**The Impact of Women on the Development of the Israel Healthcare System:**

**The Contributions of Nurse Ida Wissotzky**

**Introduction**

***"I knew the path would be a long and difficult one. There are no roses here, but rocks [...]and I wish you further development, progress and success in healing and preventing disease, and I am certain that you will know how to fulfill everything that your sacred profession demands from you in developing this country, and that you will know what our national human emotion and our people who are rebuilding the country need from you."****.*[[1]](#endnote-1)

Women made important, although often overlooked, contributions to the development of the healthcare sector in Israel. One such woman was Ida Wissotzky. Her numerous contributions include her work with Jewish refugees in Cypriot internment camps, with wounded soldiers during the 1948 war and beyond, and with immigrants in Israeli Absorption camps. In recent years, the professional literature in nursing has discussed the importance of the relationship between nursing on the one hand and the people who make policy and politics, on the other hand. Ida Wissotzky Krinsky, about whom this article was written, was unique in that from the beginning she combined a sense of professional mission with political action and involvement in leading health policy, in the first years of the State of Israel and in the years that preceded its establishment. The article will describe the most important junctures in the history of nursing and of the State of Israel through the eyes of one nurse, a determined warrior and compassionate woman, who aspired to combine pioneering work, health policy and politics. The article aim is to fill this gap by describing Wissotzky’s activities as a nurse in a developing profession, as well as her involvement in the political struggles and ideologies marking the years of nation-building. It thus contributes to a better understanding about the impact of women on the development of military and public health nursing in Israel.

Like other immigrant nurses in the 1930s, together with those already in Eretz Israel, Ida Wissotzky was tasked with responding to multiple crises at a time when the healthcare system – both its critical care *and* preventive health functions – was just developing. And many, Wissotzky among them, made enormous contributions even as their European families and communities were being destroyed. Nurse Wissotzky’s work spanned all of these crises, including working with post-Holocaust refugees in Cypriot camps; caring for the wounded during the 1948 War for Independence and later conflicts; and responding to the complex healthcare needs wrought by massive immigration to Israel between 1948 and 1951, which doubled the young country’s population. In no other country have nurses been tasked to respond, simultaneously, to as many crises – all without established institutions, protocols and guidelines, and with extreme shortages of medical equipment and personnel, especially of other nurses. It is not then surprising that Ida Wissotzky’s name appears in numerous historic contexts, all regarding her highly appreciated and often groundbreaking achievements in the tumultuous years of nation-building in Israel. Nonetheless, despite her impact on military and public health nursing in Israel, beyond passing references, Among the people I interviewed, only a few could add information about her.

Wissotzky, in fact, frequently wrote in professional newspapers and kept handwritten drafts from lectures she delivered at conferences. While active in the Mapam Party, (Mifleget Po'alim Me'uhedet - the Hebrew expression for the United Workers' Party), and the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement, the leadership of these organizations ensured that their members’ contributions, including Wissotzky’s articles and their drafts, were preserved in the archives at Givat Haviva (the national education center of Israel’s Kibbutz Federation). These archival materials, including a book written in her memory, are the basis for this article. In addition, in light of the fact that most of her family members were killed in the Holocaust, and that she had no children, the only known orally transmitted information about her comes from this author’s interview with two nurses who worked in parallel with Wissotzky and knew her during the years being investigated.

Drawing on both archival information and interviews, this article aims to tell the story of Wissotzky’s major contributions to the extraordinary challenges of her time. In so doing, it endeavors to fill an important gap in the historic record regarding Wissotzky’s life specifically. More generally, however, it aims to show how her contributions illustrate the role that many women played in shaping the development of military and public health nursing in Israel.

Following a review of literature on the role of women in nation-building before and after the establishment of Israel (Section One), and brief overview of Wissotzky’s life from her birth in Poland (Section Tow), I describe the educational and ideological underpinnings of Wissotzky’s work and world view (Section Three). The article then details her contributions in each of the three nursing areas to which she contributed so much: responding to Holocaust refugees (Section Four); organizing medical care during war (Section Five); and developing medical services for immigrants (Section Six). The article concludes with a look at the political struggles marking the development of Israeli healthcare system through the lens of Wissotzky’s personal experiences (Section Seven). We conclude in Section Eight with some reflections on.

**Section One: Background**

Like others, Ida Wissotzky, who was a nurse, aspired to inculcate the Zionist spirit with the means at her disposal as a professional and as an active woman in the field of health. In recent years, research on women and gender in the context of the history of the Yishuv (pre-state Israel) has expanded. The issue of absorption and immigration is discussed by researchers,[[2]](#endnote-2) [Nadav Davidovich](https://scholar.google.co.il/citations?user=83MIhIQAAAAJ&hl=iw&oi=sra) and [Shifra Shvarts](https://scholar.google.co.il/citations?user=NpmWqssAAAAJ&hl=iw&oi=sra) claim that although Zionist ideology portrayed the new state as the homeland of the Jewish people and recognized the importance of the ingathering of the exiles, many people feared that the Zionist enterprise would fail under the pressures of mass immigration and the health problems that accompanied it. Researchers further claim that the healthcare system played a key role in absorption of immigrants, and that a branched set of systems of welfare workers, nurses, and doctors acted not only to cure, but also to educate the public and shape public healthcare.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Liat Steir-Livny claims that members of Israeli organizations tried to transform a difficult and complex migration process into a fixed and simplistic scheme, moving rapidly “from Holocaust to resurrection”, and ignoring difficulties and problems.[[4]](#endnote-4) Such shifts in perception or in the goal of assisting immigrants can be seen in studies dealing with the absorption of immigrants in the years before the establishment of the state, especially in the healthcare context. Prominent in this field is Sachlav Stoler-Liss’s study of models of the absorption of immigrants in the healthcare system, which shaped the idea of public health as a national task.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Another field of research addresses women’s participation in the effort to establish the State of Israel, their contributions, roles, and status as an influential force in society.[[6]](#endnote-6) Researchers such as Margalit Shilo, Hanna Herzog, and others, discuss women and gender issues in the early years of the Yishuv and the establishment of the State of Israel.[[7]](#endnote-7) Shilo notes that although such research is expanding, key questions have not yet been examined with respect to gender issues and women in the Yishuv. She believes that professional women, whom she calls nation-builders, changed the character of the country, and suggests that a historical analysis of women and gender can shed new light on that society. In her book *Women Build a Nation*, Shilo discusses professional women, medicine, and nursing, among other issues. She notes that, unlike nurses in hospitals who follow doctors’ instructions, public healthcare nurses are required to take initiative, in accordance with their knowledge.[[8]](#endnote-8) Nira Bartal also addresses, among other things, aspects of gender and professionalism at the beginning of the Yishuv, when the school for nurses first made it possible to train women to work in various professions.[[9]](#endnote-9)

This research examines the primary spheres in which women were engaged during the early years of the nation: education, health care, and raising children.[[10]](#endnote-10) Indeed, through the crucial roles they played in motherhood and nursing, women were able to become actively involved in the first decades of Zionist society. According to Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern, in the process of nation-building, a new definition emerged of the roles of women, (authority through motherhood), as reflected in the welfare organizations that women founded, managed, and operated, which elevated motherhood to a sacred status. Margalit-Stern attributes national importance to what she sees as an intentional process to symbolize motherhood as meeting the needs of the collective.[[11]](#endnote-11) IdaWissotzky, like other weman at the time, (Berta Landesman, Selma Meyer, Sara Lishansky, Sara Shmukler and Henrietta Szold) who promoted the role of nurses in public program for maternal and child health, many of whom were not mothers themselves, Wissotzky also combined professional and public activities.

Most studies on the history of medicine deal with the development of various services in terms of the chronology of events in the relevant period. Sachlav Stoler-Liss and Shifra Shvarts note that in studies of the history of the Yishuv period and the beginning of the state, little emphasis is given to the history of medicine, and even less attention is given to the study of women in the fields of medicine and treatment. Stoler-Liss and Shvarts have examined the latter in an article about Dr. Miriam Aharonova, who preached that motherhood was part of the national mission, despite not being a mother herself.[[12]](#endnote-12) It appears that in many cases, the legitimacy of the women seeking to be influential was achieved through advancing the goals of promoting health and helping other women, motherhood and child-rearing.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Studies on the history of nursing in Israel, which has traditionally been characterized as a profession for females, do not address these issues surrounding the role of gender and the promotion of motherhood, instead focusing on describing the development of the profession, rather than development of gender roles.[[14]](#endnote-14) Bartal points out that researchers who describe the work of Hadassah or relate Szold’s story do so because of the importance of medical practice and public health care to the Zionist enterprise. The gender aspect of nursing has received little attention in research despite Szold’s central role in promoting nursing in Eretz Israel.,[[15]](#endnote-15) And the fact that the first nursing leaders such as Florence Nightingale, Ethel Gordon Fenwick and Livinia Doc embarked on a struggle for nursing inspired by women's struggles for equal rights.[[16]](#endnote-16) Some recent articles do highlight the importance of nurses’ involvement in the political world to advance the goals of the profession.[[17]](#endnote-17) However, they do not discuss the price that these nurses paid for their political involvement, although the records show that nurses struggled to secure their place and professional future, even before the establishment of the state.[[18]](#endnote-18)

**Section Two. An Overview of Ida Wissotzky’s Life**

Ida (Hinda) Wissotzky was born in 1909 in Bialystok, Poland. Her father, Moshe, was a successful merchant and her mother, Zlata, was his second wife. Her younger brother (Dr. Reuven Wissotzky), and his wife Shoshana, a registered nurse, worked in Czyste Hospital and both of them perished in the Holocaust along with their two children.

In 1924, Ida graduated from the "Hebrew Gymnasium" in Bialystok and moved to Warsaw.A year later, (1925) she studied at the School of Commerce in Warsaw, from which she graduated with honors. She attended a high school for another year, but this did not fulfill her ambitions. So in 1928, she enrolled in the prestigious Warsaw nursing school, Chista, which was adjacent to a Jewish hospital of the same name. She graduated by1931 and upon graduation she completed another year at the Warsaw University in Public Health and sychology(1932).[[19]](#endnote-19) She worked as a nurse in charge of a health center adjacent to the hospital and served as chairman of the Union of Jewish Nurses in Poland.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Wissotzky and her husband Joshua Krinsky, whom she married shortly before immigrating to Eretz Israel in 1937. Joshua was an engineer and worked for the Israeli Electric Corporation. Like Ida, he was active in the "Haganah" and in the institutions of the "Histadrut". Ida wrote that he was a faithful partner in all her activities and a faithful friend to the Nurses Public.[[21]](#endnote-21)

Initially, Wissotzky who was a member of the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement from the 1930s in Warsaw together with her husband, fulfilled the mission of the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement by becoming members of Kibbutz Ein Shemer. During 1937, they immigrated to Eretz Israel, initially living on a kibbutz, and from 1938-1944 she worked at Hadassah Hospital in Tel Aviv as a general nurse and as a nurse in the operating room. That year (1944) she became a nurse in the public health in Tel Aviv. This period marks the beginning of her work and involvement in nursing and public missions as presented in detail in the article itself. Throughout all these years, Wissotzky was a member of the National Secretariat of the Israeli Nurses Association, a member of the Executive Committee of the Histadrut (General Organization of Workers in Israel), a member of the National Secretariat of the Workers’ Council and an activist in the political party Mapam, to which she bequeathed her property after her death.

**Section Three: Educational and Ideological Foundations**

Wissotzky’s education at the Czyste School of Nursing and her involvement with the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement shaped her life commitments throughout her career.

1. Professional Background - (1928-1937) Ida Wissotzky graduated in 1931 from the Czyste School of Nursing in Warsaw. Its history and role among Warsaw’s Jewish population is important for understanding the roots of her professional, organizational, and public activities, as well as her ideology. The Nursing school was established in 1923 by doctors of the Czyste Jewish Hospital in Warsaw to train Jewish nurses, since Jews were not being accepted into other schools. The Warsaw Municipality and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)[[22]](#endnote-22) helped finance the school. The JDC recruited an outstanding nurse from the United States, Emilia Greenwald,[[23]](#endnote-23) who ran the school from 1923 to 1927, when the school won a prestigious award and received great acclaim.

The school’s spirit was greatly influenced by Greenwald, who was not only captivated by Henrietta Szold, but by professional attitudes prevalent in New York at the time,[[24]](#endnote-24) namely, socialized medicine, which combined socialist values and social feminism, placing particular emphasis on the importance of nursing in general and public healthcare nurses.[[25]](#endnote-25) The Czyste students were carefully selected according to the spirit of the school.[[26]](#endnote-26) Students who excelled in their first year of studies were sent to the United States to train as instructors and principals.[[27]](#endnote-27)

After her success in Warsaw, Greenwald was sent by the Hadassah organization to establish a network of community health centers in the pre-state Land of Israel.[[28]](#endnote-28) In 1932, Greenwald was asked by the Hospital’s director Dr. Chaim Yassky[[29]](#endnote-29) to prepare an evaluation on the hospital’s nursing services. In 1933, she submitted two evaluation reports with suggestions, which the Hadassah nurses were quick to adopt.[[30]](#endnote-30) All of this brought about a congruence in the conception of nursing in the Hadassah-affiliated nursing school and the Czyste nursing school, which were both considered prestigious schools at the time. Bartal points out that both schools were founded around the same the time by American nurses. The main difference lies in the preparation to care for immigrants beginning in the early 1920s, and the component of preventive medicine in the training at the Hadassah-affiliated hospital and school (which had the same head nurse).[[31]](#endnote-31)

Nursing at Hadassah and Czyste nursing schools was founded on the same ideology of the Women’s Zionist Organization of America (Hadassah). The feminist spirit and the humanitarian vision were prominent elements of the education at both schools.[[32]](#endnote-32) This spirit can be seen from the words of one of the graduates (Lisa Mironchik) to the *The Nurse in Israel* periodical newspaper:

“The aims of the study program were concrete: to educate the students to a high level of cultural qualities, to develop their emotional connection to the profession, to teach them to care for patients through love for others, to teach the students to see the person they are caring for not only as a patient but as part of his family and environment...”[[33]](#endnote-33)

The schools were similar in that the teachers were involved in the work of their corresponding hospital departments, and the International Association of Nurses accepted the Czyste and Hadassah nursing schools into its ranks as members.[[34]](#endnote-34) Many of its graduates were recognized for their courageous and extraordinary deeds.[[35]](#endnote-35) Bella Blum-Bilitzka, a first-year graduate, served as the school’s principal until its closure during the Holocaust. She managed to continue to operate the school underground, even when Poland was under Nazi occupation. In an interview conducted for this article, Blum-Bilitzka’s daughter spoke about her mother’s heroism and the consciousness of their mission held by the nurses in those days, who entered the profession seeking not a salary, but to contribute to society.[[36]](#endnote-36)

. Evidence of this can be found in Wissotzky’s writings:

“A new type of Jewish nurse emerged from [the Czyste School]— a nurse who bore the burden of the health of the Jewish community in Poland between the two world wars. During the time of horrors, the angel in white fulfilled a noble mission in rescuing children and smuggling them out of the ghetto. The nurses were everywhere: among the insurgents in the ghetto, with the partisans in the cities, in the last dramatic campaign. In the Warsaw ghetto, the last of the nurses perished with the last patients. They went to their death with their patients. The nurses went up to the stake together with the people, and the nurses stood the fateful test until the bitter end. Only memories remain”.[[37]](#endnote-37)

By 1937, 245 nurses had graduated, of whom 39 had immigrated to Eretz Israel, where they were promised a job.[[38]](#endnote-38) Ida Wissotzky among them.[[39]](#endnote-39) Upon the establishment of the State of Israel, ninety-two graduates began working in their field in Israel, and most of these contributed to the War of Independence and the Sinai War (1956), as well as to the absorption of immigrants during Israel’s post-war major waves of migration.[[40]](#endnote-40)

The deep friendship that connected the nursing school alumni who were members of the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement began in Warsaw and lasted for the rest of their lives.[[41]](#endnote-41) Many lived and worked together.[[42]](#endnote-42) Ida Wissotzky, in her role as a head nurse of the Medical Services for Immigrants, leveraged these relationships and was able to recruit them to work with her.

**B.** Ideological background -Participation in *Hashomer Hatzair & Mapam*

Until her immigration to Israel in 1937, Wissotzky served as the head of the Association of Jewish Certified Nurses in Poland[[43]](#endnote-43) concomitantly with her activities in the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement until her emigration. The association was recognized by the Warsaw municipality and by the Socialist Party of Poland.[[44]](#endnote-44)

At that same time, (1933) Wissotzky’s fate became linked with that of Meir Yaari, the undisputed leader of *Hashomer Hatzair* youth movement. *Hashomer Hatzair* was founded in Galicia under the name *Hashomer* in 1913, the Warsaw branch opening later.[[45]](#endnote-45) In 1916, it was renamed *Hashomer Hatzair*.[[46]](#endnote-46) From its early years, the idea of fulfillment was fundamental to the movement. It was a practical goal of immigration to and settlement in Israel.[[47]](#endnote-47) Aviva Halamish and Alon Gan point out that only in the mid-1920s did the movement add an ideological element: Zionism and socialism, and later the fraternity of all peoples (with a focus on humanism and love of humanity).[[48]](#endnote-48) This approach was consistent with the education Wissotzky received at the school in Warsaw of educating the students to a reach a high social and cultural level of understanding, to see not only the patient, but the individual’s family and environment, and to instill the love of others.[[49]](#endnote-49)

The term *Hashomer Hatzair* refers to three organizational frameworks: the youth movement founded in 1913; the national Kibbutz Movement founded in 1927; and the political party Mapam, founded in 1946. Aviva Halamish notes that in those days, the influence of the youth movement and national Kibbutz Movement far exceeded their actual size, and even exceeded the electoral power of Mapam, as the youth movement flourished during Yaari’s leadership. After merging with the Zionist-socialist *Ahdut HaAvodah* party led by David Ben-Gurion in 1948, Mapam won 19 seats in the first Knesset, under Yaari’s leadership.[[50]](#endnote-50)

Wissotzky’s fate was linked to that of Meir Yaari During her time as a political activist in Warsaw with the pro-Zionist doctors and nurses, she provided free medical care and hospitalization to pioneers from the training groups of the pioneer movements in Poland, who were hospitalized at Czyste Hospital.[[51]](#endnote-51) The roots of the connection between Meir Yaari and Ida can be surmised from his words after her death:

“I suffered from a high fever, and it was decided to transfer me to the Jewish hospital in Warsaw. There I was cared for by a young girl, a member of the movement named Ida Wissotzky. From the time I was admitted to the hospital, without exaggeration she spent day and night at my bedside. In large part due to her dedication, I came out alive, as penicillin treatment was not yet known at the time, and meningitis was then a fatal disease”.[[52]](#endnote-52)

In 1933, Yaari suffered an attack of meningitis. He lost consciousness and was hospitalized in Warsaw where, he said, he met his saving angel in the person of Ida Wissotzky. She stayed by his bedside day and night until the staff became convinced that she was his fiancée. And, indeed, a special and affectionate relationship developed between the two.[[53]](#endnote-53)

A relationship that will be maintained throughout her life despite all the difficulties she has experienced.

**Section Four: Responding to Holocaust Refugees. (1938-1947)**

By 1938, Wissotzky and her husband had moved to Tel Aviv where she worked at Hadassah Hospital and in public health. In 1944 she was appointed head nurse in public health in Tel Aviv.[[54]](#endnote-54) At this time, the nursing leadership in Eretz Israel was aware of what was happening in Europe. Shulamit Cantor (the head nurse at Hadassah), Szold, and others noted in their speeches that the nurses in Eretz Israel must prepare for the arrival of war refugees, with emphasis placed on the public health and healthcare for immigrants.[[55]](#endnote-55)

Parallel with her work as a nurse, Wissotzky also was active with the Haganah, a pre-state Zionist defense organization, which was heavily involved in aiding Jewish refugees from Europe in their efforts to reach Eretz Israel. At that time, women were usually recruited to this organization to fulfill first aid and relief roles,[[56]](#endnote-56) such as integrating into ‘Magen David Adom’.[[57]](#endnote-57) Although Wissotzky does not mention this in her memoirs, an in-depth search of the Haganah’s archives uncovered documentation of her membership number 876.[[58]](#endnote-58)

In an interview with a nursing publication (*‘The Nurse in Israel*’), Wissotzky described how one night, a ship of illegal immigrants arrived on the shores of Tel Aviv. Some of the people on board were taken by ambulance to the hospital., and when British police arrived looking for illegal immigrants, they found the beds occupied by the fake patients. At night, the illegal immigrants were then transferred to private homes by members of the Haganah organization.[[59]](#endnote-59) In his letters for interview as head of the military medical service, Dr. Sheba[[60]](#endnote-60) mentioned how the arrival of the illegal immigrants created a great amount of work at Hadassah Hospital.[[61]](#endnote-61)

The connection she made all her life between the place from which she came and which was the motive for her work to the place she aspired to, is expressed in the words she delivered at the ceremony for the first graduates of the Hadassah School of Nursing in Tel Aviv in 1946, in which she made the connection between Hadassah and Czyste:

“We, graduates of schools in the Diaspora, fought for years for our right as Jewish women to pursue a career in the medical profession, surrounded by the poisoned atmosphere of anti-Semitism. We charted our path and conquered the profession for ourselves. Now Diaspora Jewry has fallen into an abyss along with millions of its people and its cultural assets. It is a great and immense consolation to us that the Land of Eretz Israel brings together not only the exiles of Eretz Israel but also establishes for itself important institutions in the medical profession”.[[62]](#endnote-62)

From the content of the remarks, it can be seen with certainty that her education and the events of the Holocaust influenced her vision of the importance of the profession and training in Eretz Israel.

Ida became an employee of the municipality (1944), and she dealt with public health. She devoted herself to the work, but one year later when it became clear to her after World War II that the DP camps had been set up in Europe,(1945) and Perhaps because most of her family members in Europe were killed during World War II,. she immediately asked to go there and help: “I feel I can benefit them in my role that I take on myself”, she wrote.[[63]](#endnote-63) Israel Rokach, the mayor of Tel Aviv, refused on the grounds that the difficult situation in the preventive medicine service did not allow for her release.[[64]](#endnote-64) Her ambition to help Holocaust survivors was not fulfilled, and she remained in her position until 1946 when she was called to the detention camps in Cyprus.

These were camps set up by the British authorities to detain immigrants who arrived in Eretz Israel without permits. About 52,000 immigrants were sent to detention camps in Cyprus. The British Army Medical Service, which was supposed to provide the detainees with medical services in the camps, was not prepared for the scope of the services and medical problems it had to deal with. Without prior preparation, it was tasked with taking care of the health of citizens of a wide age range, in the sick and disabled, pregnant women and babies, who went and fought as the period of captivity and detention lasted.[[65]](#endnote-65)

In the first expedition, Dr. Sheba, a physician and member of the Haganah, went to inspect the camps and the medical services.[[66]](#endnote-66) Upon his return, he recruited Ida Wissotzky to work in Cyprus as part of a delegation of doctors and nurses island to respond to the 200–300 people who daily required medical assistance.[[67]](#endnote-67) The mission to Cyprus was a dream come true for Ida. In the draft of an article for a newspaper she wrote, “Cyprus is the main front of Zionism. We must do our utmost to help and prepare a warm home for them”.[[68]](#endnote-68)

Many years later, in January 1979, Ida published an article describing her experiences in Cyprus, noting the shocking health conditions that prevailed in the camps. noting that the children were survivors of the ghetto, graduates of the concentration camps, children without mother or father, weak and haunted by the spirits of the dead: “Almost every one of them was in a German or British camp for six years, and they did not know that somewhere there was a life where death and terror did not exist”.[[69]](#endnote-69)

While in Cyprus, Ida also participated in underground activities in the camp,[[70]](#endnote-70) Confirmed by one of the detainees and a member of Hashomer Hatzair who later became a well-known painter named Shmuel(Alexander Sandor) Katz:

“I know that she took an active part in smuggling explosives that were used to blow up an illegal immigrant ship. She helped smuggle out of custody (Eli Wiesel), who blew up the ship, and she helped smuggle members of Palyam (the naval branch of the Palmach) and handed them fake IDs. Katz described her as an angel from the Holy Land.[[71]](#endnote-71)

Wissotzky even visited Katz at the hospital after he contracted typhus and was hospitalized in Nicosia, and she cared for him. According to Katz, she had a special commitment to the people of Hashomer Hatzair. Her concern was beyond her role as a nurse and extended to providing members with a record player, records and painting tools, and teaching them songs and stories about the Land of Israel. Katz dedicated one of the paintings he painted in the camp to her memory.[[72]](#endnote-72)

Ida described in an article in the newspaper, The *Nurse in Israel,* the harsh conditions in the camps and concluded that the way life in the camps was organized was the biggest demonstration against The British policy (which reflected in the “White Paper” according to which the Land of Israel will be a common state for Arabs and Jews was therefore restricted to the Aliyah of Jews to Eretz Israel)

Later, she met many of the former internees from the camps on Cyprus during the Israeli War of Independence, as the former detainees were sent from the camps to the battlefield.[[73]](#endnote-73) Returning from the island, she continued to raise funds and to lead a clothing project to obtain donations of clothes for Cyprus detainees as part of her activities with women’s organizations.[[74]](#endnote-74)

**Section Five: Organizing Medical Care During War (1947-1949)**

Israel’s War of Independence began on November 30, 1947, the day after the UN resolution on the partition of the British-ruled Palestine Mandate. The war lasted about a year and a half, resulting in over 6,000 Jewish victims (about 1% of the total Jewish population) and several thousand injured.[[75]](#endnote-75) Around the time of the war’s outbreak, Dr. Sheba was appointed head of the military medical services, which became an independent unit recruiting medical and nursing personnel.[[76]](#endnote-76) At the beginning of the fighting, some 147 nurses (including Wissotzky) were recruited to the combat units, although they did not take part in the fighting. Most of them had previously served with the Haganah, Magen David Adom, or with Kupat Holim (the Sick Fund).[[77]](#endnote-77) By the end of the war, there were 263 nurses in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), but this number did not meet the needs of the army.[[78]](#endnote-78) Like other nurses, Wissotzky was recruited as a volunteer, based on personal connections.

Wissotzky was honored for her military service during the War. The documents indicate that she was active mainly on the southern front, as head nurse in a military hospital (Hospital No. 13, Sarafand, near Tzrifin camp, which became a government-run medical center after the war, named Assaf Harofeh). And although Wissotzky was recruited into the army without a rank, Dr. Sheba equipped her with an entry permit to all the hospitals in the country so she could extend her assistance everywhere.[[79]](#endnote-79) Her major contribution came during the Operation Yoav, campaign against Egypt in October of 1948, which claimed many lives, with many wounded were taken to hospitals.[[80]](#endnote-80) Within 48 hours, Wissotzky managed to set up a military hospital with 250 beds, equipped and ready to receive the wounded.[[81]](#endnote-81)

Dr. Sternberg, who worked with Wissotzky after the war, first met her at the IDF Medical Service headquarters, the day after Operation Yoav began. Their first meeting was on Saturday at the medical service headquarters on the Jaffa-Tel Aviv border, after dozens of wounded had been evacuated to a hospital in Sarafand. As Dr. Sternberg wrote:

“Ida did not talk much, but one could feel a lot of tension in her actions. She demanded: ‘Give me permission to get the equipment and furnishings and I will get them’. I put together a list of equipment with her and went into the office of Dr. Sheba, who had returned a short time earlier from the southern front. He was shocked by the sight of the many dead and wounded”.[[82]](#endnote-82)

Wissotzky’s characteristic organizational ability was greatly appreciated and paved the way for her next position in the medical services for immigrants. At the end of the war, Dr. Max Lindenfeld, commander of Hospital 13, wrote a letter of thanks and appreciation for her service in the army on behalf of Dr. Sheba, as part of an official day honoring the IDF.[[83]](#endnote-83)

**Section Six: Developing Medical Services for Mass Immigration (1949-1953)**

In April 1949, Wissotzky enlisted for her next mission, perhaps the most significant and central of her life: working in the immigrant camps. At that time, there was a severe shortage of medical personnel in Israel, leading to competition for nurses and doctors between the hospitals and the Sick Funds. Before the establishment of the State of Israel and during its early years, medical services were mainly provided by the Clalit Sick Fund, which was part of the Histadrut (General Organization of Workers in Israel) and had clinics and hospitals for the workers throughout the country. Other sick funds operating during that time were small, and their activities were limited. In fact, the personnel shortage was so severe that it was discussed in the Knesset (the supreme state body) on August 2, 1949. At the same time, the nurses were demanding improvements in their terms of their employment, especially if there was to be any chance of recruiting nurses who were married and had children. At the Knesset hearing, the nurses’ representative[[84]](#endnote-84) stated that the nurses had complied with the calls to go to work in the DP camps and the internment camps in Cyprus, and were now being asked to work in immigrant camps.[[85]](#endnote-85) Professional values and the struggle to improve conditions and wages for nurses were also raised publicly, and Wissotzky played an active role in this campaign. Her activities led to a closer connection with the doctors, the army, healthcare services for immigrants, and especially with Dr. Sternberg Director of Health Services for Immigrants, Dr. Sheba, and his deputy Dr. Baruch Pada.[[86]](#endnote-86)

Together with her professional nursing work, Wissotzky continued her public activities in Mapam party, the Workers’ Council, and the Nurses’ Association , everywhere championing the nurses’ cause.[[87]](#endnote-87) These two tracks of activity – medical and political – were to collide in the future, but in the early 1950s, Wissotzky was at the height of her professional and ideological activities. It is possible that the status of the Mapam party in these years had the effect of promoting her work. But without a doubt, her competence and contribution during the war led Dr. Sheba, as director of the Ministry of Health, to believe in her abilities.[[88]](#endnote-88) When she volunteered to manage nursing in the immigrant camps, Dr. Sternberg immediately approved her request.[[89]](#endnote-89)

The Jewish National Council, (Va‘ad Le’umi) established in 1920 during the British Mandate, was intended to be the executive institution of the Yishuv’s Assembly of Representatives (Asefat HaNivcharim). From 1928, it was officially recognized by the British Government and also began managing healthcare matters.[[90]](#endnote-90) When Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel increased during World War II, the National Committee decided that an institution for immigrants’ medical treatment should be established. The Medical Services for Immigrants (*Sharal*), established in 1944, was dedicated to providing immigrants medical examinations upon arrival, evaluating them medically, and providing healthcare coverage. In 1946, *Sharal* was transferred to the management of Hadassah. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the government took over management of *Sharal*, and camps for immigrants were set up at various sites.[[91]](#endnote-91) At the end of the War of Independence (20.7.1949), the young state of Israel addressed the urgent task of assuring free Jewish immigration. Within three-and-a-half years the population of Israel doubled: 650,000 people absorbed nearly 700,000 new immigrants from dozens of places in the Diaspora – a rate of absorption unprecedented in the world. All this happened at a time when tremendous effort was invested in recovering from the hardest of all Israel’s wars (the war of Independence), and while consolidating the nation’s sovereignty, infrastructure, and unity.[[92]](#endnote-92) 22 immigrant absorption camps were opened throughout the country, with 15 clinics, six dental clinics and five inpatient institutions, with a total of 350 beds.[[93]](#endnote-93) The harsh conditions in immigrant and transit camps also caused many to become sick and contract various contagious diseases, and one tenth of the people in the camps needed medical care. Almost half of them were Holocaust survivors. The number of immigrants from North Africa and Asia which increased at the end of 1951 included a high proportion of children and the elderly who immediately needed care.[[94]](#endnote-94) According to the report of 1950-51, the medical staff were engaged in medical rehabilitation, especially in Aliyah from Yemen, where thousands of children and infants were hospitalized and a significant percentage were infected with infectious diseases and poor nutrition. Of the 30,000 immigrants, 16,000 were hospitalized.[[95]](#endnote-95) By 1951, immigrants made up 75% of the total population.[[96]](#endnote-96) The enormous scale of immigration further intensified the debate on the issue of immigrant absorption.[[97]](#endnote-97) The poor level of hygiene in the camps, and the prevalence of infectious diseases, necessitated an accelerated development of preventive medicine and public healthcare. Among the immigrants were thousands of ill people, and many immigrants arrived without prior medical screening and in very poor physical condition. This, together with the shortage of skilled healthcare staff, exacerbated the challenge of providing healthcare for the immigrants.[[98]](#endnote-98)

The medical service for immigrants (*the Sharal*), that was transferred from Hadassa to the management of the Ministry of Health after the state establishment was headed by Dr. Sternberg, and Ida Wissotzky was appointed head nurse.[[99]](#endnote-99) As with her previous appointments, doctors recruited her to management positions based on her abilities. Dr. Sternberg wrote that in return for her enlisting in the medical service for immigrants, she demanded a “free hand”. whereby she created and filled a new role of head nurse. Sternberg said she performed this role with passion and endless devotion. She turned to the new camps that opened for absorption with the feeling that here is the weak point, here the great dangers and here also the real challenge to accompany the immigrant in his first steps in the country and thus “…is recorded as one of the brightest pages in the history of nursing in the country”.[[100]](#endnote-100)

The immigrant absorption policy was based on the Declaration of Independence, which called for the “ingathering of the exiles”. Following government guidelines, the country’s population would double in the first four years, especially as the Government stated that every Jew had the right to settle in Israel as their homeland.[[101]](#endnote-101) Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion laid out a philosophy regarding healthcare for immigrants, stating in a Knesset debate on November 21, 1949, that it was better for sick children to be treated with faith and love in Israel by its doctors and nurses, and if they were doomed to die, it would be better that they die in Israel.[[102]](#endnote-102)

Despite the common goals of Jewish Agency, the Joint (JDC), and the Sick Funds, the treatment of immigrants was affected by political tensions between them, as they all vied to become involved in and influence healthcare for immigrants. This mission offered women and women’s organizations a suitable sphere for realizing their vision of promoting health and education and promoting healthy motherhood. Wissotzky’s leadership under the existing conditions was exceptional. At each site, she appointed a head nurse from among her friends and colleagues, and was able to build teams around them with incredible speed, with many of the practical nurses and caregivers learning while working. Sternberg describes the many precautions that Wissotzky, as head nurse, took to prevent harm to the patient. For example, iron discipline was maintained regarding the medicine cabinet, which was arranged in exactly the same way in each clinic and ward to prevent mistakes or substitutions.[[103]](#endnote-103) During the first few years of the State, the number of nurses increased, but was still insufficient to meet the needs and many challenges presented by the massive influx of immigrants. While new hospitals and clinics were opened throughout the country, nursing schools could provide new staff members only after three years of rigorous training. In addition, the existing teams were preoccupied with caring for the wounded and disabled from the recently-ended war, preventing the treatment of epidemics and diseases, such as tuberculosis and polio that were prevalent in the country.

Most of the nurses recruited in the immigrant camps were Holocaust survivors themselves. To their ranks were added immigrant women, who worked in the immigrant camps supervised by a registered nurse. Organizations such as the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) and the Working Mothers Organization (Na‘amat), which focused on helping mothers and children, assisted the nurses in the camps and institutions across the country.[[104]](#endnote-104)

From 1949–1953 Ida Wissotzky was the Head Nurse of the Medical Services for Immigrants (*Sharal*). Many challenges had to be addressed in a short period of time, exacerbated by a shortage of staff and equipment. There was mutual trust and appreciation between Ida Wissotzky and Dr. Sternberg, and the latter even devoted a chapter in his book to the profession of nursing under her leadership.[[105]](#endnote-105)

The Israel State Archives contains a file entitled Medical/Nurses, which deals with the recruitment of nurses, in which there is a detailed discussion about their recruitment. An effort was made to recruit nurses from all the hospitals to work in the immigrant absorption camps, and especially from the graduates of the nursing schools.[[106]](#endnote-106)

The competition for staff and equipment reflected the disagreements between management of healthcare services in the camps and management of nursing by the Ministry of Health.[[107]](#endnote-107) On November 8, 1949, on behalf of the head nurse of the state, Shulamit Cantor, Dina Kaplanovich (principal of the Beilinson Nursing School), and Nurse Chaya Zeslavsky (of the Ministry of Health) visited the immigrant camps in Be’er Yaakov, Rosh HaAyin, Beit Lid and the Degani Hospital in Jaffa for mothers and children. The purpose of the visit was to assess the medical staff in the camps. This inspection found that there was no shortage of nurses.[[108]](#endnote-108) The review shows that medical services were provided in clinics and hospital rooms. In the camps, there were 35 working nurses and 121–123 beds. Each camp had delivery rooms and two midwives, who helped women who did not have time to be taken to the hospital for their deliveries.[[109]](#endnote-109)

Given the situation in the hospitals in Israel and the shortage of registered nurses, Cantor believed that it was not possible to provide only registered nurses for the camps, and she recommended setting a standard of three registered nurses for a child care unit and only one for adult's unit. Wissotzky, on the other hand, demanded that the adult care unit also be given three registered nurses, as is customary in the country’s hospitals.[[110]](#endnote-110)

The picture of the staff in the camps is also reflected in the words of Ms. Chaya Zeslavsky, who was the supervisor of public health in nursing before Ida, until the Sharal was transferred to the Ministry of Health, wrote in a document attached to Cantor’s letter:[[111]](#endnote-111)

"The immigrants were from different countries, with different habits and a precarious and frequently changing state of health. Zeslavsky wrote that skin and eye diseases are numerous and far exceed the norm. In the clinics, tropical ulcers require treatment twice a day, and eye patients should be given drops, and one qualified nurse per adult treatment unit has to give the medical treatment, such as penicillin injections, bandages, medicines and more, twice or three times a day, and indeed such treatments required more manpower. Treating ringworm is complicated and time consuming. The nurse has the task not only of caring for the patient but also of visiting the tents for the purpose of detecting the cases by careful examination. While in an ordinary population, after the diagnosis, the doctor prescribes the drug, in camps not all patients can follow the instructions, and the nurse must give treatments such as penicillin injections, bandages, medicines, etc. herself to patients lying in tents, and she must also perform clinic visits. All these treatments require more manpower".[[112]](#endnote-112) In Wissotzky reference to this issue, she demonstrated the desperate need for additional nurses in describing the immigrants from Yemen that brought with it many sick and disabled people in poor health.[[113]](#endnote-113) Similarly, Dr. Avraham Sternberg detailed in his book the consequences of the difficulties of medical and administrative treatment in the camps.[[114]](#endnote-114)

A month later, Dr. Sternberg wrote his own summary of the situation in “Sharal”, in which he also referred to the medical staff: “In this area, the difficulties are many, and they are very well known. The problem of nurses and no less the problem of suitable doctors remains. The number of nurses increased from 45 on 1.1.1949 to 310 at the end of the year, and the total number of employees from 90 to 562 people”.[[115]](#endnote-115)

Later in the report Dr. Sternberg wrote that in the first months of the year, the medical service for the immigrant was in a difficult and ridiculous situation. With the cessation of work and responsibility of Hadassah who actually managed and established the service from 1944, (October 1948), organizational tools and habits remained adapted to the immigration of 18,000 people per year and 1,500 per month and the resentment between the immigrants and the camp workers alike, increased.[[116]](#endnote-116)

The crowed and unhygienic conditions had always threatened the medical condition of the camps. In the summary of the report, he states: “A framework for medical care in the immigrant camps was established with great effort. It must be maintained, strengthened and improved. Every wave of immigration brings with it new problems, and one must be constantly ready to face new challenges”.[[117]](#endnote-117) In his book, *A People is Absorbed,* Dr. Sternberg added:

“The picture of the person who worked in the medical service for the immigrant would not be complete if we did not discuss the figure of the nurse. There were three times more nurses than doctors. Most of them were practical nurses from among the immigrants from the DP camps and a few from North Africa. In many cases, Ida placed one registered nurse among 40 and even 50 practical nurses. …in the kingdom of nursing, Ida was solely responsible, and it is a wonder how she found her way in recruiting hundreds of girls. She was able to respond to a very sudden emergency call within a few hours...”.

Ida trained caregivers consistently and stubbornly while imposing discipline and professional rigor, and she trained them for the profession.[[118]](#endnote-118)

At a conference of Clalit Sick fund in the early 1950s, which were subordinate to the Histadrut at the time, Wissotzky spoke about the activities of the “green nurses” (public healthcare nurses) working in the immigrant camps, and the shortage of doctors and nurses there due to the lack of volunteers. She noted that of 420 nurses working in the camps, only 19 were registered nurses. Despite the shortage, hundreds of nurses left the profession because of their family situation and because their household expenses exceeded their wages. She called on the Histadrut and the Clalit Sick fund to find ways to significantly improve wages and working conditions so these nurses could return to work, and especially to help return the “green nurses” to their educational and pioneering work in the immigrant camps and throughout the country. She reported that due to the shortage of manpower, the hospitals in the immigrant camps were not properly equipped and there was no staff to operate them. Wissotzky summed up her speech with the words: “It is impossible to sustain and develop the ‘Sharal’ if the labor movement in the country and this conference does not find a way to stimulate volunteerism and guidance in the nursing profession”.[[119]](#endnote-119)

Upon completion of her work in the camps, Dr. Sheba as director of the Ministry of Health arranged for Ida, through the World Health Organization, to study in Scandinavia and Switzerland on behalf of the Ministry of Health in order to learn methods for merging preventive medicine with curative medicine.[[120]](#endnote-120) The archive contains letters he sent to the directors of the Ministry of Health in Stockholm, Finland and Switzerland regarding Ida Wissotzky: “Our country is establishing new hospitals, and Ms. Wissotzky will be one of the nurses who will have to establish the institutions according to the philosophy of combining preventive medicine in hospital care ... It is important that she will learn modern methods”.[[121]](#endnote-121)

While in Switzerland, Ida sent a letter to the Second Conference of the Nurses’ Association in which she wrote:

“I send my greetings to our second conference from a great distance while working in hospitals in Europe on behalf of the Ministry of Health ... I meet many nurses from different peoples who are dedicated to their role and purpose. Among those nurses, I brought the news of the nurse in Israel, loyal to her important role and at the forefront of the campaign for the absorption of *aliyah*, ingathering of the exiles, and the national and social liberation of the Jewish people”.[[122]](#endnote-122)

Upon her return to Israel, she reported on the advanced training to Dr. Sheba[[123]](#endnote-123) who resigned from the Ministry of Health and was appointed director of Tel Hashomer Hospital, (which would later be named after him). He hoped that Ida would work under his management at Tel Hashomer Hospital, although it appears that this did not work out.[[124]](#endnote-124) However, she was soon offered a new and important role, a one-time opportunity for her career. Unfortunately, this seeming opportunity would become the biggest disappointment of them all.

**Section Seven: Opportunity & Disappointment: Ministry of Health (1954-1958)**

Following the intense years of nation-building, war, refugees and immigration, the young country turned to building a sustainable healthcare infrastructure. These years were marked by political struggles and dynamic processes. all of which influenced Wissotzky’s life and career trajectory.

In the early years of the state the leadership of the Ministry of Health (MOH) not only changed frequently, but were often also responsible for other ministries. Institutions with powerful political positions, such as the Histadrut and the Sick Fund, fought with the government for control of public health policy in Israel, which led to frequent changes of managers and unrest at the top of the ministry. Dr.Yosef Meir, affiliated with Clalit Sick Fund,[[125]](#endnote-125) was appointed in 1949 as the first Director General, but was forced to resign a year later[[126]](#endnote-126) following conflict with department heads who were supported by the Medical Association.[[127]](#endnote-127) The second Director General, Dr. Sheba, appointed in 1951, wanted to lead a reform of the healthcare system in which he strongly believed: a state-run healthcare service. But he, too, submitted his resignation about a year later, once he realized he would not get support for his plan. Such was the situation in the MOH when a new government was formed in 1955 following a government crisis.[[128]](#endnote-128) At this point, Israel Barzilai was appointed as the sixth Minister of Health, the first from the Mapam Party (of which Wissotzky was a member). In recognition of the magnitude of her work in “Sharal” and in the immigrant camps, Wissotzky was invited to serve as the head nurse in the Ministry of Health. However, it seems that the political context was an obstacle for her. In the eyes of the new minister, Ida was apparently Considered appropriate for the job considering her success in the previous position and the fact that she was active in the party’s institutions while she was in Warsaw, represented the Mapam party in the Nurses’ Association and was close to Meir Yaari, the undisputed leader of Mapam. Nevertheless, the appointment met with fierce opposition and struggles in the press.

The senior nurses in the Ministry of Health in those days were mostly affiliated with the Hadassah organization and hospital. The Department of Nursing of the Ministry was established during the War of Independence as part of the Ministry of Health and was headed by Shulamit Cantor (beginning in 1948), who prior to that had run the School of Nursing at Hadassah. Other senior nurses from Hadassah were appointed to positions in the MOH and other hospitals.

Sara Shachaf claims that in the early years of the state, two entities influenced nursing: the Department of Nursing of the MOH, which was a state body and dealt with the professional aspects of nursing, and the Nurses’ Association, which dealt with working conditions and wages.[[129]](#endnote-129) Cantor was replaced in 1955 by Chaya Krystal-Rosenthal, also of Hadassah (she had worked as an operating room nurse and later was in charge of training the nurses).[[130]](#endnote-130) The incoming Minister of Health Barzilai asked to appoint two people affiliated with Mapam, one of these was the appointment of Ida Wissotzky as head nurse of the Ministry of Health. The first appointment was successful, but Wissotzky’s appointment was strongly opposed by both the staff in the Department of Nursing and the Nurses’ Association. As written in the newspaper *Ma‘ariv*: “The nurses of the Ministry of Health opposed "Politrock",( Russian Nickname for a political officer (but the Minister of Health won, seeing that Ms. Ida Wissotzky is one of the most important and weighty figures in Mapam and a highly regarded nurse”. It was clear to Minister Barzilai that at all costs he should give Ida Wissotzky a key position in his office; however, the price –the destruction of the nurses’ department – was too high. The nurses explicitly announced: “Wissotzky or us”, but the minister did not hesitate, and despite this, he chose Ida[[131]](#endnote-131).

Krystal-Rosenthal opposed Wissotzky’s appointment. In a meeting between the Health Minister, Krystal-Rosenthal, and five nursing inspectors in the Ministry of Health, Wissotzky’s work in Cyprus and in Israel with the new immigrants was reviewed favorably. However, Krystal-Rosenthal defended the nurses’ abilities, declaring that: “Our past does not fall short of Wissotzky’s”.[[132]](#endnote-132) The newspaper *Haboker* wrote: “General purge at the Ministry of Health in Jerusalem and its branches are likely being prepared by the Minister of Health, Mapam member Barzilai”.[[133]](#endnote-133) The Nurses’ Association issued a statement emphasizing that appointments for key positions had previously been determined based on the recommendations of their organization and the Nursing Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Health (rather than on a political basis). The National Committee of the Nurses’ Association convened to discuss the dismissal of Kristal- Rosental.[[134]](#endnote-134) It is possible that a combination of forces was created of personal opposition from the administrative nurses serving in the Ministry of Health and a political move among the representatives of the nurses' association, and opposition to the appointment painted in a political color.

Ultimately, Wissotzky’s appointment was rescinded. National head nurse Krystal-Rosenthal withdrew her own resignation after an agreement was reached with the management of the MOH, in light of the danger of the department disbanding.[[135]](#endnote-135) Other nurses also rescinded their resignations including Esther Botishansky (the National Supervisor of Health Services), Tikva Koloditsky (the National Supervisor of the Mentally Ill), Gertrude Trit (the Supervisor of Nursing Education) and Nechama Gutman (the Deputy Supervisor of Public Health).[[136]](#endnote-136) In the compromise reached, it was agreed that Wissotzky would not be associated with the Ministry’s Department of Nursing. Following this, it was decided to appoint Ida Wissotzky to another position in the field of emergency care. In response, Krystal-Rosenthal was asked to continue in her position for another month.[[137]](#endnote-137)

In the face of the nurses’ opposition to her appointment, the doctors with whom Wissotzky had worked in the army and the *Sharal* mobilized in an extraordinary move to uphold her reputation. In February 1956, four doctors (including Dr. Sternberg, Dr. Sheba, and Dr. Pada), and three nurses published a letter in the newspapers praising Wissotzky’s experience and abilities: “She was a nurse in charge of operating rooms in Hadassah during the events of 1936–1939; and was a devoted public nurse in poor neighborhoods, in the internment camps in Cyprus, during the War of Independence and in the immigrant camps. These were, by all accounts, major roles in the field of healthcare in a country absorbing immigrants”. Among other issues, they emphasized her care for immigrants from Yemen, who faced serious health problems: “She was alone but assertive in her decision to help and act, and was sometimes harsh with herself. She worked day and night to help the masses of the needy especially, the vulnerable infants and women giving birth, and with every wave [of immigration], this issue came upon her again”.[[138]](#endnote-138) Although they were reluctant to mention their names in the newspapers, the doctors felt obliged to write their positions on the harmful errors made regarding one of the pioneering figures among healthcare workers in the country, through no fault of her own.[[139]](#endnote-139)

The Yad Yaari archive in Givat Haviva contains an unsigned letter to Meir Yaari, by an author who identified himself as an activist in the Mapam party and chairman of the workers’ committee of a government ministry, criticizing the failure of the appointment and condemning the “fear of the newspaper editors":

One of the warriors who never let the conscience of these people rest was Ida Wissotzky; her devotion and concern was for the little man and his affairs. I would ask you to place all the weight of your authority ... to immediately put Ida to work in the Ministry of Health with pride and, in fact, at the front door.[[140]](#endnote-140)

In an interview with a nurse who worked with Wissotzky, she confirms the opposition among the members of the Nurses’ Association to Wissotzky’s appointment[[141]](#endnote-141) Ida was eventually appointed to another position in emergency screening in which her experience and knowledge suddenly became vital and required, as preparations for what would become on October 29, 1956, the Sinai War. Her main function was the design of new buildings, including their equipment, and the determination of appropriate standard.[[142]](#endnote-142)

However, in that role, Ida felt that she did not reach her full human potential. In 1958 she decided to resign from her position and to return to work in public health with a severe feeling of disappointment, as can be learned from her letter to Meir Yaari:

“After suffering and hard deliberations, I decided to leave my job at the Ministry of Health because I was not given a suitable position, neither status nor rank, that would allow me to work in the central office of the Ministry of Health. I felt isolated and disregarded ... There is no joie de vivre in this role. I associated my destiny with a profession that has a vocation that gave me courage and gave me wings and excited me and created content and satisfaction in my life”.[[143]](#endnote-143)

From the vast correspondence that was maintained between the people of the office and Ida, we learned about the importance they attached to her role and the effort they made to delay her resignation.[[144]](#endnote-144) However, in 1958 Ida chose to return to her job in public health with the Tel Aviv Municipality. Health Minister Barzilai thanked her: “For your dedicated and loyal service in our office and at the same time your request to continue to volunteer in your position in emergencies and continue to address as needed questions that were in your care while working in our office”.[[145]](#endnote-145)

In her resume, Ida mentioned this phase of her work only briefly, and she noted that between 1956 and 1958 (the period of the Sinai war) she was involved in organizing hospitalization during the emergency. Later, she noted, she was a national inspector of foreign institutions.[[146]](#endnote-146) In the face of this reality, the question arises as to why it was precisely among the nurses that opposition was provoked, as described? Did this arise as a result of her determined personality, or was it her political position and organizational affiliation? We will never know. What is certain is the price she paid.

In interviews, Wissotzky noted her disappointment at the party’s failure to support her. She did not mention the Nurses’ Association. She felt she had been a victim of the political struggle for appointments.[[147]](#endnote-147)Another explanation can be offered against the background of her activity in the Nurses’ Association. From the very first day of the nurses' Association, two goals for which the Nursess were divided stood out. The organizational direction is partisan versus the professional apolitical positioning, as was the case in Nursing organizations around the world and in the international organization (ICN). The political power of the Nurses' Association stood out in the early years, which also characterized the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor), in political struggles. The secretary of the Nurses' Association was always affiliated with the ruling party, Mapai.[[148]](#endnote-148)

Malka Gerbler, in an interview, described their common struggle against political threats in the Nurses’ Association[[149]](#endnote-149) Pnina Failer, a nurse who immigrated to Israel in 1938 and was Wissotzky’s partner in struggles with the Histadrut, added that Wissotzky was excluded from nursing positions due to her roles and ideological activities. Failer, like Wissotzky, worked at Hadassah Hospital in Tel Aviv and was a member of the Haganah until the establishment of the state. After the War of Independence due to her Communist positions, she was not hired by a public hospital and was forced to work in a private clinic.[[150]](#endnote-150) Later, Failer noted that she had been drawn into political activity by her belief in equal rights, and that she joined the Histadrut out of a desire to fight for nurses’ rights (maternity leave, appropriate working conditions, etc.), although she paid a personal price for this.[[151]](#endnote-151)

Wissotzky returned to Tel Aviv at the end of April 1958 to become the head nurse at the Abrahams Institution for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Children in the Tel Aviv Municipality, on behalf of the Oza and Alyn organization. Her work there continued until 1962 won her the praise of the director of the institution.[[152]](#endnote-152) Although clearly disappointed in both her colleagues in the Nurses’ Association and her fellow party members, she continued to volunteer in the field of emergency health care, which now also included the recruitment and placement of nurses during emergencies (at that time, Chaya Tzipkin, the national head nurse, was also affiliated with Mapam).[[153]](#endnote-153)

**Section Eight: Not Just a Professional Career: Recognition, Awards and Political Activity**

Her last years of work brought Wissotzky pleasure, satisfaction, recognition and appreciation. The highest recognition she received was in 1973, when she was awarded a prize by the Israeli Rotary organization for her life’s work and for high moral standards in fulfilling her role as a nurse and as an organizer of health services. The award was presented to her in the presence of the Health Minister, Victor Shem Tov, (a Mapam member).[[154]](#endnote-154) Malka Grebler, who was the spokeswoman for public health nurses, said at the event that Ida demonstrated a high level in many areas and her contribution to the nursing profession was vital to the state. Grebler further noted that Ida Wissotzky was at the forefront of the struggle for public health nurses.[[155]](#endnote-155)

In 1975, at the age of 66 and after 44 years of work as a nurse, Ida Wissotzky retired. She continued her political activities as an active member of the party, loyal still to Meir Ya’ari. Although the party let her down in her fight for the position in the Ministry of Health, she continued to cultivate the connection to Meir Ya'ari, the leader of the party, as she treated him in her early days in the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement. Halamish describes that he accepted her devotion even though he was not sure that he did deserve it.[[156]](#endnote-156) The special connection between them can be gleaned from Ya’ari’s words In a short letter thanking her for taking care of equipping his apartment in Tel Aviv.[[157]](#endnote-157)

. **Activities in the Histadrut (1947-1969)**

For decades, Ida Wissotzky was active in a number of institutions. She was a member of the National Secretariat of the Israeli Nurses Association, a member of the Executive Committee of the Histadrut, a representative at the central institution of Clalit Sick fund, a member of the National Secretariat of the Workers’ Council, and a member of the Mapam central institutions, especially in the party’s branch in Tel Aviv.[[158]](#endnote-158) The records attest to her political activities, which began in Warsaw[[159]](#endnote-159) and continued with Mapam all her life.[[160]](#endnote-160)

With the establishment of the state, the Histadrut gained much influence and power. As part of this entity, the Nurses’ Association was, in the early years, dynamic and active, mainly dealing with basic questions, such as who could be a member – only registered nurses or also practical nurses, and Struggles over working conditions.[[161]](#endnote-161) Holding its first conference in 1947. The nurses’ demands for higher wages received little sympathy from the trade union, which threatened to expel the nurses’ organization from the Histadrut.[[162]](#endnote-162) The status of the Nurses’ Association strengthened after it sent nurses to work in the internment camps in Cyprus and sent two representatives to the International Nurses’ Organization.[[163]](#endnote-163)

In the 1950s, as its power increased largely due to the shortage of nurses and resultant high demand for them, the nurses’ organization advocated for better wages and working conditions. Strikes continued to characterize the nurses’ struggle throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In many cases, the Histadrut did not support the nurses’ strikes, and sometimes even opposed them. In 1964, there was a wave of strikes in many sectors of the economy, including among the nurses, who went on strike without the approval of the Histadrut. Their strike began in the operating rooms at Beilinson Hospital, extended to hospitals in the rest of the country, and ended with a strike by nurses working in public health care such as the maternal/infant healthcare services.[[164]](#endnote-164)

Ida Wissotzky, who was a member of the National Secretariat of the Histadrut, demanded that Yeruham Meshel, director of the Histadrut’s trade union department, appeal the decision of the labor union’s High Committee, which had left nurses out of the discussion of wage conditions.[[165]](#endnote-165) Only in 1980 was nursing recognized as a “preferred profession” with special work conditions, such as working only six hours daily in Hospital shifts, as well as an annual grant for those working in hospitals, but the change did have a partial impact on staffing shortages, and the nurses’ organization was forced to continue its struggles in the years that followed.[[166]](#endnote-166)

In 1952, ahead of elections in the Nurses’ Association, and as the Mapam party’s representative, Wissotzky attended conferences around the country. She condemned the activities of nurses affiliated with the Mapai party (Mifleget Poalei Eretz yisrael- - Israel Workers Party), that was the dominant force in Israel until 1977 for not advocate on behalf of the nursing profession. She noted that work in the immigrant camps was led by nurses from Mapam, who worked under extremely difficult conditions, and that the Secretary of the Nurses’ Association did not help with this work, and, in fact, hindered it, out of narrow interests based on political party lines.[[167]](#endnote-167) These issues indicate the mix of professionalism and ideology that characterized that era.

Ida Wissotzky and her husband Joshua Krinsky were both activists and ideologues. Wissotzky noted that her husband was also politically involved and supported her activities.[[168]](#endnote-168) Having lost most of their family in the Holocaust and remaining childless, her devotion to her husband seemed to have a particularly strong meaning. Wissotzky devoted most of her time to caring for her husband when he fell ill in 1977.[[169]](#endnote-169) She abandoned all her activities and devoted herself to caring for him for the next two years, even though she was already in poor health herself. Indeed, 13 months after his death (in 1979), Ida Wissotzky died and was buried next to him.[[170]](#endnote-170)She died on March 4, 1981, at the age of 72.[[171]](#endnote-171) In concert with her beliefs over a lifetime, she bequeathed her property to the Mapam party and the Havatzelet Foundation, which was established in 1967 with the aim of supporting the National Kibbutz Movement.[[172]](#endnote-172)

Her worldview can be summed up as *Davar* *Hapoelet*, newspaper (1973) presented Wissotzky’s words of thanks for winning the Rotary Good Citizenship Award: “In all my years of work, I have never regretted choosing the profession of a nurse, which allowed me to live a full life. I was privileged to participate in missions that the times and reality required. I approached them with apprehension and hesitation, but I also got to work with wonderful people”.[[173]](#endnote-173)

**Summary and Conclusions**

The story of Ida Wissotzky's life as a nurse is unique in that although she was outside the consensus in the nursing profession, it was the profession that allowed her to realize some of the goals of the ideology she believed in. She did not work in any of the Ministry of Health hospitals and did not belong to the Clalit Sick fund, Hadassah, or the Ministry of Health. Unlike other nurses who advanced up the professional ladder along the usual tracks through assessments from other nurses, Wissotzky progressed due to her doing and recognition by the doctors and managers with whom she worked and her appointment to the Ministry of Health was made on a political basis and her contributions and abilities as a nurse that were greatly recognized. Therefore, she shared her disappointment with her party leader, Meir Yaari.

She was also active in the field of maternal and child health, which as Shvarts and Shehory-Rubin note in their research, was the basis of legitimacy for women’s public activity. The fact that Wissotzky was a nurse was a helpful foundation for her political activities.[[174]](#endnote-174) Herzog notes the obstacle of women’s organizations being relegated to areas that were traditionally perceived as the realm of women. The choice of what constituted “female” arenas of activity stemmed from the image of women held by members of these organizations. This traditional conception of the roles of women defined the fields of action in which they chose to work and make their contribution to the nation-building enterprise; in this case, helping women, children, and the is advantaged.[[175]](#endnote-175)

To a large extent, Wissotzky’s story shares elements with that of other women who worked during the founding of the State of Israel, struggling for their ideological values, for advancement in their profession, and for gender equality, yet remaining behind the scenes.

Bartal notes the development of the nursing profession in Israel and the tension between the administrative nurses and caregiver nurses.[[176]](#endnote-176) This seems to still exist today, but it was notable that Wissotzky’s approach combined the two, not out of necessity, but out of a sense of mission.

*Professionally* and as a nurse, it seems that the education she received and the upheavals she went through during her upbringing in Warsaw influenced her desire to give of herself to public health and to be at all the junctures between helping professionals and people whom she helped. This perception was reflected in her courageous work in conditions of want and without compromise within the framework of the “Sharal”.[[177]](#endnote-177) She was at the heart of the work, which, despite the frustration, fear of disease and epidemics, soon established a healthcare system and a public health system, that is internationally acclaimed.

*Ideologically*, it seems that her devotion to the movement and its principles accompanied her until her last day, which from the perspective of time takes on additional significance in the face of the disappointments that were her lot, unless we go back to her beginnings, to the disaster that befell her family in the place where she grew up and the events that shaped her life.

Ida Wissoztky’s era was marked by a sequence of formative and dynamic events: World War II, the Haganah, the internment camps in Cyprus, the War of Independence, the mass immigration to Israel, Operation Sinai, and the Six-Day War. During all of these, she was active and influential, struggling for her principles without compromise, as she is remembered by her friends.[[178]](#endnote-178)

This article describes the most important crossroads in the history of nursing at the early years of the State of Israel through the story of one nurse, who aspired to combine professional activity with a social vision. Like her, there were other nurses and her story is their story, nurses who modestly and faithfully contributed to the establishment of the state, society, the health system and the status of women in Israel. describing Wissotzky’s activities as a nurse in a developing profession, as well as her involvement in the political struggles and ideologies marking the years of nation-building and contributes to a better understanding about the impact of women like her on the development of military and public health nursing in Israel.

1. Abbreviations used in this article: GHA = Givat Haviva Archive; AA = Historical Press Archive; ATA = Tel Aviv Municipality Archive; ATS = IDF Archive; ATH = Archive of the History of the Haganah; GM = State Archives, AZM= the Central Zionist Archives.

   From Henrietta Szold's last speech at the 25th Jubilee Conference of Hadassah Nursing School, the Nurse Newspaper (1945), pp. 11-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For literature discussing the issue of immigration and healthcare, see Yoav Gelber, A New Homeland: The Immigration and Absorption of Central European Jews 1948-1933 (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Publishing, 1990); Dvora Hacohen, Immigrants in Turmoil: The Great Aliyah and Its Absorption in Israel 1953-1948 (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Jerusalem, 1994). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Nadav Davidovich and Shifra Shvarts, “Israeli Immigration and the Israeli Melting Pot”, Studies in the Restoration of Israel, 13 (2003), pp. 181–202. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Liat Steyer-Livni, One Trauma, Two Perspectives, Three Years: Aspects of the Holocaust and Revival in Eretz Israel and American Jewish Propaganda (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2019), pp. 10, 192. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Sachlav Stoller-Liss, “Training and Promoting Health in Multicultural Societies: The Case of the Great Aliyah to Israel (1956-1949)”, PhD Diss., Ben-Gurion University, 2006, pp. 15–16. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Margalit Shilo, Women Building a Nation: Hebrew Professional Women 1818-1948 (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2020); Margalit Shilo, Ruth Kark, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, eds. The New Hebrew Women: Women in the Yishuv and Zionism in the Mirror of Gender (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 2002); Margalit Shilo, “Women, Gender and the History of the Yishuv in Israel: Achievements and Goals”, Cathedra, 150 (2004), pp. 121–154. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Hannah Herzog, “Women’s Organizations in Civilian Circles: A Forgotten Chapter in the Historiography

   of the Yishuv,” Cathedra, 70 (1994), p. 123 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Margalit Shilo, Women Building a Nation (above, n. 6), pp. 16 and 106 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Nira Bartal, “Founding the Nursing School”, in Margalit Shilo, Women Building a Nation (above n.6), pp. 291-271. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Margalit Shilo, Women Building a Nation (above, n.6), pp. 39–84. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern, “The ‘Law of Nature’ Versus the ‘Dictate of the Movement’: Motherhood and Non-Motherhood in the Yishuv 1920-1945”, Studies in the Restoration of Israel (Theme Series): Gender in Israel, 2011, pp. 170-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Sachlav Stoler-Liss and Shifra Shvarts, “Women’s Daily Hygiene for Her Periods: Gender, Nationality and Work in the Writings of Dr. Miriam Aharonova (1889-1967)”, Studies in the Restoration of Israel. Iyunim (Theme Series): Gender in Israel, 2011, pp. 85–105. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Hannah Herzog, “Women’s Organizations in Civilian Circles”, (above 7), pp. 111–133. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Dorit Weiss, “Nursing – Its Role in the Jewish Health Services in Mauritius, Aden, Cyprus and Atlit Refugee Camps 1940-1948”, PhD Thesis. Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv 2002, Nira Bartal, Compassion and Knowledge: Chapters in the History of Nursing in Eretz Israel 1948-1918 (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Yitzhak 2005); Sara Shachaf, Good Enough Nurse: Nursing between ideal and reality, Israel 1960-1995 (Tel Aviv: Resling 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Nira Bartal, Compassion and Knowledge (above, n. 14), pp. 3-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Jennifer H**.** Matthews, "Role of Professional Organizations in Advocating for the Nursing

    Profession" OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing Vol. 17, No. 1, Manuscript 3. (2012). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Alrsandro Stievano, Riccardo Caruso, Frederico Pittella, Franklin A. Shaffer, Gennaro Rocco and Julie Fairman, “Shaping nursing profession regulation through history – a systematic review”, Nursing International Review, 66 (2019), pp. 17-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Nira Bartal, Compassion and Knowledge (above, n. 14), pp. 3-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Ida Wissotzky, “Jubilee of Memories”, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski, pp.9-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. 25 GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Ida Wissotzky to Hamuda Ish Shalom regarding her resume. (undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. GHA 1.76-95 (2), Nurse Ida Wissotzky- Krinsky regarding her resume. (undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. **JDC**: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. An American Jewish organization founded in 1914 and engaged in humanitarian aid, especially for Jews from Eastern Europe and Israel, Especially humanitarian for the Jews of Eastern Europe and Israel. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Amelia Greenwald was born in 1881 to a Jewish family from Germany who emigrated to America. She graduated in 1908 and met Henrietta Szold in New York in 1914, a meeting that led to her studying Hebrew, Yiddish and Jewish history. During World War I, she joined the American Red Cross and worked in Europe. In 1923, after a decorated and tried-out work in World War I, Greenwald accepted a request to establish the School of Jewish Nurses in Warsaw. See more Susan L. Maye, “Amelia Greenwald (1881–1966)”, in Paula Hyman and Dalia Ofer (eds.), Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia (CD-ROM – February 28, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Dorit Weiss, “‘Tipat Halav’ (Mother & Child clinics) in Israel: A Historical Perspective”, Medicine, 851 (Debt 21) (2019), p. 828. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Susan Mayer, “Amelia Greenwald: Pioneer in International Public Health”, Nursing and Health Care, 15 (1994): 74-78; Ibid., “The Jewish Experience in Nursing in America: 1881 to 1955”. Ed.D. Thesis, Teachers College of Columbia University, 1996. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Miriam Ofer, White Robe in the Ghetto (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 2015), pp. 66-68. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., pp. 66-68. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Dorit Weiss, “Tipat Halav” (above, n. 24), p. 828. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Dr. Chaim Yassky (1896-1948) ran Hadassah Hospital from 1948 to 1938. He was killed with 78 hospital staff while traveling in a convoy *on route* to the hospital from an ambush by the Jordanian Legion. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Nira Bartal, Compassion and Knowledge (above, n. 14), pp. 172-174. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., pp. 7, 308-309. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. This concept was realized mainly in the 1920s and was reduced following subsequent national events, see there, p. 355-356. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Lisa Mironchik, “The Czyste School of Nursing in Warsaw - and Its Methods of Study”, The Nurse in Israel 10 (1964), pp. 46-48. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid., p. 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Ida Wissotzky, “In Tears, Sadness, and Heartbreak”, The Nurse in Israel 18 (1973), p. 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Interview with Aviva Blum, daughter of Bella Blum-Bilitzka, the school principal during World War II, conducted in Tel Aviv, 2021. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Ida Wissotzky, “Jubilee of Memories”, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski, pp. 16-17. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Miriam Ofer, White Robe in the Ghetto (above, n. 26), p. 69 [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Noah Zebuloni, “The 40th Anniversary of the School of Nursing”, Heruth newspaper (31.7.1963), p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Lisa Mironchik, “The Czyste School of Nursing” (above, n. 33), p. 48. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Testimony of Sonia Milshtein, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n. 37), pp. 91-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Testimony of Tamar Jungerman, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n. 37), p. 93. More evidence of the close connection between the graduates of the school you can find in tamar Jungerman’s words from Kibbutz Ga‘aton, who after graduating lived with Ida and Sonia in the same apartment. All the graduates were active in the *Hashomer Hatzair* movement, but she described Ida as an initiative of this activity. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. GHA 1.76-95 (2), letter from Ida Wissotzky to Hamuda Ish Shalom regarding her resume. ( undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. GHA 1.76-95 (2), a document in Ida’s handwriting describing her resume. (undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Aviva Halamish and Alon Gan, “Hashomer Hatzair in the Test of Time –- History and Historiography”, Israel, 23 (2016), p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Aviva Halamish, Meir Yaari (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009), p. 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Mordechai Bentov, Numerous Days (Tel Aviv: Poalim Library 1984), pp. 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Aviva Halamish and Alon Gan, “Hashomer Hatzair” (above, n. 45), pp.1-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Lisa Mironchik, “The Czyste School of Nursing” (above, n. 33), p. 48. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Aviva Halamish, Meir Yaari (above, n. 46), pp. 9-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. GHA 1.76-95 (2), a letter in Ida’s handwriting, entitled “Nurse Ida Wissotzky-Krinsky”. (undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Words of Meir Yaari, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Yehoshua Krinski (above, n. 37), p. 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Aviva Halamish, Meir Yaari (above, n. 46), pp.139-140. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. GHA 1.76-95 (2), letter from Ida Wissotzky to Hamuda Ish Shalom regarding her resume. (undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. AZM J117/282, Speech by the Principal of the School of Nursing, Ms. Shulamit Cantor, at the Alumni Conference (December 22, 1944). [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Yonit Efron, “Warrior Sisters and Mothers: Ethos and Reality in the Test of the Daughters of the 1948 Generation”, Studies in the Establishment of Israel, 10 (2000), p. 353. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Magen David Adom (Red Shield of David) – Israel’s emergency services organization established in 1930 a format similar to that of the Red Cross to provide first aid, evacuation of wounded, international humanitarian activities and emergency medicine. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. ATH 68/1956/12, a membership card in the Haganah in the name of Ida Wissotzky. The membership cards were usually written in code. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Hemda Hadani, “From the Memoirs of an Older Nurse”, The Nurse in Israel 4 (1958), p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Dr. Chaim Sheba (1908-1971) was a physician at Beilinson Hospital, enlisted in the British Army and headed the military medical service in the Haganah. He established the IDF Medical Corps and served in the Cyprus camps. In 1950, he was appointed director of the Ministry of Health for one year and later managed the Tel Hashomer Medical Center, which is named after him. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. ATH 80 P. 175/1, Express letter from Dr. Sheba to Ms. Kopilov (January 23, 1970). [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. GHA 1.76-95 (4), handwritten document (without specifying the date). [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Letter from Ida to Mr. I. Rokach (September 24, 1945), in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n. 37), p. 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Letter from Israel Rokach to Ida Wissotzky in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n. 37), p. 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Nahum Bogner, The Deportation Island (Tel Aviv: Am Oved,1991), p.13. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., pp. 3-4, an interview by Chaya Avrahami with Dr. Sheba (17.8.1969). [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. ATH 14/137, Report of the Medical Delegation (6.9-22.10.1946). [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. GHA 1.76-95 (3), handwritten entries on Cyprus (undated). [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. An article by Ida Wissotzky in Hotam newspaper: “Winter - Cyprus 1947”, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n.37), pp. 16-17. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. GHA 1.76-95 (3), drafts of an article on Cyprus, and Ruth Bondi, Sheba: A Doctor for Everyone (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan Modan (1981), p. 82. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. GHA 1.95-76 (3), handwritten drafts of an article on Cyprus. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n.37), p27 [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Ida Wissotzky, “They Did Not Disappoint”, The Nurse in Israel 4 (1958), pp. 16-17. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. AA, Davar newspaper, p. 4 (June 16, 1947); AA, Al Hamishmar newspaper, p. 3 (June 5, 1947). [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Mordechai Naor and Dan Gil‘adi, Israel in the Twentieth Century: From a Locality to a State (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense 1991), pp. 393-401. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. In The History of the Haganah (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense 1972, vol. iii), p. 1249. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Baruch Horowitz, Every Soldier Front (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 2000), p. 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Ronen Segev, “From civilian service to military service: what led policy-makers to remove nursing care from field units of the Israeli defense force (IDF)and return it later?” Journal of Health Research, 9 (2020), p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. GHA 1.76-95 (1), letter of approval from the head of the military medical services to Ida (September 27, 1948). [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. Also called “Operation Ten Plagues”, it was intended to prevent the Egyptian’s from detaching the Negev from Israel prior to the Israel conquest of Be’er Sheva, see Nathaniel Lorch, The History of the War of Independence (Givatayim: Mishkel and Masada 1989), pp. 495 and 691. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. GHA 1.76-95 (2), handwritten resume document entitled: “Nurse Ida Wissotzky-Krinski” (undated). [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n.37), p. 91. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. GHA 1.76-95 (3) Letter from Dr. Max (Moshe) Lindfield, Commander of Hospital 13, on behalf of Dr. Sheba, Head of the Medical Service.(undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Devora Yapan was the secretary of the Histadrut Nurses’ Organization from 1955-1948. Ida Wissotzky was also an active member of it. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Minutes of the Committee for Public Services (2.8.1949), in Ronen Segev, Nurses for Arms in Nir Man (ed.), Military Medicine (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense 2018), p. 177-176. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Baruch Pade (Pedersky) (1908-2001) was a physician, chief medical officer, hospital director and director general of the Ministry of Health, professor of internal medicine, recipient of the Israel Prize for Medicine. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. From the words of Hamuda Ish Shalom, Secretary of the Nurses’ Association, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Yehoshua Krinski (above, n.37), p. 43. The archive contains drafts of Wissotzky ’s speeches on the shortage of nurses to camps apparently addressed by the Nurses’ Association. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. GHA 1.76-95 (5), Dr. Sheba, Director of the Ministry of Health, to Nurse Ida Wissotzky regarding her appointment to the directorate of a maternity home in Kfar Giladi (December 22, 1950). [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Abraham Sternberg, To Absorb a Nation (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame’uchad 1973), p. 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Haim Doron and Shifra Shvarts, Community Medicine (Beer Sheba: Ben Gurion University, 2004), p. 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Dorit Weiss, Nursing – Its Role (above, n. 14), pp. 85-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Scahlav Stoller-Liss, Shifra Shvarts and Mordechai Shani, To Be a Healthy Nation. (Beer Sheva: Ben: Gurion University of the Negev, 2016), p. 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. GM C-5/22/144, The Medical Services for Immigrants(Sharal) Report for 1949. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Ibid, p.11. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. GM C-/14/143, The Medical Services for Immigrants(Sharal) Report for 1950-1951. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Ibid, p. 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. Ruth Bondi, Sheba (above, n. 70), pp. 152-154. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. Pnina Romem and Shifra Shvarts, “Melban 1949-1954 — An Organization in Formation”, in Hava Golander and Yitzhak Brick (eds.), A Mission of Kindness and Brotherhood — The Story of Melban-Joint in Israel, 1949-1975 (Jerusalem: Eshel, 2005), pp. 45-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. Abraham Sternberg, To Absorb a Nation (above, n.89), pp. 36-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. Ibid p. 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. Dvora Hacohen, Immigrants in Turmoil (above, n.2), p. 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. Transcript of The Knesset Remarks: The Prime Minister's Answer in the Knesset. Meeting No.47 (21.11.1949) p. 128 [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. Abraham Sternberg, To Absorb a Nation (above, n. 89), p. 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Dorit Weiss and Anat Peles-Buratz, “Raising or Lowering the Bar? A Historical Prospective on Shortage of Nurses in Israel”, Ha-Achot b-Yisrael, (July 2014), pp. 37-41. [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. Abraham Sternberg, To Absorb a Nation (above, n. 89), pp. 161-164. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. GM Gal-46638/10, Medical/Nurses, Ministry of Labor and Construction Files on recruiting nurses to immigrant camps (9.1948-6.1949). [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Dr. Meir in response to Wissotzky’s letter regarding her powers (7.19.1949). [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Ms. Cantor to Dr. Meir and Dr. Sternberg for the attention of Ida Wissotzky, as well as to Ms. Chaya Zeslavsky and Ms. Dina Kaplanovich of the Clalit Sick Fund (29.11.1949). [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. Ibid. The findings of the committee that Cantor headed on the situation in the camps and in the hospital in Jaffa. (23.11.1949) [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. GHA 1.76-95 (5), Memorandum of Understanding by Ms. Cantor to Dr. Sternberg on behalf of the Committee. (29.11.1949) [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. GHA 1.76-95 (5), Ms. Chaya Zeslavsky document attached to the Memorandum of Ms.Cantor

     to Dr. Sternberg on behalf of the Committee. (23.11.1949). [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. GHA 1.76-95 (3), Ida’s speech at the HMO conference in the early 1950s. p1. [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. Dr. Avraham Sternberg described in his book the difficulties of medical treatment: "These

     gave rise to improvised arrangements in which children were often sent alone after hospitalization

     and treatment, contributing", in his opinion, "to the terrible problem of the disappearance of Yemeni

     children who rocked the country many years later" Avraham Sternberg, To Absorb a Nation, (above, n.

     89). p. 76-77. Despite the difficult conditions described in the article, no evidence was found in the

     documents scanned for the current research purposes in relation to this painful matter. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. GHA 1.76-95 (5), Dr. Sternberg’s Report on the Immigrant Medical Service (31.12.1949). [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. Ibid., p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. Abraham Sternberg, To Absorb a Nation (above, n. 89), pp. 161-164. [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. GHA 1.76-95 (3), Ida’s speech at the HMO conference in the early 1950s. [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letters from Dr. Sheba to Dr. Boigel, Chief Medical Officer in Zurich (29.3.1953) and Dr. Wesley from the World Health Organization to Ida regarding her in-service training in Finland (7.11.1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. GHA 1.76-95 (5) Letter from Dr. Sheba to Dr. Engel, the Medical Director of Stockholm, and to Dr. Sauter, the Deputy Director of Hygiene Services in Bern, prior to Ida’s visit (14.12.1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. GHA 1.76-95 (5), a letter in Ida’s handwriting to the Second Conference of the Nurses’ Association in Israel from Bern (24.12.1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Dr. Sheba, Director of Tel Hashomer hospital, to Dr. Stark, Medical Director in Helsinki (March 29, 1953). [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. GHA 2.76-95 (1), letter from Dr. Sheba, director of the hospital, to Mr. Maimuni, Director of the Tel Aviv Health Center (September 7, 1953). [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. Wissozky was active on behalf of Mapam party, the second largest faction in the government. By the time Israel Barzilai was appointed Minister of Health (1955), Ahcdut Ha‘avoda (labor unity) had already withdrawn, and its power had been reduced to 8-9. She joined Mapai, the ruling party. [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. Shifra Shvarts, Kupat Holim, The Histadrut and the Government (Beer Sheba: The Ben-Gurion research Center, 2000), p. 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. Batya Tamir, “Department Managers in Government Hospitals in Israel — Dimensions of Stability”, PhD Thesis, University of Haifa, 2009, pp. 111-128. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. Ibid, p. 218. [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. Sara Shachaf, Good Enough Nurse (above, n. 14), pp. 27-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. The information is provided orally courtesy of the Secretariat of Hadassah Nursing School. [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. “Ida Wissotzky Accepted the Appointment”, Ma‘ariv newspaper, Friday, (27.4.1956), p. 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. GHA 1.76-95 (1), Haboker newspaper (25.12.1955). [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. GHA 1.76-95 (1), Haboker newspaper (26.12.1955). [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. GHA 1.76-95 (1), Haboker newspaper (8.5.1956). [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. AA, Heruth newspaper (19.4.1956). [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. GHA 2.76-95 (1), Haboker newspaper (19.4.1956). [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. GHA 1.76-95 (2), letter from Dr. Sheba, Dr. Sternberg, Dr. Steinberg and Dr. Pada to the editors of Ha’aretz newspaper. [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. GHA 1.76-95 (5), a letter from an unidentified writer (apparently, dated 22.2.1956). [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. Malka Gerbler, Interview, Pardes Hanna. June 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. AA, “A compromise has been reached in the Ministry of Health”, Ha’aretz newspaper (8.5.1956); “the Ministry of Health Nurses”, Ma‘ariv newspaper (27.4.1956), p. 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. Letter from Ida to Meir Yaari, in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Yehoshua Krinski (above, n37), p. 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
144. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Pinchas Dagan to Col. Dr. Pada (1.11.60), and letter from Ida Wissotzky to Pinchas Dagan (27.11.1960). [↑](#endnote-ref-144)
145. GHA 2.76-95 (1), letter from Minister Israel Barzilai to Ida Wissotzky (30.4.1958). [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. GHA 1.76-95 (2), CV (written in her handwriting) of Nurse Ida Wissotzky-Krinsky (undated). [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n. 37), pp. 34-35. [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. Dorit Weiss, "From the Nurses' Union to the Nurses' Association, a historical View" in: Dorit Weiss, Hava

     Golander, Shifra Shvartz, (in writing), [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
149. Malka Gerbler, Interview (above, n. 142). [↑](#endnote-ref-149)
150. Telephone interview with Pnina Failer, Yad Hanna, June .2021. [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. At the time, the manager, Burstein, was also the deputy director of the Public Health Department in Tel Aviv. [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Mordechai Namir, Mayor of Tel Aviv (9.9.1962) and GHA 2.76-95 (1), letter from M. Khaled, Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv (9.9.1962). [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. AA, Davar newspaper (June 22, 1973). [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. AA, Al Hamishmar newspaper (29.1.1965). [↑](#endnote-ref-155)
156. Aviva Halamish, Meir Yaari (above, n. 46), pp.137-138 [↑](#endnote-ref-156)
157. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Meir Yaari to Ida Wissotzky (September 26, 1980). [↑](#endnote-ref-157)
158. GHA 1.76-95 (2), CV (written in her handwriting) of Nurse Ida Wissotzky-Krinski (undated). [↑](#endnote-ref-158)
159. GHA 1.76-95 (1), letter from ‘Histadrut Hechalutz’ in Poland with a certificate to Ida Wissotzky: The fellow member Hinda Wissotzky showed great dedication in her work and the knowledge of the profession. The certificate was given at her request for submission to the central institution of Clalit Sick fund in Israel (June 8, 1938). [↑](#endnote-ref-159)
160. GHA, Minutes No. 3, meeting of the presidium (April 22, 1943); as well as the first conference meeting of the members of the *Hashomer Hatzair* in Mapam (1950). [↑](#endnote-ref-160)
161. Rebecca Adams-Stockler & Judith Steiner-Freud, The History of the Israeli Nursing Association (Department of Nursing, Tel Aviv University 1985), p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-161)
162. AA, Al Hamishmar newspaper (27.8.1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-162)
163. Rebecca Adams-Stockler & Judith Steiner-Freud, History (above, n. 162), p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
164. AA,The newspapers Ma‘ariv, Davar, Al hamishmar (1954-1965). [↑](#endnote-ref-164)
165. AA, Al Hamishmar newspaper (26.1.1965). [↑](#endnote-ref-165)
166. Rebecca Adams-Stockler & Judith Steiner-Freud, History (above, n. 162), p. 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-166)
167. AA, Al Hamishmar newspaper (29.8.1952). [↑](#endnote-ref-167)
168. GHA 2.76-95 (1), her remarks at the farewell ceremony at the Tel Aviv Municipality. (1.4.1976), p.5. [↑](#endnote-ref-168)
169. in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinsky (above, n.37), p. 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-169)
170. GHA 1.76-95 (5), letter from Ida Wissotzky to Hamuda Ish Shalom regarding her resume. (undated) [↑](#endnote-ref-170)
171. Hevra Kadisha, Tel Aviv website. [↑](#endnote-ref-171)
172. GHA 26.11 (1), a copy of the will of Ida Wissotzky-Krinsky. (21.7.1978), pp.1-3 [↑](#endnote-ref-172)
173. Tzvia Ben Shalom, Devar Hapoaelet (9.10.1973), pp. 18-19. [↑](#endnote-ref-173)
174. See Shifra Shvarts and Zipora Shehory-Rubin, “On Behalf of Mothers and Children in Eretz Israel: The Efforts of Hadassah, the Federation of Hebrew Women and WIZO, to Establish Maternal and Infant Welfare Centers, 1913-1948”, in Margalit Shilo, Women Building a Nation (above, n.6), pp. 229-291. [↑](#endnote-ref-174)
175. Hannah Herzog, “Women’s Organizations” (above, n. 7), pp. 111-133. [↑](#endnote-ref-175)
176. Nira Bartal, Compassion and Knowledge (above, n. 14), p. 356-355. [↑](#endnote-ref-176)
177. Ben Nun Yehudit, “On the Brink of the Second Decade”, The Nurse in Israel, 25-26 (1958), p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-177)
178. Malka Gerbler, Interview (above, n. 142). Lutka Sternberg in Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n. 37), p. 101; and Tamar Jungerman, iin Shimon Henigman (ed.), Ida and Joshua Krinski (above, n.37), p. 99. [↑](#endnote-ref-178)