

Abandonment of Illusions

Zionist Political Attitudes
Toward Palestinian Arab
Nationalism, 1936–1939

Yehoyada Haim



About the Book and Author

*Abandonment of Illusions: Zionist Political Attitudes Toward Palestinian Arab Nationalism,
1936-1939*

Yehoyada Haim

Since the late nineteenth century and especially in times of great tension in the Middle East, observers have asked whether the longstanding Arab-Jewish conflict could have been avoided. The early Zionists did not feel that Arab nationalism would evolve as a reaction to Jewish settlement and the pursuit of Jewish statehood; to the Zionists it seemed logical that their presence would create an atmosphere of technical and social progress and economic prosperity, which would bring such immeasurable benefits to the Palestinians that they would accept the Jewish immigrants. In reality, however, Palestinian nationalism became pervasive, resistance to the Jewish presence became violent and uncompromising, and the Palestinian Arabs revolted. The uprising of 1936-1939 brought about a major réévaluation of Zionist policy, particularly of the left-of-center and middle-of-the-road positions, strengthened the resolve of Zionist revisionist groups to pursue a policy of military strength, and caused the disintegration of the binationalist leadership.

The politics, attitudes, and assumptions prevailing in the pre-World War I Zionist movement, according to the author, are identical to those that provide the dynamics of contemporary Israeli politics. Dr. Haim identifies the main factions of the Zionist movement, analyzing their basic assumptions and policies, their various interpretations of Palestinian Arab opposition to the Jewish state, and their different approaches to overcoming that obstacle. He deals with the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, and the subsequent realignment among the Zionists, in detail. The book provides an invaluable perspective for the events of our day in the confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Yehoyada Haim, currently political counselor at the Israeli Embassy in London, served as advisor to Israel's United Nations mission and as senior researcher for the Israel Foreign Ministry's Center for Political Research in Jerusalem.

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Foreword

Dr. Haim's book deals with one of the most crucial phases in the long and bitter conflict between the Palestinian-Arab and the Jewish-Zionist national movements over Palestine or Eretz Israel.

While carefully examining the positions of both the Palestinian Arabs and the British authorities during 1936—1939 — the critical period of the Arab Revolt — the author mainly and thoroughly dwells upon the attitudes of the Jewish-Zionist political community toward the Palestinian Arabs, skillfully illuminating the differences in position of the three principal Zionist groups: the Official Zionists, the Revisionists and the Bi-nationalists.

It is particularly interesting and instructive to note Dr. Haim's critical analysis of the diverse perceptions and policies of the two major wings of the Zionist movement vis-à-vis the Palestinian Arab national movement: the Official Zionists, who provided the political leadership of both the Jewish *yishuv* and the State of Israel for about half a century until 1977, and the Revisionists, who have constituted the ideological-political hotbed for the leadership of Prime Minister Begin and his party since 1977.

Dr. Harm's book, which is based on unpublished archival materials, and is written with a commendable scholarly approach, represents not only an important piece of historical work on the Arab-Jewish conflict; it provides as well an essential background for a better understanding of the recent and current policies of the Israeli Likud and Labor parties toward the Palestinian Arabs.

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Preface

Since the late 19th century, especially at times of open tension, observers have asked whether the long-standing Arab Jewish conflict could have been avoided. In approaching an answer it would be useful to examine each side's perceptions of the character, rights and aspirations of its opponent, and to study the various attempts to reach an accord. The intensive private discussions among the Zionist leadership provoked by the events of 1936-1939, the stormiest years in Arab-Zionist relations up to that point, are amply recorded in archival materials which, while not originally intended for publication, throw considerable light on these issues. An examination of these deliberations, coupled with a more detailed treatment of Jewish-Arab negotiations and of Zionist attitudes toward British proposals for solving the Palestine problem, may help us determine whether there were real chances for a solution that were not exploited at that crucial period.

This work is based mainly on materials from the archives of various Zionist bodies, supplemented by other primary sources which have since appeared in print. Secondary sources, based on British archival materials, are used mainly to present the general background and to elucidate the British point of view.

Names of non-English authors are spelled in accordance with U.S. Library of Congress usage except in those cases where it conflicts with the spelling used by the individuals involved. Thus, the same name will not always be spelled consistently; for example, *Chaim* Weizmann and Haim Kalvarisky. In those cases in which a name was changed after 1939, the new name will be used only where it was used by the owner; for example, the name Shertok is used except when his *Diaries*, which were published under the name Sharett, are cited.

Hebrew and Arabic words, including those of institutions and organizations of the Jewish community in Palestine, are spelled as they generally appear in English. When no such conventional spelling is available I have transliterated phonetically. Therefore, transliterations from Hebrew and Arabic will not always be consistent; for example, Kaplan and Tawfiq, Chaim and Hussaini.

I am grateful to the staffs of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem; the Magnes Archives at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; the Jabotinsky Archives in Tel Aviv; the Mapai Archives in Beth Berl, Kefar Sava; and the Hebraic Section of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. I also wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Neil Caplan, who allowed me to read his doctoral dissertation before it was published.

I have been privileged to benefit from the supervision of Professor John D. Ruedy, to whom I am very grateful. Fellowships from NDEA and the Center for Strategic and International Studies made it possible for me to undertake this work. My thanks are also extended to Professors Edward Kaitz and David Goldfrank for their support and help. Special thanks are due to Barry Youngerman for his careful copyediting of my revised doctoral thesis. The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and its Director of Publications, Norma Schneider, helped me bring this work to publication. Last, but not least, I am fortunate in having as a good friend Bruce Hardcastle, who unselfishly helped and advised me throughout this work.

Introduction

During the Mandate period almost all Zionists believed that Arab opposition posed the greatest single obstacle to the creation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Zionists were, however, divided in their views about the size of this obstacle and the ways to overcome it, as they were divided in their general attitudes toward Palestinian Arabs. In this regard they tended to fall into three principal groups, which I shall refer to as: (1) Official Zionist, (2) Revisionist and (3) Bi-nationalist. The Official Zionists, who represented the mainstream of Zionist thought, included members of the Jewish Agency, which became the sounding board of Official Zionist policy. The Revisionists were members of the Jewish Agency until 1935, at which time they established the New Zionist Organization in order to carry on their opposition to Official Zionism. The Bi-nationalists accepted the authority of the Jewish Agency but opposed its policy toward the Arabs. From the mid-1920s they believed that the solution to the Palestine problem lay in the establishment of a bi-national state.

On the eve of 1936 Official Zionist policy toward the Palestinian Arabs was based on three assumptions. The first of these, which had weakened with time but still carried weight, was that Arab opposition to the Jewish National Home was not based on nationalism. Second was the assumption that existing opposition would decrease when the Arabs realized that they would derive economic and other benefits from the Zionist enterprise.¹ The third assumption was that Arab opposition would decrease with the demographic and economic growth of the Jewish element in Palestine, because then the Arabs would be forced to accept the Jewish reality.²

From the outset of the Zionist enterprise in the late 1880s Palestinian Arab opposition found expression in verbal attacks and actual clashes with the Jewish settlers. Political opposition was first manifested in the last decade of the 19th century, when Palestinian Arab notables complained to the Ottoman authorities about the purchase of land by Jews and the repercussions that this would have on local Arabs. Contemporary Arabic newspapers were also hostile; Arab politicians and members of the Ottoman parliament made frequent written and spoken reference to the dangers of Zionism, demanding an end to Jewish immigration and land purchase.

Although Arab opposition was primarily political and nationalistic in nature, on the eve of the First World War economic and cultural factors also came into play. The second wave of immigration to Palestine in 1905 had brought with it a large number of Jewish workers who opposed the employment of Arabs in Jewish agricultural settlements on both ideological and nationalistic grounds. They did not conceal their socialism and, even more so, their Zionist nationalism. This, coupled with their lack of knowledge of Arab customs, language, religion and culture, further aggravated Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism.

When the Official Zionists became alerted to the increased Arab opposition, they sought to tackle the problem on the local as well as regional levels. The *yishuv* viewed the local problem as one of improving relations with the Arabs by decreasing socio-economic tension, by increasing the security of the Jewish settlements,³ and by responding to Arab press attacks against land purchase and immigration. On the regional level, Zionist representatives in the Ottoman capital tried to reduce opposition from Arab members of the parliament in order to prevent the Ottomans from imposing restrictions on the Zionist enterprise.

In early 1913 the tightening of political restrictions on the Arabs resulted in increased Arab national opposition to the Ottoman regime, to the point where the Arab Decentralization Party

contacted the Official Zionists to propose mutual cooperation. The subsequent negotiations and efforts to convene a Jewish-Arab conference in 1914 provided only a temporary decrease in Arab press attacks.

The political-national conflict that existed between Arabs and Zionists prior to the Balfour Declaration was exacerbated by that document's legitimation of Zionism. The Zionists understood the Declaration to mean that a Jewish state was to be established in Palestine; the British, too, believed that a Jewish state would emerge at some future date.⁴

While Palestinian Arab opposition grew, the Zionists reached an agreement in January 1919 with Faisal, son of Sharif Hussain and the leader of the Arab Revolt, in which Faisal apparently renounced his claim to Palestine provided that the Arabs as a whole gained their independence. In the context of growing Arab nationalism, this solution found almost no support. Although it is likely that Faisal knew nothing about Palestinian Arab national feelings, Zionists attached great importance to his attitude, which fed their hopes of reaching an agreement with the Arabs. All that was needed, the Zionists felt, was a "true" Arab leader who could envision the mutual benefits that would accrue via cooperation.

The Palestinian Arabs were, however, completely opposed to the Balfour Declaration. During 1919-1921 they expressed their opposition in publications, speeches, demonstrations, riots and attacks on individual Jews and settlements. This resistance forced the Official Zionist leaders to reconsider the future of Jewish-Arab relations, as well as to reexamine their theories on Palestinian Arab opposition. The small minority of Official Zionists who viewed the opposition in terms of national resistance were aware that although the Arab national movement had its weaknesses, and although economic benefits would help decrease Arab opposition — such opposition was genuine.⁵ However, the majority of Official Zionists adhered to the view that Arab nationalism was not a factor in the resistance to the Jewish National Home. They believed that the opposition stemmed from the Effendi class which, they thought, feared the loss of its privileges and rule over the Palestinian Arab masses. The masses themselves were supposed to either be indifferent to politics or to welcome the economic benefits brought about by the National Home. They had no basic anti-Jewish feeling; it was the Effendis who incited them against the *yishuv*.⁶

The growing Jewish working class strongly concurred in the opinion that opposition came only from the Effendis. Jewish leaders rejected any cooperation with the latter, calling instead for an organization of Palestinian Arab workers aimed at raising the social and economic level of Arabs to that of Jewish workers. These socialist-Zionists believed that Arab workers were provoked to oppose Zionism by demagogues, and that if their real class enemies, the Effendis, could be exposed, and their mutual interests with Jewish workers made clear, worker opposition to Zionism would dissolve. Thus, the advancement of Arab workers was essential from the Zionist as well as the socialist point of view. Moreover, organizing the Arab workers would prevent their being used as cheap labor, thereby eliminating competition between Arab and Jewish workers. Various types of Jewish-Arab organizations were considered in the 1920s, and several plans were advanced to help the Arab worker.⁷ Nonetheless, by the end of the 1930s little had been accomplished in this area.

The 1929 "disturbances," yet another manifestation of Palestinian Arab hostility, took the lives of many Jews, causing the Official Zionists to reevaluate their views on the roots of the Arab problem. It seems to have been at this juncture that David Ben-Gurion accepted the fact that Palestinian Arab opposition stemmed from national objectives.⁸

The growing recognition in the early 1930s that there was indeed a conflict between Zionism

and Palestinian Arab national aspirations caused some Zionists to be pessimistic about the possibility of fulfilling their aspirations.⁹ But most Official Zionists - including the pessimists among them — never abandoned the main goals of Zionism. Rather, the attacks strengthened their assumption that only a strong *yishuv* would discourage the Arabs from using violence, because it would force them to realize that the Jewish settlement could not be destroyed.¹⁰

The assumption that Palestinian Arabs would become less hostile as they became aware of the benefits to be derived from the National Home had been expressed as far back as the writings of Theodor Herzl. This assumption was usually predicated on the belief that nationalist motivation was absent among Palestinian Arabs, and on an awareness of the Middle Eastern custom of taking bribes. The ease with which Arabs could be persuaded by payment, their requests for Zionist financial aid, and the fact that many Palestinian Arab leaders had sold land to Jews apparently led the Zionists to conclude that Arabs could usually be motivated materialistically. Besides trying to win over individuals through personal subsidies, the Zionists tried to create friendly Palestinian Arab political parties in order to decrease opposition and help bypass the Effendi class. These parties were, however, short-lived, because they depended on the Zionists too heavily and functioned only as long as financial assistance was forthcoming. They also aroused opposition among Palestinian Arabs, causing many party members to suffer a loss of status in their own communities. The help extended to existing Palestinian Arab parties and newspapers in the mid-1920s and early 1930s succeeded in decreasing opposition to Zionism in limited areas only.¹¹

By the 1930s the Official Zionist assumptions on the non-national character of Arab opposition and the beneficial effects of economic improvement had been weakened, but the assumption that the stronger the *yishuv*, the more it would be accepted by Palestinian Arabs still remained in force. On this basis alone the Official Zionists felt it essential to increase the Jewish population in Palestine, especially in light of their new understanding of Palestinian Arab nationalism. The Official Zionists viewed the situation as a race between Arabs and Jews, one which they aimed to win before the Palestinian Arabs fully awakened to the fact that there even was one. By that time the Jewish presence would be strong enough to impress itself on them.

The Revisionists, who found their leading exponent in Vladimir (Zeev) Jabotinsky, rejected the first two Official Zionist assumptions. Jabotinsky's theories regarding Jewish-Arab relations and Palestinian Arab opposition to the National Home, which he had formulated prior to the establishment of the Revisionist party in 1925, became accepted party policy and remained so with no substantial changes until at least 1939.

In the early 1920s Jabotinsky had claimed that Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism arose from instinctive patriotism, and not as a result of agitation by a few self-seeking individuals. The Arabs loved Palestine as much as the Jews, and would resist Jewish encroachment. Jabotinsky rejected the Official Zionist contention that Arab opposition to the National Home was based on a misunderstanding between Arabs and Jews; such opposition was natural and inevitable. He also rejected the assumption that economic benefits would defuse such opposition. The only way the Arabs would come to accept the reality of the Jewish National Home was through the establishment of a Jewish military force — an "iron wall." Talk about Jewish-Arab agreement and negotiations merely diverted the attention of the *yishuv*, and the British, from building this wall. Jabotinsky never stopped calling for the establishment of a Jewish force; without it the Arabs, who hoped to destroy the National Home, would never cease their opposition.¹² This view recalls the Official Zionist assumption that a strong *yishuv* would serve to lessen such opposition.

The Bi-national group organized itself in 1925 with the creation of the Brith Shalom (Peace Covenant) association. However, their ideas had been expressed as early as the last decade of the 19th century. One of the basic ideas was that Zionist settlement and immigration should be carried out only with the consent of the Palestinian Arabs, a principle which neither the Revisionists nor the Official Zionists accepted. Most Bi-nationalists agreed that Jews had the right to ingather in Palestine, but they did not want to impose this process against the will of the Palestinian Arabs. Some Bi-nationalists were pacifists; others were motivated by their own unique understanding of Jewish nationalism¹³ or of the final aim of Zionism.¹⁴ The Bi-nationalists recognized the conflict between Zionist and Arab national aspirations, and they feared its ultimate consequences. This group rejected all three Official Zionist assumptions. Ahad Ha'am, whose ideas influenced the later Bi-nationalists, recognized the true nature of Palestinian Arab opposition in 1891. In the early 20th century other members of the group began to say that all Palestinian Arabs opposed Zionism, and that the most salient problem facing Zionism was its relationship with these Arabs.

Most members of Brith Shalom were scholars, but some of them, high-ranking Official Zionists,¹⁵ believed that unless an agreement was reached, the conflict between the two nationalisms would become violent. In an effort to attain such agreement, they proposed a solution whose point of departure was equality of rights for both Jews and Arabs: a bi-national state with equal civil, political and social rights for each community, regardless of size, and with each enjoying autonomous management of its internal affairs.¹⁶ The Bi-nationalists believed that the Arab's greatest fear was political domination by Jews through continued immigration; consequently, after the "disturbances" of 1929 some were even willing to drop one of the crucial Zionist ideas that of a Jewish majority.¹⁷

Brith Shalom failed to secure public backing from Jews or support from Palestinian Arabs. Many of its members resigned, and it was disbanded in 1933. While some Official Zionist leaders accepted British Shalom's principle that neither Arabs nor Jews should dominate one another, the only important Zionist group to adopt its plan for a bi-national state was the socialist Hashomer Hatzair, which did so in 1929. But even they differed on several points with "individual Bi-nationalists."

The Bi-nationalist group viewed a bi-national state as the final aim of Zionism. Jabotinsky's 1920s solution to the problem, which was later adopted by the Revisionists, differed and called for the establishment of a Jewish state in historic Palestine¹⁸ based on a Jewish majority attained through mass immigration. He also proposed full civil and religious rights for the Palestinian Arabs, as promised in the Balfour Declaration.

The Official Zionists did not state their final aim. They were more practical in their approach. While there can be little doubt that they desired a Jewish majority in a Jewish state in Palestine, when faced with the opposition of the Palestinian Arabs they tried to find a compromise between what was desirable and what was obtainable, without losing sight of the minimum requirements: that they would not be dominated by others, and that the National Home be large enough to provide a place of refuge for persecuted Jews.

The disturbances of 1929 shocked the Zionists and focused their energies on efforts to resolve their dispute with Palestinian Arabs. Various new ideas were raised among Official Zionists,¹⁹ and their leaders met with Arabs on several occasions in the early 1930s in an attempt to clear up any mutual "misunderstanding." To some Official Zionists these discussions merely served to illustrate the width of the gap between the two sides. Those Bi-nationalists who tried to reach an agreement with the Arabs also met with little success.

It can therefore be stated that Palestinian Arabs never accepted the Zionists as integral participants in the life of Palestine, but rather saw them as invaders, usurpers and tools of British imperialism. They refused to accept that Jews had the right to immigrate and settle, a right recognized by the British as well as the Zionists.²⁰ Thus, when Jewish immigration increased following the Nazi take-over of Germany, and other international, regional and local events further provoked them, the Palestinian Arabs took united action against the National Home.

Notes

- ¹ The first and second assumptions were, to a certain extent, related. They both obscured the real national opposition of the Palestinian Arabs.
- ² The second and third assumptions were related in that the stronger the National Home, the greater would be its economic benefits.
- ³ At this period *Hashomer*, the Jewish watchmen's association, was founded for the protection of Jewish settlements. Later, armed attacks on the *yishuv* in 1920 and British reluctance to allow the Jews to arm led to the establishment of the *Haganah*, the illegal Jewish defense organization.
- ⁴ See Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1961), pp. 523-525, 552-556, 623-625.
- ⁵ One such figure was Chaim Arlosoroff; see Margalit Elkanah, *Hashomer Hatza'ir: Me'edath Ne'urim Lemarxism Mahpechani* (Hashomer Hatza'ir: From Youth Community to Revolutionary Marxism) (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuhad, 1971), pp. 165-167.
- ⁶ See the pamphlet of Y[itzhak] Ben-Zvi, *Hatenu'a Ha'aravith* (The Arab Movement) (Jaffa: 'Avoda, 1921); D[avid] Ben-Gurion, *Anahnu Veshchenenu* (We and Our Neighbors) (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1931), pp. 62-65, 73, 105-108, 134-139, 151, 163; Neil Caplan, "The Yishuv and the Arab Question, 1917-1925" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1973), pp. 184-185.
- ⁷ For various aspects of the socialist analysis see Ben-Gurion, *We and Our Neighbors*, pp. 72-74, 81, 83, 108, 150-159, 182; S. Kaplansky, *Jews and Arabs in Palestine* (London: The Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation, 1922), pp. 2-8; E. Sereni and R. E. Ashery, eds., *Jews and Arabs in Palestine: Studies in a National and Colonial Problem* (New York: Hechalutz Press, 1936); Arolosoroff, *Lesheaelath Hairgun Hameshutaf* (On the Joint Union Question) (Tel Aviv: Hapo'el Hatza'ir, 1927); Ben-Gurion, *Avoda Yvrith* (Jewish Labor) (Tel Aviv: Hava'ad Hapo'el, 1932).
- ⁸ See Ben-Gurion, *We and Our Neighbors*, pp. 62-65, 73, 105-108, 134-139, 151, and compare it with his speech delivered in 1930, pp. 180-181. In 1934 he realized that the assumption that economic benefits would decrease Palestinian Arab opposition was ill-founded; see David Ben-Gurion, *Pegishot 'Im Manhigim 'Arviyim* (Talks with Arab Leaders) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1967), pp. 19-20.
- ⁹ See, for example, Arlosoroff, *Yoman Yerushalaim* (Jerusalem Diary) (Tel Aviv: Mifleget Po'ale Eretz Yisrael, 1949), pp. 329-341. Arlosoroff expressed his pessimism, suggesting to Weizmann the possibility of bringing about the fulfillment of Zionism by conquering part of Palestine militarily.
- ¹⁰ See Ben-Gurion's letter and accompanying memorandum to Col. F. Kish, 23 October 1929, and Kish's answer dated 13 November 1929, in the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (hereinafter referred to as C.Z. A.), S25/6.
- ¹¹ For various aspects of this policy see Caplan, "The Yishuv and the Arab Question," pp. 71, 119, 137-138, 193-202, 258-274; C.Z.A., S25/3050, S25/3051, S25/2554.
- ¹² See Zeev Jabotinsky in *Sheaeloth 'Avoda* (Labor Questions) (Jerusalem: Revisionist Workers' Organization, 1933) (C.Z.A. catalog number 4215).
- ¹³ Martin Buber, for example, who thought the Jewish nation was different from other nations by virtue of its Biblically-ordained moral vocation. See Buber, *'Am Ve'olam: Maamarim Al 'Inyane Hasha'a* (Nation and World: Articles on Current Events) (Jerusalem: Hasifriya Hazionith, 1961), pp. 19-23.
- ¹⁴ For example, Ahad Ha'am, who aimed at creating a cultural center for Judaism in Palestine, and who viewed Palestine as belonging to both the Jewish and Palestinian Arab nations.
- ¹⁵ For example, Arthur Ruppin, who initiated the group's establishment. See his *Pirque Hayayei* (Chapters in My Life) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), Vol. III, pp. 18, 32-35.
- ¹⁶ The most prominent among those who supported a bi-national state at this period were Ruppin, Hans Kohn, Robert

Weltsch, Judah L. Magnes, Buber, and Hugo Bergmann.

- [17](#) For Magnes, see his pamphlet, *Like All the Nations?* (Jerusalem: Herods Gates, 1930), p. 6; Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea in Palestine during Mandatory Times* (Haifa: Shikmona, 1970), p. 54, quoting a memorandum from some members of Brith Shalom. On ways to obtain Palestinian Arab friendship see Haim M. Kalvarisky, "The Arab Question in General," 4 May 1929, C.Z.A., S25/2968.
- [18](#) In this study the term "Mandatory Palestine" will refer to the territory west of the Jordan River, and "historic Palestine" will refer to both Mandatory Palestine and Transjordan.
- [19](#) Before 1929 Chaim Weizmann had supported the idea of a bi-national state in Palestine, but he thought that it was unacceptable to Official Zionists. In 1930 the Mapai Party adopted a position favoring political parity in the proposed Legislative Council. Ben-Gurion offered a program which in effect called for the cantonization of Palestine. See Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea*, pp. 73-77, 81-82, 90-98; Elkanah, *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, pp. 168-169; Ben-Gurion, *We and Our Neighbors*, pp. 188-196.
- [20](#) See, for example, telegram to the Jewish Agency Executive, Jerusalem, 25 February 1932, C.Z.A., S25/3224; C.Z.A., S25/5686; M. Kapeleuk, "The Methods of Fighting of the Mufti and His Faction," C.Z.A., S25/3483.

1

Zionist Politics and Attitudes on the Eve of the Arab Revolt

Arab Demands and the British Response

On 25 November 1935 a joint delegation representing five of the six¹ Palestinian Arab parties presented a memorandum to Sir Arthur G. Wauchope, the British High Commissioner for Palestine, for transmission to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The memorandum consisted of three demands:

1. The establishment of a national government to be elected by the inhabitants of the country according to democratic principles (in effect, Arab majority rule).
2. A complete halt to Jewish immigration.
3. Prohibition of Jewish land purchases.

The delegation threatened that if the British response were inadequate it would consider other means to achieve these goals.

On 29 January 1936 Sir Arthur invited the delegation to receive the Secretary of State's reply. To the first demand, the British responded that the elective principle had already been recognized in the proposal for a legislative council which had been submitted to Arab leaders on 21 December 1935. As for immigration, the absorptive capacity policy would be more strictly enforced. Finally, the Secretary of State informed the petitioners that he had approved, in principle, a proposal by the High Commissioner to restrict land sales by small landowners.

There was little new in this reply. The British had been discussing the establishment of a legislative council and the imposition of land-sale restrictions long before the Arab demands were presented. The timing of the reply was significant, however, and was related to international, regional and local developments.

British policy in Palestine was the result of a combination of countervailing forces. Both neighboring Arab states and Zionist Jews outside Palestine brought pressure to bear in London. Locally, Palestinian Arab demands that Britain halt the development of the Jewish National Home were opposed by the *yishuv*. These regional and local pressures were, in turn, influenced and strengthened by changes in the international situation.

In 1935, at the time the Arab delegation presented its demands, an unforeseen weakness in Britain's military posture was exposed by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and this raised the prospect of a British-Italian war. These considerations forced the British to try to consolidate their position in the Arab East through a reconciliation with Arab nationalists, whose demands for independence had been strengthened by the new international developments.

In Egypt, British rule was challenged by strikes, riots, demonstrations and heightened

nationalist political activity. In March 1936 the British agreed to negotiate with the nationalists to prepare a treaty of alliance with an independent Egypt. Concessions were also made in Iraq and Transjordan. Similarly, the French decided to come to terms with Syrian nationalists after a period of disturbances that culminated in a general strike which ran from 11 January to 1 March 1936. Events in Syria and Egypt encouraged Palestinian Arabs to try to emulate their cousins across the frontiers.

Nationalist, anti-British forces among the Palestinian Arabs were also affected by Hitler's rise to power. They were predisposed to be influenced by Hitler, and to a lesser extent by Mussolini, because they shared a common enemy with the two dictators - Britain - and because many of them viewed the autocratic regimes in Germany and Italy as practical alternatives to Western democracy, which seemed alien to Middle East traditions.

The very limited Italian influence in the Middle East grew in the 1930s as a result of propaganda campaigns and, especially, of the Ethiopian War which placed Italy in opposition to Britain and France. But the Nazis were even more influential, particularly among Palestinian Arabs. Germany was stronger than Italy, having a much more efficient leadership, and did not have the latter's history of colonialism in Arab lands. And the Jews were the mutual enemy of the Nazis and the Palestinian Arabs. Finally, the German community in Palestine² strongly supported the Nazi regime in the mid-1930s. According to Zionist sources, they were active in spreading Nazi propaganda among the Arabs.³

A series of events within Palestine also contributed to the rise in tension and strengthened the resolve of the Palestinian Arab national movement.

By the end of 1934 Palestinian Arabs had begun to form political parties⁴ to replace the family factions of earlier years. All of them demanded an independent Arab state in Palestine, abolition of the Mandate and revocation of the Balfour Declaration.

In 1935 the nationalist movement acquired a martyr and symbol in Sheikh 'Azz ad-Din al-Qasem. Al-Qasem had organized a group whose purpose was to kill Jews and Englishmen,⁵ both of whom he viewed as conquerors of Palestine. He died in a battle with the police,⁶ an event which strengthened the political standing of those who called for armed struggle against the British, the perceived supporters of the Zionist enterprise.

The discovery, in October 1935, of a large shipment of arms and ammunition smuggled into the country by Jews was seen by the Arabs as proof that the Jews were arming themselves. More frightening still was the prospect of Jewish domination, since the rise of Hitler had pushed Jewish immigration to record heights. Over sixty thousand Jewish immigrants entered Palestine in 1935; if immigration continued at such a pace, Palestine stood to lose its predominantly Arab character.⁷

The High Commissioner, aware of all these developments, believed that the establishment of a legislative council and implementation of restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases would calm the country.

High Commissioner Wauchope had declared his intention of establishing self-governing institutions in Palestine⁸ in November 1932, in an appearance before the Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva. He said then that he would take steps in the direction of establishing a legislative council for Palestine when the Municipal Ordinance, which would facilitate and extend the participation of local representatives in municipal government, was in working order.⁹ The High Commissioner, who felt that Jewish-Arab understanding would be possible if continually pursued, thought that the best way to achieve this was by getting both sides to work

together on improving the economic life of Palestine. He believed that Arabs and Jews would some day be ready to work together in a legislative council, the establishment of which would be the peak of his career in Palestine.¹⁰

Wauchope's proposal for the legislative council, made on 22 December 1935, divided the 28 members as follows:

	<i>Elected</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Ex Officio</i>
Muslim Arabs	8	3*	
Jews	3	4	
Christian Arabs	1	2	
Commercial (British)		2	
Officials (British)			5
Totals	12	11	5

* Including one Bedouin

Within the five-year term of the council, no changes were to be made in its composition. In the case of a voting tie, a casting vote would be exercised by the senior official member.

The legislative council was to have the power to debate and amend all bills introduced by the Government, to introduce bills of its own, to debate the annual budget, and to propose any question of public interest for debate except questions which would endanger the public peace. It would not be permitted to pass a resolution or amendment to a bill that questioned the validity of the Mandate.

The High Commissioner was to retain substantial powers. All bills would require his approval; he could declare as law any important bill which the council failed to pass within a reasonable time, and could prorogue and dissolve the council; if any community refused to participate in the elections, he could nominate British officials or other persons for the vacant seats.¹¹

The proposed council would have been a consultative body with no real power. Its composition of 14 Arabs and a total of 14 Jewish and British members was probably designed to make it more acceptable to the Zionists. Furthermore, non-citizen immigrants were counted in determining total Jewish representation.

Palestinian Arab attitudes toward the legislative council were divided. Of the six Arab parties, only Khalidi's Reform Party and the Nashashibis' Defense Party were ready to accept it. The leaders of both generally favored cooperation with the Government.¹² The Istiqlal Party, continuing its policy of non-cooperation with the British, advocated complete rejection of the council. The response of the three remaining parties, including the Mufti's Palestine Arab Party, the most important of the six, was ambiguous. In a reply to the High Commissioner's proposal, the latter group noted that the council proposal did not meet the joint Arab delegation's demands, and it called for an increase in the council's authority to include political, economic and administrative matters.¹³ But it did not reject the council idea outright.

[The Legislative Council Proposal](#)

Most Zionists had opposed the idea of a legislative council since 1929, doing all in their power to have the plan killed, or at least delay it for as long as possible. This opposition crystallized in the Nineteenth Zionist Congress in the summer of 1935, months before the proposal was officially announced.

While some Bi-nationalists were ready to accept the legislative council plan, Official Zionists and Revisionists were opposed in principle to a legislative council having a Jewish minority. Both Official Zionists and Revisionists based their rejection, in principle, on the wording of the Mandate and the character of the Arab opposition. The Nineteenth Zionist Congress had already made the first point clear: the establishment of the council was declared to be contrary to the spirit of the Mandate, which inherently recognized that the future of Palestine was by right the concern of the world Jewish community as a whole and not of the *yishuv* alone. The Congress felt that a legislative body reflecting the current composition of the population, and thereby relegating the Jews to minority status, would violate this fundamental right of the Jewish people.¹⁴ Although the Mandate referred to the development of self-governing institutions in Palestine, such institutions should conform in structure and objective to what the Congress saw as the main purpose of the Mandate - the establishment of the Jewish National Home. Furthermore, the Palestine Mandate, unlike the mandates for Syria and Iraq, did not call for the immediate establishment of a national legislature.¹⁵

In a 1936 letter to Zionist leader Lord Melchett, Official Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann wrote that, in 1931, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald had agreed that the principle of parity¹⁶ would be applied when the legislative council was established.¹⁷ In any case, the Jews in Palestine felt that their presence there was, as Winston Churchill put it, "as of right not on sufferance."¹⁸

The Official Zionists and Revisionists had serious misgivings concerning their Arab partners-to-be in the legislative council. They argued that the Arab leaders had not yet accepted either the Mandate or the Jewish National Home, and that they would use the legislative council solely as an instrument for hampering the goals laid down by the Mandate and as a sounding board for propaganda against the National Home. Although the council was supposedly designed to further democratic principles, it would in fact be "merely a modernized cloak for the old feudal system, that is, a continuation in power of the family cliques which had held the country in their thrall for centuries and pound down the faces of the poor."¹⁹ The council would therefore serve only to intensify communal strife, contrary to the High Commissioner's hope. Finally, Zionist leaders regarded the institution of a central legislature as premature, since local government was still so poorly developed.

After the High Commissioner's proposal was announced, the Official Zionists raised specific objections to its provisions. Although they knew that the proposed council was little more than a consultative body, they continued to oppose its existence, fearing its potential influence on British public opinion and government and believing that, to avoid antagonizing the Arabs, the High Commissioner would not use his veto power often.²⁰ They noted that similar councils in other British dependencies tended toward a steady increase in power. Although the composition of the proposed council was such that its 14 Arab members could be counterbalanced by the 14 Jewish and British members, the Official Zionists claimed that most British officials in Palestine could not be relied upon to defend the principles of the National Home, for, like the High Commissioner, they would not wish to antagonize the Arabs. Indeed, a council which had the power to deal with land issues was likely to undermine these principles. As long as the Arabs did not recognize Jewish rights to immigrate and purchase land, the Zionists would not recognize

their right to influence decisions relating to these issues.²¹

Nonetheless, the Zionists believed that the legislative council was likely to be established despite their most strenuous objections. Partly to provide for this eventuality, and partly to provoke Arab opposition to the council, they put forth certain modifications in the High Commissioner's proposal. They suggested that Article 2 of the Mandate, which coupled the development of self-governing institutions with the establishment of a Jewish National Home, be included in the preamble to the council's founding ordinance, and that an oath to the Mandatory Government be required of all council members, assuming that the Arabs would reject the council proposal if such changes were made.²²

In order to decrease possible damage from the council to the establishment of the Jewish National Home, the Zionists requested that immigration be completely excluded from the council's legislative purview.²³ Official Zionists argued that the High Commissioner's proposal to retain control only over labor immigration, while allowing other categories to fall within the jurisdiction of the council, would give the latter the power to repeal the Immigration Ordinance.

In sum, Official Zionists and Revisionists supported the status quo in the constitutional structure of Palestine and opposed any change which could have impeded the development of the National Home. They wanted the Mandate to continue at least until the Jews formed a majority.

Until the legislative council proposal was officially announced, the principal opposition tactic employed by the Official Zionists was to lobby in London to prevent the council's establishment or to delay it for as long as possible.²⁴ By stressing that they would not participate in any legislative council and that Zionists all over the world supported their stand, they hoped to create the expectation that any such council would automatically fail.

After the British proposal was published, additional tactics were adopted. Official Zionists believed that their threat to boycott the council was one of the main reasons that some Arabs supported the plan. In order to keep from encouraging pro-council Arabs, the Zionists called on Hebrew newspapers to cease emphasizing Zionist opposition.²⁵ The Official Zionists hoped that Arab rejection would help defeat the plan, thereby freeing the Jews of responsibility for its demise in the eyes of the British public.

Lobbying activities in London, intensified after the proposal was announced, succeeded in bringing about a discussion of the question in the House of Lords and later in the House of Commons.²⁶ The two debates showed that the legislative council was opposed not only by the Labour Party, but by many of the ruling Conservatives as well. The Colonial Office, disturbed by this opposition, hesitated to proceed with establishment of the council lest the question be brought to a vote in Parliament and embarrass the Government.²⁷

Proposals for a Royal Commission and a Round Table Conference were presented during the Parliamentary debates. Apparently at the initiative of the High Commissioner, the Arabs were invited on 2 April 1936 to send a delegation to London. According to Moshe Shertok, head of the Jewish Agency Political Department, the High Commissioner thus hoped to save the legislative council scheme by direct Arab pressure. But Shertok thought, as did most Official Zionist leaders in London, that the British had already decided to abandon the proposal.²⁸ In a letter to Shertok, Lord Melchett wrote that "in the House of Commons it is freely said on all sides that the legislative council is dead."²⁹

The Arab delegation was supposed to leave for London in early May, but by then the Arab Revolt had already begun and British attention was diverted from both the council and the delegation.

The Jewish Agency tried to present a united Zionist front against the legislative council. Those in the *yishuv* who supported its establishment, including some Bi-nationalist leaders, accepted Jewish Agency discipline and publicly refrained from speaking in its favor.³⁰ Judah L. Magnes, Dean of the Hebrew University and a prominent Bi-nationalist, wanted to appeal to the public for acceptance of the council, and tried to organize groups of supporters. But even Magnes retreated from this position, bowing to the pressure of friends who argued that, since all sections of the *yishuv* opposed the council, he could only damage his reputation by a futile effort to advance its cause.³¹

Pro-council Zionists included the influential Farmers Union, the Bene Binyamin organization³² and several individuals, most of them Bi-nationalists.³³ In a discussion between these groups and Shertok, Magnes, who had long favored acceptance of such an institution,³⁴ argued that it was a grave mistake to reject the council. Many opportunities had been missed, he said, which could have led to an understanding with the Arabs. The council might constitute the last such opportunity.³⁵ Magnes added that the Zionists could achieve a great deal by direct discussions with the Arabs, including their acceptance of immigration.³⁶

Werner David Senator presented the argument in a different way to the Jewish Agency Executive. Since it was Arab pressure that had led the Government to try to restrict the development of the Jewish National Home, the Zionists had to find a way to reach an understanding with the Arabs. To that end, they had to reevaluate their position on the legislative council³⁷

Moshe Smilansky, head of the Farmers Union, warned that the council would have some influence on public opinion, which Zionists should try to share. In any case, he said, it was impossible for them to oppose the Government. Both the Farmers Union and Bene Binyamin claimed that a timely decision to participate in the council would enable the Zionists to promote the selection of Arab representatives who were willing to work with the Jews.³⁸

It appears that while Magnes, Senator, Hugo Bergmann and other individuals supported the council mainly as an avenue to rapprochement between Arabs and Jews, the Farmers Union and Bene Binyamin were motivated largely by material interests. Their members, citrus growers and businessmen who depended on the Government, worried that lack of participation might hurt their profits. There are also indications that they felt some of their members might be nominated by the Government to the council.

When the Shaw Commission of 1929 and the Passfield White Paper of 1930 endorsed the establishment of a legislative council, Zionist leaders pressed the British in London and Palestine to declare parity in the council as official British policy. These leaders did not, however, have any official authority from the Zionist Congress for this position.³⁹

In June 1935 Shertok told the High Commissioner that parity was not the official Zionist policy, although he did admit that some individual leaders favored its being discussed at the Congress if and when it was adopted by the Government. This was, in effect, a retreat from the earlier Zionist position. Those who had advocated parity in the make-up of the council had done so not out of conviction, but in the belief that it was the best deal attainable at the time. By 1935 the situation had changed; the rapid rise in immigration had raised the possibility of a Jewish majority in the near future. In light of that possibility a majority of the participants in an April 1935 Jewish Agency discussion rejected parity. Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi were prepared to support it for a limited number of years. Only Kaplansky actually advocated parity as a way to promote mutual understanding with the Arabs.⁴⁰

After publication of the High Commissioner's proposal, the issue of parity was raised once again. The Official Zionists understood that they had to make some positive response to the council question or risk antagonizing British and world public opinion. The pressure was apparently felt most strongly in London, where Lord Melchett (who said in a letter to Weizmann that a Zionist initiative was needed) urged that parity be proposed, although he saw no possibility of the Government accepting the proposal.⁴¹ When Melchett cabled Jerusalem requesting permission to act,⁴² Ben-Gurion replied that the Executive had not been authorized by the Congress to make such a proposal. If the Government offered parity, the General Council would be summoned to decide⁴³ but if the Zionists took the initiative, the British would assume they had acquiesced to the establishment of the council, and all future discussion would be confined to its composition.⁴⁴

It is unlikely that a parity initiative would have been endorsed in early 1936 by either the Zionist Congress or the General Council, but a Government proposal for parity might have been accepted. Many Zionists thought that the Government would establish the council in spite of their opposition; parity would at least be an improvement over the original plan, and Zionist cooperation would assure the goodwill of the Government. The Zionists had rejected the proposed council because they refused to accept minority status, but parity would render that objection untenable. In any event, since the Arabs would probably reject Government-proposed parity, it would be safe as well as tactically wise for the Zionists to appear in a more positive light.⁴⁵

The Revisionists totally rejected the parity principle, proclaiming that as long as Jews were a minority in Palestine the idea of a legislative council would have to be rejected. To Jabotinsky, the council would be acceptable only if all the Jews in the world could vote and send representatives.⁴⁶

The Land Legislation Proposal

In his 29 January 1936 reply to the Arab delegation, the High Commissioner reported that his proposal for a law protecting small landowners had been approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Wauchope had suggested such a law in February 1935,⁴⁷ even before he heard the delegation's demand that land sales to Jews be prohibited. The law was part of his overall program for achieving understanding between Jews and Arabs, which stressed economic development and a rise in the fellahin standard of living. He saw himself as the protector of the weakest strata of Palestinian Arab society, and probably also hoped that he could pacify the countryside by satisfying its economic needs.

In 1933 and 1934, during Wauchope's term as High Commissioner, the Protection of Cultivators Ordinances were enacted in an attempt to protect rural tenants by regulating and restricting the power of landlords to determine length of tenancy, evictions and increases in rent. The Ordinances did not, however, affect small landowners, whom Wauchope claimed needed protection because of the increased land sales.⁴⁸ Although there was little difficulty in obtaining alternative employment at the time, any setback in the economic situation might bring about unemployment, making the position of the smallholders untenable. Wauchope added that, although the Government had tried to develop and improve agricultural areas since 1932, this

development had not modified the pace of land transfers from Arabs to Jews.⁴⁹

As early as February 1935, the High Commissioner revealed to the Zionists his plan to enact a law forbidding small landowners to sell land unless they retained a "subsistence area" sufficient for their support.⁵⁰ This bill's enactment was postponed due to a negative reaction in London,⁵¹ but the proposal was announced publicly in early 1936, along with the legislative council proposal, in an effort to decrease tension among Palestinian Arabs.

The land proposal, as delivered to the Zionists, stated that:

Except in the Sub-District of Beersheba and the urban areas, and also except as regards land planted with citrus, no landowner shall be permitted to sell any of his land unless he retains a minimum area which is sufficient to afford a means of subsistence to himself and his family; and that (as a safeguard against collusive sales) this minimum area shall be inalienable and shall revert to the Government if it ceases to be cultivated by the owner-occupier.⁵²

The less populated Beersheba district was exempt because, according to the Government, its lands were owned mainly by tribal leaders and not by small landowners.⁵³ Furthermore, land was not scarce in that district, and Jewish holdings were a very small proportion of the available land.⁵⁴

The amount of land constituting a minimum subsistence area was not specified in the proposal; that was to depend on such factors as the degree of cultivation (extensive or intensive) and land quality. The High Commissioner stressed that the bill was still in the proposal stage and that final drafting would take considerable time.

As far as can be determined by a reading of Arabic newspapers, Palestinian Arabs felt that the proposed law did not meet their demands. In particular, they opposed the exclusion of certain districts, which, they maintained, would facilitate Jewish land purchase, immigration and eventual control in the southern districts. Nevertheless, they demanded immediate implementation of the proposal. Any delay would allow Jews to buy lands which the legislation was designed to protect, and might even enable them to destroy the proposal as they had in the case of the Passfield White Paper of 1930. The delay in implementation, and the exclusion of some parts of the country, were attributed by most Arabic newspapers to a British-Zionist plot.⁵⁵

The Arabs viewed their land-related demands as political in nature, while the British proposal was merely economic. They wanted a total ban on land sales to Jews, which would prevent further development of the Jewish National Home and preserve the Arab character of Palestine. The British offer of protection for certain small landowners did not, in the Arab view, address itself to the real problem. Thus, it seems likely that even if the British had agreed to extend the land law to all of Palestine, and to implement it immediately, the Arabs would not have been satisfied.

Zionist leaders viewed the proposed land legislation as one more British obstacle to block development of the National Home. Most Zionists said the law would halt growth in agriculture without bringing the expected protection to the fellahin. They pointed out that Article 16 of the Mandate imposed on the Government the obligation to encourage Jewish settlement on the land.⁵⁶

Even more than the Mandate, Zionists emphasized the so-called MacDonald Letter, which confirmed that "the obligation to facilitate Jewish immigration — to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land — remains a positive obligation of the Mandate, and it can be fulfilled without prejudice to the rights and position of other sections of the population of Palestine." The letter provided for a comprehensive inquiry to determine which lands could be made available for Jewish settlement, and expressed the Mandatory Government's definite intention to initiate an

active policy of development..." If control of land transfers proved necessary, it would be "regulative and not prohibitory," it would be limited in duration, and it would operate only within the scope of the development scheme.⁵⁷ In contrast to the letter, the proposed legislation was, in fact, prohibitory; it was not preceded by an inquiry into the availability of land for Jewish settlement, and it did not operate within the scope of the development scheme.

The High Commissioner claimed that subsistence areas were needed to protect the present and future interests of the small landowners. The Zionists countered that Arab peasants had benefited from the sale of their surplus lands to Jews and used the capital obtained to improve their farms. Restricting the sale of so-called subsistence areas on the basis of existing agricultural conditions would, the Zionists maintained, lead to stagnation. It would freeze the condition of the fellahin at its current level and delay further progress.⁵⁸

As for British pretensions to protect the future interests of the fellahin, Weizmann claimed that the special Cabinet Committee formed to negotiate with the Jewish Agency, after publication of the Passfield White Paper in 1930, had reached the conclusion that the problems of future generations were best left to the future.⁵⁹

The Zionists were disturbed by the accusation implicit in the proposed law that Jews were pushing the Arabs off their lands, an accusation that had been raised earlier in the Passfield White Paper. To counter this charge, they cited a Government inquiry which had concluded that, as of 1935, the total number of Arabs displaced through Jewish land purchases was only 664.⁶⁰ Moreover, most of these 664 had not been small landowners, but tenant farmers, who were not mentioned in the proposed legislation.

To what extent would the proposed restriction on the sale of "subsistence areas" have constituted a real obstacle to the continued development of the Jewish National Home? An analysis of land-purchase practices in Palestine at that time may provide some answers.

While the High Commissioner acknowledged that the two Jewish national land-purchase companies⁶¹ had seen that small landowners and tenants retained adequate subsistence areas, he claimed that this principle had not been observed by private land-buyers.⁶² However, the total amount of land purchased privately during the period 1931—1935 was 69,226 dunams, of which at most half could have been bought from small landowners.⁶³ This would amount to an average of 7,000 dunams per year, a figure that included the urban, citrus and surplus holdings of small landowners, all of which were specifically excluded from the proposed legislation. The Zionist leaders, themselves, had estimated that total land purchases by Jews from small landowners, including purchases by the Jewish national companies, amounted to only 10 percent of total annual purchases.⁶⁴

If the actual impact of the proposed restrictions was so marginal, even in the eyes of the Zionists, why did they fight them so vigorously?

First and foremost, since Zionists were opposed in principle to any restrictions on land sales,⁶⁵ specific details and implications of the latest British proposal were of little importance in their opposition. Furthermore, they believed that their acceptance would constitute tacit admission that Jews had been driving Arabs off the land. They also felt that the new law would lead to agricultural stagnation. Compounding these considerations, the proposals for land legislation, for the legislative council and for restricting immigration had all come together at a time when the situation of European Jewry was deteriorating.

A small number of Official Zionists were ready to accept the idea of land legislation in principle. Various leaders in London maintained that Zionists should accept the principle of

protecting the fellahin from becoming landless. They disagreed with the method proposed by the High Commissioner, suggesting instead that Zionists offer a proposal of their own which might spare the Zionists embarrassment and protect the small landowners; a well-framed law might even benefit the Zionists as well.⁶⁶ Yitzhaq Grunbaum, of the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem, pointed out that the proposal was advanced by a Britain fearful of world war, in an effort to calm the Palestinian Arabs. Since Zionists, too, wanted to prevent disturbances, and since the proposal was designed to protect the peasants and not the Effendis, he urged that it be supported.⁶⁷

Although the Bi-nationalists would seem to have been natural supporters of the legislation proposed by the High Commissioner,⁶⁸ evidence indicates that in this case they conformed to the Official Zionist position. The Revisionists strongly opposed the proposal for reasons similar to those of the Official Zionists, but with a different emphasis. They saw the proposal as yet another British attempt to hinder the growth of the National Home.⁶⁹

Thus the proposed land legislation, which was not actually a crucial obstacle to the fulfillment of Zionism, met with virtually unanimous opposition among Zionists of all persuasions. As was the case among the Arabs, most Zionists could see only the negative side of the proposal. In view of the conflicting aspirations of the two communities, it was perhaps inevitable that neither of them would be satisfied with such a law.

Zionist Initiatives

The Official Zionist and Revisionist approaches to handling Arab opposition to the Jewish National enterprise both differed dramatically from that taken by the British.

Ben-Gurion offered a plan designed to neutralize Arab opposition by strengthening the Jewish demographic position in Palestine. Viewing the Jewish-Arab dispute to be one of conflicting national aspirations, he felt the time factor to be crucial to Zionist success.

Ben-Gurion maintained that it was not enough to simply defend the Jewish cause against restrictions on land sales and immigration as well as the dangers of the council. What was urgently needed was a positive Zionist decision to take the offensive. He suggested that a plan be formulated to transfer a million Jews to Palestine over a period of five to ten years. Such a plan would be "the beginning of a policy of a Jewish state"; regional and international factors dictated its immediate adoption.⁷⁰

According to Ben-Gurion, the complicated international situation and the possibility of a world war demanded the pacification of the Palestinian Arabs. In Egypt and Syria negotiations on increased self-rule were taking place. Ben-Gurion expected Palestinian Arabs to demand similar arrangements, and he assumed that the British, conscious of their precarious world position, would acquiesce.⁷¹

An even more compelling factor behind Ben-Gurion's new stance was the worsening plight of Jews in Germany and Poland and its implications for Zionism. German Jews were being forced to leave Germany, and unless the gates of Palestine were opened to them they would go elsewhere. Immediate action was needed to make Palestine the refuge for masses of Jewish immigrants, which would turn the country into a de facto Jewish state. Failure to do so would lead to the rapid deterioration of Zionism, and possibly to its collapse. An immigration project

would enjoy British sympathy, since both world and British public opinion recognized the urgent need for evacuating Jews from Germany and Poland. One could thus say that, for Ben-Gurion, the evacuation of European Jews to Palestine was not an end in itself, but rather a means to advance the establishment of a Jewish state.

Ben-Gurion thought that implementation of his plan could change Zionist-Arab relations within four or five years, thereby providing a basis for agreement between the two groups. If even half a million Jews immigrated, he reasoned, the Jewish population would become too large to ignore or resist, and the Arabs would have to accept the National Home. No mature individual could ignore facts; while he might try to destroy them, if unsuccessful he would learn to adjust.⁷²

Ben-Gurion stressed the importance of the British role. The Zionists had to depend exclusively on Britain, then the decisive factor in Palestine, to achieve increased immigration. He did not discount the Arab factor, believing that agreement with the Arabs was one of the only two possible avenues for Zionist action. But until the Arabs showed more interest in coming to an understanding, the Zionists would have to choose the second road — dependence on the British.⁷³ Ben-Gurion unleashed an intensive campaign to promote his plan, and an action committee was set up,⁷⁴ but the disturbances of April 1936 diverted interest from the plan.

Most Zionist leaders favored large-scale immigration and were prepared to accept Ben-Gurion's project. Foremost among the dissenters were Senator and Yosef Shprintzak, a Mapai leader. Senator maintained that Ben-Gurion's plan was unrealistic. While he agreed that the British proposals were designed to appease the Arabs, he concluded that they would therefore not accept any program which might increase Arab opposition to their rule. A Zionist agreement with the Arabs was thus all the more necessary.⁷⁵ Shprintzak went a step further in maintaining that the Arabs and not the British were the primary factor in Palestine. Admitting that the Palestinian Arabs did not want an agreement with the Zionists, he said that Zionists shared the blame for the breakdown in Jewish-Arab relations. They had continually appealed to the British, while making no real effort to find ways to reach agreement with the Arabs. Unless such ways were found, he warned, the National Home would be imperiled.⁷⁶

Ben-Gurion's immigration plan of 1936 was not the first of its kind. As early as the 1920s Jabotinsky had called for large-scale Jewish immigration with the goal of converting Palestine into a Jewish state. Only through rapid immigration could Jews become a majority despite the higher Arab birthrate.⁷⁷ But by the time Ben-Gurion began advocating mass immigration for the purpose of creating a Jewish state, Jabotinsky's emphasis had changed due to the rise of anti-Jewish regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. Declaring that "a Jewish state is not the final aim, but only a step toward the fulfillment of Zionism,"⁷⁸ his immediate goal was to rescue the Jews of Europe.⁷⁹

Jabotinsky called for evacuating from one to two million of those Jews to Palestine. To bring this about, a complete change in attitude was needed by the governments of Palestine and Transjordan, and this could be accomplished by the pressure of public opinion in Britain and those governments who wanted to expel Jews. Jabotinsky and his Revisionists argued that, although most members of the British ruling circle were still blind to common Zionist-British interests, the interests of the British Empire would be best served by the establishment of a strong Jewish state.⁸⁰

The Revisionists did not confine their interests to immigration. Since the beginning of the Mandate they had demanded that the Jewish community be armed. They now intensified that demand in the belief that Palestine was on the brink of a new outbreak of violence.⁸¹

During this period of intense Official Zionist and Revisionist activity the various Bi-nationalist bodies appear to have offered few new ideas. Magnes expressed the views of some Bi-nationalists at the end of 1935, when he said that he recognized the moral justice of both the Jewish enterprise in Palestine and the Arab's effort to create their own nation. Since the Arabs had lived in Palestine for centuries and were at least as patriotic as the Zionists, the question was whether or not compromise was possible. Magnes saw the two communities arming themselves in preparation for the decisive battle, a battle in which the stronger nation would subdue the weaker.⁸²

Hashomer Hatzai continued to analyze Arab-Jewish relations from its socialist point of view. Jewish-Arab understanding could be achieved only through the growth of the Jewish population and Arab recognition of its economic benefits; the Arab masses must be organized and their social consciousness enhanced in order to create common class interests; Zionist failure to achieve these goals was responsible for the anti-Zionism of the Arab labor movement.⁸³

The position of each group - Revisionist, Bi-nationalist and Official Zionist - was based on different basic assumptions: The Revisionists assumed that Arab-Jewish armed conflict was inevitable; the Magnes faction of the Bi-nationalists believed that Zionist concessions to the Arabs would head off a conflict between the groups; while Hashomer Hatzai assumed that socialist thought could analyze and affect the course of events.

The prevalent Official Zionist view, reflected in Ben-Gurion's immigration plan, was based on the assumption that once the Jews were demonstrably strong in number, the Arabs would reconcile themselves to reality, and conflict would be averted. This was no small assumption. To understand how it rose, Official Zionists must be divided into two schools of thought: one which did not perceive the existence of a Palestinian Arab national movement, and a second which did.

The majority of Official Zionists belonged to the first school. Believing that Palestinian Arab society lacked the adhesive of a national movement, they expected that a majority would cease opposing the Jewish Home on the basis of the economic benefits to be derived from the Zionist enterprise. Such opposition was in any event the result of agitation by the Palestinian Arab elite, feudal or semi-feudal lords whose objection to Zionism was founded entirely on their desire to rule the country for personal benefit.⁸⁴ When they realized that the Jews were in Palestine to stay, this elite would abandon their personal ambitions and cease inciting the masses against the Zionists. Official Zionists thus tended to view Palestinian Arab society as being made up of individuals with conflicting economic needs and personal ambitions.

But a Palestinian Arab national movement did, in fact, exist. Although it was in a negative phase where it was concerned primarily with ousting foreign rulers rather than programs of reform and modernization, and not equally developed in all social strata, like any other national movement, it could not be expected to reconcile itself to a rival national movement, however strong this rival movement might become. A large increase in the Jewish population of Palestine would therefore have resulted not in reconciliation but in armed struggle.

While the second school of Official Zionist thought did perceive the existence of the Palestinian Arab national movement, they still felt that an increase in Jewish population would result in agreement with the Arabs. Ben Gurion, the most important and most representative spokesman for this school of thought, felt that it was essential to bring peace to a turbulent Palestine by coming to terms with the Arabs. This would directly facilitate further Zionist development, and would also ease the British restrictions on that development which had been imposed largely as a result of Arab unrest.⁸⁵

In Ben-Gurion's view, one monolithic Arab national movement encompassed the entire Arab

world. On the local, Palestinian level, he did recognize a basic conflict of aspirations between Arabs and Jews. But he was convinced that no such conflict existed between Zionism and the larger Arab national movement, which aspired toward cultural, economic and social revival, political independence and Arab unity. Since Palestine represented only a small part of the Arab world, the eventual establishment of a Jewish state, either as part of a federation of Middle Eastern states or as a separate state, would not endanger any of these goals. Ben-Gurion believed that Zionists had much to offer the larger Arab national movement; their worldwide political influence could help further Arab aspirations for unity through the establishment of a federation of Arab countries which would include a Jewish state comprising all of mandatory Palestine and possibly Transjordan as well. Although the Palestinian Arabs in Palestine would eventually become a minority, they would be part of the majority in the larger federation.⁸⁶

Concluding that agreement was possible with the larger Arab national movement, Ben-Gurion maintained that such an arrangement would weaken Palestine Arab nationalist opposition to the point where, when the Zionists grew strong enough through immigration and had convinced the Palestinian Arabs of the potential benefits, the two communities would come to an understanding.⁸⁷

On the local level an agreement would include a general development program whereby new land would be brought under cultivation by the Jews, who would, at the same time, help the fellahin advance their standard of living and give them instruction in modern methods of cultivation. A subsistence area would be left to any small landowner from whom the Jews purchased land.⁸⁸ Ben-Gurion was prepared to accept limitations on immigration, but only as dictated by the absorptive capacity of Palestine.⁸⁹ Any such agreement would be worked out in cooperation with the British.

Ben-Gurion's interpretation of Arab nationalism was most likely based on wishful thinking. The Middle East reality did not support his view that Pan-Arab aspirations were stronger and more enduring than local nationalism. Important though Arab unity might have been to Palestinian Arabs, in the late 1930s local aspirations were even stronger, and their main goal was an independent Palestinian state. Ben-Gurion also failed to realize that, even when the larger Arab national movement did emerge from its negative phase, Palestinian Arabs would still be more concerned with possible harm to their own goals than with any benefit that Zionism might bring to Arabs outside Palestine. Moreover, the positive phase of Palestinian Arab nationalism could be reached only after an independent Palestinian Arab state was established, and only then could Palestinian Arabs recognize the benefits of which Ben-Gurion spoke.

Ben-Gurion's interpretation also ignored the Arabs' anti-imperialist feelings and their growing rejection of Western ideas and assistance as well as Western domination. As far as Palestinian Arabs were concerned, Zionists were Westerners — tools of British imperialism and imperialists in their own right. This perception was increasingly shared by Arabs in neighboring countries as well. Therefore, any further development of the larger Arab national movement, even in a positive direction, would intensify Arab rejection of Zionism and Zionist assistance.

Ben-Gurion's ideas on Jewish-Arab agreement were expressed in discussions with Musa 'Alami and several other Arab leaders in 1934. Two years later, in April 1936, he expressed the same views in three conversations with George Antonius, a Christian Palestinian Arab leader and advocate of a Greater Syria. Although Ben-Gurion wrote an optimistic account of these conversations,⁹⁰ close examination of all that was said by Antonius illustrates the wide gap between the two men. For example, Antonius did not believe that wider Arab national movement aspirations were not in conflict with those of Zionism. While he would have accepted a Jewish

National Home as a spiritual, but not political center, he felt that the very idea of a Jewish state was contradictory to Arab aspirations. When Ben-Gurion rejected this view of the National Home, Antonius suggested that Jews be permitted to immigrate to the Greater Syria, whose creation he advocated. This proposal was probably meant to prevent the emergence of a Jewish majority in Palestine by diffusing the Jewish population throughout the new, larger entity. Antonius repeatedly asserted that no understanding could be reached between Arabs and Jews without limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine. In discussing the possibility of a federation of states within a Greater Syria, he maintained that elections in the Palestine province would have to be based on existing population ratios, which would assure a majority to Palestinian Arabs. The most Antonius was ready to offer was a partition arrangement giving the Jews a "state" in certain areas of the coastal plain, where they would constitute the majority; this "state" would be included in the Greater Syria federation.⁹¹

The views of Antonius, in complete contradiction to Ben-Gurion's basic aims, reflect the reality of conflicting aspirations in Palestine, a reality which Ben-Gurion's record of his conversations with Antonius does not seem to have taken into account. It was to lead to armed confrontation.

Notes

¹ The party not represented was Istiqlal.

² German settlement in Palestine started in 1868. In the 1930s the settlers numbered about 2,000.

³ *Sefer Toldoth Haganah* (History of the Haganah) (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachoth; 6th ed., 1973), Vol. II, Part 1, pp. 460-465. But, according to other sources, German Nazi Party members in Palestine were ordered to remain uninvolved in the Jewish-Arab conflict. See R. Melka, "Nazi Germany and the Palestine Question," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. V (October 1969), p. 225. See also David Yisraeli, "The Third Reich and Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. VII (October 1971), pp. 343-344.

⁴ The most important Arab party in the country was probably the Palestine Arab Party. Dominated by Haj Amin al-Hussaini, its titular head was Jamal Hussaini. The National Defense Party, organized by the Nashashibi opposition headed by Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, advocated a united Transjordan and Palestine to be ruled by Amir 'Abdallah. The anti-British Istiqlal, headed by 'Auni 'Abdel Hadi, advocated Arab unity under Iraqi leadership. The Reform Party was headed by Dr. Hussain Khalidi, the Mayor of Jerusalem. The Congress Executive of the Nationalist Youth Party was headed by Ya'qub Ghussain. By 1936 this party had weakened, and its leader followed the Nashashibis in their moderate policy toward the Government. The Nationalist Bloc, headed by 'Abd-al-Latif Bey Saleh of Nablus, was probably the weakest party.

⁵ According to the Arabic newspaper, *Al-Jami'a al-Iskmiya*, quoted in *Davar*, 12 November 1935, p. 1.

⁶ The Sheikh's group was religious rather than secular nationalist in character. See *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 467-468; E. S[asson], "Admiration of the Teirorists," 29 December 1935, C.Z.A., S25/10.197; *Faiastin*, 21, 23, 24 November; 5 December 1935; 12 July 1936.

⁷ With 60,000 immigrants a year, the Zionists would have a majority by 1947. See Great Britain, *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (1937), p. 282.

⁸ The idea of establishing a legislative council was raised for the first time after the riots of 1921. In 1922 the Government announced a proposal for a council and called for elections in early 1923, but an Arab boycott brought an end to this early attempt. The Shaw Commission of 1929 and the Passfield White Paper of 1930 again called for the establishment of such a council. Although the MacDonald Letter of 1931 did not refer to the constitutional question, Wauchope thought that the British were obliged to fulfill this part of the Passfield White Paper. See N. Rose, "Haviquwah 'A1 Hamu'atza Hamehoqet Beshanim 1929-1936" (The Discussion of the Legislative Council, 1929-1936), in *Mehqarim Betoldoth 'Am Yisrael Beeretz Yisrael*, Vol. II (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1972), pp. 218-231.

⁹ Permanent Mandate Commission, *Minutes of the Twenty-Second Session* (Geneva, 1932), p. 82.

¹⁰ Esco Foundation for Palestine, *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), Vol. II, p. 740.

- [11](#) Official British communique, recorded in C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [12](#) *Falastin*, 4 April 1936, p. 1. The newspaper was an organ of the Nashashibis during this period.
- [13](#) *Davar*, 20 January 1936, p. 1.
- [14](#) *Haqongres Hazioni Hatish 'a 'Asar* (The Nineteenth Zionist Congress) (Lucerne, 1935), pp. 506-507.
- [15](#) Memorandum by S. Brodetsky, C.Z.A., S25/10.166; speech by N. Laski, 19 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/6300; letter to H.A. Goodman, 8 October 1934, C.Z.A., S25/3. See also *Haboker*, 23 December 1935, p. 1; *Palestine Post*, 23 December 1935, p.1.
- [16](#) Equal numbers of Jewish and Arab representatives.
- [17](#) 17 January 1936, C.Z.A., S26/6300.
- [18](#) Churchill's White Paper. See Great Britain, "Palestine" in *Accounts and Papers: Session 7 February-4 August 1922* (London, 1924), Vol. XXIII, p. 19.
- [19](#) Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 380.
- [20](#) Proceedings of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, 27 March 1936, C.Z.A. (hereinafter referred to as Executive Proceedings, C.Z.A.).
- [21](#) *Haboker*, 23 December 1935, p. 1.
- [22](#) Letter from A.L. [Arthur Lourie] to Leo [Kohn], 9 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [23](#) "Proposed Palestine Legislative Council," 19 February 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [24](#) Memorandum by Brodetsky, C.Z.A., S25/10.166; letter from M.S., C.Z.A., S25/3; "Meetings of the Central Committee," 16 April 1936, The Israeli Labor Party Archives, Beth Beri, Kefar Sava, Israel (hereinafter referred to as the Central Committee, Mapai Archives).
- [25](#) Letter from Ben-Gurion, 23 December 1935, C.Z.A., S25/10.166; see also quotations from Arabic sources in the Arab Bureau of the Jewish Agency's "Survey for March" (1936), C.Z. A., S25/20.187.
- [26](#) The latter discussion was apparently neither sought nor deemed advantageous by the Zionists in London, who did not want to antagonize the British Government by bringing the question to a vote. It was raised by the Labour Party Opposition, for its own reasons. See Weizmann's speech, Executive Proceedings, 3 April 1936, C.Z.A.
- [27](#) Lord Melchett estimated that if a vote were taken, the Government majority would drop from about 200 to 60. See Melchett's letters to Shertok and Agronsky dated 27 March 1936, in C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [28](#) Political Committee, 7 April 1936, Mapai Archives; letter from S. Brodetsky to Ben-Gurion, 3 April 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [29](#) C.Z.A., S25/3. It seems that this view was reinforced in talks with Government members. J.H. Thomas, the Colonial Secretary, told Weizmann on 12 March 1936 that he hoped the scheme would be abandoned; he thought the conditions he himself had added to the council's constitution would be rejected by the Arabs. See Executive Proceedings, 3 April 1936, C.Z.A. For another interpretation see Ben-Gurion, Political Committee, 7 April 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [30](#) Executive Proceedings, 16 February 1936, C.Z.A. See also Bergmann's denial that he supported the proposed council, in *Door Hayom*, 6 January 1936, p. 1. In fact, he did support it; see his letter to Magnes concerning the legislative council, dated 8 January 1936, in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, Magnes Archives (hereinafter referred to as Magnes Archives), P 311-203.
- [31](#) Letter from H. Bergmann to J.L. Magnes, 8 January 1936, Magnes Archives, P 311-203; letter from Maniya to J.L. Magnes, 20 January 1936, Magnes Archives, P 3-236.
- [32](#) Its members were the sons of Jews who had come to Palestine at the end of the 19th century and established agricultural settlements.
- [33](#) Some important figures in this group were Werner David Senator, Joseph Luria, Daniel Auster and Maurice Hex ter.
- [34](#) For Magnes's early views on a council, see Ben Baruch, *'Al Hasheaekh Ha'aravith* (About the Arab Problem) (C.Z.A. catalog number 5063).
- [35](#) Letter from J.L. Magnes to the editor of the *Palestine Post*, 8 January 1936, Magnes Archives, P 311-203. (The date on the letter is 1935, but the content and related materials indicate that this was a typographical error.) The letter was either not sent or not published.
- [36](#) Executive Proceedings, 16 February 1936, C.Z.A.; Magnes Archives, P3-230, handwritten and undated document, seemingly from the end of 1935 or early 1936.
- [37](#) Executive Proceedings, 19 January, 16 February 1936, C.Z.A.
- [38](#) *Ibid*, They did not explain how this could be done.
- [39](#) Letter from S. Brodetsky, 29 October 1934, C.Z.A., S25/4162.

- [40](#) C.Z.A, S25/417.
- [41](#) 6 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/6300.
- [42](#) Telegram dated 25 March 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3. Melchett was supported by Weizmann. See Executive Proceedings, 3 March 1936, C.Z.A.
- [43](#) Ben-Gurion's telegram dated 27 March 1936, C.Z.A. S25/3.
- [44](#) Executive Proceedings, 27 March 1936, C.Z.A.
- [45](#) *Ibid.*
- [46](#) *Hayarden*, 24 January 1936, p. 9.
- [47](#) Executive Proceedings, 26 January 1936, C.Z.A.
- [48](#) The amount of land purchased by Zionists in 1931 was 18,583 dunams, while in 1935 it was 72,905 dunams (excluding the Hula Concession). See A. Granovsky, *The Land Issue in Palestine* (Jerusalem: Keren Kayemeth Leyisrael, 1936), p. 46.
- [49](#) Letter from the Government of Palestine to the Jewish Agency, 29 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9844.
- [50](#) Executive Proceedings, 26 January 1936, C.Z.A.
- [51](#) This reaction can perhaps be explained by the proposal's anti-Zionist thrust and by its violation of British traditions of non-interference in private freedoms, especially concerning property. See Political Committee, 29 January 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [52](#) Letter from the Government of Palestine to the Jewish Agency, 29 January 1936, C.Z.A, S25/9844; *The New Judaea*, Vol. XII, No.5 (February 1936), p. 67.
- [53](#) *Falastin*, 5 February 1936, p. 1.
- [54](#) In the Beersheba sub-district, which comprised 12,570,000 dunams, only about 0.8 percent belonged to Jews. See Granovsky, *Land Issue*, pp. 45-46.
- [55](#) E. Sasson, "The Summary of the Reaction of the Arabic Newspapers to the Proposed Land Legislation," 23 March 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.065.
- [56](#) "Statement by the Executive of the Jewish Agency," *The New Judaea*, Vol. V, No. 5 (February 1936), p. 67.
- [57](#) *The New York Times*, 14 February 1931, p. 8. See also the interview with the High Commissioner, 26 January 1936, in David Ben-Gurion, *Zehronot* (Memoirs), Vol. 111:1936 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1973), pp. 43-50,
- [58](#) Executive Proceedings, 26 January 1936, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 43-50.
- [59](#) See Weizmann's comments in the interview with the High Commissioner, in Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 45.
- [60](#) Granovsky, *Land Issue*, pp. 39-40.
- [61](#) The Palestine Land Development Company and the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA).
- [62](#) Memorandum by Ben-Gurion, 30 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/6929.
- [63](#) Granovsky, *Land issue*, pp. 43-44.
- [64](#) Executive Proceedings, 26 January 1936, C.Z.A. Actually, this figure was more accurate for the period prior to 1931. For 1931-1935 the percentage of land purchased from small landowners increased. During those five years Jews purchased a total of 209,488 dunams, of which some 73,000 dunams, or about 34 percent had been owned by smallholders: 38,514 dunams acquired by the two Jewish National Companies and an estimated 35,000 dunams purchased by private individuals. See Granovsky, *Land Issue*, pp. 43-44.
- [65](#) More specific points were raised later in Zionist evidence presented to the Royal Commission.
- [66](#) Letter from Lord Melchett to M. Shertok, 27 March 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3; Letter from Arthur [Lourie] to M. Shertok, 30 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [67](#) Executive Proceedings, 26 January 1936, C.Z. A.
- [68](#) Senator voiced no opposition to the land legislation during a discussion in the Executive of the Jewish Agency. See *ibid.*
- [69](#) *Hayarden*, 1936: 31 January, p. 1; 7 February, p. 1; 21 February, p. 3.
- [70](#) Political Committee, 9 March 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [71](#) *Ibid.*; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 78.
- [72](#) Political Committee, 9 March, Central Committee, 16 April 1936, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 19 January 1936, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 105-106, 118.
- [73](#) Central Committee, 16 April, Political Committee, 30 March 1936, Mapai Archives.

- [74](#) Executive Proceedings, 22 March 1936, C.Z.A. See also Letter from Lord Melchett to M. Shertok, 7 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3.
- [75](#) Executive Proceedings, 19 January, 22 March 1936, C.Z.A.
- [76](#) Central Committee, 16 April and Political Committee, 30 March 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [77](#) Y. Benari, "Medinyutho Shel Zeev Jabotinsky" (Zeev Jabotinsky's Policy), *Gesher*, Vol. X (June 1964), pp. 21-22.
- [78](#) Zeev Jabotinsky, *Neumim: 1927-1940* (Speeches: 1927-1940) (Jerusalem: 'Ari Jabotinsky, 1948), p. 180.
- [79](#) Joseph B. Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet, the Vladimir Jabotinsky Story* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), pp. 334-338.
- [80](#) *Hayarden*, 1936: 31 January, p. 3; 6, 19 April, p. 1.
- [81](#) *Ibid.* 24 January, p. 1; 13 March, p. 3; 20 March, p.2; 27 March, pp. 1, 7; 3 April, p. 2; 6 April, p. 2; 10 April, pp. 1, 3.
- [82](#) Letter from J.L. Magnes to [Moshe] Glikson, 26 November 1935, Magnes Archives, P 311-203.
- [83](#) *Hashomer Hatzair*, 1 March, 1 April, 1936.
- [84](#) *Davar*, 16 April 1936; Ya'aqov Thon, "A New Period in the Middle East," C.Z.A., S25/2971.
- [85](#) Executive Proceedings, 19 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [86](#) *Ibid.*; Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 20, 22, 24, 35-38, 57.
- [87](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 91, 165; *idem. Talks*, pp. 48-49; Executive Proceedings, 19 May 1936, C.Z.A. (Although this Executive meeting was held after the Arab Revolt began, Ben-Gurion continued to elaborate on his earlier ideas.); "The Committee for Research of Political Questions," 11 March 1935, C.Z.A., S25/417. All the Zionists were convinced that the Palestinians derived economic benefits from the Jewish National Home, and almost all were certain that the Arab knew this to be true but would not admit it. Ben-Gurion, however, was among those who felt that Palestinian Arabs honestly believed that the Zionist enterprise was economically harmful to them.
- [88](#) Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 23, 30, 53; Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1936, C.Z.A.
- [89](#) Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 29, 35, 37-38, 49, 55-56, 59, 64-66.
- [90](#) "First Meeting - 17.4.36," "Second Meeting - 22.4.36," "Third Meeting 29.4.36," C.Z.A., S25/10.093. Ben-Gurion's book, *Talks*, presents these conversations almost word for word.
- [91](#) Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 49-65.

2

Zionist Responses to the Revolt

The Arab Strike

The Zionists, like the British, were aware of the rise in communal tension in Palestine. Nevertheless, they rejected British proposals designed to reduce these tensions until the outbreak of the Arab Revolt. As can be seen from the various plans they presented for the growth of the National Home and for solving the Palestine question, they were confident that they could still achieve all their goals. But even if the British proposals had been implemented, the real problem in Palestine — the conflict between two national aspirations — would not have been solved.

In April 1936 the Palestinian Arabs began trying to impose their own solution, using terror against the Jewish community, armed revolt against the Mandatory authority, and a general strike. These actions are collectively known as the Arab Revolt or the "Disturbances of 1936."¹ The Revolt took British, Zionist and even Arab leaders by surprise, even though all had been aware of the explosive atmosphere.

On 15 April several automobiles were stopped by Arabs on the Tulkarm-Nablus road, and their occupants were robbed. Jewish passengers were shot, two of them fatally. The next day two Arabs were killed in reprisal by Revisionists. By the evening of 18 April the tension appeared to the Zionists to have relaxed.² But on the next day, as a result of false rumors that Arabs had been murdered by Jews in Tel Aviv, nine Jews were killed in Jaffa and about sixty were wounded.³ On the following day Arab nationalists in Nablus formed what they called a National Committee, which immediately issued an appeal for a general strike to last until the Government agreed to fulfill the three demands of the joint Arab delegation of 1935. The city of Jaffa soon followed Nablus in forming its own National Committee, which joined the demand for a general strike. On 21 April the strike call was endorsed by the leaders of the coalition of five Arab parties.⁴ On 25 April these five parties, together with Istiqlal, formed a ten-member executive body later known as the Arab Higher Committee. The Committee declared that the general strike would continue throughout Palestine until the 1935 demands were met. Its immediate demand was that Jewish immigration be brought to a halt. It also declared an Arab economic boycott of Jews.

Reexamination of the evidence, much of which was available to Zionists at the time, reveals an important fact which many of them apparently overlooked: that the call for a general strike does not seem to have been initiated by the Arab political leadership. The Arab parties and the Higher Committee had merely adopted a call already issued at the local level. In an effort to retain the reins of leadership, Arab leaders adopted some extremist and National Committee demands; but at the same time they sought to keep the level of confrontation with the Government as low as possible.⁵

For example, on 24 April a group of one hundred prominent Palestinian Arabs, which did not include party leaders,⁶ appealed for a strike by Arab civil servants. The Car Owners' and Drivers' Committee issued a similar manifesto, calling for non-payment of taxes as well.⁷ But, while the

Higher Committee adopted the latter call, effective 15 May, it rejected the appeal for a civil servants' strike.⁸

The Palestinian Arabs had previously demonstrated their ability to conduct a successful general strike. But the strikes of 26 October 1935 and 4 February 1936 lasted only one day each, while the one which began in April 1936 was to last 175 days, longer than anyone, including the Arab leaders, could have foreseen, and longer than any other strike in modern Middle Eastern history. For all its shortcomings it evidenced the tremendous growth and strength of the Palestinian Arab national movement. Despite the economic hardship it imposed on the masses, the continued internal struggles within the Higher Committee and the increasing need to employ force to maintain it,⁹ the strike lasted until it was called off by the Higher Committee on 11 October 1936.

Zionists differed among themselves in their perceptions of the causes of the disturbances. In fact, Official Zionists could still not even agree among themselves on whether Palestinian Arab nationalism existed.¹⁰ Those who did not perceive its existence¹¹ believed that the disturbances were the result of agitation by a small group motivated mainly by self-interest.¹² They thought that the large majority of Palestinian Arabs, including fellahin, workers and shopkeepers, opposed the strike, and that it continued only because of coercion by the National Committees.¹³ In this view, the Effendis, who were the leaders of the Palestinian Arab political parties¹⁴ and whose rule the Zionists had undermined by bringing about higher wages and new employment,¹⁵ were taking advantage of the Arab masses whom they had kept in virtual serfdom. The masses, with their susceptibility to exaggerated rumors, their patriarchal respect for prominent families and their deep religious piety, could easily be manipulated until emotions were raised to a fever pitch.¹⁶ But, not only were the masses not opposed to the Zionist enterprise, they actually welcomed the benefits that it brought to them.¹⁷

Zionists of this view were quick to point out that the Arab leaders themselves had benefited greatly from the Zionist enterprise in the past, and that despite their current opposition to Zionism they had cooperated in building the National Home during the long periods of peace between riots.¹⁸ In view of the years of Arab cooperation up to 1936, how could the Arab leaders claim that they feared Jewish domination? And, were terrorist acts against Jews — the murder of innocent men, women and children, highway robbery and the destruction of property — the acts of Arab nationalists? No, they were carried out by hired thugs, highwaymen and adventures.¹⁹ Moreover, only a small portion of the Arab population participated in the general strike. The majority, the fellahin, did not strike at all. And most shopkeepers and craftsmen, although they may have closed their shops, continued to sell merchandise from their homes or to work behind closed doors. In the estimation of these Zionists, a maximum of 10 percent joined the strike, most out of fear.²⁰ Had civil servants joined the strike, the resulting paralysis of the country would have harmed the interests of the Arab leaders and those of their followers who were anxious to secure government positions. That they decided against action of this sort was seen as evidence of a lack of real nationalistic commitment.

According to the reasoning of the first school of Official Zionist thought, international, regional and local factors played only a secondary role in the upheaval that began in 1936. Despite the fact that its members did acknowledge the existence of Palestinian Arab nationalism, Hashomer Hatz'a'ir came to a similar conclusion. These socialists, who considered class interests more important than national ones, felt that national consciousness differed in intensity in the various strata of Palestinian Arab society. According to their view, the reactionary Effendis had

indeed succeeded in uniting most Palestinian Arabs, including the fellahin and the workers, under their banner. By representing their own class interests as national demands, they had duped the masses into supporting them. Unlike Official Zionists of the first school of thought, the Hashomer Hatzai'ir believed that the masses did fear Jewish domination, but they blamed this fear on the Effendis. While recognizing that Jewish immigration was against the interests of the Effendis, they maintained that it would aid the Arab masses by bringing about an end to exploitation in the future, just as it had brought economic benefits in the past.²¹

Even most of those Official Zionists who did recognize the existence of Palestinian Arab nationalism agreed with much of the first school's analysis of Palestinian Arab society, not fully grasping the significance of the events which occurred in late April and early May 1936. Moshe Shertok, for example, who seems to have had more insight than most into those early weeks,²² thought the strike was more show than substance.²³

This prevailing Zionist opinion resulted from earlier experience of Arab disturbances. It was not anticipated that the Arabs would be able to maintain an effective strike in the face of economic hardship. Also, the Zionist failure to see indications of a national revolt during the early weeks was understandable, since Arab attacks prior to the middle of May were directed primarily against Jews and their property, and not against soldiers or government property; furthermore, the early attacks did not appear to have been organized. However, as the disturbances gained momentum and attacks began to be directed against the Government, more and more Zionists joined the second school of thought, viewing the turbulence as part of a national revolt whose seeds had existed all along.²⁴ These Zionists recognized that the main cause of the disturbances was the Arab fear that continued immigration would lead to Jewish domination, and that Arabs of all social strata wanted to preserve the Arab character of Palestine. Motivated by nationalism and not by narrow self-interest,²⁵ most Arabs supported the uprising, the call for which had issued spontaneously from below.²⁶ Ben-Gurion, a chief spokesman for this point of view, argued that:

The Arabs fight with arms, strike, terror, sabotage, murder and destruction of government property.... What else must they do for their acts to be worthy of the name "revolt"....?²⁷

It is no accident that the opinions of those Official Zionists who denied the existence of Palestinian Arab nationalism are found in newspapers and other public documents, while dissenting opinions are largely in the records of secret meetings.²⁸ Among the pressing concerns which discouraged the dissenters from making their views public was the fear that they would lead rank-and-file Zionists to the conclusion that the Zionist dream could not be attained. The impact of this on Jewish immigration and the influx of Jewish capital, of crucial importance to the development of the National Home, would have been disastrous. Perhaps even more important was Zionist concern with British reaction. Their hopes for the fulfillment of Zionism rested mainly on the British, and by emphasizing the importance of Palestinian Arab nationalism they might have contributed to British feeling that continued support for the National Home would agitate the Arab population, possibly to armed resistance. The British might then feel justified in retreating from their Zionist obligations.²⁹

By the end of 1936 most members of the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem, and most Mapai leaders who had expressed opinions on the subject, seemed to agree that Palestinian Arab nationalism did, indeed, exist.³⁰ However, given the political atmosphere of the time, it is easy to understand why this insight did not seep down to the rank and file. Official Zionist newspapers

had consistently emphasized that such nationalism did not exist. The Zionist public's understanding of Palestinian Arabs, their aspirations and motivations, was largely dependent on the newspapers, since great cultural and linguistic barriers separated the two communities. Most ordinary Zionists understood nationalism in the positive light of Zionism, which emphasized development and reform; they could not easily comprehend it in its negative aspect, as embodied by the Palestinian Arabs. They were therefore prepared to accept these newspapers' view of the revolt.

The Revisionists were in basic agreement with those Official Zionists who recognized the existence of Palestinian Arab nationalism. While they first considered the disturbances as the work of a small group of nationalist agitators,³¹ they later used the term "revolt."³² In evaluating the Revolt, Palestine Revisionist leader Eliahu Ben-Horin wrote that, "Even if part of [Palestinian] Arab unity was achieved by force... it does not change the fact of magnificent national unity and discipline that can provide an example for us and for many others."³³ Despite the fact that one must exercise caution in dealing with the public statements of Revisionist leaders, since their main concern seems to have been to discredit the Official Zionists in the eyes of the *yishuv*, the statement of Ben-Horin can still be seen as expressing the general Revisionist view of the Revolt.

While Zionists were divided on whether nationalist motivations helped spark the Revolt, most of them agreed that "Axis encouragement and Axis money played a major role."³⁴ Many British public figures and newspapers also believed that Italian or German money, or both, was helping the Palestinian Arabs maintain the strike and continue the armed struggle.³⁵ The Palestinian Arabs vigorously denied these charges,³⁶ which probably began as rumors, but they were lent credence by the inability of both the British and the Zionists to conceive that Palestinian Arabs were capable of maintaining a strike and armed revolt of such long duration on their own. The Zionists had no concrete proof of foreign financial involvement, but in the early months of the strike they believed that Italy was supplying money to the Arabs,³⁷ later some believed that Germany was the chief foreign instigator.³⁸

Recent studies indicate that the Germans not only did not organize the Revolt, but, contrary to what might have been expected of them, refrained from involvement in Palestine during this period. Nazi institutions and organizations in Palestine even withheld material support and arms from the Palestinian Arabs.³⁹ Although the Italians were active in broadcasting Arabic-language propaganda from Bari in Italy, they too seem to have refrained from supplying arms throughout the Revolt.⁴⁰ Whether or not Italy supplied financial support remains unclarified.⁴¹

During the early stage of the strike Zionists of every stripe were convinced that it would soon collapse and that its failure would discredit Arab leaders, discourage them from any future use of the strike as a political tool and prevent British concessions at Zionist expense. This attitude was perhaps best expressed by Shertok, when he said that the disturbances would not occupy a very important place in history.⁴² The Zionists explained that, unlike the events in Syria, a strike in Palestine would fail to bring the economy to a standstill since the Jews were continuing their economic activity. It could do only slight economic damage to the Jews and the British, while causing extensive economic dislocation to the Arabs, who would thus be forced to recognize its futility.⁴³ Furthermore, some Zionists did not believe that the Effendis would endure the financial sacrifices necessary for the strike to continue.⁴⁴ It is likely that those who foresaw a rapid collapse of the strike based their predictions on experiences of earlier Arab "disturbances," recalling that the Arab leaders could barely maintain one day of strike during the 1933 troubles.

When early collapse of the strike did not materialize by the beginning of May, some Zionist leaders came to see that it was not going to disintegrate rapidly.⁴⁵ But, even then, few expected it to last very long; the forces working toward its demise were all too evident. Much of the strike information received by Official Zionist leaders came from Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. But his briefings, which emphasized the disunity among Arab leaders, reflected the intelligence reports that he himself had received. Although most of the specific information was valid,⁴⁶ and although the reports did include evidence of Arab unity as well, their net effect was to mislead the Zionists into believing that the hoped-for collapse would come.

The Arab Higher Committee must have been aware of the hardships that the strike brought to ordinary Palestinian Arabs. But to have called it off without winning some concession, such as a temporary halt to immigration, would have meant a great loss of prestige in their own community. Further, the leaders argued that the unifying effect of the strike would, in itself, lead to eventual success.

In any case the strike lasted until October, the Zionists charging that British ineptitude, together with coercion and foreign money, were the main factors contributing to its long duration.

The British Response

British policy during the first phase of the Arab Revolt, widely criticized by Zionists and non-Zionists alike, followed guidelines laid down by the High Commissioner. In a letter to Secretary of State for the Colonies Ormsby-Gore,⁴⁷ Commissioner Wauchope stated that British policy had to meet two goals: to maintain British prestige by restoring law and order as early as possible, and to avoid leaving an embittered Palestinian Arab population ready to renew the Revolt at the first opportunity. While strong repressive measures might accomplish the first aim, they would destroy any chance of realizing the second, and might even have harmful repercussions in other Arab and Muslim countries under British control. Concessions to the Palestinian Arabs might achieve partial realization of both aims, but the resultant show of weakness would damage British prestige. (Wauchope noted that he had suggested this policy to London during the first phase of the Revolt.) The High Commissioner maintained that a third alternative, that of protecting lives and property without the use of repressive measures, would achieve full realization of both aims.⁴⁸

The third policy was in fact applied by the British during most of the Revolt's first phase. Wauchope believed that the Revolt was initiated from below, and that it was led by a widely based Palestinian Arab national movement which feared Jewish domination.⁴⁹ Repressive measures alone could never succeed in suppressing such a national movement. Thus, he was reluctant to arrest top Palestinian Arab leaders, even after he decided to take stricter measures against the Revolt in mid-May. Arrests of this sort might increase the violence as more extreme leaders stepped in. Believing that the strike would disintegrate by itself, the High Commissioner considered repressive measures unnecessary. And if this did happen, its leaders would be discredited, thereby strengthening the Government's position.⁵⁰ The British did not consistently adhere to their avowed policy of non-repressive protection of life and property; repression was

employed on several occasions. However, up to the end of the Arab strike, Wauchope's actions can best be summarized as passive rather than active — appeal and appeasement rather than coercion; the threat of force rather than its implementation.

Most Official Zionist leaders understood the motives behind the High Commissioner's policy, and several top leaders supported this approach in the early stage of the Revolt. Finally, recognizing the nationalist motives behind the Revolt, they thought that repressive measures would have an adverse effect in that the arrest of Arab leaders would provoke greater Arab violence, making room for new, more extreme leaders, and increasing the popularity of those arrested. Measures such as this would antagonize world, and especially Islamic, public opinion.⁵¹ This support for the High Commissioner's policy did not last long. From the end of April most Zionists became skeptical of his intentions, believing that he was trying to utilize the disturbances to win support in London for his proposed restrictions on immigration and land purchase, and for his legislative council plan.⁵²

There are several reasons for this shift in attitude. The British administration in Palestine had at first tried to represent the disorders of 19 April as a violent collision of Jews and Arabs resulting in casualties on both sides, and not as an attack by Arabs against Jews. Only after great effort on the part of the Zionists did the authorities reinvestigate,⁵³ and the High Commissioner's final announcement portrayed the disorders as Arab attacks against Jews. But, when Colonial Secretary Thomas repeated the earlier British version on 23 April, this was seen by Zionist leaders as a deliberate falsehood fostered by an administration which was, in their eyes, overwhelmingly anti-Zionist.⁵⁴ Even those Zionists who backed the High Commissioner's generally passive policy during the first two weeks of the strike suspected that he was not unhappy about the disturbances. In the Zionist view, the Arabs interpreted the High Commissioner's inaction as evidence that he wanted both the strike and anti-Jewish attacks to continue.⁵⁵ Some Zionists went so far as to assert that, having had advance knowledge of the disorders, the British made no attempt to prevent them.⁵⁶ By the end of the strike Hashomer Hatzair went even a step farther, charging that the British had actually organized the Revolt for their own benefit.⁵⁷ In this view, the continued rule in Palestine necessary to British imperialist interests might be threatened if Jews achieved majority status and were no longer dependent on Mandatory authorities. An anti-Zionist policy would bring the British the further dividend of friendship among the dominant circles in Palestine and the Arab world.⁵⁸

At the opposite pole of opinion, the Bi-nationalist Senator, in general agreement with British handling of the disturbances,⁵⁹ was openly critical of those who viewed the British authorities in Palestine as enemies. Noting that the British had done a great deal to help the Zionists during the disturbances, he pointed out that they had armed the *yishuv*, consented to the building of the Tel Aviv jetty (which lessened Jewish reliance on the strike-bound port at Jaffa), and granted a new immigration schedule (even though the major aim of the Revolt was to halt Jewish immigration).

While the Revisionists did not feel that the British actually welcomed the disturbances, they thought that British attempts to win Arab consent for the proposed legislative council had encouraged them to actively oppose Jewish aims.⁶⁰ Believing that British anti-Zionist policy had unintentionally brought about the disturbances, the Revisionists hoped that the Revolt, which was at least as anti-British as it was anti-Jewish, would teach the former a lesson. They therefore called for the immediate application of repressive measures.⁶¹

Whatever the role of the High Commissioner and his administration in the Revolt, Zionists felt that continuation of the disturbances might lead to British acquiescence in Arab demands for

limiting the National Home. By early May even those Zionists who understood the advantages of a mild British policy were calling for stricter measures to ward off two impending threats: attempts by the High Commissioner to impose land legislation even more restrictive than that which the Zionists had recently so vigorously rejected,⁶² and attempts to bring about a Royal Commission inquiry. The Zionists rejected an inquiry not only because a commission might have the power to reevaluate all questions concerning the Mandate and the National Home, but because they considered the reports of previous commissions to have been anti-Zionist.⁶³ These new developments heightened Zionist suspicions of the High Commissioner's policy on the disturbances.

It became increasingly clear that a prolonged strike and its accompanying disorders were undesirable from the Zionist point of view. It would elevate the Palestine question in British public opinion thus complicating the job of Zionists in London, would cause increasing damage to the fields and orchards in Palestine, and would also affect the urban Jewish economy. Continuing disorders were also likely to slow the influx of Jewish capital from abroad.⁶⁴

In the early weeks of the strike two divergent approaches to its repression were suggested in Official Zionist circles. Grunbaum held that the strike itself was central to all the other disturbances, and that its collapse was not imminent. End the strike by repressive measures, and the attending disorders would come to a halt as well.⁶⁵ Arthur Ruppin disagreed. In his view, the disorders were the central problem. Deal quickly with them, and the strike would disintegrate by itself. Repressive measures aimed directly at the strike, such as the arrest of its leaders, would only strengthen it and provoke a more serious revolt.⁶⁶

Ben-Gurion and Shertok, who were charged with dealing with the Government, agreed with Ruppin that repression of the strike might lead to a revolt. In fact, while Ruppin had emphasized that the strike would not be economically harmful to the *yishuv*, Ben-Gurion believed that it could actually be advantageous. Nevertheless, he called on the Government to repress both the disorders and the strike.⁶⁷ The Government, he explained, was planning to use the strike to justify policy changes. If the Zionists demanded stern measures now, they could later attribute the strike's persistence to Government inaction.⁶⁸

But by the second half of May Ben-Gurion and all other Official Zionists came to believe that the strike must be repressed. Any advantages derived from it were now far outweighed by its disadvantages. The Zionists had lost any remnant of confidence in the High Commissioner's passive policy when British officials suggested unofficially that the Zionists voluntarily halt immigration.⁶⁹ On the heels of this alarming development was the official announcement of an impending Royal Commission.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, renewed anti-Jewish terror resulted in several deaths, and the Arabs activated their civil disobedience program of tax non-payment. The disturbances were escalating to the point of armed revolt against the British.

The Zionists intensified their demands on the Government, which had already made some gestures in their direction.⁷¹ The Jewish Agency called on Wauchope to dissolve the Arab Higher Committee, which Zionists believed was responsible for the violence. They demanded that the members of this and other Arab committees be held personally responsible for attacks on Jews, and that acts of civil disobedience be suppressed.⁷²

From the latter part of May on there was little difference between the varieties of Official Zionist opinion, or even between them and the Revisionists. While Wauchope had three alternatives — defense, repression or concessions - only the first two were open to Zionists, for concessions would curb immigration, the cornerstone of Zionism. The High Commissioner had

opted for the defensive alternative, but that had proved unworkable. Now the Zionists could only advocate repression.

The Zionists concluded that British policy, at least during the first months of the strike, encouraged the Arab belief that the Government supported them. This assumption was reached subjectively. They had no doubts about their right to immigrate into Palestine, a land which they considered their own, and they seem to have taken for granted, at least subconsciously, that the Arabs recognized this right as well. But the Palestinian Arabs, too, considered Palestine their own, viewing the Jews as invaders bent on seizing the country from its rightful owners. Thus, they felt it was their right to employ any means, including strike, terror and armed revolt, to safeguard their national interests. Under the circumstances, then, the Arabs could not possibly consider a Government that arrested and shot at them as they exercised this fundamental right, and that continued to allow Jewish immigration, as one that supported them.

Each national movement viewed British actions as a threat to its own fundamental rights as well as evidence of support for the other side. Each interpreted the actions of the other movement according to its own subjective prejudices. It was therefore natural that each saw only the negative aspects of any proposal other than its own.

Zionist Proposals

While demanding a more repressive British policy, the Zionists also considered and attempted several steps by which they themselves could help bring about a satisfactory solution to the problem. There were four general approaches: persuasive publicity, money, concessions and Arab-Jewish agreement. They hoped that by publishing an Arabic newspaper,⁷³ by making public statements in Arabic and by distributing Arabic-language pamphlets, they might counter what were seen as distortions in the Arabic press, thereby explaining the Zionist case to Arabs in Palestine and abroad. Support for the newspaper venture was found among various Official Zionists and, especially, among the Bi-nationahsts.⁷⁴ Such a newspaper would be particularly helpful in reaching Arabs in neighboring countries, who were thought to be more open to understanding.⁷⁵

There was considerable Zionist opposition to an Arabic newspaper on the grounds that it could not achieve the goals set for it. Anything written in such a paper would be distorted by Arab agitators, and its influence among Arabs in neighboring countries would be minimal since they were completely under the influence of the Palestinian Arabs with whom they shared linguistic, religious and national ties.⁷⁶

Some Official Zionist leaders, backed by the Revisionists, pointed out that similar enterprises in other Diaspora countries had proved useless. These newspapers were read almost exclusively by Jews, and not by the Gentiles at whom they were directed. Publications of this type reflected an apologetic attitude, but no apology was needed in Palestine, where the Jews lived by right, not on sufferance.⁷⁷ However, the idea received strong support in the powerful Mapai Party and in the Histadrut, and it was decided to publish a weekly Arabic-language newspaper under Histadrut sponsorship.⁷⁸

Zionists also tried to get articles calling for better Jewish-Arab understanding published in the Arabic newspapers of countries bordering Palestine, but these efforts met with little success.⁷⁹

The pamphlets and public statements in Arabic published by various Zionist organizations, mainly the Jewish Agency,⁸⁰ had the limited aim of decreasing or at least preventing further escalation of Arab-Jewish tensions.

Among those who suggested bribing some of the strike leaders was Pinhas Rutenberg.⁸¹ Like Grunbaum, he too saw the strike itself as the chief danger to Zionist aims, and he agreed that the Government was not inclined to end it. Over the objections of Shertok, he made attempts to offer money to Ragheb Nashashibi, a prominent member of the Arab Higher Committee who was known to be in financial difficulties. According to Shertok, the offers were declined for the time being.⁸²

Ben-Gurion was probably expressing the opinion of most members of the Jewish Agency Executive when he said, "It is childish to think that it is possible to end the strike with money."⁸³ The Zionists should have learned from past experience that such methods did more harm than good. Besides, given the nationalistic nature of the strike, offers of money would most likely be refused.

Nevertheless, another attempt was made, this time by Moshe Smilansky of the Group of Five. Smilansky thought that this method, not uncommon in the Middle East, might bring the Arab leaders to negotiations. He therefore established contact with Tawfiq Ghussain, whose son Ya'qub was a member of the Arab Higher Committee. According to Smilansky, after discussions with members of the Higher Committee, Tawfiq and his son suggested that the Zionists pay five thousand Palestine pounds to each of eight Committee members,⁸⁴ and another five thousand to each of the Ghussains. In return, the Higher Committee would stop the strike and negotiate with the Zionists.⁸⁵ While members of the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem do not seem to have known of this attempt, Weizmann, who was aware of it, raised the matter in a conversation with the Colonial Secretary.⁸⁶

As the situation deteriorated and the specter of immigration curbs loomed, the Political Department of the Jewish Agency was prepared to use money in a limited number of localities,⁸⁷ not all in Palestine; Amir 'Abdallah of Transjordan was also contacted. On 30 April Shertok wrote the Amir, asking him to recommend to the members of the Arab Higher Committee that they end their strike. According to Shertok, the British had already made a similar request.⁸⁸ 'Abdallah made the recommendation and suggested to the Arab Higher Committee that they send a delegation to London.⁸⁹ However, the small amount of money received from the Zionists was probably only a secondary factor in his decision to help end the strike and disorders. More important were his fear that the Palestinian Arab Revolt would bring disorder to Transjordan, his desire to increase his influence among the Palestinian Arabs, and British advice.⁹⁰ As the situation in Palestine deteriorated, he advised the Zionists that they would have to make concessions in the field of immigration if the strike was to be ended.⁹¹

With the escalation of the disorders in mid-May, the possibility of temporarily suspending Jewish immigration was widely discussed by the British and even by the Jewish Agency. Until then the High Commissioner had been fairly well convinced that the strike would disintegrate of its own accord without such concessions.

British reluctance to grant concessions stemmed from fear of losing prestige and from Zionist pressure. If they yielded to force, it would be interpreted in the area as well as in Europe as yet another sign of British weakness. Moreover, both the High Commissioner and the Secretary of State for the Colonies had stated both publicly and privately that the British would not succumb to violence in Palestine and that the Government would not suspend Jewish immigration.

Besides, the British had committed themselves to sending a Royal Commission to Palestine,⁹² and any policy changes should be postponed until its work had been completed. On the other hand, since the High Commissioner's defensive policy was not working, and since he ruled out repressive measures as counter-productive, the only alternative seemed to be concessions. In addition, there was increasing pressure from Arab countries in favor of policy changes.

Thus, by early July the British Cabinet was actively considering suspending immigration while the Royal Commission investigation was still in progress, provided that law and order was first restored. Negotiations toward this end were conducted with Arab leaders, but they had borne no fruit by 2 September, when the Cabinet decided to discard its plans for concessions in favor of a repressive approach that included the imposition of martial law.⁹³

Ben-Gurion probably represented general Zionist opinion in regarding even temporary curbs on immigration as a step toward the liquidation of the National Home. He considered the suggestion that the Zionists themselves suspend immigration as a call for suicide.⁹⁴ A halt to immigration would dash Zionist hopes for a solution to the Palestine problem, and any interruption, however temporary, would have a devastating impact on the persecuted East European Jews, on Jews throughout the world and on the *yishuv* in Palestine.⁹⁵ Moreover, any such concession would constitute a tacit admission that Jewish rights were open to question or dependent on Arab consent.⁹⁶

A suspension of immigration might also cause those Zionists who opposed the Jewish Agency's *havlagah* (self-restraint) policy to blame it for the immigration curbs, and abandonment of that policy by the *yishuv* would have dire political consequences. The Arabs would view the suspension as a British surrender to violence and as evidence of Zionist timidity, thereby encouraging further terrorist activity against the *yishuv*. Even a delay in publishing the new immigration schedule would bring about continuation of the strike.⁹⁷ In arguing against British concessions on immigration, the Zionists, using arguments which the British themselves understood, stressed the undesirable effects of such a policy on Britain.⁹⁸

But, while all Zionists opposed British curbs on immigration, a small number of leaders were willing to accept a form of suspension if, and only if, it were imposed by the Zionists themselves. While this group was aware of the hue and cry that suspension would cause among the Jews, they felt that it might lead to greater Jewish-Arab understanding and eventually strengthen the Zionist position in any deliberations on Palestine; the Zionists felt they had been excluded from the decision-making process during British-Arab negotiations in the summer of 1936 and during the Cabinet deliberations on immigration curbs.

Senator was probably the first Zionist to raise the possibility of Zionist concessions on immigration as a solution to the disorders in Palestine;⁹⁹ his suggestion was offered as a gesture of good will toward the British. But Magnes saw Zionist concessions as a way of promoting Jewish-Arab agreement.¹⁰⁰

However, the prevailing opinion among Official Zionist leaders was that immigration did not constitute an obstacle to negotiations and that, in any case, the issue could only be resolved through the negotiating process. Any talk of possible Zionist concessions would strengthen Arab determination to continue the struggle. Even worse, the High Commissioner's awareness of the internal Zionist debate on Jewish concessions might be what was preventing him from taking more repressive measures, for he would not pursue a more vigorous policy as long as he thought there was any other way out.¹⁰¹

In early June 1936 Weizmann, who was also inclined toward concessions, suggested that the

Zionists offer a temporary halt to immigration. After heated debate by the Political Committee in London, the idea was rejected.¹⁰² Discussions and debates in closed circles, however heated, need not have affected general public policy; but Weizmann shared his ideas on the matter with non-Zionists as well. In a conversation sometime late in June, he told Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore that he was willing to make, or at least to consider, some sort of concession on immigration, and he sent confirmation of this conversation to the Colonial Secretary in late August.¹⁰³ More important, and more damaging from the Zionist point of view, were Weizmann's 9 June 1936 comments to Nuri Said, which indicated his seeming readiness to halt immigration,¹⁰⁴ and which soon became known to the High Commissioner and the Colonial Secretary. Weizmann was requested by Zionist leaders in London to dictate a denial to Ormsby-Gore,¹⁰⁵ but news of his conversations soon reached the Arab press.¹⁰⁶ Zionists feared that, even if subsequently denied, news of this sort would raise Arab hopes that the Government was about to halt immigration.

Fear that the British would indeed suspend immigration jolted the Zionists into discussing retaliatory actions. Among the options proposed were noncooperation with the Government, boycott of the Royal Commission, Weizmann's resignation or an economic boycott against Palestinian Arabs.¹⁰⁷ Signs of defeatism were already evident in the *yishuv*, right-wing parties blaming the Jewish Agency for impending immigration curbs which would bring catastrophe to Eastern European Jews. An economic boycott of the Arabs could serve to unite the *yishuv* and give it a sense of direction in its struggle for continued immigration.

Leaders of the Mapai Party, in particular, felt that a Jewish boycott would consolidate and guarantee gains already made by the *yishuv* as a result of Arab workers having left their jobs in Jewish settlements. A Jewish boycott against Arabs would prevent the Jews who had replaced these Arabs from being replaced themselves once the strike was over. The boycott would also force Jews who preferred the port at Jaffa to make use of the new Tel Aviv jetty. Politically, a boycott would show the Arabs that they could not fight against immigration and still benefit from the prosperity it brought; if Arab workers, fellahin and home-owners were hurt economically, they might become dissatisfied with the Arab leadership. It would also show the British the strength of Zionist reaction.

Others maintained that a boycott would be politically damaging and economically unwise, and would therefore be seen as a manifestation of Zionist weakness and lack of direction. The four-month Arab boycott had proved to be advantageous to the *yishuv*. A Jewish boycott would be almost impossible to enforce and would divide the Jewish community rather than unite it. That it would also constitute yet another blow to Arab-Jewish relations¹⁰⁸ was especially emphasized by Hashomer Hatz'a'ir.¹⁰⁹

In summary, of the four approaches considered to help bring an end to the strike, the Official Zionists idea of persuasive publicity was limited in its goal, the buying off of strike leaders was not accepted by most Zionist leaders, Zionist suspension or acquiescence to British suspension of immigration was rejected, and the possibility of Jewish-Arab agreement, as will be seen, was so limited as to be almost nonexistent.

Havlagah

The attacks against Jews which began in Jaffa on 19 April 1936, and the strike which followed, continued until 12 October 1936, the end of the first phase of the Arab Revolt. During the month following the initial attacks Arab violence was mostly unorganized and directed mainly against Jewish property and transportation. Attacks on Jewish life were renewed in mid-May, partly as a result of the same kind of rumors that had spurred the violence in Jaffa. When an Arab was killed in Jerusalem on 12 May, the Jews were accused of the murder despite police reports stating he had been killed by other Arabs for refusing to strike.¹¹⁰ As a result, several Jewish passers-by were attacked in the old city of Jerusalem, two of them fatally. Indiscriminate attacks against Jews continued throughout the summer, with the worst violence coming in August, when 30 Jews were killed and many more injured.

The first attacks on Jews were followed within a month by an armed Arab revolt against the Government which seems to have been caused by publication of the new labor immigration schedule on 18 May and the opening of the Tel Aviv jetty on the following day. The arrest of several Arab figures on 23 May served to intensify the uprising, which moved gradually from the cities to the villages.

Initially, groups of Arab irregulars seem to have organized spontaneously and to have operated without any central direction.¹¹¹ In an attempt to exercise control over the irregular groups, the Arab Higher Committee sought a figure under whom they could be united. He was found in Fawzi al-Qawqaji, whose renown brought him recognition from almost all the diverse groups of irregulars operating in Palestine. Al-Qawqaji came to Palestine in mid-August with a large group of volunteers from Iraq and Syria, and began to reorganize the local groups and provide them with elementary military training.¹¹²

The indiscriminate Arab attacks on Jews and their property was met by the Zionist policy of *havlagah* or self-restraint, under which Jews defended themselves within their settlements, but did not pursue the attackers or make reprisals, often leaving their fields and orchards unguarded. With very few exceptions, the policy of *havlagah* was strictly adhered to, even by the militant Revisionists who strongly opposed it in public.

Havlagah provoked stormy debate within the *yishuv* that summer and for many years to come, and the very word came to acquire derogatory associations. It was supported by all the top Official Zionist leaders, who believed that the Zionists would forfeit world and especially British public opinion if they resorted to lawlessness and violence. The British Government could then claim that Palestine was in a state of civil war and cut off Jewish immigration¹¹³ as they had done during the disturbances of 1921 and 1929. On the other hand, strict adherence to *havlagah* would make it difficult for the British to suspend immigration or disarm the Haganah (the illegal Zionist defense organization), leaving the Zionists in a better position to obtain some of their own demands.¹¹⁴

Ben-Gurion, an outspoken supporter of *havlagah*, noted that since Zionist and Arab aims differed, their tactics could not be identical. While the Arab aim was to prevent further changes in Palestine, change, in the form of new factories and new immigrants, was precisely what the Zionists wanted. If Jews used the Arabs' methods, permanent warfare would result, and even if the British did allow free immigration, the inflow of Jewish capital and immigrants would cease.¹¹⁵ Nor did Ben-Gurion think that Zionists could use terror to frighten the British into granting concessions. The Palestinian Arabs aimed to oust the British and keep Palestine for themselves, but since the Zionists wanted Britain's help in bringing Jews to Palestine, they needed a continued British presence in Palestine.¹¹⁶ As for Jewish reprisals against Arabs, they

would serve only to unite the nationalistically motivated Arabs.¹¹⁷

Supporters of *havlagah* claimed that it would not be seen as a sign of weakness but rather as a sign of strength; the *yishuv* could reveal its maturity only by controlling its emotions. And, as Beri Katznelson put it, killing innocent noncombatant Arabs, while not serving in any way to end Arab terror, was "a morally cruel and criminal act."¹¹⁸

The Revisionists position on *havlagah* was ambiguous, since Jabotinsky supported the policy both publicly and privately while Revisionist newspapers and leaders in Palestine strongly opposed it. However, despite these public attacks on *havlagah*, the party adhered to the policy almost unanimously in practice. As part of the "Irgun B," which included four other parties, they had to follow the line adopted by its Control Committee.¹¹⁹

Although Jabotinsky's advocacy of *havlagah* stood in contradiction to his principle of Jewish militancy, he feared that if the Zionists did not exercise self-restraint they might have to fight the British as well as the Arabs.¹²⁰ If, on the other hand, the *yishuv* proved its loyalty, and its ability to control itself through *havlagah*, the British might permit the establishment of a Jewish self-defense force, one of the Revisionists' main goals.

One might expect that, since Jabotinsky himself issued the order to adhere to *havlagah*, the Revisionists would have been somewhat less critical of the policy. But the Jewish Agency's advocacy of the policy was, by itself, almost sufficient cause for Revisionist opposition.

Official Zionist and Revisionist opponents of *havlagah* seem to have been concerned primarily about its emotional-psychological impact on Jews. They also feared its psychological impact on the British and the Arabs. Jews who had been persecuted in the Diaspora without any means of self-defense felt that they had an obligation to protect themselves in Palestine, which they considered their homeland. These feelings were reinforced by incidents such as the murder of Yoseph Trumpeldor,¹²¹ who had become a legendary symbol for a generation of Zionists in both the Diaspora and Palestine. There would be a new type of Palestinian Jew, one who did not give in to force, but fought back instead. And the *havlagah* policy would not only destroy this ideal for Diaspora Jews,¹²² but would engender apathy and a sense of helpless defeatism in the *yishuv*.¹²³ Worst of all, the Arabs, who had learned through experience to respect Jewish courage and self-defense, were likely to increase their attacks against Jews¹²⁴ upon this evidence of new Jewish fear.

Although they were forced to admit that *havlagah* earned British respect for *the yishuv*, opponents claimed that it also tended to strengthen the British belief that Jews were unsuited for war and thereby to weaken the position of the *yishuv* as a political factor.¹²⁵

The Hashomer Hatz'a'ir support for *havlagah* was based on their dominant philosophy, that the Arab masses had participated in the Revolt due to the influence and agitation of the Effendis, their exploiters and class enemies. Reprisals would only hinder the masses from understanding the difference between their natural class enemies and the forces of progress, setting further obstacles in the way of Jewish-Arab understanding.¹²⁶

Hashomer Hatz'a'ir, along with those Official Zionists directly connected with the Haganah, did, however, demand a policy of "active" *havlagah* whereby Jewish fields and roads would be patrolled and attackers in these areas pursued. But Official Zionist leaders feared that such armed patrolling without the Government's permission, an illegal act, might precipitate clashes with the police which could hamper Zionist-British cooperation in the security and political areas.¹²⁷ Besides, a policy of active *havlagah* required more well-trained and equipped fighters than the Haganah possessed.

As the Revolt continued, passive self-restraint took its political and psychological toll, as its opponents had warned, and two substitute courses of action - active *havlagah* and counter-terrorism - were suggested (and later applied).

[The Role of the Arab States](#)

Arab states became actively involved in Palestinian affairs in late April 1936. The British at first discouraged their involvement, rejecting the request that Jewish immigration be suspended in order to bring an end to the uprising.¹²⁸ In late June the British agreed to let King 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia use his influence with the Palestinian Arabs to end the Revolt, but his mediation, and that of other Arab leaders, brought no results. The Palestinian Arabs demanded that the British suspend immigration during the Royal Commission's investigation, and grant a general amnesty to most Arab offenders, while the British insisted that the disorders be ended first.¹²⁹

Then, in mid-August efforts to end the Revolt were joined by the prominent Iraqi leader Nuri Sa'id. Unlike the previous moves by Arab leaders, Nuri Sa'id's public stand was seen as a formal Iraqi attempt to claim a role in Mandatory Palestine then and in the future. The British Cabinet's 2 September 1936 decision to not suspend Jewish immigration and to declare martial law in Palestine was partly a reaction to this attempt, as well as an effort to end the involvement of the Arab states in Palestinian affairs.¹³⁰

Upon learning of Nuri Sa'id's involvement the Zionists intensified their political activities in order to stave off the danger of future pressure on the British, from Iraq and other Arab countries, for a solution favorable to the Palestinian Arabs.¹³¹ Furthermore, Official Zionist leaders felt that they were being entirely ignored in the negotiations between Nuri Sa'id and the British.¹³²

The Cabinet decision to establish martial law never had to be implemented. As a face-saving gesture, the Arab Higher Committee was allowed to appeal to the Arab rulers, who issued a public request that the uprising be terminated. The Committee called off the strike on 11 October 1936, ostensibly in compliance with the Arab rulers' appeal.

The Zionists saw a dangerous precedent in this appeal by Arab rulers, who would now feel obliged to pressure the British Government to meet some of the Palestinian Arab demands and would therefore be likely to intervene again in the future. Both strike and terrorist activities had been on the decline, and the High Commissioner's helping the Arab Higher Committee save face had merely postponed its collapse.¹³³

Wauchope, who described his role as that of a "kindly father,"¹³⁴ had tried to end the uprising without alienating the Palestinian Arabs. But in the view of Official Zionists and Revisionists, by allowing the rebels to escape punishment, leaving their underground structure intact and not disarming the Arab population, Wauchope had opened the door to future troubles. Zionist intelligence services reported that the Arabs planned to renew the armed struggle if they were not satisfied with British policies.¹³⁵ The Zionists also felt that the Arab Higher Committee would be credited with restoring order, to the detriment of the Government's authority.¹³⁶

For all its shortcomings, the Zionist argument was borne out by later events. The Revolt was renewed in mid-1937 because the Arabs believed that a truce, and not peace, existed between

them and the Government,¹³⁷ and that they possessed the necessary organization, wherewithal and support from the Arab states.

[New Zionist Conclusions](#)

The first phase of the Arab Revolt served to reinforce Zionist belief that population growth, Jewish economic independence and Jewish self-defense were crucial to the future of the *yishuv*. Most Official Zionist leaders believed that the numerical weakness of the *yishuv* was the chief cause of the disturbances; had the *yishuv* been stronger, it could have reached an understanding with the Arabs.¹³⁸ Now more than ever Zionists sought to free themselves from Arab markets and services and to increase the number of Jewish workers in all branches of government.¹³⁹

These aims had already been advanced during the first phase of the Revolt with the building of a jetty and new government offices in Tel Aviv.¹⁴⁰ Even more important were the disappearance of Arab workers from Jewish agricultural colonies and their replacement by Jewish labor.¹⁴¹ It was these achievements that led Ben-Gurion and several other Official Zionists to conclude early in the Revolt that the Arab economic strike would have positive consequences for the *yishuv*.¹⁴²

Zionists were convinced that both the illegally organized Haganah and the legally recruited Supernumerary Police¹⁴³ had to be strengthened. They felt that the expansion and reequipment of the Supernumerary Police, which was one of their major demands during the first phase of the Revolt,¹⁴⁴ would increase Jewish-British cooperation and make it more difficult politically for the British to make concessions at Zionist expense. Jewish military help would also dispel the impression that Jews were hiding behind British bayonets, thereby lessening the internal damages wrought in the *yishuv* by the *havlagah* debate. Militarily, the strengthening of this legal force, and of the Haganah, would enable the *yishuv* to defend itself from Arab attacks. Suspicious of British intentions, many Zionists were not convinced that the *yishuv* would be protected otherwise.¹⁴⁵

As the Zionists saw it, net Arab achievements in the first phase of the Revolt were negligible since none of their three basic demands - representative government, suspension of Jewish immigration and an end to Jewish land purchases — had been realized.¹⁴⁶ And while they did concede one great Arab achievement - the establishment of a precedent for external Arab involvement in Palestine —¹⁴⁷ no contemporary Zionist leader seems to have understood the future implications of this factor.

One major change did occur in the Zionist assessment of Palestinian Arabs: by the end of the strike, most Zionist leaders seem to have developed a new appreciation of the willingness of Palestinian Arabs to sacrifice life and property for their cause. And with this appreciation came something akin to praise for Arab unity of purpose and Arab ability to organize and conduct wide-ranging operations.¹⁴⁸ This awareness, new for most Zionists, made the search for a solution to the Palestine question seem all the more urgent. The Arab Revolt brought a clear pronouncement of Arab aims for Palestine's future. Demands arose within the Zionist movement for a parallel declaration of goals.

Granbaum raised the issue among Official Zionists at a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive. The Arabs, he pointed out, were demanding a halt to immigration at the very time that persecution in Europe demanded its increase. It was imperative that Zionists, too, declare their

aims.¹⁴⁹ While both the Revisionists and Hashomer Hatza'ir had already declared their final aims (for the former, a Jewish state with a Jewish majority; for the latter, a socialist, bi-national society in Palestine as a prelude to a socialist Middle East), the Official Zionists, although most of them shared the general goals of a Jewish majority in a Jewish state, could not agree on final aims.

The lack of a defined stand on the part of the Official Zionists had the advantage of preventing further division in the Jewish Agency. While the Agency had already declared its support for the principle of non-domination of either community by the other, several more detailed proposals to solve the Palestine question were now put forward, usually in private. The most productive suggestions probably came from Ben-Gurion, then Chairman of the Agency. In a May 1936 presentation of his ideas before the Executive, he maintained that an agreement might be reached with the Arabs if the Zionists addressed themselves to Arab fears of Jewish political and economic domination. Such an agreement might include laws protecting small Arab landowners, a pressing Arab economic concern, Arab-Jewish parity in a Palestine executive body, in response to Arab political demands, and a regional federation in the British sphere to be joined by a Jewish state, to allay long-range Arab fears of minority status.¹⁵⁰

Official Zionist critics claimed that the British would not accept Ben-Gurion's federal idea, because then the Arab world would no longer be divided into a multitude of small states which they could easily manipulate.¹⁵¹ France, too, would be antagonistic to a federation; having no desire to renounce its claims on Syria and Lebanon, it would especially dislike their falling into the British sphere.¹⁵² Furthermore, the federation plan offered nothing concrete to the Palestinian Arabs. Arab unity was a dream for the distant future. As Shertok put it, "To assume that the federation idea is a Solution now is to ignore reality."¹⁵³ A united Arab state could be established only through a gradual internal Arab process. The most the Zionists could offer if and when such a federation were established was to seek ways to join it.

To Ben-Gurion's claim that the Arabs in such a federation would receive Zionist economic, scientific and technical aid, the critics asked how the Zionists, short of funds even for the *yishuv's* needs, would summon up the requisite material resources. This might be a matter for future attention, but it was certainly not a viable alternative for the present.¹⁵⁴ Undaunted by this criticism, Ben-Gurion's interest in a federation was reinforced by the Arab states' involvement in the Palestine question, which he viewed as a strengthening of Pan-Arabism.¹⁵⁵

For all the criticism directed against Ben-Gurion's federation proposal, it was in principle acceptable from the Official Zionist point of view. And, despite its never being brought to a vote, the idea was proposed by Official Zionist negotiators to several Arab leaders.¹⁵⁶

As conceived by Ben-Gurion, Arab-Jewish parity meant equal numbers of Jews and Arabs in the executive body of Palestine;¹⁵⁷ but how long such parity would last was not clear. Years later he would claim that he had stated it would last only for the duration of the Mandate, but the record of the 19 May meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive does not bear this out.¹⁵⁸ He did write in his diary a few days later that parity would be maintained during the "transitional period," that is, only under the Mandate.¹⁵⁹ However, in a letter to Shertok in mid-August, he wrote that the Zionist offer to the Royal Commission should stress "prevention of the danger of domination by one nation over the other by the establishment of parity... *for now and for generations*, until agreement is reached between the two nations..."¹⁶⁰

Criticizing this ambiguity at a meeting of the Executive, Senator queried what Zionist policy would be after a Jewish majority had been attained. And Maurice B. Hexter pointed out that

parity would not allay Arab fears of Jewish domination since the Arabs knew that the Jews, once they achieved a majority, would ask for numerical representation.¹⁶¹ Shertok pointed out another major weakness of Ben-Gurion's idea, which he may have realized himself: while Ben-Gurion viewed parity as a Zionist concession to the Arabs, since it granted equality to the *yishuv*, most Arabs would consider it an Arab concession, and would therefore demand a corresponding Zionist concession.¹⁶²

Ben-Gurion's hope of reaching an understanding with the Arabs on limitations to immigration seems to have been more realistic than his federation and parity proposals. The idea for a compromise on immigration had been raised by the Arabs themselves in negotiations with Zionists. The question provoked a stormy debate in Official Zionist circles, which Shertok characterized as a conflict between the mystical, short-sighted approach (of opponents to limitations) and the pragmatic, realistic approach (of its advocates).¹⁶³

The opponents¹⁶⁴ maintained that no Zionist leader had the authority to make concessions on the right of the Jews to immigrate into Palestine.¹⁶⁵ Citing the dangers currently facing European Jewry, they pointed to the need for strengthening rather than eroding the right to immigrate, noting as well that such mass immigration might help bring about a Jewish majority in Palestine.¹⁶⁶ Besides, an agreement to limit the number of immigrants would encourage the Arabs to renew the disturbances in order to win even greater concessions. For these and other reasons,¹⁶⁷ they preferred to accept continued disturbances, and even British curbs on immigration, rather than volunteer such a dangerous concession.

Supporters of an immigration agreement with the Arabs rejected almost all these arguments.¹⁶⁸ Shertok claimed that the High Commissioner would never agree to an annual immigration exceeding the 1935 number, and that the British might even impose stricter limitations to allay Arab fears and thereby prevent future disturbances. Zionist agreement with the Arabs would not only forestall Government limitations but would bring to Palestine the law and order without which immigration and the influx of capital would decline.¹⁶⁹ And further, since limitations on immigration constituted the chief Arab demand, agreement would be impossible if the Zionists refused to discuss the question.¹⁷⁰ Shertok, ever the pragmatist, pointed out that, in the absence of adequate Government measures to establish law and order, the Zionists must take the peacemaking initiative.¹⁷¹

When the Jewish Agency finally decided to discuss numerical limitations, they took the 1935 immigration total as the bottom limit,¹⁷² a decision that serves to illuminate the huge gap between Zionist and Arab thinking at the time. Since the Arab Revolt was precipitated by precisely these 1935 figures, it was unrealistic to expect an agreement on the same number after months of struggle. From the Zionist point of view, however, the new offer represented a significant retreat from Ben-Gurion's earlier immigration plan and from the high hopes on the eve of the Revolt. And a retreat was necessary if the Zionists were to attain their ultimate goal. As Ben-Gurion put it,

We need agreement with the Arabs not for the establishment of peace in the country.... Peace is a means and not the aim. The aim is the fulfillment of Zionism.... Only for this do we need peace and only for this do we need agreement.¹⁷³

The Bi-nationalists considered agreement with the Arabs essential, in and of itself, to the fulfillment of Zionism, and not merely a means to fulfill Zionism under British rule.¹⁷⁴ Therefore Magnes' views on this issue typified those of many individual Bi-nationalists; the first to suggest voluntary limits, he advocated a quota lower than any Official Zionist was willing to accept.¹⁷⁵

Jabotinsky's attitude toward an Arab-Zionist agreement derived from a realistic analysis of the Arab point of view. Even if Arabs outside the country could be convinced that Palestine was a small, unimportant region, and even if they could be persuaded to accept the Zionist enterprise, both of which he doubted very much, Palestine would remain the fatherland of Palestinian Arabs who would never compromise. In the highly unlikely event that non-Palestinian Arabs agreed to accept a Jewish state at the geographical center of an Arab federation, the Zionists would have to pay a high price. Since they were unable to help the Arab countries financially (indeed, they lacked the funds to develop even Palestine), the only aid they could provide would be political. This would be a treacherous and suicidal course; working for the twin Arab goals of independence and unity would mean the end of British and other European influence in the entire Middle East. And Britain had granted the Balfour Declaration, while other European countries had supported the Mandate, of which the Jewish National Home was a part.

Since the Arabs would never voluntarily come to an agreement with Zionism, Jabotinsky saw only two courses open to Zionists: to bring a halt to the entire enterprise, or to carry on without regard to Arab opposition. The latter would require an "iron wall" of military protection that the Arabs could not break,¹⁷⁶ since agreement was not possible as long as the Arabs had the slightest hope of ridding themselves of the Zionists. Only after they abandoned such hopes would they agree to make concessions.¹⁷⁷

Jabotinsky rejected the view that it was immoral for Jews to settle in Palestine by force and without Arab consent. There was no place in the world where Jews could settle without meeting native resistance. Must a nation without land remain forever without land? Was it moral that over 16 million Jews remained without land while 38 million Arabs controlled an area from Morocco to Iraq, from Syria to Arabia, a territory of which Palestine comprised only one part out of one hundred and seventy?¹⁷⁸

Midway through the Arab Revolt Ben-Gurion raised the idea of a Jewish military force. Since an agreement with the Arabs appeared unlikely,¹⁷⁹ he felt that a Jewish military detachment should be established to help the Government maintain order and thereby prevent British concessions at Zionist expense. He raised the idea after learning from the Colonial Secretary that the British would have to limit immigration in response to pressure from the Arab states and to prevent a recurrence of disorders. The action would be forced on the British by their military weakness and the uncertain international situation.¹⁸⁰

Ben-Gurion expected the British, who were themselves rearming, to welcome his plan,¹⁸¹ which included provisions for one Jewish military unit in Palestine and a second in England. He convinced several important Zionist leaders in London to pressure the British on its behalf by explaining that it would strengthen the Zionist position there as well as in the *yishuv*. He must have also hoped that a Jewish military unit in Palestine would help decrease the adverse effects of *havlagah*.

Laws to protect small landowners, parity in an executive body, federation with surrounding states, concessions on immigration and the establishment of Jewish military forces — all these proposals found support among Zionist elements as either partial or complete solutions to the Palestine question. Among the other proposals raised by the Zionists, one idea was given serious consideration by the British: cantonization — division of the country into territories connected by federal ties. A few months before the Arab Revolt Arthur Cust, a former official in the Palestine administration, had put forward a cantonization plan calling for the division of Palestine into one Jewish and one Arab canton, with enclaves at the Holy Places and at Haifa.¹⁸² The Jewish canton was to include part of the coastal plain and other areas where Jewish

settlements were concentrated; the Arab canton was to be united with Transjordan. Each was to enjoy a large measure of autonomy under the Mandatory Government, and eventually to become independent.¹⁸³ Although Cust had published his plan in February 1936, it received little attention until later in the year, when he presented his idea before a meeting of the Royal Asian Society at which Weizmann was present. Weizmann and Cust held several meetings, and, according to Ben-Gurion, Weizmann appears to have agreed with Cust on some form of cantonization.¹⁸⁴

In essence what Gust's plan involved was the eventual partition of Palestine, an eventuality which Mordechai Namirovsky, a leader of the Mapai Party, presented for Official Zionist consideration during the first phase of the Arab Revolt. Namirovsky's suggestion that a Jewish state be established in half of Mandatory Palestine, in order to reach agreement with the Arabs, did not engender a positive response at the time.¹⁸⁵ Cust's plan was not even discussed in Official Zionist political bodies, and the little that was said about it outside these bodies indicates that the plan's nonacceptance of Jewish immigration into the Arab canton made it unpopular.¹⁸⁶

Another approach toward the Arabs, which received strong consideration in the 1920s and early 1930s, was to organize the Palestinian Arabs themselves in an agreement with the Zionists, bypassing their leaders. The few Zionist leaders who still viewed this as a viable solution either discounted the existence of Palestinian Arab nationalism (a disbelief which had begun to be dispelled in Official Zionist circles) or believed in the overriding power of class interests.¹⁸⁷ (The latter persisted in viewing Palestinian Arab leaders as feudal exploiters.) But, however much Official Zionist leaders may have agreed with elements of this view, they could not reach the same conclusion. Shertok perhaps best expressed the prevailing view when he said,

The leadership of this Arab movement is made up of persons raised up by the events. It is impossible to claim that because this leadership was not elected in a general election it is not leadership. There is no faction which does not see them as the leadership.... This Arab leadership is a political factor; this is the way it is seen by the Arab public, and the Government has recognized it..¹⁸⁸

The Zionists would therefore have to direct any attempts at negotiations at the existing Arab leadership.

Zionist-Arab Negotiations

During the first phase of the Revolt the Official Zionist consensus was that negotiations with Palestinian Arabs would head off excessive British concessions and strengthen the Zionist position in dealings with the Government. Only by forming an independent policy vis-à-vis the Arabs could the Zionists demonstrate their importance.¹⁸⁹

The Palestinian Arab figure most involved in negotiations with Zionists was Musa 'Alami, a prominent leader not associated with any political party. Motivated largely by a hatred of violence and the belief that Arab violence would harm the Arab cause,¹⁹⁰ 'Alami's immediate aim was to end both the bloodshed and the strike by extracting Zionist concessions on immigration.¹⁹¹ To further this goal he seems to have been prepared to make what were, from the Arab point of view, major concessions. In conversations with both Gad Frumkin¹⁹² and Magnes, 'Alami agreed to increase Jewish immigration to the point where Jews would constitute 40

percent of the total population within ten years, an average annual immigration of 30,000. The agreement was to be temporary and tied to an understanding on land and administrative matters. In a preliminary agreement reached with Magnes, it was decided that Jewish land purchases would allow for subsistence areas to be retained by the fellahin, and that Arab-Jewish parity would be applied in both high-ranking administrative positions and the legislative council.¹⁹³ It was further agreed that the Zionists would not make use of their unused immigration certificates while negotiations were in progress.¹⁹⁴

During the period between 'Alami's separate conversations with Frumkin and Magnes the latter two formed the Group of Five together with Moshe Smilansky, Pinhas Rutenberg and Moshe Novomeysky,¹⁹⁵ prominent Zionists who concurred in the belief that Arab consent and agreement were a necessary prerequisite to the fulfillment of Zionism,¹⁹⁶ This was in contrast to general Official Zionist thought, which viewed such consent merely as a way of achieving Zionist goals and which would be opposed to any terms of agreement that might hamper development of the National Home. Besides, since few Official Zionists considered 'Alami to be an authoritative Palestinian Arab political leader,¹⁹⁷ they did not believe that the Group's proposal, no matter how concessionary, would be acceptable to Palestinian Arabs.¹⁹⁸ And without the requisite authority an agreement would bring the Zionists more harm than good by giving the High Commissioner the impression that they were willing to make concessions without the guarantee of Arab compliance.¹⁹⁹ In any case, the Jewish Agency would only accept an immigration figure double the 30,000 offered by 'Alami, and even that only for a period of five years, half that cited in the agreement.²⁰⁰

The Group's preliminary agreement proposal, based on their talks with 'Alami, was the subject of intense speculation for many years. Had the Zionists, in their rejection of the agreement, missed a golden opportunity to arrive at an understanding with the Arabs? Probably not. For even though 'Alami, one of the most moderate of Palestine Arabs, was willing to make concessions in order to secure suspension of immigration and thereby, he thought, end the Revolt, he still rejected the idea of a Jewish state. It therefore seems that, in an atmosphere of two conflicting national aspirations, the agreement would have provided little more than a short-lived truce to be broken by either side at the first opportunity.

Unlike Musa 'Alami, Hussain Khalidi, Mayor of Jerusalem, was a member of the Arab Higher Committee. Khalidi had come under considerable Arab pressure to announce a strike of the city's municipal workers, but the eventuality that the Jewish vice-mayor would then assume his post must have fired Khalidi's enthusiasm to end the general strike.²⁰¹ The most serious of the several Zionist attempts to negotiate with Khalidi²⁰² was probably that of Haim Solomon, a Jewish member of Jerusalem's city council. Contemporary reports on the conversation between Solomon and Khalidi do not coincide. Some relate that Khalidi, who favored a permanent Jewish-Arab agreement whereby Jews would be allowed to purchase 40 percent of the land in Palestine and bring in 30,000 immigrants per year, promised to consult with other Arab leaders before continuing negotiations. Since there were no further talks between the two, it seems that Khalidi, like 'Alami, found little support for his ideas among other Arab leaders.²⁰³

The Zionists considered the Mufti's consent essential to any agreement with the Arabs, and when their repeated attempts to reach him through other prominent Palestinian Arab leaders proved futile they complained of his unwillingness to meet with them directly²⁰⁴ and sought a meeting through non Palestinian Arab leaders. The first such contact was probably that made by Nahum Vilensky, who met with Muhammad 'Ali 'Aluba in Cairo in early May. Represented to

the Zionists as a former Egyptian cabinet minister and close correspondent of the Mufti,²⁰⁵ 'Aluba told Vilensky that he would arrange for Arab-Jewish negotiations if the Jews were willing to talk.²⁰⁶ When the matter was relayed to Shertok, he replied that the Zionists were ready to negotiate unconditionally.²⁰⁷ 'Aluba then reportedly suggested to the Mufti that he and other Palestinian Arab leaders meet with Zionist leaders in Cairo. When the Mufti (and Ragheb Nashashibi) responded with the call for a temporary suspension of Jewish immigration as a precondition to talks, both Vilensky and 'Aluba agreed that this indicated his unwillingness to negotiate.²⁰⁸

In late May 1936 Vilensky did succeed in initiating more protracted negotiations with a group of Pan-Arabists then living in Egypt.²⁰⁹ Headed by Dr. 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, a Syrian, and Amin Sa'id, a Pan-Arabist newspaperman, this group,²¹⁰ which the Zionists took to have been in contact with the Arab Higher Committee, proposed that the Jews agree to not exceed 40 percent of the Palestine population. When Vilensky rejected this proposal on behalf of the Zionists, they then suggested a ceiling of 50 percent, a figure that Ben-Gurion, who seriously doubted that the Mufti would find it agreeable, asked Vilensky to check on.²¹¹ According to the Arab group, the Mufti said that he would only negotiate with the Jews if they agreed to not exceed 80 percent of the Palestinian Arab population, that is, a little less than 45 percent of the whole, a condition that was, of course, unacceptable to the Zionists. The same group also proposed the establishment of an Arab federation with Zionist help, as well as Jewish-Arab parity in the administration of Palestine, provided that the Jews accept the 40 percent limits.²¹²

Toward the end of September the Zionists dispatched Bernard Joseph to Cairo after having been informed that a meeting with a member of the Arab Higher Committee was possible.²¹³ While the expected meeting did not take place, the Committee member having been recalled to Palestine, Joseph did have two meetings with Shahbandar at which he presented proposals regarding the three major problem areas in Jewish-Arab relations: land; self-governing institutions; immigration.

Among Joseph's proposals aimed at decreasing Palestinian Arab concern over land sales was the establishment of a review board comprising an Arab, a Jewish and a British member to consider whether individual land transactions had caused hardship or brought about injustice to the Arabs involved. Joseph also told Shahbandar that the Zionists were prepared to finance large land-development schemes that would benefit both communities and were willing to enter into a five-year agreement limiting total land sales. On self-governing institutions, Joseph relayed to Shahbandar that the Zionists would agree to representational parity in a legislative council regardless of the future populations of either community. He also proposed that Arabs and Jews agree on a five-year maximum immigration figure, but did not suggest what that number might be. Finally, he told Shahbandar that the Zionists would, under certain conditions, be willing to have Palestine form part of an Arab federation.

In his conversations with Joseph, Shahbandar indicated that while compromise might be possible on land sales and the legislative council, he saw great difficulties arising from the immigration question. He therefore suggested that immigration be permitted only until Jews reached equality in numbers with Arabs, a proposal which Joseph rejected.²¹⁴

Shahbandar was probably speaking for most of his negotiating group when he told Joseph that it was the potential benefits of Jewish-Arab cooperation that made him anxious to settle the Palestine problem. He probably hoped, as well, that the Jews would be politically and financially helpful in establishing an Arab federation. However, either because of its connection with the

Arab Higher Committee or because Shahbandar's group itself wanted to preserve the country's Arab character, it was unwilling to make concessions that would allow Jews to become a majority in Palestine.

The Zionists met with several other Syrian leaders during this period, including heads of the Syrian National Bloc. In negotiations in Damascus with Fakhri al-Barudi and Shukri al-Kuwatli, they put forth proposals similar to those which Joseph had suggested to Shahbandar. However, while they did offer parity in both the administrative and self-governing institutions of the country, this time they did not agree to accept numerical limitations on immigration.²¹⁵ Without entering into details, al-Barudi asked the Zionists to halt immigration so he could negotiate with Palestinian Arab leaders, both he and al-Kuwatli stressing the importance as well as the feasibility of Jewish-Arab understanding.²¹⁶

In meetings with Syrian delegation leaders in Paris, Jamil Mardam, a founder and leader of the Syrian Nationalist Bloc, expressed his readiness to help achieve Jewish-Arab agreement on the Palestine question. The Syrian negotiators in both Paris and Damascus seem to have felt that their help in ending the Arab Revolt would be rewarded by Zionist help in gaining their independence from France. Since they believed that the Zionists could influence French Premier Leon Blum, they promised to apply pressure on Arab leaders in Palestine to ease the situation there.²¹⁷ But despite their wish to help bring about a Jewish-Arab understanding, the available evidence does not indicate their willingness to accept either an eventual Jewish majority or a Jewish state in Palestine.

Negotiations were also held with the Christian Lebanese President and Patriarch, who only seemed to have been prepared to enter into an economic and cultural agreement with the Zionists.²¹⁸

The foregoing attempts at Arab-Jewish rapprochement clearly indicate that the only way the Zionists could have reached an agreement was by abandoning Zionism as they knew it. It therefore became the task of the British Royal Commission to investigate other avenues toward a solution to the Palestine question.

Notes

¹ For want of a generally recognized alternative, the term "terror" is used to describe indiscriminate attacks on nonmilitant Jewish individuals, groups or property. If met by armed Jewish resistance, as opposed to reprisal Jewish terror, the same attacks would have had to be termed "civil war." "Armed revolt" refers to the military struggle against the British authorities. While the term "disturbances" was usually employed by Zionists, it was often used by non-Zionists as well; in this study the term is often used when Zionist attitudes are being examined.

² Executive Proceedings, 19 April 1936, C.Z.A.

³ On these rumors, see the memorandum by E. Sasson to B. Joseph, 5 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9753. See also, *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 633-634.

⁴ See "Decisions of the Arab Parties' Leaders," 22 April 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9331.

⁵ For an account of arguments in the Higher Committee over ending the strike, see A. H. C[ohen], "Reports of the Arab Bureau" (hereinafter referred to as "Arab Bureau"), 22 April, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3253.

⁶ Report by E. Efpstein], 25 April 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252.

⁷ *Royal Commission Report*, p. 97; Memorandum from A.H. Cohen to B. Joseph, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini: 1936* (Political Diaries, 1936) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1968), pp. 101-102.

⁸ See the Arab Higher Committee's answer to the High Commissioner in A.H.C., Arab Bureau," 6, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252. While the Nashashibis opposed the the general strike at first, they soon began to support such extreme

measures as the civil servants* strike. They may have hoped that the strike would force both the Mufti and Jerusalem Mayor Khalidi to strike as well, thereby damaging relations between these two and the High Commissioner to the Nashashibis' advantage. See report of E. Epstein, 25 April 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252.

- [9](#) See, for example, E.S[asson], "Arab Bureau," 12,31 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252; "Internal Arab Terror against Political Opponents," C.Z.A., S25/8233.
- [10](#) The interpretations and attitudes of individual Zionists during the first phase of the Arab Revolt, at least from May 1936, were marked by changes and confusion. This study attempts to present the main thrust of individual Zionist opinions.
- [11](#) This group included some who, while they did see such nationalism, thought it existed in only certain social strata.
- [12](#) Many British figures shared this Zionist opinion; see, for example, J. Michael Cohen, "Sir Arthur Wauchope, the Army, and the Rebellion in Palestine, 1936," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. IX (January 1973), p. 20.
- [13](#) *Davar*, 1936: 29 April, p. 1 15 June, p. 2; 2 July, p. 2; *Haolam*, 30 April 1936, p. 254.
- [14](#) See, for example, *Davar*, 22 May 1936, p. 1; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 122.
- [15](#) *Haolam*, 1936: 9 July, p. 526; 6 August, p. 602.
- [16](#) *Ibid.*; *Haaretz*, 16 May 1936; Ch. W[eizmann], "Note of Conversation with the Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin,..." 19 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/7559; Tabenkin and Moshe Beilinson in Political Committee, 28 July 1936, Mapai Archives. See also Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [17](#) *Haolam*, 28 May 1936, p. 382.
- [18](#) *The Palestine Post*, 24 June 1936, p. 3.
- [19](#) *Haolam*, 1936: 14 May, p. 309; 28 May, p. 382; 25 June, p. 479; 6 August, p. 602; 22 October, p. 73.
- [20](#) *Davar*, 1936: 10 May, p. 1; 2 July, p. 2; 28 July, p. 1. See also "The Causes of the Disturbances," C.Z.A., S25/10.212, undated document from late 1936.
- [21](#) *Hashomer Hatzair*, 1936: 1 May, p. 3; 1 July, p. 6; 15 July, p. 11; 1 September, p. 4.
- [22](#) As far as available evidence shows, Shertok was the first to characterize the disturbances as a revolt. See his comments in Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives; see also Executive proceedings, 23 April, 5, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [23](#) Sharett, *Dwn'es: 1936*, p. 95.
- [24](#) See, for example, Shertok in Political Committee, 28 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [25](#) See Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 5 May 1936, C.Z.A., and in his *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 164, 170, 283. Shertok also in Central Committee, 9 June 1936 and in Political Committee, 28 July 1936, Mapai Archives. See further Senator in Executive Proceedings, 20 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [26](#) See Ben-Gurion and Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 23 April 1936, C.Z.A.
- [27](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 364; see also his remarks in Executive Proceedings, 6 July 1936, C.Z.A.
- [28](#) This is not to say that there were no public expressions of this dissension; see, for example, M. Assaf in *Davar*, 17 June 1936, p. 2; Y. Thon in *Davar*, 31 July 1936, p. 3.
- [29](#) See Beilinson's argument in Political Committee, 28 July 1936, Mapai Archives. See also *Haolam*, 28 May 1936, pp. 381-383. Cf. Ben-Gurion's public approach in *Davar* (Evening Edition), 6 June 1936, p. 1.
- [30](#) The principal figures in this majority were Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Ussishkin, Senator, Shprintzak and A. Kaplan. In the dissenting minority were Weizmann, Grunbaum, Beilinson and Tabenkin. See, in addition to sources already mentioned, "Meeting of the Inner Actions Committee," 13 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825. For Weizmann's attitude, see "Minutes of Meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Held in London," September [1936/], C.Z.A., S25/1719.
- [31](#) See *Hayarden*, 5,8 May 1936, p. 2.
- [32](#) *Ibid.*, 1936: 26 May, pp. 1-2; 14 August, p. 3; 28 August, p. 7; 30 October, p. 5. However, not all Revisionists employed this term. See also in *Hayarden*, 4 July 1936,p.3.
- [33](#) *Ibid.*, 30October 1936,p.5.
- [34](#) Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 382; cf. Weizmann in *Haolam*, 19 November 1936, p. 138. See also *Haolam*, 4 June 1936, pp. 400-401; *Davar*, 21 July 1936; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 97; B. Joseph in Executive Proceedings, 3, 31 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [35](#) See *Davar*, 1936: 26 April, 14, 31 May, 8 December; "Minutes of an Interview with His Excellency the High Commissioner," 31 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/19; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 97.
- [36](#) See 'Alami's denial during a conversation with Shertok in Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives. See also "The Arab Case: Statement by the Palestine Arab Delegation," 1 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/8951.

- [37](#) Executive Proceedings, 31 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [38](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 211-212; Shertok in Political Committee, 22 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [39](#) D. Yisraeli ("The Third Reich and Palestine," pp. 344, 349), who bases his claim on oral testimony, states that only Admiral Canaris, a German intelligence chief, was giving financial aid to Haj Amin al-Hussaini. R. Melka ("Nazi Germany," p. 225), whose source is a document which he assumes is from 1939, agrees that German intelligence gave money to the Mufti. It might well be that this German financial support was given in a later stage of the Revolt. Hirszowicz says that Haj Amin's first official contact with a German representative was probably in mid-1937; see L. Hirszowicz, "Nazi Germany and the Palestine Partition Plan," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. I (October 1964), p. 34.
- [40](#) See Meika, "Nazi Germany," p. 231, note 35.
- [41](#) The British do not seem to have any proof that she was. In fact, no mention was made of Italian money in Palestine in the April 1938 agreement between Britain and Italy which obliged Italy to cease anti-British propaganda to the Arab countries.
- [42](#) Executive Proceedings, 22 April 1936, C.Z.A.; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 97. Shertok is quoted in the Proceedings as having said, "I am sure [that the disturbances are unimportant]," while comments on the same topic in his *Diaries: 1936*, p. 85, quote him as saying, "I hope." Apparently the editor of his diaries made an error.
- [43](#) See the remarks of Ruppin, Hexter and Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 23 April, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion in Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives; *Davar*, 15 June 1936, p. 2.
- [44](#) See, for example, *Haolam*, 4 June 1936, p. 401.
- [45](#) See Fishman and Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [46](#) See, for example, Shertok in *ibid.*, 14 June, C.Z.A.; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 182; E.S., "Arab Bureau," 12 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252; A.H.C., "Arab Bureau," 31 May, 12, 26 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252; A.H.C., "Arab Bureau," 2, 30 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9173 and 12 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252; an untitled report dated 18 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; M.N., "Arab Bureau," 1 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.187; E. Golomb and Shertok in Political Committee, 16 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [47](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 399-407.
- [48](#) Cohen, "Wauchope," p. 23.
- [49](#) *Ibid.*, p. 20; Shertok in Central Committee, 21 May, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [50](#) See Executive Proceedings, 23 April, 14 June 1936, C.Z.A.; Political Committee, 4 May, Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [51](#) See Shertok and Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 22, 23 April 1936, C.Z.A.; Senator and Ruppin, Executive Proceedings, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 127.
- [52](#) Executive Proceedings, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [53](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 80-85; Political Committee, 25 April 1936, Mapai Archives; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 168.
- [54](#) See B. Katznelson in Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives; Central Committee, 21 May 1936, Mapai Archives. On 5 May Thomas corrected himself by reading the High Commissioner's announcement into the Parliamentary record.
- [55](#) Executive Proceedings, 23 April; 3, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 99-102; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 182-183.
- [56](#) Central Committee, 21 May, Political Committee, 23 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [57](#) Proceedings of the Inner Actions Committee, 13 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825.
- [58](#) *Hashomer Hatzair*, 1936: 1 September, pp. 4-5; 15 October, editorial page.
- [59](#) "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine [held in London]," 2 September 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1719; Executive Proceedings, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A. See also Smilansky's support of British policy in "Farmers Union: Minutes of the Meeting of the Center, 1 July 1936," Magnes Archives, P 311-125.
- [60](#) "Communiqué from N.Z.O. [New Zionist Organization] dated 21 April 1936," Jabotinsky Institute, Beth Zeev, Tel Aviv, 8/1-4G (hereinafter referred to as Jabotinsky Archives); *Hayarden*, 1 May 1936, p. 1.
- [61](#) *Hayarden*, 1936: 22 May, p. 2; 26 May, p. 2; 5 June, p. 2; Letter from the Presidency of the New Zionist Organization to the Executive in Palestine, 22 April 1936, Jabotinsky Archives, 4/2-4G.
- [62](#) Executive Proceedings, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [63](#) Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 180-181.

- [64](#) Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [65](#) Executive Proceedings, 23 April 1936, C.Z.A. See also Y. Fishman in the same meeting and in the meeting of 3 May; he held similar views.
- [66](#) Most members of the Executive, particularly Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Senator and Hexter, agreed on the danger of repressive measures of this sort; see also Executive Proceedings, 3, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [67](#) The decision on what to demand seems to have been made not by the Executive, but by the Political Department of the Jewish Agency; see Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [68](#) Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives. See also Executive Proceedings, 23 April, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp.96,113; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 131, 182.
- [69](#) Executive Proceedings, 15, 17 May 1936, C.Z.A.; telegram from the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/6325. See also letter from Dov [Hoz] to Moshe [Shertok] and Ben-Gurion, 18 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/6325.
- [70](#) The announcement was made on 18 May.
- [71](#) The High Commissioner allowed the Zionists to unload ships at Tel Aviv on 15 May, and on 18 May he published the labor immigration schedule for the next six months. See also Executive Proceedings, 17 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [72](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 192, 250, and his comments in Central Committee, 21 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [73](#) The last Zionist attempts to publish Arabic newspapers had been made following the 1929 disturbances.
- [74](#) See, for example, *Hashomer Hatzair*, 1936: 19 July, p. 9; 1 November, p. 2; R. B[inyamin] in *Haolam*, 23 July 1936, p. 570.
- [75](#) See, for example, Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1936, C.Z.A.; *Davar*, 1936: 16 May, p. 1; 1 July, p. 2; letter from Yosef Nahmani to Yitzhaq, 26 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; "Proceedings: Consultation about Arab Newspaper Publication," 20-22.7.1936, Mapai Archives.
- [76](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 203; Shertok and Ussishkin in Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [77](#) Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives; *Hayarden*, 1936:15 May, p. 2; 26 May, p. 2.
- [78](#) "Proceedings: Consultation about Arabic Newspaper Publication," 20-22 July 1936, Mapai Archives. That weekly began publication in March 1937, as *Haqiqat al-Amer*.
- [79](#) Letter from E.E. to Vilensky, 24 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25&3164. According to Shertok, three articles were published in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Jihad*, but the editor received so many complaints that he followed these pieces with several anti-Zionist tracts; see Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [80](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 185; Memorandum from M. Nisani to M. Shertok, 14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; Undated document from about 20 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/4270. See also Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1936, C.Z.A.; Memorandum by E. Epstein to M. Shertok, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3137.
- [81](#) Rutenberg (1897-1942), an engineer, was given a concession for electricity generation on the Jordan river in 1929.
- [82](#) Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [83](#) *Ibid.*, 4 May 1936.
- [84](#) Excluding the Mufti and Jamal ai-Hussaini.
- [85](#) Smilansky, *Tequma Veshoah* (Rise and Holocaust) (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1953), pp. 194-196.
- [86](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, p. 82; Ch.W., "Note of Conversation with the Rt. Hon. J.H. Thomas..., May 18,1936,..." C.Z.A., S25/7559.
- [87](#) See letter from E.E. to M.S., 26 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; Letter to Ya'aqov Shalush, 16 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783. See also Memorandum from A.H. Cohen to M. Shertok and Y. Ben-Zvi, 4 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783. There were also cases in which private Jewish firms paid Arab strike leaders to call off the strike; see Smilansky, *Rise and Holocaust*, pp. 196-197.
- [88](#) Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 3 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Letter from 'Abdallah to Shertok, 6 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3243.
- [89](#) *Ibid.*; "Information from Secret Sources," C.Z.A., S25/3243, undated documents apparently from early May 1936.
- [90](#) See A.H. Cohen, "Between the Political Department and the Amir's Palace in Amman," 28 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3243, a report of several exchanges of correspondence between the Jewish Agency and the Amir or his liaison. Cohen recommended giving him PL500 for expenses; see memorandum from him to M. Shertok and Ben-Zvi, 28 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3243, which relates a conversation with the Amir's liaison Muhammad al-Unsi. In another document dated 1 November 1937, Cohen wrote to Shertok, C.Z.A., S25/3486, that while he offered PL500, Unsi insisted that the Amir needed at least PL1,000. A telegram from Joseph, 15 August 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649, read "...We provide immediately [to 'Abdallah) 500 plus 500 September October..."

- [91](#) Memorandum from A.H. Cohen to M. Shertok and Ben-Zvi, 18 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3243; A.H. Cohen, "Between the Political Department and the Amirate's Palace in Amman," 28 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3243; Letter to Arthur Lourie, 19 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3236.
- [92](#) See *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 97-98; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 192; *Davar*, 26 May 1936, p. 1; Esco, *Palestine*, pp. 793-794.
- [93](#) N.A. Rose, *The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929-1939* (London: Frank Cass, 1937), p. 125.
- [94](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 293. See also Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 181.
- [95](#) Political Committee, 16 June, 31 August 1936, Mapai Archives; *Davar*, 10 July 1936, p. 1; Shertok in Central Committee, 3 August 1936, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 10 July 1936, C.Z.A.
- [96](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 178-179.
- [97](#) Central Committee, 22 August 1936, Mapai Archives; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 192-193, 309.
- [98](#) For these arguments, see above, pp. 146-147.
- [99](#) Executive Proceedings, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A. See also Ussishkin in Executive Proceedings, 6 July 1936, C.Z.A.
- [100](#) See Shertok in *ibid.*, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [101](#) See Shertok's interview with the High Commissioner in Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 148-151.
- [102](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 251-252; Central Committee, 9 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [103](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 310,312,402,406; Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 305-9.
- [104](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 251,310, 327.
- [105](#) Central Committee, 9 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [106](#) *S et Haboker*, 22 July 1936, p. 1.
- [107](#) See Political Committee, 6 July, 31 August 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [108](#) See the comments of Tabenkin, Lufban and Grabovsky in *ibid.*, 31 August 1936, Mapai Archives. See also Letter from Moshe Smilansky to Moshe Shertok, 4 August 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783.
- [109](#) See *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1936: 1 May, pp. 4-5; 15 October, pp. 3-4.
- [110](#) A.H.C., "Arab Bureau," 13 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252.
- [111](#) See "Arab Bureau," 6 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9173; M.N., "Arab Bureau," 1 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.187; A.H.C., "Arab Bureau," 12 July 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252; *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 654-658,
- [112](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 658-659; E.E., "The Organization and Activities of the Arab Bands in Palestine," 12 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3441.
- [113](#) See Ussishkin in an untitled document dated 19 April 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1776 (the minutes of a meeting of Zionist parties); Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 80-84.
- [114](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 261, 414; Dov Hoz in Political Committee, 23 June 1936, Mapai Archives; *Haolam*, 17 May 1936, p. 286.
- [115](#) Untitled document dated 19 April 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1776.
- [116](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 383.
- [117](#) See A.H.C., "Arab Bureau," 18 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/3252.
- [118](#) Central Committee, 21 May 1936, Mapai Archives. See also *Haolam*, 17 May 1936, p. 286; Central Committee, 21 May, 22 August 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [119](#) This does not imply that individual Revisionists always followed the orders of the Irgun B; see David Niv, *Ma'rachoth Hairgun Hazevai Haleumi, 1931-1937* (Battle for Freedom: The Irgun Zevai Leumi, 1931-1937) (Tel Aviv: Klausner Institute, 1965), Vol. I, pp. 268-270.
- [120](#) The main article appeared in *Hayarden*, 12 July 1936, p. 3, and was entitled, "The *Havlagah* of the *Yishuv*, until When?" The other articles appeared in the same newspaper of 5 June, p. 3, and 4 July, p. 3.
- [121](#) Yoseph Trumpeldor (1880-1920), who emigrated to Palestine in 1912, had called for a Jewish society of pioneers to live in Palestine and train in arms and agriculture; he was killed during the Arab attacks on Tel Hal
- [122](#) See *Hayarden*, 1936: 12, 14, 31 July; 14, 31 August; *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 837-838. See also Shertok in Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [123](#) For an analysis of these fears, see Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 379-380. See also Central Committee, 21 May, 4 June 1936, Political Committee, 25 April, 16 June 1936, Mapai Archives; *Hayarden*, 14 August 1936, p. 3,

- [124](#) See Z. Aharonovitz in Central Committee, 21 May 1936, Mapai Archives. See also Dew, 30 August 1936, p. 2; *Hayarden*, 28 August 1936, p. 7.
- [125](#) See E. Golomb, Z. Aharonovitz and Tabenkin in Central Committee, *ibid.* See also *Hayarden*, 24 July, p. 3; 14 August, p. 3, 1936.
- [126](#) *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1936: 1 September, pp. 2-3; 1 October, p. 3. The organization also considered the policy's effect on the British and the Jews; see, for example, *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1936: 15 June, p. 2; 1 July, p. 8.
- [127](#) See Shertok in Central Committee, 9 June, Golomb in Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [128](#) G. Shefer, "Saudi Arabia and the Palestine Problem during the Arab Revolt, 1936-1939," *Hammah Hehadash*, Vol. XXII, No. 2 (1972), pp. 138-139.
- [129](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 493-496; Shefer, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.
- [130](#) Central Committee, 11-12 September 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [131](#) See Shertok's conversation with the High Commissioner in Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 292-294; *Davar*, 28 August, 1936, p. 1.
- [132](#) Political Committee, 31 August 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [133](#) Central Committee, 29 September 1936, Mapai Archives; telegram from Shertok to Lourie, 27 September 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1649; *Haolam*, 24 September 1936, p. 2.
- [134](#) Cohen, "Wauchope," p. 27.
- [135](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 298-301, 334; *Davar*, 5-6 November 1936; "Arab Bureau," 30 November 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9173; Memorandum by David Hacohen, 22 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; E.E., "Arab Bureau," 27 December 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9786; E.E., "The Activities of the Arab Bands in Palestine," 27 October, C.Z.A., S25/3441, 12 November 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783. The same point of view was shared by General Dill, Commander of the British Army in Palestine; see Cohen, "Wauchope," pp. 28-29. For the Revisionist assessment, see letter from the President of the New Zionist Organization to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Jabotinsky Archives, 8/1-4G; *Hayarden*, 31 October 1936, p. 2.
- [136](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 300-301, 312-313, 334-336.
- [137](#) Cohen, "Wauchope," p. 29; The Arab Higher Committee, "Text of a Secret Proclamation by the Arab Higher Committee...," n.d., C.Z.A., S25/3441,
- [138](#) See "The Causes of the Disturbances," n.d., C.Z.A., S25/10.122; Ruppin in Executive Proceedings, 15 May 1936, C.Z.A.; B. Katznelson in Central Committee, 21 May 1936, Mapai Archives; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 175; Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 22 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- Among the probably very few Official Zionists who doubted the assumption at this time was Levi Shkolnik (later Eshkol); see Central Committee, 4 June 1936, Hashomer Hatza'ir agreed that it was important that the *yishuv* increase its population, but did not see this as a way to an understanding with the Arabs. If the disturbances continued during the growth of the Jewish population, hatred would continue, and a Jewish majority would not bring peace. See *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1936:1 May, pp. 2-4; 15 June, p. 10.
- [139](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 163.
- [140](#) See *ibid.*, pp. 343, 478-481; "Meeting of the Inner Actions Committee," 13-14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825.
- [141](#) See Central Committee, 15 October 1936, Mapai Archives; *Davar*, 1936: 20 May, p. 2; 17 June, p. 4; 4 October, p. 4; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 376-379.
- [142](#) Political Committee, 4 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [143](#) This force had begun to be recruited by the end of May; by September it reached 2,863 members. Its task was primarily to protect Jewish settlements from Arab attacks.
- [144](#) See Shertok in Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [145](#) See *Davar*, 14 May, 1, 3, 5, 18 June 1936; *Haolam*, 29 October 1936, p. 93; undated and untitled document in C.Z.A., S25/4270; "Meeting of the Inner Actions Committee," 13-14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825.
- [146](#) See Inner Actions Committee, 13-14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825.
- [147](#) *Davar*, 12 October, 12 November 1936; Central Committee, 29 September 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [148](#) See Central Committee, 3, 9 June, 3 August, 29 September 1936, Mapai Archives; E. Berlin, Ruppin and Golomb in Inner Actions Committee, 14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825.
- [149](#) Executive Proceedings, 20 May 1936, C.Z.A. See also Fishman in the same meeting, and Ussishkin in Executive Proceeding, 6 July 1936, C.Z.A.

- [150](#) *Ibid.*, 19 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 255; Central Committee, 29 September 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [151](#) See the comments of Hexter and E. Rotenstreich in Executive Proceedings, 20,22 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [152](#) *Ibid.*; Kaplan in Political Committee, 23 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [153](#) Executive Proceedings, 20, 22 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [154](#) *Ibid.*
- [155](#) *Ibid.*, 29 September 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [156](#) See also Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 29 May 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [157](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 239, 257.
- [158](#) Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, p. 74. Cf. Executive Proceedings, 19 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [159](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 217. See also p. 357, citing a similar statement in early August.
- [160](#) *Ibid.*, p. 372, emphasis added.
- [161](#) Executive Proceedings, 20 May 1936, C.Z.A.
- [162](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 259, 382.
- [163](#) Central Committee, 29 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [164](#) Opponents in the Executive of the Jewish Agency were Ussishkin, Grunbaum, Fishman and Rotenstreich. In the Mapai they were Tabenkin, Golomb and Beilinson.
- [165](#) See Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A. See also Tabenkin in Central Committee, 29 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [166](#) This point was emphasized mainly by Grunbaum; see Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A. See also Tabenkin and Beilinson in Central Committee, 3, 23 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [167](#) See Fishman in Executive Proceedings, *ibid.*
- [168](#) See Central Committee, 29 June 1936, Mapai Archives. The major supporters were Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Kaplan, Ruppin, Ben-Zvi, and, to a lesser extent, B. Katznelson.
- [169](#) See, for example, Ruppin and Ben-Zvi in Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [170](#) See Shertok in Central Committee, 29 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [171](#) See Shertok in Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [172](#) Executive Proceedings, 14 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [173](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 255.
- [174](#) Executive Proceedings, 20 May 1936, C.Z.A.; "Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine held on September 3 [1936]..," C.Z.A., S25/1719.
- [175](#) Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A. Magnes was for an annual immigration of about 30,000, for ten years.
- [176](#) Zeev Jabotinsky, *Baderech Lamedina* (On the Road to a State) (Jerusalem: 'Ari Jabotinsky, 1953), pp. 257-258. These views are taken, with a few linguistic changes, from an article published in 1933 and reprinted in *Hayarden*, 26 May 1936, p. 3; see also *Hayarden*, 22 April, 1, 5, 15, 22 May 1936.
- [177](#) *Ibid*
- [178](#) Z. Jabotinsky, "The Morality of the Iron Wall," *Hayarden*, 29 May 1936, p. 3.
- [179](#) See, for example, Executive Proceedings, 19, 20, 22 May 1936, C.Z.A.; Central Committee, 3, 9 June, 3 August 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [180](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 349.
- [181](#) Central Committee, 11-12 September 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [182](#) Zionists had raised the idea long before Cust. It was probably first suggested by Itamar Ben-Avi, a journalist who, by the end of the First World War, had begun to try to convince Zionist leaders to accept his idea. Victor Jacobson, a representative of the Zionist Organization in Geneva, was another advocate of cantonization. Still another, P. Dickeshtain, wrote articles during the 1930s supporting the idea. For more details, see B. Avniel, *Ba'ayat Hacantonim* (The Cantonization Problem) (Tel Aviv: 'Azriel, 1937); Itamar Ben-Avi, *Yehuda Miyadith* (Judea Immediately) (Tel Aviv: Bene Binyamin, 1930); P. Dickeshtain, "Shitat Hacantonim" (The Cantonization System), *Haolam*, 1930: 14 February, pp. 121-123; 18 February, pp. 142-144.
- [183](#) Hattis, *Bi-National Idea*, pp. 126-128. The major difference between Cust's plan and earlier Zionist proposals was that the

- Zionist advocates of cantonization counted on continued immigration and land purchases in the Arab canton, while Cust probably ruled this out. See Arthur Cust, "A New Pbn for Palestine," *The Spectator*, 21 February 1936, pp. 294-295.
- [184](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 294; Hattis, *Bi-National Idea*, pp. 128-129; Central Committee, 30 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [185](#) Central Committee, 23 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [186](#) *Ibid.*; *Davar*, 14 July 1936, p. 1; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 332.
- [187](#) See, respectively, Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 20 May 1936, C.Z.A., and Tabenkin in Central Committee, 3 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [188](#) Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [189](#) See Shertok's comments in *ibid.*, 23 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [190](#) See Sir Geoffrey Furlonge, *Palestine is My Country: The Story of Musa Alami* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 108.
- [191](#) See, for example, 'Alami's two conversations with Joseph in an untitled document signed by Joseph and dated 11, 28 May 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.093. See also Justice Gad Frumkin in Political Committee, 23 May 1936; Shertok in Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives; J.L. Magnes in Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [192](#) Frumkin (1887-1960) was a member of the Supreme Court.
- [193](#) For Frumkin's conversations, see Shertok's report to the Political Committee, 23 May 1936. For the Magnes-'Alami "agreement" see Central Committee, 3 June 1936, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [194](#) See Executive Proceedings, *ibid.*
- [195](#) Moshe Novomeysky (1873-1961) was a mining engineer; in 1927 he received a concession for mining potash in the Dead Sea area,
- [196](#) The report in Frumkin, *Derech Shofet Birushalaim* (The Way of a Judge in Jerusalem) (Tel Aviv: Davir, 1954), pp. 327-335, is identical to Frumkin's memorandum, "Arab-Jewish Conversations - July 1936: Memorandum for Submission to the Executive of the Jewish Agency," C.Z.A., S25/189; see also Smilansky, *Rise and Holocaust*, p. 195.
- [197](#) See, for example, Frumkin, *urfrage*, p. 326; Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 19 May 1936, C.Z.A. 'Alami's second conversation with Shertok and Joseph should be viewed in light of this question. The two Zionists asked 'Alami if he had the authorization of recognized Arab leaders of permanent standing, such as the Mufti of Jerusalem. Two months later, recalling the events of that last meeting, 'Alami maintained that Joseph was supposed to have contacted him within a few days to receive the reply, but did not. According to Joseph's version of the conversation, 'Alami was supposed to have contacted *him* to deliver the Arab leaders' answer. 'Alami claimed that his decision to break off talks with Shertok was a result of the latter's request that he provide written authorization from the Mufti to continue the negotiations. Shertok saw in this claim an excuse whereby 'Alami covered his inability to secure the authorization. For Magnes's report, see Frumkin, *Judge*, pp. 336-337, or letter from Frumkin to Shertok, 20 August 1936, C.Z.A., S25/2960. For Joseph's report, see the untitled document, 24 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.093.
- [198](#) See the discussion in Central Committee, 2 June; see also Shertok in Central Committee, 9 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [199](#) See, for example, Executive Proceedings, 2 June 1936, C.Z.A.; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 148-150.
- [200](#) According to Frumkin, Ussishkin later was agreeable to a ten-year period.
- [201](#) See Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1936, C.Z.A.
- [202](#) For one such attempt, see Shertok in Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [203](#) See Ben-Zvi in Political Committee, 22 July 1936, Mapai Archives; Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, pp. 216-217.
- [204](#) See Shertok in Political Committee, 22 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [205](#) See Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives. However, in his *Al-Nizarat wal-Wizarat al-Misriyah* (The Egyptian Administrations and Ministries) (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1969), Fuad Kar am makes no mention of him.
- [206](#) "Negotiation with Egyptian Arab Politicians about Agreement between Jews and Arabs in Palestine," C.Z.A., S25/9166, summarizing Vilensky's negotiations and apparently written by him in the Fall of 1937.
- [207](#) Political Committee, 21 June 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [208](#) Letter from Vilensky to Shertok, 9 June 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9166.
- [209](#) "Negotiation with Egyptian-Arab Politicians about Agreement between Jews and Arabs in Palestine," C.Z.A., S25/9166. Vilensky's reliability on dates is open to question.
- [210](#) *Loc. cit.*; the group included members of the Syrian-Palestinian Committee.
- [211](#) *Loc. cit.*; see also Ben Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 333-336.

- [212](#) See Political Committee, 22 July 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [213](#) See Executive Proceedings, 20 September 1936, C.Z.A.
- [214](#) "Minutes of Conversation with Dr. Shahbandar and Amin Eff. Said in Cairo, 21.9.36," and "Note of Conversation with Dr. Shahbandar and Amin Said in Cairo on September 23,1936," C.Z.A., S25/3052.
- [215](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1936*, p. 239; "Proceedings of the Conversation with Fakhri al-Barudi in Duma (near Damascus) on 17 July 1936," apparently recorded by Epstein, C.Z.A., S25/9783.
- [216](#) "Minutes of the Meeting with the Arab National Bloc of Syria (Arab Nationalist Party) at Bludan (near Damascus) on August 1, 1936," apparently written by E. Epstein, C.Z A., S25/10.093, and *ibid*.
- [217](#) "Proceeding of the Conversation with Fakhri al-Barudi... on July 17, 1936," C.Z.A., S25/9783; "Note of Discussion at Meeting of Political Advisory Committee... London... June 25th, 1936...", C.Z.A., S25/1649; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 218-219, 248.
- [218](#) See Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 27 September 1936, C.Z.A.

3

The Royal Commission Inquiry

Arab Economic Gains

The idea of dispatching a Royal Commission to Palestine had been raised even before the outbreak of the Arab Revolt, during the debate of the proposed legislative council. But after the first riots the idea took on new force and the Colonial Secretary announced on 18 May 1936 that a Commission would be appointed once order had been restored. Commission members were named early in August and were given a mandate "to ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances which broke out in Palestine..." and "to make recommendations for their removal and for the prevention of recurrence."¹ The Commission arrived in Palestine on 11 November, after the strike had been called off.

Recognizing the crucial importance of any conclusions reached by the Commission, the Zionists made every effort to submerge their internal differences in order to present their case in a favorable light. Therefore, their statements to the Commission on Jewish-Arab relations and Palestinian Arab political developments were not necessarily reflective of their views as expressed in internal Zionist discussions.² This was not, however, true with regard to their statements before the Commission on Jewish-Arab economic relations.

While Zionists had long assumed that the economic benefits Zionism would bring to Palestine would eventually convince the Arabs to cease their opposition, they did not pretend that they were pursuing their enterprise with the deliberate aim of benefiting the Palestinian Arabs. Ben-Gurion probably spoke for most Zionists when he told the Royal Commission that: "The benefit which is accruing to the country from our work is not the reason and the justification of our being here and of the Jewish National Home."³

Nevertheless, the Zionists did believe that the benefits attained by Palestine's Arabs more than satisfied the Mandate's admonition that no harm be done to them.⁴ To support this claim, they cited the following evidence from their own sources and Administration reports.⁵

Although a considerable number of Arabs emigrated from Palestine during the Ottoman rule, such emigration decreased gradually under the Mandate, and only 196 cases were recorded in 1935.⁶ The Zionists claimed that the higher wages and general economic prosperity resulting from development of the National Home had even resulted in illegal Arab immigration from other countries; some 20,000 to 25,000 seasonal workers had entered Palestine illegally from the Houran region of Syria between 1934 and 1936, 6,000 to 8,000 of whom remained in the country.⁷ There had also been a significant increase in the native Palestinian Arab population, which had remained stable during Ottoman rule. The rate of natural increase was estimated at 28.10 per thousand in 1935, among the highest in the world, an impressive figure especially when compared with Arab countries such as Iraq and Syria, where no significant increase was noted between 1920 and the mid-1930s.⁸ That this increase in Arab population was most marked

in those areas of concentrated Jewish settlements was a further proof that Zionist activities were benefiting the Arabs.⁹

The influx of public and private capital into the economy of Palestine was further evidence of the economic betterment that Zionism had brought to the Palestinian Arabs. By 1937 Jews throughout the world had donated some LP 14,039,000, and these monies had been invested through the national funds in swamp drainage, land reclamation and amelioration, afforestation, housing, health and education.¹⁰ This, together with private Jewish investment amounting to LP30,000,000 between 1932-1935,¹¹ had stimulated progress which benefited all the inhabitants of Palestine, the Arab community included.¹²

By Zionist estimates, at least 60 percent of total tax revenue in 1936 came from the Jewish community, which accounted for only 30 percent of Palestine's population. And the accumulation of a considerable revenue surplus between 1932—1936,¹³ which enabled the Government to employ Arabs in public projects and to extend them social and agricultural services, was also largely due to the rapid growth of the National Home. This activity also resulted in an increase in the agricultural taxes remitted to the Government.¹⁴

The Zionist belief that the growth of Jewish industry was the main stimulus behind Arab industrial development¹⁵ was bolstered by the fact that industrial undertakings in Palestine, most of these traditional in nature,¹⁶ had grown from 1,235 before the First World War to 2,290 in 1933.¹⁷

The fellahin, too, had benefited, from the remission of agricultural taxes which the Zionists claimed had been made possible by Jewish urban growth. And their intensive mixed farming depended primarily on the growing demand and purchasing power of the Jewish urban population; the Jewish Agency agricultural experimentation station estimated that about one half of the fellahin's marketed produce was purchased by the Jewish urban population.¹⁸

The accusation that Arabs were being forced from the rural areas was refuted on the grounds that even Government census figures showed that rural Arabs had increased their share of total Arab population from 65.6 to 67.3 percent between 1922 and 1931.¹⁹ That the rising living standard of the Arab agricultural population was a direct result of their selling land to Jews²⁰ was evidenced by the fact that the most flourishing Arab villages were those closest to Jewish settlements.²¹ In addition, the Jewish settlements employed about 6,000 Arabs,²² most of whom came from neighboring villages. None of these benefits would have reached the fellahin without the development of the National Home.²³

The Zionists claimed that although large-scale immigration frequently caused wages to become depressed due to an oversupply in the labor market, this had not occurred in Palestine. On the contrary, wages in Palestine had increased substantially, and were impressively high in comparison with wages in other Arab countries.²⁴

Taken as a whole, it does appear to be true that, despite their abhorrence of the Zionist enterprise, and despite the hardship it entailed on a small number of individuals,²⁵ the Palestinian Arabs derived great economic benefit from the agricultural and industrial development of the *yishuv*. However, most Palestinian Arab leaders did not admit to this, and those who did would have preferred a poor Palestine without Jews to a prosperous country that comprised the National Home.²⁶ For them the political consequences of the growing Zionist presence obscured the economic benefits. Where Zionists saw Arabs finding employment with Jews or fellahin taking advantage of an expanding produce market, Arabs saw their own labor being expended on

building the Jewish National Home and feeding its citizens. And when Arab land was sold to Jews, they could not view the sale of land, much of which had never been cultivated, as a financial transaction, but saw only the passing of Arab land into Jewish hands.

The Agrarian Issue

Zionist confidence in the beneficial effects of their agricultural activities helps explain why they rejected restrictive Government land policies in favor of the developmental approach. While they argued against land reserves²⁷ and cantonization, they particularly opposed the proposals to create subsistence areas, maintaining that the proposal announced by the Government on the eve of the Revolt underestimated the amount of arable land in Palestine²⁸ and miscalculated the relative amounts of different categories of land needed to support an agricultural family.²⁹ Pointing out that Arabs had not been forced to sell land to Jews, but had done so to improve their remaining parcels, to free themselves from debt, or simply for monetary gain, the Zionists said they had no cause for complaint regarding Jewish land purchases,³⁰ especially since many of those who were complaining had themselves sold land to the Jews.³¹

A more genuine way to help the fellahin would be to improve their agricultural methods and increase the scope of irrigation to foster intensive rather than extensive cultivation. According to Ruppin, an agricultural expert, only 600,000 of the cultivable 3,000,000 dunams were currently being irrigated. The remaining 2,400,000 dunams, if irrigated, could absorb an additional 101,000 peasant families.³²

The Zionists also offered to promote agricultural development by financing public utility companies which the Government would help manage. The Zionists would receive a 99-year lease on a part of the land developed for use by individual Jews. Arab owners or tenants, who would receive developed land directly from the Government, would then enjoy the advantages of farm rationalization, crop rotation, consolidation of holdings and a resultant rise in living standards.³³

In their discussions on the land question, Zionists in the Agency all agreed that the boundaries of the National Home included Transjordan, which had been separated from Palestine by the British in 1922. Both Ussishkin and Fishman considered all of historic Palestine to be the fatherland of the Jews alone, Fishman's approach deriving mainly from his religious beliefs. They believed that the Mandate obliged the Government to facilitate Jewish immigration and land acquisition and that, including Transjordan, the country was capable of absorbing millions more Jews; if the British disagreed with this figure they had the option of transferring Palestinian Arabs to other Arab countries to make room for the Jews.³⁴

Ben-Gurion felt differently, as did most other Official Zionists of the Jewish Agency Executive.³⁵ While agreeing that historic Palestine including Transjordan could absorb millions more Jews, they told the Royal Commission that they were willing to bring land purchase and settlement to a halt when immigration reached the point where its continuation would necessitate the displacement of Arabs.³⁶ If, after all, Transjordan was not incorporated into the Jewish Home, they would ask British permission to purchase land there to relocate those Palestinian Arab tenants who would consent to move when the land they farmed was bought by Jews.³⁷

Senator, while he agreed in general with the majority approach, rejected their proposal to

purchase land in Transjordan. He felt that, since it ran the risk of being interpreted as a Zionist attempt to evacuate the Arabs from Palestine, it might prove a major political blunder.³⁸

Since the Royal Commission was generally concerned with political rather than economic considerations, in the end it recommended a series of prohibitive land measures of the sort that Zionists had so steadfastly resisted.

Jewish Labor

Few Zionists realized that the frequent public appeals by the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency to hire Jewish workers posed obstacles to Jewish-Arab understanding; nor did they view the promotion of Jewish labor as a boycott of Arab labor. This campaign did, however, encounter opposition from other Zionist groups.

Opposition from the Farmers Union seems to have been based on the non-dependability of Jewish workers, who, they claimed, tended to abandon agricultural work during prosperous years,³⁹ who were not as productive as Arab workers and were therefore not entitled to the higher salaries demanded by their labor organization, and who, with their Histadrut-backed demands for political and social rights in the settlements, were less pliable in general than Arab workers.⁴⁰ Most important, the low world price for citrus in 1936 rendered the farmers incapable of paying higher salaries.⁴¹

The Bi-nationalists opposed the exclusive use of Jewish labor on ideological and political grounds. They agreed that the principle of Jewish labor was essential to the further development of the National Home, but thought a policy of exclusive Jewish employment would impede understanding with the Arabs. They therefore demanded that a certain percentage of jobs be given to Arabs.⁴²

On this as on most issues, the socialist Hashomer Hatzai was concerned mainly with relations between Jewish and Arab workers. Zionists should call for maximum use of Jewish labor; but the exclusive use of Jews would be discriminatory.⁴³ One of Zionism's basic aims was to correct the imbalance in the Jewish social structure by increasing the number of workers. This imbalance had been a perpetual source of criticism in the Diaspora, where Jews were accused of economically exploiting their host societies.⁴⁴ If the Jews used Arab labor to develop their agricultural settlements and the National Home, they would again be open to the old accusations.⁴⁵

The labor question was closely linked to immigration, since the number of agricultural workers given immigration certificates depended on the call for such workers by Jewish enterprises. If Jewish employees hired Arab workers instead of Jews, the demand for Jewish labor immigrants would markedly decrease.⁴⁶

Thus, despite the deteriorating economic conditions of late 1935 and early 1936, Zionist bodies increased their pressure on farmers to employ more Jews. Jewish employment did increase during the Arab strike,⁴⁷ but as soon as the strike was over the farmers rehired their Arab laborers.⁴⁸ The Histadrut and the Jewish Agency opposed this trend, but without trying to put a complete stop to the use of Arab labor. They deemed the retention of Jewish workers necessary to prevent increased unemployment, especially since a large number of those employed in various aspects of security would be forced onto the labor market at the conclusion

of the unrest.⁴⁹

The Revisionists, who also called for the exclusive employment of Jewish labor in Jewish enterprises, strongly opposed the Histadrut methods of striking and picketing the Jewish employers it regarded as class enemies. The Revisionists suggested instead that a national employment agency be established, along with an institute to arbitrate labor and management disputes.⁵⁰

Although the campaign for the exclusive employment of Jews in the old Jewish settlements was never completely successful, the Zionists were able to apply the principle in Jewish National Fund settlements, which were more directly controlled by the Jewish Agency and were governed by the "self-labor" system in which no settlement could have more land than its members could cultivate themselves.⁵¹ If special circumstances necessitated the temporary use of hired labor, the Fund required that it be Jewish labor. Such circumstances were apparently rare; although 30 percent of Jewish-owned land was controlled by the National Fund, only about 300 hired laborers worked there.⁵²

The fact that advocates of Jewish labor were more interested in the employment of Jews than in displacing Arab workers can best be illustrated by the actions of the Histadrut, which, while it was the main supporter of the principle of Jewish labor, did more than any other Zionist organization to improve the social and economic conditions of Arab workers, even helping them strike for better working conditions. While the Histadrut hoped to thereby create class solidarity, as well as to prevent Arabs from falling under the influence of "agitators," on the whole it failed to achieve these aims.

Attributing its overall lack of success to strong opposition from Arab employers and Arab leaders, the Histadrut also claimed that the Government, too, hindered cooperation between Jewish and Arab labor.⁵³ However, the real reason for its failure comes across in a statement an Arab is said to have made to a Zionist: "Can you imagine a group of Arabs coming to Tel Aviv today and preaching to Jewish workers that they abandon Zionism? Would they succeed? The same case applies to us."⁵⁴

This reaction tends to confirm the view of the Revisionists, who pointed out that by 1914 even socialists in Europe were placing national over class interests and joining their respective countries' war efforts. There was even more reason to believe that the emerging Arab working class in Palestine, unfamiliar with the notions of class solidarity, would follow nationalistic leaders, even those of the exploiting class. The Revisionists insisted that the conflict between national aspirations in Palestine acted to cement Arab cohesion across class lines, a point on which most Mapai leaders concurred. They viewed the Histadrut's call for Jewish labor as yet another obstacle to whatever little Jewish-Arab class solidarity might have been possible.⁵⁵

Political Parity

We have discussed political parity in relation to the British-proposed legislative council and to Ben-Gurion's plan for endeavoring to attain some form of Arab-Jewish agreement. In preparing their presentation to the Royal Commission Zionists dealt with the issue once again.

Zionist leaders in London had suggested that the movement publicly adopt parity as a solution to the Palestine problem as early as mid-July 1936.⁵⁶ They repeated their suggestion in mid-

September in the belief that they had to offer the British something to offset mounting political pressure.

Official Zionist reaction in Palestine was mixed. Some favored adoption of the parity principle, but without a public declaration, while others were totally opposed. Since public support for political parity was opposed by a large majority of the Official Zionist leaders in Palestine, the idea was temporarily put aside.⁵⁷ Even Weizmann, a force behind the London call for a declaration on parity, said that such a pronouncement was best avoided.⁵⁸ But the internal debate, over whether the Jewish Agency Executive should back parity before the Royal Commission when and if it proved necessary, continued. Those who favored the move found support in London, while opponents were backed by the Revisionists.

Supporters maintained that some Arabs might be ready to accept parity as part of an overall Jewish-Arab agreement, and that even an Arab rejection of the parity proposal and demand for majority rule would prove that the alleged Arab fear of Jewish domination was only a ruse to camouflage their own goal to dominate.⁵⁹ In any case, supporters claimed, the principle that neither of the two peoples should dominate the other regardless of numerical strength, which had been confirmed by the Zionist Congress of 1931 as the basis of peaceful relations between Jews and Arabs, was in effect the principle of parity.⁶⁰ The British would be agreeable to parity because it would diminish Arab fears of Jewish domination as well as protect British interests in Palestine; parity required the presence of a third party to arbitrate, and this could only be the Mandatory Government. Supporters also pointed out that parity was supported by many British politicians, some of them pro-Arab.⁶¹ By applying it during the Mandate period, Zionists might be able to forestall further obstacles to the development of the National Home.

Official Zionists opposed to parity were guided by the principle that full Jewish rights in Palestine were (1) deeply rooted in history and (2) confirmed by the Mandate, which guaranteed non-Jews in Palestine religious and economic rights, but not political rights. Jews were not "ingathering" merely to obtain half their rights. If the full achievement of Zionism could not be obtained now, Zionists should be willing to wait as long as necessary without conceding these principles.⁶²

As for the British, Official Zionist opponents predicted that viewing parity as a maximum demand by 30 percent of the population for political equality with the majority, and not as a Zionist concession, they would seek a middle course which would guarantee Jewish status.⁶³ In practical terms parity would not constitute an effective change from current practice, since an equal number of Jews and Arabs in ruling institutions would lead to conflicts, thereby leaving decisions in the hands of the British.

Opponents generally maintained that parity would not satisfy the Arabs. Some argued that the Arabs would interpret the offer as a fundamental concession obtained through the murder of Jews and destruction of their property.⁶⁴ Others, on the contrary, said that the Arabs would see it not as a concession, but as a demand for political equality with the majority.⁶⁵ In any case, the Jews should not tell the Arabs half-truths; they wanted to become nothing less than the majority in Palestine and to rule the country as a Jewish state.⁶⁶

The Bi-nationalists, most of whom were members of either Qedmah Mizrahah⁶⁷ or Hashomer Hatza'ir,⁶⁸ wished parity to be declared official Zionist policy and to be adhered to even after the end of the Mandate or the attainment of a Jewish majority.⁶⁹ For them, parity was akin to their concept of a bi-national state.

The Revisionist position on parity, as defined in a memorandum sent to the central committees

of the New Zionist Organization by its Presidency, added several points to the arguments of Official-Zionist opponents. It was felt that parity would tend to transfer the Jewish question from the international forum provided by the League of Nations to the Palestine Administration, which, as far as the Revisionists were concerned, was anti-Zionist. Parity would provide the British with ammunition to justify anti-Zionist actions by allowing it to claim that it, in itself, safeguarded Jewish rights.⁷⁰

The Palestinian Arabs, who had been demanding an end to the Mandate and establishment of an Arab state, believed that the end of British rule was in sight. It would therefore have been against their interests to agree to parity, which meant recognition of Jewish rights in Palestine. The Zionists, however, expecting the Mandate to last for a long time, spoke in terms of decades of British rule.⁷¹ While the Official Zionists aimed for a Jewish majority in a Jewish state, the real possibility that the Royal Commission would impose limitations made these goals seem far away. The parity proposal was designed to prevent limitations on immigration during the long-term Mandate phase.

In order to present a united front before the Royal Commission, the various Official Zionist factions agreed on a formula to be presented by Weizmann should he be asked about parity: If the essential bases of the National Home, particularly immigration and land purchase, were guaranteed, the Zionists would gladly discuss parity.⁷² However, in private meetings with the Commission both Weizmann and Ben-Gurion seem to have made definite offers of political parity as a Zionist solution to the Palestine question.⁷³ The Royal Commission nevertheless concluded that such a solution was not practical.⁷⁴

Zionist-Arab Negotiations

Ben-Gurion's long-standing views on the chances of eventual Arab-Jewish understanding (which were probably supported by the majority of Official Zionists), were closely reflected in the stance that both he and Weizmann took in private sessions with the Royal Commission. Both believed that, since Zionist aspirations and those of the larger Arab World did not necessarily conflict, an eventual agreement between Arabs and Jews was possible. Agreement with other Arab countries would weaken Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism and facilitate Arab-Jewish understanding within the country. Once the Arab countries attained political independence and endeavored to establish positive programs for growth and reform, they would seek Zionist assistance,⁷⁵ Some felt that independent Arab states would enhance the chances for mutual understanding.⁷⁶ Others felt some concern that such Arab independence might stimulate nationalist fervor, thereby strengthening the independence movement in Palestine.⁷⁷ But the Official Zionists do not seem to have envisioned any lasting enmity from the emerging Arab states.

The Zionists did, however, feel that Palestinian Arabs, confident that the *yishuv* could be destroyed, saw no need to reach an agreement with the Jews. Believing that a rapid increase in Jewish immigration was essential to change Arab attitudes,⁷⁸ the Zionists urged the British to pursue a firm policy in support of both the Mandate and further development of the National Home. Once the Arabs realized that the British were serious, they would be forced to reconcile themselves to Zionism.⁷⁹ Understanding that the British would be reluctant to fulfill the Mandate

unless it was clearly in their own best interests, the Official Zionists tried to convince the Royal Commission that strengthening the *yishuv* would secure the strategic position of Britain in Palestine.⁸⁰

The Revisionists, taking a basically different approach in their testimony before the Commissioners, insisted that the Arabs would come to terms only after they saw that they had no alternative, that is, only after the National Home had actually been imposed on them.⁸¹ They therefore called for the immediate establishment of a Jewish military force.⁸²

The Bi-nationalists, more optimistic than the Official Zionists about the possibilities of Jewish-Arab agreement, criticized the Jewish Agency for not pursuing those possibilities that did exist.⁸³ Individual Bi-nationalists maintained that agreement with the Arabs could be achieved on the basis of a bi-national state which would impose few limitations on Zionism. Some suggestions for mutual understanding of this type were formulated by the Qedmah Mizraha Association, which called for units on Arab language, history and culture to be included in the Jewish school curriculum, and for the establishment of economic, cultural and social ties with the Arabs.⁸⁴

The two poles of Bi-nationalist opinion on this issue were exemplified by the views of Haim M. Kalvarisky and Magnes. Kalvarisky, Qedmah Mizraha's most active member, tended to idealize the unifying influence of the common Semitic origins of the two peoples.⁸⁵ He differed little from Ben-Gurion in his opinion that the two national movements complemented each other and that Zionist economic development and unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine and the neighboring states were beneficial to Arabs as well as Jews. To allay Arab fears of Jewish domination, Kalvarisky called for political parity, welcoming the prospect of an Arab federation within which Palestine would be an autonomous state.

Taking a somewhat more realistic view, perhaps because he was more political in his thinking than most members of Qedmah Mizraha, Magnes saw the conflict between Jewish and Arab aspirations more clearly. In a letter to the Royal Commission, he held out little hope for a permanent political agreement between the two communities at that time but suggested a truce for a limited period along the lines he had worked out with Alami. He also proposed that the Royal Commission convene a round-table conference of Jews and Arabs which would be given the general findings of the Commission's report and then strive to work out an agreement; the British would be required to accept whatever agreement the conference reached.⁸⁶

As it turned out, the Royal Commission, concurring with the Revisionist view that the Zionist-Arab conflict was irreconcilable, rejected the Bi-nationalist notion that agreement was possible at that time as well as the Official Zionist contention that it would be possible in the future. In proposing partition as a solution, the Commission rejected the policy proposals of all three branches of Zionism.

During the Royal Commission's inquiry there do not seem to have been any serious political negotiations between Zionists and Arabs - either Palestinian or non-Palestinian. Both Arabs and Official Zionists, considering the British to be the key to the future of Palestine, were preoccupied with preparing their testimony for the Royal Commission.⁸⁷ The Arabs were also acutely aware that the British were more likely to make concessions than the Zionists,⁸⁸ and, further, that the Zionists might use any sign of rapprochement in their endeavor to prolong the Mandate.

While the Zionists would probably have welcomed negotiations during this period, especially those Official Zionists who contended that agreement was possible,⁸⁹ they do not seem to have

sought direct talks, perhaps in the belief that the Arabs would reject their overtures.

By February 1937 it became apparent that the Royal Commission might recommend partition.⁹⁰ In late April there were indications that the Zionists were considering a common front with Arabs, based on a rejection of partition.⁹¹ Feelers were put out to several Arab leaders, and conversations subsequently conducted. In his talks with 'Awni Abdel Hadi, head of the Istiqlal Party and a leading member of the Arab Higher Committee, Shertok presented Ben-Gurion's proposals for political parity and a federation. Awni rejected both, maintaining that a federation could only arise as a result of a long process, and not on the initiative of the Arabs and Jews alone. Besides, any Palestinian state within a federation had to be an Arab state in order to be of value to them. As for parity, Awni contended that it would lead to a Jewish majority and the resultant loss of Palestine's Arab character. Since the Arabs had to maintain a two-thirds majority to remain the decisive factor, the maximum allowable number of Jews in Palestine had already been reached. There was no room for compromise, he said, and the Palestinian Arabs would fight against any further immigration.⁹²

With regard to the Mufti and Ragheb Nashashibi, Shertok reported that although Nashashibi was anxious to sell land to the Jews due to his desperate financial situation, he was "entirely played out, with no guts left in him to make any stand against the Mufti." Already apprised of 'Awni's position, Shertok concluded "These three [the Mufti, 'Awni and Ragheb] not being available for any attempt at a rapprochement, the possibility of any successful approach to Arab circles in Palestine at the present time appears to be ruled out."⁹³

While the motivation for the 'Awni-Shertok talks was their mutual opposition to partition, other talks resulted from Palestinian Arab efforts to obtain Zionist financial help. The most important of these were those initiated by the prominent Shanti family of Jaffa,⁹⁴ who, for a certain sum of money, offered to establish a moderate Arab party⁹⁵ and to put their newspaper, Al-Difa',⁹⁶ at the disposal of the Zionists.⁹⁷ Shertok, opposed to using Zionist finances to establish new Arab parties, decided to limit his talks with Ibrahim Shanti to general political topics.⁹⁸

Negotiations with top Palestinian Arab leaders indicated that the possibility of reaching an agreement with them was slim, but talks with leaders in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Transjordan seemed to present a much brighter chance for understanding and cooperation. The Zionists felt that such cooperation would lessen the support these states had been giving the Palestinian Arabs and prevent other Arab countries from becoming involved in the problem.⁹⁹ This would also give the Zionists the ammunition to refute the British contention that the Arab world was united against Zionism.¹⁰⁰ Efforts to negotiate with non-Palestinian Arab leaders were therefore stepped up,¹⁰¹ as were those to counter Palestinian Arab propaganda by disseminating the Zionist point of view to Arabs outside Palestine.¹⁰²

The Zionists felt that the situation in Iraq had changed since the October 1936 coup of Bakr Sidqi. The new regime was devoting itself more to Iraqi than to Pan-Arab affairs. In talks with the Zionists, Iraqi leaders had shown themselves anxious to enlist Zionist aid in improving their relations with the British, as well as desirous of reaching an understanding with the Jews.¹⁰³ The Iraqi consul in Jerusalem was reported to have said that his government would not involve itself in the Palestine question even if the Royal Commission's recommendations were unfavorable to the Palestinian Arabs.¹⁰⁴

Above all, the Zionists were anxious to reach an agreement with Syria because that would have the greatest effect on the Palestinian Arabs. Some Syrian leaders reportedly expressed a

willingness to use their influence to bring about a Jewish-Palestinian Arab agreement,¹⁰⁵ and Ben-Gurion reported that they had agreed to allow Zionists to participate in the development of their natural resources. Although Ben-Gurion advised against such an undertaking on the grounds that it would be interpreted as an attempt to infiltrate the Arab states,¹⁰⁶ Shertok dispatched an agent to Syria. When the Syrian leader who was contacted rejected any such venture as one that would disgrace Syria before the Arab World, Shertok, now pessimistic about the possibility of Zionist agreement with Syria, wrote: "It will be, of course, rashness on our part to assume that the financial difficulties of the Syrian Government will push them into our arms."¹⁰⁷

Zionist attempts to meet with Ibn Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia were unsuccessful, although several meetings were held with high-ranking Saudi officials.¹⁰⁸

The Arab leader with whom the Zionists had the closest relationship was probably Amir Abdallah of Transjordan, who regularly exchanged views and information with their Political Department. Although it seems that the Department made no attempt to come to a political agreement with him,¹⁰⁹ several Zionist leaders from Palestine did meet with him in London to discuss an arrangement which would include Jewish immigration into Transjordan in exchange for financial aid. The Amir's noncommittal reply encouraged some Zionist leaders to conclude that an agreement was possible.¹¹⁰ More pragmatic, Shertok felt the Amir's complete dependence upon the British made a British-Zionist agreement prerequisite to any Zionist understanding with Abdallah. Shertok, who believed that Abdallah was seriously considering eventual cooperation with the Zionists, attributed the latter's negative public stance to his delicate political position.¹¹¹

Had the situation been different, there is little doubt that 'Abdallah would have welcomed Jewish immigration into Transjordan.¹¹² But, despite the offer by some prominent Transjordanians to submit a memorandum to the Royal Commission suggesting that their country be opened to Jewish immigration,¹¹³ no agreement was ever reached in that quarter either.

Thus, prospects for an Arab-Jewish agreement through negotiations did not improve during the Royal Commission inquiry. It was in this period that some Zionists began to realize that their assistance was not necessarily welcome by the Arab states. Further, the hope that partition rumors would encourage Palestinian Arab-Zionist talks also proved unfounded. Later, the actual publication of the partition scheme did, however, greatly stimulate Arab-Jewish negotiations.

Notes

¹ *Royal Commission Report*, p. vi.

² For example, Ben-Gurion's views on the causes of the Arab Revolt and his attitude toward Palestinian Arab nationalism, as presented in previous chapters, were at variance with his position before the Royal Commission. See his private testimony before the Royal Commission, C.Z.A., S25/4642; see also Political Committee, 20 December 1936, Mapai Archives.

³ Ben-Gurion's public testimony before the Royal Commission, 7 January 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.217.

⁴ Specifically, Article 6.

⁵ See "Jewish Work in Palestine and Its Effect on the Non-Jewish Population" (hereinafter referred to as "Jewish Work"), n.d., C.Z.A., S25/4596.

⁶ To support this assertion, evidence from Great Britain is given in *ibid.*; see *Report on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1935* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), p. 43. The annual estimate for emigration

from Palestine before the First World War was 3,000.

- [7](#) *Royal Commission Report*, p. 292, estimated that 10,000 to 11,000 Houranis might come into Palestine for temporary work during a really bad year. See Shertok's and E. Epstein's testimony before the Royal Commission in *Haolam*, 24 December 1936, pp. 252-253, 255,257. Although the public testimony was published as *Palestine Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), the Hebrew translation will be used throughout this study.
- [8](#) "Jewish Work," C.Z.A., S25/4596; A.M. Carr-Saunders, *World Population* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 310; *Palestine: Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922* (Jerusalem: Greek Convent Press, n.d.), p. 3, and *Census of Palestine 1931* (Alexandria: Whitehead Monis, 1933), pp. 24-25; Great Britain, *Report for 1935*, pp. 151, 322; Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1934* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 115.
- [9](#) The Arab populations of Haifa and Jaffa increased 87 percent and 62 percent, respectively, from 1922 to 1931, while in Nablus there was only a 7 percent increase, and in Gm a decline of 2 percent. In rural areas, the sub-district of Haifa saw an increase of 149 percent and Jaffa of 124 percent, while in Tulkarem and Nablus the increases were only 29 percent and 26 percent, respectively; see *Census of 1922*, pp. 6, 20, 24, 27, 30, and cf. *Census of 1931*, Vol. II, pp. 18-19. The increased Arab population in areas of Jewish concentration can be attributed to the Jewish need for Arab agricultural produce. The *Royal Commission Report*, p. 129, agrees in general with this Zionist interpretation of the numbers.
- [10](#) "Appendix to Memorandum on the Economic Structure of Palestine" (hereinafter referred to as "Economic Structure"), n.d., C.Z.A., S25/4653.
- [11](#) According to Jewish Agency sources the estimated total since the First World War was about LP 63,000,000.
- [12](#) "Economic Structure," C.Z.A., S25/4653. See also, *Royal Commission Report*, p. 212.
- [13](#) In April 1936 the surplus amounted to LP6,267,000.
- [14](#) "Jewish Work," C.Z.A., S25/4596; "Economic Structure," C.Z.A., S25/4653. The *Royal Commission Report*, p. 129, arrived at the same conclusions.
- [15](#) "Economic Structure," *ibid.*, and the *Royal Commission Report*, p. 129, agree on this score.
- [16](#) "Jewish Work," C.Z.A., S25/4596, quoting as authorities, Great Britain, *Report of the High Commissioner on the Administration of Palestine, 1920-25* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1925),p. 18, and *Report on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1933* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), p. 27. See also *Royal Commission Report*, p. 208.
- [17](#) Those enterprises provided work for 25,129 Arabs; Great Britain, *Report of 1933*, p. 27.
- [18](#) "Economic Structure," C.Z.A., S25/4653.
- [19](#) "Jewish Work," C.Z.A., S25/4569, quoting *Census of 1922*, p. 56, and *Census of 1931*, Vol. II, pp. 2,8-10, 18 = 19.
- [20](#) "1936," n.d., C.Z.A., S25/9875.
- [21](#) Moshe Smilansky, "Memorandum on Land and Settlement presented to the Palestine Royal Commission," C.Z.A., S25/4687.
- [22](#) On the eve of the Revolt the total was closer to 11,000,
- [23](#) B. J[oseph], "Point No. 10, Letter of 2/8/36: Quotation from Carstand Memorandum," C.Z.A., S25/4687.
- [24](#) Salaries of Arab workers in Palestine were between two and three times higher than those of workers in Iraq, Syria, Transjordan and Egypt. See also B.J., "Point No. 32(a) Letter of 2/8/36; Arab Benefit from Land Speculation," C.Z.A., S25/4687.
- [25](#) An example would be tenants who became "landless," that is who had the land they worked sold from under them. Their number was probably higher than the Government's figure of 664 or the Jewish Agency's figure of 688. However, if the National Home had not existed in Palestine, the laws to protect the fellahin would probably not have been enacted, as those Palestinian Arab leaders who were also large landowners might not have demanded such laws. Besides, with the process of modernization and the rise of capitalism in a developing country, a good number of peasants usually lose their land while large landowners increase their holdings. . . "
- [26](#) See 'Alami's remarks in Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 19-20.
- [27](#) When Weizmann evinced a readiness to reserve land in the hills for the exclusive use of Arabs, as part of a tripartite agreement, he probably did so without the authority of the various Zionist bodies; see his private testimony before the Royal Commission, 8 January 1937, C.Z.A., S25/4642.
- [28](#) The Government estimate was 8,760,000 dunams, while the Jewish Agency's was 12,697,000.
- [29](#) The Zionists considered 20 dunams of irrigated land sufficient for the support of an agricultural family; see Ruppin in Executive Proceedings, 21 October 1936, C.Z.A. The Government's precise estimate on subsistence areas was not announced, but the Zionists thought it was more than 100 dunams; see Shertok and Ruppin in Executive Proceedings, 29

October 1936, C.Z.A.

- [30](#) B.J., "Point No. 10, Letter of 2/8/36: Quotation from Carstand Memorandum," C-Z.A..S25/4687.
- [31](#) While the Zionists did not provide names to the Royal Commission, the Jewish Agency did compile a list of prominent Arabs who had sold land to Jews; included were the Istiqlalis Mu'in Madi and Rashid Haj Ibrahim; the ex-mayors of Tiberias and Safed, Sa'id Tabri and Naif Sobhi; members of 1936 strike committees Ibrahim Sahyun and Mikha'il Tuma; and the religious leaders Ibrahim and Tawfiq al-Khalil of Haifa, 'Abd-as-Saleh al-Tabari, Mufti of Tiberias, and his son Zidqi, Haj Khalil Taha of Haifa, As'ad al-Shuqairi and Abdallah Muhlis. For additional names, see the untitled list, dated 5 January 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783. Weizmann reported in "Conferences on Palestine, 8th Meeting, February 20, 1939," C.Z.A., S25/7633, that Musa 'Alami had also sold land.
- [32](#) Executive Proceedings, 21 October 1936, C.Z.A.,
- [33](#) Hexter's private testimony before the Royal Commission, C.Z.A., S25/4642; "The Committee on Land Affairs," 2 November 1936, C.Z.A., S25/4687; see also Political Committee, 20 December 1936, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 20, 21 December 1936, C.Z.A.
- [34](#) See Executive Proceedings, 2,29 October, 1, November 1936, C.Z.A.
- [35](#) Their approach apparently contained elements of both *realpolitik* and conviction; see,for example, Ben-Gurion's comments in *ibid.*, 1 November with 21 October 1936, C.Z.A.
- [36](#) *Ibid.*, 1 November 1936, C.Z.A.; see also Hexter's testimony before the Royal Commission in *Haolam*, 1 January 1937, p. 303.
- [37](#) See Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Ruppin and Kaplan in Executive Proceedings, 21, 29 October, 1 November 1936, C.Z.A.
- [38](#) See Senator's comments in *ibid.*, 29 October, 1 November 1936, C.Z.A.; Senator, "Suggestions for a Political Programme," 1936, Magnes Archives, P311-125.
- [39](#) Such as the years 1934 and early 1935. Of the estimated 11,000 Arabs employed by Jews in 1935, 10,000 were working in rural settlements; see "Jewish Work" C.Z.A., S25/4596.
- [40](#) "Proceedings of a Meeting between Representatives of the Council of Workers of Rehovoth with the Agricultural Committee of Rehovoth in 19.10.36," C.Z.A., S25/7188; Letter from Ben-Gurion to Eichenberg, 10 December 1935, C.Z.A., S25/7188.
- [41](#) R. Shaffrir, *Hama'ruchah Le'avodah Ivrit* (The Struggle for Jewish Labor) (Tel Aviv: Histadruth, 1946), p. 35.
- [42](#) See Senator in Executive Proceedings, 29 October 1936, C.Z.A.; "The Arab Question," an undated, handwritten draft, probably by Magnes, Magnes Archives, P311-95; letter from Z. Harkabi to Beri [Katznelson], 8 September 1934, Magnes Archives, P 311-85; Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 20 May 1936.
- [43](#) See, for example, *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1936: 1 April; 15 June, pp. 3-4; 1 December, pp. 5-7; 15 December, pp. 1-2.
- [44](#) See Katznelson's testimony before the Royal Commission in *Haolam*, 11 February 1937, p. 430; Ben-Gurion's private evidence before the Commission in C.Z.A., S25/4642; letter from Ben-Gurion to Eichenberg, 10 December 1935, C.Z.A., S25/7188.
- [45](#) See, for example, *Palestine and Transjordan*, 13 June 1936, p. 9.
- [46](#) See Shertok's testimony before the Royal Commission in *Haolam*, 10 Deocmber 1936, p.208.
- [47](#) The Statistical Department of the Jewish Agency estimated that in 1937 there were 8,222 Jews and 3,322 Arabs working in the five largest Jewish settlements; see "Summary of the Result of Workers Census during the Years 1932-1939," C.Z.A., S25/7188.
- [48](#) *Davar*, 17 August 1936, pp. 3, 5; see also Central Committee, 15 October 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [49](#) See Central Committee, 15, 24 October 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [50](#) *Hayarden*, 7 February 1936, p. 10; Shalom Shwartz, *Jabotinsky Lohem Haumah* (Jabotinsky, the Fighter of the Nation) (Jerusalem: Hapo'el Hamizrahi Press, 1943), pp. 340-341; Avniel, *Ba'ayat Ha'aravim Beeretz Yisrael* (The Arab Problem in Palestine) (Tel Aviv: Haahim Hershbourm Press, 1936), p. 18.
- [51](#) Ruppin's testimony before the Royal Commission, *Haolam*, 24 December 1936, p. 262; The Jewish Agency for Palestine, *Jews and Arabs in Palestine* (London: Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1936), p. 13.
- [52](#) B. Joseph, "Point No. A(1) Letter of 21.7.36," C.Z.A., S25/10.370.
- [53](#) "Cooperation between Jews and Arabs Workers under the Auspices of the General Federation of Jewish Labour," C.Z.A., S25/3105, apparently written in 1937.
- [54](#) Central Committee, 16 January 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [55](#) Avniel, *The Arab Problem*, pp. 17-18.

- [56](#) Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 350.
- [57](#) However, supporters of parity did speak of such a solution unofficially; see, for example, Weizmann in *Haolam*, 19 November 1936, p. 138; Ben-Gurion's speech in *Davar*, 9 February 1936, p. 1.
- [58](#) Executive Proceedings, 22 November 1936, C.Z.A.
- [59](#) Ben-Gurion in Inner Actions Committee, 13,14 October 1936, S25/1825, 1827, C.Z.A.
- [60](#) Ben-Gurion, Shertok and Baratz in *ibid.*; Weizmann in Executive Proceedings, 22 November 1936, C.Z.A.; Letter from L[ourie] to Ben-Gurion, 29 September 1936, C.Z.A., S25/12.
- [61](#) Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi in Inner Actions Committee, 13 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825; Rubashov and Shertok in Inner Actions Committee, 14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1827.
- [62](#) See Ussishkin, Farbstein and Shragai in Actions Committee, 13 October, *ibid.*; Grunbaum and Fishman in Executive Proceedings, 22 November 1936, C.Z.A.
- [63](#) Berlin in Inner Actions Committee, 14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1827.
- [64](#) See Fishman in *ibid.*; see also Farbstein in Inner Actions Committee, 13 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1825.
- [65](#) See Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 22 November 1936, C.Z.A.; E. Berlin and P. Bernstein in inner Actions Committee, 14 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1827.
- [66](#) See Ussishkin and Shragai in Inner Actions Committee, 13 October 1936, C.Z.A., S25/1835.
- [67](#) The purpose of Qedmah Mizrahah, founded in mid-1936, was to bring about mutual understanding between Arabs and Jews. Little was heard of the organization after 1938.
- [68](#) This socialist organization thought that political parity would be useful in the future when the Arab working class ruled Arab society; see *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1 November 1936, p. 3.
- [69](#) See Senator in Executive Proceedings, 29 October 1936, C.Z.A.; "Suggestions for a Political Programme," 1936, Magnes Archives, P 311-125; "Minutes of Meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, held in London, September 2 [1936]," C.Z.A., S25/1719. *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1936: 1 September, p. 3; 1 November, p. 3; 15 November, p. 1.
- [70](#) "Memorandum from the Presidency of the New Zionist Organization to All Central Committees...", 30 November 1936, Jabotinsky Archives, 4G-1/2; *Hayarden*, 1936: 30 October, 13, 20, 27 November; 4, 18 December; 1 April 1937.
- [71](#) See Executive Proceedings, 22 November 1936, C.Z.A.
- [72](#) *Ibid.*, 23 November 1936, C.Z.A.
- [73](#) C.Z.A., S25/4642; Weizmann in Executive Proceedings, 25 December 1936, C.Z.A.
- [74](#) *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 360-362.
- [75](#) See Weizmann's and Ben-Gurion's private testimony before the Royal Commission, C.Z.A., S25/4642. See also Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Medini: 1937* (Political Diaries: 1937) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1971), p. 19.
- [76](#) See Assaf in *Davar*, 10 March 1936, p. 2; Thon, "New Era in the Near East," C.Z.A., S25/2971, undated document probably from early 1936; cf. "Note of Discussion of Political Advisory Committee... June 25th, 1936..." C.Z.A., S25/1649.
- [77](#) See Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, p. 19.
- [78](#) There seems to be a subtle contradiction between this conclusion and the feeling of many Official Zionists that the rise in immigration and Arab fear of Jewish domination were the principal causes of the disturbances. The implication that more Jewish immigration would bring about continuance of the revolt was not stressed before the Royal Commission. Perhaps the Zionists thought that a firm British policy would resolve the contradiction.
- [79](#) *Haolam*, 17 December 1936, p. 227; 22 April 1937, p. 646; Ben-Gurion's and Weizmann's private testimony before the Royal Commission, C.Z.A., S25/4642.
- [80](#) *Ibid.*; *Haolam*, 31 December 1936, pp. 273-274; 21 January 1937, p. 347, 25 February 1937, p. 467.
- [81](#) Jabotinsky, *On the Road to a State*, pp. 259-260; Jabotinsky's testimony before the Royal Commission, Jabotinsky Archives, 29 of the pamphlet.
- [82](#) Jabotinsky's testimony, pp. 9-14, Jabotinsky Archives.
- [83](#) See the lecture by H.M. Kalvarisky at the Qedmah Mizrahah Conference, entitled "A Solution to the Arab Problem," 18 March 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3111; "Conversation between Representatives of Qedmah Mizrahah Association and D. Ben-Gurion," C.Z.A., S25/9785, undated document, apparently from the second half of 1936.
- [84](#) *Ibid.*; Memorandum from Qedmah Mizrahah to the Members of the Elected Council, Magnes Archives, P 311-95, probably from mid-1936.

- [85](#) Lecture by Kalvarisky in Qedmah Mizrahah Conference, entitled "A Solution to the Arab Problem," 18 March 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3111.
- [86](#) Letter from J.L. Magnes to Prof. Coupland, 7 January 1937, Magnes Archives, P311-125; letter from J.L. Magnes to Prof. Wm. Rappard, 11 February 1937, Magnes Archives, P 3-235.
- [87](#) See 'Awni Abdel Hadi's presentation to the Zionists in Bernard Joseph, "Note of a Conversation with Auni Bey Abdul Hadi," 1 June 1937, C.Z.A., S25/188; Central Committee, 27 April 1937, Mapai Archives. The Arabs did not appear before the Commission until January 1937.
- [88](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, p. 73.
- [89](#) See Ben-Gurion and Weizmann's private testimony before the Royal Commission, C.Z.A., S25/4642.
- [90](#) See Shertok in Central Committee, 5-6 February 1936, Mapai Archives.
- [91](#) This may have been connected with British newspaper reports that the Royal Commission was about to recommend partition; see Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 90-91, 104. An earlier date would contradict what Shertok says in pages 56 and 75.
- [92](#) See Central Committee, 27 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Bernard Joseph, "Note of a Conversation with Auni Bey Abdul Hadi," 1 June 1937, C.Z.A., S25/188.
- [93](#) "Diary of Mr. Shertok," 19 May 1937, C.Z.A., Z4/10.3181.
- [94](#) For the two conversations with the Shantis, see *ibid.*, 21 May 1937; A.H.C., "Talk with Kamel Shanti," 19 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/9783.
- [95](#) For an Arab attempt to establish a peasant party with Zionist aid, see A.H.C., "Conversation with 'Abd al-Fattah Darwish, the Chief of the Banu Hasan Tribe from the Vicinity of Jerusalem... 17.11.36," C.Z.A., S25/9783. The leader of a Druze band also made an attempt at cooperation with the Zionists, apparently also for money; see Memorandum to D. Ben-Gurion, M. Shertok, and Sh. Meirov, 4 January 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3441.
- [96](#) *Al-Difa'* was established in 1934 by Ibrahim ash-Shanti, who became its editor. The newspaper supported an extreme Istiqlal line.
- [97](#) Shertok reported that another Arabic newspaper also offered its services to the Zionists; see *Diaries: 1937*, p. 128.
- [98](#) "Diary of Mr. Shertok," 21 May 1937, C.Z.A., Z4/10.3181.
- [99](#) Central Committee, 1 March 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [100](#) See Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 21, 61; Ben-Gurion, *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 401-404.
- [101](#) Executive Proceedings, 31 January 1937, C.Z.A.; Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 19-22, 61, 83, 89, 124-125.
- [102](#) See Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 19 April 1937, C.Z.A. The publication of the Arabic newspaper, *Haqiqat al Amer*, began in March 1937.
- [103](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 21, 78, 224.
- [104](#) *Ibid.*; Joseph in Central Committee, 1 March 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [105](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 19-20; Central Committee, 1 March 27 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Weizmann's private testimony before the Royal Commission, C.Z.A., S25/4642.
- [106](#) Executive Proceedings, 19 April 1937, C.Z.A.
- [107](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 154, 175.
- [108](#) See *ibid.*, p. 60; Executive Proceedings, 19 April 1937, C.Z.A. For the attempts to meet with Ibn Sa'ud, see Letter from Captain H.C. Armstrong to Ben-Gurion, 31 May 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.095. In a talk with Ben-Gurion, H.St. John Philby, a close friend of Ibn Sa'ud, suggested the possibility of a federation, of which Palestine would become a part, along with Jewish immigration unlimited by political considerations. See Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 137-150; see also his meeting with the Saudi minister responsible for foreign affairs, in Executive Proceedings, 19 April 1937, C.Z.A.
- [109](#) A.H.C., "Between the Political Department and the Amirate Palace," 14, 18 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3486.
- [110](#) Dov Hoz, "Conversation of David Hacoheh and Dov Hoz with Amir'Abdallah, London, 15.5.37," C.Z.A., S25/3486; Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 150-151.
- [111](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 150-151. See also 'Abdallah's remarks concerning his conviction that an agreement could be reached, in Shertok, "Note of a Call on His Highness, the Amir Abdullah, November 24, 1936," C.Z.A., Z4/10.3181.
- [112](#) In his private testimony before the Royal Commission, 'Abdallah said, "If the case in Palestine is settled, I do not object to Jews being settled in Transjordan," He also said that the Jews in Palestine should not exceed 35 percent of the population. See the untitled, undated and unsigned document in C.Z.A., S25/9783.
- [113](#) The group was headed by Rafifan Pasha, member of the Transjordanian Legislative Council; see A.H.C., "Convention," 15

April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3052;"Notes for Mr. M. Shertok," n.d., C.Z.A., S25/436.

4

Partition and Other Proposed Solutions

Partition

The Royal Commission discussed both cantonization and partition in private sessions with Weizmann.¹ Cantonization, especially the Cust plan, was discussed in the session of 23 December 1936. Weizmann argued that the Cust scheme was unworkable, but he did not completely rule out cantonization. When asked if any such plan could be acceptable to the Zionists, he answered that careful attention would be given "if a definite proposal was put forward which would allow immigration to go on... [and] if Transjordan was included in some form."²

It seems that Zionist leaders, fearing that the Royal Commission would recommend a cantonization scheme, did their utmost to prevent such a development.³ In the end the Commission stated a preference for partition over cantonization.⁴

In a private meeting on 8 January 1937 Weizmann was asked about partition. Not fully grasping the implications of this new idea, his answer concerned cantonization. When, toward the end of his testimony, the question was repeated, Weizmann replied: "Permit me not to give a definite answer now. Let me think [about] it."⁵ But he quickly became convinced that partition was the best possible solution. On 2 March he received confirmation that the Royal Commission would recommend partition as one of its proposals.⁶

By early April Zionist leaders in Palestine became aware that partition was highly favored by the Commission, But the details of the scheme were still unknown when the debate among Zionists began. All factions, including supporters of partition, considered it wise to reject the plan publicly, so that it would not be viewed as Zionist-inspired. Top Zionist leaders, most of whom supported partition, did not even show enthusiasm for it in private, for that could have been interpreted as unconditional acceptance of the principle of partition, whatever its details; it was precisely the details that would determine their final decision.⁷

The Royal Commission's report, based on what was probably the most thorough and penetrating investigation ever conducted by the British in Palestine, was published in July 1937. Accepting the premise that the conflicting national aspirations of Palestinian Arabs and Jews were irreconcilable, the Commission proposed certain immediate palliative measures — the curbing of land purchase and immigration - and recommended partition as the best possible long-term solution.

The restrictions on Jewish land purchase were designed to guarantee the needs of the growing Arab population, and probably also to satisfy political considerations. On immigration, the Report proposed replacing the economic absorptive principle by the "political high level" principle, which would take into account "political and psychological factors."⁸ The Commission suggested that Jewish immigration in all categories be fixed at a maximum 12,000 per year for

the following five years. Some think that this figure was proposed in order to maintain the proportion between the Arab and Jewish populations.⁹

The Royal Commission argued that "if [partition] offers neither party all it wants, it offers each what it wants most, namely freedom and security."¹⁰ The scheme divided the area of Palestine and Transjordan into a Jewish state, an Arab state and a British enclave. The cities of Haifa, Safad, Tiberias and Acre, which fell within the Jewish state, would remain temporarily under the British Mandate due to their mixed populations. Excluding these four cities, the Jewish state would have about 258,000 Jews and 225,000 Arabs, while the Arab state would only have about 1,250 Jews.¹¹ The area of the Jewish state would be 4,999,500 dunams, of which the Jews would possess 1440,200.¹¹

It was recognized, however, that the two states could not be established immediately. During a period of transition the Palestine Administration would continue to rule, with the existing Mandate as the governing instrument. Immigration and land restrictions would be imposed to follow up the short-term palliative measures. During the transitional period,

steps should be taken to prohibit the purchase of land by Jews within the Arab Area (i.e., the area of the projected Arab State).... Instead of the political "high level" recommended..., there should be a territorial restriction on Jewish immigration. No Jewish immigration into the Arab Area should be permitted.¹³

Upon the publication of the Commission's report, the British Government issued a White Paper announcing that it had accepted its recommendations. In mid-September Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden announced to the Council of the League of Nations that the Mandate had become unworkable. While he did not commit his Government to any particular partition plan, he promised that a special commission would be appointed to visit Palestine to come up with specific proposals.

Zionist leaders knew of the Royal Commission's partition proposal before its publication, but the proposed immigration and land restrictions took them by surprise.¹⁴ Since April they had been preoccupied by the debate over the *principle* of partition,¹⁵ a debate which reached its peak at the Zionist Congress in August.

No single motive or argument divided the sides in the debate. Both supporters and opponents of partition based their arguments on *realpolitik* and on idealism, on Palestinian Arab rejection of partition, and on the urgent need for a place for Jews to immigrate. Traditional political alignments were upset as the two extreme branches of Zionism, the Revisionists and the Bi-nationalists, joined to oppose the plan, and both the Right and Left wings of Official Zionism split over the issue. Supporters of partition were found only among Official Zionists, but these included most of the top leaders.¹⁶

Although the reasoning used by Bi-nationalist, Revisionist and Official Zionist opponents was similar, their basic motivations differed; in each case partition was considered to contradict the group's assumptions, ideologies and conceptions about the political future of Palestine.

The Bi-nationalists seemed to fear that partition would aggravate Arab-Jewish tension.¹⁷ Arab rejection of partition was itself an important reason for most Bi-nationalists to oppose it.¹⁸ For Hashomer Hatzair, partition would also prevent the organization of the Arab masses in support of class interests.¹⁹

Most Revisionist and Official Zionist opponents seem to have been motivated primarily by their belief that no Zionist had the right, even temporarily, to relinquish the Jewish right to any part of Palestine. Their concern about the small size of the proposed state and its consequent

political, strategic and economic weaknesses seemed to be secondary.²⁰

These opponents stressed that Zionism had always aspired to concentrate a large portion of scattered Jewry within the historic boundaries of Palestine, with the purpose of establishing a Jewish majority in a Jewish state. The dream of a return to the homeland had involved all of Palestine, with all its historic and sacred places, and the partition scheme would exclude the most precious sites.²¹ Contemporary Zionist leaders did not have the right to force-close fundamental Jewish rights in Palestine for future generations.²²

At that very moment, the opponents hastened to point out, European Jews were in growing need of a place of refuge. The world remained closed to Jewish immigration, and for masses of Jews there was no place to go other than Palestine; but the proposed size of the Jewish state destroyed their hopes of salvation.²³ The state recommended by the Royal Commission included less than one quarter of Palestine west of the Jordan River. This area already had a population of about 140 inhabitants per square kilometer, the same density as in Germany, a highly developed, industrial country.²⁴

The Royal Commission's proposal to transfer the Arab population from the Jewish state, forcibly if necessary, was unacceptable to the British Government. Opponents asserted that it was extremely unlikely that the Arabs would leave the richer Jewish area voluntarily,²⁵ and that if they did, they would sneak back in, which would be virtually impossible to prevent along such an extended frontier.²⁶ Thus, even at the start, the Jewish character of the state would be negated since the Arabs would comprise 40 to 50 percent of the population and control 75 to 80 percent of the land.²⁷

Many anti-partition Zionists did not believe that the current Jewish population was large enough to constitute a viable basis for a state.²⁸ Some of them, although they did not stress the point, appeared to be uncertain of the ability of the Jews to actually run a state.²⁹

Opponents were also concerned that the proposed Jewish state would create obstacles to Jewish-Arab understanding. Although the state would be overcrowded from the start, increased immigration due to the growing persecution of Jews in Europe would result in grave pressure for the Jewish state to overstep its boundaries and spread into the sparsely populated Arab area. The Arabs would resist, and conflict would result.³⁰

Opponents stressed that the neighboring Arab states as well as most Palestinian Arabs strongly opposed partition. If it were nonetheless imposed, they would struggle to reunite the country through the destruction of the Jewish state. Thus, partition would result in a permanent state of tension between Arabs and Jews, constantly preparing for an inevitable war.³¹

Anti-partitionists were concerned about the strategic weakness of the Jewish state, which would be long and narrow, cut off by enclaves and located entirely on low terrain, while the Arab state would occupy the hills, allowing it to attack the Jewish state without difficulty. Even in the absence of a full-scale war, terrorists conducting guerrilla activities in the Jewish state could easily escape into its Arab neighbor.³²

As some opponents of partition put it, given the strategic and economic weaknesses of the Jewish state, the plan carried the seeds of its own destruction. Others warned that such a state would have only a shadow of power, without real sovereignty; it could therefore exist only with the constant assistance of the British.³⁴

Many Official Zionist and Hashomer Hatzair opponents claimed that the British proposed such a limited Jewish state to curtail Zionist activities. They would never grant the Jewish state sovereignty, arguing that the existence of a large Arab minority required a special arrangement.

In time they would limit Zionist activities and territory even more.³⁵

Neither the British nor pro-partition Zionists accepted partition in the belief that the time was ripe for a Jewish state, opponents charged, but because they saw no other alternative. But Official Zionist and Revisionist opponents claimed that an alternative was indeed available, one that would allow true fulfillment of the Mandate. Maintaining that temporary limitations on the National Home were preferable to a partition, and that restrictions might be changed through political struggle, they pointed out that the establishment of borders through partition would be almost impossible to reverse.³⁶

In contrast, supporters of partition argued that the principle was indeed consistent with Zionist ideology. The fulfillment of Zionist aspirations was a task for generations, to be achieved step by step. To accept partition in the present did not require an abandonment of Zionist aspirations or a limitation on ultimate Zionist aims. On the contrary, partition would hasten their fulfillment.³⁷ The supporters saw the partition plan as the best possible solution available at the time; the current balance of forces left only two solutions to the Palestine problem: either minority status for the Jews or partition.

Among the forces working for further development of the National Home was the existence of a strong Jewish community in Palestine, strategically and politically valuable to Great Britain, A second supportive factor was the worsening situation for Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, which put constant pressure on the West to help solve the Jewish problem.

Unfortunately, the persecuted Jewish communities of the Diaspora had suffered a decline in political and economic influence, while the forces opposing the National Home were growing stronger. Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism was increasing. The political power and influence of the Arab states had also increased, as had their pressure for a pro-Arab solution in Palestine, Internationally, with war a growing possibility, Great Britain desired to extricate itself from Palestine by pacifying the Arabs.³⁸

The pro-partitionists concluded that it was not possible at that time to implement the Mandate as the Jews understood it. To reject partition would, in effect, leave the Zionists with minority status in Palestine.³⁹ Even without the temporary restrictions suggested by the Commission, the National Home was developing in a way that would eventually lead to partition, as the Jews settled and bought land mainly in the coastal plain.⁴⁰

But continuation of the Mandate without new restrictions was unlikely. Supporters claimed that partition would bring great advantages and would meet the immediate needs of millions of Jews who faced increasing anti-Semitism in Europe. These Jews urgently needed a Jewish state as a refuge from the danger of war and the large-scale liquidation it might bring.⁴¹ Pro-partitionists believed that the proposed Jewish state would have a large enough absorptive capacity to meet immediate requirements; they estimated that it could absorb as many as one and a half to two million immigrants,⁴² enough to alleviate the Jewish refugee problem.

Ben-Gurion put the two alternatives in a different perspective. British restrictions on immigration, he said, might be changed by political struggle, but the number of wealthy immigrants was decreasing, in part because Jews were being attacked in Palestine. The decreasing influx of capital put a limit on immigration, even in the absence of political restrictions. Any British restrictions would further decrease immigration, leading to a decline in Zionist enthusiasm and stagnation in the *yishuv*. Under partition, immigration would be under Zionist control. The mere establishment of a Jewish state would therefore be a great stimulus to the immigration of prosperous Jews.⁴³

The establishment of the Jewish state would also, according to the propartitionists, partly fulfill the Zionist desire to escape minority status and to rule themselves. It was the lack of a sovereign Jewish state that allowed the persecution of Jews to increase without protest.⁴⁴

Thus, supporters of partition had a sharply different view of its potential impact on the Arabs than did its opponents. They claimed that partition would prevent destruction of the *yishuv*, and would eventually lead to a Jewish-Arab understanding. The Revolt had expressed the Arab fear of eventual Jewish domination through continued immigration, and it showed a growing opposition to the National Home.⁴⁵ Because the conflict in Palestine was over political aspirations, pro-partitionists maintained, economic benefits would not satisfy Arabs who were demanding a final decision on the future of Palestine. The only solution was partition.⁴⁶

Weizmann favored partition because he considered it unrealistic to expect either an Arab-Jewish agreement or a continuation of the Mandate, since the Palestinian Arabs had rejected any agreement which did not halt immigration.⁴⁷ But partition would isolate the two communities from each other, thus preventing further escalation of ill-feeling.⁴⁸

Many supporters of partition, noting that the disturbances of 1936 clearly illustrated the deep hatred of the Palestinian Arabs for the Jewish community as well as the support of these Arabs by the armed states surrounding the country, concluded that the *yishuv* could be protected only by a Jewish state which controlled immigration and established its own armed forces.⁴⁹

All of the supporters of partition believed it would eventually lead to an understanding with the Arabs. A minority viewed the proposed Jewish state as a tool to eventually strengthen the *yishuv*, which might help achieve such an understanding.⁵⁰ The majority thought the very existence of a Jewish state would strengthen the Jewish position in Palestine, thereby leading to the desired agreement.⁵¹ The minority group believed that when *the yishuv* grew to a significant size, the Arabs would be content to benefit from Jewish economic assistance.⁵² The majority group felt that the establishment of a Jewish state would bring about Arab recognition of a *de facto* reality,⁵³ and that it would create the mutual interests basic to all understanding between nations.⁵⁴

Supporters of partition expected that agreement with the existing Arab states would bring in its wake an understanding with the new Palestinian Arab state, and that this state, when forced to confront its poor economic condition, would open its borders to Jewish immigration.⁵⁵ The artificial borders created by the partition would thus vanish.⁵⁶

An analysis of British policies and intentions provided pro-partitionists with supplementary arguments in favor of the scheme. True, continuation of the Mandate, even in the restricted form it had reached by 1935, was possible, but it might necessitate the use of military measures and the deployment of strong military forces in Palestine. Great Britain, usually reluctant to use such measures in its colonies, preferred to grant concessions instead. International, regional and local factors strengthened this reluctance, which had driven the British to seek a solution other than the continuation of the Mandate. The Royal Commission's claim that the Mandate was unworkable left the Zionists little choice in the matter.⁵⁷

The establishment of a Jewish state, pro-partitionists held, would end Zionist dependence on the British and help establish a much healthier relationship based on mutual interests. The British would need the Jewish state to protect their interests in the Suez Canal Zone and other strategic points in the region, while the Jews would need Britain for military and other support.⁵⁸

Although the debate over partition raged at the Twentieth Zionist Congress and the Jewish Agency Council which followed, both bodies did manage to come up with compromise formulas

accepting partition in principle, if not the partition proposed by the Commission. The two main articles of the Congress's resolution states:

The Congress strongly rejects the assertion of the Palestine Royal Commission that the Palestine Mandate has proved unworkable and demands its fulfillment. The Congress directs the Executive to resist any infringement upon the rights of the Jewish people internationally guaranteed by the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.

While regarding the scheme of partition put forward by the Royal Commission as unacceptable, the Congress empowers the Executive to enter into negotiations with a view to ascertaining the precise terms of His Majesty's Government for the proposed establishment of a Jewish state. In such negotiations, the Executive shall not commit either itself or the Congress, but in the event of the emergence of a definite scheme for the establishment of a Jewish state such scheme shall be brought before the newly elected Congress for its consideration and decision.⁵⁹

There was no argument among Zionists concerning the first article. Even those who disagreed with its sentiments joined in publicly supporting it for tactical reasons. Although some pro-partitionists believed that the Royal Commission had given the Mandate its last blow,⁶⁰ while others actually preferred partition and a Jewish state to the Mandate,⁶¹ a majority in both groups thought that it would greatly damage the Zionist cause to express such views publicly. Even those Zionists who preferred partition believed that the Mandate should continue in force until its establishment.⁶² But since the British Government had also confined itself to a generalized acceptance of the Royal Commission's recommendations, there was thus no specific Government proposal on which the Congress could vote. The Zionist resolution was designed to leave room for maneuvering as well as to avoid a split in their organization over the question of partition.⁶³ At such a crucial point for the future of Zionism all efforts had to be directed toward the external struggle.

However, the very ambiguity of these Congress resolutions caused extensive debate in Zionist bodies in Palestine until at least mid-1938. Immediately after the Congress, different interpretations of the resolution were advanced by opponents and proponents of partition. Opponents understood it to mean that the Executive should concentrate its struggle on the continuation of the Mandate and, only when that struggle had proved unsuccessful, begin to negotiate the establishment of a Jewish state through partition. Proponents said the resolution called on Zionists to continue their struggle against changes in the Mandate and simultaneously to negotiate the possibility of establishing a state.⁶⁴

While the proponents' interpretation was adopted, that was not the end of the discussion. The question which then arose was how an active struggle for fulfillment of the Mandate could be conducted effectively in conjunction with an active attempt to achieve the establishment of a Jewish state to replace the Mandate.

Official Zionist supporters of partition and its opponents did agree on one matter: They considered it critical that the transitional period between publication of the Royal Commission Report and the final British decision be as short as possible.⁶⁵ The two factions also agreed on a new emphasis in Zionist land purchase and settlement programs. Although settlement on the land had always been a major Zionist ideological value, until the beginning of the Arab Revolt Jewish land purchases had been mainly guided by considerations of the cost and quality of individual parcels and a tendency to concentrate on one area at a time.⁶⁶ But the first phase of the Arab Revolt brought strategic and security matters to the fore,⁶⁷ and by the end of 1936 the Zionists were using new guidelines in choosing land for purchase and settlement,⁶⁸ endeavoring to connect isolated Jewish settlements to the rest of the *yishuv* and to set up new settlements at strategic points. They also hoped that this would show the Arabs that the Jews had come to stay

in Palestine and could not be frightened by terrorism.⁶⁹

After April 1937, when the Zionists became convinced that the Royal Commission was going to recommend partition, the policy was to buy as much land as possible in areas such as the Galilee, where Jewish land purchases had been small, and to settle it immediately. This would widen the area of Jewish settlement and bring about a more advantageous partition. As Shertok explained. "The whole issue of partition is not to establish a regime in Palestine in accordance with our historical right, or with what we think we deserve, or with the potential of our growth, ...but in accordance with the established facts."⁷⁰

The Royal Commission had recommended that the Galilee, populated mostly by Arabs, be included in the Jewish state. The establishment of settlements in this area was essential in order to keep the region in Jewish hands. Furthermore, the Zionists wanted changes in the borders drawn up by the Commission, which would increase the territory apportioned to the Jewish state.⁷¹ In order to increase their bargaining power, land would have to be purchased in specific areas and settlements built.⁷²

This new land policy became even more important from late 1937, when British anti-partitionist forces were growing stronger and greater concessions to the Arabs appeared possible. In the spring and summer of 1938 it seemed possible that the British would abandon partition and adopt other, less favorable recommendations of the Royal Commission, such as prohibition of land sales in various areas. All this strengthened the need to purchase as much land and establish as many settlements as possible.⁷³

Despite their efforts, the Zionists were unable to purchase all the land that might have been available. There was a substantial decrease in purchases in 1936—1938 as compared with 1934-1935.⁷⁴ Available Zionist documents indicate that Arab reluctance played a small part here, as more Arab land was being offered for sale then, probably as a result of the deteriorating economic situation of the Arab community in Palestine.⁷⁵ It was Zionist financial difficulties that seem to have been the main deterrent to Jewish land purchase. The goal of establishing new settlements was, however, much more successful. In 1937-1938, 31 new settlements were established, mostly in areas where few or no Jewish settlements had previously existed.

Considering the British retreat from partition in late 1938 and the abandonment of the National Home by the White Paper of 1939, one might say that the "creation of facts" policy was a failure. But the *yishuv* was only one of many forces influencing British policy in Palestine. Partition would probably have been abandoned even if the Zionists had succeeded in purchasing far more land and establishing many more settlements.

Minority Rights

The Royal Commission's proposal to establish a Jewish state was considered by many Official Zionists to be a great political victory for Zionism. Nonetheless, they foresaw that statehood would entail great responsibilities and problems which would need careful prior consideration and research, not least because of the British announcement that a new commission would be sent to Palestine to recommend details for the partition.

Among the most important of these problems would be the treatment of an Arab minority by the Jewish state.⁷⁶ The subject received much high-level attention, with discussions conducted in

the Jewish Agency Executive and among Zionist leaders, and with scholars preparing reports and several special committees recommending policies. The Jewish Agency discussions dealt mainly with two issues - the transfer of Arabs from the Jewish state and the rights of the remaining Arab minority. While the Royal Commission suggested that Arabs be transferred, forcibly if need be, the British Government refused to accept compulsory transfer.

Throughout the internal Zionist debate on the minority question, opinions, especially among the anti-partitionists, were often colored by the participants' view on partition. In addition, the fact that the terms "compulsory" and "voluntary" transfer were not sufficiently defined, made the position of some Zionist leaders unclear.⁷⁷

Two points of view crystallized among the Official Zionist and Bi-nationalist participants in the debate. A minority, composed mostly of Official Zionist anti-partitionists, favored compulsory transfer, while the majority advocated voluntary transfer, both groups agreeing that some form of transfer was desirable as a decrease in the size of the Arab minority would strengthen the Jewish element, thereby easing the problems of minority rights and guarantees. More important, it was a means to obtain Arab land, which constituted about 70 percent of the total in the proposed Jewish state.⁷⁸ Many Zionist leaders saw great potential for immigration without any form of transfer,⁷⁹ but this optimism was not shared by all.⁸⁰ Even the optimists viewed the fact that only some 20 percent of the land would be owned by Jews as a large handicap.⁸¹ Therefore, both groups confined their discussion of transfer almost exclusively to the rural Arab population.

Those favoring compulsory transfer warned that a Jewish state with a large minority population would be vulnerable; they pointed out the problems that had arisen in certain European states, especially Czechoslovakia. But they wanted the transfer to be conducted by Great Britain, because if it were carried out by the Zionists themselves it could be used against the Jews in the Diaspora.⁸²

Those opposing compulsory transfer noted that the British Government, which would have to carry it out, had already rejected it in principle. Moreover, merely advocating such measures could greatly endanger Jews throughout the world.⁸³ They felt that compulsory transfer should be ruled out as long as voluntary transfer, under the proper political and economic conditions, was possible.

Politically, voluntary transfer would need the cooperation of the Arab state which might require pressure from the British. Also, economic inducements would be necessary to encourage the rural Arab population to leave the Jewish state.⁸⁴ It was therefore suggested that Zionists purchase land in the Arab states and finance the establishment of agricultural settlements there for the purpose of relocating those Arab tenants, workers and fellahin who desired to be transferred.⁸⁵ Agrarian reform in the Jewish state might also be used to put indirect pressure on Arabs to transfer. Such a program might reduce the large estates, register and divide the *musha*⁸⁶ land and encourage intensive farming in place of the existing extensive system of cultivation.⁸⁷ Although the Zionists intended to grant some of the resultant land to its current tenants, indirect pressure would cause some rural Arabs to move to Arab countries.

Both the Revisionist and Hashomer Hatz'ir opponents of partition were opposed to transfer of any kind, which they considered impossible and undesirable.⁸⁸ But it is difficult to determine whether they would have favored transfer if partition had actually been imposed by the British. In such a case, the Revisionists might well have supported compulsory transfer, and Hashomer Hatz'ir might have joined the majority of Official Zionists (and such individuals as Senator)

who accepted voluntary transfer of the Arabs.⁸⁹

The Zionists were acutely conscious of the fact that, with the end of the Mandate and the establishment of a Jewish state, it would be necessary to design the administrative and judicial institutions which would implement minority rights. They also understood that these rights would be under the international protection of the League of Nations.⁹⁰

The question arose whether the League or Great Britain would be satisfied with the adoption by the Jewish state of the principles cited in the minorities treaties imposed on certain states after the First World War and operating under League auspices. The British Colonial Secretary, Ormsby-Gore, stated that additional provisions for safeguarding minorities would have to be made.⁹¹

In deciding what rights and guarantees could be granted without endangering the interests or the sovereignty of the Jewish state, Zionists were well aware that most minorities treaties under League of Nations guarantees had been undermined in practice. All Zionists shared the view that the Jewish state should treat its minorities well and should not subvert whatever rights it had decided to grant.⁹²

Even security considerations dictated that minority rights be guaranteed. Surrounded by Arab states, a discontented Arab minority in the Jewish state might turn to Arabs across the border for sympathy, and their grievances be made a pretext for Arab aggression.⁹³ In addition, even assuming that the percentage would decrease in the course of time through large-scale Jewish immigration or Arab transfer, the Arab minority would be proportionately much larger than most minorities in countries where similar problems existed. Furthermore, countries with serious minority problems generally had more than one minority, while the non-Jewish population in the Jewish state would consist almost entirely of a single group.⁹⁴

For Ben-Gurion, good treatment of the Arab minority by the Jewish state served another purpose. He said: "The question of the Arabs in the Jewish state is not only the problem of a minority. It is the central political question, the question of the relationship between the Jewish state and the Arab World."⁹⁵

On another occasion Ben-Gurion gave this idea a different perspective:

The point of departure in a solution to the Arab question in the Jewish state, is in [my] opinion, the need to prepare the ground for Jewish-Arab agreement. [I] support the Jewish state not because [I] am satisfied with partition of the country, but because of the assumption that when we become a strong power after the establishment of the state, we will abolish partition and spread throughout all of Palestine... by mutual understanding and a Jewish-Arab agreement.... Only if we become a strong factor, and the state more than anything will help [in this], will it be worthwhile for the Arabs to reach an agreement with us. Because the state is only a stage in the fulfillment of Zionism... it must be managed so that we will gain the friendship of the Arabs in the state and outside it.⁹⁶

Discussions on minority rights in such areas as citizenship, franchise and language centered on specifics rather than principles. Concerning citizenship, some Zionists wanted it granted automatically to all Arabs, while others proposed allowing the Arabs to choose individually, with those Arabs who did not accept the offer of citizenship within a given period or who rejected it outright forfeiting the right to remain in the Jewish state. Most Official Zionist leaders seem to have felt that anyone who declined citizenship should leave the state,⁹⁷ but some questioned this.⁹⁸ Those Arabs who chose to accept Jewish citizenship would share in the political life of the state.⁹⁹

In general, Zionists were willing to grant universal adult suffrage without literacy or pecuniary tests, with representation allotted on a proportional basis. They assumed that the parliament

would have a large Jewish majority as a result of Jewish immigration during the period between the decision to establish the Jewish state and its actual establishment.¹⁰⁰ The rejection of citizenship by some Arabs was expected to further increase the Jewish majority in the parliament.¹⁰¹ Transfer of part of the Arab population would also help bring about a strong Jewish parliamentary majority, but this was rarely brought up in the context of citizenship.¹⁰²

Although there are no indications that the Revisionists discussed the minority issue in detail, some Bi-nationalists, Magnes among them, raised some unique ideas. He suggested that a minority statute recognizing the equality of Arab and Jewish nationalities be included in the constitution of both states, with each state being administered by both nationalities equally, without regard to numerical strength. There would be equal representation in the Upper House and proportional representation by population in the Lower House of each parliament. Because the number of Jews in the Arab state would be very small at first, the system would have little practical importance there at the start.¹⁰³

Another Bi-nationalist, Gad Frumkin, rejected Magnes's ideas, arguing that while parity had been an acceptable solution for Palestine as a whole, partition meant full independence for each of the two nations to pursue its unique aims. He concluded that Magnes's plan would be impossible to apply, would yield no advantage and would probably be rejected by Arabs and Jews alike.¹⁰⁴

Many Zionists felt that formal equality alone would not suffice, but that a gradual rise in the Arab standard of living and education level was not only necessary but in the interests of the Jewish state.¹⁰⁵ There were even discussions on forgoing the principle of Jewish labor in the interest of non-discrimination, but it is not clear whether this would apply only on Jewish National Fund land or in all Jewish enterprises.¹⁰⁶

The Zionists felt that only those Arabs loyal to the state should be allowed to hold sensitive high-level positions in the civil service and security forces. They believed that while Arab loyalty would be questionable during the initial years of statehood, it would cease to be a problem as the Arabs gradually adjusted to the state.¹⁰⁷ Some feared, however, that the British would consider any restrictions, no matter what the motivation, as discriminatory and unacceptable. To avoid the problem, several Zionists suggested that such stringent qualifications be set for sensitive positions that most Arabs would initially be excluded.¹⁰⁸

Senator, although he too understood the problem of loyalty in high civil service and police positions, opposed such a policy. He believed that loyalty would be won only if the Arabs felt at home in the Jewish state. He therefore proposed that Zionists bring the problem out into the open, making a clear declaration of what their employment policy would be after the first few years of statehood.¹⁰⁹

The question of Arab loyalty tied in with discussions on the need for security forces, for it was the consensus that the state would be faced with internal and external security problems during its first years. The Zionists feared that internal Arab unrest might receive support from the Arab states, and that irregular bands would penetrate from the neighboring states.¹¹⁰ To cope with these dangers a standing army would be vital.¹¹¹

Three possible types of recruitment were considered: voluntary military service for all; compulsory service for all; and compulsory service for Jews with voluntary service for Arabs. Each alternative was considered from the point of view of cost, military value ¹¹² and the minority question. The aim was to keep the number of Arabs in the forces down while avoiding accusations of unequal treatment.

Voluntary service for all, some thought, would probably satisfy both requirements, since Arabs would not be very enthusiastic about volunteering for a Jewish army. However, most members of the Security Committee viewed voluntary service as unsuitable. They recommended compulsory recruitment¹¹³ for Arabs as well as Jews, theorizing that the number of Arabs in the army would not be large because a lower percentage were of military age and fewer could pass medical, educational and other examinations. The minority opinion was that compulsory service might be seen as a way to force Arabs to protect the Jewish state; compulsory service for Jews and voluntary service for Arabs would defuse that charge.¹¹⁴

All these issues were, however, secondary to land policy. Ben-Gurion spoke for many Zionists on this problem in what can be called his manifesto on the Jewish state:

...The Jewish state, unlike other countries, will not be, therefore, an end in itself, but a means toward an end.¹¹⁵ ...The policy of the Jewish state will be directed therefore, primarily toward increasing the capacity of the country to absorb masses of Jewish immigrants and toward the settlement of an appropriate segment of the immigrants on the land. By using all the means available, the Jewish state will strive to increase intensive cultivation of the land...¹¹⁶

Two different approaches emerged, one stressing agrarian reform and the other intensified cultivation, although they were not mutually exclusive.

The agrarian reform group wanted to reduce the size of both Arab and Jewish landholdings by enacting a reform law confiscating with compensation all the land over 100 dunams in a single landowner's possession. This would be the only way for Zionists to obtain needed land, since the Arabs would tend not to sell their land to Jews.¹¹⁷ It was estimated that this would leave 1,800,000 dunams, of which 500,000 were uncultivable; another 300,000 would be used to settle the tenants presently working on the land;¹¹⁸ one million dunams would remain for Jewish settlement. It was conceded that this would not essentially change the cultivation methods used by the fellahin, who would receive land as former tenants; it would, however, meet some of the Jewish land requirements.¹¹⁹

The majority of Zionist leaders favored the systematic intensification and development of agriculture over land reform. Land reform would bring accusations that the Jews were dispossessing the Arabs, while intensification and development, which had long been an explicit plank in the Zionist program, would free some Arab land for Zionist settlement since the fellahin would sell off portions of their land to raise money for more intensive cultivation.¹²⁰ Additional land could be purchased when the British administration was replaced by a Jewish one and Arabs would not be afraid to sell their land because of pressure and fear.¹²¹ It was estimated that the intensification system would facilitate the settlement of an additional 64,150 Jewish families or 320,750 individuals on the land.¹²²

As it turned out, Zionist discussions on Arab minority rights in the Jewish state proved premature. Pressure against partition and against the creation of a Jewish state grew steadily stronger, until the British abandoned the plan in the fall of 1938. And, even while the plan was still alive, Arab, Jewish and British opponents of partition had tried to squash it.

Other Proposals

The period after the publication of the *Royal Commission Report* was probably the most

intensive one in the history of Arab-Jewish negotiations. Jewish, Arab and British opponents of partition sought to defeat it by agreeing that Palestine should remain undivided. The Bi-nationalists, especially Magnes and Haim M. Kalvarisky, were the most active Zionists in this area. Apparently, Bi-nationalist activities were prompted not only by opposition to the principle of partition, but also by the need to prove that Arabs and Jews really could live together in one state.

In their desire to defeat partition, the Arabs stepped up their efforts to negotiate with the Zionists. Immediately prior to the publication of the Royal Commission's report the Zionists had hoped that the Arab opposition to partition would make them more amenable to negotiations on other problems, but after the report appeared most felt that the Commission's proposals were even worse than partition. Therefore, they avoided taking the initiative in negotiations, merely responding to Arab proposals.¹²³

Official Zionist suspicions that the negotiators, especially from the Mufti's group, were concerned only with the defeat of partition, and not with conciliation, also dampened their enthusiasm for negotiations.¹²⁴ They felt that this group's initiative was designed to divide the Jews further on the question of partition,¹²⁵ and that the Mufti's followers would seek conciliation only when they were entirely convinced that the British would carry out partition.¹²⁶ In addition, many pro-partitionist¹²⁷ Zionist leaders believed that partition was the best possible way to avoid friction between the two communities. Some even considered partition preferable to a continuation of the Mandate as it had functioned on the eve of the Arab Revolt.

The most discussed and most suspect alternative to partition from the Zionist point of view was the Haymson-Newcombe proposal. In November 1937 Albert M. Haymson, an English Jew who had served as Director of Immigration in Palestine during Lord Samuel's term as High Commissioner, wrote the Zionist Executive in London that he had "excellent reason to believe that responsible and representative Arabs were prepared to meet representative Jews to discuss the possibility of a settlement of the Palestine question," and that a scheme he outlined "would be acceptable to them [the Arabs] as a basis for discussion."¹²⁸

Magnes, who received a copy of the Haymson-Newcombe plan in late October,¹²⁹ brought the matter to the attention of some members of the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine in mid-November. According to Shertok, Magnes reported that recent conversations with two different groups of Palestinian Arabs had resulted in the formulation of two proposals,¹³⁰ one of them the same in effect as the Haymson-Newcombe plan, and a second, less important one, drawn up by Palestinian Arabs.¹³¹ Magnes believed that the first plan was supported by a very influential Arab group, including the Mufti's people.¹³² Shertok seems to have been under the impression that Magnes had received the Haymson plan from Arabs in Jerusalem.¹³³

When Magnes eventually revealed more details, it became apparent that the proposal originated from discussions held in America, England and Geneva among Jews, Arabs and Englishmen. Negotiations in the United States, which had extended from May to June 1937, included Arab participants 'Izzat Tannous, a Palestinian Arab Christian associated with the Mufti's group, Amin Rihani, the famous American-Lebanese writer, and E.I. Shatara, President of the Arab National League in the United States.¹³⁴ The London talks, which had been held from June to August, included Arab leaders Tannous, Jamal al-Hussaini and Adel Arselan. Tannous, Awni Abdel Hadi and several others were the Arab participants in Geneva. Most of the Jews involved were not Zionists. While Haymson and Colonel Newcombe participated in the London talks,¹³⁵ Magnes, in a meeting with several members of the Executive in late November

1937, revealed only that the document had two authors, one a Jew and the other an Englishman.¹³⁶

The Haymson-Newcombe proposal, which was phrased in general terms, was unclear on several points. It called for communal and municipal autonomy for the two communities, and stipulated that:

A sovereign independent Palestine State be created on 1 Jan. 19—, ...The maximum Jewish population in Palestine, and later in Transjordan, shall not exceed an agreed figure, which shall be less than fifty percent of the total population...

This agreement shall hold for a term of... years from... and shall be renewable.¹³⁷

Internal discussions among the Zionists expressed the doubt that any representative Arab group supported the proposal.¹³⁸ They also considered the plan a trap that would in effect provide for an Arab state in Palestine with a permanent Jewish minority.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, Zionist leaders decided that further inquiry was needed before they could even discuss the proposal in detail among themselves. If genuine, Arab support for such a plan could be a great step toward understanding,¹⁴⁰ since it represented three major Arab concessions: (1) *de facto* recognition of the Jewish National Home; (2) agreement to eventual Jewish settlement in Transjordan; (3) agreement to increased immigration until the Jews constituted nearly half the population.¹⁴¹

The decision to investigate further was also influenced by tactical factors. Ben-Gurion warned that outright rejection of the proposal would allow anti-Zionist Englishmen to say that the Zionists had refused to negotiate despite repeated claims of their willingness to do so.¹⁴² Zionists did not want to "give rise to a new myth that another golden opportunity for an honourable peace with the Arabs had been killed by the folly of the Jewish Agency,"¹⁴³ a statement cited by the Bi-nationalists when charging that the Agency had not actively sought an accord.

Jewish Agency leaders told Magnes that knowing which Arabs actually backed the proposal was a prerequisite to discussing terms. They instructed the Zionist Office in London to ask Haymson the same question,¹⁴⁴ which subsequent events proved to be most relevant.

There were several reasons why the Jewish Agency questioned Magnes when they could have obtained information directly from the London office and Haymson.¹⁴⁵ It was Magnes who first brought the Haymson-Newcombe plan to the attention of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, before the first letter on the subject arrived from the London office. The Agency could not cut off talks with him in the middle,¹⁴⁶ especially since he gave the impression that he was already involved in negotiations¹⁴⁷ and that he had connections with Arabs in Palestine who backed the proposal. And, in addition, when the Agency made inquiries through both Magnes and their London office, Haymson took several weeks to reply to the latter but answered Magnes in a matter of days.¹⁴⁸

Haymson's reply on the question of Arab support was that it was forthcoming from the most prominent Palestinian Arab leaders, the Hussainis and 'Abdel Hadi among them.¹⁴⁹ Zionist leaders, suspecting that the proposal was neither formulated nor authorized by the Arab figures in question,¹⁵⁰ asked Magnes to find out directly whether they supported the plan. They did not feel that their checking further on the ambiguous answers they had received from London implied Zionist commitment to the plan.¹⁵¹

However, Magnes who trusted Haymson and Newcombe and gave credence to their answers, considered them an acceptable basis for negotiations. Failing to understand that the Zionist leaders did not feel the same way, he interpreted their correspondence¹⁵² to mean that the Zionists did accept the proposal, at least as a basis for discussion. When a letter to Shertok¹⁵³

clarifying his interpretation of Haymson's answers remained unquestioned, the misunderstanding was cemented,¹⁵⁴ and he told Haymson that the Zionists were ready for negotiations.¹⁵⁵

Haymson, even less in touch than Magnes with Zionist ideology and intentions, thus assumed that the Jewish Agency had in principle accepted the proposal. When he relayed this misinformation to Musa al-Hussaini and Newcombe, who both immediately informed the Mufti,¹⁵⁶ the Agency in effect became committed to a plan it had never accepted.

Any potential for negotiations became even more doubtful when those Arabs who supposedly backed the proposal denied that they had ever done so. Musa al-Hussaini and his associates stated that certain important articles of the proposal, especially those concerning immigration, were not acceptable.¹⁵⁷ Magnes later said that even he had become suspicious by mid-December, and that his contact with the Mufti's group in Beirut confirmed his suspicion.¹⁵⁸

Magnes had communicated with the Mufti at the time that the Jewish Agency asked him to investigate the possibility of direct negotiations. On 12 January 1938 he informed Shertok that the Palestinian Arab leadership claimed that Colonel Newcombe had gone beyond the authority they had given him. While they were not ready to accept the proposal as a basis for discussion, and had never agreed to do so, they did offer a plan of their own.¹⁵⁹

Zionist leaders now felt that they had been duped by Haymson, via Magnes, or by the Arabs, who thought the negotiations might help prevent the creation of a Jewish state.¹⁶⁰ Long arguments, accusations and counteraccusations ensued between Magnes and the heads of the Jewish Agency Political Department,¹⁶¹ Magnes claiming that the Agency had only been told that four Arab leaders accepted the proposal as a basis for discussion.¹⁶²

Newcombe, in his letter to Magnes of 4 February 1938, probably gave a more accurate version of Arab involvement when he wrote that he had discussed various possibilities with two Arabs, one of them a member of the Arab Higher Committee, and that he and Haymson had drafted the plan a few months later. He explained: "I feel quite justified in saying that they [the Arabs] would have accepted it in general, and as a basis for discussion.... Therefore, it seems to be clear that the Mufti could not have agreed to the wording as it stood, nor could I have had his authority in details: but the general outline did approximate the views of the Mufti's advisers."¹⁶³ If this was the case, the Mufti and his group can not be seen as having supported or abandoned the proposal.

Magnes tried to prove that, from the outset, both he and Haymson had described the situation to Zionist leaders in the same terms later used by Newcombe. However, every Zionist leader who discussed the Haymson plan with Magnes understood him to have said that the proposal found backing among prominent Arabs. Had he presented the plan in the way he later claimed it is likely that the Zionist leaders would have rejected it immediately.¹⁶⁴

Magnes's presentation of the proposal was contrived to the degree that he did not present it as having originated from Haymson, whom the Zionist leaders did not credit highly, and Newcombe, who was well-known to be pro-Arab; if he had, it would not even have been considered by the Zionists. Further, the record shows that he was purposely evasive in his talks with Zionist leaders.¹⁶⁵

The negotiations sought by Magnes never took place. On 12 January he informed the Zionist leaders that the four Arab leaders now refused to negotiate. Magnes attributed this change of heart to Ben-Gurion's speech of 21 December 1937, in which he announced that the Zionists would never agree to permanent minority status in Palestine.¹⁶⁶ While the Palestinian Arab leadership took that to be an indication of bad faith on the part of the Jewish Agency,¹⁶⁷ the main

factor in the Arab withdrawal was the rumors current in December 1937 to the effect that the British might abandon partition, and the publication of a dispatch from the Colonial Secretary to the High Commissioner on 4 January 1938 implying that this was so.

Zionists received early confirmation of their suspicions that the Arabs were still not prepared to make concessions and that the motives of the Arabs and of the proposal's originators only aimed to prove that partition was unnecessary. On 9 December 1937 the Arabic newspaper *Falastin* wrote that negotiations were already under way. Soon after that numerous articles in other Arabic newspapers expanded upon this claim, referring to an agreement, supposedly approved by some Zionists, in which the Jews would remain a minority in Palestine.¹⁶⁹ The *Falastin* article spoke of an agreement between Nuri Sa'id and Zionist leaders, according to which the Jews would be allowed to reach 35 percent of the population in Palestine, and attempts would be made to convince Iraq, Lebanon and Syria to accept Jewish immigration. While similar proposals were indeed made by individual Arabs,¹⁷⁰ including Nuri Sa'id,¹⁷¹ the source of information for the article in *Falastin* is difficult to determine. It is unlikely that there was a connection between the article and the Haymson-Newcombe affair;¹⁷² in any case, Magnes and Haymson denied any such connection.¹⁷³

The Arab counterproposal that Magnes told the Zionists about in January became known as the Beirut or Mufti proposal.¹⁷⁴ While the plan used much of the Haymson-Newcombe wording, it differed greatly in content; the three positive elements of the earlier proposal - Arab consent to Jewish immigration, the possibility that Transjordan would be opened to Jewish immigration and verbal recognition of the Jewish National Home—were absent.¹⁷⁵ In essence, the Beirut scheme called for the establishment of an independent Arab state in Palestine and a halt to Jewish immigration and to the sale of Arab land to Jews.

Despite Shertok's feeling that no agreement would result from this, Magnes felt that negotiations should not be broken off. But his suggestion that the Zionists express their readiness to meet with Arab leaders on the basis of the Haymson-Newcombe proposal¹⁷⁶ was rejected by the Jewish Agency Executive. The Agency informed him instead that it had decided to end all negotiations on that proposal.¹⁷⁷

Certain that he could and should continue negotiations as an individual¹⁷⁸ Magnes met with Nuri Sa'id on 6 February 1938. The agreement drafted, which was known as the Nuri Sa'id proposal, differed from the Beirut proposal chiefly on immigration. It stated that, "The maximum Jewish population of Palestine shall be X per cent...,"¹⁷⁹ but no figure was specified in order to facilitate a first meeting between the two parties.¹⁸⁰ Remarks by Magnes suggest that what Nuri Sa'id had in mind was permanent minority status for the Jews.¹⁸¹

By the time Magnes formally brought the proposal to the attention of the Jewish Agency in his letter of 21 February,¹⁸² it evoked little comment on its own, because Zionist leaders had by that time received disturbing news about the Magnes-Nuri negotiations to the effect that Nuri told the British that Magnes agreed to permanent minority status for the Jews and would try to obtain the Agency's authorization to negotiate on this basis. He was also reported to have said that if such authorization were not forthcoming, many Jews in America, England, Germany and even Palestine would break off relations with the Agency and negotiate with the Arabs.¹⁸³ Even worse, Zionists in London reported that someone informed the British Cabinet that there were members of the Agency Executive among those ready to accept minority status for the Jews.¹⁸⁴

Magnes claimed that he never made these statements, nor did Nuri Sa'id report to the British as claimed. He had tried, he said, to convince Nuri to accept his ten-year agreement, at which

time the Jews would comprise 40 percent of the population,¹⁸⁵ and that Nuri would not have given an untrue account of the conversation or have informed the British.¹⁸⁶ Magnes seems to have investigated the matter, since he wrote in a letter, "Nuri Pasha categorically denies ever having reported anything to the contrary to any one. He declares it to be a mystery to him how the Zionists can spread about such reports,"¹⁸⁷ and said that he had been told Nuri denied informing the British of their conversation.¹⁸⁸

The available sources, however, verify that Nuri did indeed inform the British that Magnes was ready to accept permanent minority status.¹⁸⁹ What is not clear is whether this was an honest conclusion based on his conversation with Magnes, or whether he misrepresented the facts. Not sure which was true,¹⁹⁰ but fearing the effect of the information on British policy, a majority of leaders in the Executive accused Magnes of damaging the Zionist cause. When he was asked to put a halt to his unauthorized activities,¹⁹¹ he apparently became even more suspicious of the Agency's intentions.¹⁹²

Mapes did not confine his activities to negotiations with Arab figures. His correspondence¹⁹³ and talks with Zionist and non-Zionist Jewish leaders who shared his opposition to partition, although they found almost no support in the *yishuv* press,¹⁹⁴ were given wide exposure and support by the Jewish-American press.¹⁹⁵

Magnes was not the only Zionist to make contacts with anti-partition Arabs, Jewish leaders and others. Haim M. Kalvarisky, another Bi-nationalist, whose negotiations were usually conducted with lesser Arab figures who opposed the Mufti, does not seem to have aroused the ire of Zionist leaders as Magnes did. Since Kalvarisky accepted the Agency's authority, and since his ideas regarding Jewish-Arab understanding were more acceptable to Zionist leaders, the Agency approved his request to negotiate on his own behalf.¹⁹⁶

Most of Kalvarisky's talks with Arabs were initiated by them, the first contact occurring almost immediately after publication of the *Royal Commission Report*. Shertok telegraphed Ben-Gurion in London:

Well known Arab nationalist Haifa member Awni's party close associate Mufti name cabled to Hos approached last night Kalvarisky Jerusalem after meeting Mufti's circle with proposal Arab-Jewish negotiations suggested five to seven delegates each side expressed desirability Jewish representatives to include Kalvarisky Magnes H. Samuel asked early reply insisted absolute secrecy...¹⁹⁷

The Agency Executive replied that they were willing to negotiate with representative Arabs, but that before entering any talks they wanted to ensure that the Arab delegation was representative. They also wrote to Kalvarisky that all the Jewish representatives would be chosen by the Executive.¹⁹⁸ The prominent Arab from Haifa, most likely Rashid al-Haj Ibrahim,¹⁹⁹ upon being asked about his authority to speak in the name of the Mufti's group, first claimed that he was ill and then that he was unable to fulfill the request.²⁰⁰ Months later Shertok reported that al-Haj told Kalvarisky the time was not ripe for negotiation.²⁰¹

Another prominent Palestinian Arab who reportedly sought talks with Kalvarisky, Khalidi, confirmed that his authority for such negotiations came from the Mufti and his group. Suspecting "the sincerity of the Arabs in seeking to negotiate with him now, while the Permanent Mandates Commission was in session...,"²⁰² Joseph asked Kalvarisky to delay his meeting with Khalidi until after the Mandates Commission meeting. Kalvarisky agreed to act in accordance with this suggestion,²⁰³ and there is no evidence that any further meetings took place.

Kalvarisky also had had talks with Palestinian Arabs who were ready to agree to numerical and legislative parity in an autonomous, bi-national state which would be a member of an Arab federation.²⁰⁴ Shertok, who seems to have doubted that Palestinian Arabs would suggest such terms, proposed a further meeting between these Arabs and Joseph ²⁰⁵ In a meeting which took place on 22 December the Arab spokesman maintained that the most Palestinian Arabs would accept was political parity with an Arab majority.²⁰⁶

Another group of Arabs, a rural group who claimed to represent 80 villages, reportedly agreed to accept Kalvarisky's own plan. When they asked for Zionist help in establishing a party, Shertok turned them down for the same reasons he had rejected similar proposals in the past.²⁰⁷

Mustafa Wahbah al-Tall, a Transjordanian and close associate of Amir 'Abdallah, seems also to have shared Kalvarisky's idea of Pan-Semitism.²⁰⁸ Al-Tall was probably the "Mustafa," mentioned by a Transjordanian official as having initiated a meeting with Kalvarisky in early June 1938.²⁰⁹ This official's proposed solution to the Palestine problem called for the unification of Transjordan and Palestine, under the rule of Amir 'Abdallah. The Mandate would be terminated, immigration would continue for ten years until the Jewish population reached 42 to 44 percent of the total, and there would be political parity. Since this was the same plan that 'Abdallah had submitted to the Partition Commission, with certain modifications,²¹⁰ the initiative was apparently conducted with the knowledge of the Amir.

Kalvarisky suggested a plan that differed on two points. He proposed that immigration be based on the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine, and that Transjordan and Palestine be two autonomous states joined in a federal system.²¹¹ Agreeing that this proposal could serve as a basis for discussion, the Transjordanian official offered to arrange a meeting with the Amir. It has been reported that during the subsequent meeting Amir 'Abdallah mainly listened, making only general comments on the possibility of peace between Arabs and Jews.²¹²

Kalvarisky and al-Tall decided to join in an effort to determine the attitude of various Pan-Arabists toward Pan-Semitism.²¹³ When al-Tall was sent to Cairo by Amir 'Abdallah in mid-July 1938 to pave the way for 'Abdallah's plan before the Interparliamentary Congress that would meet later that year, Kalvarisky suggested that al-Tall investigate whether the Pan-Semitic idea would find support among Cairo's Pan-Arabists, especially Shahbandar and 'Aluba.²¹⁴

Al-Tall's letters and discussions constantly emphasized his desire to strengthen the Amir. In September he told Kalvarisky that the Amir lacked the money to send the 20 delegates for whom he had received invitations to the congress, and urged the Zionists to help finance the delegation.²¹⁵ He also called on the Jews to help Abdallah politically. The close association between al-Tall and the Amir leaves little doubt that al-Tall's negotiations with Kalvarisky were conducted with the Amir's knowledge.

Shertok did not think very highly of the Kalvarisky-al-Tall negotiation, nor did he think that an agreement with 'Abdallah would be of value. Moreover, he rejected al-Tall's proposal, which he considered similar to the Amir's plan since in both the Jews would be kept a minority in an independent Arab state.²¹⁶ Although he was convinced that the Amir was conducting negotiations outside the framework of the Jewish Agency in the hope of obtaining greater concessions from other Jews, this does not seem to have affected Agency relations with 'Abdallah. The Political Department and the Amirate Palace continued to exchange views, explain policies and evaluate political developments.²¹⁷

At the end of the summer of 1937 Kalvarisky carried his efforts to bring about Arab-Jewish understanding to Syria and Lebanon, where his discussions with Arab figures led him to be

"encouraged and convinced once more that Jewish-Arab agreement is absolutely possible."²¹⁸

Kalvarisky agreed with al-Tall that Arabic publications written by Jews were of little value in the effort to counter anti-Jewish propaganda and explain Zionism. He himself had attempted to establish an Arabic newspaper as long ago as 1936.²¹⁹ But he could not accept al-Tall's suggestion that an Arab-run newspaper be established, mainly for lack of the funds requested.²²⁰ His efforts to convince Shertok of the merits of an Arab-run weekly which would publicly call for Jewish-Arab understanding were unsuccessful because Shertok was convinced by past experience that the venture would fail.²²¹ However, the Political Department continued to support such publications wherever possible. From November 1937 on one Palestinian Arab newspaper began cooperating with the Zionists.²²² Anonymous pamphlets were also distributed, especially in Arab countries, and about 200 anonymous articles were published in Syrian and Lebanese newspapers.²²³

During the period of intensive negotiations the Jewish Agency endeavored to deal directly with any Arabs seeking negotiations. The Palestinian Arabs then in most frequent contact with the Agency's workers were the Nashashibis, who had become inactive after the Royal Commission's report was published. The Nashashibis' policy of cooperation with the Government had found little support among Palestinian Arabs, and they were effectively terrorized, mainly by supporters of the Mufti. But in early winter 1937 the situation seemed to be changing in their favor. The Mufti had been dismissed from his post and had fled the country along with other members of the Arab Higher Committee.

This left the field open for the Nashashibis and the Amir, and it was reported that 'Abdallah was ready to exploit this new opportunity at once if the Zionists "would foot the bill."²²⁴ Uncertain whether the British would continue their strict policy, Ragheb Nashashibi advocated caution in cooperation with the Zionists. Fachri Nashashibi criticized his uncle Ragheb and advocated immediate cooperative action, as had 'Abdallah. He thought that his party should reorganize and seek support from Palestinian Arabs, the Arab press and various Arab leaders. However, he too claimed that he lacked the necessary funds. He requested financial aid from the Zionists, agreeing to support the policy lines suggested and to back partition.²²⁵

Some Zionists thought the time was ripe to encourage the Nashashibis and the Amir and to intensify negotiations. But Shertok, ever cautious, thought that it should first be determined whether the Nashashibis still represented a valid political force,²²⁶ and if so, whether they would have the courage to publicly support the Government's new policy. While Shertok felt that Abdallah had the necessary courage, he doubted that the British considered him an important factor or would back him.²²⁷

Although Fachri Nashashibi did try to reinvigorate the party in mid-1938, the Nashashibis eventually failed in their attempt to challenge the leadership of the Mufti. His plan to fight the Mufti with his own tactics - rejection of partition and opposition to Jewish immigration - and to reverse his policy after defeating the Mufti was turned down by Shertok, who thought that Fachri would fail if he did not take a public stand for peace and against terror.²²⁸ In any case, the Nashashibis were only one factor in Palestinian Arab society, and a declining one at that.

Since all the proposals advocating direct negotiations with leading Palestinian Arabs included the proviso that the Jews remain a minority in Palestine,²²⁹ Zionist and other Jewish leaders concluded that the Palestinian Arabs were not ready to make the crucial concessions.

While the Zionists initiated few of the meetings with Palestinian Arabs, they were active in contacting ruling figures in neighboring Arab countries, hoping to defuse their increasing

pressure on Great Britain to abandon partition. They apparently thought that these Arab leaders could mediate between Palestinian Arabs and Jews.

Shertok initiated a meeting in Geneva with the Coptic Foreign Minister of Egypt Butrus al-Ghali when the League of Nations Council was being convened in mid-September 1937. Because this meeting took place after Butrus had made his speech in the League Council, and not before as Shertok had intended,²³⁰ the discussion did not get down to specifics. Butrus said that, while he favored continued Jewish immigration, the Jews should remain a minority, and Shertok undertook to explain his own views on the Jews as a nation.²³¹

Jamil Mar dam, Prime Minister of Syria, also managed to delay his meeting with Bernard Joseph until after he had spoken against partition.²³² To avoid this happening with the Lebanese as well, Joseph visited their delegation without an official invitation. However, in the subsequent meeting with Lebanese President Amil Edda, Joseph was told that while Lebanon would not get involved in the Palestine question, the Lebanese and Jews should seek ways of cooperating.²³³

In early 1938 Lebanese Prime Minister Khair ad-Din Ahdab initiated a meeting with Shertok at the home of Fachri Nashashibi, at which he asked for Zionist cooperation and financial aid to oust the Mufti and his group from Beirut. Among his suggestions for accomplishing this were Zionist and Lebanese political pressure on France to remove the Mufti from Lebanon, and the establishment of a Zionist-financed newspaper which would support this move.²³⁴ While Shertok doubted if this would benefit the Zionists in any way, he did think the Zionists should help the prime minister in his difficulties. But the Zionists could not possibly contribute the sum of money requested, and further, the sample given to Shertok after the first meeting contained articles that seemed to involve the Zionists in internal Lebanese affairs.²³⁵ Shertok therefore suggested a much smaller-scale plan.

When Jamil Mardam, a leader of the National Bloc, announced Syrian support for the Palestinian Arabs, Zionist leaders attributed this stand to the economic and political pressure on the Syrian Government arising from the deteriorating situation in Palestine. Opposed by Shahbandar, who was using the Palestine question for political gain, the Bloc wanted to defeat Shahbandar by finding a solution to the problem, and a solution would only come about through agreement between Jews, Palestinian Arabs and the British. The Bloc regarded the Mufti and his group, with whom they were in contact, as the real representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, and reportedly said that they would seek his aid in working out a proposal that would not be based on minority status for the Jews.²³⁶

At a meeting with the Egyptian Prime Minister during the summer of 1938, the prime minister said that "so far as Egypt was concerned, and the Egyptian Government, they are interested in Palestine only as good neighbors, who would like to see peace restored there."²³⁷ During the same summer Ben-Gurion tried unsuccessfully to arrange a meeting with Ibn Sa'ud, whom the Zionists considered the most important Arab leader.²³⁸

Talks were held between Weizmann and the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Tawfiq Suwaidi, in the early fall of 1938, for the Zionists felt that the British were ready to abandon partition, and wanted to hear what Suwaidi had advocated to the British. The foreign minister told Weizmann that his plan called for an independent Palestine with autonomy for the Jews but with no further Jewish immigration.²³⁹

Shahbandar and Nuri Sa'id, although they held no official positions, were very active, during this period, in suggesting solutions and seeking negotiations with the Jews. Shertok felt that their belief that Arab unity would be achieved in the near future through the establishment of an Arab

federation led them to take a more constructive approach to the Palestine question and its Jewish aspect. Shertok explained that their suggestion that Jews be allowed to immigrate to Syria and Iraq was motivated by their hope that the immigrants would help develop those countries. However, both leaders also looked upon this policy as a way of compensating the Zionists if they would agree to abandon their insistence on a Jewish majority in Palestine.²⁴⁰

Shertok's conclusion that the proposals of Shahbandar and Nuri Sa'id were unacceptable conformed with those of other Zionists.²⁴¹ The Zionist leaders did not initiate negotiations with them. A meeting might result in false rumors that they were considering minority status, since both Shahbandar and Nuri were known to leak information to the British and the press.²⁴² The Zionists also believed that any agreement with them would bind only the Zionists and not the Arabs, because Palestinian Arab leaders would not follow Shahbandar and Nuri.²⁴³

Thus, even when the Arabs were intent on replacing the British partition proposal and were making relatively intense efforts to reach an agreement with the Jews on an alternative solution, they were not willing to make any of the concessions that might have led to an accord.

Notes

¹ But it seems that the distinction between the two was not always clearly understood. There was a certain ambiguity about the meaning of the term cantonization among some Zionist leaders, at least until mid-April 1937.

² C.Z.A., S25/4642.

³ "Minutes of a Meeting held on May 8, 1937...", C.Z.A., S25/1719; Ben-Gurion's interview with the High Commissioner, 7 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/19; Sharet, *Diaries: 1937*, p. 41. For Revisionist opposition see Jabotinsky, *Evidence to the Palestine Royal Commission* (Tel Aviv: The New Zionist Organization in Palestine, 1937), pp. 19-20; *Hayarden*, 1, 23 April, 7 May 1937.

⁴ *Royal Commission Report*, pp. 377-379.

⁵ C.Z.A., S25/4642.

⁶ Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, pp. 129-130.

⁷ See Central Committee, 10, 15 April, Mapai Archives.

⁸ *Royal Commission Report*, p. 300.

⁹ Esco, *Palestine*, Vol. II, pp. 829-830.

¹⁰ *Royal Commission Report*, p. 394.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 389-390. The population, including the four cities, would have been about 316,000 Jews and 293,000 Arabs.

¹² Esco, *Palestine*, Vol. II, p. 862.

¹³ *Royal Commission Report*, p. 393.

¹⁴ Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, pp. 137-138.

¹⁵ Even after the publication of the Royal Commission's Report, the discussion among Zionists continued to center around the main features of the proposal rather than its details.

¹⁶ Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Shertok and most Zionist leaders in London. Shertok was undecided at first, and only gradually came to accept partition.

¹⁷ Some apparently rejected the plan on more specific grounds. This might have been the case with Senator. See Executive Proceedings, 1, 25 May 1938, C.Z.A.

¹⁸ See, for example, Ya'aqov Haz an in Inner Actions Committee, 22 April 1937, S25/1798; Magries speech, *Jewish Agency Council*, in *Haqongres Hazioni Ha'esrim* (Twentieth Zionist Congress) (Zurich, 1937), pp. xlviii-lxi.

¹⁹ See also Hazan, *Eretz Yisrael 'Al Parashath Derachim* (Palestine on the Cross Road) (Merhavia: Hakibutz Haartzi Hashomer Hatza'ir, 1938), pp. 23, 34.

- [20](#) Objections were raised on economic, strategic and political grounds, although it is not always clear which combination of motives were important to any one individual. It is reported that Jabotinsky did consider accepting partition, but in the end he decided to reject it. Benjamin Akzin, a member of the Presidency of the New Zionist Organization, wrote in "*Midinyuth Hahutz Shel Jabotinsky*" (The Foreign Policy of Jabotinsky), *Gesher*, Vol. VI, September, 1960, pp. 52-53, that other members of the presidency were ready to accept partition.
- [21](#) "Memorandum to the Palestine Partition Commission" submitted by M. Ussishkin, 22 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5117 (hereinafter referred to as Memorandum by Ussishkin); B. Katznelson in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 75; Hazan in Inner Actions Committee, 22 April 1937, S25/1798; "Memorandum to the Palestine Partition Commission," n.d., unsigned, C.Z.A., S25/525/5117 (hereinafter referred to as Memorandum by Bernstein and others). This last memorandum was submitted by a group of prominent Zionist figures in Palestine; see Letters from Bernstein to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 19 August, 3 September 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5117.
- [22](#) See Ussishkin in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 38.
- [23](#) Memorandum by Ussishkin, C.Z.A., S25/5117; "Evidence submitted to the Palestine Partition Commission, Jerusalem, June 20th, 1938," by Benjamin Akzin, Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G (hereinafter referred to as Evidence by Akzin); Magnes, *Jewish Agency Council*, in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. li—lil.
- [24](#) "Address by Mr. V. Jabotinsky at a meeting of members of the House of Parliament... 13th July, 1937....," Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G.
- [25](#) Memorandums by Ussishkin, Bernstein and others, C.Z.A., S25/5117.
- [26](#) "Statement by the Presidency of the New Zionist Organization: The Danger of the Palestine Partition Proposal," n.d., Jabotinsky Archives, 8/1-4G.
- [27](#) Memorandum by Ussishkin, C.Z.A., S25/5117; Hazan, *On the Cross Road*, p. 29. Akzin claimed, in Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G, that even if some Arabs did sell their land, they would only move into the cities.
- [28](#) See Tabenkin, for example, Central Committee, 10 April 1937; Shprintzak, Central Committee, 15 April 1937; "Consultation on the Political Situation," 23 June 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [29](#) See, for example, the quotation from Shertok in Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [30](#) Memorandum by Ussishkin, C.Z.A., S25/5117.
- [31](#) Hazan comments in Inner Actions Committee, 22 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1798; Memorandums by Ussishkin, Bernstein and others, C.Z.A., S25/5117; Memorandum by Akzin, in Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G; "Statement by the Presidency of the New Zionist Organization: The Danger of the Palestine Partition Proposal," Jabotinsky Archives, 8/1-4G. Magnes speech, *Jewish Agency Council*, in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. xlix-1; Shprintzak, Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [32](#) Memorandums by Ussishkin, Bernstein and others, C.Z.A., S25/5117; Memorandum by Akzin, Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G; Akzin, "Foreign Policy of Jabotinsky," p. 53.
- [33](#) Katznelson in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 77.
- [34](#) Memorandums by Ussishkin, C.Z.A., S25/5117; by Akzin, Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G.
- [35](#) See B. Repetur in Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives. See also Hazan in Actions Committee, 22 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1789.
- [36](#) See B. Locker and Meirov in Central Committee, 10 April 1937; Tabenkin, "Consultation on the Political Situation," 8 June 1937. See also Ben-Gurion, Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives; "From the Diary of D. Ben-Gurion in London," 11 May 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.066.
- [37](#) See Ben-Gurion, *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. 96-99, 100; Golomb, Central Committee, 15 April 1937; Namirovsky, Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [38](#) "B.G. in the Political Committee - Closed Congress," 7 August 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.066; Shertok in Inner Actions Committee, 11 January, 18 May 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831.
- [39](#) See Central Committee, 10,15 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Weizmann and Grunbaum, Executive Proceedings, 1 August 1937, C.Z.A.; their speeches in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. 32, 130.
- [40](#) Weizmann, *ibid.*, p. 70.
- [41](#) See, for example, Namirovsky in Central Committee, 10 April, Grabovsky in Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [42](#) *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. 70-71, 109, 198; *Jewish Agency Council*, p liv.
- [43](#) Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [44](#) See Ruppin's speech in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 73; Ben-Gurion in the "Political Committee - Closed Congress," 7

August 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.066; *Haolam*, 11 November 1937, p. 162.

- [45](#) See, for example, Namirovsky in Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Ruppin and Grunbaum in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. 73, 129.
- [46](#) Namirovsky and Yavnieli in Central Committee, 10 April; Golomb, S. Dayan, Grabovsky, in Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Weizmann in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 195.
- [47](#) Weizmann speech, *Jewish Agency Council*, in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. lix-lxii.
- [48](#) Rubashov and Ruppin in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. 61, 72-73.
- [49](#) See Namirovsky, Central Committee, 10 April; Goiomb and Aaharonovitz in Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Ben-Gurion's speech in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 107.
- [50](#) The main advocate of this view was Ben-Gurion.
- [51](#) The main advocates of this view were Weizmann, Ruppin and A. Katznelson.
- [52](#) See, for example, Ben-Gurion in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 109; and in Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [53](#) See Ruppin's speech, *Jewish Agency Council*, in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. xxiv.
- [54](#) Weizmann in *ibid.*, p. lxxii.
- [55](#) Some Zionists believed that such an understanding would also result in Jewish immigration to other Arab countries. See Namirovsky in Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [56](#) See Ben-Gurion in *ibid.*; Remez and Ben-Gurion in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, pp. 57, 109; Golomb in Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [57](#) Ben-Gurion and Yavnieli in Central Committee, 10 April 1937, Mapai Archives; Weizmann in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 196.
- [58](#) A. Katznelson, Yavnieli and Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 10 April; Golomb in Central Committee, 15 April 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [59](#) *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. 202. For the Agency's resolution see *Jewish Agency Council*, p. lxxx.
- [60](#) Letters from L.B.N. to Moshe, 9 July 1937, from Weizmann to S. Wise and Lipsky, 21 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649.
- [61](#) Ben-Gurion, for example. See his comments in Inner Actions Committee, 11 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831; letter to Moshe, May 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.066.
- [62](#) *Ibid.*; Meirov in Central Committee, 7 September 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [63](#) See Tabenkin, for example, in Central Committee, 27 October 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [64](#) For discussions see Central Committee, 7 September, 27 October, 30 November 1937, Mapai Archives; Inner Actions Committee, 3 November 1937, 11 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831.
- [65](#) Central Committee, 27 October 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [66](#) A. Bein, *Toldoth Hahithyashvuth Hazionith Metqfath Herzl Ve'ad Yamenu* (The History of Zionist Settlement from Herzl until the Present) (Ramat Gan: Massada, 4th ed., 1970), pp. 370, 376.
- [67](#) During this period no new settlement occurred, probably because the *yishuv* was caught completely unprepared by the revolt.
- [68](#) Letter from Ben-Gurion to Ussishkin, 3 November 1936, Memorandum from Shertok to Ben-Gurion, 5 November 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9839.
- [69](#) *Ibid.*; Bein, *Zionist Settlement*, pp. 370-371.
- [70](#) Shertok in Central Committee, 7 June 1937, Mapai Archives. See also Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 144,162-163, 165.
- [71](#) For example, in the Baitsan district.
- [72](#) See Bein, *Zionist Settlement*, p. 370; Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 144, 162-163, 165; Sharett, *Yoman Medini: 1938* (Political Diaries: 1938) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1972), p. 79.
- [73](#) See "Consultation on Political Issues," 7 April 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [74](#) Land purchases totalled 62,116 dunams in 1934; 72,905 dunams in 1935; 18,145 dunams in 1936; 29,367 dunams in 1937; and 27,280 dunams in 1938. See Esco, *Palestine*, Vol. II, p. 941.
- [75](#) See Central Committee, 5 January 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [76](#) The *Royal Commission Report*, p. 381, asked for strict guarantees for the protection of minorities.

- [77](#) The Royal Commission used the term "compulsory" transfer to refer to a transfer agreement between the Jewish and Arab states regardless of opposition from the transferees. "Voluntary" transfer implied the transferees themselves were willing to move; see also *ibid.*, pp. 391-392.
- [78](#) See, for example, Ben-Zvi in Executive Proceedings, 12 June, Afternoon Session, 1938, C.Z.A.; "Minutes of the Population Transfer Committee, ...21.11.37, Second Session," C.Z.A., S25/42. About 10 percent of the land in the Jewish state belonged to the Government.
- [79](#) See D. Horowitz, "Economic Aspects of Partition," May, 1938, C.Z.A., S25/272.
- [80](#) See, for example, Granovsky and Thon in "Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee for Determination of the Agricultural Absorptive Capacity of Different Areas of the Country, 14.6.38," C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [81](#) See, for example, Ruppin in Executive Proceedings, 12 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [82](#) See Ussishkin and B. Katznelson in *ibid.*, Afternoon Session. See also Thon in "Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee for the Determination of the Absorptive Capacity of Different Areas in the Country," 14 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/42; Granovsky in "Minutes of Consultation in the Sub-Committee for the Transfer of Arabs... December 1, 5, 1937," C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [83](#) See, for example, Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 12 June 1938, C.Z.A.; "Minutes of Consultation in the Sub-Committee for the Transfer of the Arabs... December 1, 5, 1937"; "Minutes of the Transfer Committee... 21.11.37," C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [84](#) It was estimated that 217,334 Arabs lived in the rural areas of the proposed Jewish state in 1936, some 73.66 percent of the total Arab population. See A. Bonne, "Transfer of the Arab Population (Summary regarding its financial scope)," July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.061.
- [85](#) Executive Proceedings, 12 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [86](#) Land held in common by all the villagers.
- [87](#) See Mendelsohn and Granovsky in "Minutes of the Meeting of the Population Transfer Committee... 29.11.37," C.Z.A., S25/42; Thon in "Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee for Determination of the Agricultural Absorptive Capacity of the Different Areas of the Country, 14.6.38," C.Z.A., S25/42; "Minutes of the Population Transfer Committee... 21.11.37, Second Session," C.Z.A., S25/10.061; Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 7,12 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [88](#) See Jabotinsky, "On Partition," Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G.
- [89](#) Executive Proceedings, 12 June, Afternoon Session, 1938, C.Z.A.
- [90](#) N. Feinberg, "On the International Protection of Minorities in Case of the Establishment of a Jewish State," n.d., C.Z.A., S25/10.058.
- [91](#) See Leonard Stein, "Note on Minority Policy," 23 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102, quoting the Colonial Secretary.
- [92](#) For a similar opinion by the Revisionists see testimony by Akzin, Jabotinsky Archives, 14-4G.
- [93](#) Blanche D.C. Dugdale, "Notes for Guidance in Framing a Minority Policy for a Jewish State," n.d., C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [94](#) L.B. Namier, "Treatment of Minorities," n.d., written before the end of May 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102; W. Senator, "The Position of the Arabs in the Jewish State," 21 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102; Leonard Stein, "Note on Minority Policy," 23 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [95](#) Executive Proceedings, 9 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [96](#) *Ibid.*, 7 June 1938, C.Z.A. This line of thought was supported particularly by W. Senator.
- [97](#) See *ibid.*, 7, 9,12 June 1938, C.Z.A.; Namier, "Treatment of Minorities," C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [98](#) See Kaplan in Executive Proceedings, 9 June 1938, C.Z.A.; he raised the possibility that such a policy would cause political problems. Leonard Stein in his "Note on Minority Policy," 23 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [99](#) *Ibid.*; Shertok to the Secretary, Palestine Partition Commission, "Memorandum on the Treatment of Minorities," 31 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/182; Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [100](#) The number of immigrants to enter the Jewish state was projected by most Zionists to be about 60,000 per year.
- [101](#) Executive Proceedings, 29 May, 12 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [102](#) Transfer was intended mainly to increase the amount of Jewish-owned land; most Zionists viewed it as a gradual process.
- [103](#) Memorandum by Magnes to the Chairman and Members of the Palestine Partition Commission, 27 July 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-85.
- [104](#) Letter from Gad Fruiti kin to Magnes, 7 September 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-68. It seems that there were some who supported Magnes. See letter to Dr. Brown, apparently from Magnes, 1 September 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-68.
- [105](#) See Executive Proceedings, 7,12 June 1938, C.Z.A.

- [106](#) *Ibid.*, 9, 12 June, C.Z.A.; Grunbaum, "Concerning the Rights of the Arab Minority," 13 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/246; The Haifa Committee for the Jewish Agency: Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting, held on April 10th 1938," C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [107](#) See Shertok and Senator in Executive Proceedings, 9 June, Suprasky and B. Katznelson in Executive Proceedings, 12 June, Afternoon Session, 1938, C.Z.A.; Grunbaum, "Concerning the Rights of the Arab Minority," 13 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/246. Ussishkin doubted that the Arabs would accept reality and gradually become loyal to the Jewish state. See also Executive Proceedings, 12 June, Afternoon Session, 1938, C.Z.A.
- [108](#) See Grunbaum, "Concerning the Rights of the Arab Minority," 13 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/246; Namier, "Treatment of Minorities," C.Z.A., S25/5102; Stein, "Note on Minority Policy," 23 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [109](#) W. Senator, "The Position of the Arabs in the Jewish State," 21 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102; Executive Proceedings, 9 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [110](#) See untitled document, apparently the minutes of the Security Committee, 10 November 1937, C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [111](#) At one meeting participants discussed a police force of 3,000 men, including a 1,000-man frontier force, a standing army of 3,800 officers and men and a militia of 20,000 to 30,000. See "Minutes of the Session of the Security Committee," 7, 12 December 1937,C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [112](#) For the first two aspects see the meetings of the Security Committee, C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [113](#) See D. G. and Sit[kov] in "Minutes of the Session of the Security Committee," 7 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [114](#) Bianche Dugdale, "Note for Guidance in Framing a Minority Policy for a Jewish State," C.Z.A., S25/5102; Leonard Stein, "Note on Minority Policy," 23 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [115](#) On the eve of the Arab Revolt Ben-Gurion had called the Jewish state an end not a means.
- [116](#) Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1938, C.Z.A. See also Executive Proceedings, 12 June 1938, C.Z. A., especially Ben-Zvi's comments in the Afternoon Session.
- [117](#) See Remez, Katznelson and Zechovisky in *ibid.*, 12 June 1938, C.Z.A.
- [118](#) From available documents it seems that the majority of Zionists advocated the continuation of tenant protection as embodied in the laws of the Cultivators Ordinance. See Ben-Gurion in *ibid.*, 6 June 1938; Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 29 May 1938, C.Z.A.; Namier, "Treatment of Minorities," C.Z.A., S25/5102; Stein, "Notes on Minority Policy," C.Z.A., 23 June 1938,C.Z.A., S25/5102.
- [119](#) "Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee for Determination of the Agricultural Absorptive Capacity of Different Areas in the Country," 14 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/42.
- [120](#) See Weitz and Vilkansky in *loc. cit.*; Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 7 June 1938, C.Z.A.; "Memorandum on Treatment of Minorities," 31 July 1938,C.Z.A.,S25/182.
- [121](#) See Ben-Zvi in Executive Proceedings, 12 June, Afternoon Session, 1938, C.Z.A.
- [122](#) According to research done by D. Steirn, Y.E. Volkani and Y. Weitz. See their letter to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 3 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/247.
- [123](#) See Executive Proceedings, 25 October 1937, C.Z.A., especially Shertok's comments.
- [124](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, p. 451; Joseph in Central Committee, 19 September 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [125](#) See Memorandum by D. Ben-Gurion, 3 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [126](#) Central Committee, 30 November 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [127](#) Even opponents of partition among the Official Zionists did not take the initiative in negotiations with the Arabs. They demanded the continuation of the Mandate until the Jews were a majority. See, for example, Ussishkin's opinion in Executive Proceedings, 21 November 1937, C.Z.A.
- [128](#) See Letter to A.H. Haymson, apparently from A. L[ourie], 1 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Memorandum by D. Ben-Gurion, 3 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [129](#) Haymson apparently wrote him about the developments which led to the proposal; see Magnes in Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A. Colonel Newcombe was the pro-Arab Treasurer of the Palestine Information Bureau in London.
- [130](#) *Ibid.*, 21 November 1937, C.Z.A.
- [131](#) *Ibid.*, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A. The major point was that Palestine would become an independent state in an Arab federation with political parity between Arabs and Jews. It was implied that the Jews would remain a minority. See also Memorandum by D. Ben-Gurion, 3 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [132](#) Letter from Magnes to the Members of the Executive, Jewish Agency, 21 February 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-195.
- [133](#) Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 21 November 1937, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.
- [134](#) Magnes was probably referring to negotiations between these Arabs and prominent Jewish leaders, including Steven S.

Wise and Felix Warburg. During these talks, a proposal was formulated calling for a ten-year agreement at the end of which the Jewish population would not exceed 40 percent. See telegram to Weizmann, 17 July 1937, and Weizmann's telegram to Warburg on 17 July and to Shertok on 18 July 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960. For other negotiations in the U.S. see Executive Proceedings, 24 July 1938, C.Z.A.; Hexter's letter to Shertok, 5 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960. See also letter from Louis Lipsky to Moshe Shertok, 3 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Shatara's letter to B. Joseph, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.095.

[135](#) See Magnes in Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.

[136](#) On a copy of a letter sent to the Executive, A. L[ourie] wrote by hand: "From certain remarks of Bentwich it is clear to me that the Englishman mentioned by Magnes is Col. Newcombe." See letter to A.H. Haymson, 1 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[137](#) C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[138](#) Executive Proceedings, 21 November 1937, C.Z.A.; Shertok in Central Committee, 30 November 1937, Mapai Archives. See also letter from Sh[ertok] to Brodetsky, 25 November 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[139](#) See, for example, Shertok in Central Committee, *ibid.*; letter from Lourie to Neville J. Laski, 10 November 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[140](#) Letter from D.B. G[urion] to Magnes, 3 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[141](#) Letter from Shertok to Magnes, 13 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Shertok in Inner Actions Committee, 11 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831.

[142](#) Memorandum by Ben-Gurion, 3 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960. See also Executive Proceedings, 21 November 1937, C.Z.A., especially the comments by Ussishkin.

[143](#) Letter from Shertok to Brodetsky, 25 November 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[144](#) *Ibid.*

[145](#) Abraham Sela', "Sihot Vemaga'im Ben Manhigim Zioniyim Leben Manhigim 'Arviyim Palestinian, 1933-1939" (Talks and Contacts between Zionist Leaders and Palestinian Arab Leaders, 1933-1939), *Hamizrah Hehadash*, Part 11: 1937-1939, Vol. XXIII (1937), p. 12.

[146](#) See Executive Proceedings, 21 November 1937, C.Z.A.

[147](#) Magnes's part in the negotiations prior to the submission of the draft to the Jewish Agency is not clear.

[148](#) Haymson's answer to the questions submitted to him on 1 December was not written until 20 December. See letters to Haymson, 1 December 1937, from Haymson to A. Lourie, 20 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[149](#) See letter from Magnes to Shertok, 3 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; letter from Haymson to A. Lourie, 20 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Memorandum by Ben-Gurion, 3 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[150](#) Letter from M. Shertok to Magnes, December 6, 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[151](#) Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.; Letter from D.B.G. to Magnes, 3 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Letter from Shertok to Magnes, 25 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[152](#) Letter from Magnes to Shertok, 9 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[153](#) *Loc. cit.*

[154](#) Letter from J.L. Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[155](#) See the attached letter to London with letter from Magnes to Shertok, 9 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[156](#) "Extract of Minutes of Interview with Husseine [sic], 14.12.37," by L. Bakstansky, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[157](#) *Loc. cit.*; see also letter from D.B.G. to Magnes, 24 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[158](#) Letter from Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3960; Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.

[159](#) Letter from Shertok to Magnes, 13 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[160](#) See letter from M. Shertok to Magnes, 25 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Letter from D.B.G. to Magnes, 3 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Executive Proceedings, 16 January 1938, C.Z.A.

[161](#) See *loc. Cit.*; Letter from Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[162](#) Magnes refused to name one of the leaders; the other three were 'Adel Arselan, Musa and Jamal Hussaini.

[163](#) Quoted in letter from Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

[164](#) See, for example, Executive Proceedings, 16 January, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.; Letter from D.B.G. to Magnes, 3 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

- [165](#) See also letter from M. Shertok to Brodetsky, 28 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [166](#) See "Words Concerning the Question of Negotiation between Arabs and Jews," December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/9355. The announcement was made primarily to refute the articles in Arabic newspapers claiming that the Zionists were ready to agree that the Jews would remain a minority.
- [167](#) Letter from Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [168](#) Letter from Shertok to Brodetsky, 28 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960. See also letter from D.B.G. to Magnes, 3 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [169](#) See letter from E. Sasson to M. Shertok, 13 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097, which tells about such articles in Syrian and Lebanese newspapers; *Falastin*, 9, 14 December 1937; quotations from various Arabic newspapers in *Haolam*, 1937: 16 December, pp. 264-265, 30 December, pp. 301-302; *Davar*, 13 December 1937, p. 1.
- [170](#) See Musa al-Hussaini's speeches in London in *Haolam*, 30 December 1937, pp. 302-303; Letter from Lourie to Moshe Shertok, 13 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [171](#) Letter from E. Sasson in Beirut to M. Shertok, 4 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2966; Letter from N. Vilensky to M. Shertok, 17 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; "Conversation with Shahbandar," 15 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2965; *Haolam*, 20 January 1938, p. 304.
- [172](#) See the Arab Higher Committee's statement dated 29 December 1937, Magnes Archives, P 311-64, denying the rumour about negotiations.
- [173](#) Letter from A.M. Haymson to Lourie, 24 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Letter from Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960, Appendix VL
- [174](#) C.Z.A., S25/2960; see also Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea*, pp. 177-178.
- [175](#) See letter from Shertok to Brodetsky, 28 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [176](#) Letter from Shertok to Magnes, 13 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Executive Proceedings, 16 January 1938, C.Z.A.; letter from Magnes to Shertok, 14 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [177](#) See Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 16 January 1938, C.Z.A.; letter from Shertok to Magnes, 25 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [178](#) Letter from Magnes to Stooock, 5 June 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66.
- [179](#) C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [180](#) Letter from Magnes to Members of the Executive, 21 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [181](#) See Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.; letter from Magnes to Stooock, 5 June 1938, Magnes Archives, P311-66.
- [182](#) Letter in C.Z.A., S25/2960. He had told Ussishkin on 9 February about the proposal. See Executive Proceedings, 20 February 1938.
- [183](#) Executive Proceedings, 20, 27 February, C.Z.A.; letter from D.B.G. to Magnes, 24 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [184](#) See Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 27 February 1938, C.Z.A.
- [185](#) See comments in *ibid.*, 20 February; Magnes in *ibid.*, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.; letters from Magnes to Stooock, 5 June 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66, and to Ben-Gurion, 3 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960. See also *New York Times*, 18 July 1937.
- [186](#) Letter dated 3 March 1938 in C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [187](#) Letter from Magnes to Stooock, 5 June 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66.
- [188](#) Executive Proceedings, 24 April, 1938, C.Z.A.
- [189](#) Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea*, p. 183, note 375, using British sources.
- [190](#) Executive Proceedings, 24 April 1938, C.Z.A.
- [191](#) Senator, Hexter and Mrs. Jacobs tried to soften the attacks on Magnes. See also *ibid.*, 20, 27 February 1938, C.Z.A.; letter from M.S. to Magnes, 2 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [192](#) See his letter to Stooock, 5 June 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66.
- [193](#) See files P 311-63, 64, 65, 66, 68, Magnes Archives.
- [194](#) See, for example, *The Palestine Post*, 21 July 1937, *Davar*, 24 August 1937. His article in the *New York Times*, however, was published in Hebrew. See *Davar*, 19 July 1937.
- [195](#) A large collection of articles can be found in file P 311-242, Magnes Archives.
- [196](#) Shertok's letter to Kalvarisky, 14 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.

- [197](#) Telegram dated 24 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [198](#) "Letter that was handed to Mr. Kalvarisky on the 29.7.1937," signed by Shertok, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Aharon Cohen, *Israel and the Arab World*, p. 279.
- [199](#) Rashid al-Haj, director of a bank in Haifa, was among the founders of 'Awni's party, the Istiqlal. In a letter from David Hacothen to Shertok, 13 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/4144, Hacothen reported that al-Haj had told him about his conversations with Kalvarisky, and added that he had spoken to the Mufti and other leaders. It has been suggested by Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea*, p. 173, and by Sela, "Negotiation, 1937-1939," p. 7 (probably based upon Hattis's claim), that the Arab notable was Moghannam Elias Moghannam, but this cannot be true. Moghannam was the Secretary of the Palestine Defense Party and not of 'Awni's party, and he was from Jerusalem, not Haifa. Joseph in his "Minutes of a Conversation with Mr. Kalvarisky on August 3rd, 1937," C.Z.A., S25/2960, called the person a "Haifa Arab notable." Joseph knew Moghannam well as a lawyer, and had had conversations with him shortly before, as reported by him on 25 July 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960. The possibility that Shertok mistakenly thought that Moghannam was from 'Awni's Party and from Haifa seems unlikely. Furthermore, in his report to the Central Committee, 18 September 1937, Mapai Archives, Joseph referred to the talks with the Arab notable from Haifa and his conversation with Moghannam as two entirely separate negotiations.
- [200](#) B.J. "Minutes of a Conversation with Mr. Kalvarisky on August 3rd, 1937," C.Z.A., S25/2960; Joseph in Central Committee, 18 September 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [201](#) Letter to the Editorial Board of *Yodisha Rondshoy*, 8 April 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [202](#) B.J., "Minutes of a Conversation with Mr. Kalvarisky on August 3rd, 1937," C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [203](#) *Loc. cit.*
- [204](#) Executive Proceedings, 21 November 1937, C.Z.A.
- [205](#) Letter from H.M. Kalvarisky, 14 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; letter from M.Sh. to H.M. Kalvarisky, 14 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [206](#) Report of B. J., undated, untitled, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [207](#) Letter from Shertok to H. Kalvarisky, 21 April 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [208](#) Mustafa al-Tall received some money from Kalvarisky. However, there is substantial evidence that al-Tall had been enthralled by the idea of Pan-Semitism and was not just paying lip service in exchange for money. See Raphael Patai, ed., *Jordan* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1957), pp. 274, 319-320; al-Tall's letter to Kalvarisky, 19 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111.
- [209](#) See the draft of a letter to H. Kalvarisky, C.Z.A., S25/2960, apparently written by Shertok on 1 June 1938; Kalvarisky's letter to Shertok, 3 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111; Shertok, *Diaries: 1938*, p. 137; Mustafa Wahba's letter to Kalvarisky, 19 August, C.Z.A., S25/3111; Kalvarisky's letter to Mustafa, Magnes Archives, P311-68; "The proposal of Mustafa Wahbi [sic.] al-Tall," Magnes Archives, C311-68; Shertok's letter to Kalvarisky, 16 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111.
- [210](#) Letter to Kalvarisky apparently from Shertok, 1 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Letter from H.M. Kalvarisky to Moshe Shertok, 3 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111. See also Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, p. 137. For the Amir's proposal see "Between the Amirate Palace and the Political Department," dated 22 May 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.098.
- [211](#) Letter to H. Kalvarisky apparently from Shertok, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Letter from H.M. Kalvarisky to Moshe Shertok, 3 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111.
- [212](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, p. 137.
- [213](#) The money received by Mustafa al-Tall probably played some part here.
- [214](#) The World Interparliamentary Congress of Arab and Muslim Countries for the Defense of Palestine convened in Cairo from 7 to 11 October 1938. 'Aluba was the organizer and main force behind the Interparliamentary Congress.
- [215](#) Letters from Mustafa to Beno, 8 September and to Kalvarisky, 22 September 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111. See also letter to Elias [Sasson] in "Summary of the Mustafa-Kalvarisky correspondence," prepared for Shertok by "G."; letters from Kalvarisky to Shertok, 18 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3111.
- [216](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 137-219; letter apparently from Shertok to Kalvarisky, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [217](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 219-220; "Between the Amirate Palace and the Political Department," from May 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.098; another document under the same title written by A.H.C., 18 July 1938; "Letter that was sent from the Political Department to M. U[r]isi in Transjordan," 19 January 1938, by A.H.C.; Memorandum from E.S. to M.S., "Protest-Telegram from A. Abdallah of Transjordan," 10 July 1938, all in C.Z.A., S25/3486; B.J., "Minute of a Conversation with M. Un[si] on 11 October 1938," C.Z.A., Z4/20.702.
- [218](#) See "Report of the Activities of 'Kedma Mizraha' since its Foundation," address of Kalvarisky, 6 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3110.

- [219](#) Kalvarisky reported in *loc cit.* that he had been negotiating with Muhammad 'Azmi, an Egyptian newspaperman, since the end of 1936; see also "Visit of Mahmud Azmi," memorandum of Leo Kohn or Shertok, 30 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3111.
- [220](#) See also letters from Kalvarisky to Mustafa, 5, 28 September 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3 111.
- [221](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 155-156.
- [222](#) The newspaper seems to have been *Al-Jami'a al-Islamiya*; see Shertok, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 396-397; *Diaries: 1938*, p. 60.
- [223](#) See, for example, Memorandum by E. Sasson to M. Shertok, 30 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3109; letter from Elias [Sasson] to Moshe [Shertok], 9 November 1938, C.Z.A., S25/4550.
- [224](#) Letters from Shertok to Weizmann, 19 October 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649.
- [225](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 373, 386.
- [226](#) Some Zionists seem to have had little respect for the Nashashibis; see Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, p. 137; Ben-Gurion, Central Committee, 30 November 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [227](#) Letter to Weizmann, 19 October 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649.
- [228](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 137, 194.
- [229](#) For additional talks see Joseph in Central Committee, 18 September 1937, Mapai Archives; Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 324-325; *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 31-33; letters from Kosovsky to Shertok, 18 October, and from Shertok to Kosovsky, 24 October 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; letter from Shertok to Tolkovsky, 22 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960.
- [230](#) Shertok reported that al-Ghali had deliberately delayed the talk; see Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, p. 321.
- [231](#) I would like to insert here that the question of whether the Jews are or are not a nation seems irrelevant. Nationalism is a belief that a common ground exists in a certain population. Only the individual himself can decide to which nation he belongs, and not necessarily according to any formula that an outsider may deem appropriate. Therefore, if a religious-historical-cultural background was seen by Zionists as the common ground for their nationalism, this belief, unique as it may have been, cannot be questioned on the basis of its not fitting such a formula.
- [232](#) See Central Committee, 29 August, 7, 18 September 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [233](#) See Joseph in *ibid.*, September 18, 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [234](#) See Shertok's comments in Executive Proceedings, 13 February 1938, C.Z.A., and his *Diaries: 1938*, p. 78.
- [235](#) Executive Proceedings, 13 February 1938; I was unable to locate this document in the Central Zionist Archives, and am therefore unable to identify the articles in question.
- [236](#) *ibid.*, 6 February 1938, C.Z.A.
- [237](#) B. L[ocker], "Note of Conversation with his Excellency Mohammed Mahmud Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt..., 30 July 1938,...." C.Z.A., S25/3052.
- [238](#) Another intent was to inquire into the accuracy of the reports in the *Evening Standard* (23 August 1938) that the Saudi Government supported a plan for a ten-year truce between Jews and Arabs; see D.B.G., "Note of Interview with His Excellency Hafiz Wahba, Saudi Minister in London, 25th August, 1938...." C.Z.A., S25/3052.
- [239](#) Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, p. 309.
- [240](#) Inner Actions Committee, 11 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831.
- [241](#) See also letter from E. Sasson to M. Shertok, 4 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/2966.
- [242](#) For the Shahbandar-Kadmi Cohen negotiations, see *Falastin*, 14 December 1937. See also *Haolam*, 16 December 1937, p. 264.
- [243](#) "Letter from Mr. N. Vilensky to Mr. M. Shertok," 17 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2960; Shertok in Inner Actions Committee, 11 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831.

5

The British Retreat

The Revolt — Second Phase

During the Royal Commission's inquiry in Palestine terrorist activities against the *yishuv* continued, but on a much lower scale than in previous months. Palestinian Arabs were concentrating their anti-Zionist efforts on an economic boycott of the Jews, but Zionist intelligence services reported that they were prepared to renew the Revolt if the Commission did not meet their demands.¹ Acts of terrorism against Jews and their property increased in February 1937, even after the Government took stricter measures to improve security.

The renewed violence, and the lack of Jewish confidence in the Government, helped provoke a resurgence of the Haganah and the Irgun B, illegal Zionist defense organizations. Uneasy relations between the Revisionists and other right oocenter members of the Irgun B led to its being split into two groups in April 1937. One rejoined the Haganah, and the other, under Revisionist control, formed the *Irgun Zeva'i Leumi*.²

Dissension was on the rise within the Palestinian Arab leadership as well. Despite disagreements on the question of terrorism and other issues, the Arab Higher Committee had maintained control over the Arab struggle and kept factional problems to a minimum until January 1937. From that point on the rivalry between the Hussainis and the Nashashibis heated up, with the latter charging that the Higher Committee had become a tool of the Mufti. By the end of the strike indications grew that the Nashashibis were pursuing an independent line.³ Their activities increased greatly when it appeared that the Royal Commission was leaning toward a partition plan that would unite the Arab sector with Transjordan, since the Nashashibis had long favored Amir 'Abdallah's rule over Palestine. The Hussainis, on the other hand, vigorously rejected the idea of partition and of union with Transjordan. The attempted assassination of Fachri Nashashibi in late June 1937, which was thought to be the work of the Hussainis, brought an end to Nashashibi participation in the Arab Higher Committee and an increase in their cooperation with the Government.⁴

Political terror, used mainly by the Hussainis against the Nashashibis, was only one facet of internal Arab violence. The roving guerrilla bands continued to operate, maintaining themselves by extorting money from rural Arabs or through banditry. In most cases the Higher Committee had no control over these bands. Dissatisfied with the policies of the Committee or unsure of the loyalty of prominent Arabs, some guerrilla groups turned to intimidation and assassination. Appeals by Palestinian Arab leaders for a halt to the violence were of little avail as each Arab faction tried to gain control over the bands for use against their opponents and for the future struggle to control Palestine. The Hussainis were particularly successful with the existing bands and in organizing new ones.⁵

On 26 September 1937 L.Y. Andrews, a District Commissioner, was killed by a terrorist. This set off what is known as the second phase of the Palestinian Arab revolt. In the first days after

the assassination the British arrested about 200 prominent Palestinian Arabs, but no action was taken against the Mufti and other members of the Arab Higher Committee.

Although few Zionists of any persuasion had much real hope that the British would take drastic measures, they called on the Government to take action to solve the problem by: depriving the Arab Higher Committee, headed by the Mufti, of its powers, arresting or deporting its members and having British military authorities take over the administration of Palestine, at least the Galilee where the situation was completely out of control.⁶ They viewed the failure to arrest the main Palestinian Arab leaders after the Andrews murder as a signal to the Arabs that the British were too weak for the Mufti and his associates.⁷ The Zionists had information that Palestinian Arabs were training, arming and organizing irregular bands for a new armed revolt, which the Zionists believed was inevitable.⁸ Zionist leaders disagreed among themselves only on how soon the revolt would start.⁹

Contrary to Zionist expectations, the Government did take drastic action. On 1 October the Arab Higher Committee and the local National Committees were declared illegal, and five members of the Higher Committee were exiled to the Seychelles. The Mufti was also removed from his post on the Supreme Muslim Council; he escaped to Lebanon in mid-October and established himself near Beirut.

Shertok was probably right in claiming that Zionist demands played no role in shaping the new tough policy. But most Zionists, after having advocated drastic government action since the first phase of the Arab Revolt, welcomed the new policy as a sign that the Government was dealing with terrorism, and as tacit confirmation that the Arab Higher Committee was responsible for the unrest.¹⁰

In the two weeks following the Government moves, terrorist activities decreased markedly. Zionists did not generally discuss these measures in detail, but it is possible to draw conclusions about their response by studying the statements of those Zionist leaders who did.¹¹ All of them seem to have agreed that although some outbreaks of violence could still be expected, a Palestinian Arab revolt would probably not occur now. British officials reportedly shared this view.¹² As late as 18 October, four days after terrorist attacks had resumed, Shertok said, "I am not worried that the actions of the last few days are signs of new disturbances."¹³

Such confidence seems to have been based on inaccurate information. On 10 October Dov Joseph told the Jewish Agency Executive and Mapai Central Committee that representatives of Jewish settlements said to be familiar with Arab views reported that Palestinian Arabs were satisfied with the Government's actions.¹⁴ Although the Nashashibi faction and others who had suffered terrorist attacks may have welcomed the Government moves, they represented only a small portion of the Palestinian Arabs. Subsequent events showed that most Palestinian Arabs did not approve of the action taken against their leaders. A more realistic analysis, which appeared in a Zionist intelligence report, told that many former Nashashibi supporters had gone over to the Mufti. Any Nashashibi attempt to benefit from the Mufti's absence would fail and deprive them of public confidence.¹⁵ In effect, the Government's action had actually strengthened the Mufti's position as the recognized political leader of the Palestinian Arabs.

Despite the Government crackdown, there was a steady increase in the activities of irregular bands (which continued until May 1939; terrorism did not altogether cease until after the outbreak of the Second World War). Several large rural guerrilla bands played a very prominent role in this phase of the Revolt, operating in scattered areas of the country and mobilizing smaller groups under their command. They received money, arms and recruits from the new

Revolt headquarters in Damascus and to a lesser extent from the Mufti in Beirut. Money and recruits also came from the Palestinian Arab population itself. The extent to which the Mufti and the Damascus headquarters controlled the bands is difficult to determine, but available documents indicate that overall activities were directed from both Syria and Lebanon.¹⁶

The bands grew steadily in the two months after the October violence and increased the number of successful attacks. A vigorous British response succeeded in restraining the guerrillas by late December. An interim period of reorganization followed, in which some of the many Syrian guerrillas were replaced by Palestinian Arabs who were familiar with local conditions.

Large-scale violence resumed in late spring 1938. Both individual terrorism and guerrilla attacks were employed against non-cooperative Arabs, the *yishuv*, and the British. In contrast to the unity that had prevailed during the first phase of the Revolt, this time the Palestinian Arab leadership was violently divided. Inter-Arab terrorism, in the form of threats, coercion and destruction of property, occurred. Many of the Nashashibi faction were killed, including such prominent figures as Hassan Sidqi Dajani. Others, including Ragheb Nashashibi, head of the opposition, and Sulaiman Tuqan, Mayor of Nablus, fled the country. The opposition was virtually inactive until October 1938, when Fachri Nashashibi openly organized his own bands to fight terrorism against Arabs. But, although the Government probably encouraged him and might have given him support, changes in British policy brought his efforts to an end.

From the insurgent point of view the main target was the British. At first the major arena of the Revolt was in the north, but by the early summer of 1938 the irregular bands had successfully extended operations to the plains and the south. Many cities were raided, and police stations and post offices were burned. At the peak of the Revolt, which stretched from August to October 1938, the rebels were in control of several large cities including Jaffa, Gaza, Beersheba and, in mid-October, even the Old City of Jerusalem.

After the Munich Pact was concluded in September 1938, the British sent reinforcements to Palestine and began to suppress the rebels. By winter the British had gained the upper hand, and by May 1939 the armed revolt had virtually been halted.

Although terrorism against the *yishuv*, like inter-Arab terror, was only secondary from the Arab point of view, Jewish casualties were much higher in the second phase than in the first. From mid-October 1937 to mid-June 1938 anti-Jewish terror was concentrated mainly in Jerusalem. The attacks spread and increased in intensity as new methods of terrorism brought greater casualty figures. During the next period groups of Jews were killed rather than individuals. By the end of October 1938, 223 Jews had been killed in Palestine.

Several kidnappings occurred as well. Often Jews kidnapped in the summer of 1938, one was ransomed, three were freed, and six were reportedly killed. Some Zionist leaders opposed the paying of ransom, maintaining that it would encourage further kidnappings and provide the bands with money to buy weapons.¹⁷ The majority, however, believed that if ransom could save lives it should be paid, citing the old Jewish tradition of freeing kidnapped or captured co-religionists.

The large majority of Official Zionist leaders attributed the origin, persistence and intensity of the second phase of the Revolt mainly to outside forces. (They were joined in this view by Hashomer Hatzair.) These outside forces were said to include British action and inaction, foreign money and Revisionist retaliation; the irregular bands themselves were considered an outside force, although a minority of Official Zionists did view them as an integral part of the Revolt.

A majority believed that the bands were motivated by self-interest, and were not nationalistic

in their aims. Adherents of this line of thought were also convinced that the bands had imposed themselves on the Palestinian Arabs through force, and that most Palestinian Arabs were opposed to terrorism.¹⁸ It was the Mufti and his associates in Lebanon and Syria who were behind the terrorism and the armed revolt, and they were using violence to achieve their own political ends.¹⁹

These Zionists, however, no longer ignored the existence of Palestinian Arab nationalism, as many had done in the past.²⁰ That point of view had been losing adherents²¹ ever since the events of 1936. (Even in the Hebrew press the controversy over nationalism among the Palestinian Arabs was now largely over.)²² Nevertheless, a majority still refused to relate the activities of the irregulars to their new appreciation of Palestinian Arab nationalism. They still believed, with most of the *yishuv*, that the Government's actions against the Mufti and members of the Arab Higher Committee in early October 1937 had been welcomed by the majority of Palestinian Arabs. While most Palestinian Arabs had taken part in the first phase of the Revolt, at least in the strike and boycott, the new phase was dominated by armed bands whose total membership was relatively small. Furthermore, at least until December 1937 a large proportion of the members were Syrians, whom many Zionists considered to be foreign mercenaries,²³ with many of the Palestinian Arab members, including some of the top leaders, having criminal records. The disunity among Palestinian Arabs during the Revolt's second phase was an additional factor in shaping Zionist attitudes.²⁴

The fact that the bands were drawn primarily from among the fellahin and the urban lower classes, and that the elite of the towns and cities were being terrorized by them, also made it possible to view the second phase as a social revolt of the lower classes against their masters.²⁵

The majority of Zionists may have been misled by their own attitudes toward terrorism. Almost all Official Zionist leaders and Bi-nationalists felt that those who used indiscriminate terror as a political tool were brutal and immoral, and applied their own standards to the Arabs.

Dealing with the day-to-day details of terrorist activity and individual security problems, the majority of Zionists tended to avoid confronting the question of the final political goal of Palestinian Arabs, most of whom did in fact share a common rejection of Zionism and desire to maintain the Arab character of Palestine. Those Palestinian Arabs who objected to terrorism seem to have done so not so much because it was used against Jews, but because it was used against other Arabs as well. In sum, these Zionists made the mistake, common in such conflicts, of exaggerating the weaknesses of the opposing camp.

A minority of Zionists, including Ben-Gurion, did see the Revolt as an expression of Palestinian Arab society and not as an imposition from outside. Those with this view ascribed the long duration and intensity of the Revolt mostly to the Palestinian Arabs' desire to prevent further development of the National Home.²⁶

The extent of British responsibility for causing or continuing the Revolt was discussed extensively in the summer of 1938; British Government policy, Palestine Administration policy and the activities of the military forces were all examined. Many Zionists believed that British Government indecision on the future of Palestine encouraged the terrorists to continue "their activities in hopes of forcing a British retreat. All Zionists shared the opinion that only a clear policy, firmly applied, would end the terror and the armed revolt."²⁷ This view seems to have been shared by some British officials in Palestine as well.²⁸

Even more damaging, according to most Official Zionists, was the inaction of the British Administration in Palestine, which they considered the main obstacle to the imposition of strict

measures. They charged that the Administration was afraid to act for fear of further aggravating relations with the Palestinian Arabs. In addition, many British officials were thought to be anti-Zionist and either actively encouraging the Palestinian Arabs or deliberately failing to take measures to stop them.²⁹

Although their methods were considered wanting, the British armed forces fared considerably better than the Administration in the judgement of Official Zionist analysts. However, these forces were not trained for guerrilla warfare, they were unfamiliar with the country's topography, and there was little coordination among the various branches or between the forces and the Administration.³⁰

During the summer of 1938 the *yishuv* and its leaders arrived at two contradictory conclusions regarding British intentions. A part of the *yishuv*, including most of its leaders, believed that the British genuinely wanted to end the Revolt.³¹ Many others, including some Official Zionist leaders and Hashomer Hatz'a'ir, believed that the British wanted the Revolt, and especially the terrorism against Jews, to continue so that they might have an excuse for abandoning partition.³²

Of all the approaches taken by the Zionists during the first phase of the Revolt, only the demands for drastic military measures seemed relevant to the second phase. Arabic-language publications and attempts to buy off gang leaders are not even mentioned in the available documents as possible ways to end the violence. There was some discussion about encouraging the political elements in Palestinian Arab society opposed to armed struggle, but at least until the early fall of 1938 the Zionists provided very little help to the Nasha-shibis or other groups seeking such assistance.³³ There were also attempts at negotiations with Arabs, but these focused on finding alternatives to partition rather than on ending terror and the armed revolt.

The Zionists felt that their own military participation was essential to the defense of the *yishuv* and the restoration of law and order in Palestine. There were constant demands that the *yishuv's* legal self-defense forces, the Supernumerary Police, be strengthened. The Zionists charged that previous requests to strengthen the force had been fulfilled too slowly and only in part. At first the British seem to have thought that these requests were motivated not so much by the need for self-defense, but also by a desire to decrease unemployment and to score political gains.³⁴

However, in April 1938 the British reorganized the force so that members who had previously been tied to individual settlements were now divided into regional formations that could be called on to defend several places within the region. More important for the Zionists, mobile units with permission to travel from one place to another could provide help to settlements under attack, protect roads and fields, and surprise the terrorists. By January 1939, after a further reorganization, there were 62 mobile units with a total of 400 members.³⁵ This increase was one of the reasons for the February 1939 dissolution of the Haganah's illegal mobile field units, which had been established in the summer of 1937 and which comprised more than 1,000 members throughout *the yishuv* by the spring of 1938.

Zionists' demands to strengthen their own self-defense forces coincided with the increase in terrorism against Jews, which the British seemed to be unwilling or unable to end. They therefore decided they could not rely on British arms to defend the *yishuv*, since the British might even abandon support for Zionism and leave the *yishuv* to face the Palestinian Arabs alone. The only legal way to gain military experience and training was through the Supernumerary Police.³⁶

Defense notwithstanding, the Zionists did have political reasons for wanting to cooperate with the British to suppress the Revolt. The British were reluctant, not only because of the serious

political consequences, but also because they hesitated to use one community against another. They used Jews in this role only when they had no alternative, or when the political considerations were less important than the military.³⁷

Jewish groups known as Special Night Squads had been used in defending several important facilities; some units had offensive functions as well. These units, established in June 1938 by Captain W. Wingate, were used in areas where irregular bands were concentrated. Although considered most effective by Zionist leaders,³⁸ British opposition limited their personnel to 75 Jews and 40 British. That they were established at all was mainly due to Wingate's enthusiasm.

During the second phase of the Revolt Official Zionists and Revisionists understood that British commitment to the Mandate might waver due to the strategic value of the Arab states. They tried to counter this factor, stressing the potential value of British-Zionist military cooperation.³⁹

Although in summer 1938 it seemed that any demands to strengthen Jewish security forces only increased British suspicions that the Jews wanted their own army,⁴⁰ the British began to seek military cooperation in September, when the Arab police were resigning and Europe was on the verge of war. The Government also endeavored to determine what military forces the *yishuv* could supply in the event of war, thereby revealing their hopes to depend on the *yishuv* by building a Jewish army.⁴¹ Shertok commented on the ironic situation in which Zionist-British military cooperation was reaching its peak at the same time that the British were retreating from political support of Zionism.⁴²

Hashomer Hatza'ir, while it demanded increases in the self-defense forces, was opposed to the establishment of a Jewish army and to increased military-political cooperation with the British. They believed that the British were interested in buying off the reactionary Arab classes at Zionist expense, and that military cooperation would only strengthen British imperialist interests. If a Jewish army were used against the Arabs, it might damage future cooperation between the masses of both communities.⁴³

All factions agreed that British military help was needed in order to bring about an end to Arab terrorism. Some believed that adherence to the *havlagah* policy would help bring about such assistance. But the stormy debate on this question continued, many Haganah members believing that the negative effects of *havlagah* outweighed its benefits. From early spring until fall 1937 the Haganah attacked targets where terrorists congregated.

The most common Irgun activity during this period, however, was indiscriminate reprisal, and despite Official Zionist attempts to prevent further breaches of *havlagah*,⁴⁴ the return to the self-restraint policy was achieved only after the Government cracked down on Palestinian Arab terrorists at the end of September.

The Irgun, however, did not abandon the reprisal policy. Its own counterterrorist activities increased with the increase in Arab terrorism in October and November, reaching a peak when seven Arabs were killed on 14 November. The Irgun only began to practice *havlagah* after military courts, which were empowered to impose the death penalty on those who even carried weapons, began to function on 18 November 1937. As in 1936, the Revisionists found themselves calling for an end to *havlagah* while observing the policy in practice.⁴⁵ The opposition to *havlagah* among rank and file Irgun members led indirectly to a second wave of reprisals against Arabs in summer 1938.

In early spring of that year two groups of Jews were killed by Arab terrorists in the Galilee. Ignoring orders from their commanders, three Revisionists fired at an Arab bus. Although they

missed the passengers, the three were arrested and tried by the police. One of them, Shlomo Ben Yoseph, was hanged on 29 June 1938. For two months after the execution the Irgun carried out a wave of terrorist attacks against Arabs, inflicting large numbers of casualties. Powerful bombs were placed in Arab public places. The most destructive was exploded in the Haifa Arab market in July and killed at least fifty Arabs. From the end of August until February 1939 the Irgun once more observed *havlagah*.

What had been academic discussions on *havlagah* in 1936 were now arguments based on the facts of Revisionist reprisal activities. Adherents of the indiscriminate reprisal policy⁴⁶ said that they had shown that the Jews were not hiding behind British bayonets. The British had imposed limitations on Jewish immigration, and might eventually give the country to the Arabs, precisely as a result of Arab terror. Reprisals showed that the Jews too were a military factor that the British would have to take into account.⁴⁷ That the Irgun did not achieve their goal of stopping Arab terror by counter-terror was attributed to its inadequate size. To objections that their attacks killed innocent Arabs, they replied that Jews and Arabs were at war, and the target, as in any war, was the enemy, not necessarily its soldiers.⁴⁸

Ali Official Zionist leaders were opposed to reprisals, which they considered disastrous to the *yishuv*. Even those who had opposed *havlagah* in 1936 supported it now,⁴⁹ viewing the political and military achievements of the intervening period as the outcome of their adherence to self-restraint, Ben-Gurion, arguing that the Zionists needed British help on both the military and political fronts, said that the British would blame any reprisals on the *yishuv* as a whole, and would therefore deem it disloyal, irresponsible, undependable and unworthy of protection. This would lead not only to political setbacks, but also to the weakening of the legal Jewish security forces.⁵⁰

Both Official Zionist leaders and Bi-nationahsts felt reprisals not only failed to decrease Arab terrorism against Jews, but had the opposite effect; furthermore, there was no moral justification for killing innocent Arabs. Some Official Zionists agreed with Hashomer Hatz'a'ir that reprisals brought about a further deterioration in Jewish-Arab relations.⁵¹

Official Zionists and Bi-nationalists found their efforts to bring a halt to Irgun attacks weakened by rising influence of the Revisionists and the increasing opposition to *havlagah*. Amid the almost daily killing of Jews, *yishuv* support for the Revisionist reprisals was on the increase.⁵² Some Official Zionists therefore advocated the use of force to stop the Irgun attacks.⁵³

It can be safely said that neither *yishuv* security forces nor the reprisal attacks had any marked influence on the course of the terrorist wave. While the Supernumerary Police probably saved many Jewish lives, its defensive nature prevented it from putting a stop to Arab tenor. This was also true of the mobile units and the illegal field units. The Night Squads, which were probably best suited to counter-terrorist warfare, were few in number and short-lived.

Zionist fear of engaging in illegal activities which could be traced back to the Haganah prevented many anti-terror operations from taking place. But British military cooperation, whatever its contribution to the military strength of the *yishuv*, did not prevent the British from withholding their help for the further development of the National Home.

Havlagah neither achieved its political goals nor put an end to terrorism. Might the indiscriminate attacks of the Revisionists have done so? Evidence indicates that such attacks were counter-productive and in fact probably stimulated further acts of Arab terrorism.

The Role of the Arab States

The British retreat - from partition in November 1938 and then from support of the National Home in May 1939 — was mainly due to pressure from the Arab states in a time of international crisis. The Palestinian Arab Revolt seems to have played a secondary role here. Malcolm MacDonald, who became Colonial Secretary in May 1938, is reported to have said of the Arab terror that he intended "to ignore it politically."⁵⁴

After the publication of the Royal Commission's partition proposal, the Arab states stepped up their pressure on Britain. Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore probably expressed the feeling of most British leaders when he said that, "as regards relations between Great Britain and the Arabs today, there was no denying that from Syria to Aden, Palestine had become a principal factor in bringing about strained relations between Britain and the Arab world."⁵⁵

Direct Arab pressure was felt mainly in the Foreign Office, which in late 1937 became the first British ministry to oppose partition.⁵⁶ When the Chiefs of Staff also favored a solution which would meet the demands of the Arab states,⁵⁷ other British decision-makers gradually fell into line.

In 1937 and 1938, faced with the likelihood of a new war, the British were preparing militarily, strategically and politically to meet threats to their international position. They had to remain on good terms with the Arab countries to prevent them from aligning with Germany and Italy.⁵⁸ Arab unrest in reaction to partition could destroy Britain's strategic position in the Middle East.

From the end of 1937 British strategic thinking downgraded the relative importance of the Mediterranean area to the outcome of a war and to the survival of the Commonwealth. Provided the friendship of the Arab countries could be assured, British forces in the Middle East were to be thinned out in the event of war. Of prime importance was the defense of the Suez Canal and the vital overland route from Palestine through Transjordan and Iraq to the Persian Gulf, because the British feared that the sea route would be blockaded by the Italians. If the Palestinian Arab Revolt continued and the Arab states became unfriendly, the overland route would be unsafe.

The major dissenter from the general Zionist feeling that the British were wrong in their estimation of the Arab threat was Ben-Gurion.⁶⁰ He believed that the Arab states did want to help their Palestinian Arab brothers, and that they opposed partition from Pan-Arab motives which aimed at the establishment of an Arab federation that included an Arab Palestine.⁶¹

The prevailing Zionist attitude was that feeling of Arab solidarity played a role in the Palestine question. In Shertok's view, "every Government gets involved in Palestine affairs when its internal position starts to become shaky, and this is one of its last resorts to survive and save itself."⁶²

Ibn-Sa'ud, considered the most important Arab leader by the British and therefore by the Zionists as well, was felt to have involved himself in the Palestine question as a bargaining maneuver in his long-standing dispute with Britain over his border with Transjordan. Ibn-Sa'ud was also said to fear that the British partition plan would afford the Hashimite Amir 'Abdallah opportunities for expansion.

Syrian and Iraqi involvement was viewed as a by-product of internal political difficulties. The Syrian regime of Mardam had lost Alexandretta to Turkey, failed to ratify its treaty with France, was having difficulties with minority separatists and was generally weak. In addition, returned exiles headed by Shahbandar, who were opposed to the Syrian Government, used the Palestine

issue to arouse unrest and obtain public support. The Syrian regime had been compelled to declare its own support for the Palestinian Arabs in order to neutralize this opposition. The Syrian National Bloc's contacts with the Zionists and its expressions of a desire for cooperation were seen as evidence that Syrian leaders were using the Palestine question only for local consumption.

There was little real support for the Palestinian Arabs from Egypt, Lebanon and Transjordan. Egyptian involvement was limited to Palestinian Arab exiles living there; Lebanon was considered amenable to the idea of partition and a Jewish state; and Amir 'Abdallah, whose interests were viewed as territorial, was also thought to find partition acceptable.⁶³

The Zionists who held these views do not seem to have dealt with the possibility that Arab leaders who opposed Zionism were speaking to an existing popular sympathy for the Palestinian Arabs. Although available sources indicate a marked increase in Arab opposition to Zionism among both the general population and its leaders,⁶⁴ the Zionist majority continued to insist that popular opposition was caused by the Palestinian Arabs in exile, exacerbated by Italian and German propaganda, agitation and money. They do not seem to have understood that propaganda requires the proper atmosphere to succeed.

The late 1930s saw an intense search for self-identity in the Arab world, and a concomitant rejection of Western ideas such as parliamentary democracy. In this climate Pan-Arabism gained ground as a solution to both the Arab identity crisis and the internal problems. It opposed Zionism as a foreign intrusion imposed by the British and as an obstacle to full Palestinian participation in the coming Pan-Arab state. The rivalry for positions of prominence in the envisaged federation notwithstanding, Arab desire for unity was genuine and strong.

The Zionist majority, however, noted only Arab efforts at cooperation and understanding, and not their opposition to Zionism. Some Arab leaders outside Palestine had sought Zionist political or financial aid, and Arab reaction to the separation of Alexandretta from Syria showed the fallacy of believing too strongly in Arab solidarity. If there was indeed a feeling of Pan-Arab solidarity, why had it not manifested itself when Alexandretta was given to Turkey?⁶⁵ Since these Zionists found the notion that Zionism represented an imperialist foreign invasion absurd, they could not believe such notions were anything more than rhetoric.

Although Ben-Gurion did not share this evaluation, he believed it politically wise for the Zionists to play down any connection between Pan-Arabism and Arab opposition to the Jewish state, and to highlight Arab self-interest.⁶⁶ This then became the Official Zionist argument against British claims that partition was politically difficult to implement.⁶⁷ While some British agreed with the Zionist interpretation,⁶⁸ that argument never addressed itself to the opposition itself, which was the major British concern.

But the Zionists continued to stress that the British could proceed with partition without fearing opposition from the Arab world, because what opposition did exist was not based on principle, and also because the Arab countries involved were militarily dependent on the British. A summary of the latter point, as it was presented to the British, can be found in a memorandum sent to the Colonial Office:

Each of the Arab states has interests closely bound up with Britain, and each of them depends to a very high degree on British protection for the safeguarding of its interests and the realization of its ambitions. They will from time to time talk Palestine... so long as they believed that such talk is not unwelcome to the representatives of Great Britain in the Near East and the ruling circles in London.⁶⁹

The Revisionists, on the other hand, acknowledged that anti-Zionist opposition existed in the

Arab countries, but characterized the sentiment as xenophobia rather than Pan-Arabism.⁷⁰ They felt that the Arabs simply wished to rid themselves of all foreign elements, including the Zionists, and that the notion of Pan-Arabism and an Arab federation were instilled by the British as pretexts for abandoning their obligations to the Jews. The Revisionists agreed with the Official Zionists that Arab dependence on the British would inhibit them from creating strategic problems.⁷¹

Many British officials held similar views on Arab strength.⁷² But British conceptions of Arab dependence or independence, military strength or weakness, did not affect their political retreat from partition. The new political stand had been taken in an effort to secure Arab friendship, to prevent an increase in Arab support for the Axis powers and to keep the area quiet in the event of war. What mattered was not the military strength of the Arab world, but its neutrality. Because Arab loyalty was in doubt, it had to be cultivated. Jewish loyalty was taken for granted.

In the summer of 1938 the British began an intensive search for an alternate solution to the Palestine problem. In late June Malcolm MacDonald, the new Colonial Secretary, raised the possibility of Zionist-Arab negotiations toward a peaceful understanding.⁷³ In early July MacDonald warned Weizmann that partition would cause unrest in the entire Arab and Muslim world.⁷⁴ In the crucial month of September John Shuckburgh, an Undersecretary for the Colonies, suggested two alternatives to partition to Weizmann; one called for a five-year limitation on Jewish immigration, the other for the creation of several Jewish-controlled cantons.⁷⁵

The Weizmann-MacDonald meetings of mid-September made it clear to Official Zionist leaders in London that the British Government had definitely decided to abandon partition. By November partition was dead. The Partition Commission Report issued that month gave it a decent burial; although it outlined three alternative partition plans, its conclusion was that partition was impractical. This was followed by the Government's official rejection of the partition plan and call for a tripartite conference of Jews, Arabs and British. In the likely event that the conference would not end in an agreement, the British Government would impose its own solution, based upon two principles: that the British would remain in Palestine, and that the Arab states would at least acquiesce in that decision.⁷⁶

The partition proposal had been killed by growing opposition to the Jewish National Home. The question remains: Why did the British take so long to capitulate? Why did it take two and a half years of continued anti-Zionist pressure? The delay cannot be explained by any sense of commitment by the British to the Balfour Declaration as a binding international obligation. They did not feel that they had to honor the Mandate in order to protect their position in Palestine, as a halt to the development of the National Home would have no serious consequences for British interests.

The answer to this question lies in the fact that, while Zionist political clout in Europe had declined as a result of the disenfranchisement of elements of Central and Eastern European Jewry, the Zionist position had been strengthened morally for precisely the same reason. Britain's delay in abandoning the National Home was rooted in her reluctance to outrage public opinion at a time of great distress for the Jews. The event was delayed further by the exercise of whatever political influence the Zionists still wielded in Britain. Through astute diplomacy and propaganda and close contacts with British policymakers, the Zionists had been able to gain time until the pressure to kill the partition plan became too strong.

[The London Conference](#)

MacDonald presented the idea of a round table conference of Jews and Arabs to Weizmann on 13 October 1938. A similar idea had been raised by the Jewish Agency Council after the Zionist Congress of 1937, when they directed the Executive "to request His Majesty's Government to convene a conference of Jews and Arabs of Palestine with a view of exploring the possibilities of making a peaceful settlement."⁷⁷ The British response at the time was negative, based on the premise that partition was the best solution.⁷⁸

The general Official Zionist response to the proposed conference was not at first negative, but opposition grew after mid-December,⁷⁹ when it became increasingly obvious that the conference was being designed to meet Arab demands, including immigration curbs. And this at a time when pogroms against German Jews, in November, had intensified the Jewish refugee problem. Although the Zionists had committed themselves to participate, they hoped that the conference could somehow be cancelled, or at least delayed, until the international situation had stabilized.⁸⁰ Those Official Zionist leaders who agreed to participation despite their pessimistic view of the outcome, did so in the belief that the same pressures which caused the British retreat might cause the conference to be held even without Jewish participation.⁸¹ This seems to have stimulated contacts between the Zionists and the Nashashibis, who, unlike the Mufti's faction, favored participation.⁸²

In order to ensure Jewish participation in the conference MacDonald assured Zionist leaders that immigration would continue at the current rate of 1,000 a month during the conference, and that no plan that would confine the Jews to minority status would be approved.⁸³ In early December the British Government announced that it still felt itself bound by the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, but that it reserved the right to change its policy should conditions warrant this.⁸⁴

Some Official Zionist leaders thought that participation in the conference would lend respectability to British decisions against the Jewish National Home.⁸⁵ They believed that the Government's decision to meet Arab demands was partly due to the assumption that Jews had no alternative but to cooperate.⁸⁶

Officially, the Zionists refused to take part in the conference if the Arab states attended.⁸⁷ Jewish participation would then be taken as an admission that non-Palestinian Arabs had the right to become involved in Palestine, and Britain would then have a precedent for taking their opinion into account. This factor was not stressed during internal Official Zionist discussions.⁸⁸ Several opponents believed that Britain's real motive for inviting the Arab states was to unite them under British control, with the Palestine issue as the pretext.⁸⁹

Official Zionist opponents also warned that the Arabs, assured that the British were ready to meet their demands and confident of support from Italy and Germany, were in no need of agreement. In any case, there would be no real Jewish-Arab conference since the Arabs refused to sit with the Jews and each side would meet separately with the British. Jewish absence would cost the Zionists nothing, and would at least have a demonstrative value.⁹⁰

The Revisionists, who also opposed participation, attributed the conference idea to anti-Zionist sentiment in the Foreign Office. Since they did not believe that the Arabs posed a genuine threat to Britain, they ascribed malicious motives to the British political retreat.⁹¹

By January 1939 the majority of the *yishuv* was against participation,⁹² and the majority in the

Jewish Agency Executive favored it. The latter view ultimately prevailed. But the advocates of participation entertained no illusions about the purpose of the conference. With the exception of Shprintzak and Senator, they did not view the conference as a genuine forum for negotiations. Weizmann felt that the Arab participants were "under the direction of Hitler's agents."⁹³ At least until mid-December, he even believed, as did B. Katznelson, that the British retreat from support of the National Home was the result of a secret agreement with Germany and Italy.⁹⁴

Ben-Gurion, who took the Arab desire for independence more seriously, thought that the British did fear Arab unrest, although he felt that they overestimated the Arab ability to act independently. Potential German and Italian aggression had blown the importance of Arab pressure out of all proportion.

Ben-Gurion subjected the roles of the Arab states to detailed analysis and came to the conclusion that neither the Palestinian Arabs nor the Arab states had any motive for reconciliation with the Jews. As he put it,

After the abolition of the Jewish State plan, there is no chance now for an agreement with the Arabs unless we abandon Zionism. Since we are not ready for that, and the Arabs will not talk on less than that, I cannot see any agreement with them now.⁹⁵

Nor did the eventual advocates of participation, Hashomer Hatzair, foresee an agreement.⁹⁶ They thought the conference was nothing but an imperialistic British attempt to form a Pan-Arab bloc which would promote Britain's interest. An agreement was impossible because the Palestinian Arab leaders were under fascist influence and acting in their own class interests.

Thus, advocates of participation were not motivated by any hopes of a Jewish-Arab breakthrough. They simply believed that, since the conference would be held with or without Jewish representation, Jewish attendance might succeed in softening the restrictions that the British intended to propose. If the Zionists refused to attend, the British would claim additional justification for imposing their policy, since there would no longer be any chance for a voluntary agreement, and they could blame the Jews for this impasse.⁹⁷ Participation would head off an adverse public reaction; in the words of one advocate, "We have no force except that represented by public opinion."⁹⁸ Without a presence at the conference the Jews would have no opportunity to explain their position to the public.⁹⁹ Furthermore, non-participation might cause a split with those Jews outside the *yishuv* who felt that the conference presented a golden opportunity to reach an agreement with the Arabs.¹⁰⁰

Two leaders, the Official Zionist Shprintzak and the Bi-nationalist Senator — although neither had any illusions about the intentions of the British — wanted the Zionists to go to the conference with a positive attitude, ready to make concessions for the sake of an agreement. Most Bi-nationalists and a small segment of the *yishuv* shared this view.¹⁰¹ Shprintzak and Senator felt that, since the main obstacle to agreement was Palestinian Arab fear of continued immigration, the two communities should agree on a fixed rate of immigration. Senator provided a detailed overall plan for Jewish-Arab agreement.¹⁰²

Official Zionist leaders, on the other hand, felt that they should make no concessions to British-backed Arab demands. The November 1938 pogrom in Germany, which gave rise to an immediate need for the relocation of German Jews, contributed to the Official Zionist determination to maintain a non-conciliatory policy.

Such a policy was outlined by Shertok and Ben-Gurion before a London meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, where it received a favorable reception. The two leaders called on the

Zionists to argue that the Jews should be given all of Mandatory Palestine since the Arabs had already achieved most of their nationalistic goals while the Jews had achieved none. To quell Palestinian Arab fear of Jewish domination, the Jews should propose a link between Palestine and the Arab states. Ben-Gurion further recommended that political parity be suggested as Palestine's further system of government but that cantonization should be accepted if proposed, provided the Jewish canton comprised the area suggested by the Royal Commission plus Jerusalem.¹⁰³ Both Shertok and Ben-Gurion urged that attempts be made to talk with the Arabs, although both were pessimistic about the Arab response.¹⁰⁴

No matter what their position on attending the conference, most Zionists expected it to restrict, if not halt, immigration and land purchase. They did not think that the British would create an independent state in Palestine.¹⁰⁵

The London Conference opened at St. James Palace on 7 February 1939 with a Jewish delegation that included representatives of the Jewish Agency, the ultra-orthodox Agudath Yisrael party and Jewish delegates from several countries. Although there were non-Zionist participants, the delegation stood as one, with all the delegates following the direction of the Official Zionists, headed by Weizmann, Ben-Gurion and Shertok.

The Arabs were represented by two delegations of Palestinian Arabs, as well as delegations from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Transjordan and Yemen. Palestinian disunity was not manifested, as the Nashashibis followed the lead of the Mufti's faction.

In five meetings during the first phase of British-Jewish talks, which ended on 14 February, Colonial Secretary MacDonald outlined the reasons for the British retreat and explained why the British needed to meet some of the Arab demands. At the outset of these talks he proposed that his comments, for the purposes of discussion, represent the Arab point of view. As it developed, it was not clear where his representation of the Arab view ended, and where his own view (and that of the British Government) began. The impression created was that all his statements reflected his own views.

MacDonald asserted that the British Government had obligations to both Arabs and Jews. He said that "the authors of the Balfour Declaration made certain assumptions which have been falsified by events," because they had not taken into account the existing Arab population and had erroneously assumed that the Arabs would eventually acquiesce in the Jewish National Home. He argued that while "some people referred to Arab opposition as bluff," it was genuine. The Mandate required the establishment of self-governing institutions, which was precisely what the Arabs were demanding. And because they were the majority in Palestine, it would be unjust to force them to accept a Jewish regime. Their claim to independence was as justified as that of any other Arab state. The building of the National Home could therefore be continued only by force, which the British Government was unwilling to exert, or by conciliation with the Arabs. MacDonald urged the Jews to adopt a "realistic" policy; if the British Empire were destroyed in the coming war, the Jews would suffer a similar fate.¹⁰⁶

In rebuttal the Zionists said that the British had been well aware of the existence of an Arab population in Palestine at the time of the Balfour Declaration. Although he accepted this point, MacDonald claimed that it did not detract from his argument.¹⁰⁷

The Secretary of State for the Colonies had assumed that the consent, or at least acquiescence, of the Arabs was essential to the implementation of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. The Zionists pointed out that in neither the Mandate nor the Balfour Declaration was such a condition mentioned. In fact, if the Mandate required the consent of the existing population, it would lose its meaning since it was doubtful that Great Britain was in Palestine with Arab

consent.¹⁰⁸

Shertok told MacDonald that Jewish rights did not depend on anyone's consent or acquiescence. The development of the National Home could not be stopped because the *yishuv*, which represented 30 percent of the population of Palestine, was a reality that had to be taken into account.¹⁰⁹

Speaking of "realities," Stephen S. Wise, an American Zionist leader, reminded MacDonald of the importance to Britain of American public opinion. Americans, especially American Jews, were very much concerned about the future development of the National Home and the fulfillment of what they saw as Britain's international obligations under the Mandate.¹¹⁰

Turning to strategic needs, which outweighed considerations of Arab rights in the formulation of Britain's Palestine policy, the Colonial Secretary explained that friendly relations with the Arab countries were of the greatest importance to Britain and would be impossible to achieve unless Britain changed its policy.

The Jewish delegation tried to convince the British that the Arab states depended on Britain much more than Britain depended on them and that the British could exploit the *yishuv's* military capacity for their strategic needs.

Arab solidarity on the Palestine question was only a pretext for extracting British concessions on other fronts. As such, a pro-Arab settlement of the question might bring only temporary benefits to Britain.¹¹¹ The Jewish delegates expressed serious doubts that the Palestine question would affect the attitude of Arab states toward Britain in the event of war; each state would make decisions according to its own national interests. The loyalty of the Arab states would be secured only if Britain were strong and militarily successful. It was, in any event, futile to make arrangements now that could be altered by the new situation that war might bring.¹¹²

On the other hand, Jewish loyalty could be depended on in the event of war. Claiming that between 50,000 and 75,000 young Jews could be recruited, the Zionists pointed out that a loyal Jewish force in the Middle East would provide reinforcements which would otherwise be difficult to find.¹¹³

Expanding on these possibilities, Wise said that young Jews in the United States were anxious to form a Jewish legion to help both the British and the *yishuv*. Furthermore, in the event of war the Jewish community in the United States could be of real value in influencing public opinion, which was divided concerning active military support for the European democracies. Both political and military support would be available from American Jews, provided that Britain did not take action against the Jewish National Home.¹¹⁴

There would, however, have been little net benefit for the British if the Jews drafted in Palestine had to be used to subdue an Arab uprising. The friendship of the Muslim world was far more important than any Jewish support, of which the British were, in any case, assured.

During the second and final phase of talks, in the latter half of February, the British presented their proposals on immigration, land purchase and the constitutional future of Palestine. MacDonald outlined the proposals on 15 February, but when he filled in the details in following sessions he made certain changes in favor of the Arabs.

On 20 February MacDonald introduced three different immigration proposals. The first, which he favored, would allow immigration of 15,000 to 30,000 Jews in each of the following ten years. At the end of this period the *yishuv* would constitute 35 to 40 percent of the total population,¹¹⁵ and the Arabs would be given veto power over further immigration. In one of the other two alternatives the immigration rate would be lowered in exchange for dropping the Arab

veto power. The third possibility, which held the last attraction for MacDonald, was a cantonization plan which would allow the Jews to control immigration in certain areas of Palestine.¹¹⁶

The final British proposal, submitted to the Jewish delegation on 15 March, would allow 15,000 per annum to enter the country over a five-year period, after which immigration was to be subject to Palestinian Arab consent.¹¹⁷

The Jewish delegation rejected the principle of Arab consent from the outset, because this would confine the Jews to permanent minority status. Although they did declare their willingness to discuss the ten-year immigration plan, provided there would be no Arab veto power thereafter, the British decided to drop this proposal, probably because they knew it would be unacceptable to the Arabs. A Jewish version of the cantonization proposal was also rejected by the British.¹¹⁸

On the question of Jewish land purchase, the British proposed dividing Palestine into three zones — free, restricted and prohibited¹¹⁹ — claiming that the restrictions were necessary to pacify the Arabs inside and outside of Palestine. Their chief motivation, they said, was the scarcity of land available for Arab cultivation.¹²⁰ The final British proposal, on 15 March, recommended that the High Commissioner be empowered to implement these limitations in accordance with the findings of the Royal and Partition commissions.¹²¹

The Jewish delegates rejected the proposed restrictions. But discussions on the issue were limited, most likely because they lacked full details on the British proposal. While discussions on immigration restrictions took up a great deal of conference time, even more sessions dealt with the future political structure of Palestine. MacDonald claimed that there were indications that progress toward the establishment of self-governing institutions would alleviate other problems.¹²² At first he suggested that Palestine's constitutional structure be based on Jewish-Arab parity,¹²³ but after the Arabs rejected this proposal,¹²⁴ MacDonald told the Jewish delegates that there were serious difficulties in reaching an agreement on parity.¹²⁵ The proposals presented at the meeting in question centered around termination of the Mandate and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state after a transitional period. According to these proposals, a round table conference of the three parties would be called to deal with minorities, British interests and a constitution.¹²⁶

At this point in the negotiations, which were proving as unfavorable to the Zionists as they had expected, the "courier incident" intervened to provide them with a good excuse to abandon the talks. According to the Zionists, a British courier delivered a version of the British constitutional proposals, intended for the Arab delegation, to the Jewish delegation instead.¹²⁷ Recent studies have shown that the document was nothing more than a summary of the British proposals of 24 February in the form of an appendix,¹²⁸ and was in fact meant for Jewish eyes; the document itself was so identified.¹²⁹ The British, insisting that their own final proposals had not yet been made, asked the Jewish delegation to remain at the conference; but the latter refused and brought their formal participation to an end. The meetings that followed in March were all informal.

In these meetings the British filled in details on their original constitutional proposals and made some modifications. The move toward independence would be gradual, the number of Jewish and Arab Palestinians participating in the governing institutions increasing with each step; the time gap would not be fixed but would depend on conditions; and the transitional period would end only after Jewish-Arab cooperation had been attained.

The British saw the need for certain safeguards in an independent Palestinian state — for the Holy Places, for British interests and for the Jewish National Home. The Jews, who they

considered an extraordinary minority, would require special constitutional safeguards.¹³⁰

The final British proposal of 15 March recommended an independent state, "possibly of a federal nature,"¹³¹ and a national constitutional assembly instead of the round table.¹³² They also dropped the idea of parity in favor of proportional representation during the transitional period.¹³³ In short the British plan would have placed the fulfillment of each party's most cherished demand in the hands of its rival. The Jews were to be given the power to prevent the creation of an independent Arab state in Palestine, and the Arabs to halt Jewish immigration. MacDonald claimed that this would force both parties to compromise and cooperate.¹³⁴

Had MacDonald really believed that this policy would lead to cooperation, he can only be regarded as naive. But the manner in which he presented his arguments indicates that his real aim at the conference was to prolong the British stay in Palestine by creating a deadlock which would ease the pressure on the British from both sides. His strategy therefore succeeded, at least in the short run.

The Zionists felt that the British proposals would result in a diminution of the Zionism they knew and had been fighting for. Therefore, they began to take the initiative in proposing their own solutions early in the conference. One proposal, calling for cantonization with the creation of two federated states and federal institutions based on parity, placed Jewish immigration in Jewish hands and allocated enough territory to the Jews to facilitate further development.¹³⁵ The British refused to discuss this proposal in detail because they viewed the federal alternative as viable only after the transitional period, that is, after restrictions on immigration and land sale had been imposed.

On the eve of the London Conference Ben-Gurion said that he was prepared to make greater concessions directly to the Arabs than via the British. But in February the Zionists expressed their willingness to reach an agreement with the Arabs through either direct or indirect negotiations, on a give and take basis.¹³⁶

Three unofficial meetings were held between Jewish delegates and non-Palestinian Arabs, the Palestinian Arab delegates refusing to participate. The two talks devoted to actual negotiations only accentuated the wide gap between the two sides; while the Jews wanted recognition of their right to immigrate, the Arabs would tolerate the admission of some Jews to Palestine or other Arab countries, but only as a humanitarian gesture in the context of the refugee problem. The Arabs also demanded that an Arab state be established in Palestine.¹³⁷

This meeting showed the British moving closer to the Arab position; their only remaining difference with the Arabs was on the nature of the safeguards to be given the Jewish minority in an independent Palestine.

The Zionists were divided over whether to accept the invitation to a third informal meeting, some of them fearing British-Arab collusion. They finally made their participation conditional on a British commitment to refrain from interfering in the talks between Arabs and Jews.¹³⁸ The chief Arab spokesman at this meeting, the Egyptian Ali Maher, called on the Jews to halt, or at least slow down, immigration for the time being, and to seek Arab friendship and goodwill before resuming it. Weizmann made a comment that MacDonald (and Shertok) construed to mean that the Jews agreed to such a slowdown, but Ben-Gurion later said that Weizmann had been referring to mutual, and not unilateral, Jewish concessions.¹³⁹

The final British proposals of mid-March proved unacceptable to both Palestinian Arabs and Jews. Pressure from the Zionists and the Arab governments, together with the uncertain international situation, delayed publication of the proposals until 17 May 1939, when they were

finally issued in the form of the White Paper.

In the interim the Zionists intensified their lobbying activities in Britain and the United States. Proclaiming that they would fight rather than submit to the plan, they warned that it would fail to pacify the country.¹⁴⁰

After the London Conference the dialogue between the British and the Arab states continued in Cairo,¹⁴¹ with the Arab governments pressing the British for further concessions. It was most likely these pressures that brought about the changes in the British proposals made at the London Conference and those published in the White Paper. For example, the White Paper made no mention at all of a federation after a transitional period, and a sentence to the effect that the state would be neither Jewish nor Arab was deleted.

By 15 March, the day the British submitted their final proposals to the delegates, the German occupation of Prague made war almost a certainty, and put more of a premium than ever on Arab friendship.

[The Zionist Response](#)

While the Jewish National Home had been built with British help, after October 1938 Britain began to impose restrictions which would prevent its further development. The Zionist reaction found expression in a spate of new proposals for solving the Palestine problem and also for meeting the new British challenge. All these new ideas came from the Official Zionists, the mainstream seemingly being more pragmatic in adapting to new realities and more ready to make concessions. Cantonization, which had been rejected by most Official Zionist leaders, was now reconsidered,¹⁴² and some leaders were even ready to accept a Jewish canton smaller than the one outlined in the Peel proposal.¹⁴³ However, most Official Zionists could go no further than to approve the proposal calling for two federated states with political parity,¹⁴⁴ which they had presented to the British at the London Conference.

Another plan which called for paying Iraq several million Palestine pounds to resettle a large number of Palestinian Arabs received public attention.¹⁴⁵ But Weizmann's talks with the Foreign Minister of Iraq did not lead to any results.¹⁴⁶

As Arab-Jewish agreement seemed unattainable at this time, since the Arabs knew they could get more from the British than the Zionists,¹⁴⁷ the large majority of Official Zionists concluded that talks with the British would be more fruitful than with the Arabs.¹⁴⁸ Progress could be made only if the British stood firmly behind their former policy, but, as they began to realize, favorable British policy depended on Arab consent due to the increasing importance of the Arabs to Britain.

The impending British retreat, although painfully obvious to the Zionists, required a difficult mental readjustment. For all their complaints of British obstructionism throughout the Mandate period, Zionists knew that British help had been essential to their achievements in Palestine. The prospect of an end to this aid, which had for so long been taken for granted, led to panic, confusion and despair. The threat of the physical destruction of *the yishuv* as a possible consequence of Arab rule compounded this anxiety.¹⁴⁹ The one ray of hope in this dark picture was the knowledge that British policy could change in the future as it had done in the past.¹⁵⁰

At the first signs of the British retreat after early October 1938 Weizmann suggested that the

yishuv prepare to revolt against Great Britain,¹⁵¹ and Ben-Gurion apparently agreed.¹⁵² Later, however, Ben-Gurion came up with alternative measures to defeat the White Paper policy, and Weizmann retreated from his first position.¹⁵³

Ben-Gurion's initial proposal, that the *yishuv* revolt, received a mixed reaction.¹⁵⁴ However, as he and other leaders detailed the proposal, and as British intentions became clearer, most opposition disappeared. Ben-Gurion's new activist policy, which comprised elements suggested in the past by other Zionist leaders,¹⁵⁵ laid out the basic lines for the future struggle against British policy. The policy was publicized on the eve of the publication of the White Paper, and it succeeded in ending the period of confusion and discord within Zionist ranks.

Arguing against premature military activity, Ben-Gurion claimed that the British would not leave Palestine as long as their Empire existed; if they did establish an Arab state there it would not be truly independent. Since the impending international situation would force the Jews to cooperate with the British in the coming war, it would be best to avoid alienating whatever sympathy still existed among the British.¹⁵⁶ While he did say, "I do not exclude the possibility that we will have to revolt against England and conquer a Jewish state in part of the country,"¹⁵⁷ such measures were for the distant future. For the time being it was better to work toward a policy of renewed British cooperation in the development of the Jewish National Home.

According to the measures outlined by Ben-Gurion, the *yishuv* would refuse to participate in government institutions which furthered the new British policy by emphasizing the minority status of the Jews. More actively, the plan called for civil disobedience against laws designed to decrease or halt Jewish development in Palestine, particularly laws against immigration and settlement, and the intensification of illegal immigration.¹⁵⁸

Even the small group of Official Zionists who opposed illegal action against the Government did not oppose illegal immigration; in their eyes laws against fundamental Jewish rights were invalid and antithetical to any Zionist.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, immigration, illegal or otherwise, enhanced the *yishuv's* military potential and would cause the British to reconsider their policy and depend on the Jews to protect their interests in Palestine.¹⁶⁰

As part of the Zionist policy, Ben-Gurion proposed that Haifa should have a large Jewish majority, even if this necessitated the transfer of Jews from other areas. He claimed that the city was the strategic center of Palestine and that Jewish control of the city would facilitate establishment of an arms industry, a national military training program and the founding of Jewish settlements in border and other strategic areas. This would increase the strategic value of the *yishuv* to Britain and, if events made it necessary, help prepare the *yishuv* for a revolt.¹⁶¹ Additional measures included the establishment of an organization to gain power by force, the tightening of Haganah secrecy and a general mobilization of youth for settlement and military purposes.¹⁶²

The Official Zionists hoped to force the British to abandon their anti-Zionist policy through the use of economic, military and political pressures, and by taking advantage of increasingly sympathetic public opinion.¹⁶³

Many of the measures being adopted by the Official Zionists had been demanded or implemented by the Revisionists well before the British retreat from partition. Although they lacked a program for the further development of the National Home through settlement, the Revisionists now stepped up their efforts in illegal immigration, which Jabotinsky said should become the "national sport"; for him, as for Ben-Gurion, it was a political tool as well.

In the effort to establish a Jewish state in all of historic Palestine, Jabotinsky offered a plan at

the end of 1938 which called for the immigration of a million Jews in the next two years.¹⁶⁴ The Revisionists, like the Official Zionists, believed that the new British policy was not necessarily final, but they seem to have been more optimistic that change was possible.¹⁶⁵ To show the British that Palestine was not to be pacified, they began a wave of reprisals and other terrorist attacks against Arabs in late February, hoping to show the British that they would be able to implement their new policy only by totally destroying *the yishuv*.¹⁶⁶

The Bi-nationalists, holding fast to their old assumptions and proposals, believed that the Official Zionist proposals constituted an obstacle to eventual Arab acceptance of the Jewish presence.¹⁶⁷ They continued to see a binational state with political parity as the only possible solution to the Palestine problem; such a state would eventually join an Arab federation.¹⁶⁸ All Bi-nationalists called for an agreement on the rate and timing of immigration, but they differed among themselves on what the rate should be and on what would happen at the end of the immigration period.¹⁶⁹ The Bi-nationalists were the only Zionist faction ready to give the Palestinian Arabs equal political rights, but even this major Zionist concession was totally unacceptable to the Palestinian Arabs.

Hashomer Hatzair, like the Bi-nationalists, did not adjust its proposals to the changing political atmosphere. They still foresaw an Arab-Jewish socialist society in a bi-national state, through the organization of the Arab-Jewish masses. While they mostly agreed with Official Zionist policy vis-à-vis the British, they refused to consider active revolt.¹⁷⁰

The White Paper published on 19 May 1939 was even more unfavorable to the Zionists than the final British proposals at the London Conference. This brought about a new era in the Zionist struggle. Only the future would tell whether the plans that had been made for the impending struggle would bear fruit.

Notes

- ¹ E.S., "Arab Bureau," 20 November 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.187; E.E., "Arab Bureau," 27 December and E.S., "Arab Bureau," 2 December 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9173; A.H.C., "Report on Security," 14 December 1936, C.Z.A., S25/9783; memorandum from R. Z. asiani to Kaplan, January 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3441.
- ² National Military Organization, commonly referred to as the Irgun.
- ³ "Arab Bureau," 1 December 1936, C.Z.A., S25/10.187; 10 March 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097; 26,30 April 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3571.
- ⁴ See A.H.C., "Evaluation of the Situation among the Arabs," 5 June 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097.
- ⁵ See, for example, A.H.C., "Ragheb Nashashibi on the Partition Plan," 18 July 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097; "Arab Bureau," 25 June, 15 July, 25 August, 9 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/4127; A.H.C., "Political Information about Developments among the Arabs," 30 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097; see also David Niv, *Ma'rachoth Hairgun Hatzevai Haleumi: Mehaganah Lehatqafa, 1937-1939* (The Struggle of the Irgun: From Defense to Offense, 1937-1939) (Tel-Aviv: Klausner Institute, 1965) (hereinafter referred to as Niv, *Irgun*, Part II), pp. 22,24.
- ⁶ B.J., "Minutes of an Interview with the Officer Administering the Government on Tuesday, 28 September 1937," C.Z.A., S25/20. See also Executive Proceedings, 28 September 1937, C.Z.A.
- ⁷ *Loc. cit.*; Central Committee, 28 September 1937, Mapai Archives. See *Mishmar Ha'am*, 1 October 1937, pp. 1-2, for similar ideas of the Revisionists.
- ⁸ See, for example, "Arab Bureau," 25 June, 15 July, 25 August, 9 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/4127; "Political Information about Developments among the Arabs," 30 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097; "Extract from Letter," 16 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1513; letter from David Hacohen to Moshe, 16 September 1937, C.Z.A., S25/4144; Central Committee, 28, 29 September 1937, Mapai Archives. For the Revisionists see *Hayarden*, 27 August, *Behazith Ha'am*, 24

September, *Mishmar Ha'am*, 1 October 1937. See also, *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1,16 September 1937.

- [9](#) For example, compare Kaplan with Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 28 September 1937, C.Z.A.
- [10](#) Central Committee, 18 October 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [11](#) It is difficult to determine the attitude of some Zionists, such as Ben-Gurion, who had misgivings about any action against the Mufti; see Shertok's opinion as well as Ben-Gurion's in Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, p. 265.
- [12](#) See Joseph in Executive Proceedings, 3, 10 October 1937, C.Z.A. He reported that this was the view of the acting High Commissioner, the head of intelligence and the British police. Downie, as reported in "Note of Interview with Mr. H.F. Downie, Colonial Office, October 9, 1937...", C.Z.A., S25/7563, seemed to be more skeptical.
- [13](#) Central Committee, 18 October 1937, Mapai Archives. See also *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 15 October, 1,15 November 1937 which shared the same view.
- [14](#) See also intelligence report entitled, "N.H. Kefar Gil'adi writes;," 29 October 1937, C.Z.A., S25/10.097.
- [15](#) "Political Information about Developments among the Arabs," 14 October 1937,C.Z.A., S25/10.097.
- [16](#) See, for example, A.H.C., "Political Information about Developments among the Arabs," 6, 13 December, C.Z.A., S25/10.097; "The Activities of the Mufti and his Associates in Syria," 7 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.098, a document apparently written by an Arab who had direct information from the headquarters in Damascus and Beirut; memorandum by R. Z[aslani] to Kaplan, 24 January 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3540; A.H.C., "Political Information about Developments among the Arabs (Survey)," 6 July 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.098; B.J., "Note of an Interview with Sir Charles Tegart on December 29th, 1938," "Minute of an Interview with Sir Charles Tegart, January 17th, 1939," C.Z.A., S25/43; "Terror," 14 April 1939, C.Z.A., S25/4960. The *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 763, claims that the influence of the headquarters was very limited.
- [17](#) See, for example, A. Katznelson and Shprintzak in Central Committee, 17 August 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [18](#) See Ben-Zvi in "Consultation on Political Issues," 7 April 1938, Mapai Archives; Central Committee, 2-3 February, 14 September, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Political Committee, 24 August 1938, Mapai Archives; Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 263, 317; *Davar*, 20 October, 14 December 1937,22 March, 2, 25 September 1938, 28 April 1939. For Weizmann's attitude see "Note of Interview with... Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office, Friday, February 25, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [19](#) See Central Committee, 13 March, 17 August, 14 September, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Shertok in Political Committee, 31 July-1 August 1938, Maps Archives; *Davar*, 22, 26 August, 25 September 1938; 16 January, 19, 28 April, 14 May 1939; *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1937: 15 October, p. 1; 1 November, p. 12.
- [20](#) As to whether this group considered the second phase a national revolt, the sources are ambiguous. Only Ben-Zvi in "Consultation on Political Affairs," 7 April 1938, Mapai Archives, stated clearly that he did not see it as a revolt. The high-ranking British did not consider the second phase a revolt.
- [21](#) For certain changes in Weizmann's views, see his letter to Wise and Lipsky, 21 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649; "Note of Conversation between M.M. and Ch.W.... June 22nd, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563. In an article of a latter date, Grunbaum used the term "revolt." see *Haolam*, 29 July 1939, p. 695. See also B. Katznelson's ideas in Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [22](#) See, for example, *Davar*, 25 August, 25 September, 18 November 1938; 12 January, 5 February, 3, 19 March, 19 April, 1939.
- [23](#) See Ben-Zvi in "Consultation on Political Affairs," 4 April 1938, Mapai Archives. This attitude concealed a certain ambiguity. The non-Palestinian Arabs were considered foreigners by these Zionists, and their actions, like those of Syrian politicians, were thought to be motivated by reasons other than a genuine desire to help Palestinian Arabs. On the other hand, most Zionists considered the Arab National Movement as including all Arabs.
- [24](#) See *loc. cit.*; Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 317-318. See also *Davar*, 18 November 1938, p. 2; 19 April 1939, p. 3.
- [25](#) See Golomb in Central Committee, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives. See also Shertok in Central Committee, 14 September 1938, Mapai Archives; *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 772-773.
- [26](#) Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 6 July 1938, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 7 July 1938, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion, "The Security Question and the Present Issues," 3 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1949.
- [27](#) Letters from Weizmann to Wise and Lipsky, 21 December, and to Amery, 31 December 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649; "Note of Conversation between M.M.[acDonald?] and Ch. W[eizmann], Wednesday, June 22nd, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563; Golomb in Central Committee, 2-3 February, and Shertok in the meeting of 17 August 1938, Mapai Archives; "Minutes of Interview with Sii Charles Tegart on Friday, February 17th, 1939," C.Z.A., S25/43; *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1937: 15 October; 1 November, p. 1; 15 August 1938, p. 3. See also, *Hayarden*, 8 November 1937.
- [28](#) See Shertok quoting the head of the British armed forces in Palestine, in Central Committee, 17 August 1938, Mapai Archives.

- [29](#) *Loc. cit.*; Repetur in Central Committee, 6 July; Hoz in Political Committee, 24 August 1938, Mapai Archives. For Revisionists see, for example, *Hayarden*, 15 October, 19 November 1937, 15 April, 10 July 1938.
- [30](#) Golomb and Shertok in Central Committee, 14 March, 6 July, respectively, and Political Committee, 24 August 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [31](#) Ben-Gurion did not think that the Government was handling the Revolt well, but he emphasized that the Arabs, and not the British, were the central factors in the Revolt. See Executive Proceedings, 24 July 1938, C.Z.A.; Central Committee, 2-3 February 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [32](#) See, for example, Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 7 July 1938, C.Z.A.; *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1 August 1938.
- [33](#) It is possible that Abdallah received some financial aid to encourage him to act against the Mufti; see telegram from Joseph, 15 August 1937, C.Z.A., S25/1649.
- [34](#) It is difficult to determine if the Zionist leaders at this time really had such a political motivation. In the comments by Shertok in the Central Committee, 2-3 February 1938, Mapai Archives, one can find the argument that the increase in the force was actually damaging politically.
- [35](#) The number of permanent Supernumeraries was raised to 1,100 in July 1938. See Shertok in Political Committee, 22 July 1938, Mapai Archives. In January 1939 they numbered 1,289 and their reserves numbered 13,122. The total number of Jews in all the security forces in Palestine is estimated for July 1939, by *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 897, to have been about 22,000. Revisionists expressed a low opinion of the Supernumerary Police which, they said, were entirely under British control. The Jewish Agency had tried to prevent recruitment of Revisionists into this force. In negotiations with Official Zionist leaders, Revisionist leaders expressed their wish to participate. See "Open Words to the People who Live in Zion," Proclamation No. 3, from the Collection of the Irgun, September 1938? ("?" in the original document), Jabotinsky Archives; Golomb in Central Committee, 12 November 1938, Mapai Archives; Shertok, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 328-330.
- [36](#) Most of the Supernumerary Police were also members of the Haganah; see, for example, Ben-Gurion, "The Security Question and the Present Issues," 3 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1949; Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, pp. 328-330.
- [37](#) See, for example, Central Committee, 14 September 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [38](#) There was more than a little opposition to the squads among Jewish settlers, who thought that such operations were contrary to Zionism, and who feared that they would damage relations with Arab villagers; see Political Committee, 22 July 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [39](#) See Executive Proceedings, 25 November 1937, 1 May 1938, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion in "Consultation on Political Affairs," 7 April 1938, Mapai Archives; Ben-Zvi, "Meeting with the High Commissioner, 11.7.38," C.Z.A., S25/21; B. Katznelson in Central Committee, 4 April 1938, Mapai Archives; "Short Note of Interview Between W[eizmann] and J. S[huckburgh], 15 October 1937..." C.Z.A., S25/7563. For the Revisionists see, *Behazith Ha'am*, 24 September 1937; *Hayarden*, 8, 15 October, 19 November 1937, 15 April, 11 November 1938; *Ha'am*, 4 March 1938.
- [40](#) See Shertok in Political Committee, 24 August 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [41](#) See telegram from Shertok to Lourie, September 1938, C.Z.A., S25/21; Central Committee, 14 September 1938, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 18 September 1938, C.Z.A., Sharett, *Diaries: 1938*, p. 290. On British thoughts about building a Jewish army during the Munich crisis see Michael J. Cohen, "Appeasement in the Middle East: The British White Paper on Palestine, May 1939," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. XVI (September 1973), p. 575.
- [42](#) Central Committee, 14 September 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [43](#) *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1 April 1937, 1 August, 15 September, 1 October 1938.
- [44](#) See, for example, Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 289-296.
- [45](#) The Revisionists and their newspapers did not publicly call for reprisals, but they presented arguments in their favor and indirectly attacked the followers of *havlagah*. See *Zionews*, 15 September 1937, Jabotinsky Archives, 4G-1/21; *Mishmar Ha'am*, 1 October 1937; *Hayarden*, 8 October, 19 November 1937.
- [46](#) It seems that the Revisionists were divided into moderates and extremists, as was the Irgun, which was not controlled entirely by the Revisionist organization. Some, including the exiled leader Jabotinsky, seem to have opposed most indiscriminate attacks, especially those in which large bombs were used. See and compare Niv, *Irgun*, Part II, p. 77; *History of the Haganah*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 1060-1062; Schechtman, *Fighter and Prophet*, p. 453; Jabotinsky's articles, *Hayarden*, 19 November 1937; *Hazon Ha'am*, 11 February 1938.
- [47](#) Proclamation No. 1, from the Collection of the Irgun, 1938? ("?" in the original document), Jabotinsky Archives. Untitled document; 'Open Words to the People who Live in Zion,' Proclamation No. 3, from the Collection of the Irgun, September, 1938? ("?" in the original), Jabotinsky Archives.
- [48](#) *Loc. cit.*; Niv, *Irgun*, Part II, pp. 41-42; *Lema'an Hamoledeth*, 14 January 1938, pp. 4, 7. (The Revisionist newspaper *Hayarden* was closed several times by the Government; it reappeared under various different names.)

- [49](#) See, for example, Aharonovitz in Political Committee, 22 July 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [50](#) See Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 6 July 1938, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 24 July 1938, C.Z.A.; Ben-Gurion, "On Security Questions and Present Issues," 3 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1949.
- [51](#) See *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1 August 1938, p. 3; Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 24 July 1938, C.Z.A.
- [52](#) See Reports in Central Committee, 6 July and Political Committee, 22 July 1938, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 7 July 1938, C.Z.A.; *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1938: 15 July, p. 2; 1 August, pp. 2-3.
- [53](#) In the available documents no one seems to have advocated denouncing Revisionists to the police, although such a suggestion seems to be raised in the Executive Proceedings, 7 July 1938, C.Z.A., judging by Ussishkin's remarks opposing the idea.
- [54](#) Untitled document signed by L.B. N[amier], dated 9 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [55](#) "Note of Interview at the Colonial Office on Tuesday, May 3rd, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563. See similar British claims also in "Note of Interview with... Ormsby-Gore... February 25, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [56](#) Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, p. 151; Shefer, "Saudi Arabia and Palestine," p. 149.
- [57](#) Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, p. 152.
- [58](#) Recent studies show that several Arab leaders and Arab states sought German help in quashing the partition policy; see, for example, Hirszowicz, "Nazi Germany and Partition," pp. 52-55; Melka, "Nazi Germany and Palestine," pp. 225-226; "Summary of Two Conversations with 'B' [MacDonald], September 13th and 14th, 1938," C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [59](#) M.J. Cohen, "British Strategy and the Palestine Question 1936-39," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. VII (July-October 1972), pp. 162-163.
- [60](#) See also Golomb in Central Committee, 18 September 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [61](#) Inner Actions Committee, 18 May 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1831; Central Committee, 4 April, 6 July 1938, Mapai Archives; "Security Questions and Present Issues," 3 August 1938, C.Z.A., S25/1949.
- [62](#) Central Committee, 29 August 1937, Mapai Archives.
- [63](#) "Summary Notes of Two Conversations with 'B' [MacDonald], September 13th and 14th, 1938," C.Z.A., S25/7563; "Arab Reactions to Government Policy in Palestine," March 1938, and the accompanying memorandum dated 11 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7563; "Note of Interview with... Ormsby-Gore..., February 25, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563; Epstein, "The Character of Pan-Arab Movement: Its Political and Social Value," 4 February 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.066; Central Committee, 7 September 1937, 2-3 February, 17 August 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [64](#) See also "Memorandum of the Syrian Government to the League of Nations," 23 July 1937, C.Z.A., S25/3417; documents written by Epstein in C.Z.A., S25/3141; "Arab Bureau," 3 January 1937, C.Z.A., S25/9786; telegram from Nabih al-Azma to the President of the Zionist Organization, 8 October 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3157; file S25/3142; Sharett, *Diaries: 1937*, pp. 327, 330; "It is desirable not to get involved in Others Affairs," Beirut, June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/3109; "Minutes of Interview with his Excellency, the High Commissioner..., August 19th, 1937," C.Z.A., S25/20.
- [65](#) "Note of an Interview with... Ormsby-Gore... February 25th, 1938 " C.Z.A., S25/7563; untitled document signed by L.B. N[amier], dated 9 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7563; Executive Proceedings, 13 February 1938, C.Z.A.
- [66](#) See Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 6 July 1938; Executive Proceedings, 25 October 1937, C.Z.A.
- [67](#) "Note of an Interview with... Ormsby-Gore..., February 25th, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563; "Arab Reactions to Government Policy in Palestine," March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7563; untitled document signed by L.B. N[amier], dated 9 June 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [68](#) See Ormsby-Gore in "Note of Interview at the Colonial Office on Tuesday, May 3rd, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563; Shefer, "Saudi Arabia and Palestine," pp. 137-151.
- [69](#) "Arab Reactions to Government Policy in Palestine," March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [70](#) It seems that in 1937 the Revisionists recognized some aspects of Pan-Arabism as a force within the Arab World, but this recognition largely disappeared in 1938. Cf., for example, *Hayarden*, 27 August 1937 and *Behazit Ha'am*, 24 September 1937, with *Ha'am*, 4 March, *Hayarden*, 10 July 1938.
- [71](#) *Hayarden*, 5, 8, 15 October 1937, 10 July, 5, 11, 19 November 1938; *Behazit Ha'am*, 24 September 1937; *Ha'am*, 4 March 1938.
- [72](#) See, for example, "Summary Notes of Two Conversations with 'B' [MacDonald], September 13th and 14th, 1938," C.Z.A., S25/7563; Joseph's comments in Executive Session, 25 December 1938, C.Z.A.
- [73](#) "Note of Conversation between M.M. and Ch. W., Wednesday, June 22nd, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [74](#) Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, pp. 161-162.
- [75](#) "Summary Note of Conversation with J.S...., September 9th, 1938," C.Z.A., S25/7563.

- [76](#) "Summary Notes of Two Conversations with 'B' [MacDonald], September 13th and 14th, 1938," C.Z.A., S25/7563; Cohen, "Palestine White Paper," pp. 578-579.
- [77](#) *Jewish Agency Council*, in *Twentieth Zionist Congress*, p. lxix.
- [78](#) Letter from J.H. Shuckburgh to Ch. Weizmann, 26 October 1937, C.Z.A., S25/2967.
- [79](#) See and compare Ben-Gurion's initial position toward the conference in Comments by Joseph in Central Committee, 1 November 1938, and B. Katznelson and Ben Gurion in Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Shertok's position in Executive Proceedings, 21 October 1938, and his letter to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, 20 January 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1513; Weizmann's changing attitude in Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, p. 179, and "Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive held on the 19th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719.
- [80](#) See, for example, Central Committee, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Rubashov and Kaplan in Political Committee, 26 October 1938, and Kaplan in "Joint Meeting of the Political Committee and...", 19 December, 1938, Mapai Archives; Joseph in Executive Proceedings, 1 January 1939, C.Z.A.
- [81](#) See, for example, letter from Shertok to the Jewish Agency Executive, Jerusalem, 20 January 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1513.
- [82](#) For the talks see "Dr. Joseph's Diary Notes," from late December 1938 and January 1939, in C.Z.A., S25/43; Golomb in Central Committee, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Joseph in Executive Proceedings, 15, 22,29 January 1939, C.Z.A.
- [83](#) Shertok in Political Committee, 26 October 1938, Mapai Archives; and in "Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive held on the 19th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719. During the Munich crisis the British Government considered stopping immigration altogether. See B. Katznelson in Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [84](#) Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Lords), Vol. III, No. 13 (8 December 1938), col. 463.
- [85](#) The major Zionist leaders in London who took this line were Namier and Locker, and in Palestine, B. Katznelson, Fishman, Ussishkin and Grunbaum.
- [86](#) "Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive held on Friday, the 16th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719.
- [87](#) See the Jewish Agency statement of 9 November, quoted in *Haolam*, 4 December 1938, p. 57.
- [88](#) Ussishkin, who initially did not oppose participation in the conference, claimed in Executive Proceedings, 21 October 1938, C.Z.A., that the participation of the Arab states should not be opposed because they were more moderate than the Palestinian Arabs. Perhaps Zionist concern on this issue subsided when they were told in December that separate talks with each delegation would be held at the conference.
- [89](#) See *ibid.*, 1, 29 January 1939, C.Z.A.; Katznelson in Central Committee, 7, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Grunbaum and Ben-Zvi in Executive Proceedings, 23 October 1938, C.Z.A. See also Kaplan in "Joint Meeting of the Political Committee and...", 19 December 1938, Mapai Archives; *Haolam*, 8 December 1938, pp. 83-85.
- [90](#) Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives; see also Ussishkin in Executive Proceedings, 11 December 1938, 22 January 1939, C.Z.A.
- [91](#) *Hayarden*, 11,18, 25 November 1938; *Hamashkif*, 27,29 30, 31 January, 2,13, 17,19, 24 February, 27 April 1939.
- [92](#) See Executive Proceedings, 25 December 1938, 8, 22 January 1939, C.Z.A.; Grabovsky and Hertzfeld in "Joint Meeting of the Political Committee and...", 19 December 1938, Mapai Archives; telegram from Joseph to Shertok, 18 December 1938, C.Z.A., S25/45.
- [93](#) "Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive held on the 19th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719. For Weizmann's opinion see telegram from Shertok to Joseph, 13 January 1939,C.Z.A., S25/45.
- [94](#) Compare Ben-Gurion's quote of Weizmann in Executive Proceedings, 6 December 1938, C.Z.A., and Weizmann in "Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive held on Friday, the 16th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719. For Katznelson see Central Committee, 7,15 December 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [95](#) Central Committee, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives. See also Executive Proceedings, 13 November, 6,11 December 1938, C.Z.A.
- [96](#) For changes in the organization's attitude see *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 15 November 1938, pp. 1-2,1939: 1 January,p. tj 15 January, p. 1.
- [97](#) See Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Ruppin and Kaplan in Executive Proceedings, 22 January 1939, C.Z.A.; letter from Shertok to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, 20 January 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1513.
- [98](#) Stein in "Minutes of the Executive held on Friday, the 16th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719.
- [99](#) See Kaplan in "Joint Meeting of the Political Committee and...", December 19, 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [100](#) See "Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Executive held on Friday, the 16th December, 1938...", C.Z.A., S25/1719; Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives.

- [101](#) See, for example, letter from J.L. Magnes to the Editor of the *Palestine Post*, 11 November 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66. See also memorandum from Ahduth Ha'am Party to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 9 January 1939, Magnes Archives, P 311-269; Shprintzak in Central Committee, 7 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Senator in Executive Proceedings, 14 November, 11, 25 December 1938, C.Z.A.; *Haolam*, 23 February 1939, pp. 334-335; March 2, 1939, pp. 358-359, for ideas of the Bi-nationalists.
- [102](#) Letter from Senator to the Executive, 7 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/3835. Senator's plan called for an immigration rate of 25,000 for each of the following 10-12 years, political parity, an eventual bi-national state and the participation of Palestine in a future Middle East federation.
- [103](#) "Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive held on the 19th December, 1938..." C.Z.A., S25/1719; Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives; Executive Proceedings, 11 December 1938, C.Z.A.
- [104](#) See Joseph's quotes of Ben-Gurion and Shertok in Central Committee, 22 February 1939, Mapai Archives.
- [105](#) See *Davar*, 5 February 1939, p. 2; *Hashomer Hatzair*, 24 February 1939, p. 1.
- [106](#) Conferences on Palestine, Third Meeting, 10 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632.
- [107](#) Fourth Meeting, 13 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632.
- [108](#) Ben-Gurion in Third Meeting, 10 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632; Wise and Weizmann in *ibid*
- [109](#) Fourth Meeting, 13 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632.
- [110](#) *Loc. cit.* The British decision not to stop immigration in September 1938 came partly as a result of pressure from the United States.
- [111](#) Fifth Meeting, 14 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632.
- [112](#) Second Meeting, 8 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632.
- [113](#) Fifth Meeting, 14 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632; telegram from Liebenstein and Calili to Shertok, 12,13 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/45.
- [114](#) Fifth Meeting, 14 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7632.
- [115](#) For different calculations see Stein, "Notes on the Forthcoming Palestine Conference," 18 December 1938, C.Z.A., S25/10.350.
- [116](#) Eighth Meeting, 20 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633.
- [117](#) Tenth Meeting, 15 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633.
- [118](#) See Informal Discussions with Jewish Delegates, First Meeting, 3 March, Third Meeting, 11 March, and Fourth Informal Meeting, 12 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7638.
- [119](#) Sixth Meeting, 15 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633.
- [120](#) Eighth Meeting, 20 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633.
- [121](#) A land law along these lines was published in February 1940.
- [122](#) See Informal Discussions with Arab and Jewish Delegates, 23, 24 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7641.
- [123](#) Sixth Meeting, 15 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633. See also MacDonald in Seventh Meeting, 17 February in the same file.
- [124](#) MacDonald informed the Jewish delegation of this development at the Eighth Meeting, 20 February; *loc. cit.* See also Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 254 -255.
- [125](#) Informal Discussions with Arab and Jewish Delegates, Second Meeting, 24 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7641.
- [126](#) See, "Appendix. General Summary of British Government's Suggestions," C.Z.A., S25/7642. See also Informal Discussion with Arab and Jewish Delegates, First Meeting, 23 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7641.
- [127](#) Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 406.
- [128](#) Yehuda Bauer, *Diplomatiya Vemahtereth Bemdiniyuth Hazionith* (Diplomacy and Underground in Zionism) (Jerusalem: Sifriat Hapo'alim, 1966), p. 30; Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, pp. 188-190.
- [129](#) See Informal Discussions with Arab and Jewish Delegates, Second Meeting, 24 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7641; "Appendix. General Summary of British Government's Suggestions," C.Z.A., S25/7642.
- [130](#) See Informal Discussions, First Meeting, 3 March, Second Meeting, 6 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7638.
- [131](#) Tenth Meeting, 15 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633.
- [132](#) Informal Discussions, Third Meeting, 11 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7638.
- [133](#) Tenth Meeting, 15 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7633.

- [134](#) See, for example, Informal Discussions, Third Meeting, 11 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7638.
- [135](#) See Shertok and Weizmann in Informal Discussions, Second Meeting, 6 March; Third Meeting, 11 March, and Fourth Meeting, 12 March 1938, C.Z.A., S25/7638.
- [136](#) See Ben-Gurion in Informal Discussions, Third Meeting, 11 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7638.
- [137](#) See Informal Discussions with Arab and Jewish Delegates, First Meeting, 23 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/7641.
- [138](#) See handwritten letter by Ben-Gurion, dated 7 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1494.
- [139](#) Ben-Gurion, *Talks*, pp. 261-265.
- [140](#) See, for example, Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 8 June 1939.
- [141](#) See telegram from Zioniburo to Joseph, 27 April 1939, C.Z.A., S25/45; "Vilensky from Cairo Informs," undated, C.Z.A., S25/45; A. L[ourie], "Note of Conversation with Mr. MacDonald, 27 April 1939....," C.Z.A., S25/7563.
- [142](#) See Ruppin and Grunbaum in Executive Proceedings, 7 October 1938, C.Z.A.
- [143](#) See Grunbaum, *ibid.*, 10 October 1938, C.Z.A. See also Ruppin, *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, ed. by Alex Bein (Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 285.
- [144](#) Telegram from Zioniburo to Joseph, 10 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/45.
- [145](#) See *Hashomer Hatza'ir*, 1 January 1939, pp. 2-3, referring to articles published in the Hebrew press. See also Shertok in "Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Executive held on the 19th December, 1938....," C.Z.A., S25/1719.
- [146](#) "Dr. Joseph Diary Notes," 10 April 1939, C.Z.A., S25/43.
- [147](#) See Shertok in Executive Proceedings, 7 October 1938, C.Z.A.
- [148](#) *Ibid.*, 10 October 1938, C.Z.A.
- [149](#) See *Davar*, 12 April 1939; Executive Proceedings, 7 October 1938, C.Z.A., especially comments by Grunbaum and Fishman-*jHamashkif*, 5 May, 1939, p. 1.
- [150](#) See, for example, Ruppin in Executive Proceedings, *loc. cit.*
- [151](#) Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, p. 167; Hacoheh, quoting in Political Committee, 3 October 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [152](#) Political Committee, 26 October 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [153](#) See, for example, Weizmann's suggestions in Executive Proceedings, 8 May 1939, C.Z.A.
- [154](#) Political Committee, 3, 26 October 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [155](#) See, for example, *ibid.*; Executive Proceedings, 12 February, 17 March 1939, C.Z.A.; Central Committee, 7, 15 December 1938, 22, 26 February, 1, 22, 29 March 1939, Mapai Archives.
- [156](#) Inner Actions Committee, 24 April 1939, S25/1823, 3 May 1939, S25/40, C.Z.A.
- [157](#) Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [158](#) See, for example, Ben-Gurion in Inner Actions Committee, 24 April 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1823; 3 May 1939, C.Z.A., S25/40. Until 1938 only Revisionists dealt with illegal immigration, while Official Zionists opposed it. In 1938 the Histadrut organized the Musad Aliya Beth. In early summer of 1939 the Jewish Agency began to exercise control over the Musad.
- [159](#) This group was headed by Smilansky; see Weinstain in Inner Actions Committee, 24 April 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1823; Joseph in Central Committee, 22 March 1939, Mapai Archives.
- [160](#) See Ben-Gurion in Executive Proceedings, 11 December 1938, C.Z.A.; Central Committee, 15 December 1938, Mapai Archives.
- [161](#) Executive Proceedings, 6, 11 December 1938, C.Z.A.; Inner Actions Committee, 24 April, S25/1836, 9 May 1939, S25/40, C.Z.A.
- [162](#) Political Committee, 3, 26 October and Central Committee, 7 December 1938, 26 February, 22 March 1939, Mapai Archives. See also Inner Actions Committee, 24 April, S25/1823, 3 May, S25/40, and 9 May 1939, C.Z.A., S25/1836; "The Resolution of the Inner Actions Committee in its Meeting of 10.5.39," C.Z.A., S25/1822.
- [163](#) The importance of Jews in the United States and of American public opinion in general was emphasized in this period. See, for example, Ben-Gurion in Central Committee, 15 December 1938, 11 May 1939, Mapai Archives.
- [164](#) *Hamashkif*, 6 January, 21 April 1939; telegram from Jabotinsky to the Nessiut, 14 November 1938, Jabotinsky Archives, 1/5-4G.
- [165](#) *Hamashkif*, 3, 20, 23, 24, 27 February, 5, 15 May 1939; *Hayom*, 3 March 1939.
- [166](#) *Hamashkif*, 12, 21, 26 February 1939.

- [167](#) See, for example, letter from J.L. Magnes to MacDonald, 22 September 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66; letter from Kalvarisky to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 5 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/3110.
- [168](#) See *Haolam*, 8, 15 December 1938, 23 February, 2 March 1939, for a discussion of a federation plan raised by the Bilingualist R. Binyomin.
- [169](#) Magnes spoke of an increase of the Jewish population to 40 percent within ten years, after which the question would be reopened. Kalvarisky suggested an increase to 50 percent within ten years, after which independence would be given to Palestine. Senator's suggestion was close to that of Magnes in his letters to MacDonald, 22 September, and to the Editor of the *Palestine Post*, 11 November 1938, Magnes Archives, P 311-66; see also letter from H.M. Kalvarisky to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 5 March 1939, C.Z.A., S25/3110; memorandum from Senator to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, 7 February 1939, C.Z.A., S25/3835. See also Senator in Executive Proceedings, 4 October, 14 November 1938, C.Z.A.
- [170](#) See *Hashomer Hatzza'ir*, 15 January, 10 February, 10, 17, 24 March, 1939; Ya'ari in Inner Actions Committee, 9 May 1939, C.Z.A. S25/1836.

6

Zionist Hopes in Palestine: Illusion and Reality

The Palestine problem was deeply rooted in the conflict between diametrically opposed Zionist and Arab aspirations, with the high Zionist hopes of 1936 frightening the Palestinian Arabs and the 1939 British attempt to end unrest among the Arabs threatening the Jews. The conflict between the two nationalisms was of such magnitude that no British compromise could have satisfied what each side considered its fundamental demands. In the end each faction directed its national struggle against the British, charging them with imposing obstacles.

Of all the solutions proposed by the British, partition was the most promising precisely because it dealt with the reality of conflicting national aspirations. Any other solution would have denied one or the other of the communities its most cherished national goal - self-government - which neither side would surrender for material concessions or be frightened into by force. But, since the Palestinian Arabs were adamantly opposed to partition, the British abandoned the idea in late 1938.

Any study of the approaches to Palestinian Arab nationalism taken by the Official Zionists, Bi-nationalists and Revisionists must lead to the conclusion that all three groups viewed the Arabs and their goals with a combination of reality and illusion. The Revisionist understanding of the basic conflict, which stressed the irreconcilability of the two national aspirations, was probably closest to reality. However, the method they proposed to overcome Palestinian Arab opposition to the National Home seems to have been the most unrealistic one. The National Home could not have been built behind an "iron wall" without British approval, which was most unlikely. And had the British established the "iron wall" early in the Mandate, it would probably have incited the Palestinian Arab nationalists to revolt long before 1936. Had such a policy been adopted in 1936, the revolt would most likely have developed into a civil war in which the Arab states might have intervened. The Revisionist plan for the immigration of millions of Jews in the 1930s could not have worked because it would have been opposed by the British; it would have caused an immediate Arab revolt and it was impractical from the Jewish standpoint. The Revisionists completely ignored the social and economic upheaval that massive immigration would bring to the National Home and the fact that, due to the "disturbances" of late 1937 and 1938, even the limited number of immigration certificates available for Jews with capital were for the most part unused.

While the Official Zionists, who were in the majority, probably had the most pragmatic policy of all three groups, their general understanding of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arabs as a people was unrealistic. Most Official Zionists, like the Revisionists, would only grant their rivals economic and religious rights, refusing to recognize their political rights. Both groups (as well as most Bi-nationalists) considered Transjordan to be part of the National Home and opposed the ban on Jewish immigration and settlement there. However, most Official Zionists accepted that the Jewish Home would develop only in Mandatory Palestine, while the Revisionist slogan was "a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River." In general, the Official Zionists were pragmatic and flexible, choosing their goals in line with what they felt could be attained in the face of Arab opposition and British reluctance.

The Official Zionists did not unite around one specific program for solving the Palestine

problem; there is little doubt that if the British-imposed partition had included the New City of Jerusalem within the Jewish state, most Official Zionists (and probably even many Revisionists) would have accepted it. The Official Zionists wanted a Jewish state with a Jewish majority in Palestine, and in 1937-1938 the Peel plan offered the closest approximation to that. The Official Zionists' plan proposed at the London Conference, which provided for two federated states or cantonization, represented the largest concession they could make and still maintain majority support. Political parity was also proposed, but as a major concession and not out of conviction.

The Bi-nationalist prediction that Jewish-Arab agreement was essential to the fulfillment of Zionism, and that without Arab consent the conflict could only be solved by force, proved to be true. Other Bi-nationalist assumptions and proposals seem to have been less realistic, for instance their unwillingness to accept minority status for the Jews in Palestine. Their plan for a bi-national state, which they accused the Official Zionists of obstructing, could never have succeeded because the Palestinian Arabs considered political parity, an element of the plan, humiliating. The strong desire of the Bi-nationalists for Jewish-Arab understanding apparently blinded them to the fact that neither Palestinian nor non-Palestinian Arabs evinced the desire to reach an agreement based on anything other than a permanent Jewish minority in Palestine. And even if Arab opposition had not been so strong, a bi-national state would not have suited the two self-centered national movements in Palestine, one of them in its negative phase and the other in the process of nation-building. One is forced to conclude that the plan was better suited for academic discussion than for practical implementation. Aware of the socio-cultural gap, the Bi-nationalists called for the teaching of Arabic and Arab history and culture in Jewish schools, and for a genuine Zionist effort to raise the Palestinian Arabs' standard of living. They also opposed the isolationist tendencies fostered by Official Zionists and Revisionists, which encouraged the *yishuv* to be independent of the Palestinian Arabs.

The Bi-nationalists, as well as some Official Zionists, drew exaggerated conclusions from their observation that it was possible to be friends with their Arab neighbors and to cooperate with Arabs in business. Their desire for cooperation led them to confuse the personal (where mutual interest leads to cooperation) and the national-political (where irreconcilable conflicts made understanding virtually impossible).

Hashomer Hatzair wanted the Zionist working class to organize and indoctrinate the Palestinian Arab masses and help them to escape from the influence of the Effendi class, which agitated against the National Home. Hoping that common class interests would eventually transcend separate national interests, the group aimed to build a socialist society in Palestine and, eventually, throughout the entire Middle East. Even socialists within the Mapai Party rejected such a solution as unrealistic, because the working class was known to act on nationalistic feelings rather than class interests; this had been the case among European workers in 1914 and among Palestinian Arab workers themselves during the Revolt in 1936-1939. Rejecting this argument, Hashomer Hatzair continued to oppose Zionist moves that might widen the gap between the Arab and Jewish working classes.

The publication of the British White Paper had little effect on the Revisionist and Bi-nationalist views of the Palestinian Arab problem. It did, however, push the Official Zionists much closer to the Revisionists with regard to the possibility of a negotiated settlement. By 1939 the Official Zionist interpretation of the basic conflict and the Palestinian Arab opposition became similar to that of the Revisionists with the abandonment of two of their three elusive assumptions. All Official Zionist leaders recognized the reality of two conflicting national movements, and had learned that Arab opposition to the National Home could not be eased by

bribes or by the promise of economic benefits. They believed that any vestige of a chance to reach agreement had been entirely destroyed by the White Paper, since the Arabs would now refuse to accept anything less than what the British had promised in that document.

The Revisionists had never entertained hopes that Zionism could be achieved through agreement with the Arabs. The Official Zionists and Revisionists now agreed that accord would be reached only after the National Home had been firmly established and that Palestinian Arab opposition would be overcome only through increased immigration and settlement or through military force.

The White Paper ended Zionist reliance on the British. Forced to choose between abandoning Zionism or developing the National Home despite British and Arab opposition, the Zionists chose the latter course.

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