters) under the pseudonym Z. Ravich from the newspaper’s no. 4595 dated October 31, 1933.⁸⁴ The first installment of this novel is entitled “Mezhdu Skilloi i Karidboy.” The narrator is a passenger onboard a ship carrying immigrants from Europe to Palestine. He holds a Palestinian newspaper in his hands and talks about Eretz Israel as a fa-

⁸² Gray Johnson Poole, “Sir Flinders Petrie,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 July 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Flinders-Petrie> [accessed 12.10.2022].

⁸³ JI-ZMA, P 305-6.

⁸⁴ Z. Ravich. “Palestiniskie pisma”: “Mezhdu Skilloi i Kharidboi,” no. 4595, October 21, 1933; “Tel Aviv,” no. 4605, October 31, 1933; “Pod nebom Sarony,” no. 4616, November 11, 1933; “Delo ob ubistve Arlozorova,” no. 4633, November 28, 1933; “Vokrug processa,” no. 4653, December 18, 1933; “Vokrug processa,” no. 4682, January 16, 1934; “Ierusalim,” no. 4712, February 16, 1934; “Na gore Eleonskoi,” no. 4747, March 23, 1934; “Bytovoe javlenie,” no. 4770, April 15, 1934; “Puteshestvie v Sodom,” no. 4852, July 6, 1934; “Damoklov mech,” no. 4866; July 20, 1934; “Gorod Akko,” no. 4995, November 26, 1934.

miliar place, from which we understand that he must have been visiting Europe and returning to Israel. The passengers he describes are German Jews who will land in Israel for the first time. The passage between Scylla and Charybdis is thus both physical (the ship bound for Palestine skirted Sicily, passing through the Strait of Messina, where Scylla and Charybdis are located) and metaphorical. Jews have to escape Germany and Europe where danger threatens them. Moving to a completely foreign country with children and few belongings, often having to learn a language from scratch, is to choose the lesser of two evils, as in the proverbial idiom “between Scylla and Charybdis” (or “between a rock and a hard place”).

In the article “Tel Aviv” (no. 4615, October 31, 1933) Mayani’s description of the eponymous city matches the images of it one finds scattered in all the contemporary press: a city that never sleeps, in constant movement, where “straight streets along which a continuous outflow of people moves have rows of bright three-story houses and an endless chain of shops and cafes,” populated by a varied and colourful crowd with different head dresses, people, “all of them got off the boat yesterday only from the ship, almost the day, or even the day before yesterday, from Cologne, from Łódź, from Budapest,” and “everyone hurries somewhere, everyone’s busy.” The image of a city, in motion and becoming eternal, will become a *topos* in Tel Aviv’s representation. The model of the new Jew, the muscular *halutz* who built the country in the 1920s, despite the pogrom of 1921 (the Jaffa Riots of May 1921), is at the centre of Ravich’s narrative.

The travel story continues in Sarona, a small settlement in Mandatory Palestine where Ravich gets acquainted with the Russian *gerim*, the Russian converts from Christianity to Judaism who were saved from the pogrom of 1929. Brief exchanges with its inhabitants are interspersed with the description of the place, as in an interview. Then the narration moves on to the discussion of the theme of the moment; Khaim Arlozorov’s murder. Ravich participated as a reporter in the trial of the defendant. In the article “Vokrug processa” (Around the process) he describes the day of Arlozorov’s murder from the point of view of Stavskiy, to highlight Stavskiy’s lack of any connection to the crime, and the likelihood of his alibi at the time of the murder. Ravich’s position is that the accusations against Stavskiy are the result of a collective suggestion, and by his description of the defendant it is evident that the journalist is positively inclined towards him. Stavskiy is described as a young man full of *joie de vivre* and energy and in stark op-

position to the other defendant (Rosenblatt). "Tall, sloping in the shoulders, ruddy. Stavskiy, having arrived in the country only four months prior to his arrest had not yet had time to tan. [...] The accused has a good-natured, open face, smiling eyes." In the last article concerning the trial, "The sword of Damocles," Ravich identifies the inconsistencies in the testimony of Arlozorov's widow and affirms even more tenaciously Stavskiy's distance from the crime. Since the assassination of Arlozorov happened on the night of Friday, June 16, 1933, and the articles are a faithful report of the process, one must presume that Klyuchevich was in Palestine in the second half of 1933, making his first episode of the Palestinian letters a first-hand report of a journey from Europe to Israel. Those episodes are not the only evidence. They are accompanied by the humorous tale "Letayushii medved, zapiski katorzhnika" [The flying bear, notes of a convict], published in *Rassvet* on July 31, 1934 (no. 13 July 31, 1934). Already, from the surnames of the witnesses presented in the story, we understand the humorous intention of the article and the willingness to ridicule the reliability of the testimonies. The story is told in the first person and has quasi-absurd connotations from the beginning: "About the deathly event of June 16, I came to know on the radio: that day I was no further than in Greenland, where I delivered a shipment of Palestinian ice. But a month later, when I had just managed to set foot on the shore in Jaffa, someone's strong hands grabbed me by the scruff of the neck." The witnesses are Mrs. "Pig" [*Khazir* in Hebrew], Mr. "Bezchestner" (from the Russian prefix *bez*, *chestnost* and *ozorit* in honesty and the suffix *-er* for the Yiddish professions) and Mrs. "Ozorova" (from Russian *ozorit* meaning 'mischief, smut, spoil or harm by a prank'). Needless to say, all the witnesses had no hesitation in accusing the protagonist, also bearing witness to their devotion or affiliation to religion (Mr. Dishonest testifies with "the Bible in hand" and claims to be the nephew of a *shokhet*, a ritual butcher. In this article are further references to what we have already identified as Mayani's personal crusade against bigotry). Adding absurdity to the false testimony provided by the characters is an unexpected witness: a flying bear. To the astonished objections of the accused, the judge objects that a further suspicious hint of lies in the fact that he does not deny the legitimacy of the bear as a witness but rather addresses only "secondary" details (*vtorostepennogo kharaktera*), such as the fact that a bear cannot fly.

The flying bear is an ironic-parodic rehash of Yevzerov's "flying camel," the symbol of the oriental fairs in Tel Aviv. The image was widespread, and was drawn by the famous artist Arie El-Hanani.

One of the chapters in Ladinsky's book *Journey to Palestine* was called "The Flying Camel."

Returning to the journalistic experience of Klyuchevich-Ravich on the Parisian newspaper *Posledniye Novosti* in the following episodes: Ravich-Mayani's reportage turns into a travelogue full of orientalist fascination, where he describes Jerusalem, the Dead Sea and finally Akko.⁸⁵ It is probably thanks to this serialised novel that a personal relationship between Mayani-Ravich and Pavel Milyukov, the editor of *Posledniye Novosti*, arises. This is testified by correspondence of the latter:

August 5, 1933

Dear Mr. Mayani,

Today I'm leaving for Italy for a few weeks for treatment in the mountains, and you will understand why in my haste I could not use your valuable intelligence. Thank you very much for it. When I return, I will certainly look into the Paleontological Institute. Mister Bashmakov⁸⁶ probably remembers me. Now I am writing only a few lines to thank you and explain the reason for my silence.

Yours P. Milyukov⁸⁷

It is not without interest that the pseudonym Ravich, the maiden name of the author's mother, is rarely used for publications on *Rassvet*. The reason for choosing one pseudonym over another can obviously be only speculated upon. Since "by adopting a pseudonym, one not only disguises his own name, but also expands his personality with a self-chosen meaning, which also allows him to fictitiously distance himself from himself,"⁸⁸ we shall ask ourselves what his intention was in doing this. In this case, my opinion is that the single motive for which the author adopted this pseudonym is "acculturation." In a pan-Russian newspaper, he wanted to detach himself from the monolithic character of the Zionist, altering his surname to sound more naturally Russian and less exotic, or Jewish. The lack of enigmatical connotations goes together with the peculiar use of a pseudonym for "the desire to hide one's origin by choosing a name that is more characteristic of a given country or environment."⁸⁹ All the more so, what resonates is the option of not desiring to expose oneself excessively in one's literary debut.

⁸⁵ Ravich 1933–1934.

⁸⁶ Alexander Alexandrovich Bashmakov (1858–1943), famous historian, anthropologist, jurist, public figure. In Russia, he was one of the closest associates of Prime Minister Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin. He edited the *Government Bulletin*. After emigration he lived in Bulgaria, Serbia, from 1924, in Paris. He served at the Académie française des beaux-arts, and from 1932 he lectured on anthropology at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

⁸⁷ JI-ZMA, P-306.

⁸⁸ S. Schmidt, "K poetike psevdonima. . .," p. 37.

⁸⁹ Manfred Shrubka, "O funktsiyakh psevdonimov. . .," p. 42.

This is confirmed by the fact that under this “neutral pseudonym” was published the book of lyrical poems *To, chto otkrylos’ na mig* (What Unclosed for a Moment) (Paris: Parabola, 1935) dedicated to Yohanna Markovna and Vladimir Yevgenyevich Jabotinsky. The nature of its contents confirms our interpretation regarding the choice of the pseudonym Ravich, since this collection of poems not only breaks out of the framework of Klyuchevich’s Zionist activities, but does not even contain a single hint concerning his national origin. These verses are pure Russian poetry.

The presence of a poetry collection in the work of a Jewish nationalist, an active figure in the national revival, and one of the ardent followers and supporters of Jabotinsky, only strengthens one of the main theses of our work. *Rassvet* as a multivalent cultural and historical entity served not only specific ideological and political goals within a narrow party framework inside the Zionist movement, but was an organ of the Russian emigrant press, which was oriented towards universal values that turned out to be much larger than the specific political programme of revisionism. An example of the ambivalence of the Jewish-European dual world for the personalities of *Rassvet* is given in this book of poems, which are Russian not only in language, but also in the cultural semantics belonging to the aesthetic system of Russian lyrics.

In the poems contained in Klyuchevich’s only book of verse, even a specific Palestinian landscape is strikingly absent as the earthly space that is the central locus in the author’s universe. Perhaps the only poem that claims to be Palestinian is the “Long-Faded Star,” presenting the pioneering transformation of the biblical desert, forgotten and abandoned for centuries, as the beginning of the day “which was foreseen by the prophets”:

*A long-faded star
Rising over the dormant East,
And the wires stretched out
Among the sands in the sun.*

*Where the chameleon froze
Between the rosy ruins —
The motor hums and a ringing is heard
Branded, unyielding steel.*

*White concrete forts
They grow on scanty goat hills.
And every minute you see
People who sailed from the sea*

*And you hear a carefree laughter
There, where only jackals cried,*

*Wine of unexpected pleasures
It played in worn furs.*

*A hexagonal star
Pierced the skies of the East.
The Day of Atonement, the Day of Judgment
The day that the prophets foresaw...*

The eastern theme (Istanbul at night) is represented in the poem "Nocturne," which is certainly an echo of the poet's dwelling in the then Turkish capital, where he ended up after having emigrated from Russia. To this poem the Palestinian and Oriental topic is limited.

Even the poems written in Jerusalem do not relate to the Holy City, but to something outer to it. The poem "Wind" celebrates the wind which is not tied to specific *genius loci*. This "shift," "deception of expectation" is organic for the lyrical structure of Klyuchevich's poetry. The rejection of the Zionist problems or at least the biblical imagery, that one would have expected from this author, frees the reader's perception from the usual stereotype. Klyuchevich's poems turn out to be released not only from the dictates of "party discipline," but also from any ideological task imposed in advance on them. In his poems there are no political motives at all. He unequivocally resolves the classical opposition between "citizen" and "poet" in favour of the latter. This is especially curious against the collection of ideas that he worshiped and served and which were for him indestructible "creeds." Klyuchevich's journalistic work was fenced off from belles-lettres by an impregnable wall, and Klyuchevich the poet could hardly express a wish that "the pen be equated with a bayonet," as his Russian contemporary and poet Vladimir Mayakovsky would have put it.

It is noteworthy that already in the first poem of the collection, which usually performs the functions of "setting and tuning," there is this implicit shift. The composition "Parisian Twilights" is a typical urban lyrical sketch, connected by association to that layer of Russian émigré literature (prose and poetry) that sought to capture the image of the "capital of the world."⁹⁰ The urban Parisian theme is continued in the collection with the poem "Champ de Mars":

*The chestnut trees in the shade smell of horse sweat.
Among the dark alleys, someone's whisper and laughter...*

⁹⁰ This image resonates in *Paris at Night* (1928), a collection of essays by Andrey Sedykh, and in *Parisian Nights* (1932), a book of poetry by D. Knut that Mayani reviewed enthusiastically, with several citations of passages from Knut's poems, in an article signed Ben-Tavriya, which appeared in *Rassvet*, 1932, no. 9, February 28.

*This evening, bestowed by hot June,
Like a measured stream of long-awaited pleasures.*

*Pair after pair perform on the gravel
As in a slow dance, in a drunken drowsiness.
The chant of beeps answers with a guitar,
And the murmur of the fountain merges with it.*

*Faded canopy of heaven, in a reddish radiance
From the flickering of running crimson advertisements.
Only the black lace of the Tower is hazier,
Like a huge, empty, and abandoned temple.*

In the book, there is even a space for melodramatic-romantic verses of the Scandinavian type. In the poem "On the Golden Sand of the Koktebel Beach," which opens with the emblematic epigraph "It was by the sea, by the azure foam...", Klyuchevich recreates not only the semantic, but also the melodic pattern of Igor Severyanin's poem "Eto bylo u morya"):

*On the golden sand of Koktebel beach
I lay as if in a slumber at your swarthy feet.
This ghostly noon, hour of a misty mirage,
Have you forgotten? While I, I couldn't forget.*

Of course, there is no reason to see in the poetry of Klyuchevich in general, and in this collection in particular, any significant artistic achievements. On the whole, his poetic work does not rise above the average level, neither in terms of content nor in terms of formal mastery. However, in this case, we are not talking about Klyuchevich as a master of the poetic word, but about the fact that his poetic voice lacks the notes of a political publicist, a journalist mobilised and called to serve exclusively the ideology of Zionism.

The themes of Klyuchevich are completely different. They are not only far from the struggle for the national idea as the revisionists saw and understood it (the establishment of a Jewish majority in Eretz Israel, the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River, etc.), but they do not touch on these matters at all. They exist on a different plan of poetic existence. His poems are about love, about its oddities and whims, exciting flashes of happiness, and unexpected feelings of death. So, for example, in a rather good poem "Her Letter in a White Envelope," the poet reflects on the state of mind of a person who receives news of the extinguishing of feelings by a beloved:⁹¹

⁹¹ Ravich, *To, chto otkrylos' na mig*, p. 13.

*Her letter in a white envelope
It came like an inaudible death.
With the silent breath of death
Breathed into the heavenly firmament...*

*The pipes submissively fell silent,
The pipes of a hot day...
It seemed that around burned out
The last bursts of fire.*

*It seemed like the last calls
And the indistinct trembling of hearts
Extinguished like a turquoise vault,
Like a farewell crimson in the sky.*

*The letter was in a white envelope.
In the soul — the evening haze.
To those who partake of death,
She could not avoid coming.*

Klyuchevich seems to have triumphed in the picking up of successful images for the poetic narrative: the “inaudible death, [the] indistinct trembling of hearts,” and the fading of passion of love like a death sentence. Although there is no special expressive innovation in all this, on the whole the lyrical acoustics of the text are perceived as sincere and confessional, which is especially important for lyrical meditation.

Establishing the artistic genesis of Klyuchevich as a poet, one cannot ignore the fact that in his poems that are included in the collection *To, chto otkrylos' na mig*,⁹² the name of Aleksandr Blok, the poetic idol of the Silver Age generation, is mentioned several times. The poem “You Ran into a Cold and Bright Ward” was preceded by an epigraph from Blok (“As the sky rose above me, / And I could not meet her / Move my sick hand, / Say that I yearned for her”). It appears in the poem “A Cup of Mocha,” which contains a rather successful line that almost expresses the essence of his poetry: “And the world is foreseen in a line.”⁹³ In the composition “Eternal Motive,” the poet evokes his loneliness and alienation in a world where even the unkind nature is indifferent to him.⁹⁴

*They got me wrapped up
Unfulfilled dreams —*

⁹² JI, ZMA.

⁹³ Ravich, *To, chto otkrylos' na mig*, p. 32.

⁹⁴ In the journal *De la Petite Chronique d'Israel* in the section “Notes marginales” was published a collection of responses to the question “Who is a Jew?” from 13- to 15-year-olds outside a Tel Aviv school, signed Ben-Tavriya that is a further proof of Klyuchevich’s attachment to the identity topic.

*Let them bloom, drunk,
 Violets, tuberose;
 Let the swallows whistle
 Like gentle arrows
 And God-given poison
 It harbors the fruit of a ripe vine;
 And let them float in the night
 pouring songs,
 And the moon sends rays
 Drunk and incorporeal;
 And may always, always
 The sea roars a song
 And the blue ridge
 Calls to other dawns;
 And may in all years
 Children scream and dance
 And may always, always
 Love throw nets;
 And let the brook murmur
 In the silence of a dense forest,
 After all, I'm a stranger, no one,
 I won't hear from them soon.
 Because I'm almost in paradise
 Or — I'm close to paradise:
 Maybe I'm singing
 Perhaps I am dying.*

These verses evoke the sense of loneliness and disorientation of the poet who feels he does not belong to anyone or to any place. In these lines there is an air of that “universal pain” which, among other Leopardian subtexts, had been so successful as a *topos* since the mid-19th century among the young Russian poets thanks to the translations of Giacomo Leopardi’s poetry⁹⁵ (among others, by Gumilyov for Gorky’s publishing house Vsemirnaya literatura in 1919).⁹⁶

In *Rassvet* he authored, until July, 1934, numerous articles on the topics ranging from history, ethnography, and anthropology, through art and literary criticism, to football in Palestine.⁹⁷ Mayani’s position in the journal surely grew in importance over years, since he co-authored articles with Jabotinsky and delivered lectures to the editorial board. The following is an excerpt from a letter dated April 9, 1932:⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Donata Gelli Mureddu, “Leopardi in Russia: traduzioni, interpretazioni e influenze,” *Russica Romana*, II (1995), pp. 111–137.

⁹⁶ Francesca Lazzarin, “Giacomo Leopardi (ri)tradotto da Nikolaj Gumilëv: due frammenti inediti dai ‘Canti,’” *Europa Orientalis*, no. 31, 2012.

⁹⁷ Ben-Tavriya, “O evreyskom futbole,” *Rassvet*, no. 15, April 12, 1931. In this article he underlines the successes of Jewish football in Palestine despite a lack of tradition in this sport.

⁹⁸ JI-VJA, κ 1 - 2/ 22/ 1, 1533.

I will ask you to come to me on Tuesday at 10 am, and bring all the newspapers, newspaper clippings, etc. from the last week. Prepare yourself as if for a lecture to members of the editorial board. I will also collect newspaper clippings and together we will prepare the editorial for the Passover issue.

I will also ask you to come with (for now, briefly) a summary of the material you found in the Jewish press (series) for The Black Book — simply a breakdown of the material you found.



A caricature of Jabotinsky drawn by Mayani, May 29, 1931.
Photo (Anna Balestrieri, 2019)

An article on the economic difficulties of families called “The Women in Times of Crisis” on November 14, 1934, in *HaYarden*, signed Ben-Tavriya, is the last known evidence of Mayani’s presence in Eretz Israel that year.

At the end of 1934, he was back in Paris, where he served for a certain time as a secretary to the department of Halpern’s Brit HaHayal, a revisionist association of Jewish reservists with regional military and political training schools for members. In Mayani’s section in France, Vygodsky and Mirkin ran the courses in Paris for field and weapons training.⁹⁹ *Rassvet* had already closed. After the closure of the newspaper, Mayani held administrative positions in the Executive Committee of the Hatzohar, officially Brit HaTzionim HaRevizionistim, a Revisionist Zionist organisation and political party in Mandatory Palestine and newly independent Israel. At some point he was made redundant by Jabotinsky on the grounds of lack of economic resources:

⁹⁹ Khaim Ben Yeruham, *Sefer Beitar: Korot and Mekorot*, Volume 2: El Ha’am, Part One. Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, 1973, p. 158.

To Zakharia Mayani, Paris
The government of Betar
Paris, April 15, 1936 [Hebrew]

Dear Sir,

To my deep regret I have to inform you that despite all our efforts we have not been able to repair the huge damage caused to us by the destruction of the company 'Phoenix' and several other financial failures of the latest newcomers. I am therefore unable to use your important services below.

Please believe when I say sorrowfully that I can no longer use your help as a permanent assistant who receives a salary. I knew how to appreciate the good arrangements that you, sir, had made in the affairs of the naval school; I also felt the loyal sympathy that you, my lord, have for this enterprise, and normally it is not easy for someone like me to part with a spiritual force like you. I hope that our partnership in this field will stop only temporarily and not for long, and will soon resume in another field. But today I have no choice.

Your position in the government will conclude at the end of this month of April, but if it is necessary for you, my lord, to use your time even before that you should feel free to do so immediately after you hand over the affairs of the naval school to the government officer Dillion, and you will in any case receive your salary by the end of the month.

Thank you for everything, and may all the sacrifices I was forced to impose on you, my lord, and on your co-workers will not be in vain.

Tel Hai,
Z. Jabotins[ky]
Head of Betar¹⁰⁰

In those years in Paris, Mayani studied at the École du Louvre, a higher education institution of the Ministry of Culture that provided courses in art history, archaeology, epigraphy, history of civilisations, anthropology, and musicology. This was possibly a necessary step before attempting doctoral studies, which he eventually not only endeavoured to do, but also successfully completed. In 1935 he received a PhD in Eastern Archaeology from Sorbonne University. Mayani asked Jabotinsky to help him get a research scholarship at one of the universities in England in the field of ancient Middle Eastern history (see letter to Mayani 21.1.1936 from Jabotinsky in London: JI-VJA, 1 - 2/ 26/ 1 א). Jabotinsky inquired of Dr. Mund and Norman Bentwich.¹⁰¹ In response to Jabotinsky's request to Norman Bentwich regarding a scholarship for Dr. Mayani, Bentwich replied that he could not deal with the matter. However, he suggested that he contact Dr. Suknik of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who might find Mayani's book interesting (the letter

¹⁰⁰ JI-VJA, /1א 1 - 2/ 26 3054. To this period also belong the activities of creation of the Betar Naval Academy.

¹⁰¹ JI-VJA, א 1 - 2/ 26/ 1, 3001. Sir Robert Ludwig Mund was also involved in archaeology. He participated in archaeological activities in Egypt and the Land of Israel, and helped establish the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem.

of Bentwich is from July 15, 1936; JI-VJA, 24/3/18). Mayani spent some time in Brighton that year, trying to foster his academic connections to obtain the scholarship.

Before the outbreak of World War II, Mayani moved back to Eretz Israel. He was a teacher of Hebrew at the Bagrout College of Jerusalem from 1938 to 1942. He “resumed his work [...] after having been released from the Government Service in 1946.” In those years he was active in political propaganda activities, especially against the left, advocating “the Land of Israel needs to be opened to all Jews, of all classes, as far as they are Jews, and not only to the target group that our left fed with fratricidal hatred even before they had shaken off their exile. We differed from our wretched socialists who preached the division of the people even before the nation was formed.”¹⁰² Those years were troubled by internal divisions and to this deeply politicised and militant period of Mayani’s life belong some verses (*mashel*, parable-allegory) in Hebrew that the acumen of the researcher Dror Bar Yosef has attributed, with an intuition that we fully share, to the period of the Little Season:¹⁰³

25/06/1947

Two sheep / Zakharia Mayani
(parable)

*There were two sheep in the land
between them they also clashed
But sometimes miracles happened
that together they also grazed and rested
And it happened today, and unintentionally
They both wandered away in the meadow
Here the night is coming
And ploughed... a wolf emerges!*

This was in the framework of the historical period of the “Hunting Season,” which is considered one of the great moments of crisis of the Yishuv, since it endangered it with the threat of a fratricidal war opposing Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi that organised a Jewish uprising against the British authorities. The allegory of the two sheep might be a direct quotation from a letter of March 1, 1945 sent from the High Commissioner in Jerusalem to the Colonial Secretary in London. That letter revealed that the Jewish Agency was exploiting “its collaboration with the British Intelligence in

¹⁰² See his article in *HaMashkif* (*The Observer*, a Hebrew language daily newspaper published between 1938 and 1948 in Mandatory Palestine, owned by Hatzohar, the Revisionist party) on July 26, 1944.

¹⁰³ JI-ZMA, P-305.

order to hand over active members of the Revisionist party, who were not even members of the Irgun, and thereby to rid itself of political rivals. The letter states, among other things: (Public Records, CO733/457). [...]

Unfortunately, the Jewish Agency's lists of so-called terrorists continue to include numerous people who have no terror connections, but politically speaking are undesirable to the Jewish Agency. This adds to the difficulties the police have in separating the sheep from the goats."¹⁰⁴ In the context of retaliation and showdown that prevailed in those years, Mayani clearly stands on the side of his comrades, falsely accused, or kidnapped for petty political calculations.

In 1947 he was granted a one-year leave from the college and applied for a USA visa to travel to Chicago for academic studies at the University of Illinois. He was back in Israel in 1948, since according to a certificate issued 21.06.1948, Mayani served in the paramilitary organization *Mishmar HaAm* (a corps of volunteers that had the intention of maintaining order in the cities) of the 13th district of the People's Guard. This was a volunteer unit designed to maintain order in the major cities, including Haifa, Tel Aviv, Safed, and Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵

In 1949 he was back in France to continue his studies, working on behalf of, and being supported by, the Institute for the Research of Jewish Middle East Communities of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In the following years he continued both his academic and journalistic activities, as a literary critic. In Paris he was a teacher of Hebrew at the Centre d'Etudes Juives Bar Ilan and also conducted research in the field of Archaeology. From these years there remains a review of the future Nobel Prize winner Agnon in *L'univers Israelite* (his style according to Klyuchevich was influenced by the Talmud). There is also a very detailed and philologically interesting review signed Zacharie) and an article retracing Modigliani's Jewish roots and his knowledge of Hebrew. In addition there is a review of *Dr. Zhivago* that is rather critical because of Pasternak's categorically negative approach to nationalisms, and the "Chain of Goddesses," a didactic article on archaeological discoveries in Beth Shearim. In March, 1954, Schechtman sent him a letter in Paris apologising for not being able to involve him more in the Jabotinsky biography project he was working on, despite knowing this would help his modest budget. From October to April every year he was in Jerusa-

¹⁰⁴ "The Hunting Season," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.jewishvirtual-library.org/the-ldquo-hunting-season-rdquo>.

¹⁰⁵ [zionistarchives.org.il](https://www.zionistarchives.org.il)

lem, where he had a house, or in Eilat, as the mild climate of the Red Sea city in winter was beneficial for his chronic respiratory failure.¹⁰⁶ His address in Eilat was 714–9.

Scholarly works, mainly on the history and decoding of the Etruscan language, signed by Zacharie (the French version of Zakharia) Mayani are numerous. One of the first books, *Les Etrusques Commencent à Parler* (The Etruscans Begin to Speak) was published in 1961 in Paris by the publishing house Arthaud, and in 1962 in London by Souvenir Press. In that year he spent the Autumn in Albania in order to study Albanian. His charming theories on Etruscan language derivation from proto-Illyric and Albanian were appreciated by many scholars,¹⁰⁷ nonetheless the leading scientific community in the field (headed by the Italian Pallottino, one of the dominant figures in Etruscology), disregarded Mayani's position as pure fantasy. The refusal to publish the material about his discoveries by accredited American and British historical journals gives reason for concern that the skepticism about his theories, if not as contemptuous as among the Italian Etruscologists, was widespread in the academic community. The last thirty years of his life, Mayani's fight to have his theories accepted and recognised intensified but had no success. Mayani had nonetheless many supporters and sympathisers,¹⁰⁸ and authored a great number of academic books and articles.¹⁰⁹

Although he mastered multiple languages, Mayani's literary output can be seen as noteworthy only when one considers its Russian portion, and the prose rather than poetry.

His experiments in the field of screenplays were equally varied and unsuccessful. Despite his good relationship with the theatre establishment, his work was officially rejected by Habima Theatre's director in a letter from June 20, 1940. In the pre-war period, Klyuchevich dabbled in writing short stories and plays in Hebrew, French, and English (one tale marks the appearance of a new pseudonym, "Eilati,"¹¹⁰ from Eilat, in Hebrew).

¹⁰⁶ In a letter to Monsieur le Professeur J.C. Dragan, via Larga 11, Milano dated 1977, September 24 Klyuchevich professes his intention to move temporarily to Israel to enjoy a milder climate as he was suffering from chronic asthma ("Etantagè je supporte mal l'humidité de l'hiver europeen, le 2 octobre je pars pour Eilat, sur le mer rouge, où je resterais 5-6 mois").

¹⁰⁷ For instance, there is a review of *The Etruscans Begin to Speak* by the historian and Egyptologist Sir Charles Petrie, whom I mentioned above, in *The Illustrated London News*. He enthusiastically accepts all Klyuchevich's hypotheses about the provenance of the Etruscan people from Asia Minor, the belonging of the Etruscan language to the Illyrian language family and the theory that the structure of the Etruscans as a confederation of city-states predicted the future history of Italy.

¹⁰⁸ JI-ZMA, P 305-6. The lawyer Enzo Gatti sent him a letter to Eilat stating "I am persevering ahead with my fight against the Official Science of Ignorance (see: Pallottino and co.)."

¹⁰⁹ See bibliography for a list of Mayani's books and publications on academic topics.

¹¹⁰ JI-ZMA, P 305-25.

Klyuchevich's political activity never took the centre stage, although as we saw he contributed to the Revisionist movement from its inception and in various countries. It should be noted, though, that Etzel and Beitar were not the leadership of the Yishuv; they were even the opposite, almost a separate movement. In 1979 Mayani was active in seeking the peace process with Egypt. Pesach Grupper, a Likud party member who was a Knesset member at the time (and an Israeli politician who served as Minister of Agriculture between October, 1983 and September, 1984) says, on a Knesset letterhead paper from March 18, 1979 that Mayani's efforts in the negotiations are appreciated. A few years before, in 1972, he sought the help of the movement to publish a book. He received a refusal from Menachem Begin, who suggested that he turn to the Jabotinsky Institute of Israel.¹¹¹ The book, that was never published, was meant to be a collection of memories of Jabotinsky from the close point of view of one of his secretaries. Many handwritten draft pages remain in Mayani's archive, and may be a source of new insights into the personality and the activities of the Zionist revisionist leader.¹¹²

Klyuchevich got married in Paris in 1937, but ten years later, on the application to board a ship from Haifa to New York (with the University of Chicago, Illinois, as a final destination to engage in archaeological research) he already self-declared¹¹³ that he was divorced.

Some photographs found in his archive featuring a woman, and some hints in his correspondence suggest that he got remarried or lived in a quasi-marital partnership or cohabitation with a woman.¹¹⁴ Her name was Emilia (Mila) Loulaki and Mayani met her in Paris; it can be surmised from the fact that a woman by that name was designated, on May 10, 1973, as the sole heiress to Klyuchevich's flat in Eilat.

In April 7, 1982 Zachar Zecharie Klyuchevich Mayani Ben-Tavriya Eilati died in Eilat of cardiac failure and coronary sclerosis.

This article is one of the chapters of the dissertation *Russian-Jewish Press in the Emigration: The Case of 'Rassvet' (1922-34, Berlin-Paris): Internal History and External Context*. The main materials of this study are based on archival documents stored at the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel (Tel Aviv), to whose staff I express my deep grati-

¹¹¹ JI-ZMA, P 305-10.

¹¹² JI-ZMA, P 305-12.

¹¹³ On the previously mentioned visa application of December 17, 1947.

¹¹⁴ Giovanni Rapelli, who was a linguist and worked for Mondadori, translated Mayani's books with a view of publishing them. He sent greetings to his wife at any given occasion.

tude for their help, in particular to Dr. Gil Weissblei. I also express my heartfelt thanks to Dror Bar-Yosef (Begin Centre, Jerusalem), who assisted me with genuine enthusiasm in interpreting cryptic data, and I feel indebted to Professor Vladimir Khazan (Jerusalem) for his invaluable scientific advice.

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The footnotes use the following abbreviations for archives in Israel:

CAHJP — The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (Jerusalem);

JI-ZMA — Jabotinsky Institute. Zakharia Mayani Archive (Tel Aviv);

JI-VJA — Jabotinsky Institute. Vladimir Jabotinsky Archive (Tel Aviv).

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- Z. Ravich. *Ha maahafilim* (Hebrew, The illegal immigrants, theatrical comedy in three acts).
- Z. Ravich. *Purim shelkol ha kitot* (Hebrew, Purim of all classes, theatrical comedy in eight acts).
- Z. Ravich. *Khalukat hateudot* (Hebrew, Report card, theatre play).
- Z. Mayani. *Jugement dernier* (French, The last judgement).