

A History of Palestinian Resistance



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Published by

AL-AQSA PUBLISHERS

P.O.Box 5127

Leicester, LE2 0WU, UK

Tel: (0116) 212 5441, Fax: (0116) 253 7575

E-Mail: info@aqsa.org.uk

Website: www.aqsa.org.uk

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ISBN 0-9536530-3-x

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Abdullah, Daud

I. Title

A History of Palestinian Resistance

1. Social Movements – Palestine

2. Insurgency – Palestine

3. Palestine – Politics and Government

303.6'095694

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Foreword

In the political discourse of the Middle East the Palestine Question is known as 'ar Raqam as Sa'ab' (the difficult number). No other issue has engaged the energies and resources of the international community in the 20th century more than the Palestine Question. Since 1948, it has been the cause of regional wars and continues until today to be a dangerous threat to international peace and security.

Despite its solid roots in the depths of history, many people know very little and understand much less about the Palestine Question. While a few are aware that Zionist Israel was founded on the basis of 'historical' claims, after more than 100 years, most remain ignorant of the origins and nature of these claims. Because of its centrality to regional peace and global security, it is the duty of every student of history to know and understand this issue. It is for them, first and foremost, that this book was written. Others may benefit and are equally encouraged to study it.

I am grateful to the Friends of al-Aqsa and its chairman, Mr. Ismail Patel, for commissioning me to prepare this text. Despite my failure to deliver at the time requested, he has been extremely patient and understanding.

As the title indicates, this is by no means an exhaustive history. It does, however, provide a general insight into the origins of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its impact on the region. I have benefited from a wealth of Palestinian sources, written both in English and Arabic. Some of these date back to the early years of the conflict. Others have been written by a new generation of Palestinian writers.

Though this study is confined to the 20th century it required a cursory overview of the late 19th century and the birth of the Zionist movement. The author lays no claim to absolute detachment from his subject. Hence, his understanding of the facts has informed the themes of this book.

Part I is therefore titled 'A Land with a People and a History'. It lays bare the facts which belie the Zionist claim that Palestine was 'A land without a people.'

Part II offers an account of the mandatory period and the beginnings of the Zionist colonization of Palestine. It reviews the early resistance, the diplomatic intrigues and eventual UN partition of the country.

In Part III, the focus shifts to the establishment of Israel and attendant destruction of Palestinian society. It presents a critical assessment of the role played by regional actors in the loss of Palestine in 1948 and the Nakba – Catastrophe – that befell the Palestinian people.

Part IV is titled 'From revolution to diplomacy.' This covers the period 1965-2000. It traces the birth of Fateh, the PLO and the eruption of the Palestinian revolution in the mid 1960s. It also examines in detail the process by which the PLO was transformed from a revolutionary movement committed to the liberation of Palestine into a 'national authority' seeking accommodation with Israel.

Several individuals and institutions have helped to make this work a reality. I am, however, most grateful to one institution: the Palestinian Return Centre, London, from whose library and archives most of the material for this book was obtained. I wish to thank its Director, Mr Majed al-Zeer, and all my colleagues there for their encouragement and assistance. Finally, I must record here a special word of thanks to my dear wife, Shanaz, who shared with me all the joys and pain of fulfilling this task.

Daud A. Abdullah

London, August 2005

Part I

A Land with a People and a History (1882-1922)

CHAPTER 1

A Land with a People

Palestine lies at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. It is a holy land to the three major religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is the land of the prophets appointed by Allah. They all worshipped in this land and waged many bitter struggles to establish the truth and dominance of good over evil. All the prophets preached the same message: that God is One, He is alone and has no partner, and only He deserves to be worshipped.

Population

As far back as history can record Palestine was always populated. Its earliest known inhabitants were the Canaanites. Theirs was the first of a series of migrations that headed northeast out of the Arab peninsula about 3,500 BC.¹ Persistent famine and harsh climatic conditions forced successive waves of migrants northwards to the Bilad al-Sham (presently known as Syria, Palestine and Jordan). The Bible refers to the Arab tribes that settled west of the Jordan River as Canaanites and to the land as "the country of the Canaanites" (Exodus 3:17).

Having adopted a settled life, the Canaanites developed their own villages and towns. They learnt the use of iron and practiced the art of writing. They engaged in agriculture and trade and established an advanced culture.

Palestine was inhabited for many centuries before the arrival of the Israelite tribes from Egypt. When they invaded the land of Canaan in the twelfth century B.C. the population of the country included apart from the Canaanites, the Hittites, Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites and Philistines. The name Palestine stems from the Philistines who lived along the southern Mediterranean coast in the twelfth century B.C. Similarly, the Palestinian people of today are the descendents of the Philistines, Canaanites, and other tribes.

From earliest times many invaders have sought to control the land, port cities, trade routes, and people of Palestine. Besides the Israelites, they included the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Turks and British. Each of these

newcomers were either absorbed into the population through marriage, killed or later deported. In the case of the original population, they remained in Palestine continuously until the middle of the twentieth century when the invading Israelis expelled three-quarters of their number.

Still on this all-important question of population, there is a common though incorrect view that the Palestine Arabs first arrived in the country during seventh century spread of Islam. This, of course, has no basis in history because the Islamic expansion did not mark the beginning of the Arab presence in Palestine.² The Arabs are a pre-Islamic people who lived in other parts of the region before the rise of Islam. Thus, the appearance of Arabs in the 7th century was more of a cultural change than a racial one.

Whereas Christianity had previously been the principal religion of the Palestinian people, it was almost replaced by Islam in the 7th century. Although most of them became Muslims at the time, a small section of Christians and Jews continued to practice their faith. By the end of the nineteenth century (1895) the population of Palestine was estimated at 500,000 of whom 400,000 were Muslims, 53,000 were Christians and 47,000 were Jewish.

Political Administration

Following its conquest by the Turks in 1517, Palestine was ruled as an administrative division of the Ottoman Empire until 1917. In its heyday, the Ottoman Empire was one of the strongest and most far-reaching powers of its time. It acquired the political and military muscle that allowed its rule to stretch from Iraq in the east to Bilad al-Sham, the Hijaz, Egypt, Sudan, most of north Africa, Greece and into east European countries like Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Romania.

With regard to Palestine, it was administered as part of an area called Greater Syria which consisted of the countries that emerged in the twentieth century as Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Despite the absence of any clearly defined boundaries in the various parts of Greater Syria, the people of Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Gaza, Nablus and the surrounding countryside referred to their country as Filastin or Palestine.

During the nineteenth century the country was divided into a number of administrative units. The two principal officials responsible for the area were the Pashas of Sidon and Damascus.

The former, who resided in Acre, controlled parts of the northern Palestinian coast, the Galilee region and parts of Lebanon as far north as Beirut. The pashas of Damascus governed over Syria and parts of central Palestine including Jerusalem. These divisions were changed toward the end of the nineteenth century.

When the dangers of foreign occupation became more forceful and aggressive, Sultan Abdul Hamid II ordered a change in the administrative structure of Palestine. In 1887-1888 the country was divided into three units, Acre, Nablus and Jerusalem. Under the new arrangement a special status was granted to Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings because it contained most of the holy sites in Palestine including the Aqsa Mosque. Instead of being administered by the pasha in Damascus, the Sultan separated it and made it an autonomous unit linked directly to Constantinople, the capital of the Empire. By doing so, Abdul Hamid aimed to keep a closer watch on the growing European interference in the internal affairs of the Empire and Jewish immigration to Palestine.

With regard to the administrative unit of Nablus, its authority extended over the areas of Tul Karam, Jenin, Tubas and Baysan. As for Acre, its rule covered Safad, Tabariya, Nazareth and Haifa. In response to a number of requests from foreign Christian bodies, Nazareth was brought under the control of Jerusalem for a brief while during this period.³

Despite these various administrative divisions and its position within Greater Syria, Palestine as a geographic unit had a particular meaning and value to its people. They enjoyed full political and civil rights as Turks or any other members of the Empire. As far as they were concerned the land of Palestine belonged only to those who inhabited it from the beginning of history, who tilled its soil, ate from its produce, and buried their dead in it.

The economy

Bishop Arculf of France wrote about the inhabitants of Jericho, "the whole site of the city is covered with cornfields and vineyards without any habitations. Between it and river Jordan are large groves of palm trees, interspersed with open spaces, in which are almost innumerable houses..."⁴ During the second half of the nineteenth century Palestine experienced major economic growth from agricultural as well as industrial output. Favorable conditions on the world market prompted local farmers to expand the area of

land under cultivation. Hence, with the decline of grain production in Russia after the Crimean War, the Gaza Strip emerged as an important producing region.

Palestine's fame for its citrus also preceded the Zionist colonization. Between 1850 and 1880 the production of oranges from Jaffa quadrupled. There was similar growth in the production of olives and vegetables. On the industrial level the Nablus region witnessed a doubling in the number of soap factories from 15 in 1860 to 30 in 1882.⁵

Writing under the pen name Ahad Ha'Am, the early Zionist essayist Asher Ginzberg (1856-1927) wrote after a visit to Palestine, "We abroad are accustomed to believe that Palestine nowadays is almost entirely desolate: a barren desert where anyone can buy land to his heart's content. In fact this is not so. All over the country it is hard to find arable land that is not cultivated".⁶

By the turn of the twentieth century Palestine was not only a land with a people but also a country with a well-established system of government and a thriving economy. For purely political reasons, however, certain myths had to be created in order to justify and win support for the conquest of this ancient Holy Land.

Points of Review

- The first known inhabitants of Palestine were the Canaanite Arabs from whom the Palestinians descended.
- The Palestinians always maintained their presence and ownership of their land despite the many invasions and foreign rule to which they were subjected.
- On the eve of the Zionist invasion, Palestine had an advanced agricultural economy.

Questions

1. Discuss the view that the Arab presence in Palestine did not begin with the 7th century spread of Islam.
2. Comment on the role of the Ottoman Empire in preserving the Islamic character of Palestine.
3. Assess the claim that Palestine was a barren wasteland on the eve of the Zionist invasion.

Chapter 2

The Origins of the Zionist Movement

Pogroms

The transformation of Arab Palestine into Jewish Israel in the first half of the twentieth century was not only the result of a foreign invasion and military conquest. It was equally the product of many years of political planning and campaigning. Of course, these military operations and political ideas were neither separate nor unrelated. They rather represented the two faces of a colonial nationalist movement called Zionism.

The origins of the modern Zionist movement can be traced to the immediate period after the 1881-84 massacres [pogroms] of Jews in Russia and Romania. During the late nineteenth century Russian Empire was struck by a series of economic crises. The widespread misery and hardship, which they caused, led to rebellion against the Czar, or king of Russia. Instead of addressing the real causes of the problems, the Czar responded by fanning the flames of hatred against Jews, which had smoldered in Christian Europe for centuries. The Christians resurfaced old accusations of the Jews being the persecutors of Jesus.

Religious hatred was not the only cause of hostility toward the Jews. In Russia, as in many other parts of Europe, they became the victims of economic downturn. A culture was created where peasants and officials started viewing the Jews as parasites that ruthlessly amassed wealth through profiteering and usury. The first massive pogrom of Jews took place in Elizavetgrad (now Kirovo) on 15 April 1881. The attacks continued right until the summer of 1884, with Jewish communities being attacked by angry mobs in Ukraine, White Russia, Bessarabia, Minsk and Warsaw.¹

Auto-emancipation

The emergence of the Zionist movement was in many ways a response to the pogroms. In some respects it was also a consequence of those events. Although it did not possess a unified leadership with a single aim, its social foundations were almost completed by 1884. Many groups called Choveve Zion [Lovers of Zion] emerged in cities across Russia and Romania. They were

inspired by the idea of "auto-emancipation" advocated by Moshe Lilienblum (1843-1910) and Leo Pinsker (1821-91).

Lilienblum observed that while Jews did not see themselves as strangers, others saw them this way. The only solution to the Jewish problem was that they should cease being strangers and become citizens and masters in a land of their own. He advised they should not go to America where they would again become strangers. Instead they should go to Palestine "to which we have historic right".²

During the early 1880s a small number of young Lovers of Zion emigrated to Palestine with the aim of rebuilding the ancient Jewish "Kingdom of David and Solomon". They used Zion as a symbol of hope and divine promise because the area where Solomon built the Temple was referred to as Zion. Previously, the name Zion was used in reference to the fort built by the Yebusite founders of Jerusalem to protect the city. The Bible later referred to it as the Citadel of David after he had conquered it.

With regard to Leo Pinsker, he witnessed at close hand the pogroms of 1881 and the flight of tens of thousands of Jews. Driven by hunger, fear, and distress thousands fled to Germany, Austria, France and England. The vast majority however chose to go to the United States. In 1882 Pinsker himself traveled abroad. His apparent mission was to impress upon the leadership of western Jewry to help bring about an exodus out of Russia. His ideas were well received in London by Arthur Cohen, president of the Board of Deputies who urged him to put his views in writing. Thus he wrote his famous pamphlet titled, 'Auto-emancipation.'

Pinsker's work was a rallying call to Russian Jews: that they could not look to others to emancipate them or change their conditions. On the contrary it was they who had to take their destiny into their own hands. Like Lilienblum, Pinsker believed in a territorial solution. He, however, seemed less insistent about Palestine. At one point he even discounted Palestine and explained that the Jews needed any land. On another occasion, however, he did not object to Palestine but maintained that he thought it unsuitable.

Despite their historical claims and repeated efforts, Jewish efforts to settle in Palestine only made a breakthrough in the second half of the nineteenth century after the pogroms that swept across

Eastern Europe. In 1882, three Zionist inspired groups arrived in Palestine from Romania and Poland and they settled in Jerusalem and Jaffa. While some opened small businesses, others showed an interest in farming. The latter formed themselves into eight agricultural colonies. The presence of the newcomers quickly led to growing discontent because their attempts to purchase land threatened the local Palestinian peasants with displacement. As early as 1891 the signs of Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people became increasingly evident. Ahad Ha'Am, condemned the attitudes of the settlers after his 1891 visit:

"They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause and even boast of these deeds; and nobody among us opposes this despicable inclination".³

Basle

During the latter years of the 1880s and 1890s an attempt was made to fuse the various strands of Zionist thought. The three most distinctive trends within the movement were the practical, political and cultural Zionists. The practical Zionists favored the tradition of Choveve Zion and the need to establish agricultural collectives in Palestine. One of its chief spokesmen was Aaron David Gordon (1821-1922). Although political Zionism stressed the need for an independent Jewish state, it was less committed to Palestine. It was, in fact, prepared to accept any 'vacant space' under European control and where it was possible to override the wishes of its people. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), a Hungarian born Jew, was one of its most prominent leaders. The cultural nationalists led by Ahad Ha'Am were very much influenced by the idea of a Jewish cultural renaissance. They aspired to the creation in Palestine of a spiritual centre for the development of Jewish culture and religion without the establishment of a political or economic order there. This spiritual centre would be one that enriched and freed Jewish identity from the crippling customs it acquired during the diaspora.

The first Zionist Congress, convened by Herzl at Basle in August 1897, marked an important turning point in the history of the Zionist movement. Herzl devised a plan, which he believed would win him the support of a major European colonial power. He was, presumably, well aware of the intense rivalry between Britain, Germany and Russia for influence in the Middle East region. Whereas Britain wanted to safeguard the sea route to India, the

Russians similarly sought access to the Mediterranean. At the same time Germany was intent on building a railway that would link Berlin with Baghdad. Against this background of European colonial rivalry, Herzl drifted closer to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. Thus, in 1896, he wrote in his groundbreaking work, *The Jewish State*, "We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism".⁴

One hundred and ninety-seven delegates representing all the schools of Zionist thought attended the 1897 Congress. In his keynote address to the gathering Herzl said, "we want to lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation...Zionism seeks to obtain for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secure homeland in Palestine".¹¹

The Congress concluded with the founding of the World Zionist Organization and the declaration of the Basle Protocol. It read in part, "Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine".

With the election of Theodor Herzl as the first president of the World Zionist Organization in 1897, Political Zionism had evidently won an important victory. In order to carry the masses of East European Jewry along with him Herzl still needed to appease them by remaining fully committed to the settlement of Palestine.

Points of Review

- Zionism emerged in Europe as a result of, and in response to, the late nineteenth century pogroms carried out in Russia, Romania and other parts of Eastern Europe.
- The early Zionists were divided between practical, cultural and political tendencies.
- At the Basle Congress, Theodor Herzl's political Zionism prevailed.

Questions

1. What factors led to the pogroms against Jews in Russia between 1881-84?
2. What was the main message of Leo Pinsker's work, *Auto-emancipation*?
3. How does Herzl's political Zionism differ from the cultural Zionism advocated by *Ahad Ha'Am*?

Chapter 3

Zionism and European Colonialism (1897-1904)

The Basle Congress entrusted Herzl with the task of finding a colonial power to sponsor the Zionist project in Palestine. In a sense it confirmed a role that he had already begun to play. The previous year, 1896, Herzl visited Constantinople accompanied by Philip de Newlinski, a former Austrian diplomat who had promised to arrange a meeting for him with Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Turkey. Because of the well-publicized indebtedness of the Ottoman Empire Herzl suggested to his intermediary that he was prepared to help relieve the financial hardships facing the Sultan in return for his permission to establish a settlement near Jerusalem. No amount of financial assistance, however, seemed enough to entice Abdul Hamid.

During one of the encounters between Newlinski and the Sultan, the latter asked whether it was possible for the Jews to settle in another part of the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan was quite prepared to grant them residence as Ottoman citizens in any other part of his realm except Palestine. Newlinski replied, "Palestine is considered the cradle of the Jews hence they had the desire to return to it". Abdul Hamid then declared, "Palestine is not considered the cradle of the Jews alone, instead it is viewed as the cradle of all the other religions".¹ When Newlinski threatened that the Zionists would turn to Argentina the Sultan made his famous reply:

Advise your friend Herzl not to take any further steps concerning this matter because I am unable to compromise one foot of the Holy Land because it is not my possession; it is the possession of my people. My forefathers fought for this land and watered it with their blood. Let the Jews keep their millions. If my Empire is torn apart they may obtain a part of Palestine without having to pay anything. But they must first begin the dismemberment of our dead bodies. And I would not agree for the dismemberment of my body while I am alive.²

Herzl and the Kaiser

Upon assuming the leadership of the Zionist movement Herzl set about on a diplomatic campaign in western capitals. In order to gain the support of a great power he had to, somehow, get rid of

the impression that Zionism was a movement of East European Jewry. In other words, he had to convince western leaders that his was an undertaking that truly represented the hopes of all European Jews and that they stood to benefit from supporting it.

Toward this end, Herzl first approached the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. He had apparently placed particular hope in the Kaiser who was a personal friend of Sultan Abdul Hamid and whose country, Germany, was the only European ally of the Ottoman Empire. As early as March 1896 the idea of a meeting with Wilhelm II was already given serious consideration. It came about when a certain William Hechler Herzl, Chaplain in the British Embassy in Vienna, offered to arrange a meeting for Herzl with Kaiser Wilhelm II. Hechler was a tutor of the son of Friedrich, the Grand Duke of Baden, who was an uncle by marriage of the Kaiser. Herzl fell for the bait and told Hechler exactly what he wanted,

I told [Hechler]: I have got to establish direct contact, a contact that is discernable on the outside, with a responsible or non-responsible statesman – that is, with a minister of state or a prince. Then the Jews will believe in me, then they will follow me. The most suitable man would be the German Kaiser. I must be given help if I am to carry out the task.³

Herzl's opportunity came in October 1898 after the Kaiser's visit to Constantinople. He accompanied the royal entourage to Jerusalem on what Wilhelm II intended to be a pilgrimage. Herzl presented his case before the Kaiser asking for German support, noting that they had succeeded in arousing the passions of nationalism among the Jews. Wilhelm II was not interested or in a position to help. He told Herzl that he had come to Jerusalem for pilgrimage and not for any political purpose and that he would not make any representation with the Sultan in any matter concerning the Jewish plans in Palestine because that would be considered an intervention into the internal affairs of the Ottoman state.

Early Encounters with the British

After his failure to make headway with the German authorities, Herzl turned his attention to the British. A new round of economic crises in Russia at the turn of the century provoked renewed attacks against Jews there. Thousands of them took flight and sought refuge in England.

Public attitude to the Jewish immigrants was, however, unwelcoming. They saw the flood of refugees as a threat to their standard of living. As a result the Government, headed by Prime Minister Arthur James Balfour, was forced to set up a royal commission to investigate the issue of alien immigration. In response to pleas from Herzl's friends, the commission in 1902 agreed to hear him as a witness. This was despite strong opposition from Lord Lionel Rothschild, a leading western financier of Jewish settlements in Palestine and opponent of political Zionism.⁴ Herzl found a receptive ear among British politicians who were exceptionally keen to limit Jewish immigration and find a solution to what was then called the 'Jewish problem'.

Most western leaders were well aware of the dangers posed by the spread of the revolutionary socialist ideas that were gaining strength in Russia and threatening the Czarist regime. Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Zionist, wrote in a report to Herzl in 1903 that, "The Zionist movement failed here since it did not succeed in attracting the best of Jewish youth...Almost the entire Jewish student body stands firmly behind the revolutionary camp".⁵

While in London, Herzl played upon these fears and stressed the need to help the Jews establish their own national home. He claimed that the Zionists would not only solve Europe's Jewish problem but they would "eliminate the danger of a revolution which would begin with the Jews and end who knows where..."⁶

Apart from his scare mongering tactic of a Jewish revolutionary movement, Herzl was also eager to put Zionism in the service of British imperialism. He quite rightly recognized that Britain, with its possessions in Asia, would be most interested in Zionism. Joseph Chamberlain, a well-known figure for his anti-Semitic views and Colonial Secretary, showed an interest in the Zionist project. During the ensuing exchanges between the two, a number of options were considered. These were Cyprus, the Egyptian Sinai, and Uganda. Given the fresh hostilities in Russia and the attacks that took place in Kishinev in April 1903, Herzl was now prepared to consider any of these three as a means to emancipate his people from oppression.

Although Cyprus fell under the authority off the Colonial Office, Chamberlain pointed out that his government was not prepared to evict its Greek and Muslim inhabitants for the sake of a new settler population. There were, likewise, other problems concerning

Egypt, albeit of a different kind. In the first place, the country was not a British colony. Though constitutionally still part of the Ottoman Empire, it was since 1882 held under British military occupation. In the end it seemed that the British were themselves not prepared to share Egypt with any other colonial enterprise and so the idea of the Jewish settlement of Sinai died in its infancy.

Notwithstanding, Chamberlain assured Herzl that Britain was prepared to assist the Zionist project in any of its colonial possessions "not inhabited by white settlers".⁷ On 23 April 1903, the colonial secretary proposed Uganda. The territories suggested included present day Kenya, which was then part of a larger area called Uganda. Although Herzl had previously committed himself to the settlement of Palestine he was willing to consider other options. Hence, when the Sixth Zionist Congress was convened in Basle in August 1903, he argued passionately for the acceptance of the Uganda proposal. The proposal was, however, defeated at the Congress in the face of strong opposition from the Russian Jews who were not prepared to accept any other land but Palestine.

The Uganda proposal could have had disastrous consequences on the Zionist movement. It did, in fact, split its ranks and led to the emergence of the Jewish Territorial Organization under the leadership of Israel Zangwill. They believed that current circumstances, rather than historical attachments, should be the guiding principle of Zionism. They tried to take the idea forward after the death of Theodor Herzl in 1904. When the Young Turks Nationalists overthrew Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1909 they decided to throw their support once again for the settlement of Palestine. Herzl's successor, Chaim Weizmann, continued the search for a colonial backer for the project in Palestine. A new phase in the history was about to begin, as Palestine became the sole target of the Zionist movement.

Points of Review

- Sultan Abdul Hamid II felt unable to concede territory in Palestine to the Zionists because it was not the possession of the Ottoman Turks only.
- Kaiser Wilhelm II refused to act as an intermediary on behalf of the Zionists because he did not want to intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.
- Herzl played upon British fears of mass immigration and desire for imperial glory in order to arouse official interest in the Zionist project.

Questions

1. Explain some of the methods used by the Zionists to ensnare Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Turkey.
2. Why was it important for the Zionists to obtain a colonial backing for their project in Palestine?
3. Explain why the early twentieth century proposals for Cyprus, the Egyptian Sinai and Uganda failed.

Chapter 4

Racism and Violence in Early Zionist Thought

As a settler colonial movement, Zionism inherited many of the racist attitudes prevalent in late nineteenth century European society. From its inception, the founding fathers advocated claims of the "White man's burden" to civilize the darker races. In his early writings Herzl reflected these prejudices and supposed European superiority. His proposed Jewish State, he argued, would form "a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization opposed to barbarism".¹ Further, in his attempt to impress the Grand Duke of Baden he claimed that Jews returning to their 'historic fatherland' would act as representatives of western civilization, bestow "cleanliness, order and the well-established traditions of the Occident to this plague-ridden, blighted corner of the Orient".²

Herein lies a fundamental difference between political Zionism and Judaism. The term Political Zionism is deliberately used here to distinguish between the messianic Zion of Jewish Orthodoxy from the settler colony sought by the political Zionists. Being a religion based on revelation, the Torah, Judaism's basic message is rooted in the recognition of God, His unity and transcendence, the Day of Judgment and man's accountability. Political Zionism on the other hand, is a nineteenth century colonial movement of European Jews to found an exclusive Jewish State, preferably in Palestine. Although by no means identical with Judaism, political Zionism interprets Judaism in an extremely ethnic and sectarian manner by claiming the Jews to be a race, a chosen race which has a God given right to rule over Palestine. Accordingly, a practicing pious Jew may not necessarily be a Zionist and likewise there are many Zionists who have renounced their ancestral faith of Judaism.³

Because of its distortion of Judaic teachings, many orthodox rabbis condemned political Zionism in the strongest terms. Shortly before the 1897 Congress in Basle the German Rabbinate formally and publicly condemned the 'efforts of the so-called Zionists to create a Jewish national State in Palestine' as contrary to the divine law. The rabbis called upon all those committed to the interest of

Judaism to distance themselves from Political Zionism and the impending Congress organized by Theodor Herzl.⁴

In neighboring Austria, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Dr Moritz Gudemann (1835-1918), expressed similar reservations about the 'worldly' nature of Political Zionism. In 1897 he published a monograph titled National-Judenthum (National Judaism), which was in many respects a scathing attack on the aims and programmes of the Zionist movement. Gudemann argued that true Zionism was not separable from the future of humanity. On the contrary, it was closely connected to the ethical perfection and brotherhood of all mankind. And that the future of the Jewish people was not dependent upon "our national restoration in Palestine, with all the requirements of state sovereignty".⁵

From Jerusalem the Rabbi of Brisk, Joseph Hayyim Sonnenfeldt (1848-1932) expressed similar condemnation of Political Zionism.

As to the Zionists, what shall I say and what am I to speak? There is great dismay also in the Holy land that these evil men who deny the Unique one of the world and His holy Torah have proclaimed with so much publicity that it is in their hands to hasten redemption for the people of Israel and gather the dispersed from the ends of the earth. They have also asserted their view, that the whole difference and distinction between Israel and the nations lies in nationalism, blood and race; and that the faith and the religion are superfluous.⁶

Racism

Despite its rejection and condemnation by leading rabbis, Political Zionism has placed particular emphasis on the notion that the Jews are a "Chosen People". That they are, moreover, a holy people set apart from the rest of mankind and endowed with a special relationship with God. Thus, when it became a force in the late nineteenth century, Political Zionism showed little concern and even less respect for the rights and human dignity of the Palestinian Arabs. Their history, culture, wealth, honor, and aspirations counted for nothing with the Zionists. It was precisely because of this attitude that the former Prime Minister of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir, told the British Sunday Times of 15 June 1969;

"There is no such thing as Palestinians. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country from them. They did not exist".

In order to carry out the exploitation, repression, extermination or expulsion of the natives, settler colonialism has always denied the humanity of the indigenous peoples wherever it took root. In South Africa the Dutch, and later German and French settlers, spared no effort to dehumanize the African population. Similarly, in Palestine, the Zionists have denied the existence and humanity of the Palestinians.

Still another important feature of Zionism is its claim to superiority over the people it colonized. Early Zionist leaders invoked Biblical texts to justify such claims. Although Herzl was not particularly observant of the Torah, he recognized the value of the notions of the 'Chosen People' and 'return' to the 'Promised Land' as means to mobilize Jewish opinion. In the long run, the sanctity ascribed to the Jewish people in the religious sense was transferred to them in the ethnic sense. As a result, Jews no longer constituted a religious community but rather became an organic peoplehood with organic ties that bound them together to the exclusion of all others. With this understanding it was only a matter of time before Zionist leaders like Asher Ginsberg began to speak of a Jewish "supernation".⁷

Apart from the notable difference of racial identity, Zionism has much in common with Pan-Germanism. Whereas Zionism requires a Jew to prove his Jewishness by being a blind supporter of Israel, Pan-Germanism, as advocated by the Nazis, proclaimed that all peoples of the Aryan race owed their foremost loyalty to Germany, the *Heimat*. Ariel Sharon summed up the Zionist view when he said, "the first and the most supreme value is the good of the State. The State is the supreme value".⁸

Violence

The Zionist worship of the state and human power naturally led to violent and tragic consequences. Arnold Toynbee, the eminent British historian, declared that, "It is a form of idolatry which has led its adherents to commit innumerable crimes and follies".⁹ To begin with, the notion of a superman had its attendant of subman. In the case of Palestine, which the Zionists conquered, it meant the expulsion of the Palestinian who was deemed the subman.¹⁰

In all their writings and literature the Zionists referred to Palestine as Israel, Zion, and the Promised Land. They spoke of themselves as Hebrews going to a new land, one that was barren

and devoid of civilization. The Palestinian people were portrayed as marginal and uncultured. The manifest destiny and mission of the Zionists was, therefore, to ethnically cleanse the land. Theodore Herzl and the majority of Zionists were convinced that the fulfillment of their dream would result in the acute suffering and misery of the indigenous population. On 12 June, 1895 he wrote into his diary, "We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country".¹¹

From the very beginning the Zionists had decided to use violence against the indigenous Palestinian Arabs in order to achieve their objectives. Since the Jews constituted less than 5 per cent of the population of Palestine it was virtually impossible for the Zionists to transform it into a state for Jews except through military conquest. Israel Zangwill was one of the most strident advocates of violence against the Palestinians. Speaking in Manchester in April 1905 he declared, "We must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the [Arab] tribes in possession as our forefathers did or grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedan and accustomed for centuries to despise us".¹²

In a broader historical context, the violence unleashed against the Palestinians was by no means peculiar. Similar brutality was meted out to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, South Africa and Zimbabwe who were also deemed marginal. Some writers have pointed out that there is a link between settler conquests and the Bible. As a result, Zionism has been viewed in some quarters as an instrument of God and that whoever opposes it is in fact opposing God. They further note that the ethnic cleansing that occurred in North America, southern Africa, New Zealand and Palestine were not only legitimate but a fulfillment of God's command. Such a mandate they trace to the Book of Exodus (23:27-33)

...for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not live in your land, or they will make you sin against me; for if you worship their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

In the Book of Deuteronomy (7:1-11) the same theme is outlined, "When Yahweh your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations

before you—the Hitites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites...and when Yahweh your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy...Break down their alters, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Also in Deuteronomy (20:16-18) the motive for 'ethnic cleansing' is further derived,

But as for the towns of these peoples that Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them – the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites – just as Yahweh your God has commanded, so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against Yahweh your God.

Although the Zionists have portrayed themselves as the (sole) descendents of the biblical children of Israel and used narratives as these to justify their oppression of the Palestinian people, some Christian scholars warn of the dangers of interpreting them in a literal manner.¹² Professor Michael Prior noted that the narratives pertaining to the divine promise of land to the Israelites and its conquest are not simple history, but rather reflect the religious and political views of their much later authors.¹⁴ Whatever the case, one thing is certain: that the Zionist occupation of Palestine, out of belief in their absolute right, did at length make the expulsion of the Palestinians a matter of course.

Points of Review

- Because of its distortion of Judaic teachings many orthodox rabbis condemned Political Zionism.
- Apart from the notable difference of racial identity, Political Zionism has much in common with Pan-Germanism.
- The Zionist worship of the state and human power led its adherents to commit numerous crimes and follies.

Questions

1. What is the difference between Zionism and Judaism?
2. In what ways is Zionism similar to Pan-Germanism?
3. What measures did early Zionist leaders propose to alter the population balance in Palestine?

Chapter 5

The Balfour Declaration

After Herzl's death in July 1904, Dr Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Zionist, succeeded to the leadership of the World Zionist Organization. He belonged to that wing of the Zionist movement, which rejected the British government's offer to colonize Uganda. Although he recognized the need for an imperial backer, Weizmann, unlike Herzl, was not prepared to accept any offer. His vision was irreversibly focused on Palestine. He was well aware that Britain itself wanted a foothold in Palestine. Thus, in 1904, Weizmann moved to England from Geneva, convinced that of all the European powers, Britain was the most likely to provide support for the Zionist project.

Herzl was given a letter of introduction to the head of the Chemistry Department at Victoria University, Manchester, Professor William H. Perkin. Through him he was appointed as a lecturer in the department and soon after became actively involved in the work of the Manchester Zionist Society. Manchester itself was the center of Zionist thought and activity in England.

Though a newcomer to the British scene, Weizmann quickly worked himself into the corridors of power. It began in the winter of 1906 during an election campaign after the collapse of the Conservative government of which Arthur Balfour was prime minister. Balfour had heard of the Russian Jew who led the Zionist opposition to the offer of settling Uganda made by his government. The two met at a Manchester Hotel, which Balfour used as his election headquarters. When asked why the Zionists were so bitterly opposed to the Uganda offer, Weizmann explained, "Only a deep religious conviction keeps this movement alive. This conviction is based on the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and in Palestine alone. If Moses had come into the Zionist meeting when it was voting for Uganda, he would have broken the tablets again".¹

As it turned out, the Conservative party was overwhelmingly defeated in the 1906 general elections. Balfour remained its leader until 1911 when he resigned. Ever since their fateful meeting in 1906, Weizmann cultivated a relationship with the former prime

minister, which proved invaluable to the Zionist cause. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, it seemed the time had come for the Zionists to reap the fruits of their labour.

War Breaks Out

Turkey's entry into the war alongside Germany in August 1914 had far reaching consequences for Palestine. It gave the Zionists a prized opportunity to reopen negotiations with the British government for a "national home" in Palestine. They emphasized Palestine's strategic position and the importance of having inhabitants there that were willing to help protect Britain's regional interests and the vital sea routes to India. Despite reservations from elements within the Foreign Office, Herbert Samuel, a prominent Jew and member of Cabinet assumed the task of selling the Zionist project to the British government. After a Foreign Office refusal to meet a delegation from the Zionist leadership, Samuel presented in January 1915 a memorandum on "The Future of Palestine" to the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith. The Prime Minister was unimpressed and rejected the proposal for a British protectorate in Palestine under whose stewardship the Zionist programme would be implemented. Meanwhile, the search for official support suffered a further setback that same year when Weizmann approached the British Ambassador to Paris, Lord Bertie. A staunch Catholic, Lord Bertie declared the project an "absurd scheme" and shuddered to think of "what the Pope would say".²

Herbert Samuel was not satisfied with Asquith's rejection. He thereafter turned to Mark Sykes, a trusted friend and Member of Parliament who was seconded by the Intelligence Department of the War Office to the Turkish front when the war broke out. Sykes was convinced that the Zionist project was consistent with British imperial interests and so he decided to work covertly with Samuel to further Zionist aims in Whitehall.

After the collapse of the Asquith government and the appointment of David Lloyd George as Prime Minister in December 1916, British policy toward the Zionists changed significantly. The government opened official talks with the Zionists who were ably assisted by the editor of the Manchester Guardian, C.P. Scott. Playing the role of facilitator Scott introduced Weizmann to his close friend Lloyd George.

During the war a strange turn of events worked together in

favour of the Zionist cause. Britain's ability to continue the large-scale production of ammunition was seriously handicapped after it exhausted its supply of timber, which was used to produce wood alcohol, from which acetone an essential component in the manufacture of cordite was made. When Prime Minister George informed his trusted friend Scott that the Government were looking for a resourceful scientist to invent synthetic acetone, the latter immediately recommended Weizmann. The rest was history.

Although still a foreigner, Chaim Weizmann was employed by the British Ministry of Munition and Admiralty, where Arthur Balfour was now an influential figure. When they met for the first time after taking up his assignment Balfour assured Dr Weizmann, "I was thinking of that conversation of ours and I believe that when the guns stop firing you may get your Jerusalem".³

Realizing the grave challenge posed to the Allies by increased German submarine success, Weizmann committed himself and the constituency of "the Jewish people" fully behind the British war effort with the understanding that Britain would reward them with a public law declaration of support for political Zionism and its territorial aspirations in Palestine.

The Six Drafts

In the summer of 1917, Mark Sykes ordered Weizmann to draft a declaration that would certify the juridical claim of the Jewish people to Palestine. A number of concerned parties wrote six different drafts before an agreement was made on the final text. In June-July the Foreign Office produced a draft, which contained the key words 'asylum' and 'refuge.'

On 12, July, the Zionists wrote their preliminary draft. It affirmed the acceptance of the British government to the principle of Palestine becoming the national home of the Jewish people once the war was concluded. This draft reflected the work of Dr Nahum Sokolow, the continental representative of the Zionists and his colleagues. It mentioned internal autonomy for the Jews in Palestine and "freedom of immigration for Jews". Balfour raised some objections to this draft and it was not submitted officially.

On 18 July, the Zionists sent a revised draft to Foreign Secretary Balfour. It was submitted with an accompanying letter from Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild (1868-1937) requesting a letter from the British government confirming its approval.

The Balfour draft completed in August 1917 reaffirmed without reservation the content of the Zionist draft. Because it was the work of the Foreign Secretary, this draft was viewed not only as a slightly reworded version of the Zionist draft but, moreover, an official endorsement of the July 18 Zionist draft. Still, there were doubts as to whether the Zionist aims as stated in this draft would be accepted and it was, therefore, not presented to the Cabinet.

That month, a prominent Conservative member in the War Cabinet, Lord Milner, was asked to prepare an alternative draft. Although he stepped back somewhat from the Zionist demands in order to win the support of the entire Cabinet, it did meet with opposition. Quite significantly, one of the main opponents to the entire scheme was none other than Edwin Montagu, the only Jewish member of the Cabinet and secretary of state for India. He condemned Zionism as a deviation from Judaism and described it as a form of nationalism. In a memorandum titled "The Anti Semitism of the present Government", which he circulated among his fellow Cabinet members, Montagu forewarned with amazing accuracy that, "you will find a population in Palestine driving out its present inhabitants, taking all the best in the country".⁴

In order to break the impasse and overcome the difficulties before the Milner draft, Weizmann and Rothschild wrote a memorandum to the Foreign Secretary on 3 October imploring that the declaration be granted. Montagu's opposition had, by now, exposed the weaknesses in the Zionist claim. At this stage Milner turned to Leopold Amery, an assistant secretary in the Cabinet for help in the preparation of a draft "which would go a reasonable distance to meeting the objections, both Jewish and pro-Arab, without impairing the substance of the proposed Declaration". This fifth draft, prepared by Milner-Amery, was cabled to the United States Supreme Court Justice, Louis Brandeis, for amendment and submission to President Wilson for his approval. Brandeis suggested some changes, among them the substitution of "Jewish people" for "Jewish race". Once these amendments were completed, Brandeis forwarded the draft to Colonel Edward M. House who then passed it on to President Wilson.

Sixty-Seven Words

The final draft approved by Wilson was a compromise of sorts. Instead of explicitly stating the real Zionist intent of founding a

Jewish state in Palestine, it concealed this in the diplomatic term "national home". When the document was returned to London, Balfour appended his signature to it in his capacity as Foreign Secretary. It was issued on 2 November 1917 in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild. By addressing the declaration to Lord Rothschild instead of Weizmann or Sokolow, the British government, it seems, was attempting to win over the anti-Zionist elements within British Jewry. It read:

Foreign Office

2 November 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country".

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours

Arthur James Balfour

Though consisting of only 67 words, the 1917 'Balfour Declaration' was, undoubtedly, one of the most decisive and consequential documents in the modern history of Palestine and the entire Middle East. Forming as it were, the cornerstone of the Zionist project, it changed not only the demographic map of the region but also its political, social and military configuration as well.

The Balfour Declaration may have been a victory for the Zionists, but for the Palestinians it was a tragedy. Acting as judge, jury and witness all at the same time, Britain condemned the Palestinians in absentia without their knowledge or consent. The process by which the Declaration was granted violated the legal maxim that "no one can give that which he has not" (*nemo dat quod non habet*). That a monumental injustice was done to the

Palestinians was all too evident; for how could one country promise the establishment of a national home for one people in the homeland of another at a time when it had no sovereign rights over the territory concerned?

Points of Review

- The Zionist leadership realized very early that Britain had certain strategic interests in Palestine.
- The outbreak of World War I led to a reopening of official negotiations between the Zionists and British Government.
- By adopting the diplomatic term 'national home' the Declaration concealed the real intent of the Zionists, which was the founding of a Jewish State.

Questions

1. How did Turkey's entrance into the First World War affect the future of Palestine?
2. Why did the Jewish member of Cabinet, Edwin Montagu, oppose the Zionist project?
3. Why was the Balfour Declaration described as a monumental injustice to the Palestinian people?

Part II

The Mandatory Period (1922-1948)

Chapter 6

Laying the Foundations

During the latter years of the First World War President Woodrow Wilson announced Fourteen Points upon which he felt a final settlement should be based. With regard to Palestine and the territories formerly under Turkish rule, Wilson advocated the recognition of their right to self-determination and that they be given “an absolute unmolested opportunity of development”. Earlier in January 1918, Wilson warned the American Congress that the peoples and provinces of the Ottoman Empire should not be traded and bartered as pawns in the balance of power game among nations. He claimed that the acquisition of territory by conquest should be rejected.

Soon after the war ended in November 1918, the victorious powers gathered for a peace conference in Versailles, France, in January 1919. One of the main issues at the top of their agenda was the future of Palestine and the other Arab countries occupied by the Allied Forces. As it turned out, the conference’s decisions proved to be totally inconsistent with the principles and promises that were advanced during the war.

The Peace Conference

Regretfully, the Paris Peace Conference did not uphold the principles of self-determination and non-interference advocated by Wilson. Instead, the victorious powers created a new form of colonial rule called the mandate system. Under this arrangement a nation that was given a mandate received control of the administration and resources of another people “until such time as they are able to stand alone”. Greater Syria was, accordingly, divided into Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine and placed under French and British rule. The people of the region, however, felt unjustly betrayed as they were previously given assurances of independence. Addressing the Paris Peace Conference, Sherif Husayn’s son, Faisal, pointed out, “As representing my father, who, by request of Britain and France, led the Arab rebellion against the Turks, I have come to ask that the Arabic-speaking people of Asia be recognized as independent sovereign peoples...”¹

Faisal's words fell on deaf ears. This was demonstrated on 25 April 1920, when the Supreme Council of the principal Allied Powers, sitting in San Remo, granted mandates to France over Syria and Lebanon, and Britain over Iraq and Palestine. The plan was, however, fiercely resisted by the respective populations and in the end the mandates were imposed by force of arms. In Syria, French troops crushed a local uprising and imposed military rule over the country. Similar unrests erupted in Iraq against the British. They eventually managed to contain the situation by installing Faisal as King over Iraq after the French had driven him out from Syria.

Although there was also resistance and confrontations in Palestine, the situation there was, in some respects, different. There, Britain had no intention of establishing a government of local Arab leaders. Its foremost concern at this stage was, instead, to forge ahead with its commitment to the Zionist movement. Toward this end Whitehall appointed a prominent British Zionist, Herbert Samuel, as High Commissioner of Palestine with the authority to establish a civil government in Jerusalem from the first of July 1920. The legitimacy of this administration was always questioned because at the time there was no formal peace treaty between Turkey and any of Allied Powers.

In a sense, therefore, the Mandate was not so much entrusted upon the British as it was seized by force of arms. Hence, the Mandate did not legally come into effect in 1920 because the Turkish National Assembly rejected the Treaty of Sèvres, which the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied Powers tried to impose upon Turkey in August 1920. The Turks particularly objected to Article 95 of the Treaty, which called for the administration of Palestine to be granted to a Mandatory selected by the Allies and that this Mandatory would be responsible to put into effect the 1917 Balfour Declaration. While the defeated Turks seemed prepared to accept the separation of the Arab provinces they were firmly opposed to the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine. After a series of further negotiations the matter was finally resolved with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on 23 July 1923.

It is important to note that the Treaty of Lausanne made no mention of the Balfour Declaration. While renouncing its rights and title to Palestine [in Article 16], Turkey, as the state which possessed sovereignty over Palestine, did not mortgage its future for the

establishment of a Jewish home. It stated that its future should be decided by "the parties concerned"; meaning its people.

Although Turkey was forced to renounce its rights over the Arab territories, it did not hand over such rights to the Allied Powers collectively or to any one of them in particular. In the case of Palestine no mention was made of a transfer of ownership to Britain. Had this been the case it would have mentioned so, as it did in Article 15 with regard to certain Mediterranean islands, which it specifically renounced in favor of Italy.

Conflicting Aims

By itself the Balfour Declaration had little value to the Zionist movement. Though issued by the British government, it had absolutely no legal basis of authority. The purpose of the Mandatory was, therefore, to provide the legal cover for its enforcement. Had they so desired, any British government could have ignored or repudiated the Declaration, which was only a statement of policy. With its incorporation into the Mandatory and ratification by the Principal Allied Powers acting through the League of Nations on 22 July 1922, the Balfour Declaration was, however, raised to the level of an international treaty.

The Mandate for Palestine contained two contradictory objectives. On the one hand, its preamble stated that its purpose was to put into effect the provisions of Article 22 of the Charter of the League of Nations. Notable among these was that 'the well-being and development' of the people of the mandated territory - Palestine - 'form a sacred trust of civilization.' Another provision affirmed that the existence of the Palestinian people 'as an independent nation was provisionally recognized.'²

Contrary to this, the preamble further declared that the Mandatory was obliged to "be responsible for putting into effect the Declaration originally made on 2 November, 1917 by the government of His Britannic Majesty and adopted by the said [Principal Allied] Powers in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".

These contrasting objectives were then fused in Article 2 of the Mandatory. This read, "The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development

of self-governing institutions, and also for safe-guarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion”.

Throughout the twenty-six year period of its Mandate in Palestine, Britain ensured that all legislative and executive powers in the country remained with itself and its High Commissioner. There were, admittedly, two half-hearted attempts to bring about self-government in Palestine. Both the first, which took place in 1922, and the second in 1939, were opposed and derailed by the Zionists. In the first instance, an Order-in-Council recommended the creation of a Legislative Council consisting of ten appointed members and twelve elected members. As a result of Zionist opposition the elections, which were held in 1923 for this purpose were declared null and void. No further elections were held; instead full powers were thereafter vested in the High Commissioner.

The second attempt to recognize Palestinian political aspirations was in 1939 when the British government issued a White Paper (No.6019). It stated in part that, “His Majesty’s Government believe that the framers of the Mandate in which the Balfour Declaration was embodied could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country”. It called, therefore, for “the establishment within ten years of an independent Palestine State”, and control of Jewish immigration to a maximum of 15,000 annually for the next five years, after that it could only occur with Arab approval. The Zionists violently opposed the White Paper as the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany was reaching its peak and the attempt to realize Palestinian independence was defeated.

While denying Palestinians the right to develop self-governing institutions or even to participate in the administration of their own country, Britain made special provisions to increase Jewish power and influence. Article 4 of the Mandate allowed for the creation of “an appropriate Jewish agency...recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home..”.

In the event, the Zionist Organization soon became the Jewish Agency and despite being a foreign body, was allowed to assume governmental functions in Palestine.

As it seemed, British policy makers had long concluded that a Zionist colony in Palestine would serve their interests better than an independent Palestinian state. Lord Balfour had, indeed, affirmed this in a memorandum dated 19 September 1919. That, "In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country...The Four Powers are committed to Zionism... Zionism be it right or wrong is more important than the wishes of 700,000 Arabs".³

To complete the foundation of the Zionist project in Palestine, one other important block had to be installed. The colonization of the country required a Jewish majority, which, in turn, demanded a steady and massive flow of immigrants. Toward this end, Article 6 of the Mandate called for provisions, "to facilitate Jewish immigration and encourage close settlement by Jews on the land". By doing so the British Mandatory did not only lay the foundation of the future Jewish state but it also sowed the seeds of a conflict that would haunt Palestine and the entire region for many years to come. However, the Jews would not have responded to the Zionist call of migration if it were not for the Holocaust.

Points of Review

Despite renouncing its rights over its former Arab territories, Turkey never handed over such rights to the Allied Powers collectively or individually.

The purpose of the British Mandate in Palestine was to give legal cover for the enforcement of the Balfour Declaration.

British policy makers had long concluded that a Zionist colony in Palestine would serve their interests better than an independent Palestinian state.

Questions

1. Why did the Turkish government refuse to ratify the 1920 Treaty of Sevres?
2. Explain the 'sacred trust of civilization', which the League of Nations entrusted upon the mandatory powers in Article 22 of its Charter.
3. Comment on the measures adopted by the British Mandatory to prevent the realization of Palestinian independence.

Chapter 7

Jewish Immigration and its Consequences

For all intents and purposes, the Mandatory was something of a stepping-stone toward the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. While addressing the Paris Peace Conference in February 1919, Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, told delegates that through a process of immigration they aimed to create a Jewish majority in Palestine. Although the Peace Conference did not officially adopt the plan to make Palestine a Jewish state, it did, nonetheless, clear the way to make this possible.

On the face of it, no particular importance was attached to the wishes of the Palestinian Arabs. The Balfour Declaration did not even recognize them as a people with historic national rights. Having committed His Majesty's government to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine it noted only as a kind of afterthought that nothing shall be done to prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing "non-Jewish communities". Thus, with this indirect reference to the Palestinians the Declaration ignored completely their political and national rights.

Once the imposition of the Mandatory was finally completed in 1922, Britain and the Jewish Agency stepped up their cooperation to achieve the principal Zionist objectives in Palestine. Foremost among these were the acquisition of land, attainment of a Jewish majority, and declaration of statehood. Several practical steps were taken to achieve these objectives. Land was purchased and decreed the absolute property of the Jewish people, which could not be sold, leased or mortgaged thereafter. Large-scale immigration was encouraged. Political and administrative structures were built to assume the functions of the future state. Monopolies were granted to ensure control over the economy and a military force was formed to protect Jewish interests. In effect, a self-contained entity was created on Palestinian soil, which was hostile to and separate from the Palestinian people.

Immigration

There were about one million Palestinians and fifty-six thousand Jews in Palestine at the end of the First World War. Clearly the

Zionist attempt to colonize Palestine could not have succeeded without large-scale Jewish immigration. Their slow natural growth meant they had no realistic chance of achieving numerical parity with the Arabs, let alone becoming the majority. In an address delivered in Jerusalem on 7 July 1920, High Commissioner Herbert Samuel announced that the main purpose of his administration was to encourage Jewish immigration so that they would become predominant in Palestine.¹ He subsequently followed up this declaration with the creation of a bureau for immigration in September of the same year.

Between 1919 and 1923, an estimated thirty-five thousand Jews immigrated to Palestine. In 1925, another thirty-five thousand arrived. This steady build-up of immigrants into Palestine was partially encouraged by events in Europe where economic depression and hostility toward Jews forced many to flee their homes.² Large numbers tried to enter the United States but found they were not welcomed after 1923 when the US government clamped down on immigrants from east European countries because they tended, more often than not, to be influenced by socialist ideas.

Although the Mandatory specified that the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine should correspond with the economic ability of the country to absorb the immigrants, this was not faithfully observed in practice. On the contrary, the British government reinterpreted this provision in 1931 to apply only to the Jewish sector, which was demanding increased numbers of workers. Consequently, during the five-year period between 1931 and 1936 the number of Jewish residents in Palestine doubled to 370,000 (27%). Whereas the first British census carried out in December 1922 had recorded a total of 757,182 residents of whom 83,794 (11%) were Jewish, the second census conducted in December 1931 counted 1,035,821 of whom 174,006 (17%) were Jewish.³

In 1934 the High Commissioner disclosed that the British Mandatory had completely lost control of Jewish immigration into Palestine as early as 1932. As the number of Jews who were smuggled into Palestine during this period outstripped those who had passports and valid immigration documents, the worst fears of the Palestinian population became gradually manifest. They witnessed, with frustration and then anger, that the new settler population not only eroded the immense numerical superiority that

they had enjoyed in their ancestral land for thousands of years but began to employ apartheid ideologies of segregation.

Land Acquisition

Although most Jewish immigrants tended to settle in urban centers like Jerusalem, Haifa and Ramla, the acquisition of Palestinian land was always considered essential for the success of the Zionist project. Theodore Herzl, the movement's founding leader recorded in his diary that the essence of the project and key to its success rested in the expropriation and handover of Palestinian land to Jewish immigrants.⁴ Later on, at the 1901 Fifth Zionist Congress, he ordered the establishment of the Jewish National Fund to coordinate land purchases and ensure that such land would never again be made available for sale. The reason for this latter – inalienability – provision was to make certain that every piece of land bought by the Jewish National Fund would become a part of the future Jewish state.

By 1920 the Jewish settler movement gained control of about 650,000 dunums (one dunum equals a quarter of an acre) of land. Ten years later the figure mounted to 1,164,000 dunums. In 1936 the total holdings were further expanded to an estimated 1,400,000 dunums. Most of the purchases of these lands were made from absentee owners mainly resident in Beirut. Before the First World War Beirut and the territories to its south, including the Galilee, constituted a single administrative unit under Turkish rule. After the war, however, Beirut fell within the areas mandated to the French. As a consequence of this new situation many large landowners sold their property in mandated Palestine. When viewed in the context of the overall area of Palestine the amount of land sold in this manner was relatively insignificant. By 1947 the Jews only managed to gain control of 1.9 million dunums, which represented about 6% of the total land surface.

Admittedly, it was not always important to the Zionists if the productivity of the newly acquired lands were increased or not. What seemed to be of utmost importance was to prevent the Arabs from ever benefiting from their land. On the whole, the policy of land purchases were guided by four considerations: the economic viability of the land, its contribution to forming a contiguous enclave of Jewish territory, the avoidance of isolated settlements and the

contribution of those land purchases to the Zionists political-territorial claims.⁵

The Mandatory employed several methods to bring about Zionist control of Palestinian land. High Commissioner Samuel played a leading role in this by first changing the laws which were previously enacted by the Ottoman Turks to prevent Jewish ownership of land and real estate. He substituted these with a series of new pieces of legislation intended to serve the interests of the Jews only. Most of these laws were passed during the 1920s.

Apart from the land purchases, the Mandatory administration granted monopoly concessions to the Zionist movement to control and develop Palestine's natural resources. In 1921 it gave the right to supply electricity to all of Palestine with the exception of Jerusalem to Pinhas Rutenberg's Palestine Electricity Company. Other companies received similar concessions to conduct mineral exploration and irrigation development in the Dead Sea and the Huleh marshes, north of the Sea of Galilee respectively.

On another level the Mandatory imposed an elaborate and burdensome system of taxation upon the Palestinians, which gradually led to their impoverishment and dispossession. Because of the numerous administrative obstacles placed in their way, many local farmers were unable to export their produce. As a result they failed to generate enough income to pay the taxes on their homes, land, animals and customs. In 1928, 64.2% of the families in Haifa for example, were threatened with imprisonment or the confiscation of their property. When the normal channels of extracting the taxes were exhausted the Mandatory resorted to the expulsion of farmers by the force of arms. On 15 June 1933 British forces evicted 2,546 Arab families from Al-Hawarith Valley near Tul Karm. Similarly, in January 1935 they expelled the Zabaydat Arab residents from their lands in Al-Harithiyeh near Haifa. Other residents from Afoolah and five neighboring villages were also expelled during this period.⁶

Land and Labour

In order to complete their colonization of Palestine, the early Zionists could not rely on the conquest of Palestinian land only. They also had to pursue a policy of separate development - apartheid - that would allow Jewish political, educational, economic, and military institutions to take root. The leaders of

“Labour Zionism” were the most ardent advocates of this separatist policy. In 1920 they founded the General Federation of Jewish Labour (Histadrut), whose guiding slogans were; “Jewish Land, Jewish Labour, Jewish Produce”. These ideas proved especially attractive to the Jewish emigrants who were, in the main, poor and unemployed. They swallowed, hook, line, and sinker, the Histadrut argument that the exclusion of Palestinian labour meant more jobs and relatively higher wages for themselves.⁷ Thus, when translated into practice, the principle of “Jewish Labour” forced many Jewish industries and agricultural settlements to hire Jewish labour only and boycott the fruits and produce from non-Jewish farms.

The drive to enforce the doctrine of “Jewish Labour” intensified in the 1930s. When some Jewish builders and citrus growers employed Palestinian workers, the Histadrut launched a campaign to deny them employment. This campaign spread to the cities where Palestinian Arabs were physically removed after they had found employment in Jewish industries. Members of the Histadrut picketed Jewish farms in order to prevent Palestinians from getting jobs. They poured kerosene on Arab agricultural produce and attacked Jewish housewives who purchased from Arab farmers. In 1936 David Ben Gurion, a founding leader of the Histadrut and future prime minister of Israel, told a meeting of the National Council of the settler movement (Yishuv), “If we want Hebrew redemption 100%, then we must have a 100% Hebrew settlement, a 100% Hebrew farm, and a 100% Hebrew port”.⁸

The Zionist colonization of Palestine differed in one significant way from other colonialist enterprises. Instead of exploiting the Palestinian Arab population for the benefit of a mother country as Indian workers were by the British, the Zionists set about to expel and replace the indigenous population. If ever they succeeded in concealing their objective in the early part of the twentieth century, it had become an open secret by the mid-1930s. While the Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann, compared the Arabs of Palestine to the rocks of Judea, “as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path,”.

Ben Gurion, in 1938, went even further and declared, “after we become a strong force, as a result of the creation of a state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine”.

As expected, the Palestinians did not resign themselves to losing their land. Zionism had clearly become a danger not only to

individual livelihood but also to Palestinian national aspirations as well. By 1936 about half of the peasantry could no longer sustain themselves on their land. The Zionist, through various means, evicted about twenty thousand families. Those who drifted into the cities did so only to swell the ranks of the unemployed. In June 1935, when the British Mandatory prevented them from staging a peaceful demonstration, the Federation of Arab Workers responded with a warning of things to come, "The government will soon have to give the workers either bread or bullets".⁹

Points of Review

- Although the Mandatory specified that the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine should correspond with the economic ability of the country to absorb the immigrants, this was not faithfully observed in practice.
- The essence of the Zionist project and key to its success rested in the expropriation and handover of Palestinian land to Jewish immigrants.
- Instead of exploiting the Palestinian Arab population for the benefit of a mother country as Indian workers were by the British, the Zionist colonizers set about to expel and replace the indigenous population.

Questions

1. How did the Mandatory help in accelerating Jewish immigration to Palestine?
2. What was the main function of the Jewish National Fund in Palestine?
3. Explain the doctrine of "Labour Zionism".

Chapter 8

Early Palestinian Resistance

Although 'the land of Palestine' was administratively part of greater Syria, there was a general understanding and recognition of Palestine as a distinct entity. This was especially the case with the Zionists who had long desired to establish a national home in Palestine. Arab opposition to this project, manifested in immigration and land purchases, began to take root long before the First World War, as early as the formation of the World Zionist Organization in 1897.

During this early period, official Ottoman policy was that Jewish immigrants would be able to settle in parts of the Ottoman Empire but not in Palestine. In 1897 an Arab commission was formed in Jerusalem to look into the question of land sales and immigration. Its opposition led to the cessation of sales for a number of years. It was easier to purchase land in the northern *vilayet* (district), hence the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) decided to set up an office in Beirut in 1900. At the time many of the large landowners in northern Palestine resided in Beirut.

Arab efforts were uncoordinated and often manifested in individual efforts. There were, of course, several notable isolated cases of peasant protests. In 1902 Shaykh Rashid Rida warned in his journal, *Al-Manar*, that the Jews entering Palestine sought national sovereignty there and not simply a refuge from European persecution. The issue was in fact widely debated in the Arab media, namely in Egypt. According to the Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi, over six hundred articles on Zionism were published in a sample of seventeen key newspapers from Cairo, Beirut, Haifa and Damascus between 1909 and 1914.¹ Arab opposition during this period was particularly strong. Much of what was written by the intelligentsia was in response to what was happening to their fellow peasants. Their replacement by Jewish immigrants on farms angered many and became a real bone of contention.

Peasant Opposition

After the promulgation of the Ottoman Land Code in 1858, there was a growing tendency for land to be concentrated in fewer private

hands. This law required the registration of agricultural land not previously registered in the name of individual owners. It was until that time, treated as communal land. The new law, however, made many peasants fearful of registering because they wanted to avoid taxation and other forms of state control.

On the other extreme, the wealthy upper class who were capable of cheating the system, registered large tracts of land in their names. The biggest beneficiaries were the merchants of Haifa, Beirut and Jaffa. They acquired the land after the introduction of the 1858 law. Their sale of land to the Jews, expulsion of tenant farmers and settlement of Jewish immigrants led to violent clashes. The local peasants were inhabitants of these fertile lands for generations, which they considered their own. Many of them were shocked when they were suddenly informed to vacate the land they had farmed and resided on for generations leaving them for European Jews.

One famous confrontation occurred in Mullabis village, about eleven miles north east of Jaffa, where a group of Jewish settlers from Europe had bought some land in 1878. They established an agricultural colony, Petah Tikva, which remained aloof from neighboring Palestinian villages. They ordered local peasants to stop grazing in the land. The peasants continued, however, and this led to confrontation in March 1886. This was one of the earliest recorded clashes of the modern era against Zionist occupation.

Several years later, in 1901, an attempt by the JCA to purchase seventy thousand dunums of land in the Lower Galilee was met with resistance from the Arab villagers in al-Shajara, Misha, and Melhamiyah. The Beirut based families, Sursuqs, their business affiliates, the Tuenis and Mudawwars, sold this land to the Jews.² What happened in al-Shajara was, in reality, a continuation of the resistance started at Petah Tikva. It was again played out in Tiberias in 1909 and in Afula in 1910-11 after Elias Sursuq agreed to sell some land fifteen miles away from al-Shajarah in the neighboring district of Nazareth to the JNF.

Confrontation with the Zionists was inevitable because every purchase resulted in the displacement of the local inhabitants. In the case of Afula, it seemed even more predictable because of its historical significance. Afula was the site of a fortress built by Salah al-Din al-Ayubi after he defeated the Crusaders at Hattin in 1187.

Any attempt by foreigners to occupy the town was, therefore, sure to meet with local resistance.

The Western Wall

Palestinian opposition to the Zionist project took a new and significant turn immediately after the granting of the Balfour Declaration. Encouraged by British support, the Zionists went on to make more demands, in particular demanding the handing over of the Wailing Wall. The Wailing or Western Wall also known to Muslims as Buraq Wall is an integral part of the western boundary wall of the Noble Sanctuary of al-Aqsa, which the Jews believe is all that remains of Herod's Temple from the 63 BC.

In a letter dated 30 May 1918, Chaim Weizmann wrote to Foreign Secretary Balfour demanding 'only one [holy place] which is ...left to us...our most sacred monument, in our most sacred city, is in the hands of some Moghreb religious community...'³

Weizmann's letter to Balfour coincided with a similar one to the Mufti of Jerusalem, apparently concerning the land but not the Wall. The Mufti's response was that the land in question was endowed property (waqf), which according to Islamic law could not be sold, mortgaged or leased.

One of the earliest resistance leaders to the occupation of Palestinian land was Amin Husayni, a member of the prominent Jerusalemite family which held the position of mufti of the city ever since the beginning of the seventeenth century. In 1912 he was sent to study in Cairo where he became, under the influence of Shaykh Rashid Rida, a prominent Muslim scholar. After realizing the dangers posed by the growth of the Jewish population in Palestine, which rose from 25,000 in 1882 to 85,000 in 1914, he began to form a Palestinian society to oppose Zionism.

After serving briefly in the Turkish army during the war, Amin Husayni returned to Jerusalem in February 1917 and became part of the Nascent Nationalist Movement. He was elected president of the Arab Club (al-Nadi al-Arabi) which, together with the Literary Club (al-Muntada al-Adabi) and the Christian-Muslim Association (al-Jamiya al-Islamiya al-Masihiya) formed in 1918, became the main organizations to champion the Palestinian cause.

During the first Palestine National Congress held between 27 January and 9 February 1919 Husayni encouraged the adoption of a

pan-Arabist line. He called for a vigorous anti-Zionist campaign under the banner of Palestinian unity with Syria.⁴ On 27 February 1920 Amin Husayni organized peaceful marches in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa to protest against the Chief Administrator's announcement that he was going to enforce the Balfour Declaration. The following month he organized similar marches across Palestine in support of Sherif Hussayn's son, Faisal, who was then proclaimed King of Syria by the Syrian National Congress. However, he was ousted from power by the French in July 1920 after the League of Nations ratified their mandate over the country. Amin's political influence was substantially enhanced after April 1921 when he succeeded Kamil Husayni as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.

This early phase of Palestinian resistance took a more serious tempo in 1929 when thousands of Jewish para-military groups and settlers from outlying areas marched into Jerusalem and hoisted the Zionist flag at the Western Wall of al-Aqsa Mosque shouting 'the Wall is ours!' Muslims believe that it was at this Wall that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) tied his celestial animal, Buraq, before his miraculous ascent into the heavens and, despite, this shared the wall with the Jews for over a thousand years.

As a result of the provocation, bloody battles broke out in Jerusalem on 23 August 1929 and quickly spread to many other parts of Palestine. Popularly known as the Buraq Uprising, the clashes ended with hundreds of deaths on both sides. More than 133 Jews and 116 Palestinians were killed. Most of the Palestinian were killed by British troops.⁴

Points of Review

- Palestinian opposition to the Zionist project started long before the First World War.
- Confrontation was inevitable because every purchase of land by the Zionists led to the displacement of local peasants.
- Zionist claims to the Western Wall provoked the suspicion and anger of the Palestinian people.

Questions

1. How did the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 help the Zionists?
2. What measures did the Palestinian people adopt to resist Zionism before 1922?
3. Explain the causes of the 1929 Buraq Uprising.

Chapter 9

Origins of Armed Resistance

Although Muslim leaders were greatly disturbed by the Zionist project, the emergence of an organized movement in Palestine did not come about until the 1930s. Of course, their political and social influence began to manifest itself much earlier. Soon after becoming president of the Supreme Muslim Council in January 1922, Amin Husayni embarked upon a vigorous diplomatic campaign to win the support of Muslims and of Arab countries. He sent delegations to fellow Muslim leaders to enlighten them about the Zionist threat and to rally their political and financial support.¹

In the immediate aftermath of the 1929 Buraq (Western Wall) Uprising, Muslims began to show some concern for the Palestinians. Acting in his capacity as Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin Husayni called upon Muslims everywhere to demonstrate their solidarity with the Palestinian people by declaring 16 May 1930 Palestine Day and observing a general strike on the occasion. Several countries responded positively. Many of them later complied with the Mufti's request and sent representatives to the International Commission of Inquiry convened by the League of Nations and British government in Jerusalem in October 1930.

After considering extensive written and verbal evidence, the International Commission reached a unanimous verdict in December 1930. that:

- The sole ownership to the Western Wall belonged to the Muslims;
- The pavement in front of the Wall and the adjacent Maghrebi (Moroccan) Quarter belonged to the Muslims;
- the Jews shall have access to the Western Wall for religious devotion – subject to certain stipulations.

The verdict of the Commission became national and international law in 1931 after the mandatory power, Britain, and the Council of the League of Nations accepted it. Thus the 'Palestine (Western or Wailing Wall) Order in Council' was signed at Buckingham Palace on 19 May 1931 and the British High Commissioner for Palestine was ordered to enforce it from the 8 June 1931.

Encouraged by the results of the International Commission, the Mufti stepped up his campaign to win Arab and Islamic support. His efforts culminated in the staging of a General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in December 1931. Many distinguished delegates participated in the Congress. They included the Mufti's mentor, Shaykh Rashid Rida, Shawkat Ali the leader of the Caliphate Movement in India, Muhammad Iqbal the famous poet-philosopher and Allama Diya al-Din al-Tabatabani of Iran. The declared aim of the Congress was to examine the condition of Islam and the measures to be taken to protect its interests. The real undeclared aim, which the Mufti later confirmed, was to investigate the Zionist danger in Palestine.²

Shaykh Izz al-Din Qassam

By the time Hajj Amin gained recognition, outside of Palestine, as a Palestinian national figure in the late 1920s many of his people had become disillusioned and impatient with the policies of the British mandatory. His moderate political methods of conferences, peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins seemed incapable of stemming the rising tide of Jewish immigrants into the country. As the persecution of Jews in Europe escalated their numbers grew from 4,075 in 1931 to 9,553 in 1932, 30,327 in 1933, 42,359 in 1934 and 61,854 in 1935. It was from amid this situation that Shaykh Izz al-Din Qassam emerged to organize an alternative – military – approach to the Zionist challenge.

Shaykh Qassam was born in Jebbla, a Syrian village, in 1871.³ From a very young age he was known for his leanings to serious thought and reflection. He journeyed to Egypt and studied at Azhar University (1896-1906). While in Cairo, he came under the influence of reformist scholars like Shaykh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Shaykh Rashid Rida (1865-1935). The latter two, along with their mentor Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97), played a leading role in what became known as the Islamic Revivalist Movement. Their main aim was to help the Muslim Ummah (Community) adjust to the challenges of the modern world while adhering to their fundamental beliefs and identity.

After returning to his native Syria, Shaykh Qassam became actively involved in Islamic propagation and teaching. Unlike the traditionalist scholars he, however, encouraged participation in politics. He later translated his anti-colonial rhetoric into practice by

partaking in the leadership of the Syrian national uprising against the French between 1918-1920. When the French military authorities sentenced Shaykh Qassam to death in absentia he fled the country and settled in the Palestinian port-city of Haifa in 1921.

Shortly after his arrival, Shaykh Qassam gained employment at the prestigious Burj Islamic school in Haifa where he taught for three or four years. In 1925 he became the imam of al-Istiqlal mosque when it was opened that year. The mosque soon became very famous because of Shaykh Qassam. His Friday sermons, which were renowned for their clarity of thought and force of conviction, attracted people from far and wide.

It is believed that as early as 1925 Shaykh Qassam began to recruit members for his movement against the Zionists and British.⁴ Toward this end, he benefited from his position as imam of al-Istiqlal mosque and later as an appointed marriage registrar for the Haifa Shari'ah court in 1928. This latter appointment entailed extensive travel and contact with people throughout the Haifa district. Through this intimate interaction and service in the community, the Shaykh's popularity grew both in the urban and rural areas.

Although the Qassamite Movement⁵ (as they came to be known) did not proclaim its existence until much later on, it did carry out a number of military operations in the period between 1930-33. These early forays, it appears, were intended to season his individual members and at the same time test the British, Zionist and even Arab response. On 5 April 1931 the group carried out a raid on the Yajour settlement road and killed three Jews.⁶ This was followed by a number of similar secret operations. The Qassamites were now waiting for the appropriate time to openly declare armed liberation struggle against the British and Zionists.

Meanwhile, the political crisis in Palestine reached its boiling point in 1935 with the acceleration of Jewish immigration into the country and the indifference of the British Mandatory to the demands of the Palestinian Arabs. Tensions were further heightened when news began to circulate of the discovery of a large quantity of smuggled weapons for the Jews.

Having decided to embark on armed resistance, Shaykh Qassam and some of his close associates decided to withdraw to the Ya'bad mountain near Jenin in late October 1935. They were about sixteen

men altogether. He sold his house in Haifa and his companions sold their furniture and their wives' jewelry in order to finance their campaign.⁷ Before his departure, Shaykh Qassam wrote to his friend Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim affirming; "I have confidence in myself, that my voice will be echoed everywhere after its first call. I urge you to call upon Allah, hoping that our protector the Almighty would bless our work in the service of our country".⁸

On the morning of the 20 November 1935 a contingent of about four hundred police – mainly British – surrounded Shaykh Qassam and his associates in the village of Shaykh Zayd near Ya'bad. After a lengthy gun-battle that lasted for four and half hours, four Qassamites including Shaykh Qassam were martyred and five others captured.⁹

The killing of Shaykh Qassam and his companions sent shock waves throughout Palestine. About thirty thousand mourners turned out for his funeral procession. The occasion took the form of a political event and furious calls were raised for revenge. Shaykh Qassam's death brought about a fundamental change in the course of the Palestinian national movement. After years of fruitless political negotiations, it reinforced the idea of armed struggle as the only way to gain national liberation. As one British intelligence officer pointed out shortly after, the nationalist leaders would have "to satisfy public opinion and try a new course of action, as all their previous efforts in protest, demonstrations, public meetings, etc. had failed to attain their object".¹⁰

Points of Review

- By the late 1920s many Palestinians had become disillusioned and impatient with the policies of the British mandatory.
- The emergence of an organized Islamic movement in Palestine did not come about until the 1930s.
- Shaykh Qassam found greater satisfaction working with the poor and underprivileged rather than notables and dignitaries.

Questions

1. What were the main findings of the International Commission of Inquiry set up after the Buraq uprising?
2. Briefly discuss the objectives and methodology of al-Qassam.
3. Explain the view that al-Qassam's death brought about a radical change in the Palestinian national movement.

Chapter 10

The 1936 Uprising and its Suppression

With the passing of Shaykh Qassam the Palestinian Nationalist Movement lost one of its most respected leaders. His position at the helm of the emerging Jihadist Movement was short-lived but his ideas survived well beyond the 1930s. In the circumstances the shaykh's greatest legacy were the seeds of resistance and sacrifice, which he sowed throughout Palestine during his lecture tours. For many Palestinians, he came to symbolize the selflessness that was noticeably absent in many other leaders.

The tension that overshadowed the country after Shaykh Qassam's death needed a single spark to enflame the situation. This came on the evening of 15 April 1936 when an armed band of Arabs led by the Qassamite commander, Shaykh Farhan al-Sa'adi, attacked a convoy of cars traveling between Bal'a and 'Anabta in the Tulkaram region, killing one Jew and wounding two others. The following night, Jewish militiamen retaliated and killed two Arab farmers while they slept.¹ This pattern of tit for tat killings quickly escalated and threatened to engulf the whole country.

The Strike

The Qassamite assault on the Jewish caravan did much more than provoke a cycle of attacks and counter-attacks. On the political front, it cleared the way for the declaration of a general strike on 19 April, which continued for six months thereafter. In Nablus, a committee of local leaders led by Ahmad al-Shak'a and Akram Zu'aytir took the initiative and called the strike. Similar committees were formed in other cities like Haifa, Jenin, Tulkarm and Jerusalem which soon joined in the protest. The popular demand everywhere was, "independence for Palestine" and an end to Jewish immigration.

The organizers of the strike had little experience in national politics. Hence they turned to the religious leaders and wealthy families for guidance. One week after the strike had begun a meeting was held in Jerusalem between a delegation from Haifa led by Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, Hajj Amin, Raghیب Nashashibi and Husayn Khalidi, the mayor of Jerusalem.²

Forced by public pressure, this disparate group decided to put aside their long-standing family rivalries and political differences for the common good. They formed on 25 April the Higher Arab Committee (HAC – al-Lajna al-Arabiya al-'Ulya).

The formation of the HAC in 1936 was an important landmark. It was considered the first attempt at forging Palestinian national unity after the collapse of the Palestine Arab Executive in 1934. During the previous decade, Palestinian politics was largely dominated by a small group of officials who served in the Ottoman administration in Palestine. Prominent among them were Musa Kazim Husayni, Raghib Dajani and Raghib Nashashibi. They led to what was known as the Palestine Arab Executive.

One reason for the weakness and ultimate demise of the Executive was the bitter rivalry between the Husayni and Nashashibi camps. The final collapse of the body in 1934 brought the mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin, one step closer toward becoming the paramount leader of the Palestinian National Movement. Shaykh Qassam's death in 1935 opened the leadership vacuum even wider. It was into this situation Hajj Amin stepped after the formation of the HAC in 1936.

The Palestinian general strike was considered the longest ever in the history of the Middle East. It brought acute hardship to the population of the urban centers where the impact of economic stagnation and loss of trade was most felt. In the rural areas, the peasants fared much better and in some instances had enough to supply armed groups operating in the hills.

Britain's response to the revolt was harsh and uncompromising. When the detention of community leaders and activists failed to have any impact, the Mandatory authorities resorted to measures of collective punishment. Entire villages and cities were made to pay heavy fines for supporting the resistance. The port-city of Jaffa was especially singled out because of its key role in organizing and coordinating the strike. Thus, acting under the guise of "urban renewal" the British ordered the demolition of hundreds of homes in the city and more than one thousand others in a neighboring village in June.³

In July 1936 the authorities imposed a state of martial law throughout Palestine. Fresh troops were brought in from England heavily armed and equipped with machine guns and tanks.

Restrictions on Jewish immigration was lifted and special "Night Squads" were formed between British troops and Jewish settlers to attack Palestinian villages. During the first four months of the revolt many atrocities were committed. It is believed the British dynamited five thousand houses and executed one hundred and forty eight prisoners in Acre prison alone. None of this massive use of force was enough to crush the revolt.

On the face of it, the Palestinians were willing to maintain their strike action for as long as possible with the hope that it might lead to their independence. In this regard, they were supported by solidarity committees formed in Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo and Beirut. In Syria, its people extracted a promise of self-government from the French after they staged a fifty-day strike. Similarly in Egypt, anti-British demonstrations in November 1935 brought about the resumption of negotiations between Britain and Egypt for a treaty of independence. Against this background the Palestinians viewed their protest as a means of enhancing their bargaining position and forcing the hand of the British.

End of Strike Action

In spite of its ferocity, the measures adopted by the Mandatory authority failed to break the will of the Palestinian population. It, however, had a deterring effect upon the HAC whose members continued to vie among themselves in order to preserve their personal and family interests either as landlords, employers, heads of villages, or clans. This was visibly seen in the widening gulf of mistrust between Raghīb Nashīshībī on the one hand and Hajj Amin on the other. After several months it became all too clear that the HAC had neither the commitment nor will to make the necessary sacrifices to bring about Palestinian independence.

The Committee's decision to call off the strike early in November 1936 was generally regarded as the end of the first phase of the revolt. It brought about a brief lull to the violence, which had continued unabated since April. The decision to end the strike was largely influenced by the intervention of King Ghazi of Iraq, King Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia and Amir Abdullah of Transjordan. In a passionate appeal published in Palestinian newspapers, they urged the Palestinian Arabs to end the revolt because "we rely on the good intentions of our friend Great Britain, who has declared that she will do justice".

Some sources recalled that the Arab "client kings" became involved at the behest of Britain. By the end of the summer of 1936, the Mandatory authority had grown increasingly fearful that the revolt would not only sweep them away from power but also the Zionist colonizers and traditional Palestinian leadership as well.⁴ In the case of the HAC, they welcomed the intervention of the Arab rulers. Under the apparent cover of collective Arab responsibility, it enabled the Committee to call off the strike and somehow not lose face with their people.

The ending of the strike in November 1936 brought to a close the first phase of the revolt. It also marked, according to some historians, the beginning of official Arab involvement in the Palestine Question.⁵ Britain was not, however, prepared to support and encourage Arab unity on Palestine. When the Royal (Peel) Commission of Inquiry was set up in November 1936 to investigate the causes and motives of the revolt, Britain refused to accept a joint Iraqi and Saudi government representation. Ever since, Arab unity on Palestine was obstructed and, indeed, subverted by western governments to secure their regional interests and protect Zionist gains.

The Peel Commission

Shortly before the arrival of the Royal Commission in Palestine, the British Colonial Secretary, W.G. Ormsby-Gore, announced in the House of Commons that there would be no suspension of Jewish immigration during the inquiry. The Palestinians interpreted this as an insult that was piled upon the wounds they suffered in previous months. Thus, the HAC decided to boycott the Commission for most of the period that it conducted its work in Palestine. They were eventually persuaded by the Kings Ibn Saud and Ghazi to participate.

Although the Commission returned to Britain in January 1937, its report was not released until 7 July that year. Much of the interim months were spent in consultation with British politicians and Zionists leaders. After concluding that it was impossible to resolve the Palestine Question within the framework of the Mandatory set up, the Commission recommended the termination of the mandate on the basis of partition of the country between Jews and Arabs with special enclaves created for Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth under a new mandate.⁶

While the Zionists accepted the recommendations of the Peel Commission, the Palestinians rejected them out of hand. Although the commission recommended only 20 percent of Palestine for the Jewish state, the Zionists welcomed the idea because they knew it could have formed the basis for a much larger state. On their part, the Palestinians viewed the proposals as a denial of their right to independence as provided for in Article 22 of the Charter of the League of Nations.

Back in London, the British government, like the Zionists, announced its favor with the Commission's recommendations. On 20 July Whitehall issued a Statement of Policy "expressing general agreement with the arguments and conclusions of the Commission..". This was evidently a moment of truth. The aims of Britain's Jewish national home policy were no longer concealed in ambiguity. The Statement of Policy said,

...there is an irreconcilable conflict between the aspirations of the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine, that these aspirations cannot be satisfied under the terms of the present mandate, and that a scheme of partition on the general lines recommended by the Commission represents the best and most hopeful solution to the deadlock...

More Violence

The release of the Peel report provoked an immediate outburst of violence throughout Palestine. On this occasion, it raged to levels of greater intensity and fury than before. Palestinian mistrust was, presumably, fuelled by the withdrawal of the Nashishibi faction from the HAC on 3 July 1937. Many locals feared this move was a prelude to an alliance between the Nashishibis and Amir Abdullah in Jordan in order to enforce the partition. In the weeks that preceded the publication of the report, rumors abounded in Palestine that Britain had intended to partition the country.⁷

The British linked this new wave of violence with the Mufti of Jerusalem, archrival of the Nashishibis. They decided to arrest and deport him from Palestine. When gunmen shot Mr. L.Y Andrews, the district commissioner of Galilee on 26 September 1937, the Mandatory authority found a convenient excuse to move on the Palestinian leadership. The HAC was declared illegal and some of its members were rounded up and deported to the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. As for the Mufti, he got wind of the British plan and managed to slip out of the country after weeks.

The arrest and deportation of Palestinian leaders did not put an end to the revolt. Instead, it enflamed the situation and made it worse. Neither the repressive measures adopted by the Mandatory government nor its increased cooperation with the Zionists helped. Indeed, the resistance began to attract more fighters into its ranks. A headquarters was set up in Damascus to coordinate the resistance (al-Lajnah al-Markaziyah lil Jihad) under the leadership of Izzat Darwaza and the Mufti from his base in Beirut. In Palestine itself, the most important leaders were Abdur Rahim Hajj Muhammad [Tulkarem], Aref Abdul Razaq [Nablus], Abdul Qadir Husayni [Jerusalem] and Yusuf Abu Durra [Galilee]⁸

The revolt reached its climax in the summer of 1938. City after city fell to the Palestinian resistance as the mandatory authority collapsed. From their strongholds in the hills the resistance leaders established administrative offices, intelligence centers and special courts to try collaborators. The growing strength of the resistance during this period led to a sizeable exodus of rich Palestinians and pro-government notables.

Following the resistance capture of the old city of Jerusalem in October 1938, Britain stepped up its counter attack and poured more troops into Palestine. It called upon the might of two military divisions, squadrons of airplanes, local police, the Transjordan Frontier Force, and 6,000 Jewish auxiliaries. They outnumbered the Palestinians ten to one.

By the time the revolt was finally crushed in 1939 more than 5,000 Palestinians were killed and over 15,000 were injured. War was then looming in Europe and Britain became as it was during the First World War, in need of Arab support.

Meanwhile, the Palestine Partition Commission headed by Sir John Woodward, which started work in April 1938 published its report on 9 November 1938. It dismissed the Peel Partition Plan as impractical. Britain called a conference in London (February-March) with the apparent aim of imposing a solution on both parties. It failed to produce a conclusive result.

Thus in 1939 Britain issued a White Paper to impose its own view. It marked a complete about turn from the partition policy. The White Paper read, "His Majesty's Government believe that the framers of the mandate in which the Balfour Declaration was embodied could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab

population of the country". The paper issued on 17 May 1939 stated that it was the objective of the British government to establish an independent Palestinian state within ten years in treaty relations with the UK. This resulted in a parting of the ways between Britain and the Zionists. The latter turned to the United States of America. For the rest of the twentieth century they remained the dominant foreign power not only in Palestine but the whole of the Middle East.

Points of Review

- The formation of the HAC in 1936 was regarded as the first attempt at forging Palestinian national unity after the collapse of the Palestine Arab Executive.
- The Palestinians viewed the Peel Commission recommendations as a denial of their right to independence as provided for in Article 22 of the Charter of the League of Nations.
- Zionist disappointment with the 1939 White Paper marked the end of a chapter in relations with Britain and the beginning of a new one with the United States.

Questions

1. What in your view were the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of the HAC?
2. Why was the general strike called off in 1936?
3. Comment on the significance of the 1939 White Paper.

Chapter 11

War and Diplomacy

In his drive to build a world empire under Nazi control, Hitler ordered his troops into Poland on 1 September 1939. Suddenly, the survival of Britain and France as world powers was seriously threatened. They, in response, declared war on Germany on 3 September. Thus began the Second World War which like the First World War, had far-reaching consequences on the Middle East and Palestine especially.

On 10 June 1940, Italy entered the war on the side of Germany and declared war on Britain. Two days later the Italians bombed the eastern Sudanese town of Kassala. This was not simply a challenge to British interests in the Nile valley but also its influence in the Red Sea and Palestine. With the completion of the oil refinery in Haifa in June 1940, Palestine's strategic importance became ever more crucial for the British, who relied on supplies from the oilfields of Iraq and Abadan in Iran.

With the outbreak of World War II, the Zionists decided to step up their campaign to transform Palestine into a Jewish state. In 1938 David Ben Gurion, then Chairman of the Jewish Agency recollected: "The First World War brought us the Balfour Declaration; the Second ought to bring us the Jewish State".¹ Toward this end, the Zionist Executive issued a statement on 3 September 1939 pledging their support for Britain in the war. It read reassuringly: "Our opposition to the White Paper was, however, never directed against Great Britain or the British Empire".²

After the dramatic German military successes across Europe, Britain could not afford to make any major troop deployments in the Middle East. As was the case at the beginning of the First World War, Britain was in dire need of Arab support. Indeed, it needed to bring about some measure of calm in Palestine in order to conduct its war effort.

Driven by the need to secure its interests in the region, Britain decided to make the generous offers enclosed in the 1939 White Paper and promise support for Arab independence throughout the

region. For all its worth, the Higher Arab Committee rejected the White Paper. While it welcomed Britain's tentative recognition of Arab rights, a statement from the Committee's headquarters in Beirut deplored Britain's failure to recognize Palestinian independence. In fact, the general feeling among the Palestinian Arabs was that the British proposals subjected their independence to the cooperation and even approval of the Zionist aspiration. This was contrary to their slogan, "Palestine will get its independence within the Arab federation and remain Arab forever".³

Palestinian Setbacks

Despite the promises contained in the White Paper Britain took no immediate steps to form a representative government in Palestine. On the contrary, it tightened its grip over the country and brought the three-year old revolt to an effective end. With the outbreak of the Second World War several Arab countries hastened to declare their support for the allies against Nazi Germany, placing at their disposal their armies, naval bases, airports, oil reserves and storage facilities. In the case of the Palestinians, some nine thousand volunteers joined the British war effort. They hoped that on this occasion their sacrifices would not go unrewarded as had been the case after the First World War.

Not all Palestinians were, however, prepared to support the British. Many of them were embittered by the decision of the victorious powers to place their country under a mandatory administration – which they viewed as a disguised form of colonial rule – rather than recognize them as a fully independent and sovereign people. Somehow motivated by the principle, 'my enemy's enemy is my friend,' they turned toward the Axis powers. After evading several attempts to arrest him the exiled leader of the HAC, Hajj Amin, sought refuge in Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Italy and then Germany in November 1941.⁴

While in Berlin, Hajj Amin met with the Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler, who promised unstinting German support for Palestinian independence and self-determination. The mufti made several pro-Nazi radio broadcasts in which he accused Britain of betraying the Arabs. When the Allies intensified their bombing of Berlin, the Germans decided to transfer Hajj Amin to France in May 1945. His collaboration with the Nazis did not bear the political dividends that were expected. For one thing the mufti lost credibility with a

significant section of the Palestinian society. On another level, it gave the Zionists a great opportunity to deflect attention from their own crimes in Palestine by accusing him of responsibility for the massacre of Jews in Europe.

Zionist Gains

Whereas the Arabs failed to make significant progress toward their national objectives during the War, the Zionists registered rapid successes. The latter quickly shelved their opposition to the 1939 White Paper and offered their support against Nazi Germany, which was now escalating its campaign of terror against the Jews.

In Palestine, the Jewish Agency viewed the War as a golden opportunity to advance their cause. Its leadership proposed the establishment of an independent Jewish division to fight alongside the British against the Nazis. By calling for the creation of such a force the Zionist leadership hoped not only to strengthen their claim to Palestine after the war but also contribute to the establishment of a regular army for their future state.

At this stage it must be recalled that the Zionists had, from the very earliest days of their project, recognized the need for a strong military force and extreme violence in order to transform Palestine into a purely Jewish state. They knew, moreover, that the Arab population would not readily accept the usurpation of their land by a foreign people. Thus, throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century a number of Jewish military forces were set up in Palestine.

In 1907 the Hashomer (the Guardian) was formed to provide security for the settlements. Later, when the First World War broke out the extremist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky formed the "Jewish Legion" to fight alongside the British. Four Jewish battalions of the Royal Fusiliers (38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st) fought under their own flag. Following the disbandment of the Legion after the War, an unofficial Jewish army – the Haganah – was formed under the leadership of Jabotinsky in the period 1919-1920.⁵

From the time of its inception the Haganah started to stockpile weapons in various parts of the country. Much of these were obtained through smuggling activities conducted largely with the collusion of Jewish customs officials employed in the mandatory administration. This military cooperation between the Zionists and British mandatory continued right into the 1940s. Haganah units

trained by the British carried out operations against the pro-Axis regime in Syria.

In 1941 a special commando unit, the Palmach, (an acronym for Plugot Machatz, shock brigades) was formed. By 1943 there were an estimated 43,000 Jewish volunteers in Palestine under arms.⁶ They were for all intents and purposes, controlled by the Haganah, who had by then embarked upon the production of arms in Palestine. When the British government finally bowed to their long-standing demand and recognized the establishment of the Palestine Jewish Brigade in 1944, it seemed only a matter of time before this army in waiting would launch its decisive assault to engineer the birth of the Zionist state.

Diplomacy and the United States

As early as 1942, officials in the British Foreign and Colonial Offices were convinced that the Zionists had decided “to resort to direct action” if they failed to secure a post-war settlement compatible with their aspirations.⁷ The clearest evidence of this came on 11 May 1942 at a meeting of the American Zionist Organization held at the Biltmore Hotel in New York. Chaired by David Ben Gurion, president of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency, the conference’s six hundred delegates unanimously adopted a programme demanding, “that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth”. From this point on, the Zionist movement dropped the vague diplomatic language of the “national home” and openly pursued its goal of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The Biltmore Declaration received wholehearted support in many sectors of American society. President Theodore Roosevelt, the political parties, investors and the media praised the programme for what they termed its ‘realism’. Apart from its basic demand of a Jewish state in all of Palestine, the Biltmore Declaration also called for the rejection of the 1939 White Paper and unlimited immigration of Jews into the country under the sole control of the Jewish Agency. These objectives were ratified by a special committee of the Zionist Organization on 10 November 1942 in Jerusalem and, hence, became the official programme of Zionism.⁸

Notwithstanding its declared intent to implement the 1939 White Paper regardless of the Jewish or Arab opposition, Britain seemed unable to do so after the Biltmore Conference. Faced with an escalation of terrorist attacks from Zionist extremists and diplomatic

pressure from the Americans, Prime Minister Churchill was forced to appoint a cabinet committee in July 1943 to explore an alternative to the White Paper. Five months later the committee recommended the partition of Palestine.

This latest partition plan ran into difficulty before Churchill could gain parliamentary approval for it. Though a life-long supporter of the Zionist cause, his task was dealt a serious blow in November 1944 when two Zionist terrorists, Eliahu Hakim and Eliahu Bet-Zuri shot and killed the British Minister Resident in the Middle East, Lord Moyne, in Cairo. They were later tried and executed on 22 March 1945. Moyne was a close personal friend of Churchill's and he served notice to the Zionists in the House of Commons on 17 November 1944 "if our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labors for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently in the past".⁹

After the War

The end of the Second World War coincided with the election of a Labour government in Britain in July 1945. They won a landslide 393 seats in the parliament as compared to 213 by the Conservatives. With this overwhelming control of the House the way had become virtually clear for the government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee to enforce its policies, not least of which concerning Palestine.

One of the most far-reaching statements that influenced the policy of the new government was drawn up by the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party and adopted by the party's annual conference in 1944. It read in part:

Palestine surely is a case, on human grounds and to promote a stable settlement, for transfer of population. Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land and let their settlement elsewhere be carefully organized and generously financed.¹⁰

Immediately after taking office in 1945 Prime Minister Attlee received a letter from President Truman urging him to support the admission of 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine.¹¹ On the face of it the American demand amounted to a betrayal of previous pledges made to the Arabs. President Roosevelt had actually written

to King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud on 5 April 1945 promising that no decision would be taken on the future of Palestine without full consultation with the Arab population and no decision would be taken that would jeopardize their interests.

Similarly, Article 6 of the 1922 mandate stipulated that there would be no infringements upon "the rights and position of the other sections of the population" (Arabs). In the light of these assurances Attlee replied to Truman's letter warning, "It would be unwise to break these solemn pledges and so set aflame the whole Middle East".¹²

Caught as they were between Zionist demands on the one hand and Palestinian rights on the other, Britain and the United States announced in December 1945 the formation of a joint Committee of Inquiry to study the question of Jewish immigration. Before the twelve-man Committee started its work the American Congress issued a statement on 19 December 1945, apparently with the intent of influencing the outcome of the inquiry. It referred to the persecution of the Jews in Europe and reaffirmed America's support for unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and the creation of a national home there.¹³

While in Jerusalem, the Committee heard that the entire Arab population was "unalterably opposed to the attempt to impose Jewish immigration and settlement upon it".¹⁴ Their protests fell on deaf ears and the Committee's report of March 1946 recommended among other things, the admission of 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine and repeal of land transfers regulations.

Meanwhile, the Zionists welcomed the recommendations and demanded their immediate implementation as final steps toward the declaration of the Jewish state in Palestine. They were, however, unwilling to rely solely on diplomacy as a means to achieving their objectives. With generous finance and arms supplies from wealthy Jews in the United States, after October 1945 the Zionists stepped up their terrorist campaigns against British installations and personnel in Palestine.

Britain's response, that the issuing of 100,000 Jewish immigration certificates to Palestine was dependent upon the Zionists ending their campaign of terror, brought new waves of attacks. They blew up eight road and rail bridges across the country in June 1946. Anglo-American relations was also dealt a blow that same month

when the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, told the Labour Party conference meeting in Bournemouth that President Truman was insistent on the immediate release of the 100,000 certificates because "they didn't want too many Jews in New York".¹⁵ Bevin's speech received wide coverage in the American media and several Zionist leaders demanded that the US government withhold financial assistance to Britain until Bevin's statement was retracted.

When the dust from this diplomatic storm settled, American and British made yet another attempt to coordinate policy in July 1946. President Truman sent his senior diplomat, Ambassador Henry Grady to London for talks with Herbert Morrison, the deputy British Prime Minister. They recommended the partition of Palestine into autonomous Arab and Jewish provinces under British trusteeship for an unspecified period. When Britain called a conference of Arab and Zionist in London in September 1946 to discuss the Grady-Morrison proposals, both the Higher Arab Command and the Zionist refused to participate.

The September 1946 conference was the last of its kind convened by Britain to discuss the Palestine Question before the creation of Israel. In the absence of any Palestinian representation a delegation of the Arab League rejected the Grady-Morrison proposals and proposed instead an undivided Palestinian state, governed by representatives of all the communities elected in a manner proportionate to their number. They also proposed that all future immigration and land transfers should be subject to the consent of the Arab population of Palestine.

Just at the point, when it seemed that British diplomatic efforts were gathering pace, President Truman sabotaged them on 4 October 1946 by announcing America's rejection of the Provincial Autonomy Scheme. In the same statement he declared his support for the Jewish Agency's policy of a "viable Jewish State, in control of its own immigration and economic policies, in an adequate area of Palestine and the immediate issue of 100,000 immigration certificates as a solution of the Palestine problem".¹⁶ In this manner, Britain was forced to wash its hand of the Palestine Question. Thus, on 4th February 1947 Foreign Secretary Bevin officially announced the decision of the British government to hand the issue of Palestine over to the United Nations.

Points of Review

- The outbreak of the Second World War created many opportunities for the Zionists to step up their campaign to transform Palestine into a Jewish state.
- As early as 1942 officials in the British Foreign and Colonial Offices were convinced that the Zionists had decided “to resort to direct action” if they failed to secure a post-war settlement compatible with their aspirations.
- Despite its persistent demands for the transfer of 100,000 Jews to Palestine after 1945, President Truman’s administration only accepted 25,000 Jews into the US between 1945 and 1948.

Questions

1. Explain how the Zionist movement benefited from the Second World War.
2. Why was the Biltmore Conference considered a defining moment in the Zionist campaign to transform Palestine into a Jewish state?
3. How did the allied powers betray their pledges to the Palestinian people?

Chapter 12

The UN Partitions Palestine

Acting without the approval of the Palestinians, the sovereign owners of the land, on 2 April 1947 Britain formally referred the question of Palestine to the United Nations. A letter from the British government urged the Secretary General to place the issue on the next session of the General Assembly. At the same time, the letter also requested that consideration be given to the formation of a special committee to prepare for the discussion of the Palestine question at the regular session.

Shortly thereafter, on 21 and 22 April 1947, five Arab states (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon) wrote to the Secretary General explaining their position. They requested that an additional item be added to the agenda of the proposed special session of the General Assembly and that the mandate be terminated and independence of Palestine declared forthwith.

The Arab demand for the proclamation of Palestinian independence was largely based on the fact that the League of Nations was dissolved in April 1946. Since the mandate was administered through the League, they argued that it legally came to an end with the dissolution of the League. At its last meeting, held on 18 April 1946, the League of Nations had, indeed, adopted a resolution acknowledging that with its dissolution its functions, with regard to the mandatories, would also come to an end.¹

UNSCOP

On 28 April 1947 the United Nations convened a special session of the General Assembly to consider the Palestine Question. The representatives agreed to include the item submitted by Britain on the agenda of the next General Assembly meeting but they rejected the Arab proposal. Having accepted the British recommendation, the General Assembly formed a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) on 15 May 1947. The Committee, which consisted of representatives from: Iran, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, Holland, India, Guatemala, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Australia and Canada, was sent to Palestine in June 1947. They announced that their mission

was to visit the Jewish refugee camps in Europe and examine ways to resettle them.

As expected, the Higher Arab Council (HAC) refused to cooperate with or participate in the UNSCOP investigations for several reasons. Foremost among these was their dissatisfaction with the UN for not terminating the mandate and declaring Palestinian independence. In the same manner, they also objected to the notion of linking the Jewish refugee problem in Europe with the future of Palestine.

On 31 August 1947 UNSCOP submitted its report and recommendations to the General Assembly. It proposed that:

- The mandate should be terminated and Palestinian independence declared that a transitional period, monitored by an appointed UN agency should be observed and that the political system should be based on democratic representation with respect to the principles of human rights, the rights of minorities, and preservation of the economic unity of Palestine.
- The religious character of all holy sites be preserved.
- Only peaceful means should be adopted to bring about any solution and methods of threats and use of force should be avoided.
- Palestine should be partitioned into two states, one Arab state and the other Jewish.

The UNSCOP report provoked an angered response from Arabs in Palestine and beyond. The first official reaction came from the HAC in a statement issued on 1 September 1947. It declared that, "the UNSCOP recommendations were contrary to the most fundamental principles of truth and justice as well as the national rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people". The HAC statement further denounced the UNSCOP report "as a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and an affront to Muslims and Christians everywhere and as such should only be met with absolute rejection".²

The Ad Hoc Committee and its Subsidiaries

Although both Britain and the UN recognized the HAC as the representative of the Palestinian people they disregarded its demands for independence and self-determination. Instead, the General Assembly went ahead on 23 September 1947 and formed an

Ad Hoc Committee headed by Dr Herbert Evatt of Australia to discuss the UNSCOP report and determine the future of Palestine.

The Ad Hoc Committee was divided into two Sub-Committees. Sub-Committee 1 consisted of Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Poland, South Africa, the United States of America, Uruguay, USSR and Venezuela. They all supported the partition of Palestine. Sub-Committee 2 which consisted of Afghanistan, Colombia, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen favored a unitary, democratic and independent Palestine.

By early November it was becoming ever clearer that the Ad Hoc Committee would eventually adopt the so-called majority partition plan. Events moved rapidly in this direction after 13 November 1947 when the British delegate to the UN, Sir Alexander Cadogan, informed Sub-Committee 1 of his government's intention to complete the withdrawal of its troops from Palestine by 1 August 1948. He explained that, "British troops would not be available as the instrument for the enforcement of a settlement in Palestine against either Arabs or Jews". Some Arab historians saw the timing of this announcement as a deliberate attempt on the part of Britain to hasten a UN partition resolution and fill the vacuum that it was expected to leave.³

On 24 November 1947 the Ad Hoc Committee voted on the recommendations of the two Sub-Committees. It voted first on the proposals of the Sub-Committee 2, which were:

- That the International Court of Justice should be allowed to determine whether the UN had any legal right to partition Palestine,
- An independent unitary state be declared in Palestine,
- A quota system should be established to resettle Jews in the member states of the UN. The Ad Hoc Committee rejected all three of them.

Palestinian aspiration: to assert their independence was dealt a fatal blow when the Ad Hoc Committee dismissed the recommendations of Sub-committee 2 and adopted those of Sub-Committee 1. Although the vote on partition was approved by twenty-five in favour against thirteen, this result did not secure the necessary two-third majority for it to be adopted by the General Assembly.

The Final Vote

During the next few days the Zionist lobby, backed by the United States, stepped up their campaign of political maneuvering using methods of threats and promises to win the necessary two-thirds vote. Until the day the final vote was scheduled, 27 November, it was clear that the partition plan still did not have the required support. The Americans used the occasion of Thanksgiving Day to gain a forty-eight hour postponement, during which time intensive last minute lobbying was conducted.⁴

It was extremely easy for the US to impose its will on the international community in 1947 as most of the European countries were dependent on American aid to rebuild themselves after the war. There were only four African member states of the UN at the time, none of which were included in the membership of UNSCOP. American corporations dominated the economies of all the nineteen Latin American member countries of the UN and, with the Soviet Union having declared their support for the partition plan, there was virtually no opposition to the American led scheme.

On 29 November 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which recommended the partition of Palestine by a vote of 33 in favour, 13 against and 10 abstentions. The plan granted 57 percent of the area of Palestine to the Jews, who were only 33 percent of the population and owned just 6 percent of the land. The Arabs were awarded a state in what was equivalent to 43 percent of the area of Palestine.

The level of intimidation used behind the scenes to secure the General Assembly vote was particularly reflected in the experiences of three small countries: Haiti, Liberia and the Philippines. All three had expressed opposition to partition but were forced to change their position following the intervention of officials 'at the highest levels in Washington', including President Truman. James Forrestal then Secretary of Defence recalled, "the methods that had been used...to bring coercion and duress on other nations in the General Assembly bordered closely onto scandal".⁵

Although Britain abstained from the vote, under the pretext that it would not participate in enforcing a solution which neither party agreed to, it quickly moved support for the partition resolution. After the vote was taken it announced that it would do all within its power to implement the resolution. Pakistan's Ambassador to the

UN expressed the depth of dissatisfaction that was prevalent throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds:

We much fear that the beneficence, if any, to which partition may lead will be small in comparison to the mischief which it might inaugurate. It totally lacks legal validity. We entertain no sense of grievance against those of our friends and fellow representatives who have been compelled, under heavy pressure, to change sides and to cast their votes in support of a proposal the justice and fairness of which do not commend themselves to them".⁶

By allowing itself to be used in such a scandalous manner to facilitate the claims of one people, the UN had done irrevocable damage to its credibility and prestige. It had violated one of the most fundamental principles of its Charter namely, "respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples" (Article 1). In a legal sense, the UN had no sovereign rights of ownership of Palestine and had, thus, abused its power by deciding to create a state in Palestine for the Jews. Not being a judicial or legislative body the General Assembly resolution was at best only a recommendation. It was, accordingly, well within the rights of the Palestinian people to reject the partition resolution as it violated their right to determine their destiny on their land.

Points of Review

- The Arabs maintained that since the mandate was administered through the League of Nations it legally came to an end with the dissolution of the League in 1946.
- All the Arab proposals to the UNSCOP, including recourse to the International Court of Justice, were rejected.
- Several small countries were forced to abandon their opposition to partition in order to secure the two-third vote sought by the United States.

Questions

1. What were some of the main reasons given by the Arab states to support Palestinian independence?
2. How did the composition and functioning of UNSCOP reflect its prejudice against Arab interests?
3. Explain why the UN had acted outside of its legal powers when it decided to partition Palestine.

Part III

***The Establishment of Israel and
Destruction of Palestine***

Chapter 13

Zionist Terror and the Palestinian Nakba

Back in Palestine the news of the UN partition resolution evoked mixed reactions from Palestinians and Jews. While the Palestinians were shocked and stunned by the decision the Jews were overwhelmed with joy and a sense of accomplishment with celebrations in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The UN had done irrevocable damage to its credibility and prestige by allowing itself to be used in such a scandalous manner to facilitate the claims of one people at the expense of another. Indeed, some writers argued that the world body had dealt a severe blow to international law by its refusal to submit the "Palestine Question" to the International Court of Justice.¹

From the point of view of the Zionists there were still major obstacles standing before them. At the time, more than half of the Jewish settlers lived in three major cities: Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. The Palestinian Arabs, on the other hand, were scattered across the length and breadth of their country. The fact that Palestine was already populated meant that the Zionists now had to turn their urgent attention to what they often referred to as the "Arab problem".

Throughout the period between 1937 and 1948 Zionist leaders worked tirelessly to finalize and execute a plan of clearing Palestine of its Arab population. The Jewish Agency had, in 1937, proposed to the Peel Commission of 1937 a secret memorandum to ensure the "transfer" of the Palestinian Arabs to Transjordan.² The proposal never saw the light of day after the Palestinians rejected the Peel report and its recommendation of partition.

In the subsequent years, the Zionists continued to plan and work assiduously toward their objective. They carried out a series of terrorist attacks not only against the Palestinian people but also British officials and installations in Palestine and other parts of the region. The most notorious of these acts were the assassination of the British Secretary of State Lord Moyne in Cairo on 6 October 1944 and the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on 22 July 1946, killing almost 100 British officials and Arabs. In a

memorandum submitted to the UN in July 1947 the British administered Palestine Government declared;

When the war against Germany and Japan was seen to be approaching a successful conclusion, the Jews brought into action their weapons of lawlessness and terrorism in support of their political aims and ambitions.³

On the whole, the Zionist terror campaign was conducted by three organizations. Foremost among these was the Hagana (Defence) whose origins go back to the late nineteenth century after the establishment of the first Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine. The other two were the Irgun Zvei Leumi (National Military Organization) and the Stern Gang (Freedom Fighters of Israel). The former was formed in 1935 after breaking-away from the Hagana while the latter, which was formed in 1939, was itself a splinter faction of the Irgun.

By the time of UN partition the Hagana had grown into a full-fledged regular army in all but name. Well-trained, armed and organized under a central command it was now fully poised to adopt the role of a national army whenever the Zionist political leadership should proclaim their state. Thus, when Britain announced in December 1947 that it intended to withdraw from Palestine by 15 May 1948 fighting broke out immediately. The time had come for the Zionists to execute their proposed "Plan Dalet" – their master plan, which according to a Haganah document of March 1948 was drawn up to expel as much Palestinians as they possibly could from their towns and villages.⁴

The Zionists began an all out attack with psychological terror mainly directed through the Zionist Free Radio. In order to create a climate of fear and hysteria the station warned villagers that major epidemics of cholera, typhus and similar diseases would break out across the country in the months of April and May. The purpose of Plan Dalet, according to the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, was not only to grab land and expel as many Palestinians as possible but also to seize control of government offices and public services.⁵

In their crazed campaign to 'clear' Palestine of its Arab population, the Zionists committed many atrocities. Salman Abu Sitta, a renowned Palestinian demographer and expert on Palestinian refugee affairs, recorded that the Zionists carried out at least thirty-five massacres of Palestinian civilians during the months between

the UN partition and the end of the British Mandate.⁶ The worst of the massacres was that of Deir Yassin.

Deir Yassin was a small quiet Arab village near Jerusalem. On Friday 9 April 1948 operatives from the Hagana, Irgun and Stern terrorist gangs attacked the village and slaughtered 254 men, women and children. A team from the International Red Cross was the first to visit the village after the atrocity. Its Swiss representative, Jaques de Reynier, counted 150 bodies thrown into a cistern. Of the total 254 bodies that he counted, 145 were women, of whom 35 were pregnant. The operation, which involved the use of machine guns and hand-grenades was "finished off with knives, anyone could see that", Reynier reported.⁷ Having been a witness of Nazi war crimes in Europe, Reynier said, "All I could think of was the SS troops I had seen in Athens".

These attacks were evidently the result of political decisions taken by the Zionist leadership rather than responses provoked by military necessity. David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel advocated the destruction of the Palestinian society in all its dimensions as a precondition for the creation of a Jewish state on its ruins.⁸ When Britain ended its rule over Palestine on 15 May there were already three hundred thousand evicted Palestinians in the Jordan Valley, Lebanon, and Syria.

The killings in Deir Yassin accomplished the aim of creating fear among the Palestinian population and speeded their flight away from the country after they were attacked. Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator, mentioned in his report that the exodus of Palestinian Arabs resulted from a state of panic created by fighting in their communities and by real or alleged acts of terrorism or expulsion. All told, the Zionists expelled some 750,000 Palestinian civilians from their towns and villages in 1948. The expulsion of three-quarters of the Palestinian population resulted in the depopulation and destruction of 531 villages.⁹

The sheer scale and ferocity of the Zionist attacks sent shock waves across the region and beyond. The United Nations had started a process in Palestine in which it was no longer able to control. Stunned by the unfolding tragedy and its own responsibility for it, the US dramatically announced at a meeting of the UN Security Council on 19 March 1948 the withdrawal of its support for the partition plan. The delegation announced American recognition

that it was impossible to implement the partition of Palestine except by force.¹⁰ They accordingly recommended that the Council establish a temporary trusteeship over Palestine until such time that the UN found a solution to the problem.

Encouraged by their military successes the Zionist leadership was no more in need of the UN. Ben Gurion recalled in April 1963 that the US about turn did not alter or undermine the establishment of the Jewish state.

“Establishment of the State was not, in effect, given in the United Nations resolution...although the resolution was of great moral and political value – but by our ability to bring about a decision in the country by force”.¹¹ The Zionists’ ability to impose their will on the international community was clearly demonstrated with the proclamation of their state.

At 6.00pm Washington time, on 14 May 1948, Britain relinquished its self-acquired mandate over Palestine. One minute later David Ben Gurion proclaimed the birth of the ‘State of Israel.’ Ten minutes later President Harry Truman granted American recognition of the new state that was born by expelling Palestinians. The sordid nature of the whole affair was heightened by the fact that the United States delegation at the United Nations was itself unaware that their country had recognized the new state. They were still locked in negotiations with the world body to revoke the partition plan and establish a trusteeship over Palestine. It was the Soviet representative at the United Nations who actually informed his American counterpart that their government had recognized the state of Israel.

The Phony War

The result of the 1948 War was a foregone conclusion before it started. Though often described as the Arab-Israeli War none of the Arab states neighboring Palestine were committed to war. It was not that they were caught by surprise, they knew from the disclosures of the Zionist leadership that war was imminent. The Zionist historian Anita Shapira wrote, force was “inherent in the situation” as the Zionist movement sought to conquer Palestine under the slogan “In blood and fire shall Judea rise again”.¹² As early as 1923 Vladimir Jabotinsky asserted, “there can be no kind of discussion of a voluntary reconciliation between us and the Arabs, not now and not

in the foreseeable future..."¹³ For all their worth, however, the Arab governments took no heed and adopted no military strategy.

It was only at a meeting of the council of the Arab League held in Lebanon during the period 7-15 October 1947 that the ministers for the first time, heard a military report. Major-General Ismail Safwat of Iraq who submitted the report decried the military weakness of the Palestinians in the face of the battle tested, well organized and totally armed Zionist forces. The report recommended the creation of a joint Arab command, the recruitment and arming of volunteers and supply of 10,000 rifles to the Palestinians.¹⁴

Unfortunately for the Palestinians, the Arab states had no intention of going to war. Volumes of reports exceeding more than 6,000 pages sent from British embassies in Cairo, Amman, Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and Jeddah to London during the period all confirmed this. Quite astonishingly, most of these reports were based on information provided by Arab ministers to these British diplomats about what transpired in their meetings.¹⁵

Apart from the leakage of vital intelligence to the British the Palestinian cause was further damaged by the acute differences that existed among the various Arab governments. To begin with, the Palestinian leadership under the Mufti, Hajj Amin, preferred that his forces, Jihad al-Quds, should take full responsibility for the fighting and that the role of the Arab states should be confined to the provision of weapons and material aid only. Some Arab countries opposed this position. They favored a greater military role for the Salvation Army formed by the Arab League and led by Fawzi al-Qawqaji, a Lebanese born officer in the Iraqi army.

The source of discord between Hajj Amin and certain members of the Arab League ran much deeper than military tactics. They were actually rooted in major differences of approach to the Palestine Question. While Hajj Amin was determined to fight for the total liberation of Palestine after which its people would assume the reins of power, the governments of both Transjordan and Iraq favored the implementation of the partition resolution.

Shortly before the fighting started in December 1947 King Abdullah told British Embassy officials in Jordan that it was unrealistic for the Arabs to contemplate a military victory over the Jews in Palestine and that they should instead come to an agreement with the Jews that would allow them to acquire a part of its

territory.¹⁶ Behind this show of apparent tolerance lay a more passionate ambition on the part of the Hashemite ruler of Transjordan. That was to prevent the emergence of an independent Palestinian state under the leadership of his erstwhile enemy, the Mufti, and at the same time annex what was left of Palestine and incorporate it into his kingdom.

Egypt on the other hand opposed the position of Transjordan and Iraq and instead supplied Hajj Amin with money and weapons. The impact of these differences between the Arab states forestalled any attempt to deploy an organized and effective fighting force in Palestine before the exit of the British. Meanwhile popular legions were formed in cities across the region to recruit, train and dispatch volunteers to Palestine. Foremost among these were the Muslim Brotherhood centers in Cairo, Amman and Damascus.

The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimun)

Ever since Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in March 1928 the movement played a leading role in championing the Palestinian cause. In August 1935 two senior members of the Brotherhood, Abdur Rahman Sa'ati and Muhammad Asad Hakim visited Palestine and met with the Mufti Hajj Amin. The concern and involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood took a new twist during the Great Uprising of 1936-39. Some accounts recalled that a limited number of Egyptian volunteers managed to penetrate into Palestine and participate in military operations in the north of the country.¹⁷ Meanwhile, back at home, the Brotherhood stepped up their media campaigns, organized demonstrations, and collected donations in many Egyptian cities for the Palestinians.

During the Second World War an increasing number of young Palestinians rallied to the call of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was not until after the War, however, that they opened their first branch in Palestine [in the Gaza Strip] under the leadership of Hajj Dhafir Shawa.¹⁸ The indecision of the Arab governments toward the Zionist threat contrasted drastically with the resoluteness of the Muslim Brotherhood. Whereas seven Arab countries could only deploy 24,000 fighters in Palestine, against 70,000 Jewish regulars, Imam Hasan al-Banna in October 1947 pledged 10,000 members of his movement as a first contingent.¹⁹ When he approached the Egyptian government to allow the volunteers to cross the border it refused.

With the restriction of the Egyptian government only a few combatants from the Brotherhood could come to the aid of the Palestinians. When Britain and the Arab states realized the seriousness of the Brotherhood they hastened to stop the few volunteers from joining the resistance in Palestine. In the end only a few hundred managed to cross over from Egypt.

This role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1948 War led the Egyptian government to disband the Brotherhood and started to arrest and imprison its members. On 11 February 1949, shortly before the armistice was concluded with Israel, Imam Hasan al-Banna was assassinated in Cairo, presumably by an agent of the Government.²⁰

Naturally, the sight of Arab soldiers turning their attention to capture and disarm their own Muslim brothers in Palestine was one of the most painful and regrettable episodes of the 1948 War. The lack of political will on the part of Arab governments and military dedication in the liberation of Palestine was obvious. Given their almost total lack of political independence and the manner in which their armies were dominated, armed and led by English officers, as was the case of Jordan, their defeat was hardly surprising.

Points of Review

- Throughout the period between 1937 and 1948 Zionist leaders worked tirelessly to finalize and execute a plan of clearing Palestine of its Arab population.
- Apart from the leakage of vital intelligence to the British the Palestinian cause was further damaged by the acute differences that existed among the various Arab governments.
- Ever since it was founded in 1928 the Muslim Brotherhood has consistently championed the Palestinian cause.

Questions

1. What was Plan Dalet?
2. Why was the result of the 1948 War a foregone conclusion before it started?
3. Assess the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1948 War.

Chapter 14

Building on the Spoils of War

The Palestinian catastrophe “Nakba” was unparalleled in modern history. The wholesale emptying of the country of its population was not a mere coincidence of war. It was, according to Zionist officials, their way of solving what they termed the “Arab demographic problem”. In order for Israel to emerge as a “Jewish State”, according to the vision of its founding fathers, three requirements had to be fulfilled.

It had to be first and foremost, a state for all the Jews in the world. Secondly, They had to become its majority population and, finally, the Jews had to be afforded special privileges and preferential laws. Soon after the cessation of hostilities in 1949 the leaders of the new state took a number of measures to achieve these aims.

Having captured Palestinian land far in excess of what they were allocated by the UN, Israel’s rulers decided to block the return of Palestinians to their land. There was, for all intents and purposes, a strong connection between the capture of Palestinian property and the denial of their return. Two-thirds of the cultivated land seized by Israel in 1947-49 was owned by the Palestinians, who had now become refugees. While 350 of the estimated 400 Jewish settlements created after 1948 were actually on Palestinian refugee property.¹

The Jewish immigrants needed the captured homes, farms, factories, shops and other businesses to establish themselves in Palestine. Thus, when Count Bernadotte, the UN representative, pressed the Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett to allow the refugees back he replied, “On the economic side, the reintegration of the returning Arabs into normal life ...would present an insuperable problem”.²

Faced with this policy of willful obstruction, the UN responded by rejecting Israel’s application for admission into the world body when it first applied in December 1948. But apart from their policy toward the refugees there were three other important reasons, which led to the denial of the UN membership.

In the first instance, Israel had seized land far in excess of what it was offered by the UN. Secondly, it captured the western part of Jerusalem, which according to Resolution 181 was earmarked to become an international zone. The third reason was the fact that there was intense international outrage over the Zionist murder of Count Bernadotte.

Before his murder, Count Bernadotte reported to the General Assembly on 16 September 1948. Bernadotte recommended that, 'the right of the innocent people (Palestinians), uprooted from their homes by the present terror and ravages of war, to return to their homes, should be affirmed and made effective...' The following day he was shot dead in Jerusalem, by the Zionists along with another UN official, Colonel Andre Serot.

Count Bernadotte was silenced but his report survived. Clearly recognizing its direct responsibility in creating the refugee problem when it partitioned Palestine, the UN adopted Resolution 194 on 11 December 1948, which established the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) and entrusted it with the specific mandate "to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation".

The Basic Laws

In the immediate years after the Nakba the UNCCP estimated the value of Palestinian refugee property at approximately \$122 million. At the same time, the Arab League produced its own figures of those losses and estimated them to be twenty times higher.³ Even before the war ended the provisional government in Israel took a number of measures to gain control of the property left behind by the refugees. Without the immediate and uncontrolled access to this property it would have been impossible for the new government to accommodate and provide for the thousands of Jewish immigrants who were now flooding into Palestine.

Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, summed up the satisfaction and optimism that was felt within official circles after the expulsion of the Palestinians. Writing to the President of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann, on 15 June 1948 he boasted:

The most spectacular event in the contemporary history of Palestine – more spectacular in a sense than the creation of the Jewish State – is the wholesale evacuation of its Arab population

which has swept with it also thousands of Arabs from areas threatened and/or occupied by us outside our boundaries. I doubt whether there are 100,000 Arabs in Israel today. The reversion to the status quo ante is unthinkable. The opportunities which the present position opens up for a lasting and radical solution of the most vexing problem of the Jewish State are so far-reaching as to take one's breath away. Even if a certain backwash is unavoidable, we must make the most of the momentous chance with which history has presented us so swiftly and so unexpectedly.⁴

Motivated by the need to seize this opportunity which history presented, the Israeli government passed one of its important laws aimed at the seizure of Palestinian property. In 1949 they enacted the Abandoned Areas Ordinance. Then, in 1950, they passed the Absentee Property Law. This was followed by, the Land Acquisition Law in 1953. After writing the Palestinian refugees out of existence by declaring them 'Absentees' it handed over their property to the Custodian of Absentee Property. During its first decade of existence Israel seized more than a quarter of a million acres of Palestinian land and much of this was done under the Law of Absentee Property.

The term 'absentee' was not only applied to the Palestinians who took refuge in neighboring Arab countries but it was also applied to Palestinians in the newly created Israel. Since it was impossible to deny the existence of Palestinians within Israel they coined the term "present-absentees". Most of their land was confiscated under this guise. From that point on, Israeli legislators have cleverly avoided recognition of the term "refugee". Instead, they have related to the Palestinians in terms of present and absent.

Although the UN had decided to partition Palestine and create two states it did not openly recommend the confiscation of Arab property or the violation of their individual rights. The partition resolution specifically called upon both states to promulgate democratic constitutions "guaranteeing to all persons equal and non-discriminatory rights in civil, political, economic, and religious matters". Israel refused to comply with this requirement of its birth certificate [UN Res.181] and has instead ruled by an array of so-called Basic Laws.

The Israeli leadership's refusal to enact a democratic constitution was apparently not without reason. They had long made it known that their ultimate goal was the total domination of Palestine. David

Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister told a meeting of the Jewish Agency executive in June 1938, "After we become a strong force, as a result of the creation of a State, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine".⁵ Israel's adoption of the Basic Laws after 1948 was calculated to serve this very purpose.

Expulsion and Return

Because the Basic Laws were all written to favour one people: Jews over others, they were widely condemned as racist and discriminatory. Of the entire body of these laws the Israeli Law of Return stands out markedly from the others. This law which was enacted on 5 July 1950 affords to every member of the "Jewish people" born anywhere in the world the right to immigrate to Israel and become a citizen upon arrival. At the same time, it denies this right to Palestinian Muslims and Christians who were born in Palestine and expelled during the successive wars of occupation.

While the Law of Return seeks to ensure the constant increase of Israel's Jewish population, its legal "cousin", the Nationality Law enacted in 1952 aims to limit the growth of the Palestinians. Hence, whereas the latter guarantees automatic citizenship to Jews through immigration, residence, birth and naturalization, it enforces a completely different set of rules and conditions for Palestinians.

In so far as they work together, both the Law of Return and Nationality Law constitute a single statutory unit. Between 1949 and 1952 Israel's Jewish population more than doubled. Under an entirely different set of rules, however, citizenship was denied to those Palestinians who remained in the country after 1948 as well as those who were expelled and managed to return "illegally". Under Section 3 of the Nationality Law non-Jews living in the country who could not prove that they resided there during the four years preceding the creation of Israel were not entitled to citizenship.

Many Palestinian Arabs failed to meet the requirements of the Nationality Law and consequently found themselves exposed to deportation. Their villages were deliberately shunned during registration. As a result there are literally hundreds of Arab residential concentrations, which successive Israeli governments have refused to recognize officially. They are classified as "unrecognized villages" and consequently do not appear on the official map of Israel although most of them have existed for hundreds of years before the creation of the state of Israel. Under

the cover of this technicality Israel has, for decades, willfully denied water, education, health and electricity to tens of thousands of Palestinians.

In order to maintain this situation, the Israelis imposed direct military rule in most of the Palestinian areas. Until 1967, when military rule was ended no Arab was allowed to enter or leave his area without a special permit. Professor Israel Shahak of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem linked the oppression of the Palestinians under Israeli rule to the Hebraic laws. He explained that while the Hebraic laws were especially intolerant of non-Jews, they were more so toward the ancient Canaanites and other nationals who lived in Palestine before its conquest by the Jews. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deuteronomy 20:16). As descendents of the Canaanites, Shahak notes it was inevitable that the Palestinians were subjected to such aggression.⁶

The dream of an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine has thus resulted in a colonial system of the most extreme kind. From the very beginning there was a general recognition among the Zionists that as long as they remained a minority in Palestine their moral and historical proprietorship over the land would be questioned. Hence, they concluded that it was only by becoming the majority nation could they enjoy the exclusive title to Palestine. As for the indigenous Palestinians they had an entirely different outlook.

Points of Review

- The Zionists believed it was necessary to expel the Palestinians in order to solve the 'Arab demographic problem.'
- Without the uncontrolled access to Palestinian land and property it would have been impossible for the provisional Israeli government to accommodate the thousands of Jewish immigrants flooding into Palestine.
- The Basic Laws were condemned as discriminatory because they favoured one people, Jews, over non-Jews.

Questions

1. Why was the Palestinian Nakba described as unique in modern history?
2. Why was Israel's first application for membership to the UN rejected?
3. What is meant by the term 'present-absentee'?

Chapter 15

Picking up the Pieces

When it became clear that Britain was going to end its mandate over Palestine on 15 May 1948, the Higher Arab Committee (HAC) under the leadership of Hajj Amin called upon the Arab League to proclaim an independent Palestinian Arab state on all the territories of mandatory Palestine. The request was turned down despite intense Palestinian lobbying during the two and a half months before 15 May. For all its worth, this decision by the Arab League was apparently made in response to foreign pressure.

Although several Arab countries had attained their independence by the end of the Second World War, they still remained largely dominated by Britain and increasingly so by the United States. Both powers were instrumental in making it possible to create the state of Israel in Palestine and looked with disfavor and mistrust toward the HAC. The ruling Hashemite families in Iraq and Transjordan were particularly indebted to the British who had installed them in power. King Abdullah had, in fact, established contacts with certain Zionist leaders who assured him that he would be allowed to annex a part of Palestine if he withdrew the Arab claim to all of Palestine.¹

The extent to which the Arab states were subjected to foreign influence was well demonstrated during the 1948 war in Palestine. The Arab armies prevented Hajj Amin and his close aides from entering the areas under their control in Palestine in order to direct the local resistance. Worse yet, the Arab League undertook to disarm the Palestinians in the Jerusalem, Ramallah and Hebron areas.²

The All-Palestine Government

Undeterred by the scale of the catastrophe that had befallen their country the HAC declared, on 23 September 1948, the formation of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza. The following week the new government, headed by Ahmad Hilmi Abdul Baqi, convened the first meeting of the Palestine National Council to ratify their decision. Despite the tight security controls of his

activities Hajj Amin managed to return from Cairo and attend the Council meeting after a period of eleven years in exile.

The idea of an 'All-Palestine Government' died in its infancy. It was aborted by British intervention and pressure upon King Abdullah and other Arab leaders. The Foreign Office warned that Britain would regard such a government as ill-timed and in the interests of the Hajj Amin.³ The Arab League complied and prevented the Palestinian leadership from carrying out their plan. This was done on the pretext that the Palestinian cause was an Arab one and that it was the duty of Arab countries to intervene and protect the Arab identity and interests of the Palestinian people.

Using this justification King Abdullah of Jordan called a conference in Amman in October 1948 under the chairmanship of the Palestinian notable Shaykh Sulayman Taji Farouqi. The Amman conference rejected the HAC as a representative body of the Palestinian people and its attempt to form an All-Palestine Government. As a follow up they called another conference in Jericho in December 1948 chaired by the mayor of Hebron, Muhammad Ali Ja'abary. In Jericho the few hundred delegates recommended the unification of Palestine and Transjordan, which in 1949 became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

King Abdullah accepted the Jericho conference recommendations in April 1950, despite widespread Palestinian opposition. There was very little that they could have done as Transjordanian had effective military control of most of the West Bank. When its national assembly adopted the unification resolution it undertook to safeguard the rights of the Palestinians and ensure that the union would not prejudice the outcome of the Palestine Question. In reality, this meant that the union did not in any way impair Palestinian sovereign rights over the territories.⁴ Eventually, King Abdullah formally completed the annexation of the West Bank in April 1950 by proclaiming the unity of the territories to the east and west of the Jordan.⁵

When the All-Palestine Government tried to exercise its control over the Gaza Strip the Egyptian Government intervened at the insistence of the Arab League. Its declared purpose was to keep the territory "in trust" for the Palestinian people until a final settlement was reached. This seemingly noble declaration was immediately

called into question as Hajj Amin was arrested and taken by force to Cairo. Several members of the National Council, including its chairman, were similarly forced to move to Cairo. The entire government was now in Egypt and could not perform its duties, not least because they were all placed under strict surveillance. Hajj Amin's close relations with the Muslim Brotherhood did not help his cause at a time when Egypt's military ruler Abdul Nasir was seeking to crush the movement. The work of the All-Palestine Government came to an effective end in 1964 after the formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

During the intervening decade and a half, the Arab League exercised direct control of the Palestinian Question. Palestinian organizations were more or less sidelined by Arab governments. The latter adopted the issue as the foremost Arab cause, claiming that it was not confined to the Palestinians themselves. This approach created an impression among Palestinians that the liberation of their land was purely an Arab responsibility more than it was a Palestinian one. They did not, however, react by isolating themselves. Instead they tried to become more involved with those nationalist parties and governments who had raised the slogan "unity is the way to liberation". This was especially so with Egypt under Naser.

Despite the rhetoric of confrontation during the fifties and sixties there were early signs that the Arab regimes were inclined to an accommodated settlement with the Zionist state rather than the liberation of Palestine. On the whole, their support for the Palestinian resistance seemed more of a tactical exercise than a strategic undertaking.⁶ Their overall policy toward the Palestine Question ran along two lines: the preservation of their individual seats of power and avoidance of confrontation with Israel. Hence, they spared no effort to restrain the Palestinian liberators and further prevent cross-border attacks on the newly created state of Israel. At the same time regional governments particularly those bordering Israel, conveniently permitted some low-keyed Palestinian resistance operations on their territories in order to gain domestic support and provide an outlet for local outrage.

Throughout the last fifty years, all the states neighboring Israel kept their borders tightly sealed. The only notable exception was Lebanon from where regular raids were launched after 1967. Even so, it was not because the governments favored it but only because

they were weak in the face of the Palestinian revolution that had erupted in the camps in the late sixties.⁷

The Islamic Movement

The spread of Arab nationalism and its support for the Palestine cause did not totally overshadow the Islamic movement. During the first half of the 1950s the Muslim Brotherhood re-emerged as a major political force among the youth of Gaza. One of the key figures who contributed to the resurgence of the movement was Mustafa Hafiz, an intelligence officer, and Abdul Mun'em Abdul Rauf, an Egyptian army officer with close ties to both the Brotherhood and the Free Officers who had carried out the July 1952 coup in Egypt.

Several branches of the Brotherhood were set up across the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the early 1950s. The members in West Bank were absorbed into the movement in Jordan while those in Gaza became part of the movement in Egypt. Meanwhile, most of the Palestinian students who went to Egypt to pursue university education were from the Gaza Strip. They formed the Palestinian Students Union in Cairo. The Brotherhood dominated its administrative council. Notable among them was Yasser Arafat, Salim Za'anun, Salah Khalaf, and Abdul Fatah Hammoud. They later went on to become the founders of the Palestine National Liberation Movement – Fateh.⁸

The Egyptian Government along with UNRWA had, in 1953, agreed to resettle the refugees from Gaza in the Sinai.⁹ However, the Brotherhood spearheaded the resistance efforts planting mines, exploding facilities and disrupting enemy water pipelines. The operations led to the failure of the Israeli plan to resettle the refugees in the Sinai.

After the attempted assassination of President Abdul Nasser in October 1954 the Egyptian Government began to crack down on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Thousands were arrested and several of its leaders were executed. Many of its most capable members fled to the Arab Gulf States. As expected, the events in Egypt had a negative impact on the movement in Gaza. Driven underground by threats of detention, the Brotherhood continued with its activities in secret after the mid 1950s until 1967. The Brotherhood formed a number of armed brigades such as the "Shabab al-Thar" [Youth of Revenge] and "Katibat al-Haqq" [Brigade of the Truth]. They carried

out a number of daring attacks against the Israeli occupation throughout November 1956 to March 1957 in response to the French-British-Israeli attack upon Egypt.¹⁰ One of the most outstanding combatants to emerge from the Brotherhood during this period was Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad), later to become a founding leader of Fateh and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

It was not difficult for the seeds of resistance sown in Gaza to gradually take root in the West Bank as the Israeli oppression became apparent. Branches were set up across the territory namely in Hebron, Bethlehem, Jenin, Qalqiliya, Anabta, Dowra, Sourayif, Toubas, and Jericho. Their work extended also into the refugees camps such as Aqaba Jabr near Jericho and al-Aroob near Bethlehem.¹¹ All was not, however, rosy within the movement. Critical questions were raised within the youth circles of the Brotherhood about the approach toward the Palestine Question. This led to the breakaway of several members from the Muslim Brotherhood and their formation of a new organization for the liberation of Palestine.

The birth of Fateh

Since its formation in the late 1950s Fateh has dominated the Palestinian national movement both at home and abroad. There are differences of opinion about the exact date of when the movement was founded. Although the seeds of Fateh were hatched in Gaza, they were later transplanted to Cairo. The political climate in Egypt was, however, not favorable and the nascent movement was again shifted to the Gulf where it was finally given official birth to in Kuwait.

According to Muslim Brotherhood sources, Khalil Wazir [Abu Jihad] was very much inspired by the successes of the Algerian revolution. Hence, he submitted a proposal to the leadership of the Brotherhood in Gaza urging the adoption of the Algerian model in Palestine as a means to national liberation and independence. This would have opened the doors to all segments of the Palestinian society and not just the Islamic movement. Abu Jihad did not gain the support that he expected and thus began his drift away from the Brotherhood.¹² He was only eighteen years old when he formed his own commando organization in Gaza in 1953.

Despite the rejection of his proposal by the Brotherhood's leadership, Abu Jihad received a fair measure of support from

several prominent members of the movement in Gaza. Encouraged with this rank and file support Abu Jihad then took his ideas to Cairo where they proved especially appealing to certain radical elements within the Union of Palestinian Students.

The Union had, after its elections in 1952, fallen under the control of Yasser Arafat, then an engineering student. During the mid 1950s Arafat received military training in the Egyptian Military Academy. He later served briefly during the 1956 Suez War against Britain, France and Israel. He then moved to Kuwait in early 1957 where he joined the Ministry of Public Works and co-founded Fateh in October 1959.¹³ Four of the five members of Fateh's first leadership were from the Muslim Brotherhood or with close ties to it. They were: Abu Jihad, Yusuf Amayra, Abdul Fatah Hammoud, and Sulayman Hamad. The fifth person, Yasser Arafat, had himself very close links to the Brotherhood.¹⁴

In the beginning Fateh functioned as a secret organization, recruiting its members from people with proven commitment, loyalty and willingness to sacrifice for the homeland. They started to publish a magazine called *Filastinuna* [our Palestine], which was circulated secretly from hand to hand in Arab cities. It was through this organ that Fateh launched itself onto the world stage. Since there was no official split from the Brotherhood the leadership demanded from Fateh the right to appoint three of the five-man leadership council and also the right to oversee their activities. This was apparently because the majority of Fateh members were by now from the Brotherhood. Fateh refused. This was after a period of intense negotiations, including a goodwill mission undertaken by Sulayman Hammad to Gaza for discussions with the leader of the Brotherhood Hani Bisaso. After this the official split came in the summer of 1963.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization

Something about the publication *Filastinuna* sent shock waves across the Arab world. Fateh did not advocate a lightning conventional war on Israel as they knew it would provoke outside intervention from its allies. Besides, the Arab armies were neither united nor prepared to fight Israel. Hence they called for the launch of guerilla activities from all Arab lands and, in the process of attack and counter-attack, the Arab governments would be forced either to help them or fight against them. The idea was to win popular

Arab support and not the governments. Out of these activities they hoped an entity would emerge in Palestine that would take the fight to Israel.¹⁵

Predictably this determination by the Palestinians, to control their struggle, did not win significant approval or support in Arab capitals. Many had, since 1948, spoken much on behalf of the Palestinians but did very little and yet there were other actors behind the scenes. Prominent among these was Ahmad Shuqayri, a Palestinian from Aka who had previously served as a representative of Saudi Arabia at the UN and a well-known opponent of the Mufti Hajj Amin. In April 1962 he visited Jordan and conducted negotiations with the authorities there on the need to establish an independent Palestinian state. From there Shuqayri continued with consultations in other regional capitals.

In September 1963 the Arab League convened a meeting in Cairo to explore ways of establishing a Palestinian state. They entrusted Shuqayri with the task of contacting Palestinians everywhere to form a delegation to represent them at the UN General Assembly in November 1963. A delegation was formed and attended the meeting. They participated in a special session to discuss the refugee problem and Shuqayri demanded the return of the refugees to their homes. He declared that the struggle of the Palestinian people was not for food or humanitarian assistance but for the liberation of their homeland that was subject to the greatest imperialist invasion of modern times.

Following the UN meeting, on 23 December 1963, Nasser delivered a major political statement on Palestine, the Zionist threat, and Israel's diversion of water from the Jordan River. He invited the Arab kings and presidents to a summit in Cairo to discuss these matters. Accordingly, the first summit of the Arab League was held in Cairo in January 1964. They discussed the urgent need to establish a Palestinian entity and appointed Shuqayri to form the Palestinian Liberation Organization to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people. A founding conference was scheduled for May 1964 in Jerusalem.

Fateh was initially sceptical about the idea of a PLO and Ahmad Shuqayri in particular they found him unwilling to go along with their agenda. Their main demand was that Fateh would spearhead the military wing of the struggle and he, Shuqayri, would lead the international political efforts.

The Jerusalem conference brought together 422 Palestinians from the diaspora. They adopted two documents: the Palestinian National Charter and the Basic Constitution of the PLO. This renewed effort by the Palestinians to assert their independence was by no means a departure from the Arab fold. Article 14 of the National Charter emphasized, "The destiny of the Arab nation, and indeed Arab existence itself, depend upon the destiny of the Palestine cause. From this interdependence springs the Arab nation's pursuit of, and striving for, the liberation of Palestine. The people of Palestine play the role of the vanguard in the realization of this sacred (qawmi) goal".

In light of this, a primary function of the PLO was to draw attention to the Palestinian identity in the conflict and deny the Zionists the opportunity to claim that the Palestinians do not exist and that the conflict is with the Arabs and not the Palestinians.

There were, of course, notable voices of dissent. Hajj Amin did not initially support the idea of the PLO. He criticized it as "a colonialist, Zionist conspiracy" aimed at the liquidation of the Palestine cause.¹⁶ From a strictly political point of view he saw the PLO as a threat to his position at the head of the Palestinian national movement. The Mufti viewed Ahmad Shuqayri as a lackey of Abdul Nasser whom he believed was trying to undermine his leadership and that of the HAC. Added to this element of personality conflict was Abdul Nasser's courtship of the Soviet Union and the Socialist left. All of these factors forced Hajj Amin to leave Egypt deceptively in 1959 under pretext of going to pilgrimage to Makka. He fled to Beirut where some of his aides later alleged that Naser had tried to assassinate him.¹⁷

Against this background of boiling tension and mistrust, a secret meeting was convened in Damascus in August 1964 that was going to shape the course of the Palestinian struggle and resonate across the world. It was attended by Yasser Arafat, Abu Jihad, Adil Abdul Karim, Abdullah Danan, Muhammad Yusuf Najjar, Mahmud Abbas and Mahmud Khalidi.¹⁸ They reviewed the situation in Palestine and, after nearly 18 years of occupation, they decided the only way to liberate Palestinians is by beginning an armed struggle. By adopting this course the Fateh leadership announced that it was going to launch attacks on Israeli installations with or without the support and backing of the Arab regimes.

On 1 January 1965 a unit of Fateh commandos attacked the Aylabon tunnel in Israel thereby signaling the start of the Palestinian revolution. In this operation Fateh registered the loss of the first martyr of the revolution – Ahmad Musa and the capture of its first prisoner Mahmud Bakr Hijazi.

Points of Review

- The formation of the All-Palestine Government in 1948 was one of the first steps taken by the Palestinian leadership to recover from the Nakba.
- The spread of Arab nationalism and its support for the Palestine cause did not totally overshadow the Islamic movement after the Nakba.
- A primary function of the PLO was to draw attention to the Palestinian identity in the conflict and deny the Zionists the opportunity to claim that the Palestinians do not exist and that the conflict is with the Arabs and not the Palestinians.

Questions

1. What factors led to the collapse of the All-Palestine Government?
2. Explain the reasons for the withdrawal of key members from the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza to form Fateh?
3. Comment on the view that the PLO was the creature of the Arab League more than it was an instrument of the Palestinian national movement?

Chapter 16

The 1967 War and Palestine

Throughout 1965 Fateh continued its commando attacks against Israeli military and economic targets. By the end of the year the group recorded a total of 110 operations.¹ They were not announced in the name of Fateh but rather of a fictitious organization called Al-Asifa (The Storm). Most of their operations were launched from bases in Syria, Lebanon and northern Jordan. From a strictly military point of view these attacks had a very limited impact on the Israeli state. Politically, however, they soon became a source of grave irritation not just for Israel but the Arab regimes as well.

In Israel, the attacks worsened an already dismal state of affairs. Overshadowed by a climate of political uncertainty the country grew increasingly incapable of attracting foreign investment. More distressingly, the customary sources of western aid that formed Israel's economic lifeline since 1948 began to wane by the mid 1960s. The consequences were shocking – economic stagnation, rapid inflation, increased taxes and massive job losses, which forced many Israelis to leave the country and discouraged would-be immigrants from settling there.

On the other extreme the Arab regimes were likewise irritated, albeit for other reasons. There was indeed a real fear in the capitals of neighboring countries that the attacks would drag them into an undesired conflict with Israel. In order to preempt this, the governments concerned adopted a hostile approach toward Fateh. In Egypt, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, Field Marshall Abdul Hakim Amer, issued an Order of the Day to all the armed forces of the Arab League telling them to consider themselves at war with Al-Asifa.² It was no surprise, therefore, that the movement's first martyr Ahmad Musa was killed by Jordanian soldiers while returning from their second commando operation inside Israel.³ Elsewhere, the Syrian authorities detained Yasser Arafat in late 1965 on charges of importing explosives into the country for subversive reasons. He had already been imprisoned for a few days in Lebanon earlier in the year. Other arrests and detentions of Fateh members were carried out in Jordan, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.⁴ They were subjected to torture and some died in Arab prisons.

If anything, the Arab security clamp down only served to strengthen Fateh's resolve. When the June 1967 War broke out they had registered a total of 200 attacks. Immediately after the War Fateh forwarded a memorandum on 17 June 1967 to the UN Secretary General, U Thant, urging that the international organization recognize its detainee, Mahmud Hijazi, as a prisoner of war. The memo further explained that Al-Asifa, its military wing, was obliged to carry out its operations in Israel against the Zionist movement, which was determined to eliminate the Palestine Arab presence from their homeland.⁵

In September 1967 Fateh sent a strongly worded statement to the Third Arab Summit meeting in Casablanca. The movement demanded an end to the hostile campaign against its members, the unconditional release of its prisoners, the lifting of the news blackout on its press statements and publications in the Arab countries and the granting of sanctuary to its members who were forced to take refuge in their countries.

Arab disunity

Throughout the nineteen years that preceded the 1967 War the Palestine Question was used in Arab capitals to justify political policies and changes. In public, regional governments professed their commitment to the total liberation of Palestine. They insisted that the UN partition of Palestine was illegal and thus refused to recognize the state of Israel or have any peaceful relations with it. By the mid 1960s, however, the Arab states seemed hopelessly incapable of advancing the Palestinian cause. Chronic division, rivalry and internal fighting proved to be their worst enemy, far more damaging than the state of Israel.

Despite the successful staging of the first three Arab summits in Cairo, Alexandria and Casablanca inter-Arab relations were threatened with total paralysis. The immediate cause was Egypt's intervention in Yemen to support Col. Abdullah al-Salal's revolutionary government. The latter had overthrown the monarchy of Imam Muhammad Badr in 1962. While Egypt supported the soldiers who had proclaimed a republic, Saudi Arabia and Jordan rallied to the aid of the deposed royalists. Both the ruling family in oil-rich Arabia and the western oil companies with investments there viewed the revolution in Yemen as a threat to their interests.

By 1966 the Arab countries were divided into two hostile camps

led by Nasser on the one extreme and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia on the other. Abdul Nasser's plans to convene a Fourth Summit of the Arab League in September that year seemed destined for failure. While Tunisia, under Habib Bourghiba, joined the Saudi led opposition to the republican regime in Yemen, Syria joined Egypt in its absolute support for the revolutionary regime. The other member states of the League: Kuwait, Sudan, Lebanon, Morocco and Libya remained neutral.

Egypt had, by then, poured one-third of its army into Yemen backed by air and naval forces. Saudi Arabia, on its part, provided bases and gave generous military and financial support to the royalist forces. As Yemen became the battleground of Arab armies fighting each other the greater cause of Palestine was all but forgotten. It was not until a few days before the 1967 War that the Arab states finally put aside their differences. By then it was too little too late. The damage was already done. The enflamed political differences within the Arab League had impaired all chances of effective military coordination. In the circumstances a war with Israel could only have produced one result – absolute humiliation and defeat.

While the Arabs fought each other in Yemen the clouds of war with Israel grew ever darker throughout 1966 and the first half of 1967. In hindsight one question comes to fore: did Israel exploit the divisions within the Arab ranks and hastened the war? This appears to have been the case. Since the beginning of 1966 the Israelis quietly embarked on a campaign to enlarge their weapon stocks. All through the summer of that year Israeli and Syrian troops clashed regularly on their common border. A main cause was the escalation of Palestinian commando attacks. Israel was determined to make the Syrians realize that they would have to pay a high price for its support of the Palestinians.

Faced with growing threats from Israel, the Arab states had no other choice but to prepare for the worse case scenario. Thus, after Israel's Prime Minister Levi Eshkol declared, in September 1966, that Syria would be held responsible for all Palestinian raids, regardless of the country they came from, Egypt and Syria decided to formalize a Mutual Defence Pact in November 1966.⁶ On 21 May 1967 Iraq joined the protocol. Meanwhile, the confrontation between Israeli and Syrian forces went from bad to worse as the former insisted on pursuing Palestinian guerillas inside Syrian territory.

A turning point in the crisis took place on 9 May 1967 when Israel increased the size of its forces on the Syrian border. Abdul Nasser announced that Egypt would not stand idle with its hands tied and witness an attack on Syria. By this time Nasser was convinced that Israel was going to launch an invasion of Syria. He called upon the UN to withdraw its Emergency Forces (UNEF), which were stationed in the Egyptian Sinai after the 1956 War. On 15 May he declared a state of alert and deployed his forces in the Sinai. This was followed up with his closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on 23 May. This was the pretext the Israelis needed to attack. They interpreted the closure as an act of war because the Straits provided their only outlet for the Israeli port of Ailat.

War and its consequences

On the morning of 5 June 1967 Israeli aircrafts evaded Egyptian radars and attacked its airbases in the Delta and Sinai; destroying the entire Egyptian air force while it was still on the ground. The air attack was accompanied with the simultaneous movement of troops into the Gaza and Sinai. They met with some resistance from the Palestinian Liberation Army in Gaza and the Egyptian army in the Sinai. The latter could not, however, put up a good fight since they had no cover from Israeli aircrafts. Thousands were killed and captured. The outcome of the war was decided in the first hours when the Egyptian air defences were destroyed. Within eight hours of fighting it was all over.

On the Jordanian front it was no different. Most of the Jordanian planes were also destroyed before they could be scrambled. Its forces remained stranded in the West Bank without air cover. A limited ground battle took place around Jerusalem and Jenin. On the second day of fighting the army collapsed and withdrew to its eastern defensive positions.

In Syria, the picture was no different. Its airplanes were attacked around midday and suffered great damage. Having disposed of their main targets in Egypt and Jordan, the Israelis concentrated their attention on the Syrian Golan Heights, which they managed to occupy on the sixth day of the war.

The human cost of the war was enormous. An estimated 10,000 Egyptians, 6,094 Jordanians and 1,000 Syrians were martyred. Despite the issue of four cease-fire orders by the Security Council, Israel continued its attacks until the occupation of the West Bank, of

Jordan River, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula and the old city of Jerusalem was complete. But the Israelis were not only interested in the capture of Arab land. They were equally determined to depopulate the newly occupied territories of their indigenous people and, as a result, a new phase in the Palestinian refugee problem began with the expulsion of 330,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. About 145,000 of these were registered with UNRWA and were thus made refugees for the second time after their initial expulsion in 1948.⁷

By December 1967 about 245,000 Palestinians had crossed to the East Bank of the Jordan River. Sami Hadawi described the scene as he saw it from the East Bank, "a mass of humanity in thousands was wading through the waters of the river – some beneath, others between the debris of the bombed Abdullah (formerly Allenby) Bridge, with still others being hurriedly pushed – sometimes by a volley of overhead shots – to speed them on their way to join the unhappy procession".⁸

As a consequence of the War about 1,850,000 Palestinians came under Israeli occupied rule. The al-Aqsa Mosque, the Noble Rock and the Church of the Sepulcher all fell to the occupation. From an Israeli point of view the icing on the cake was their capture of the sources of the Jordan River. Thus the Arab defeat was total and comprehensive.

The 1967 War exposed the rhetoric of the Arabs and showed the weakness of its states with their inability to deliver on their promises toward the Palestinian people. The defeat constituted a setback not only of the Palestinian national movement but the Arab nation as a whole. In the aftermath, several disclosures by both Israeli and Arab political leaders confirmed that the Arabs had no intention of going to war with Israel. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitshak Rabin told the French *Le Monde* on 29 February 1968, "I don't believe Abdul Nasser wanted the war. The two divisions that he sent to the Sinai on 14 May were not enough to make an attack on Israel. We know this and he knows it". Ezer Weizmann, the head of Israel's military intelligence at the time, further remarked, "The 1967 War was not imposed upon us. It was a war Israel chose".⁹

In the US similar admissions have reinforced the view that Israel was the aggressor and the Arabs were the aggressed. President Lyndon Johnson, in his memoirs, recalled the account of Robert

McNamara, the then Secretary of Defence, that three different intelligence bodies had confirmed that an Egyptian attack was not imminent.¹⁰ In spite of these evidences the Pentagon sent several battalions of marines to the Sixth Fleet, which was then stepping up its manoeuvres off the Syrian coast. The Israelis were apparently only waiting for the green light from Washington to attack. This came on 4 June while Abdul Nasser was still engaged in negotiations with President Johnson's envoy.¹¹

Since the War, the Arabs have maintained that there was extensive collaboration between Israel, the US and Britain. The fact that neither the Sixth Fleet nor British ships stationed in the region warned the Arabs of the impending attack meant either their surveillance equipment was ineffective or they colluded with the Israelis. Whatever the case, the 1967 War changed the geopolitical map of the region and the course of the Palestinian struggle. Whereas in the past the battle cry was "Arab unity is the way to the liberation of Palestine", after 1967 the new slogan became "the liberation of Palestine is the way to Arab unity".

Points of Review

- Egypt's military intervention in Yemen divided the Arab League into two mutually hostile camps.
- Arab political differences impaired the abilities of their armies to coordinate effectively.
- US intelligence confirmed that Egypt had no plans to go to war.

Questions

1. Why were the Arab regimes opposed to Fateh?
2. Assess the consequences of the 1967 defeat on the Palestinian cause?
3. Comment on the view that without the collaboration of the US and Britain Israel could not have achieved the military victory it did in 1967.

Chapter 17

Fateh Keeps the Struggle Alive

The humiliating defeat of 1967 unleashed a storm of unrest and discontent across the Arab world. From the Atlantic to the Gulf people held their governments directly responsible for the occupation of Palestine and other Arab lands. They had neither the time nor willingness to investigate the conspiracy theories of American and British collusion with Israel. As a result, calls were raised everywhere for change and the restoration of Arab dignity.

Nowhere was the impact of the defeat felt more than among the Palestinians, whether in their occupied homeland, the refugee camps of neighboring countries or even further beyond. They were terribly disappointed with the official Arab leadership including that of the PLO. Thus, they demanded a change in its leadership and election of a national council capable of protecting their interests.

Immediately after the war the Fateh leadership decided to take full advantage of the situation. They convened an emergency meeting in Damascus on 12 June 1967 to study the prospects of launching an all-out liberation war in Palestine. In July 1967 Yasser Arafat secretly entered the West Bank with a number of aides with the aim of organizing some form of meaningful resistance. He traveled around the occupied territories recruiting volunteers, organizing groups and directing attacks from his base in Nablus and then later Ramallah.

By December 1967 other Palestinian political parties began to form military wings. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by Dr George Habash, a Christian, began its military attacks in the West Bank. Similarly, the Syrian backed Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War (Sa'iqa) began their operations in 1968. As it were, the Palestinian revolution reached its climax during the period 1967-70. Arab regimes only obliged to accommodate Fateh in order to escape the anger of their people. Thus, the Lebanese and Jordanians opened their borders with Israel.

The operations led to calls for reprisals from the Israeli public. As expected, Israel retaliated with all its power. It destroyed homes, imposed curfews and carried out mass detentions in the occupied

territories. They benefited from a wealth of intelligence material left behind by the Jordanians and Egyptians when they withdrew from the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively. This information was used to track down, capture or kill Palestinian resistance fighters. By the year end, 200 Fatah members were killed and 1,000 were imprisoned. In early 1968 Arafat was forced to pull out of the West Bank and reorganize his campaign from Jordan.¹

The Battle of Karameh

After its successes against the resistance fighters in the West Bank, Israel began to carry out preemptive raids in the East Bank of the Jordan. On 20 March 1968 Israel's Defence Minister, Moshe Dayan, called a press conference and invited Israeli and foreign reporters to accompany the Israeli army the following day to witness the destruction of the remaining Fatah bases. He boasted that the operation against the resistance fighters in Karameh refugee camp, Jordan, would be like the destruction of eggs in a nest.²

Karameh is a small village on the East Bank of the Jordan River about two kilometers east of the town of al-Shunah. It was established by some of the refugees who were driven from their homes in 1948. The word Karameh means dignity. What happened there in March 1968 was regarded as a major step toward the restoration of Palestinian dignity.

Once they were convinced that Israel was about to attack the camp, the Fatah leadership evacuated about 14,000 Palestinian residents and left about 1,000 refugees in the camp. The resistance fighters dug trenches and occupied strategic positions in the valleys and on the mountain tops.

Arafat addressed his fighters on the evening of 20 March. He told them, "The Arab nation is watching us. We must shoulder our responsibility like men, with courage and dignity. We must plant the notion of steadfastness in this nation. We must shatter the myth of the invincible army".³ Arafat knew they were outnumbered but they were determined to teach the Israelis a lesson. He later confirmed, "We were some 297 persons to be exact". He added, "I was not expecting that any of us would be alive after the Battle of Karameh".⁴

Three brigades of Israeli troops, backed by fighter-jets and helicopters, attacked the village. The battle was bloody and

destructive. The invading forces met with rocket propelled grenades, mortar fire, rifles, and knives. Dayan, who personally supervised the operation, ordered the destruction of the camp. The Fateh resistance continued longer than the Israelis expected. After eleven hours of fighting the Israelis withdrew their forces. Western diplomatic and media sources estimated they had 1,200 dead and wounded and 120 tanks destroyed.⁵

Fateh organized a huge rally to bury its 28 martyrs in Amman and salute its 90 wounded. Jordan, which had intervened in the latter stages of the battle on the side of the Palestinians, had 128 of its forces killed and wounded. Tens of thousands came out to pay their respects. The Jordanian Government paraded the destroyed tanks and armored vehicles in Amman.

Not all Palestinian historians viewed the Battle of Karameh as a Palestinian victory. Rashid Khalidi noted that although the Palestinians had inflicted great losses on the Israelis, their losses were much more. He concludes, "This was no Arab victory, at least not militarily".⁶

Whatever the arguments, the Battle of Karameh marked an important turning point in the history of the Palestinian resistance. It reinforced the credibility of the resistance among the Arab masses and demonstrated its capacity to be steadfast. As a result the Battle of Karameh is often seen as the second launch of the Palestinian revolution after its initial launch in January 1965.⁷

The Cairo Agreement

Despite its military setbacks Fateh recorded some gains on the political front. Throughout the Arab world they were recognized as heroes for standing up to Israel. They had done what the Arab armies had failed to do collectively. Having forced the resignation of Ahmad Shuqayri from the leadership of the PLO in December 1967, Fateh members consolidated their position within the PLO.

In February 1969 the resistance fighters factions, led by Fateh, took over the leadership of the PLO headed by Yasser Arafat. At a meeting of the Palestine National Council held in Cairo, 57 from a total of 105 seats were allotted to the resistance fighters factions. With 33 of the 57 seats going to Fateh the way was cleared for Yasser Arafat to assume the chairmanship of the PLO.⁸

Meanwhile, in Lebanon the Government was obliged to give the resistance fighters a freer hand. The first bases were established

there in the winter of 1968-69. It was in the same year that the Palestinian revolution arrived in Lebanon.⁹ Lebanon's mountains, caves and thick bushes offered a much better environment for guerilla warfare than Jordan or the West Bank. As in Jordan, the actions of the resistance fighters provoked the wrath of Israel. Lebanon was drawn ever closer into full confrontation with Israel.

Tensions between the Palestinians and Lebanese escalated. Abdul Nasser invited Arafat and the Lebanese chief of staff, General Emile Lahoud, to talks on resolving their differences. These resulted in the Cairo Agreement of 3 November 1969. According to it, the PLO agreed to confine its activities to the southern part of the country and to coordinate with the Lebanese army. As a result of the agreement the Palestinians emerged in Lebanon as a greater force. The Cairo Agreement amounted to the granting of autonomy to the commandos within Lebanon and their right to launch attacks across the border as long as they coordinated with the Lebanese army. It was the PLO's first major political breakthrough in Lebanon.¹⁰

Black September

Back in Jordan, thousands of young Palestinians volunteered to join Fateh after the Battle of Karameh. King Hussein viewed the growing influence of the Palestinians with unease. Palestinians controlled in the northern Jordanian towns of Irbid and Jerash. More roadblocks began to appear on the streets of Amman. Fateh's men reacted with hostility toward the authorities when the searches on them intensified.

The mutual suspicion between the PLO and the Jordanian authorities was nonetheless fuelled by external forces. It was not in their interests to encourage the full cooperation and unity of the Jordanian and Palestinian people. Hence, they circulated rumors that the PLO had become a state within a state with its own military, administrative, financial, cultural and information structures and they were planning to stage a coup against the ruling Jordanian Hashemite family.

Elsewhere in the region, the "War of Attrition", which Egypt started in 1969 against Israel, was dangerously escalating into all out war. The Soviet rearming of the Egyptian army was surpassed with the American supply of advanced weapons to Israel. Egypt's strategic position, military strength and political influence in the

region caused immense worry in Washington. They had to find a way to extract it from the Soviet camp and neutralize it to ensure Israel's security.

The task of neutralizing Egypt was easier than it seemed. Abdul Nasser's regime was coming under increasing pressure at home to do whatever was necessary to regain Egyptian land – either by militarily or a peace settlement. Abdul Nasser chose the latter. The American baited him with the Rogers Plan [named after the US Secretary of State, William Rogers] to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. Based on UN resolution 242 the plan offered the return of Arab land for their recognition of Israel. On 23 July 1970 Egypt accepted the plan to the dismay and anger of the Palestinians. The PLO condemned the decision and Palestinians took to the streets in Amman and other Jordanian cities. Egypt's acceptance of the Rogers Plan made it easier for Hussein, the Jordanian King, to follow suit. On 29 August Hussein also announced Jordan's acceptance.

The PLFP led by George Habash and PDFLP led by Naif Hawathmah both denounced the Egyptian and Jordanian governments. The PLFP was particularly scathing in its personal attacks on Abdul Nasser who reacted by urging Hussein to suppress the resistance. In Jordan, on 1 August, shots were fired on King Hussein while on his way to the airport and on another occasion while returning to Amman from his palace in al-Hamr.¹¹ The final straw was the PLFP hijacking of three civilian aircrafts (British, American and Swiss) on 30 August and landing them in Jordan. When the King refused their demands they released their hostages and blew up the planes on the tarmac.

The Jordanian army launched its attack in the dawn of 15 September 1970. The resistance fighters positions in the refugee camps in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid were bombed from the air and land. For eleven days fierce fighting continued from street to street and house to house. Despite the superior power of the army the resistance fighters held their ground. In the end, about five thousand people were killed and twenty thousand wounded – most were civilians.

On 25 September Arafat traveled to Cairo to arrange a cease-fire. This was concluded on 28 September between the Jordanian authorities and the Palestinian resistance. After their defeat in Amman the resistance fighters tried to regroup in the hills and forests in the north of the country. When the military operations

were finally ended in July 1971 the resistance fighters presence in Jordan was almost non-existent. Their last remnants, including the leader Abu Ali Iyad, were killed. His body was dragged behind a tank through neighboring villages of Jeresh.

As in the 1967 War, there was again speculation about American involvement. Here it concerned the role of Syria, the only Arab country that attempted to come to the aid of the resistance fighters. Syrian tanks had actually crossed the border. The Jordanians contacted the State Department and asked if Israel would provide air support to Jordan against the advancing Syrian tanks.¹² Henry Kissinger [National Security Advisor under President Richard Nixon] told the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitshak Rabin, that the US would look favorably if Israel carried out an air attack on the Syrians.¹³ Acting on the apparent instructions of the Soviets the Syrians decided to withdraw their tanks.

Through painful sacrifice the Palestinian leadership was forced to learn two important lessons from the events of Black September. The first was that they could not afford to rely on others to fight their cause and, secondly, that they should steer clear of interference in the internal politics of Arab governments. Fateh summed up the sense of disappointment in its resistance paper issue of 6 July 1971 by condemning the Arab governments for "not having done anything to stop the massacre of the Palestinian people in Jordan". Yasser Arafat went even further when he told a meeting of Palestinians in Algiers in January 1972 "yes, we suffered a serious defeat in Jordan," "But the operation was not purely Jordanian. It was an Arab plot".¹³

Points of Review

- After 1967 the leadership of Fateh sought to exploit the popular discontent with the Arab regimes.
- The Battle of Karameh marked the second launch of the Palestinian revolution.
- The events of September 1970 put an effective end to fidaeyeen operations from Jordan.

Questions

1. Explain why the Palestinian and Jordanian masses celebrated the outcome of the Battle of Karameh.
2. To what extent did the PLO benefit from the 1969 Cairo Agreement?
3. What factors led to the confrontation between the Jordanian authorities and the PLO in September 1970?

Chapter 18

From Total Liberation to National Authority

Although the Cairo Agreement ended the fighting between the Jordanian authorities and the resistance fighters, tensions between the two sides persisted. In the short term, the resistance fighters were in no position to turn the military balance in their favour. Besides, they needed time to recover from the crushing blows of September 1970.

On the diplomatic front, there were some significant advances concerning the recognition of Palestinian rights. In December 1969 the UN, for the first time, referred to the Palestinians as a people and distinct national group [GA Res. 2535]. It affirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people under its Charter and international law. The following year, 8 December 1970, the General Assembly recognized the Palestinian right to self-determination by a majority of more than two-thirds. The resolution [GA/2672], stated that the fulfilment of this right was essential for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The adoption of these resolutions signalled an important break from the past. It meant that the Palestinian people could now speak on their own behalf and, determine their aspirations and the means to achieve them.

One of the immediate challenges facing the Palestinian resistance at this stage was that of unifying their ranks. This was absolutely necessary in order to fend off external interference in their affairs. With regard to Jordan's King Hussein, there was still a lingering mistrust that he wanted to speak on behalf of the Palestinians. With Fateh substantially weakened after 1970 the PLO was drawn ever closer toward the negotiating table.

Prior to 1968 the goal of the Palestinian people was the total liberation of their homeland and the expulsion of the newly arrived Jewish immigrants. The focus was on returning the Palestinians to their homeland. Since Israel denied Palestinians this right, they concluded that the best way to achieve it was through the liberation of the land. From a purely historical point of view, the liberation of

palestine was no different from the liberation of former European colonies in Africa or Latin America.

By mid 1968 Fateh began to change its approach saying that their aim was not the expulsion of the Jewish immigrants but rather the establishment of a democratic state with equal rights for all its peoples, including Jews. In a press conference conducted in October 1968 Abu Iyad explained Fateh's strategy was the establishment of a democratic state in Palestine inhabited by Muslims, Christians and Jews.¹ On 1 January 1969 the organization's Central Committee confirmed this in a statement. The Fifth Congress of the PNC in February 1969 declared that the Palestinian people aimed "to set up a free and democratic society in Palestine...and liberate Palestine from the domination of international Zionism"²

The supporters of the policy did not see it as a climb down or deviation from original principles. The Fateh representative in Paris at the time, Muhammad Abu Mayzar [Abu Hatim], said that it was consistent with the position of several Palestinian organizations before Israel was created. He cited the National Liberation League, which had set the creation of a democratic state as its main objective.³

The apparent changes in the PLO political programme were unhinged when King Hussein announced plans in 1972 to unify the two peoples on both sides of the Jordan River into a single kingdom under his rule. The Palestinian leadership naturally became sceptical that Jordan would enter into an agreement with Israel and the Americans at the expense of the Palestinian people. The King told a group of Palestinians and Jordanians on 14 February 1972 that after consultation in America and Europe he had decided to change the name of his kingdom from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Arab Kingdom and establish an autonomous rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

According to the Jordanians, the new kingdom would have a central legislative council headed by the King and, with him, a national assembly elected by secret ballot with equal representation from the two parts of the kingdom. They would each have a council of ministers and a single armed force headed by the King.⁴ King Hussein's United Arab Kingdom failed to materialize because Israel refused to withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967.

The PLO rejected the proposal. Given its wide influence in the territories the King could not muster the public support needed to take the project forward and it died in its infancy.

The October War

Of the states neighboring Israel, Egypt and Syria came under the most pressure from their people after the 1967 War. Israel's unwillingness to implement UN Resolution 242 caused great frustration and anger. It is a resolution which since its adoption by the Security Council on 22 November 1967, has been regarded as the basis of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It specifically called for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict".

In a statement issued on 26 February 1971 the Israelis informed Gunnar Jarring, the special UN representative appointed to negotiate between the parties, that "Israel would not withdraw to the pre-5 June 1967 lines". The statement explained that Israel would only withdraw to what it determines as safe and secure borders to be agreed through negotiations with the Arab states. It was clear from this that the Israelis were not willing to return the territories it acquired by force.⁵

It must be recalled that the ambiguity of the resolution allowed Israel to continue its occupation of the captured territory. The resolution, sponsored by France and the United Kingdom, varied in the two languages. While the French version used the definite article "the" in respect of the territories to be evacuated by Israel, the English version did not have the definite article. Four parties to the conflict; Egypt, Jordan Lebanon and Israel accepted the resolution. Syrian and the PLO rejected it.

After September 1970, Lebanon became the centre for the regrouping and rebuilding of the Palestinian resistance forces. In April 1973 the Israelis launched one of their most daring attacks on the PLO in Beirut. The attack was in apparent revenge for the 1972 kidnap and murder of 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich by an organization calling itself Black September.⁶ The organization also claimed responsibility for the assassination in Cairo of the Jordanian Prime Minister, Wasfi al-Tal, in November 1971. Israeli sources maintained that Black September was linked to Fateh and its key leaders such as Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad, Mohammad Daoud and Ali Hasan Salameh. Abu Iyad believed he was the main

target of the Israeli raid on the Fateh/PLO apartments in April 1973. They wanted to liquidate him and the Fateh leadership. Arafat was in the headquarters at the time but managed to escape. The Israelis killed three top PLO officials; Kamal Udwan, Muhammad Yousef al-Najjar [the PLO's Foreign Minister at the time] and Kamal Nassar, a prominent poet and PLO spokesman.

While Israel stepped up its pursuit of the Palestinian leadership and sympathizers in the region and Europe, the new leaders of Egypt and Syria focused on the rebuilding of their armies. Both Anwar Sadat and Hafez Asad had to do something to stem the growing tide of unrest in Egypt and Syria respectively. After 1967, Israeli troops were stationed on the eastern banks of the Suez Canal about 105 kilometers from Cairo. In the case of Syria they were stationed near Sa'sa' village about 50 kilometers south of Damascus. By August 1973 the count down to war began. That month Sadat informed Farouq Qadummi and Abu Iyad of his intention to go to war. On 9 September he invited them again to another meeting, this time with Arafat. He outlined his plan in detail and, after what he hoped would be a limited war, Sadat informed them that he would call for a peace conference of all the parties.⁷

On 6 October 1973 Egyptian troops crossed the Suez simultaneously with a Syrian attack on the Golan. In the initial exchanges the Egyptians drove back the Israeli occupiers. Israel retaliated by bombing government buildings in Damascus and power plants around the country. From the time the war started Israel appealed to the US to hasten and increase its delivery of arms supplies. That delivery began on 7 October.⁸ This intervention provoked the outrage of the moderate governments in the region. Saudi Arabia's King Faisal took the lead by ordering a 25% cut in oil production and an embargo against the US.

On 22 October the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 338, which was jointly drafted and sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union. The resolution called for a cease-fire within 12 hours of its adoption and the immediate implementation of Resolution 242. Despite the resolution, Israeli troops, led by Ariel Sharon, continued to push its way south and succeeded to cut the Third Egyptian army on the east bank of the Suez from its supplies. The Soviets threatened to intervene if the US did not prevent Israel from forcing a surrender after the war was declared ended. With both American and Soviet fleets lurking in the Mediterranean waters near Crete this

was probably one of the worst crisis between the two powers since World War II.⁹

In accordance with Resolutions 338 and 242 a conference was convened in Geneva on 21 December 1973. While Syria boycotted the event, Egypt and Jordan decided to attend. Despite the centrality of the Palestinian conflict to regional peace the PLO was not invited. They were, until this point, still opposed to Resolution 242. If they attended this it could have been interpreted as an implicit recognition of the resolution. The Geneva conference marked the first direct negotiations between the Arabs and Israel since 1948. The October War did not result in the liberation of occupied Arab lands or Palestine. It did, however, create the conditions for negotiations with Israel, something that Sadat desired.

The Ten-Point Programme

The PLO was extremely sceptical of the negotiating process. They feared it would result in the creation of self-autonomous entity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under Jordanian rule. The matter was discussed among the various factions who decided on a strategy to prevent this. They called for the creation of a "national authority" in any liberated part of Palestine under Palestinian leadership.

On 8 June 1974 the 12th Session of the Palestinian National Council met in Cairo and adopted a programme based on ten points as the basis for the resolution of the conflict. The Council reaffirmed its rejection of UN Resolution 242. It declared that the PLO would struggle to liberate Palestinian land and establish "the people's national, independent and fighting authority over every part of Palestinian land which is liberated".

Point 4 of the programme stated: "Any liberation step that is achieved constitutes a step for continuing [the efforts] to achieve the PLO strategy for the establishment of the Palestinian democratic state that is stipulated in the resolutions of the previous national councils".

The meeting had hardly adjourned before King Hussein challenged the PLO, claiming to be the rightful representative of the one million Palestinians in his kingdom and the one and a half million others in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Both President Sadat and King Faisal of Arabia declared their support for Hussein.

The struggle to represent the Palestinian people was soon to be decided at the Seventh Summit of Arab Leaders scheduled for Rabat on 28 October 1974. The day before the conference opened, 180 eminent Palestinians in the occupied territories signed a memorandum and smuggled it out to Arafat. It recognized the PLO and not Hussein as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". Despite a skilful and impassioned speech by Hussein, setting out his claim, the conference declared the PLO the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". They followed this up with a request to the UN urging that it invited the organization to the next session of the General Assembly. The UN granted the request and Arafat was invited to the 29th Session in November 1974.

Arafat received a standing ovation when he made his dramatic appearance at the UN. They did the same when he ended his speech, which lasted 101 minutes. His final two sentences are still remembered. "I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand". The reaction to Arafat's speech was positive and encouraging. Later that month the General Assembly (GA) adopted Resolution 3236 which:

- Reaffirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including:
 - i. The right to self-determination without external interference.
 - ii. The right to national independence and sovereignty.
- Reaffirms also the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted, and calls for their return.
- Emphasizes that full respect for and the realization of these inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are indispensable for the solution of the question of Palestine.

Lebanon's Civil War

Arafat's diplomatic coup at the UN strengthened the PLO and his own position within the organization. Nowhere was this more manifest than in Lebanon. Not all sections of the society welcomed these developments. Lebanon's 17 sects had, for many years in the past, indulged in bitter rivalries and violent feuding. After the signing of the "national pact" [Al-Mithaq al-Wantani] in 1943, the country's Christian Maronite leader Bishara Khoury and the Sunni Muslim

leader Riad Sulh maintained, through a system of proportional representation, a delicate balance between the competing sects.

With the arrival of the Palestinian fighters after 1968 the underlying weakness of the Lebanese policy was tested to the limits. The country became the focus of Israeli attacks as more and more Palestinians sought refuge there. Large swathes of territory in the south were devastated and abandoned by its people. By striking hard and randomly, the Israelis hoped to turn the Lebanese against the Palestinians and curb the latter's ability to launch cross-border attacks.¹⁰

By January 1975 the Israeli raids on southern Lebanon escalated considerably, sometimes continuing for days without respite. The village of Kfar Shuba in particular bore the brunt of the Israeli attacks. When the locals could no longer bear the indifference of the Lebanese army toward their security, they attacked a municipality building in Marj'ayoun. While venting anger upon the Lebanese army the villagers shouted slogans of praise for the PLO and its heroic resistance.¹¹

Two incidents confirmed the contrasting public attitudes towards the army and PLO. The first was the exceptionally large turnout of mourners for the funeral procession of the PLO leaders killed by the Israelis in Beirut in 1973. The second was a similar large turn out in February 1975 for the funeral of a local politician, Maruf Sa'd, who died from gunshot wounds sustained in a demonstration of local fishermen in the port city of Sidon. Many Christians believed the demonstration had less to do with the demands of local fishermen than it did with attempts to cripple the army and undermine the state.¹²

The actual start of the Lebanese civil war is often dated as 13 April 1975 as it was the day gunmen fired on Pierre Gemayel, the head of the Phalangist Party. The Christian Maronite, Gemayel family had founded the party in the 1930s. Their relations with Israel started in 1948, which continued with interruptions for the next two decades and became a full-blown alliance in the mid 1970s.¹³ Christian gunmen responded to the shooting by firing on a bus carrying Palestinian children. The Palestinian resistance groups retaliated and thus began the war. The Syrian backed Sa'iqa and the Democratic Front led by Naïf Hawathmah did much of the fighting until December 1975. Fateh did not get involved during this early phase.

The Phalangists claimed that the Palestinians had undermined the social and political balance of the country and that they should therefore be expelled. For its part, Fateh had the bitter memories of Amman. Its leadership were well aware that if they were thrown out of Lebanon they would encounter great difficulty finding sanctuary elsewhere. Significantly, the Christian Maronites were not isolated in the Arab world. Both Pierre Gemayel and Kamil Shimuon had good relations with Jordan and the Arab Gulf states.¹⁴

Throughout the first 19 months of the war the Arab states remained silent and avoided any criticism of the Maronites. They did not regard the war as a religious conflict. On the contrary they saw it as a power struggle between Lebanon's left leaning nationalist forces led by Kamal Jumblatt, head of the Druze, on the one hand, and the Maronites on the other. At the same time the Arabs states knew that Israel was also helping the Maronites. Many Phalange officers and troops had received military training inside Israel. Manachem Begin later confirmed that they had contributed \$100 million to the Phalangists, however, CIA sources reported the figure was closer to \$300 million.

In January 1976 the Phalangists moved against the Palestinian refugee camps north of Beirut. The onslaught convinced Fateh that there was a plan to eliminate the Palestinian presence from Lebanon. It could no longer remain a passive spectator and therefore decided to move its forces from the south to the northern camps. Karantina was the first of the camps to fall. It was a poor enclave with about 30,000 Palestinian Muslims. The Phalangists then blockaded and attacked Jisr Pasha and Tel al-Za'atar camps. About 1,500 refugees were killed in Tel al-Za'atar, many of them after they had surrendered.

When an Arab League's mediator arrived in the Phalangist base in August 1976 he found two Syrian officers and two Israelis officers there. Several years later, when defending himself for complicity in the Sabra and Shatila massacres, Ariel Sharon pointed to similar Israeli involvement in the Tel al-Za'atar massacre.¹⁵ Other Israeli sources confirm that four officers led by Col. Abraham Ben Eliezer were sent to Beirut to assess Phalangists' needs. "The team watched training, met Phalangist officers and observed the Christians attack the Palestinian stronghold of Tel al-Za'atar". The team recommended to their superiors in Jerusalem a major boost of Israeli arms supplies.¹⁶

The Sabra and Shatila Massacres

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 had a major impact on the Palestinian national movement. It came after the shooting of the Israeli ambassador in London. "Operation Peace for Galilee" was, however, planned long before. The mastermind of the invasion, Ariel Sharon, deployed 90,000 men, 1,300 tanks, 12,000 troop and supply trucks, 1,300 armoured personnel carriers and most of Israel's 634 combat aircrafts.¹⁷ For 67 days they laid siege to Arafat and his PLO fighters in west Beirut. Given the amount of force used by the Israelis, the Palestinian resistance was quite remarkable.

By mid August an agreement was hammered out between Philip Habib, the US special envoy and the PLO. It provided for the evacuation of Palestinian fighters and their safe passage to Tunisia where the Government had bowed to American pressure to grant them sanctuary. Before agreeing to the evacuation plan the PLO leadership insisted on, and were given assurances, that the Palestinian civilian population would not be harmed. Thereafter, a multinational force of French and American soldiers arrived on 25 August to supervise the evacuation. Following a brief farewell ceremony on 30 August, Arafat set sail from Beirut with the last group of his fighters.

At the time many Lebanese were happy to see the departure of the PLO. The organization had become isolated from the society in the immediate period before 1982. Indeed, the PLO had become tied down in fighting with local militias such as the Shi'ite Amal. Despite the lessons of 1970 they allowed themselves to be dragged into the local politics, thereby destabilizing the fragile Lebanese system. While the Lebanese state appeared to be on the verge of collapse the PLO had grown increasingly into a para-state with Arafat assuming all the trappings of a national leader and managing a budget that was larger than that of the Lebanese Government.

Shortly after the departure of the PLO the multinational force pulled out of Beirut. Based on the assurances given to the PLO it was expected that the force would remain longer and protect the Palestinian civilians in the camps. The day after their departure, 14 September, the Lebanese President Bashier Gemayel was killed in a bomb attack on the headquarters of the Phalange Party. This incident set the stage for one of the worst massacres of Palestinians in the twentieth century. From the evening of 16 to morning of 18 September, Phalangist militiamen embarked on a campaign of

frenzied slaughter of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila camps.

For all its ferocity, the massacres in Sabra and Shatila were not solely the handiwork of the Phalangists. The Israelis were equally involved. They reacted to the killing of the President Gemayel by moving their forces into west Beirut, in breach of the assurances given to Philip Habib. They claimed this was done in order to maintain "law and order". Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan and Defence Force Commander, General Amir Drori of Israel met with Phalangist leaders in east Beirut and agreed to attack the camps and clear out the remaining "terrorists".¹⁸

The MacBride Commission into the massacres concluded that they were part of a pattern of "terror" that went back many years to Deir Yassin. The Commission added that Israel's involvement in the planning, assistance and control of events which led to the massacres meant that it had committed "gravest breaches" of the Fourth Geneva Convention.¹⁹ As the Occupying Power it was obliged to protect the civilian population of the country it occupied. The total number of Palestinians killed was estimated between 3,000-3,500 in 40 hours of bloodletting.²⁰

Although the massacres in Sabra and Shatila will always be remembered as one of the worst atrocities of modern times, it must not be forgotten that several other refugee camps also suffered incalculable losses. Rashidiyeh, Ain el Hilweh, Bourj al-Brajneh, Bourj al-Shemeli and el Buss were all heavily bombarded by the Israelis. Dr Swee Chai Ang, a British medical doctor working in the Gaza Hospital in Shatila camp at the time, described the carnage: "Besides being shot dead, people were tortured before being killed. They were beaten brutally, electric wires were tied round limbs, eyes were dug out, women were raped, often more than once, children were dynamited alive".²¹

The Camp David Accords

While the PLO became ever more embroiled in the Lebanese civil war, Israel was busily engaged in secret negotiations with Egypt. After the 1973 War President Anwar Sadat seemed to have undergone a major change. One of the most noticeable signs of this was the content and style of his speeches. They no longer contained the aggressive and rhetoric of the past. In October 1973 he invited Henry Kissinger to Egypt to discuss the withdrawal of Israeli troops

from Egyptian territory. The Israelis had stationed troops on the west bank of the Suez. Their presence proved to be a constant irritant as it belied Sadat's claims of victory. Kissinger arrived in Cairo on 6 November, launching what was to become famously known as his "shuttle diplomacy".

After being a staunch ally of the Soviet Union in the region and adversary of the US, Sadat was criticized widely for turning to the Americans. He answered his critics saying he would "turn to the US, the Soviet Union, or the devil himself" if it were going to lead to Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai.²² Sadat's quiet diplomacy led to the restoration of diplomatic relations with the US during the Nixon era, which had been broken since 1967. He continued to press for a comprehensive Middle East peace conference with all the parties including the PLO.

Parallel to these initiatives, Sadat also embarked on a course of secret and direct negotiations with the Israelis, which even his closest aides were unaware of.²³ On 9 November 1977 he told the Egyptian parliament in the presence of Arafat that he was prepared to go to the end of the earth, even to the Knesset for the sake of peace. By ensuring that Arafat was present, Sadat apparently sought to give the impression that Arafat supported his overture. The latter was enraged and stormed out of the parliament.

Though addressed to the Egyptian parliament the speech was also directed to the Israelis. They duly obliged by sending him an invitation. Thus, on 19 November 1977 Sadat visited Jerusalem and addressed the Knesset three days later. President Carter took full advantage of the visit and quickly invited Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat to his Camp David presidential retreat "to seek a framework for peace in the Middle East". The meeting of the three sides lasted from 5-17 September 1978 and resulted in two sets of agreements known as the Camp David Accords.

The Camp David Accords were celebrated as a great breakthrough. The first of the two documents was titled "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East". The second was titled "A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel". The latter was signed in Washington on 26 March 1979. Of the two, the first document was the more controversial as it sought to resolve the Palestine Question. It promised "full-autonomy" and a "self-governing authority" for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the implementation of "the

provisions and principles of resolutions 242 and 338". Despite the claims of its success, the Camp David Accords fell well short of Palestinian expectations.

Shortly after the signing of the Framework for Peace in the Middle East the UN adopted a resolution declaring it invalid. On 7 December 1978 the GA declared in Resolution 33/28: "The validity of agreements purporting to solve the problem of Palestine requires that they lie within the framework of the United Nations and its Charter and its resolutions on the basis of the full attainment and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return and the right to national independence and sovereignty in Palestine and with the participation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization".

The following year the Assembly further declared in Resolution 34/65 of 29 November 1979: "The Camp David accords and other agreements have no validity in so far as they purport to determine the future of the Palestinian people and of Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967".

One of the most important criticisms raised by the Palestinians about the Accord was that it envisaged a solution of the Palestine problem only in the West Bank and Gaza. It ignored all the other Palestinian rights usurped in 1948 and 1949.

On another level, they also raised the question of representation. Anwar Sadat, they argued, had no right to negotiate the future and rights or territory of the Palestinians. They did not entrust him to do so. Furthermore, the full autonomy which the Accord promised, was itself deficient because its powers were limited only to municipal matters. Fayez Sayegh, an eminent Palestinian scholar and diplomat, explained what the Camp David Accord promised to the Palestinians:

A fraction of the Palestinian people (under one-third of the whole) is promised a fraction of its rights (not including the national right to self-determination and statehood) in a fraction of its homeland (less than one-fifth of the area of the whole); and this promise is to be fulfilled several years from now, through a step by step process in which Israel is able at every point to exercise a decisive veto-power over any agreement. Beyond that, the vast majority of Palestinians is condemned to permanent loss of its Palestinian national identity, to permanent exile and statelessness,

to permanent separation from one another and from Palestine – to a life without national hope or meaning!²⁴

Points of Review

- After 1970 the PLO was fearful that Jordan would enter into an agreement with Israel at the expense of the Palestinian people.
- Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 had a major impact on the Palestinian national movement.
- The Camp David Accord ignored the rights of the Palestinians that were usurped prior to 1967.

Questions

1. In what sense was Arafat's appearance at the UN in 1974 a diplomatic coup?
2. Comment on the role played by Israel in the planning and conduct of massacres of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.
3. Explain why the UN declared the Camp David Accords invalid.

Chapter 19

From Intifada to Oslo

Ariel Sharon's decision to invade Lebanon was not only motivated by a desire to crush the PLO, the decision was also based on a policy intended to change the status quo in the West Bank. Sharon presumed that the PLO leadership would take refuge in Syria and thereby lose its independence. At that point, Israel would be able to negotiate with a weakened Palestinian leadership in the West Bank on a formula of self-autonomy, according to Israel's rules. Such an arrangement would enable Israel to dominate the territories for another thirty years and establish irreversible facts on the ground.¹

In the end the Israelis failed to realize their dream. The people of the West Bank rallied together in support of their fellow countrymen in Lebanon. Faced with unprecedented international outrage over the massacres in Sabra and Shatila both Ariel Sharon and Prime Minister Manachem Begin were forced to resign in mid 1983. An interim Prime Minister, Yitshak Shamir, was then installed in Israel. He remained in office as head of national unity government after the deadlocked elections of July 1984.

The Likud-Labour administration continued to pursue Israel's strategic goal of settlement expansion in the Occupied Territories. They claimed it was necessary for Israel's defence and existence. The Government was, however, hard pressed for money to build the settlements as the war in Lebanon was draining resources. As a consequence, the number of settlers dropped from 15,000 in 1983 to 4,800 in 1985.²

Meanwhile, the economy of the West Bank, like Israel, also grounded to a standstill after 1981. The Occupying Power could not improve the quality of life of the Palestinians as it claimed it would. Thousands of Palestinians were graduating each year and could not find work. Many families in the territories depended on relatives in the Gulf for remunerations. The economic recession in the area had a negative impact on Palestinian living standards. Widespread discontent soon gave rise to social unrests. On 4 August 1985 the cabinet responded to the growing unrests by approving an "iron

fist' policy to deal with the Palestinian resistance. Tensions reached its climax in 15 November 1986 with the stabbing of a Jewish student in Jerusalem. This was followed by calls for a pogrom against Arabs in the city.³

The hardliners in Israel never recognized the national aspirations of the Palestinians claiming that the most they could hope for was limited administrative autonomy. They claimed the West Bank was the biblical land of Judea and Samaria granted to them by divine right. During the 1960s and 70s thousands of Israelis settled in and around Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. By 1988 they had taken control of 55% of the West Bank and 30% of the Gaza Strip. The distribution of water resources highlighted the disparity between the condition of the settlers and that of the Palestinians. While the settlers drilled 27 wells between 1967 and 1983 not one Palestinian village or individual was allowed to drill a single well during the same period.⁴

By 1987, conditions in the refugee camps had become utterly intolerable. Half the population of the Gaza Strip were refugees who lived in eight overcrowded camps administered by UNRWA. The largest of these was Jabaliyah, which sheltered 40,000 refugees. In the West Bank the largest camp was Balata with about 12,000 inhabitants. These overcrowded and deprived enclaves provided the most fertile conditions for Palestinian discontent to ferment and erupt. Their bitter memories of the Nakba, the denial of their right of return, and subjection to a military occupation all contributed to the outbreak of the 1987-1993 Intifada-uprising.⁵

Wherever it occurred in the past, the usurpation of national and human rights has resulted in the degradation and servitude of the dispossessed. Nine out of ten times it gave rise to bitter and protracted conflict the type of which has engulfed Palestine. Israel, the colonial power, was now on a collision course with the Palestinians seeking their own destiny.

In accounting for the underlying causes of the Intifada the former Mayor of Gaza city, Rashad Shawa explained the feelings among the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, "they lost all hope that Israel will ever give them their rights, they feel the Arab governments cannot deliver and the PLO has failed".⁶

The final spark that ignited the Intifada was the stabbing to death of an Israeli businessman, Shlomo Takal, in Gaza on 6

December 1987. Two days later, an Israeli truck killed four residents of the Jabaliyah camp. The driver was rumoured to be a relative of Takal.⁷ After the Morning Prayer (Fajr) on 9 December a huge demonstration set out from the mosque in Jabaliya camp. The Israeli military shot at the demonstrators and killed Hatim Abu Siis. Later on, another demonstrator, Raid Shahada, was also killed near al-Shifa Hospital. The Muslim Brotherhood issued its first statement in the name of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) on 13 December 1987. Spontaneous disturbances soon spread to other camps in Gaza and then to the West Bank, notably Balata and Qalandiya.

By January 1988 the Intifada had become more organized. Shamir's policy of brute force and beatings failed to have an impact. On 4 January leaflets were circulated throughout the West Bank announcing the formation of the Unified National Command of the Uprising. Its main bodies were Fateh, PFLP, DFLP, PFLP- GC [led by Ahmad Jibril] and the Islamic Jihad. Its aim was to sustain and direct the uprising toward national independence, repatriation, and self-determination.

The Rise of the Islamic Movement

During the 1970s Islamic scholars continued to call for resistance against the occupation. They brought together demands for reformation and resistance to occupation. Underlying these themes was the belief that jihad is a religious duty under Islamic law. They were not content to confine themselves to Islamic training [tarbiyah] and preaching [dawah] without these affecting their lives.

Prominent among these Palestinian scholars was Shaykh Ya'qub Qurashi who had a relationship with Fateh. He began his activities in 1977 before he was arrested and deported to Jordan in 1979. There was also Shaykh Muhammad Abu Tayr from Jerusalem, he was also associated with Fateh. Shaykh Asad Buwayd Tamimi, the Imam of Masjid al-Aqsa was among the scholars deported to Jordan in 1970.

The growth of the Islamic movement was not confined to the West Bank and Gaza. In 1979 Shaykh Abdullah Nimr Darwish launched a trend in Israel under the name of the 'Jihad Family'. This trend took root and spread quickly to Gaza where it gave birth to the Islamic Jihad Movement. There was, however, no organizational relationship between the two. Islamic Jihad was founded in 1980 by

Dr Fathi Shiqaqi and Shaykh Abdul Aziz Audeh. Both individuals were members of Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza under the leadership of Shaykh Ahmad Yasin. They left the movement in the mid seventies over differences of how to approach the occupation. While Shiqaqi emerged as the main ideologue and military planner of Islamic Jihad, Abdul Aziz Audeh was regarded as its spiritual leader.⁸

Given the background of its founders, Islamic Jihad is regarded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. To no lesser degree, they sought to follow in the footsteps of the hero of the early 1930s resistance, Shaykh Qassam. It was the Islamic Jihad's daring military operations in the 1980s that inspired the mass uprising. Shiqaqi was exiled from Palestine in August 1988.

Islamic Jihad was further influenced by the successful revolution in Iran. Their leadership tried to benefit from the teachings of the late Imam Khomeini. They were also influenced by the writings of Muhammad Abdul Salam Faraj, founder of the Islamic Jihad in Egypt. Shiqaqi, in his book "Al-Khomeini: al-Hal al-Islami wa al-Badil", repeats the fatwa of Khomeini that it is a religious duty to fight Zionism and seek the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine.

The centrality of Palestine in the ideology of Islamic Jihad was affirmed by Shaykh Audeh, "I am a Muslim Palestinian, and I consider Palestine the most important country in the Islamic world. I look forward to the establishment of an Islamic state in it".⁹ Islamic Jihad believes in armed struggle as strategy of political work. It does not adhere to the principle of implementing the Islamic law [Shari'ah] before the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine. In its view, a free Palestine must be realized before a Muslim Palestine.

Hamas

The word Hamas is an acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement. It means zeal, enthusiasm, and courage. Hamas regards 8 December 1987 as the official date of its founding. The political, economic and social conditions that gave rise to the Intifada were also responsible for the birth of Hamas. There were, besides, other factors related to the prevailing intellectual and political currents within the Islamic movement in Palestine and Gaza in particular.¹¹

Throughout the first half of the 1980s there was an intense internal debate and growing calls within the Brotherhood for it to remodel its programme in order to engage in active resistance. By the mid 1980s there were signs of change in the discourse. From the beginning of the Intifada, Hamas announced that it was a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.¹² By no means did it emerge from a vacuum. Quite the opposite, it was a continuation of the work started by the Brotherhood in the 1940s.

In 1973 the Israeli occupation allowed officials from the Brotherhood in Gaza to set up "Al-Mujama'a al-Islami" [The Islamic Center] headed by Shaykh Ahmad Yasin to organize cultural and social activities. The Islamic University in Gaza was its stronghold and popular support base for these activities. Sometime in the early 1980s Shaykh Ahmad Yasin founded a military organization – Mujahidun Filastiniyun – to resist the occupation. The authorities discovered it in 1984 and sentenced Shaykh Ahmad Yassin to 13 years in prison. Despite these setbacks the influence and appeal of Hamas continued to grow. The Israelis probably allowed this to happen, hoping to weaken the PLO and divert the youth from nationalist activities.¹³

The return to religion was also a reaction to the violation of the religious sites by the occupier. It was generally seen as an attempt to erase their Islamic identity. This was manifested in the growth in the number of mosques and the numbers of worshipers in them. In Gaza the number of mosques grew from 77 after the 1967 war to 160 in 1987.¹⁴

Regional factors also contributed to the emergence of Hamas. After 1982 the PLO lost its last base from which it could launch attacks on Israel. It turned, after this, almost entirely to political negotiations. To make matters worse, there emerged a tendency within the Arab League to minimize the status of the Palestinian conflict. The 1986 Arab summit in Jordan added to Palestinian bitterness as its resolutions focused almost entirely on the Iran – Iraq war.¹⁵

After the outbreak of the Intifada, Hamas formed its military wing, Kataa'ib al-Shaheed Iz al-Din al-Qassam. Because they operate in a covert manner the exact date of their formation is not known. Although some sources trace it to 1989 and the capture of

the Israeli soldier Avi Sasportas, it is believed the Kataa'ib [Brigades] did not come into their own until early 1991.¹⁶

On the political level, Hamas' thought centered around the following ideas:

- That the Palestine Question is basically an Islamic one and it is a responsibility on the shoulder of every Muslim, wherever he is.
- Western colonial interests in the region merged with the aims of the Zionists to set up the state of Israel in order to divide the Islamic community, weaken it, and render it dependent.
- That Palestinian national unity would be realized on the basis of a programme of resistance and liberation.
- The struggle with the Zionist Jews is not about borders but is a struggle between truth and falsehood that continues from one generation to another.¹⁷

On the other side of the divide, Zionist leaders also saw the conflict in existential terms. Prime Minister Shamir explained, "The problem is not a territorial dispute which can be solved through territorial concessions...or [through] a political solution that will fall from heaven...The problem is one of existence. There is a constant Arab threat, which is renewed from time to time, against Jewish existence in all of Eretz Israel".¹⁸

From the onset of the Intifada Israeli experts concluded that these "fundamentalists" were far more dangerous than the PLO.¹⁹ The role of Islamic Jihad and Hamas in directing the Intifada was an indication of how much the religious revival had spread throughout Palestinian society.

Hamas' underlying philosophy toward other groups is one of cooperation and coordination. In many respects it is inspired by rivalry in the struggle to liberate Palestine and in confronting the Zionist occupation. Hamas refused to recognise Israel's legitimacy, as it was founded on the conquest of land.

Since its emergence, there were several instances of tension between Hamas and Fateh. The latter saw Hamas as cutting into its popular influence. These differences have always been ironed out through dialogue.

Like Islamic Jihad, Hamas' strategic aim is to liberate Palestine. It has transitional aims also such as the liberation of the West Bank and Gaza, preservation of good morals and decency in Palestinian

society, the eradication of corruption and the preservation of the spirit of armed struggle.

Casualties

Between 9 December 1987 and 8 December 1989, the Israelis seriously injured an estimated 80,000 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Between one-third and two-fifths were 16 years and younger. During the same period, one-quarter of the 599 killed were children.²⁰ Despite its highly trained and equipped nature this was Israel's way of putting down the "generation of anger" who exploded stone revolution.

The Israelis also resorted to undercover agents to kill political activists. According to the Israeli human rights group B'tselem the agents often "did not first try to capture the wanted person without resorting to firearms".²¹

Record of killings attributed to undercover units ²²

Year	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Total
1988	05	07	12
1989	12	23	35
1990	07	12	19
1991	09	23	32
1992	13	34	47
1993 thru mid may	09	06	15
Total	55	105	160

The Israelis also resorted to mass arrests and the breaking of the bones of demonstrators. In May 1989 they arrested 200 alleged Hamas members including Shaykh Ahmad Yassin. The following month they banned Hamas officially. Then, in December 1992, they expelled 400 Islamists to Marj al-Zuhur Mountain in southern Lebanon. This was not an old measure. Between 1968 and 1988 Israel had expelled 1,000 Palestinians from their homeland. All these expulsions were considered illegal because they violated Article 49 (1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention to which Israel is a signatory. It states: "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportation of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive".

The Intifada ended in September 1993 when the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles (Oslo Accord) with Israel. According to

PLO figures, during the six years of the Intifada (Dec 1987 – Dec 1993) 1,540 Palestinians were killed, 130,000 were injured, and 117,000 were detained for various periods.²³

Whatever its failures and shortcomings, the Intifada demonstrated that the Palestinian people were capable of taking their destiny into their own hands; even against one of the most well equipped armies in the world. It exposed to the world the true nature of the Israeli occupation, and confirmed that no amount of force is capable of breaking the will of a people yearning to be free.

The PLO Declares Independence

While the Intifada continued to take its toll in lives and injuries much was happening behind the scenes. By 1988 the Intifada had jolted the Americans and the international community to restore the Palestine Question to the top of the international agenda. Thus, the Swedish Foreign Minister, Sten Anderson, started a process of mediation between the two sides. He arranged for meetings between the PLO leaders and American Jewish leaders. The purpose was to work out a statement of PLO commitment to peace with Israel.

At the same time, a prominent Palestinian American, Mohamed Rabie, who had contacts with the PLO, spearheaded a similar effort. He used the services of a prominent Middle East expert, William Quandt, to gain access to White House officials. His aim was to initiate a US-PLO dialogue at the highest level.²⁴ The two initiatives undertaken by Anderson and Rabie resulted in the Algiers Declaration of November 1988.

The Algiers Declaration was itself preceded by other developments, which affected the future of the Intifada. During the Arab summit held on 15 June 1998 in Algiers, Arafat's aide, Bassam Abu Sheriff, released a statement to the press declaring the PLO's readiness to co-exist with Israel. The statement was apparently intended to be a message of goodwill to the US administration but they ignored it.

When Jordan relinquished legal and administrative ties with the West Bank in July 1988, the PLO seized on this to emphasize its status as the sole representative of the people of the West Bank. Hussein did this, presumably, to quash the Israeli so-called "Jordan option", which claimed that Jordan is the real home of the

Palestinians. There were widespread rumors of a plot to change the ruling Hashemite family with a Palestinian leader in Jordan.²⁵

When the PNC met from 10-15 November 1988 for its nineteenth session in Algiers, they were advised by the Soviet Union and Arab states to devise a programme that would make the PLO acceptable for negotiations with the US and Israel. Thus, for the first time ever, the PLO officially recognized Resolution 181, which partitioned Palestine as well as Resolution 242. The PLO had, not too long before, deemed such recognition as a great sin.²⁶ Its proclamation of Palestinian independence in November 1988 was, therefore, overshadowed by its efforts to meet Israeli and American demands. To many, it seemed as if they had to give up their rights in order to gain recognition and acceptance.

For all its worth, however, Arafat's conciliatory overtures could not earn him even a visa to attend the UNGA in New York. Despite intense world pressure the US Secretary of State, George Shultz, refused to grant the visa. The Americans only agreed to engage in dialogue with the PLO after Arafat read a statement using the exact words that Shultz dictated.²⁷ The US had always insisted that the PLO accept Resolution 242, stop attacks against Israel and renounce terrorism. On 7 December Arafat signed the Stockholm Document recognizing Israel, accepting Resolutions 242 and 338 and renouncing terror. It was only after this the dialogue between the US and the PLO finally got underway in Tunis on 17 December 1988 with Robert Pelletreau representing the US.

Oslo

After the end of the 1991 Gulf War, America moved quickly to take advantage of Arab disunity by imposing a settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict according to its vision. The War had resulted in the destruction and isolation of Iraq as a regional power. On 6 March President George Bush (snr) called for an international conference on Middle East peace. The conference was held in Madrid on 30 October 1991 under the auspices of the Soviet Union. It was attended by Israel, the European Union, the six Arab Gulf states, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunis, and Algeria. Israel objected to the participation of the PLO. As a result, representatives of the PLO from the West Bank and Gaza participated [with PLO blessings] as part of the Jordanian delegation.

The conference adopted two approaches to Middle East peace: the multilateral talks and bilateral talks between Israel and states with whom it had territorial conflicts. The bilateral talks that lasted from November 1991 to October 1994 led to two principal agreements between Israel and the Palestinians and the Jordanians. The first was the Declaration of Principles (Oslo Accords) between Israel and the PLO, which was signed in Washington on 13 September 1993. The other agreement was concluded at Wadi Araba between Israel and Jordan on October 1994.

When the negotiations started in Madrid in 1991 the parties made little progress. Israel's ruling Likud party, headed by Yitshak Shamir, did not want to attend and only did so after the US threatened to withhold loan guarantees, which Israel sought to continue its settlement programme in the Occupied Territories. After weeks of bitter recriminations the Americans only got the Arabs to attend after declaring, in a letter of assurance written by Secretary of State, James Baker dated 18 October 1991 that, "the United States has opposed and will continue to oppose settlement activity in the territories occupied in 1967, which remains an obstacle to peace".

In the fall of 1992 the new Labour government of Prime Minister Yitshak Rabin offered a peace proposal to the Palestinian negotiating team. Professor Francis Boyle, the legal advisor to the Palestinian team, read the document and advised that they reject it because it was akin to the "bantustans that the apartheid Afrikaaner regime had established for the Black People in the Republic of South Africa".²⁸ He told them the proposal sought to enforce the same understanding which Manachem Begin had of the Camp David Accord; that autonomy meant autonomy for the people but not for the land. After the Palestinian delegation led by Dr Haidar Abdul Shafi rejected the proposal, the Israelis opened a secret channel with elements within the PLO and initiated talks in Norway. This was done without the knowledge of the Palestinian people and their peace delegation. The result of these secret contacts was the Oslo Agreement.

Mahmud Abbas, in his book "Tareeq Oslo", recalls the Oslo Agreement was not much different from an earlier plan that was presented to the PLO in Tunis on 12 March 1993 by Abdul Wahab Dirawashah, a former member of the Israeli Labour Party and founder of the Arab Democratic Party. He presented that proposal

on behalf of Prime Minister Rabin.²⁹ About the secret negotiations, he recalled, the Norwegians first approached the Israelis who agreed and then the Palestinians were approached. There were some initial meetings in London where an understanding between the two parties was struck.³⁰

The Oslo Accords were concluded after more than 14 rounds of secret negotiations between the PLO and Israelis. The official signing was concluded in Washington on 13 September 1993. Mahmud Abbas, in his capacity as Secretary General of the PLO executive council signed for the PLO while Foreign Minister Shimon Peres signed for Israel. All subsequent agreements between the two parties were based on the DOP.

The Oslo Accords were important because it was the first of its kind between the Palestinians and Israelis. It proposed the establishment of self-autonomous Palestinian rule in the West Bank and Gaza for a transitional period of five years. The agreement postponed discussion of several vital issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the refugees, borders, water resources and the future of the Jewish settlements. A Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was formed to administer the territories. In some respects Oslo resembled the Camp David Accord. It confirmed the extent to which the PLO had changed because when Egypt signed the accords in 1978, it was described as a betrayal.

In examining the process that led to Oslo it may be noted that Israel used every means to pressure the PLO. The presence of Hamas as a credible political force and the weakness of the Arab states were two notable means. Arafat returned to Gaza triumphantly in July 1994. The Oslo Accords was followed by five other agreements; each clarifying or reinterpreting its forerunner. They were the PLO-Israeli Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area signed in Cairo (May 1994), the Taba Agreement also known as Oslo II (September 1995), the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron (January 1997), Wye River Plantation Memorandum (October 1998), and the Sharm al-Shaykh Memorandum (September 1999).

When it signed the Declaration of Principles [DOP] in 1993, the PLO agreed to enter into a process of negotiations leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Since neither the DOP nor its derivatives mentioned the

word "occupation" or referred to Israel as an Occupying Power it gained the ability to unilaterally determine which territories it would withdraw from. As a consequence, successive Israeli governments drifted away from the formula "land for peace", which was derived from Resolutions 242 and 338 and adopted their own formula of "peace for peace".

A principal example has been the Hebron Protocol of 15 January 1997. After the Israelis claimed there were "loopholes" in the original agreements, Secretary of State Warren Christopher attached to the agreement a "Letter of Assurance" affirming America's commitment "to meet the security needs that Israel identifies". The following day Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu told the Knesset, "it is Israel that will determine the nature and scope of the three redeployments...This is also the way the United States interprets the agreement". Based on this understanding, Israel has relentlessly pursued the construction of settlements, by-pass roads, and separation wall, all in the name of security.

In the end, the Oslo Accords failed because Israel sought to maintain control of Palestinian life and land. Despite the assurances given to the Palestinians, the US, under President Clinton, refused to condemn the Israeli settlement activities in the UN claiming that it was "unproductive to debate the legalities of the issue". Madeliene Albright, the US Ambassador to the UN suggested in a letter to the GA in September 1994 that all UN resolutions on Palestine were "contentious, irrelevant and obsolete".

When the parties met at Camp David in July 2000 there was little hope that the Palestinians would realize anything substantive. By then the PLO led by Arafat was called to discuss final status issues when they controlled only 17.2% of the West Bank. Although the entire process was founded on the principle of "land for peace" Israel confiscated over 40,000 acres of Palestinian land during the interim period before the final status negotiations.

Whereas the DOP (Article IV) stated that "the two sides view the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period", Israel transformed the entire area into 64 clusters of townships with an elaborate system of settlements, highways, by-pass, industrial parks and closed military areas. After the failed Camp David talks Prime Minister Ehud Barak claimed he made the most "generous offer" to the Palestinians (95-

96%) of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This claim was, however, refuted because the Israeli figure did not include Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, the Jordan Valley or the settlements and adjoining roads. Having already agreed to give up 78% of historic Palestine, the PLO was in no position to share the remaining 22% with Israel.

In the aftermath, the Palestinians were blamed for the failure of the July 2000 negotiations at Camp David. On 28 September 2000 former General Ariel Sharon added insult to the Palestinian injury by making a provocative entry into the al-Aqsa Sanctuary under the protection of Israeli soldiers. This act ignited the flames of what became known as al-Aqsa Intifada. Since the entire Oslo process turned out to be a scam that increased their subjugation, the Palestinians decided to throw all caution and restraint to the wind.

Points of Review

- The return to religion was also a reaction to the violation of the religious sites by the occupier.
- The 1987-1993 Intifada exposed to the world the true nature of the Israeli occupation, and confirmed that no amount of force is capable of breaking the will of a people yearning to be free.
- The Oslo Accords sought to enforce the same understanding which Manachem Begin had of the Camp David Accord; that autonomy meant autonomy for the people but not for the land.

Questions

1. What were the underlying and immediate causes of the 1987-1993 Intifada?
2. Explain the circumstances that led to the rise of the Islamic movement in Palestine in the 1980s.
3. In the end the Oslo Accords failed because Israel sought to maintain control of Palestinian life and land. Comment.

Chapter 20

The Last Stand

Faced with cries of “death or expulsion” and having no sovereignty over their territories, al-Aqsa Intifada is a stand by the Palestinian people to preserve their national identity and existence in occupied Palestine. They resolved that whatever the losses they were not prepared to flee and thereby increase the ranks of the world’s Palestinian refugees. This is to many Palestinians, their last stand.

Like every other people who were subjected to foreign rule, the Palestinians cannot afford the luxury of reading history simply for entertainment. For them, its primary purpose must be to identify the pitfalls of the past and extract guidelines for the future. They had, with other Arabs, risen up against their Ottoman rulers in support of the European allied war effort, with the promise of gaining independence. Their condition today is, arguably, worse than it was then. They have no control over their economy or territorial borders. They cannot move freely within their own land without the permission of the settler. They cannot trade with fellow Arabs, because the latter now recognize the borders imposed by the occupier.

This is the background to the ongoing conflict; a people yearning to be free in their land, to shape their own destiny, and conduct relations without the let or hindrance of external forces. Many of the measures used to deny these rights are grotesque and unimaginable. One misconception must therefore be corrected in order to understand the nature of this conflict: that the colonization of Palestine in the twentieth century was not the exclusive work of Zionist settlers. The latter have been aided and abetted at every stage by the US, Britain and other international powers.

When it started at the end of the nineteenth century the sponsors of this project endorsed the colonization of Palestine on the basis that it was the white man’s burden to civilize the dark peoples of the world. Because their ambitions coincided with those of western colonial powers the Zionists managed to obtain 57% of Palestine through the UN at a time when they only constituted 33%

of the population. The failure of all subsequent peace efforts to resolve the Palestine problem was essentially due to the non-recognition of this initial abuse of power and excess of jurisdiction. By the end of the twentieth century the Israelis continues to fight the Palestinians for what remains of their historic homeland – less than 22%. Since international law does not recognize the acquisition of territory by force or conquest they claim immunity by divine right.

Palestinian popular rejection of the various agreements has forced Israel to resort to military measures to ensure compliance if not acceptance. Times have changed and so too have the people of Palestine. A new generation has come of age since the occupation first began; a generation that is not only committed to resistance but also to the liberation of all that was illegally occupied.

For all its worth, western calls for self-restraint and return to the negotiating table have been futile. They would continue to be meaningless for as long as these powers continue to arm Israel to the tune of billions of dollars each year. In other words it would take much more than words to realize Palestinian repatriation, independence, and sovereignty over their national borders, Jerusalem and resources.

As a popular uprising against foreign occupation the al-Aqsa Intifada has confirmed an indelible truth that many, both within and beyond the Middle East, were loath to admit. That the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991 was incapable of delivering a just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This was not because the conflict is unsolvable. It was primarily because those who installed themselves as the honest brokers of peace had themselves become partisans in the conflict. Hence, they looked upon Palestinian legitimate aspirations as favors to be granted and not rights to be guaranteed and protected.

To most Palestinians the issue is not about equality or living side by side with Jewish immigrants. The issue to them is their inalienable right to exercise their ownership over the land on which they were born. Would any other people submit to living in “unrecognized villages” while foreign immigrants occupy their homes and farm their lands?

This is the reason why the Oslo process ended in disgrace and bankruptcy. It invested all its effort in providing security for one

party while neglecting the rights of the other. It enabled Jews from everywhere to immigrate to Israel while it asserted the requirement that Palestinians should live in permanent exile.

Why Palestine?

The continued denial of Palestinian rights is not just a manifestation of Israel's hegemonic ambitions in the region. It is also the reflection of an outdated doctrine that seeks to secure privilege, favor, and exclusivity for a select group. If the Palestinians were seeking a status or rights not recognized by international law, history would probably have overlooked the failure of the world community to resolve this conflict. But since the Palestinians are a people whose land was invaded, conquered, and occupied by foreigners and they are only exercising their legitimate right to end that occupation, the policies toward them appear both inexplicable and inexcusable.

Everything that transpired in Palestine reflected an adherence to the dogma of a master race and a subhuman people. That is, one in which Jews have divine rights to rule, dominate and abuse while Palestinians must serve as hewers of wood and drawers of water. This is a dangerous development. In the first half of the twentieth century it landed Europe into two destructive wars that extended far beyond its shores.

Israel's maltreatment of the Palestinian people has been counter-productive for a number of reasons. Attempts to provoke an exodus to Jordan, which many Israeli politicians claim is the real Palestine, has strengthened Palestinian resolve to regain their usurped land and exercise their right of return.

From the darkness of occupation a new generation of Palestinians has emerged bearing hope of a brighter future. They are distinguished by an unstoppable will and capacity to resist. Whereas in the past the Occupier exploited external crises to change conditions in Palestine, this generation is determined to frustrate and defeat every such design in future. After witnessing their resistance in Beirut in 1982, Swee Chai Ang recorded, "A new generation has grown up in the camps of Lebanon and in the territories under the most dreadful conditions", she believes. But, "they have forgotten the meaning of fear. They have chosen to die standing, rather than live on their knees".¹

With the onset of the 21st century the world community has only two choices. It can, on the one hand, be willing accomplices to the imposition of a Pax Hebraica upon the Palestinian people in which they receive less than 20% of their ancestral land, while two thirds of their compatriots remain permanent exiles. Alternatively, it can pursue a settlement based on international law and legitimacy. Whichever it chooses, the Question of Palestine will by virtue of its sheer longevity and complexity almost certainly remain the litmus test for all who proclaim the virtues of civilization, human rights, and international law.

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1. R. Zagoren, Chaim Weizmann, (Illionois:1972), p.64
Allah summoned Moses to Mount Sinai where he remained forty days and forty nights. The Children of Israel however became impatient with his delay and began worshipping a calf made from melted gold. When Moses returned he became angry and put the Tablets down.
The Quranic account does not indicate that they were broken. On the contrary they remained whole. See Surah al A'raf:154. Abdullah Yusuf Ali observed it would have been an act of gross disrespect (if not blasphemy) had he broken the Tablets containing Allah's message, something totally unbecoming of a prophet. The Old Testament's account does, however, state that he broke the Tablets. See Exodus:xxxii:10.
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2. Ibid., p.59
3. Many writers fixed the date of his birth as 1882 but a recent study by Bayan Nuwayhid al Hoot confirmed that he was born in 1871. See B.N. al Hoot's Al Shaykh Izz al Din al Qassam fi Tarikh Filastine (Beirut: 1987), p.25

4. M. Saleh, *Al Tareeq ila al Quds* (London:1995), 173
5. Shaykh Izz al Din did not adopt any specific name to his movement. Names such as Jama'at al Qassam and al Qassamiyun became widely used after the shaykh was martyred on 19th November 1935 when the number of his supporters increased dramatically. See Al Hoot, op.cit., p.40
6. I. Al Tarablisi, *Al Islamiyun wa al Qadiyah al Filistiniyah*, (Beirut:1988), p.35
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4. Ibid., p.154
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8. The name Fateh is an acronym which means 'conquest'. It was formed by a reversal of the first letters of the Arabic name Harakat at Tahrir al Filastini (The Palestine Liberation Movement).
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10. F. El Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967-1976* (London:2000), p.167
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12. Cobban, op. cit., p.51
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14. Jabber, op.cit., p.210

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2. *Ibid.*, p.18
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4. M. Saleh, *Masharee' al Taswiya al Silmiyah Lil Qadiyah al Filastiniyah 1937-2001* (Kuala Lumpur:2002), p.33
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