

Violating the Mores, Seizing the Guards: The Riot of the 'Youth of *Perestroika*' in an Israeli Military Jail

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This article focuses on the most extensive mutiny in the history of the IDF, which broke out in Atlite Military Prison No. 6 on 9 August 1997. The central role of the army in Israeli political culture accounts for the fact that a mutiny of such extent has never taken place in the IDF military units and prisons. Israel's political culture, which emphasizes the importance of the state and is characterized by weak liberalism, is not a good breeding ground for civil disobedience, even in circumstances where one would expect such behaviour. In the case under discussion, the mutiny was led by soldiers belonging to peripheral ethnic groups of the IDF recruit population; specifically, it was organized by new immigrants from the former Soviet Union and a number of Druze soldiers.

Some military police officials and Israeli politicians of Russian origin claimed that there was no connection between the ethnicity of the prisoners and the riot. I would like to argue, however, that it was the prisoners' unique socialization in the USSR in the *Perestroika* period, when the attitude towards state and the army swayed from scepticism to hostility, that made this riot possible. I argue that what gave rise to the rebellion was not maltreatment by jail officials (as the mutineers themselves argued), but rather a different civic culture as it had developed among Soviet youngsters who were socialized in the atmosphere of 'liberal nihilism' of the early 1990s – a time when the majority of them emigrated to Israel.

Introduction

Culture supplies individuals with a standardized order of values. The need for cross-cultural comparisons seems particularly acute for research on disobedience and violence since cross-national differences regarding these phenomena are of a remarkable magnitude. As emphasized in Thorsten Sellin's classical study *Culture, Conflict and Crime*, in societies composed of different immigrant groups having their own distinctive norms of behaviour, cultural conflicts are potentially apt to arise.

For every person there is from the point of view of a given group of which he is a member, a normal (right) and an abnormal (wrong) way of reacting, the norm depending upon the social values of the group which formulated it. [...] The more complex a culture becomes, the

more likely it is that the number of normative groups which affect a person will be large, and the greater the chance that the norms of these groups will fail to agree, no matter how much they may overlap as a result of a common acceptance of certain norms.¹

Sellin also stated that 'conflicts of cultures are inevitable when the norms of one cultural or subcultural area come in contact with those of another'.² Two points are essential to this discussion: first, no culture is ever homogeneous, hence the co-existence of different streams of social reality; second, culture contributes to action not by supplying the ultimate values towards which the action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire of habits, skills and styles, from which people construct 'strategies of action'.³ Thus, belonging simultaneously to various communities infinitely broadens the boundaries of cultural units in multicultural society.⁴

Consequently, when people act according to the cultural norms and values of their own group, they are actually conforming their behaviour to ideals of their particular social environment, although this act may happen to have been defined as criminal by the dominant social groups.

Robert Merton notes that societies have a cultural structure separate and distinguishable from a social structure, the former consisting of 'an organized set of normative values', the latter of 'an organized set of social relationships'.

Anomie is conceived as a breakdown in the cultural structure, occurring particularly when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and the goals and the socially structured capabilities of members of the group to act in accord with them. In this conception, cultural values may help to produce behavior which is at odds with the mandates of the values themselves.⁵

The situation of anomie is likely to appear among the immigrant teenagers who find themselves in a situation of non-volitional marginality and suffer from the feeling of deprivation and frustration associated with the ambiguity or difficulty of practices that are required for the attainment of social or occupational roles.⁶ Initially non-volitional contextual marginality of various groups of immigrants stems from a group's belief that its members cannot succeed by adhering to the mainstream's 'rules of the game', although the barriers between themselves and the 'participating sectors' are supposed to be at least semi-permeable.⁷

Both theses are crucial for our study of the most extensive mutiny in the history of the IDF, in Atlite Military Prison No. 6 on 9 August 1997. This research emphasizes the differences in the dominant civic culture between a statist Israeli society, in which the armed forces have become essential to

collective identity, and the Soviet society during the years of *Perestroika*, characterized by extreme distrust of the state and the military authorities by the public in general and youngsters in particular. The detailed reconstruction and analysis of the event rest on numerous sources, with special attention paid to cross-cultural studies of the youth culture and the traditions of youth involvement in public protest in the USSR and in Israel.

Mutiny in 6th Military Prison: Visible Aspects

The riot began on Saturday morning when 108 prisoners having breakfast seized nine of their unarmed guards, soldiers like themselves. The rioters (most of them were serving time for desertion and absenteeism) armed themselves with knives, axes and flammable substances. They issued demands for improved conditions and a pledge that they would not be punished or transferred to civilian prisons as a result of their mutiny. As OC Manpower Maj.-Gen. Gideon Sheffer reported, the organizers recruited about 85 other inmates to cooperate in the hostage-taking, although the great majority of them did not take an active part in the riot.⁸ During the night, large numbers of security personnel, including a police anti-terror unit, were brought to the prison in preparation for a break-in. Ambulances and fire trucks were on call. Deputy OC Manpower Brig.-Gen. On Regonis and military police negotiated with the prisoners, who threatened to commit suicide if the anti-terror unit attempted to enter the section on in which they had barricaded themselves. Officials said they would only send in the anti-terror unit if they feared the hostages would be harmed,⁹ while commanders at the scene decided to avoid a confrontation for fear of harm coming to the hostages. During protracted negotiations, the captured guards were released individually, until only three were left in the prisoners' hands. Those hostages were also released, and the prisoners had returned to their cells when IDF officers signed an agreement apparently giving in to the prisoners' demands.

However, senior officers indicated later on that the agreement would not be kept because it had been signed under duress. Maj.-Gen. Sheffer told a press conference afterwards that the document was doubtful because it constituted part of the negotiations aimed at concluding the incident without loss of life to either the hostages or the hostage-takers, saying 'We signed an agreement the legal validity of which will be tested. The fact that we signed this agreement does not mean unequivocally that we will execute it.' He claimed that the agreement was signed as knives were held to the throats of hostages. It should be noted that before the signing Sheffer conferred with legal experts, including State Attorney Edna Arbel.

A number of Knesset members criticized Sheffer. Roman Bronfman (one

of the leaders of the immigrants' 'Yisrael Ba'aliya' party) claimed there should be an inquiry aimed at detecting the reasons behind the prison riot and not just at finding out who was guilty of starting it. Professor Zvi Weinberg ('Yisrael Ba'aliya') said the decision not to abide by the agreement could endanger the lives of future hostages. He argued,

The decision [not to abide by the agreement] endangers the lives of many future hostages. It will be far more difficult for the authorities to cope with the next riot. Nobody will believe the promises of the officers, so that the prisoners might slaughter the jail guards in desperation. IDF commanders should have used psychological pressure on the rioters to reach a compromise, nor sign an agreement in the knowledge they had no intention of keeping it. This time the decision helped solve the crisis quickly, but the IDF's credibility has been harmed.¹⁰

Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein claimed that 'it is forbidden under any circumstances to go back on a signed agreement. This will destroy the foundation for any future negotiations.'¹¹ The leader of the leftist 'Meretz' block Yossi Sarid called on the IDF to stick to the agreement that helped bring a peaceful end to the rebellion. Sarid said that while it was infuriating to make deals with criminals, and awkward to have to carry out what was promised, the army had to keep its word to maintain credibility.¹²

Sheffer also came under strong criticism from the Knesset's State Control Committee. Its chairman Yossi Katz (Labour) maintained that Sheffer had 'to keep the agreement, otherwise the credibility of the authorities would suffer severely'. In his opinion, 'this was not merely a legal but also an educational and moral matter of the first degree and it had implications for similar situations in the future'. When asked by Katz whether he would take responsibility should a similar mutiny take place in the future, Sheffer replied that he was not to be interrogated and refused to commit himself. Katz then asked whether the army had signed the agreement with the explicit intention of breaking it. 'We knew that there are instances when such agreements [made under duress] have not been upheld, but this was not our intention when we signed', replied Col. Yossi Telraz, deputy judge advocate-general. He said that the IDF's legal authorities had been in touch with the state attorney over the matter, the overriding consideration being to save lives.¹³

Military mutinies entail 'acts of collective insubordination' at times when dissatisfaction with external oppressive conditions reaches such a high level that it overpowers the fear associated with disobedience. Few military mutinies question the legitimacy of leaders, missions or military goals. Most have centred on other causes: dissatisfaction with conditions in

the immediate environment (food, discipline, discrimination, etc.) and 'demobilization' issues (i.e., the desire of conscripts to return home when they perceived their mission as complete).¹⁴ By the same token, in the case discussed none of the rioters expressed explicitly his demand for freedom and total exemption from the military jail; instead, all of them wanted to improve jail conditions.

The spectre of increasing violence and full-scale, bloody riots in US prison system (the rebellion in California State Prison at San Quentin in 1968, the prison strike in Massachusetts in 1971, the famous 1971 Attica prison rebellion, the riot at the State Prison of Southern Michigan in 1981, etc.) has intensified efforts to identify some of the causes or correlates of these phenomena.¹⁵ Various studies have demonstrated that collective violence can largely be attributed to the following distinct factors: (1) non-existent or restricted communication patterns which seriously impair the airing of legitimate inmate grievances and the detection of impending unrest; (2) failure to recognize the root causes of ethnic tensions in society at large; (3) insufficient awareness of the fact that ordinary criminal behaviour is often rationalized and disguised as rebellious activity; (4) failure to consider the effects of frustrations and the perception of deprivation; and (5) the perpetuation of social and physical environments which are antithetical to the goals of correction and re-socialization. It seems that almost all these factors were evident in the case under discussion.

A long period of de-legitimization of mutineers by the media ended when IDF Chief Prosecutor General Uri Shoham announced that paragraph five of the agreement, which promised that 'the rioters would not be brought to trial', would not be honoured. After meeting with Shoham and senior army officers two days before this announcement, State Attorney Edna Arbel mentioned that there were legal precedents for voiding agreements made under extreme duress.

A week later, military prosecutors handed down charges against 18 rioting soldiers. The Jaffa Military Court accepted the prosecutors' appeal to keep the soldiers in jail pending the trial's outcome. The soldiers involved in the riot refused to accept the chief prosecutor's decision to indict them and petitioned the High Court. The Court considered these pleas on 29 October 1997. Finding that the rebellion was an 'intolerable' affront to army discipline, the High Court ruled on 24 November that the IDF was entitled to try the soldiers. Justices Theodor Or, Dalia Dorner and Ya'acov Tirkel rejected the appeals by the rebels. Justices saw no reason to intervene, although they criticized the poor jailhouse conditions that led to the riot. In his decision, Justice Or wrote that

a situation in which soldiers join hands in the use of force against a commander, and do so in flagrant violation of orders, is an intolerable situation in any military organization ... Nobody disagrees that the physical conditions of the jail, housed in an old building from the British Mandate era, are difficult.

Tirkel assumed that these conditions might also be in violation of basic civil rights. He urged commanders to heed complaints about prison conditions, and to weigh these complaints when trying the soldiers. Yet he noted that the rebels could have aired their grievances by legal means.

The Mutiny as a Result of Different Civic Socialization: Military and Adolescence in Russia and Israel

It is worth mentioning that OC Military Police Brig.-Gen. Niram Goldbroom, as well as Knesset members Bronfman and Edelstein, criticized the Hebrew press for putting 'unnecessary emphasis on the fact that the majority of the riot planners were new immigrants from the CIS'. Bronfman insisted that there was no connection between the origin of the prisoners and the riot. I argue, however, that it was the prisoners' origin (or, more specifically, the unique socialization they had undergone in the USSR in the *Perestroika* period as opposed to the experience of their Israeli peers) that made this riot possible.

The central role of the army in the Israeli political culture accounts for the fact that a mutiny of such extent had never previously taken place in IDF military units or prisons. Israel was labelled 'a nation in arms' in both strategic and sociological contexts.¹⁶ Strategically, this notion related to the 'three-tier' defence service system – professional, conscript, and reserves – that enabled the Israeli armed forces to offset the quantitative superiority of the nation's adversaries. Sociologically, it connoted a partial fusion between civilian and military institutions, which enabled a somewhat civilianized military to evolve within the framework of a partially militarized society.¹⁷ Militarism became a factor in Israeli society when arms and the management of violence came to be perceived as routine, self-evident and integral parts of Israeli-Jewish culture.¹⁸ During the years of Israeli state-building, the armed forces became essential to the social experience and one of the collectivity's central symbols; the very embodiment of its patriotism. Although some changes took place, even in the late 1990s the armed forces continued to head the list of national bodies in which the public expressed most trust.¹⁹ The Israeli-Jewish national self-perception has been defined in the light of war and national conflict, while the army has grown into the utter expression of the nation.²⁰ By instituting military service as the main

socio-political mechanism that constructs the socio-cultural boundaries of society, the Israeli state has turned war and conflict management into a routine,²¹ so that conscription frameworks have become an integral part of the totalizing and individuating technologies of the state in Israel. Some scholars suggest 'the civil religion of security' as a metaphor to account for the high value with which security is assigned in Israeli mass consciousness. 'Just as a child is born into a certain religion, so the Israeli is born into a very difficult geopolitical world with its attendant dilemmas. Just as a child accepts unquestioningly the religion he was born into and some basic answers he receives, so too the Israeli child absorbs at a very early age the basics of the core-belief of national security.'²² Baruch Kimmerling recently claimed that 'the securitist subculture includes most Israeli "mainstream" social groups', although the specific content of this subculture varies from one generation to another (e.g., the Palmach, 'Six-Day War', 'Yom Kippur War', and recently the 'Intifada' generations).²³

The enactment of Israel's Military Service Law (August 1949) gave legal validity to the establishment of a mass army. General Yigael Yadin first described the Israeli citizen, in the early 1950s, as 'a soldier on 11-month leave'. The idea was to stimulate a desire to serve the nation-state that went beyond the legal obligations of army service. With the significant exception of most Arab citizens, all Israeli youngsters, female as well as male, are nominally liable for draft into the IDF when they reach the age of 18 for terms of, respectively, 21 and 36 months. Furthermore, reservists (overwhelmingly males) also perform additional terms of compulsory duty until middle age. As a result, service in the ranks has become the most widely shared of all national experiences. In the words of Reuven Gal, the IDF former chief psychologist,

military service in Israel is not perceived as compulsory, even though it is. It is not perceived as a penalty, even though it constitutes a major interruption in the life course of Israeli men and women. It is not considered a calamity, even though it is extremely stressful, sometimes even fatal. It is a normative part of the Israeli ethos – an integral phase in the life of any Israeli youth.²⁴

Israel's political culture, which emphasizes the importance of the state and is characterized by weak liberalism, is not a likely breeding ground for civil disobedience, even in circumstances where one would expect such behaviour.²⁵

In the case under discussion, the mutiny was led by soldiers belonging to a peripheral ethnic group of the IDF recruit population; specifically, it was organized mostly by a group of 16 new immigrants from the former Soviet Union with the assistance of two imprisoned soldiers of Druze

origin.²⁶ Ninety Israeli-born inmates of Jewish origin, who were imprisoned in the third wing of the 6th prison, perceived the harsh living conditions to be reasonable for jail, and did not consider rebellion.

What gave rise to the rebellion was not maltreatment by jail officials but rather a different civil culture as it had developed among the post-Soviet youngsters, who had a completely different attitude towards the limits of obedience. As opposed to the Israeli political culture, which takes for granted the citizens' readiness to be recruited whenever needed, the attitude towards the state in the collapsing Soviet Union swayed from scepticism to hostility. This state of affairs was especially evident among the representatives of ethnic minorities in general and Jews in particular. For several decades the people regarded the regime with disrespect, presumably because that was how the regime regarded them. The early 1990s were marked by extreme distrust in the state and military authorities by the Soviet public, especially by the youth; it was also the time when more than 400,000 Soviet immigrants – among them the majority of the 6th prison rebellion participants – arrived in Israel.

The Soviet-born youngsters went through two cycles of rapid social changes. The fact that adolescent immigrants from the USSR encountered socio-cultural changes prior to their emigration is crucial for the formation of the patterns of their social behaviour in Israel.²⁷ In this period of extensive reforms, young people in particular succeeded in acquiring skills that had not been available to the previous generations and accumulated formative experiences which were different not only from those of their parents' generation but also from those of their age group who emigrated from the Soviet state three or four years before.

During the same period, a unique mix of post-Soviet culture was created, including the rock music culture that flourished in Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk and other cities as an 'underground'. 'The rock community was not defined merely by a love of rock music. It was the shared lifestyles and philosophies that really united it.'²⁸ One striking feature of the rock community was the distinction it made between itself and the 'official society'. This culture offered an aesthetic and moral alternative to both the collapsing system of socialist realism and the American consumer culture, which invaded the streets and squares of the capital and the peripheral towns. The changing post-Soviet society created alternative cultural symbols and arenas: the squares and bazaars, the open-air discussion clubs and the kiosks displaying everything from the 'Manual of Theosophy' to the 'Secrets of Sex', from the complete works of Tolstoy to cotton panties made in Turkey, offered a plethora of street entertainment. Street music ranged from prisoners' romances to Beatles imitations, from great performances by unemployed members of the orchestra to accordion tunes played by war veterans.

Frisby lists a number of factors to explain the dramatic rise of the Russian youth culture in the years of *Perestroika*: (1) the proliferation of young anti-establishment political poetry; (2) the appearance of the tape recorder and improved recording methods; (3) the decline of the Komsomol as a formal, bureaucratic body; (4) the sobering process among youth and the gap between practice, ideology, and reality in the various areas of life; and (5) change in the perception of the West following exposure to it (albeit partial) and awareness of the gap between reality and the image of the West that had been presented to Russian youth.²⁹ The strengthening of the 'youth culture' coincided with and was fostered by the appearance of *Perestroika* and concepts such as democracy and pluralism. Starting at the end of the 1980s, and during the course of the 1990s, there emerged a number of different types of informal youth groups: football fan groups, rock fan groups (akin to those in the West), political groups (from democratic to fascist), environmental groups, anti-West groups, pacifist groups and religious groups. Paradoxically, the Russian youth culture of the *Perestroika* period was more akin to that of the protest movements of the 1960s and the era of the students' revolt and the flower children than to the Western youth culture of the early 1990s.³⁰

Glasnost condemned traditional values, the ideology and the regime. There was a marked devaluation of the prestige of higher education, in part as a consequence of the intense criticism of the Soviet educational system during this period. Changing economic circumstances also played a major role in changing students' attitudes towards education: a higher education no longer held much promise of a job or a successful career.³¹ *Glasnost* also condemned the world of the parental generation; this condemnation, however, became a serious trap for the young generation. In the words of Mirsky and Prawer:

The central message of glasnost was that the parents' generation was misled, failed, erred, went bankrupt, left nothing for the younger generation – there was nothing to inherit and nothing to rebel against. [...] Adolescents who have to have 'tradition' and an 'establishment', if only to rebel against as they fashion their own values, were left with no opponent in the wrestling match of adolescence; [...] rebellion has lost its purpose.³²

Julia Mirsky says that these changes coloured the individuation processes of adolescents in this society, and the processes they underwent in immigration, in a unique hue.³³ The young, who came of age during the social transformations and eagerly adopted their messages, discovered for themselves that the gaps between them and their parents' generation were very large and barely bridgeable. In Svetlana Boym's words, 'there is at

least one feature of postmodern culture that is particularly relevant to the post-Soviet situation: the loss of the master narrative. Its disappearance could be not just liberating, but also frightening.³⁴ As stressed by Wilson and Bachkatov, in the time of *Perestroika* 'loneliness – the absence of anyone near in whom to confide – was clearly a factor behind the number of youthful suicides. Suicides were the commonest cause of early death after heart disease, cancer and traffic accidents.'³⁵ The young generation reached Israel already traumatized, confused and vulnerable.

New Immigrants in the Israeli Military: 50 Years Later

For a long time the Israeli army had been portrayed as a primary agent of new immigrants' absorption into Israeli society. In 1949 Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declared, 'The army must serve as a pioneering educational force for Israeli youth, both native-born and immigrants'.³⁶ Ben-Gurion believed that conscription would help forge a sense of national identity by welding the disparate elements of Jews from various countries and cultures resident in Israel. From the very outset, Ben-Gurion intended Israel's armed forces to become instruments of a cohesive Jewish citizenry. As mentioned by Stuart Cohen, 'the IDF was conventionally, and for the most part justifiably, considered to be the nation's principal equalizer – as one of the very few institutions capable of moderating the massive ethnic and socio-economic divides which otherwise threatened to tear Israel apart'.³⁷

Many people still believe that the IDF continues to make a significant corporate contribution to social integration in Israel. However, as far back as 20 years ago Azarya and Kimmerling found that

the military service is a hampering rather than facilitating factor in the immigrants' access to the Israeli center. Immigrant soldiers' military experience, in low ranks and peripheral units, tends to relegate them to more peripheral rather than central positions in the society. Furthermore, military service does not present a very suitable meeting place for the immigrant and his new society³⁸ ... the placement of new immigrants in the IDF seems to follow paths directed by a latent bureaucratic structure along channels of least resistance.³⁹

The objective hardships of military service – such as physical discomfort, hard work, discipline and limitations on self-expression – are likely to be projected by the immigrant on the general conditions of life in the Israeli society. The social isolation and misappropriation of skills experienced by new immigrants in the army accentuates their feelings of alienation and status incongruence. Moreover, military service detaches the immigrant from

civilian life at the most crucial period of settlement and reorganization. It is doubtful whether the immigrants themselves are aware of the negative effects of military service. But data collected by the 'Tazpit' research institute demonstrated that only 26 per cent of males in the 17–23 age cohort expressed willingness to serve in the army.⁴⁰ The IDF still provides the largest framework within which Israeli secular and religious Jews from various ethnic origins and social backgrounds can meet on common ground and equal terms. However, as Stuart Cohen indicates, growing tendencies towards non-service, segregated service and conditional service – on religious as well as on non-religious grounds – are producing variant attitudes towards conscription as a formative *rite of passage* towards Israeli citizenship. In this respect, instead of being a 'nation binder', military service now threatens to become a great 'nation divider'.⁴¹

In recent years, the relationship between Israeli society and the IDF has undergone significant changes. On the elite level, an erosion of the partnership between senior politicians and the military has taken place. At the broader societal level, past manifestations of levels of integration between the military and society are not being sustained. There are three main indications that this change of relations has happened: (1) a decline in the cultural centrality of the IDF in Israeli society; (2) the fluctuation in motivation to military service; (3) an erosion in the immunity of the IDF to public criticism.⁴²

Whereas public criticism of the IDF during the period of its military triumphs in the 1950s and 1960s was rare, Israel's army today is fighting a rearguard action against critical public scrutiny. Criticism comes from a number of sources, most prominently the media, then the courts, army reservists, and parents of soldiers on active duty. Courts today interfere in a wide range of military matters, ranging from human rights to gender issues. Parents of Israeli soldiers – many of whom have served in the military themselves – demand a right to voice an opinion not only on where their children will serve but also on the conditions of their service. Public criticism of the IDF is also emerging among reservists.

Over the years, the motivation of Israeli youth to serve in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has undergone significant changes. Reuven Gal notes four main types of motivation for military induction: survival, ideological, normative and personal.⁴³ *Survival motivation* emerges when the soldier is convinced he has no alternative but to fight to stay alive. The primary trait of survival motivation is one's total dedication to the struggle. Individuals join the fight because they feel it is a matter of life and death. The feeling is so pervasive that the exceptions are de-legitimized. Those who dodge the draft are regarded as traitors. Everyone is drafted: men and women, young and old. *Ideological motivation* does not necessarily stem from a lack of

alternatives or a threat to existence, although in many cases the ideology that fuels statehood is derived from such a threat. An army based on ideological motivation becomes a sacred cow. Before Israel's independence, the motivation to join was mostly ideological, whether the group was the *Palmach*, the *Irgun* or *Lehi*. This continued even during the early years of statehood. A strong belief in ideology legitimizes virtually any means. The role of the commander in an ideological army is not only to provide military leadership, but also to educate and transmit the ideology. Such an army has virtually no need for coercion or obligatory service because the source of motivation is based on values and ideology. The *normative motivation* is based on the individual doing what society perceives as legitimate. On the contrary, *personal motivation* is related to self-realization of the individual, unconnected to the society or group.

During the first 20 years of Israel's existence, the main motivation for IDF service consisted of a combination of survival and ideological motivation. During the early years, and particularly during the War of Independence, the decision to join the military stemmed from the heavy odds against the Jewish people, when many felt their backs were against the wall. In the wake of the Holocaust, which claimed six million Jewish lives, this was no idle threat; hence military service was regarded as vital for survival. This motivation continued for several years following the War of Independence.

The second period, during which the dominant motivation was normative, lasted from the 1967 Six-Day War through the end of the 1980s. The readiness to join the IDF remained high, nearly identical to that of the previous periods of ideological and survival motivation. Polls conducted during the 1970s and 1980s showed that 85–90 per cent of Israeli youth expressed a desire to serve in the army, whether on a draft or voluntary basis. Most of the polls found only five or six per cent who said they would prefer not to join the army. The army was a norm and young people were expected to be part of the military, so that their motivation was the result of social pressure.

The third period has lasted since the Palestinian uprising in 1987. A large percentage of inductees were driven by the need for advancement and saw the army as an important tool. The IDF responded quickly to this trend and today the military branches compete for the best and brightest. Moreover, the military has instituted a salary tier that includes a range of positions. The IDF has also begun to offer more opportunities to women – not out of existential need, but rather to ensure equal opportunity: a vital element in personal motivation.

Reuven Gal notes that 'today, the motivation for a military career is so heavily based on salary and other benefits that in early 1999, air force

reserve pilots threatened to strike unless they received full life insurance plans'.⁴⁴ This attitude is likely to lead to union representation of soldiers, similar to that in several European militaries. Essentially, the IDF is moving toward an all-volunteer force based on personal motivation.

Militaries have been multi-ethnic and multilingual since the dawn of history. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the existence of a multicultural situation *de facto* does not lead to a culturally unbiased policy and practice automatically. As Baruch Kimmerling notes, Israel remains a state of 'multiple cultures without multiculturalism': the state and the veteran elites still held a mono-cultural vision of society, so that the melting-pot mechanism is implicitly still working.⁴⁵ The military is one of the most assimilationist institutions in that it demands almost complete de-socialization and re-socialization of immigrants. In the armed forces the encounter between immigrants and the absorbing society is asymmetric, based on the assumption that the immigrants' native culture is inferior. New immigrants from the former Soviet Union constitute ten per cent of the annual cohort of new recruits, and they have been more resistant to integration than the previous groups of immigrants. Consequently, most immigrants feel they are forced to deny their own identities and assimilate unconditionally into the dominant culture, although the re-socialization process does not efficiently promote their mobility in Israeli society.

Summary

In 1989, when a sense of excitement and hope for change was prevalent in all of Soviet society, Deborah Adelman tried to isolate the most essential socio-psychological characteristics of 'the children of *Perestroika*'. One of the respondents in her study, a 17-year-old Moscow University student, suggested his own definition:

Without a doubt, what distinguishes my generation is that we are not afraid of anything. [...] Without a doubt we are becoming more responsible and freer. We have been freed of the fears that the previous generation had, and we are able to talk more openly. Sometimes my parents tell me to watch what I say over telephone. But I don't have any fear inside of me. I'm not afraid. I want not to be afraid.⁴⁶

Eight years later these 'youth of *Perestroika*' refused 'to be afraid' in confronting the reality of an Israeli military jail.

Howard Becker's *Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* emphasized that many social groups and events traditionally perceived as criminal are, in fact, guided in their everyday operations by meanings and styles which are

not considered deviant in the subcultures to which they belong.⁴⁷ The immigrants' psychological loneliness, rooted in the underground subculture of the collapsing Soviet Union and combining 'romantic nihilism' with complete disengagement from the military, predetermined at least silent resistance to the military authorities. While imprisoned in the military jails these young people felt alienated from the events taking place around them. Prolonged anomie, which had unsurprisingly appeared among the immigrant teenagers in a situation of non-volitional marginality suffering from feelings of deprivation and frustration, contributed to the uprising in the Israeli military jail. None of the rioters has repented; all feel their only mistake was in finishing their mutiny too quickly. Moreover, another rebellion took place in May 1997 in Military Prison No. 4. Interestingly enough, one of the mutineers, Anatoliy Gitelman, wrote a novel about this riot, published in one of the most popular Russian magazines, *Yunost* ('Youth') but not in Israel.⁴⁸

NOTES

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1. Thorsten Sellin, *Culture Conflict and Crime* (New York: Social Science Research Council 1938), pp.29–30.
2. *Ibid.*, p.63.
3. Ann Swidler, 'Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies', *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986), p.273.
4. For further discussion see: Alek Epstein, 'State-Mediated "Hierarchy of Diversities" and the Freedom of Individual Self-Identification: Towards a Dynamic Liberal Model of Multiculturalism', *New Global Development: Journal of International and Comparative Social Welfare*, 15 (1999), pp.36–51.
5. Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), p.216.
6. On the importance of relative deprivation in the explanation of the occurrence and the level of group rebellion see the cross-cultural research conducted by Ryan Dudley and Ross Miller, 'Group Rebellion in the 1980s', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 (1998), pp.77–96.
7. On immigrant teenagers' marginality see Rita Sever and Alek Epstein, 'Personal and Contextual Marginality of Immigrant Students in Israel' (Paper presented at the 34th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology, Tel Aviv University, 11–15 July 1999).
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