

Title: Ruppin, Arthur
German Nationalist (1876 - 1943)

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RUPPIN, ARTHUR

RUPPIN, ARTHUR (1876–1943), Zionist, economist, and sociologist; originator of the study of the sociology of the Jews and "father of Zionist settlement" in Erez Israel. Ruppin was responsible for paving the way from political Zionism, which was to many people more declarative than substantial, to pragmatic Zionism, in which settlement work and political efforts were only different facets and names for the same project: the building of the land and the people. Born in Rawitsch (Rawicz), Posen district (then in Prussia), Ruppin was the son of an affluent family that had become impoverished and moved from a traditional Jewish community on the border between Poland and Silesia to Magdeburg, Prussian Saxony, in 1887. His experiences as a youth undoubtedly had an influence upon his life and his way of thought and are probably the source of his understanding of both East and West European Jewry, his support of basic social changes, and perhaps even his tendency toward planning and computing as exactly as possible in his personal, academic, and public life. Ruppin was forced to leave high school at the age of 15 because of his family's financial situation, and worked from 1891 to 1899 in the grain trade. He passed the examinations for a high school diploma as an external student and from 1899 studied law and economics at the University of Berlin and the University of Halle; he also spent time on the natural sciences, especially biology. From 1902 to 1907, he served in a court and, in the same period (1903–07), he directed the Bureau for Jewish Statistics and Demography, which was founded in Berlin by A. *Nossig . In 1903 he received the Haeckel Prize for his research work *Darwinismus und Sozialwissenschaft*, and in 1904 he published *Die Juden der Gegenwart*, in which he laid the foundations for the descriptive sociology of the Jews.

This work, which was published in a number of editions and languages, based its discussion of the position of the Jews upon a demographic and statistical analysis, instead of the propaganda and rhetoric ideology that governed such discussions at the time. Ruppin corrected and brought the book up to date in each new edition and expanded it into *Soziologie der Juden*, published in two volumes in Berlin (1930–31) and in four parts in Hebrew (1932–34). The book appeared in English under the titles *The Jews in the Modern World* (1934) and *Jewish Fate and Future* (1940).

When the first edition of *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (1904) was published, Ruppin was not yet a Zionist (although he supported the Zionist idea), but the book brought him closer to the Zionist movement and to its goal of solving the Jewish problem by founding a Jewish society and a state in Erez Israel based upon systematic urban and rural settlement. In 1907 the young sociologist traveled to Erez Israel on behalf of the Zionist Organization to study the situation there and probePage 530 the possibilities for the Zionist Organization's work in the country. This trip brought about Ruppin's connection with the Zionist Organization. The Zionist Executive, headed by David *Wolffsohn , appointed him head of its Palestine Office, which he established in Jaffa in 1908. From then until his death – with periodic intermissions devoted to scientific work or travels – Ruppin was responsible for the work of Zionist settlement in Erez Israel. In 1916 he was forced by Jamal Pasha to leave the country and move to Constantinople, where he directed the activities to aid the *yishuv* both by distributing information on what was happening in Erez Israel and by organizing the transfer of capital to the country. In 1920 he returned to Jerusalem, and in 1920–21 was a member of the Zionist Commission, from 1921 to 1927 and again from 1929 to 1931 he was a member of the Zionist Executive, and from 1933 to 1935 a member of the *Jewish Agency Executive. From 1933 he was head of the Jewish Agency Department for the Settlement of German Immigrants and from 1935 he directed the Institute for Economic Research in Erez Israel, which he founded. He also served, from 1926, as lecturer and later professor of the sociology of the Jews in the Hebrew University.

His greatest achievements outside the field of the sociology of the Jews were in that of settlement. Ruppин's work can be divided into four periods: in the first (1908–14) he laid the foundations for Zionist settlement; in the second (1914–18) he participated in the struggle to save the *yishuv* from destruction; in the third (1920–33) he took part in the systematic expansion of settlement in the cities and rural areas and of the country's economy, throughout political and economic crises; and in the last period (1933–42), when he was a recognized expert on the economy of the country and the sociology of the Jews, he filled a central role in the absorption of the Fifth Aliyah, which brought tens of thousands of immigrants from Germany and refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, and in solving the problems that resulted from their migration. The greatest importance (in Ruppин's estimation as well) is placed upon the first period, in which he paved the way for the Zionist Organization's systematic settlement work, in cooperation with the pioneers of

the Second Aliyah, who had begun to stream into the country in 1905. His activity saved from failure both the Zionist Organization and the members of the Second Aliyah, who were seeking the proper road and were without appropriate financial means, and laid the foundations for all that followed. His success brought about the recognition of the fact that the most important factor in settlement work was the settler and that the settler and the settlement agency must work together as equal partners in every enterprise. In this way Ruppin created the proper conditions for the pioneers' activities and transformed their enthusiasm into a driving force for the settlement of Erez Israel.

This basic outlook also aided in the creation of new forms of settlements – the kevuah and the kibbutz, the moshav ovedim, and the moshav shittufi, middle-class villages, etc. (see *Israel , State of: Settlement) – and defended them against all their opponents. From the outset of his work, Ruppin aspired to purchase contiguous tracts of land for agricultural settlement and to create a self-governing population. He encouraged and enabled the acquisition of large tracts of land in the Jezreel Valley (on behalf of the Palestine Land Development Corporation, which he established in 1908, and the *Jewish National Fund) and in other regions. He was also instrumental in the establishment of Tel Aviv and the purchase of land in Haifa on Mount Carmel and its slopes (Hadar ha-Karmel) and from the Greek Patriarch in Jerusalem (on which Rehavyah and other quarters were established). He was very concerned with the problem of Arab-Jewish cooperation, and in order to study this problem and its consequences, together with a small group of men, he established *Berit Shalom in 1925 and headed it until 1929, working for the establishment of a binational state in Palestine. In view of the Arab riots and uprisings in 1929, 1936, and thereafter, however, he came to the conclusion that the time was not yet ripe for fruitful Arab-Jewish negotiations, in which each nation would receive its due. He therefore believed it necessary to strengthen the Jewish position in the country economically and politically in order to create a situation in which both sides would be willing to cooperate to their mutual benefit.

His collection of essays, *Three Decades of Palestine*, was published in English in 1936. His autobiography in Hebrew, *Pirkei Hayyai*, edited by A. Bein, appeared posthumously (3 vols., 1968, 1970). *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters* appeared in English in 1971. Kefar Ruppin in the Beth-Shean Valley, an agricultural school in Emek Hefer, and a botanical garden in Deganyah Alef are named after him.

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[Alexander Bein]

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