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WHEN IDEOLOGY TRIUMPHS :
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Sylvia Berman

Many works have been written on the Zionists, on the Palestinian Arabs, and on the conflict between the two. These accounts, written by authors from a wide range of ideological backgrounds, frequently contradict one another in their analysis and interpretation, presenting amazingly different visions of what appears to be the same event. The only way to understand such polarized accounts is to understand what the historian Bernard Lewis calls "the nature of historical knowledge, study, and writing...and their functions and purposes in human societies."¹ In History--Remembered, Recovered, Invented, Lewis presents a discussion of historiography that sheds light on conflicting histories and their respective purposes.

The first of these categories Lewis terms "remembered" history. It is that which has been retained in the "collective memory of...an entity"² through statements, recollections, traditions, and writings. The purpose of remembering history in societies is to unite the population, encourage and direct it in conflict, or restore and revitalize "the nationalist or revolutionary energy...of the nation."³ But as Lewis points out, the information that is retained and the form of its retention are determined by what that society, and particularly its leaders, find useful to fulfill its various needs. Thus, the problem with remembered history is its selectivity. The history it relates is inevitably slanted and incomplete.

¹ Bernard Lewis. History -- Remembered, Recovered, Invented. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), preface.

² Ibid, 12.

³ Ibid, 51.

The recoverers of history, as Lewis describes the second type of historians, are those, then, who seek to rediscover the events that had been either forgotten or altered by the communal memory. By studying records, documents, artifacts, excavations, and forgotten languages and scripts, Lewis explains, they are attempting to fill in the gaps and correct the errors of the remembered traditional body of history.

The main point Bernard Lewis wants to make, however, is that there is "a powerful ideological motivation" behind the "recovery and dissemination" of history.⁴ The true scholar, he says, follows the evidence where it leads. No matter his or her prejudices, the purpose of the work is to give the most complete and thorough presentation and analysis possible. But frequently, the most thorough and complete presentation does not produce the history a people wants to hear, especially when new goals, based on a predetermined thesis, require a specific vision of the past. The tendency then is to write history as you would "prefer it to have been".⁵ The creator of this new, more useful vision of the past, uses remembered and recovered history where possible, but where not possible, the history must be invented. As Lewis explains, one of the main reasons for remembering the past is to justify the present, especially when there is a dispute. In such cases, each of the conflicting parties will have its own version of the past to legitimize its claims and to unite its followers

⁴Ibid, 10

⁵Ibid, 55.

against the opposition. Invented history is thus "the triumph of ideology over reality, of will over fact."⁶

The framework Lewis establishes in his book, explaining the types of histories and their motivations, is valuable for gaining a clearer insight into the Zionist and Palestinian Arab versions of their histories. This is particularly true for the first years of British Administration in Palestine, 1917-1929, an era that holds the roots of many of their present-day contentions. Two works today that illustrate the types of ideologically based histories written on the Palestinians and the Zionists, are Walid Khalidi's Before their Diaspora, and Yigal Lossin's Pillar of Fire. Each of these authors relates a vision of the period that suits their respective nationalistic goals.

Walid Khalidi, in Before Their Diaspora, does not long leave the reader in doubt of his interpretation of the period. The opening paragraphs of his preface clearly present his thesis: the Zionists, with British support, are the oppressors; the Palestinians are the long suffering victims seeking today only a moderate, "imperfect"⁷ redress for all the pain they have been subjected to at the hands of the Zionists. He is writing from a specific perspective, seeking foremost to justify the Palestinian claim to Palestine, while delegitimizing the claims of the Zionists. When writing of the early years of the Mandate, then, he creates a vision of the past that suits his purposes today.

⁶Ibid, 101.

⁷Walid Khalidi. Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians 1876-1948. (Washington D.C.: Institute For Palestine Studies, 1984).

The Palestinian Arab community was, according to Khalidi, a long-term one, with a sense of national identity from before the first Zionist settlements. He notes how, back in 1877, with the early stirrings of Zionism in Europe, Yusuf Diya-uddin Pasha al-Khalidi, "elected from Jerusalem to the first Ottoman parliament" wrote to Herzl: "in the name of God, let Palestine be left alone".⁸ According to Khalidi, with the first Zionist settlement in Palestine in the 1880s, the Palestinians already "suspected" that the aim of Zionism was to create a "Jewish national home in their country."⁹ Khalidi's point is that there already was a national home in Palestine, that of the Palestinian Arabs. Khalidi portrays Jaffa around the turn of the century as filled with buildings and people,¹⁰ as are several other cities and towns such as Gaza, Hebron, Jerusalem, Ramleh, Nablus, and Haifa.¹¹ To emphasize the cultural life, Khalidi includes photographs of faculty and students of various schools, as well as of the local soccer teams.¹²

Since much of the present-day conflict, however, revolves around the question of who made Palestine fertile, Khalidi brings in a number of photographs from before the Mandate, showing large tracts of land under cultivation, supposedly by the Arabs, in the Galilee and the Plain of Jezreel.¹³ To further illustrate the Arabs' long-term agricultural achievements, he quotes from the letter of the American counsel in Jerusalem in the 1880s, who

⁸Ibid, 41.

⁹Ibid, 83.

¹⁰Ibid, 43.

¹¹Ibid, 61-65.

¹²Ibid, 70-73.

¹³Ibid, 22.

wrote to Washington of the "excellent quality of the Jaffa orange and the superior grafting techniques of the Palestinian citrus farmers."¹⁴ Palestine then, before the war and subsequent British Administration, is presented as an agricultural land under a substantial and stable Arab population made up of villagers, as well as of an educated class of city dwellers, all living in harmony and unity. And this unified population, aspiring "to the independence and political federation of the Arab countries"¹⁵ and believing the British to support these aspirations because of British promises to them during the First World War, allied themselves with the British against the Germans, and joined in the Arab Revolt to free their home.¹⁶

After the war, however, the Palestinian people soon found their nationalist aspirations seriously threatened by the promises the British made to the Jews in 1917. The Balfour Declaration of that year promised the Jews a national home in Palestine. According to Khalidi, in 1919 the Palestinians began to organize themselves into Muslim-Christian Associations throughout the country, with elected delegates and a central executive committee. He says these congresses sent three delegations to London between 1921-1922 to "present their case...their fear of Zionist political objectives and [their] reject[ion of] the Balfour Declaration". These delegates, he continues, demanded:

the cessation of Zionist mass immigration and of the transfer of Palestinian land to Zionist ownership [as

¹⁴Ibid, 131.

¹⁵Ibid, 45.

¹⁶Ibid, 46.

well as]...government on the basis of proportional representation.¹⁷

But Khalidi points out that the British and the Zionists were not about to accept a democratic system because that would prove that the Palestinians were the majority, and thus "prejudice the development of the Jewish national home."¹⁸

Instead, the British Mandate over Palestine was approved by the League of Nations Council in July 1922 "without the consent of the Palestinians". According to Khalidi, the Mandate was little more than a declaration of joint British-Zionist sovereignty over Palestine and its terms, an "instrument for the implementation of the Zionist program." Khalidi writes that for the Palestinians the Mandate "had been imposed on them by force, and they considered it to be both morally and legally invalid."¹⁹ According to Khalidi, the White Paper issued the month before would regulate Zionist immigration "solely by economic criteria,"²⁰ He interprets these two documents together as part of the British-Zionist conspiracy to change the status quo of an Arab majority through mass Jewish immigration. Khalidi thus attributes the series of riots during the early 1920s to the general fear in the population of Zionist immigration and subsequent takeover. When he writes of the "relatively quiet" years from 1923-1929, he attributes it to the "dramatic decline in Zionist immigration" during the period.²¹ Khalidi thus makes a direct correlation between the riots and immigration.

¹⁷Ibid, 85.

¹⁸Ibid, 86.

¹⁹Ibid, 85.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid, 83.

The picture he presents of the Palestinian people during the 1920s, is one of a flourishing community. He illustrates a thriving city life with photographs of built up cities and towns,²² prospering tradesmen and artisans,²³ and abundant educational institutes and youth movements such as boy scouts, though foreign sponsored, creating an enlightened and rounded Palestinian community.²⁴ His photographs of various elements of rural life, such as the fishermen of the sea of Galilee,²⁵ craftsmen and carpenters,²⁶ a lovely young mother holding her child,²⁷ a village school with lots of healthy little boys,²⁸ all present a romanticized vision of the Palestinian peasant and his life. Most importantly, however, Khalidi stresses that it was the Palestinians who were responsible for the bulk of the agricultural production, that it was they, and not the Jews, who "made the desert bloom".²⁹ This then was the direction the Palestinians were going, with a great deal of potential for happiness and prosperity in their own land.

According to Khalidi, however, the whole period of peace in the mid-20s was filled with tension as the Arabs watched the Jewish settlements grow through immigration. Their apprehension was magnified, he says, by two events. First of all, the establishment in 1929 of the enlarged Jewish Agency, with a membership of a number of world famous figures, increased

²²Ibid, 137-146.

²³Ibid, 151-153.

²⁴Ibid, 163-171.

²⁵Ibid, 117-118.

²⁶Ibid, 119.

²⁷Ibid, 120.

²⁸Ibid, 24.

²⁹Ibid, 125.

Palestinian fear of Zionist influences on the British. But more directly, Palestinian fears grew in the face of what Khalidi terms an "unprovoked and unprecedented political riots and the demonstration".³⁰ He explains that:

Jewish access to the Wailing Wall...had for centuries been regulated by cumulative customary observances and procedures known as the "status quo", which were mutually acceptable to Jews and Muslims. An attempt by Jewish religious leaders in September, 1928 to change the status quo unilaterally was followed in August, 1929, by an unprecedented political demonstration at the Wailing Wall, organized by militant right-wing Zionists. In the context of mounting Palestinian-Jewish tensions, this incident touched off country wide disturbances in which many Jews and Palestinians were killed, the latter mostly at the hands of the British³¹

He further adds that the Palestinians perceived the demonstrations as "evidence of Zionist designs on the Mosques of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa inside the sanctuary".³² Khalidi thus justifies the Palestinian role in the disturbances by making the Palestinians innocent defenders of their home and religion, A people who had no choice but to fight. He quotes the Shaw Commission, established in October, 1929 to determine the cause of the riots, as concluding that:

the fundamental cause...[was]...Palestinians' disappointment of their political and national aspirations and fear of their economic future.³³

In Khalidi's eyes, the Arabs who were killed were "martyrs",³⁴ individuals who sacrificed themselves in an attempt to save their

³⁰Ibid, 86.

³¹Ibid, 100.

³²Ibid, 86. *Pillar of Fire: The Rebirth of Israel.*

³³Ibid, 102. *on by Zvi Ofer. (Jerusalem: Shikman Publishing*

³⁴Ibid. *any, 1983), 28-31.*

people by fighting to avert the Zionist oppression that was about to engulf them.

This, then, is Khalidi's vision of the 1929 riots and the events that ultimately led up to them. He describes a people "before their diaspora," living in a golden age of peacefulness and prosperity, who slowly found themselves threatened by an external force and heroically attempted to overcome that force. Khalidi has thus created a history of the period in a more preferred and useful form for the present-day claims and aspirations of the Palestinian people in their struggle for the land they call Palestine.

Writing from a diametrically opposed position, Yigal Lossin also has a specific purpose for his history. Pillar of Fire was originally an Israeli television series designed to relate the history of Zionism to the population. Lossin's goal is clearly to inspire and encourage the Israelis in their battle for Israel, to legitimize the Zionist claims while delegitimizing those of the Palestinians.

First and foremost, his story is of heroes and martyrs. His early pioneers are young idealistic people who, witnessing the horrible conditions of their brethren in Europe, come to Palestine in the hopes of creating a safe home for the Jews. Lossin graphically illustrates the atrocities committed against the Jews, with photographs of children slaughtered in the various East European pogroms such as in Kishinev.³⁵ He notes how in the

³⁵Yigal Lossin. Pillar of Fire: The Rebirth of Israel. Translation by Zvi Ofer. (Jerusalem: Shikman Publishing Company, 1983), 28-31.

midst of the plight of East European Jewry, the United States, previously a major escape route for these Jews, established a quota-system which effectively limited Jewish immigration.³⁶ He emphasizes that it was not the established Jews of Western Europe who were coming to Palestine in those early years, but rather it was the persecuted Jew who had no place else to go. He makes the biblical connection, as well, to reinforce the stand he takes throughout the work that no other country would do if the Jews as a people were to survive.

Lossin's early pioneers came to a land which held only poverty, harsh climate, serious disease, rocky soil, and lack of shade and water. He says that "only its powerful spiritual value could induce a person to live in what was then called a dead land".³⁷ Photographs show wide-empty spaces,³⁸ and he notes:

The land appeared vast and desolate, virtually an empty space. No one doubted that it was possible to find a just and human solution to the Jewish plight which would not be at the expense of the local Arab population.³⁹

Lossin argues that as late as the Labor Brigade of the the third Aliya, in 1919, there were few Arabs within Palestine, while the land was "almost entirely desert and swamp".⁴⁰

Lossin idealizes the Labor Brigade, those pioneers of the first years of the Mandate, as heroes who took the Jezreel Valley, a malaria-infested region that the Arabs had abandoned,⁴¹ and the Galilee, "dead soil" according to one of the early

³⁶Ibid, 145.

³⁷Ibid, 37.

³⁸Ibid, 108-109.

³⁹Ibid, 45.

⁴⁰Ibid, 123.

⁴¹Ibid, 129.

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pioneers interviewed for the book,⁴² and made both these regions bloom. Photographs show these youths, young, sturdy individuals, living a simple life off the land. He thus emphasizes the Jewish role in general in Palestine during the 1920s, of establishing the basis from which the land of Israel would become, according to Lossin, one of the most advanced agricultural systems in the entire world.⁴³ It was the Jews who made the desert bloom in Lossin's version of the history of the period.

Lossin further counters Palestinian claims by presenting the Arab masses in those early years as apathetic to the idea of nationalism as well as to Jewish immigration. When he talks of the war effort prior to the British Administration in the country, he emphasizes the lack of any notion among the Arabs of a Palestinian nation. By Lossin's account, Hussein ibn-Ali, Sharif of Mecca, and his son Emir Faisal, were the only Arab leaders to cooperate with the British in the war. And Lossin calls Faisal "the only political address in the Arab world".⁴⁴ That this is a very convenient way for Lossin to perceive Faisal's position is made clear when Lossin quotes Abba Eban as saying that Faisal did not care about the "entire concept of Palestine, that other areas of the Arab world were more important to him than this 'forsaken corner.'"⁴⁵ Lossin points out how the Jews, deeply attached to Palestine, eagerly volunteered to help

⁴²Ibid, 68.

⁴³Ibid, 139.

⁴⁴Ibid, 67.

⁴⁵Ibid.

the war effort to free Palestine, in contrast to the Arabs who as late as 1918, according to Lossin, still showed:

no signs yet of political or national awakening... Arab
Even the campaign for recruits to the army of Faisal
and Lawrence did not arouse enthusiasm. Local Arabs
were told that this was a war for liberation of their
land and the establishment of an independent Arab
kingdom, but the general feeling was expressed in the
result of this recruitment campaign--a total of 150.⁴⁶

Lossin further denegrates the Palestinian contribution by citing a British Lieutenant's story of Arab volunteers causing a British retreat because "they were busy looting some where or
another,"⁴⁷ instead of fighting alongside the British. Thus, he concludes, the Arabs did not care about liberation and hardly participated in the effort. He says the Arabs only became interested in independence when they found out Syria was getting it.⁴⁸

Lossin similarly denies that there was any inherent opposition to Zionist immigration among the Arab masses. When he describes the riots of the early 1920s, he centers on the violence inflicted on the Jews, and shows photographs of the injured and the slaughtered.⁴⁹ He writes that it was with these riots that the Zionist leaders first sensed that there might be any problems with the Arabs.⁵⁰ Yet he says how "most Arabs seemed indifferent to the changes taking place around them".

Even when the Arab press warned of the Zionist threat, it "met with only a faint response."⁵¹ During the years of peace in the

⁴⁶Ibid, 65.

⁴⁷Ibid, 63.

⁴⁸Ibid, 47.

⁴⁹Ibid, 79.

⁵⁰Ibid, 123.

⁵¹Ibid, 45.

mid-20s, "nothing incited the Palestinian Arabs", not the doubling of the Jewish population with the 4th Aliya, the rapid construction, the visit of Balfour, nor the surrounding Arab countries' involvements in nationalistic ferment.⁵² Lossen asserts that these elements that would have ignited an Arab opposition if there had been one to ignite. The years of peace prove to Lossen the weakness of the Palestinian Arab movement in 1925.⁵³ The 1929 riots are thus seen by Lossin to be completely initiated by the fanatical Arab leaders. According to Lossin, the Mufti of Jerusalem in the 1920s, Haj Amin al-Husseini raised the status of Jerusalem to a Muslim Holy City during his rule and then proceeded to make the call to the Muslims to protect the holy sights from Zionist takeover.⁵⁴ Lossin's accusation here is that Husseini only used religion as a means of arousing the Palestinian Arabs against Zionism. But Lossin further implies that the rioters were not even as motivated by religion as they were by the chance to loot the Jewish communities.⁵⁵ He describes the riots as a "massacre" of Jews, and again presents photographs of the victims. Lossin thus dismisses the riots as political opportunism on the part of the leaders, and hooliganism on the part of the masses.

By creating a history of the period which has the Jew coming to a desolate land with a small, apathetic population, and building up that land in the face of unprovoked brutal

⁵²Ibid, 159.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid, 161.

⁵⁵Ibid, 167.

Palestinian action, Lossin seeks to justify the Zionist claim to Palestine, and illustrate the weakness of the present day Palestinian-Arab claims.

Walid Khalidi's Before Their Diaspora and Yigal Lossin's Pillar of Fire are both well written, seemingly scholarly histories. But they are above all nationalistic histories. Both seek to justify their claims to Palestine, while delegitimizing the claims of the opposition. As Bernard Lewis explains, these rising states each need a history to unite and motivate their followers. Neither side is much interested in the other's problems and motivations beyond surface explanations used to bolster their respective arguments. They have, by Bernard Lewis' definition, each committed the sin that removes them firmly from the annals of true scholarship.

The essential and distinctive feature of scholarly research is...that it is not directed to a predetermined result. The historian does not set out to prove a thesis, or select material to establish some point.⁵⁶

Both Khalidi and Lossin have done exactly that. They know the results they want. They use their sources selectively, choosing the evidence that will argue their point, and interpreting that evidence the way they need. Evidence that contradicts their vision is ignored. Thus ideology triumphs in both visions of the early Mandatory period, creating irreconcilable world views that suit the authors' nationalistic goals.

"Contrasting mythologies that the Arabs and the Jews have developed to explain their situation" is how Yehoshua Porath

⁵⁶Lewis, History..., 54.

describes the "battle of words and of history writing"⁵⁷ in which Khalidi and Lossin engage. Porath, a professor of Islamic and Middle-Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, has himself written a "recovered history" of the period, The Emergence of the Palestinian-Nationalist Movement, 1918-1929.⁵⁸ A detailed analysis of the major developments and events in Palestine during the early years of Mandatory rule, largely based on Porath's work, supplemented and supported by a number of other sources, reveals a vision of those years that stands in marked contrast to the visions Khalidi and Lossin have presented.

BEFORE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

When the first Zionist settlers arrived in Palestine in the early 1880s, they did not find the empty and barren land to which Lossin's heroes came, nor did they find Khalidi's thriving and nationally aware Arab population. What they did find was a

⁵⁷ Yehoshua Porath. "Mrs. Peter's Palestine." The New York Review of Books. Vol. XXXII, no. 21 and 22. January 16, 1986, 36.

⁵⁸ Y. Porath. The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929. (England: Frank Cass and Company, Limited, 1974). (There were three reviews available on Porath's book: In Choice, February, 1975, page 1830, the reviewer called Porath's book "the most detailed and thoroughly documented study yet published of the early development of the Arab national movement", and added that Porath "provides a lucid and balanced interpretation". Elizabeth Hayford of Library Journal, February 1, 1975, page 293, described his book as a "serious and detailed study...[that]...contributes valuable analysis and information to the murky exchange of accusations and claims...and has provided an objective study of what was actually happening". Ben Halpern, Commentary, August, 1975, pages 80-86, was the only one to question the balance of Porath's interpretation, accusing Porath of identifying too strongly with the Arab side.)

population of over 500,000 people, predominantly engaged in agriculture or small, agricultural-based industries.⁵⁹ The agricultural productivity among the Arabs was low, however, due to the "primitive" levels of technology, and the prevailing system of land tenure that discouraged investment in the land by the tenant peasant cultivators.⁶⁰ Palestine itself was divided into three administrative districts under the Turks, the Sanjaks of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre,⁶¹ and the leading families of Palestine, the traditional Muslim landowning elites, served in the governing classes of the Ottoman Empire.⁶² The vast majority of the population were the Muslim peasants, but there were also approximately 70,000 Christians, and 25,000 orthodox Jews who, residing in the four Holy Cities, Jerusalem, Safad, Hebron, and Tiberius, were awaiting the Messiah.⁶³ These Jews, referred to today as the Old Yishuv, had no political aspirations, and sought only to quietly practice their traditional way of life with as little contact with outsiders as possible.⁶⁴ Thus Palestine in the late 19th century, while not flourishing agriculturally, or made up of a politically conscious and active population, was nonetheless inhabited by communities of people leading their

⁵⁹ Kenneth W Stein, The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939 (Chapel Hill and London, 1984), 3.

⁶⁰ (The system of land tenure was such that most of the land was concentrated in the hands of a small wealthy class of landowners. The land was leased to the peasant cultivators. However, landowners frequently changed tenets to avoid claims to the land by the peasants) Syria And Palestine. (London, 1920), 88, 99, 100, 106. in Seeds of Conflict (Netherlands, 1978)

⁶¹ Kenneth Stein, 9

⁶² Abdul-Wahhab Said Kayyali, Palestine: A Modern History, (London), 12.

⁶³ Zalmon Abramov, Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State, (New Jersey, 1976), 45.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 37.

lives as they had been doing for centuries. It was among this population that the first Zionist settlers arrived in 1882.

The conflict between the Arabs and the Zionists began with these first Zionist settlers, long before the First World War and the subsequent British administration. As Zionist settlements were established throughout Palestine from the 1880s onwards, disputes over land developed between the new Zionist settlers and the local Arab villagers and tenants who had been displaced from the land by the Jewish land purchases. The land, however, was sold to the Zionists by Arab landowners at extremely high prices,⁶⁵ and the very ability of the Zionists to pay such high prices aroused the fear of the landowners and the educated urban elite, about the seemingly unlimited economic power of the Jews.⁶⁶ At the same time, many of the urban educated elites began reading some of the Zionist writings in translations and came to fear Zionist intentions.⁶⁷ These urban leaders thus began organizing the peasants into acts of sabotage against Jewish purchases of land.⁶⁸ The Palestinian-Arab leadership grew even more fearful of Zionist intentions as the Zionists established their own schools, banks, and courts, seemingly in preparation for creating what the Arabs perceived to be the biblically prophesized state of the Jews.⁶⁹

⁶⁵Kayyali, 22-23.

⁶⁶Porath, The Emergence, 28.

⁶⁷Anne Mosely Lesch, Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement, (Ithica and London, 1979), 31.

⁶⁸Porath, The Emergence, 28.

⁶⁹Ibid. (There were claims by the Arabs that the separate Zionist institutions represented a state within a state--Kayyali, 32; and other protests claimed that the Zionists were excluding the Arabs from the building up of Palestine--Neil

The earliest political expression of opposition to Zionism came, however, in 1891, when a number of Palestinian Arab notables sent a petition to the central government of the Turkish Empire, demanding the prevention of further immigration of the Jews, and of their land purchases.⁷⁰ It was only after the Young Turks Revolt of 1908, though, that manifestations of political anti-Zionism became more systematic. The Revolt made available new forums for expression such as new newspapers and a new parliament. The press became, the "standard bearers" in the struggle against Zionism, warning the population that the Zionists must be stopped, that the Arabs must purchase the state lands available before the Jews do, or the Jews would push the Arabs from their homes. In the Parliament, speakers reiterated these sentiments⁷¹. In October, 1909, an organization was formed to prevent the sale of land to the Jews,⁷² and in 1910 an organization was established whose central aim was to prevent the implementation of the Zionist program⁷³.

Despite the various activities of a few individuals or groups before the war, however, no Palestinian-Arab political unity emerged at this time. The concept of a national movement in Palestine was still weak and few Palestinian Arabs joined nationalist groups before the war. Even with the growing number of Zionists entering Palestine in the years just prior to the

Caplan, Futile Diplomacy. Vol.1, Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts, 1918-1931, Great Britain, 1983, 14.)

⁷⁰ Porath, The Emergence, 26. Kayyali, 17. Lesch, 28.

⁷¹ Porath, The Emergence, 27. Kayyali, 24, 28. Lesch, 29.

⁷² Lesch, 25.

⁷³ Porath, The Emergence, 28.

First World War, attempts as late as 1913 to convene a conference in opposition to Zionism, failed to gain widespread support.⁷⁴

When General Allenby and his British troops captured Jerusalem from the Turks in December 1917, a few months before the end of the First World War, they found the population of Palestine destitute and diminished. The land was ravaged, much of the population had either died or emigrated, there was only limited livestock available, and wood and other sources of fuel were scarce. And the political organization among the Arabs was even weaker than before the war.⁷⁵ However, in a short time, the terms of the Balfour Declaration would galvanize the Palestinian Arabs into action and organization, and initiate the political conflict we are still living with today.

THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

On November 2, 1917, Arthur James Lord Balfour, member of His Majesty's Royal Government, sent a letter to Lord Edmund de Rothschild, asking him to inform the Zionist Federation that the British Government

view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavor to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine,

⁷⁴Ibid, 29. Lesch, 32.

⁷⁵Great Briatin. High Commissioner for Palestine. An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine During the Period 1st July, 1920-30th June, 1921. Cmd.1499, (London, 1921), 3.

const or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.⁷⁶

At the beginning of the British military occupation of Palestine, the actual wording of the Declaration was not yet known in Palestine, and the rumors were that Palestine had been promised to the Jews. In the spring and summer of 1918, members of the leading families of Jaffa and Ramleh started to establish associations to counter the realization of Zionist goals, and these activities soon spread to Jerusalem and other regions.⁷⁷

By the fall of 1918, Palestinian Arab notables had organized themselves into local Muslim-Christian-Associations with a central Muslim-Christian-Association or MCA. The main unifying factor was opposition to Zionism. On November 2, 1918, the Zionist Commission in Palestine held celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. The newly formed MCA used the occasion to inform the British of the establishment of the organization, and to present petitions to the British opposing the Zionist aims to establish a Jewish National home in Palestine.⁷⁸ Thus the Balfour Declaration initiated a new and far more active and organized opposition to Zionism than that from before the war.

At the same time that the Palestinians were genuinely fearing that a Jewish majority would be established in Palestine,⁷⁹ what appeared to be a "completely independent

⁷⁶"The Balfour Declaration", 1917, The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict, Ed. Walter Laquer, (New York, 1971), 17-18.

⁷⁷Porath, The Emergence, 31.

⁷⁸Ibid, 32. Kayyali, 57. Lesch, 85.

⁷⁹High Commissioner for Palestine, Cmd.1499, 6.

constitutional government" was being established in Syria, with British support, under Emir Faysal.⁸⁰ The leadership of the Arabs of Palestine saw in this emerging "independent" state both a weapon they could use against the growing Zionist threat, as well as a symbol of a status to which they could aspire. Thus, though opposition to Zionism after the Balfour Declaration was not a new phenomenon, it now had an even greater political emphasis, as Arab nationalism became both a tool against Zionism, and a goal in itself.⁸¹

With the Paris Peace Conference for the settlement of the post-war treaties scheduled for February, 1919, the Palestinian Arab leaders convened the First Congress of the MCA in January 1919. The primary purpose of the Congress was to choose representatives to attend the Peace Conference and express the will of the Palestinian Arabs.⁸² The Congress was unanimous in its opposition to Zionism⁸³--but that was the only issue upon which it was unanimous. The traditional leadership favored a "Palestine for the Palestinians" as a separate state of Palestine, where they would be the natural leaders. But a rising class of educated urban elites favored unity with an independent Syria, a condition that would give them more power than they would have in a separate state.⁸⁴ The Balfour Declaration did initiate the organization of the Palestinian nationalist

⁸⁰Porath, The Emergence, 71.

⁸¹Ibid, 72. Kayyali, 6. Lesch, 86. (They discuss how the Palestinians thought that by joining with Syria they would be free of the British Mandate)

⁸²Porath, The Emergence, 79. Report. Cmd. 5479. (London, 1937).

⁸³Ibid, 82.

⁸⁴(For further discussions on the divisions within the movement see Porath, The Emergence, 84. Kayyali, 60-61. Lesch, 87.

movement. But from the start of that organization, there came a power struggle within the movement which was to play a major role in developments throughout the 1920s. April 4, 1920.⁸⁷ At the

Lossin's dismissal of the Palestinian population as only
desiring independence because Syria got it is a conveniently
simplified interpretation of the complex strategies the
Palestinian-Arab leadership was evolving to fight the Zionist
plan. Khalidi comes closer to the truth when he claims that the
Balfour Declaration threatened Palestinian-Arab nationalist
aspirations. The British themselves were later to admit that the
intention behind their policy in 1917 was to ultimately establish
a Jewish commonwealth if the Jews were to become a majority of
the population⁸⁵. However, though the longevity of Palestinian
nationalism is what Khalidi seeks to justify today, the Western
concept of nationalism first arose among the Palestinian-Arabs as
a strategy to combat the Jewish nationalism confronting them.
The initial Palestinian-Arab political aspirations were limited
to the rising young educated elites and the community notables.
The Palestinian-Arab population as a whole mobilized against what
they were told and genuinely perceived as a physical threat to
their homes, their employment, and their religious
establishments.⁸⁶

THE NEBI MUSA RIOTS

⁸⁵ Palestine Royal Commission. Report. Cmd.5479, (London, 1937), 24.

⁸⁶Kayyali, 54-55. (He discusses how each of the Arab classes perceived the Zionists).

"A serious outbreak of rioting and looting" and "savagse attacks...by Arabs on Jews" is how British sources were to describe the riots that broke out on April 4, 1920.⁸⁷ At the same time, the British sources were explaining that the Arabs had acted out of genuine "disappointment" and "fear", which had been agravated by propoganda calling for unity with Syria under Emir Feisal.⁸⁸

The immediate cause of the 1920 riots was to show support for unity with Syria. Back in February 1919 the British had forbidden both the departure of the MCA's delegation for the Paris Peace Conference, as well as the publishing of the MCA's resolutions for the population. The Palestinians had been left with no way to represent their position to the very nations that would be determining their fate. It was then that the Palestinians made their first public expression for unity with Syria. On March 11, 1919, the MCA sent Faysal a copy of it's decision of February 10, 1919 "to authorize Your Excellency to represent Palestine and defend it at the Peace Conference"⁸⁹.

During the summer of 1919, divisions again arose within the Palestinian nationalist movement over the question of unity with Syria. The traditional leadership was agreeing to some form of protectorate, while the rising young educated classes, the more extreme elements, were demanding complete independence in unity with Syria.⁹⁰ As unity with Syria was seemingly the best method for the Palestinians to avoid zionist rule, the promoters of the

⁸⁷ Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd. 5479, 50.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Porath, The Emergence, 85-86.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 93-94.

unity movement naturally gained strength. By September, these power struggles resulted in a realignment of leadership, with the more extreme elements now at the forefront of the movement. The divisions were such that the Jerusalem and Jaffa MCAs, headed by the traditional leadership, did not participate in what would prove to be a crucial meeting. It was the more moderate MCA which

The November 27th meeting of the various nationalist unity organizations was to initiate a new form of organized opposition. At the meeting, the Supreme Committee of Palestinian Associations was established. This institution became the coordinating framework of the Pan-Syrian unity associations, with its strength concentrated in Jerusalem, Nablus, and Haifa. The Committee continued the practice of sending anti-Zionist protest notes to the authorities, as the MCA had been doing all along. However, these notes now included vehement demands for the complete independence of a united Syria without foreign protection. By December, though no violence had occurred, these notes warned that the petitioners were not responsible for what would happen if they were called upon to defend Syria's unity, and resist the division necessary for the establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Thus, "this organization marked the first stage in the attempt on the part of the unity movement to attain its goals by forceful and even violent means."⁹¹

The first widespread public declaration of discontent came on February 27, 1920, after Major General Bols issued an official proclamation, stating that the British intended to execute the

⁹¹Ibid, 94.

Balfour Declaration. Protest demonstrations broke out in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Ramleh, and local villages, accompanied by the closing of shops and the presentation of petitions to the authorities. Al-Nadi al-Arabi and al-Muntada al-Adabi, the two most extreme nationalist organizations, were the organizers of the demonstrations. However, it was the more moderate MCA which delivered the petitions to the British, thus joining the unity movement for the first time in half a year. These widespread demonstrations illustrated how advanced the nationalist associations in Palestine had grown. This was the first time they were able to organize a coordinated action on a nation-wide scale with all the various associations participating.⁹² The demonstrations were quiet and orderly, but banners were displayed with such slogans as "Death to Traitors", "Stop Zionist Immigration" and "Our country for Us".⁹³

In March, news came of Faysal's coronation as King of Syria, "and rumors spread of 'revolution' in Egypt".⁹⁴ On March 8, 1920, nation-wide demonstrations again broke out, expressing support for Faysal's regime in Damascus, demanding independence, and rejecting Zionism. These demonstrations were more violent in tone than before, and though protest notes claimed the opposition was only against Zionist immigration, not against the Jewish people, there were many attacks on Jewish passers-by and store owners. The slogans filling the air ranged from the declaration

⁹²Ibid, 96.

⁹³Bernard Wasserstein, The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929, (London, 1978), 59.

⁹⁴Ibid, 62.

that "Palestine is our land and the Jews our dogs", to the more direct "kill the Jews".⁹⁵ Threats to use force to prevent the realization of Zionism were made openly.⁹⁶ Thus there was a great deal of tension in the country just prior to April, always a potentially explosive month due to the coincidence of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish holidays.

In April the explosion went off. For the Muslims, April was the month of the Nebi Musa Celebrations. The religious life of the Arab population involved many pilgrimages to tombs of saints and sanctuaries, and the holding of generally local celebrations. The main event of the year, though, was the annual pilgrimage to the al-Nebi Musa mosque near Jerhico, the location according to tradition of the tomb of Moses. The festival attracted celebrants from all over Palestine, and "undoubtedly created a bond between the various parts of the country".⁹⁷ The Mufti, or religious leader, of Jerusalem, held a position of centrality at the celebrations⁹⁸. At the time of the 1920 Nebi Musa Celebrations, the Mufti was al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni.

On April 4, 1920, when the pilgrims from Hebron and Nablus⁹⁹ arrived in Jerusalem, they were halted twice to hear speeches from such leaders as Aref al-Aref, Musa Kazem, the mayor, other Muslim leaders, as well as the Mufti himself, Hajj Amin al-Husayni. The speeches were of a

⁹⁵Porath, The Emergence, 97.

⁹⁶Ibid, 96.

⁹⁷Ibid, 6.

⁹⁸Ibid, 14.

⁹⁹(These two cities were the most purely Muslim and anti-Zionist)

unit flagrantly political character culminating in the exhibition of the portrait of the Emir Feisal, who was greeted as 'King of Syria and Palestine.'¹⁰⁰

Shortly after the speeches, an explosion went off, likely set off by "'agents provocateurs' raising the cry of an insult to the banner by a Jew"¹⁰¹. The Arab crowds then began moving through the Jewish quarter of the Old City, looting shops and attacking and killing the Jews.

The Palin Commission, sent over by Britain to investigate the causes of the riots, concluded that there was no evidence of a definite plan to organize rioters. However, the commission did express the opinion that

the determination had been come to by the firebrands of the political agitators to take advantage of any occasion which might offer to raise a disturbance and that agents...provocateurs were present at the pilgrimages with that intention".¹⁰²

Two reports from Zionist intelligence, though, asserted that the Pan Arab associations did plan to use the celebrations as demonstrations in favor of Emir Faysal's government¹⁰³. The Zionists were preparing for such an eventuality. In the period just prior to the riots, the Jewish self-defence units, the Hagana, were first raised under Vladimir Jabotinsky¹⁰⁴.

For the Arabs, the opportunity for national independence appeared close at hand. The celebrants of al-Nebi Musa were in the midst of a religious fervor for a holiday that symbolized the

¹⁰⁰Kayyali, 75. (Wasserstein relates the same story, 64)

¹⁰¹Palin Commission Report, opp cit pp.63-64 as cited in Kayyali, 76.

¹⁰²Palin Report p. 58. FO 271\5121, as cited in Porath, The Emergence, 98.

¹⁰³Porath, The Emergence, 98.

¹⁰⁴Kayyali, 77. (Jabotinsky would play a key role in much of the politicization of the Holy sites during the late 1920s).

unity of the Arabs throughout Palestine. The al-Nebi Musa celebrations were thus an opportune time to incite the masses in the name of protecting the Muslim religious sights from the Zionist threat. As Mufti of Jerusalem and thus the central figure at the celebrations, as well as one of those who spoke just prior to the riots, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni can be pinned as one of the key instigators of the riots.

Beneath the nationalist motivations of the Nebi Musa disturbances there were strong religious overtones. A dominant claim among the Arab leadership from the first was that the Arab opposition was not directed against Jews and Judaism, but that it was directed against the program of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.¹⁰⁵ According to leaders such as Musa Kazim al-Husayni, the Arabs had not opposed Zionist immigration to Palestine before the war and had even helped establish the early settlements. It was only the Balfour Declaration that had changed the situation.¹⁰⁶ In the anti-Zionist manifesto that the First Palestinian Congress had prepared to present at the Paris Peace Conference, the authors were careful to distinguish between the Zionists and the Arabicized 'old yishuv' Jews who had been living in Palestine for centuries.¹⁰⁷ But in both the February and March demonstrations of 1920, anti-Jewish actions accompanied the anti-Zionist agitation. In April, despite earlier claims

¹⁰⁵ (The Palestinian Political Scientist Fred Khouri, makes the claim that the Arabs did not oppose the Jews as a religious entity, and that they did not object to the immigration of Jews into Palestine as long as they came "without political motivations" Fred J. Khouri, The Arab-Israeli Dilemma, New York, 1968, 11)

¹⁰⁶ Porath, The Emergence, 54.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 61.

that the Arabs only opposed Zionism not Judaism, the mobs of al-Nebi Musa headed for the Jewish quarter of the old city, where the long-term orthodox Jewish residents lived. Thus in riots attributed to opposition to Zionism and the desire for Palestinian Arab nationalist aspirations, it was in fact the Jews of the "old yishuv," many of whom opposed the Zionist movement,¹⁰⁸ who were hit hardest by Muslims gathered to celebrate Islam.

Despite the riots, protests and petitions beforehand, the San Remo conference went ahead on April 26, 1920, and assigned Palestine to be under British Mandatory power with the Balfour Declaration the primary element of that mandate. The immediate result of the disappointment of April 1920, was a shaking of the very tenuous unity within the Palestinian movement. once again, divisions and power struggles split the Palestinian Arab nationalists. On the one hand, the traditional leadership of the MCA, supported by the Nashashibi Family, community notables, merchants, and most of the Greek Orthodox community, was resigned to British rule. On the other hand, the extremist al-Nadi al-Arabi took the position of continued preparations for a pro-Faysal revolt, or at the very least, continued forceful political resistance to the British Mandate.¹⁰⁹ But in July, 1920, Faysal's regime collapsed and so ended the "Southern Syria" stage

¹⁰⁸ (For a detailed discussion on the relations between the 'old yishuv' and the 'new yishuv' see Abramov, particularly pages 86-90, 106-107, and 119-120)

¹⁰⁹ Porath, The Emergence, 102.

of Pan-Arab unity.¹¹⁰ British rule, with the Balfour Declaration provisions intact, was maintained.

THE 1921 RIOTS

In May 1921, violent riots broke out again, this time in Jaffa. The Haycraft Commission, sent by the British Government to investigate the cause of the riots, concluded that:

The immediate cause of the Jaffa riots on the 1st May was an unauthorised demonstration of Bolshevik Jews, followed by its clash with an authorised demonstration of the Jewish Labor party¹¹¹.

Various authors¹¹² give slightly different accounts of how the Arabs went from being bystanders to the Jewish political party clashes, to being aggressive attackers. The general agreement is that the Arabs watching the demonstrators began moving through the Jewish quarter of Jaffa, smashing Jewish shops and attacking pedestrians. Most revealing of the genuine Arab opposition to Jewish immigration, however, was the breaking into the Immigration House in Jaffa where new Jewish arrivals were housed. Forty Jews were killed in Jaffa within the two day rampage. Rumours of Jews attacking Arabs further incited the rioters, and soon these rumours spread outside of Jaffa, leading to violent attacks on five of the Jewish agricultural settlements.¹¹³ By the time the violence subsided three days

¹¹⁰Ibid, 103.

¹¹¹Palestine. Disturbances in May, 1921. Report of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating thereto. Cmd.1540, (The Haycraft Report), Excerpts in Selected Political Documents Related to the History of the Zionist Movement, Ed. Evyator Friesel, (Jerusalem), 21-24.

¹¹²Kayyali, 95-96. Lesch, 205-206. Wasserstein, 101.

¹¹³Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd.5479, (Peel Report), 51.

later, 47 Jews had been killed, 146 wounded, mostly by Arabs, and 48 Arabs had been killed, 73 wounded, "mostly by the police and military in suppressing the disorders".¹¹⁴

The clash between the Zionist political parties was not the root cause of the violent outbreaks of 1921. The tensions that had resulted in the 1920 riots still prevailed within the Arab community. But unlike the religious overtones present in the Nebi Musa riots, the 1921 riots were motivated more purely by political and material considerations dealing with the Jews. Among the Arab nationalist, the riots became part of the struggle over the form of action to be taken against the Zionists.

The collapse of Faysal's regime back in July 1920, had brought down with it the two "unity" proponents, al-Nadi al-Arabi and al-Muntada al-Adabi, and brought back to the forefront of the nationalist movement the MCA, composed of the traditional leaders of the Palestinian Arab communities.¹¹⁵ These voices had opposed unity with Syria all along, calling for a "Palestine for the Palestinians".

For a short time, the political standstill caused by the divisions and the realignments of power, was accompanied by the growth of economic activity. Arab landowners and businessmen returned to cultivation and new trade opportunities, seeing British rule as at least stable.¹¹⁶ But opposition to Zionism, which had been the main source of national awakening in Palestine, remained. With the traditional leaders back in

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Porath, The Emergence, 106.

¹¹⁶Ibid, 104.

the forefront by September, political activity revived, but now focused on an independent Palestine. The center of the renewed activity was Jerusalem.

In December, the Third Palestinian Congress met, and here the official Palestinian stance was established that was to guide Palestinian Arab actions for the duration of the period: absolute rejection of the Balfour Declaration, and a demand for self-rule under British hegemony¹¹⁷. The Third Palestinian Congress, however, made no demands for unity with Syria. The Palestinian Arabs turned inward in the attempt to fight the Zionist movement. The emphasis, for a brief time, was put on Muslim-Christian unity as the tool to achieve Palestinian Arab goals.¹¹⁸ At the Congress, the Arab Executive Committee of the Palestinian Arab Congress was established, as well, to enact the Congress's resolutions. Musa Kazim al-Husayni was elected as the president of the Committee. Thus, through the end of 1920 until the May 1921 riots, the traditional leadership, favoring peaceful relations with the British, was the dominant force, politically. Since 1919, however, an alternative, underground organization established by the notables of Jaffa, had controlled large numbers of the urban population and members of the underworld. The group, at first called the "Black Hand", became the "self-sacrificers", and established branches throughout Palestine, connected to al-Nadi al-Arabi and al-Muntada al-Adabi¹¹⁹. In Porath's analysis of the 1921 riots, he claims that

¹¹⁷Ibid, 110.

¹¹⁸Ibid, 108.

¹¹⁹Ibid, 129.

these extremist organizations, under the influence of al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, were preparing for violent outburst. Porath writes how in early May members of the "self-sacrificers" were inciting the villagers to attack Jewish settlements, arguing that the Jews were about to attack them and therefore it was necessary to prepare for such an eventuality¹²⁰.

Porath continues, stating that the extremist leaders

discovered that it was possible to turn the local outbreaks in Jaffa into a whole series of outbreaks over a much wider area, not so much by nationalist slogans as by the spreading of false rumors that the Jews were slaughtering Arabs...and also by the chance of possibly plundering the Jewish settlements¹²¹.

Reports of the self-sacrificers stockpiling weapons, as well as holding meetings just prior to the outbreak of riots in Jaffa and Hadera¹²² are other elements Porath discusses to support his conclusion of the riots being an anticipated event. They thus

The only thing the riots really succeeded in bringing was heavy retaliation by the government troops. British troops were sent in to halt the rioting, leaving 44 Arabs dead. Rioters were tried, collective fines were imposed on the villages involved, and the British conducted searches for arms and stolen goods.¹²³ In return, the British Government's concessions fell short of Arab expectations.¹²⁴ The High Commissioner did order temporary cessation of Jewish immigration, and in his speech of June 3, 1921, he announced the policy of economic absorption capacity as the regulator of immigration.¹²⁵ Also, the High Commissioner

¹²⁰Ibid, 130.

¹²¹Ibid, 131.

¹²²Ibid, 130.

¹²³Ibid, 132-133.

¹²⁴Kayyali, 99.

¹²⁵High Commissioner for Palestine, Cmd.1499, 19. Lesch, 207.

dropped the "national" before "home" when referring to the Balfour Declaration promises.¹²⁶ What the riots did do was reveal the full strength of the Arab opposition to zionism, opposition not limited to a particular class or religion¹²⁷.

The attempts by the British to appease the Arabs, however, failed, both with those favoring legal/diplomatic methods, as well as with those finding violent methods acceptable.

When the High Commissioner attempted in August 1921 to set up a committee of Palestinian notables which would present to him the positions of the Arab population respecting the constitution, the AE succeeded in preventing those invited from participating in the work of drafting the constitution. The latter informed the High Commissioner that only an elected parliament would be able to decide upon the drafting of a constitution in Palestine.¹²⁸

By the Fall of 1921 the militant groups were unsatisfied with the moderate leadership's stress on diplomacy. They thus began recruiting young men for attacks on Jewish settlements. Their recruiting attempts were initially without great success, until on November 2, 1921, they were able to turn protest demonstrations into anti-Jewish outbreaks. But these outbreaks were checked by the Jewish defense forces and the police. The organizers, mostly members of al-Nadi al-Arabi, were arrested, tried and severely punished. Later attempts to organize protests met with no success.¹²⁹ In the end, neither diplomacy, nor violence succeeded in changing the letter of British policy in Palestine.

¹²⁶Richard Poff, "Jerusalem Under the Mandate", The Arabs

¹²⁶Porath, The Emergence, 132. Norton Moore, (New Jersey, 1974).

¹²⁷Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd.5479, (Peel Report), 52.

¹²⁸Porath, The Emergence, 130. Lesch, 198.

¹²⁹Ibid, 134.

In the end, the riots of 1920 and 1921 were not simply the result of Khalidi's martyrs defending themselves against the Zionist aggressors. Nor were the riots a simple case of hooligans out for pillage. The individual Jews who were attacked were innocent victims. But the Arab rioters had genuine fears and frustrations. As Richard Pfaff notes, the violent clashes between the Zionists and the Arabs were clashes "between two to a political movements, Zionism and Arab nationalism".¹³⁰

THE RATIFICATION OF THE BRITISH MANDATE

ARAB ATTEMPTS AT DIPLOMACY

In July 1922, the British Mandate for Palestine, with its Balfour Declaration provisions intact, was ratified by the League of Nations. The ratification of the Mandate was a great disappointment for the Palestinians. This was particularly true for the traditional leadership, which had been convinced that once the British knew the real situation in Palestine they would change their policy.¹³¹

Immediately after the May 1921 riots, the AE and the Jaffa MCA had disassociated themselves from the outbreaks. After the November demonstrations by the extremists, the traditional leadership went so far as to praise the police for its success in halting the violence.¹³² The traditional leadership had opposed the violence of the 1921 riots and had continually called for

¹³⁰ Richard Pfaff, "Jerusalem Under the Mandate", The Arab-Israeli Conflict, Vol.1. Ed. Norton Moore, (New Jersey, 1974), 1026.

¹³¹ Porath, The Emergence, 137. Lesch, 158.

¹³² Ibid, 133.

order.¹³³ This created further tension between the young militant elements in Jaffa, on the one hand, and the MCA leadership and community notables, on the other.¹³⁴

The traditional leadership had favored diplomatic methods, and at the fourth Palestinian Congress, held right after the May 1921 riots, "it was decided to work toward the realization of national aims in legal ways only"¹³⁵. The Congress resolved to a send a delegation to London which could present the situation in Palestine from the Arab perspective. The delegation left Palestine on July 19, 1921, and on August 12 presented Churchill with a memorandum reiterating the previous Palestinian-Arab demands.¹³⁶ Aaron Klieman writes that

while the Arab delegation remained extreme in its demands--insisting upon abrogation of the Balfour Pledge, an end to Jewish immigration, and the beginning of representative government--it was more moderate in terms of approach...the delegation saw its role in striving through diplomacy, political pressure, and propaganda rather than by force and bloodshed.¹³⁷

The ultimate cause of the failure of the Palestinian delegation to have its demands met by the British, exemplifying the failure of the Palestinian national movement in general, was the gap that existed between British intentions and definitions, and Arab intentions and definitions. At the root of the division

¹³³ (During the 1921 riots, mayors and notables of Nablus, Jenin, Jerusalem, and Ramleh helped police calm the townspeople. In Ramleh, for instance, Shakaykh Sulayman al-Taji al-Faruqi "appealed to the public to disbelieve the rumours and stay calm". Lesch, 206-207.)

¹³⁴ Porath, *The Emergence*, 131.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 137. (Kayyali, 99, and Lesch, 159, write the same thing)

¹³⁶ Ibid, 141. Kayyali, 102.

¹³⁷ Aaron Kleiman. Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921. (Baltimore, 1971. 191) as cited in Lesch, 160.

was the Balfour Declaration. The British claimed that the Balfour Declaration was the reason Palestine could not be given self-government. The Palestinian-Arab response, logically, was that the British argument was

the strongest proof that the Jewish National Home undertaking is the cause of depriving us of our natural rights of establishing an independent government same as Mesopotamia and the Hedjaz.¹³⁸

For the Arabs, the primary source of agitation, and the primary motivation for sending the delegation to London in July 1921, was to effect the annulment of the Balfour Declaration and the pro-Zionist policy in general.¹³⁹ The British cabinet felt obliged to uphold the Balfour Declaration to maintain the honor and prestige of Britain in the eyes of world Jewry.¹⁴⁰ Thus for the British, it was not a matter of the Balfour Declaration's existence, but rather just a question of defining the declaration.¹⁴¹ So as the Palestinians continued to reject the British policy of treating the Arab natives of Palestine on an equal footing with the foreign Jews¹⁴², the British continued to stress their dual obligation to the Arabs and the Jews.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Great Britain. British Information Services. The Political History of Palestine Under British Administration, (New York, 1947), 5.

¹³⁹ Porath, The Emergence, 139.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 140. Wasserstein, 127.

¹⁴¹ (Churchill insisted that the Balfour Declaration would not be repudiated--that the Arabs would have to accept that fact--as long as they insisted on the Balfour Declaration's repudiation, there was nothing to say. Kayyali, 102. Wasserstein, 127.)

¹⁴² Porath, The Emergence, 143.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 140. (According to British sources the British in 1922 still believed that their obligations to the Arabs and the Jews would not conflict. Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd.5479, 11)

During the first stage of negotiations, the British made three proposals of various forms of legislative or advisory councils, all ultimately under British control, and within the context of the dual obligation. By September, the Delegation had rejected all the proposals¹⁴⁴. This brought talks to a standstill until the delegation moderated its tone somewhat, concentrating more on securing their interests and the freedom of Palestine, and less on demanding the annulment of the Balfour Declaration¹⁴⁵. The Delegation, however, still denied any special tie between the Jews and Palestine, and certainly denied the Jews the right to immigrate to Palestine even as restricted by economic considerations. The Delegation's point was that even if Palestine was not hurt economically by Jewish immigration, and "there is still no doubt regarding the harm that their presence necessarily causes Arab interests".¹⁴⁶ The Palestinian Delegation emphasized the importance of the immigration issue to their position. Yet the British proposal for an immigration committee made up of representatives from the population still did not please the Palestinians, who wanted complete supervision of immigration matters. According to Kayyali, Churchill made it clear in his negotiations with the Palestinian Delegation that any representative elective assembly or council would have no power over the control of immigration or any other matter that was vital to the implementation policy of the Jewish National Home.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Lesch, 163.

¹⁴⁵ Porath, *The Emergence*, 144.

¹⁵⁰ Lesch, 102. (She discusses the pressure put on the delegation,

¹⁴⁴ Porath, *The Emergence*, 142. ¹ Lesch, 160.

¹⁴⁵ Porath, *The Emergence*, 142.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 144. ¹ Lesch, 158-159. Cmd. 1700, in *The Israel-Arab*

¹⁴⁷ Kayyali, 102. ¹ *Agar*, 43-50.

In turn, the Palestinian-Arab Delegation "reiterated that the principle of the Jewish National Home was unacceptable as the basis for negotiations"¹⁴⁸ Porath sums up the situation accurately: "all subsequent communications and talks became...barren."¹⁴⁹

The ultimate position of the Palestinian delegation, under pressure from Palestine, as well as from the extremist element within the delegation, was a refusal to compromise to any degree on Jewish immigration, a refusal to set up discussions with the heads of the Zionist movement¹⁵⁰, and a refusal to accept the constitution as proposed in February, 1922. The ultimate position of the British was that the Balfour Declaration would be carried out. Thus, the gap that existed between the British and the Palestinian Arabs was that the British were trying to get them to accept the policy of the Balfour Pledge because it aims at their destruction. The ratification of the British Mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations the following month, with the Balfour Declaration provisions still intact, "showed the measure of the Delegation's failure". The Palestinian Delegation was recalled(?) by the AE. Palestinian attempts at diplomacy had not succeeded in any way in changing British policy regarding the Balfour Declaration.

Though the Palestinians were greatly disappointed to accept the policy

¹⁴⁸Lesch, 163.

¹⁴⁹Porath, The Emergence, 144.

¹⁵⁰Lesch, 102. (She discusses the pressure put on the delegation, and the delegation's refusal to recognize the Zionist Organization).

¹⁵¹The Churchill White Paper, Cmd.1700, in The Israel-Arab Reader, ed. Laquer, 45-50.

of the Balfour Pledge because it aims at their destruction.¹⁵²

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Though the Palestinians were greatly disappointed that the Mandate had been ratified, they did not give up their struggle. The AE wanted to keep peace with the British Government, and so explained to its supporters that rioting had to be avoided. On July 12th and 13th, countrywide strikes broke out as directed by the AE, "and it was openly announced that the Palestinian population did not accept the Mandate as based upon the Balfour Declaration"¹⁵⁴. At the Fifth Palestinian Congress, convened on August 22, 1922 in Nablus, a "purely Muslim city known for its extreme anti-zionist position", the delegates swore "to continue the efforts for the country's independence and the realization of Arab unity by legal means, and never to agree to the Jewish National Home and Jewish Immigration."¹⁵⁵

BRITISH ATTEMPTS AT CONCILIATION AND THE ARAB RESPONSE

¹⁵²The Churchill White Paper, Cmd.1700, in Selected Political Documents, Ed. Friesel.

¹⁵³Porath, The Emergence, 145.

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 148.

¹⁵⁵Ibid, 111.

On August 10, 1922, the British administration issued an Order of Council according to which a legislative council would be established.¹⁵⁶ The proposal was the same one the Delegation in London had rejected earlier that year. Thus, one of the central issues of debate at the Fifth Palestinian Congress was the question of how to respond to the legislative council elections.¹⁵⁷ The Congress, dominated by the extremists, decided to boycott the elections. the moderates of the congress objected. They tried to prevent the boycott of elections in September and October 1922, by gaining concessions from the British. One proposal was the annulment of Article 4 of the Mandate which recognized the Zionist Organization as an official advisory body to the government in matters connected with the National Home.¹⁵⁸ But the proposed concessions were not met, and the campaign to boycott the elections to the legislative council proceeded.

"The prime...force behind ...boycotting of the election was the young militant element."¹⁵⁹ According to Porath, they were able "to impose their will on the AE, the Congress, and the vast majority of Palestinians for several reasons".¹⁶⁰ First of all, the militants argued that participation in the elections would equal recognizing the legality of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration. Also, the militants pointed out how limited the legislative council was, in that it could do nothing to contradict the Mandate, such as halting Jewish immigration or the

¹⁵⁶ Palestine Order of Council, August 1922. excerpts in Selected Political Documents, ed. Friesel, 49-57.

¹⁵⁷ (Porath, The Emergence, 149.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 149-150.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 149.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 150.

sale of land to Jews,¹⁶¹ , the very issues that initiated popular support of the nationalist movement throughout Palestine, in the first place. However, it was the Turkish defeat of the Greeks in September that most roused the populace into supporting action against the latest implementation of the Mandate.¹⁶²

Turkish victories raised the prospect of the revision of the Treaty of Sevres which covered the Palestine Mandate and encouraged fresh hopes that a radical change in the situation in Palestine would result from such a revision.¹⁶³

Thus, in September, the boycott took off, with the Palestinians believing

that the foundation of the Mandate had collapsed and the question of Palestine had been reopened. Palestine in their opinion reverted to the status of 'occupied enemy territory', and its future was dependent solely upon the will of its inhabitants.¹⁶⁴

During the First World War, the Arabs had suffered a great deal. There had been widespread famine and disease which the Turkish authorities had been unable to alleviate. At the same time, the Turkish authorities exercised harsh repression of any form of criticism or opposition to their rule.¹⁶⁵ The Palestinian-Arabs had thus been open to Sharifian followers from Syria who came to Palestine to recruit people for the revolt against the Turks. The Sharifian followers "helped transform the dissatisfaction with the Turks into Arab nationalist feeling" by

¹⁶¹Ibid, 15(Palestine Order in Council provides that "no ordinance shall be passed which shall be in any way repugnant to or inconsistent with the provisions of the Mandate--
Selected Political Documents, ed. Friesel, 53).

¹⁶²Lesch, 136

¹⁶³Kayyali, 115.

¹⁶⁴Porath, The Emergence, 159.

¹⁶⁵Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd.5479, (Peel Report), 153.

telling the population that they would be granted independence if they joined the British against the Turks.¹⁶⁶

By 1922, however, the Palestinian Arabs were finding that they had exchanged Muslim rule for European-Christian rule and they were still not independent.¹⁶⁷ The Palestinians proceeded to express to the British their opinion that their position had been better under the Turks. "The Palestinians represented the Ottoman period as a glorious time compared with the dark days of British rule", saying how education, efficiency, security, and burden of taxes were all worse under the British. These arguments were exaggerated "for polemical purposes", and yet the authors of the memorandum believed their arguments, with good reason¹⁶⁸. It was they who had been part of the governing class under the Ottomans, serving in such positions as governors, senior officials, and department heads. All these positions were now held by British and Jewish officials. It was because of the loss of their positions that many notables had joined the nationalist movement to begin with, so when the movement failed, they could well regret the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, especially in its rosier light.

The Palestinians were now naturally supportive of the Turks, and especially of their leader, Mustafa Kemal, who they began referring to as "the Savior of Islam".¹⁶⁹ The Palestinian leadership had now found a new tool to use against attempts to establish the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Accompanying the

¹⁶⁶Porath, The Emergence, 160.

¹⁶⁷Lesch, 136.

¹⁶⁸Porath, The Emergence, 160.

¹⁶⁹Ibid, 159.

palestinian reappraisal of Ottoman rule, the Palestinians in late 1922 tried to gain Turkish support by saying that if the Turks support Palestine "they would prove by this their good intentions towards Muslims of the entire world."¹⁷⁰ The AE decided to send the delegation in London, to Istanbul and to the Peace Conference in Lausanne.¹⁷¹ "The Christian members of the Palestinian Delegation ...opposed its departure, since they were aware of the Islamic motives behind this."¹⁷² In Istanbul, the Palestinians then tried to gain support from other Arab countries, again on the basis of Islamic unity.¹⁷³

In Palestine, as well, religion proved to be the most effective tool for unifying the population in the boycott effort against the legislative council elections.¹⁷⁴ The Palestinian Arab Executive began a "vigorous campaign" to persuade the population not to take part in the elections to the legislative council. Delegation members began making trips within Palestine to expand on the damage participation in the elections could bring.¹⁷⁵ But the most potent factor in guaranteeing the populace's compliance in boycotting the elections, was the religious establishment, led by the local Muftis and religious functionaries¹⁷⁶. "The Mosques became the most important stages for propaganda". Political speeches replaced sermons in the

¹⁷⁰Ibid, 163.

¹⁷¹Ibid, 162. Lesch, 137.

¹⁷²Porath, The Emergence, 163.

¹⁷³Ibid, 165.

¹⁷⁴Ibid, 153.

¹⁷⁵Ibid, 152.

¹⁷⁶Ibid, 153. Lesch, 181.

mosques¹⁷⁷. The boycott was presented as a religious duty, and threats were made against those who "separated themselves from the community" to the effect "that they would be excommunicated and their dead not brought to burial".¹⁷⁸ "Those who participated in the elections were denounced in public as traitors to the national cause".¹⁷⁹ The congregation assembled for prayers swore collective oaths not to participate.¹⁸⁰ The MCA played a crucial role in organizing boycotts in that they had village heads sign declarations obligating them to boycott the elections.¹⁸¹ But

when the arts of persuasion failed, the nationalists turned to physical pressure, threats, uprooting of crops and similar acts, against those who refused to add their names to these declarations.¹⁸²

Ultimately, the boycott was most complete in purely conservative Muslim areas,¹⁸³ where its presentation as a religious precept understandably had the most influence.¹⁸⁴ In Jaffa, however, there was absolute abstention among both the Muslim and Christian communities.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷ Lesch, 182. (Shaykh abd-al-Qadir al-Muzaffar, member of the AE, was a principle speaker and organizer in the mosques and other religiously sponsored institutions. According to Lesch "his style blended religious and political themes".)

¹⁷⁸ Porath, The Emergence, 153.

¹⁷⁹ Wasserstein, 121.

¹⁸⁰ Lesch, 181-182.

¹⁸¹ Wasserstein, 121.

¹⁸² Porath, The Emergence, 153. (Great Britain. High Commissioner for Palestine. Palestine. Papers Relating to the Election for the Palestine Legislative Council, 1923, Cmd.1889, London, 1923, discusses the "exercise of strong pressure by the organizations opposing the election".)

¹⁸³ Great Britain, Cmd.1889, (Charts page 6-8 on voter turnout.)

¹⁸⁴ Porath, The Emergence, 158.

¹⁸⁵ Great Britain, Cmd.1889, 7.

The use of the Mosques for propaganda purposes "could not have been done without the agreement and encouragement of the Supreme Muslim Council, or SMC"¹⁸⁶. By Porath's analysis, the SMC's opposition to the establishment of a legislative council was not just a product of al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni's desire for dominance. Porath explains that the goal was "to secure the position of the SMC in general as the central leadership body".¹⁸⁷

In contrast to the vigorous campaign waged by the Palestinians, the British did little to try to counteract the boycott"¹⁸⁸. The British did distribute propaganda pamphlets stressing the benefit which the Palestinians would derive from the establishment of the legislative council¹⁸⁹. However, they did not force the community to take part in the elections, nor make any benefits or aid conditional upon participation.¹⁹⁰ At the same time, the government did nothing to halt the boycott activities in the Mosques due to the government's policy of complete avoidance of any interference in Muslim religious affairs in general and in the SMC in particular.¹⁹¹

The February, 1923 elections to the Legislative Council were effectively boycotted, declared "null and void" by the Palestine (Amendment) Order in Council, May 1923¹⁹². Of the 1397 vote with the Legislative Council, and that it supported the

¹⁸⁶Porath, The Emergence, 155.

¹⁸⁷Ibid. (6-155)

¹⁸⁸Wasserstein, 121.

¹⁸⁹Porath, The Emergence, 150.

¹⁹⁰Ibid, 152.

¹⁹¹Ibid, 154.

¹⁹²Great Britain, Cmd. 1889, 11.

cast, 1172 were Jewish.¹⁹³ But the Mandate, with its Balfour Declaration provisions, remained intact. According to Porath:

The Palestinians' mistake was to believe that participation in the legislative council meant acquiescence to the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration, while everyday cooperation with the government and acceptance of jobs in it were considered axiomatically permissible.

Porath's point is that had the Palestinians forced the British government in Palestine to rely solely on itself and the Jews at all levels of organization and administration, the boycott would have been more effective than it was in altering British policy in Palestine.¹⁹⁵

As it was, the Colonial Office only decided to postpone the establishment of the Legislative council, and in April 1923, two months after the aborted attempts to establish that body, they proposed the establishment of an advisory council¹⁹⁶. At first, the AE agree to cooperate, but only on matters dealing with administration, not on the constitution, nor on Zionist policy.¹⁹⁷ By May 29th, all the appointees to the advisory

council had accepted. But once the Palestinian-Arab community heard of the proposed body, they vehemently opposed it, and heavy pressure was soon exerted upon those who refused to resign. By June, 1923, the AE retracted its cooperative stand on the Advisory Council¹⁹⁸, claiming, not unjustly, that the body was "identical with the Legislative council, and that it supported the

¹⁹³Wasserstein, 122-123. illustrate the Palestinian-Arab's failure.

¹⁹⁴Porath, The Emergence, 157.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Great Britain, Cmd. 1889, 9.

¹⁹⁷Porath, The Emergence, 170.

¹⁹⁸Wasserstein, 125.

constitution which had been rejected by the nation."¹⁹⁹ Yet the British persisted in trying to set up the Advisory Council, though without success.

In June, the Third Palestinian Delegation went to London, where it requested to appear before the Cabinet Committee reviewing British policy on Palestine. But the Palestinian delegation was denied admission on the grounds that they were not an officially recognized organization²⁰⁰. The Palestinians were thus not given the chance to present their side through diplomatic channels, and the Committee went on to decide that "whether or not the Balfour Declaration had been a wise move, it was impossible to retreat from it now" due to its international approval.²⁰¹ Once again, instead of taking Palestinian-Arab demands seriously, the British persisted in a policy that the Arab population of Palestine had been rejecting from the first.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BRITISH MANDATE

Despite the violent riots of 1920 and 1921, despite the Palestinian-Arab delegations to London, despite five years of vehement demonstrations and petitions on the part of the Arabs, the British Mandate over Palestine was put into force in September, 1923. The Palestinian-Arabs, not immediately demoralized staged protest strikes throughout the country on November 2, 1923.²⁰² However, the proposal of the Arab Agency a few days later was to illustrate the Palestinian-Arab's failure.

¹⁹⁹ Porath, The Emergence, 171.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 174.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 176.

²⁰² Ibid, 183.

THE ARAB AGENCY

On November 5, 1923, and again several days later, the High Commissioner set forward the proposal of establishing an Arab Agency to parallel in function that of the Jewish Agency. The Arabs rejected the proposal both times.²⁰³ The Palestinian-Arabs believed they could get more in the League of Nations, where they had a number of supporters. Also, many felt that the SMC already defended their rights and was active in many of the same ways that the proposed Arab Agency would be.²⁰⁴ But most importantly, after all their struggles, the Palestinians were being offered even less than they had been offered before. Much of the Palestinian opposition to British policy regarding the Zionists, had been framed from the first in terms of the Palestinians' opposition to the foreign Jews receiving equal recognition to the native Arab population. Yet now, the British were proposing a body that would in fact represent the equality of the two populations.²⁰⁵ Within the context of the Palestinian struggle, this final effort of the British to convince the Palestinians to cooperate with a policy they fundamentally opposed, was understandably rejected. The British perspective, as expressed by the Colonial Secretary to the High Commissioner, was that Britain must

take a firm stand and make the Arabs realize that, while we are ready to go to the utmost limit to meet

²⁰³ Palestine. Proposed Formation of an Arab Agency. Correspondence with the High Commissioner for Palestine. Cmd.1989, (London, 1923), in Seeds of Conflict.

²⁰⁴ Porath, The Emergence, 177.

²⁰⁵ (Porath, 177, and Lesch, 187, both talk of this)

what may be reasonable in their demands, we are not to be turned from our fixed purpose of carrying out our international obligations. If they [the Arabs] refuse to cooperate with us...we shall...however reluctantly...go on without them.²⁰⁶

By November 9th the High Commissioner received another telegram from the Secretary of State of the Colonies, stating that

His Majesty's Government have been reluctantly driven to the conclusion that further efforts on similar lines would be useless and they have accordingly decided not to repeat the attempt²⁰⁷.

The British officially decided that the only way to act was to ignore the demands of the Palestinians, as they had been doing all along anyhow, and direct the country without representative bodies. From 1920 until the end of 1923, the nationalist organizations in Palestine had

worked under the impression that the form of government in Palestine and British policy had not yet been finally determined and that it was possible by bargaining to attain far-reaching changes in them.²⁰⁸

By November, 1923, though, it was clear that the pro-zionist policy of the British would not change. All efforts to effect a change had failed.

THE QUIET YEARS

Since the beginning of the Palestinian Nationalist movement, every setback had been followed by a period of temporary inactivity as power was realigned within the movement. In 1923

²⁰⁶The Duke of Devonshire, the Colonial Secretary, to the High Commissioner, private and confidential cable no. 314, 17.10.23, CO. 733/50, as cited in Porath, The Emergence, 178.

²⁰⁷Palestine, Cmd.1989, 12.

²⁰⁸Porath, The Emergence, 109.

the Palestinians were facing their biggest setback yet.²⁰⁹ They realized, with the implementation of the mandate, that the British were not going to change their policy. It was soon after this that the influences of the failure made themselves felt within the Palestinian community, leading "to a period of stagnation and paralysis" within the Palestinian national movement,²¹⁰ and indirectly, to the "quiet years" of British administration in Palestine. (Kayyali attributes the lull to the "final settlement of the Mandate in the League and the decline of the fortunes of the Jewish National Home in Palestine"²¹¹.

When Khalidi and Lossin discussed the "quiet years" they each presented simplified, onesided arguments that fit in with their purposes. In Lossin's story the years of peace are attributed both to the apathy of the Palestinian population to Zionist immigration, as well as to the divisions within the Palestinian national movement. In Khalidi's story there is not one mention of the divisions within the movement. Peace is solely the result of the apparent demise of the Zionist movement. The story presented by Porath and other sources takes into consideration all the factors.

Divisions within the Palestinian National Movement. By 1924, the Palestinian nationalist movement was at its weakest point since just after the war. The populace was growing politically apathetic as it lost confidence in the leadership of

²⁰⁹ (Anne Mosley Lesch attributes the resulting fissures that arise within the Palestinian national movement at this time, to the "final implementation of the Mandate", 85.)

²¹⁰ Kayyali, 130.

²¹¹ Ibid.

the Palestinian national movement.²¹² Conflicts and accusations between families and communities became prominent. More directly, the divisions that had haunted the nationalist movement from the start, were now tearing the movement apart. The growing internal opposition to the Husayni leadership of the AE and the MCA, now became organized in the form of the National Party under the Nashashibis²¹³. A bitter power struggle ensued, with the rising opposition striving "to win recognition for the equality of status between their parties and the AE."²¹⁴ At first, the AE refused to grant such recognition and the two sides spent most of their time accusing each other of treachery, and selling out to the British and the Jews. In June, the AE tried to convene the 7th Palestinian Congress, but the opposition refused to take part, and no Congress was held.²¹⁵ The AE's inability to convene the Congress because of the opposition's refusal to participate, made the AE realize that the opposition had to be taken seriously. The two sides reached a compromise. The Congress would be convened by a "central committee" made up of an equal number from the AE and of the opposition. Thus, the opposition's demand for equality between its organization and the AE was recognized, while the AE's demand that the opposition dissolve its separate organizations was not mentioned at all. AE supporters rejected the compromise, while within the opposition, certain groups also worked against any settlement.²¹⁶ Ultimately

²¹²Ibid, 131.

²¹³Lesch, 97.

²¹⁴Porath, The Emergence, 248.

²¹⁵Ibid, 242.

²¹⁶Ibid, 248.

the failure to convene the 7th Palestinian Congress was in great part a product of "family dissension and personal interests"²¹⁷. It illustrated graphically the extent of the internal split and weakness of the nationalist movement itself, and "led to a further decline of nationalist activity"²¹⁸.

1925 in general was a period of extensive Jewish immigration, yet few Palestinians paid any attention to the Jews. By the summer of 1925

the new High Commissioner concluded that it was no longer necessary to submit monthly political reports since nothing worth reporting was going on.²¹⁹

The decline in nationalist activity can not in the least be taken to signify an abatement of opposition to Zionist movement. But to act against Zionism required a unified population. It is here that the trouble lay, in the weakness and divisions within the Palestinian movement itself. As Kayyali expresses it "the struggle against Zionism was overshadowed by the determination to acquire power within the Muslim community".²²⁰ The AE and the MCA, once the leadership of the Palestinians, were disintegrating during the mid-1920s. The AE itself by 1926 did not have the funds to cover even current expenses, and by 1927, the office of the AE was closed down.²²¹

In March 1925, the AE and the opposition were able to work together to organize strikes and demonstrations so that "on the day of Balfour's arrival, 25th March, 1925, the Palestinian

²¹⁷Kayyali, 136.

²¹⁸Porath, The Emergence, 242.

²¹⁹Ibid, 241.

²²⁰Kayyali, 136.

²²¹Porath, The Emergence, 243. Lesch, 98.

populace showed complete unity, the strike embracing all the cities of the country and attaining mass proportions."²²² The strike created "a new spirit of cooperation between the two camps," leading to new efforts at settlement. But these efforts soon failed as the struggle over the upcoming elections to the Supreme Muslim Council "became the central political issue which preoccupied everyone".²²³ Relations between the two camps further deteriorated.

Attempts at Reconciliation Within the Palestinian Nationalist Movement. Within both camps of the nationalist movement, there were segments favoring reconciliation between the two factions, as well as with the British authorities. As early as 1924, Jamal al-Husayni, the secretary of the AE, had proposed the formation of a legislative council.²²⁴ It was similar to the one the Arabs had rejected only two years before when they had still thought that British policy could be changed. The council proposed now, though, was more conciliatory towards the Zionists than the earlier one. In the end, neither the AE or the Nationalist Party agreed to it.²²⁵ Thus, the political impasse between the Arabs and the British remained.

In June, 1926, a number of the members of the AE and of the opposition parties began renewed efforts to reach an agreement over Arab participation in the Government. Their primary demand was for a constitution giving them equal status with Iraq, which

²²² Porath, The Emergence, 250.

²²³ Ibid, 243.

²²⁴ Lesch, 188.

²²⁵ Porath, The Emergence, 245.

was under a semi-independent rule.²²⁶ In exchange the Palestinians would recognize the British Government's international obligations regarding Palestine. But though the British were "outwardly sympathetic" they soon put an end to these negotiations "since it was obvious that the Arab participants represented no-one but themselves."²²⁷

Though these attempts at agreement with the British failed, the Palestinians of the rival camps continued working to achieve a compromise among themselves. There were casual contacts between the parties during 1927. By 1928 these contacts became formalized as

the heads of the SMC and the AE on the one hand and the members of the opposition in Jerusalem on the other quickly reached a settlement...to ensure the preeminence of both sections of the Jerusalem elite within the Palestinian community.²²⁸

Divisions existed within the opposition camp. The Northerners and the Christian community refused to support the settlement unless their conditions were met, namely that the hegemony of the Jerusalem elite in the SMC and the AE come to an end. As preparations were made to hold the 7th Palestinian Congress, these rival voices declared:

let the organizers of this congress know that the country is not the private property of a few Jerusalemite families.²²⁹

The opposition had enough power to bring the preparations for the Congress to a standstill until its conditions were met. Thus, when the 7th Palestinian Congress finally met on June 20th, 1928,

²²⁶Lesch, 188.

²²⁷Porath, The Emergence, 246.

²²⁸Ibid, 252.

²²⁹Ibid.

the Jerusalemites were no longer the dominating force. Nonetheless, the convening of the Congress symbolized the resurgence of Palestinian-Arab organization.

The Crisis Within Zionism. The major factor making the struggle within the Palestinian community less volatile was the crisis within Zionism itself. Beginning in 1926, the number of Jewish immigrants diminished until by 1927 there were more emigrants from Palestine than immigrants into Palestine. High unemployment among the Jews led to demonstrations by unemployed and hungry workers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, as well as to a growing number of suicides. For the Jews

This bitter reality led to a withdrawal from extreme slogans and demands, and on the fringes of the Jewish camp much more moderate stands on the question of Palestine's political future began to appear.²³⁰

The troubles for the Jews, accompanied by a growing moderation in their demands, in turn caused the Palestinian Arabs to view the Zionist threat as rapidly diminishing. On the one hand, the Palestinian Arabs had "the sense that the Zionist scheme had reached a point of stagnation or even failure" and even felt, as the paper Filastin expressed it, that "Zionism has gone completely bankrupt".²³¹ On the other hand

the crisis of the Zionist movement...helped weaken the political activity of the rival Palestinian element, though...it encouraged the trend towards conciliation between the two rival camps within the Palestinian community and facilitated the triumph of the more moderate strategy.²³²

²³⁰Ibid, 244.

²³¹Ibid.

²³²Ibid.

As the Zionists weakened, the necessity for extreme positions and actions lessened, and it was thus that the position favoring cooperation with the Government grew.²³³ The Palestinians declared they would make peace with British Mandatory rule if only self-governing bodies would be set up. It is not that the Arabs were accepting the pro-Zionist British policy, but the Arabs were willing to be more conciliatory in the face of the Zionist crisis of 1927-1928, where "the true image of Zionism came out"²³⁴. With the Zionist crisis at its peak even the more extreme elements joined in the conciliatory mood. When in 1927 Hajj Amin al-Husayni discussed the formation of a legislative council, an institution he was now supporting

he was prepared to guarantee that when this council came into being, matters relating to the question of the Jewish National home (immigration and land acquisitions) would be removed from its jurisdiction.²³⁵

When the 7th Palestinian Congress did assemble, it was more moderate than earlier Congresses, and thus "refrained from adopting any explicit resolutions favoring independence, against the Mandate or the Balfour Declaration".²³⁶ The ultimate goal of the Congress was to establish a representative government in Palestine, but they feared that because of Jewish hostility to the idea, the British would not propose it. Thus, with the Zionist settlements in the midst of a great crisis which the Palestinians apparently viewed as symbolizing the demise of the whole Zionist plan, "the decision not to express opposition to

²³³Ibid.

²³⁴Ibid, 255.

²³⁵Ibid, 247.

²³⁶Ibid, 253.

the Balfour Declaration and thus to mollify Jewish opinion did not seem too far-reaching."²³⁷

The "years of peace" cannot be simply attributed to the divisions within the Palestinian nationalist movement, or the weakness of the Zionist movement. The implementation of the Mandate had left the Palestinian-Arab community impotent and frustrated. Many of the leaders saw cooperation with the British as the only path left open to them if they wanted to have some say in the rule of the country. It was then that divisions within the movement were greatly enhanced as the various factions tried to gain what little power was available to them, namely in the SMC. But neither they nor the Arab population as a whole were indifferent to the Zionist movement, as testified by the widespread boycott of Lord Balfour on his visit to Palestine. The weakness of the Zionist movement beginning in 1926, made the prospect of working within the framework of British administration more easy to swallow, and thus made disagreements over strategy more easy to overcome. However, as both the Palestinian nationalists and the Zionists were regaining their strength, they were to find a new tool to use against one another.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT, 1928

On the Day of Atonement, September 23, 1928, the Jews gathered before the Wailing Wall with benches, Torah, and a dividing screen, accruements necessary for their religious

²³⁷ Ibid.

practices. A status quo existed from Turkish defining the rights of the Jews at the Wall. The Mandate was pledged to uphold that status quo, which denied the Jews the right to place objects over a specified size in the wall area.²³⁸ On the Day of Atonement, 1923, the Jews brought a dividing screen to the Wall area. The screen was a violation of the Status Quo. The Mufti of Jerusalem and head of the Supreme Muslim Council, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, promptly protested to the British authorities concerning the Jewish infraction at the Wall. British police warned the Jews to remove the screen. When the Jews failed to do so, the British police took down the screen themselves, which caused an uproar among the Jewish Community.²³⁹ To the Arabs, the Jewish infringement upon the status quo symbolized Jewish intentions to take over all of Palestine.

Since the 19th century there had been disputes between the Arabs and the Jews over how extensive Jewish rights to the Wall were. Both in 1840 and in 1911 the Ottoman authorities had determined that

the Jews had no rights over the site other than permission to visit the site for purposes of worship, but without bringing benches, dividing screens or scrolls of the Law.²⁴⁰

When in 1920, the Muslims undertook repairs of the al-Haram al-Sharif area and the Wall, the Jews protested and demanded that the Wall be given over to their care.²⁴¹ "The Government

²³⁸ L.G.A. Cust, *The Status Quo in the Holy Places*, (Jerusalem, 1980) 43-46 (concerning the status quo at the Wall).

²³⁹ The Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Cmd.3229, (London, November, 1928), in *Seeds of Conflict*.

²⁴⁰ Porath, *The Emergence*, 258.

²⁴¹ Cust, 45.

rejected these demands, and the Jews continued their age-old custom of bringing benches and ritual articles to the Wall area on Sabbaths and holidays."²⁴² The Jews attempted to purchase the Wall area several times, both before the First World War, as well as after. They were unsuccessful in the face of strong Arab opposition.²⁴³

It was after the establishment of the Supreme Muslim Council by the British in January 1922, with Hajj Amin al-Husayni as its president, that the Jewish activities regarding the Wall began to be a central issue in Palestinian-Arab propaganda.²⁴⁴ Husayni called upon the Palestinian-Arab people, as well as those of other Islamic countries, to protect the Holy Places and Palestine in the name of Pan-Muslim solidarity.²⁴⁵ It was during Passover, in April, 1922,

three months after the establishment of the SMC...[that] the Muslims prevented the Jews from bringing chairs to their prayer site beside the Wailing Wall, though they had done so undisturbed since the British conquest.²⁴⁶

Again in 1923 and in 1925, similar situations occurred during the Jewish Holidays.

By 1928, the Palestinians had reorganized after five years of division and inactivity. When the Jews infringed on the status quo, Hajj Amin al-Husayni not only protested to the authorities, but now used the affair to intensify the struggle against the Jews throughout Palestine.²⁴⁷ Thus began the Supreme Muslim

²⁴²Porath, The Emergence, 260.

²⁴³Wasserstein, 224.

²⁴⁴Ibid.

²⁴⁵Lesch, 137-138.

²⁴⁶Porath, The Emergence, 261.

²⁴⁷Wasserstein, 225.

Council's intentionally provocative policy, meant to force the British government to make a definite change in its policy regarding the Jewish National Home²⁴⁸. This had been the goal the entire Palestinian leadership had been working towards since word spread of the Balfour Declaration some ten years before.

THE WAILING WALL RIOTS OF 1929

On Friday 23 August 1929 a series of bloody riots and massacres of Jews by Arabs broke out in Jerusalem, spreading thence to other parts of Palestine, and wreaking a toll in deaths, injuries, and destruction of property which raised the Arab-Jewish conflict to a new plane of intensity.²⁴⁹

The Shaw Commission, sent by Britain to investigate the cause of the riots, determined that the immediate cause was the series of provocations from both sides, beginning with the Jewish Day of Atonement in September, 1928.²⁵⁰ The Commission placed specific emphasis on the demonstration at the Wailing Wall by the Jewish right-wing Revisionist youth group, Bitar, on the 15th of August, 1929.

According to the Commission the fundamental cause of the outbreaks was the

Arab feeling of animosity and hostility towards the Jews consequent upon the disappointment of their political and national aspirations and fear for their economic future.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Porath, The Emergence, 273.

²⁴⁹ Wasserstein, 232.

²⁵⁰ Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929. Cmd.3530, (Shaw Report), in Selected Political Documents, ed. Friesel.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

In the violence that broke out, though, the communities that were hit hardest were not those of the Zionists. Instead, the long-term anti-Zionist orthodox Jewish communities of Jerusalem, Safad, and Hebron, were the ones that were massacred.²⁵²

However, the genuine fears and frustrations of the Palestinian Arabs cannot be denied. Throughout the early years of the British Administration in Palestine, the British persisted in trying to get the Palestinian Arabs to work within the framework of the Mandate, while the Palestinian Arabs were rejecting the whole framework. The Arabs participated in peaceful as well as violent activities, in the attempt to present to the British the Palestinian-Arab stand. Their activities resulted only in half-hearted attempts by the British to appease them, again within the very framework of the established British policy which the Palestinians were rejecting. Issues such as the Wall became tools for both the Arabs and the Zionists in their struggle over Palestine.

Khalidi claimed that the rioters acted purely out of religious fears. Lossin claimed that the rioters were merely looters. Neither of their one-sided, created explanations can be reconciled with each other, or with the body of evidence available through documents and other historians. Their explanations of the riots leave no room for mutual understanding.

The other vision of the early years of British Administration, that conveyed through Porath's work, through Wasserstein, Kayyali, Lesch, and various British Documents, is

²⁵² Palestine Royal Commission, Cmd.5479, (Peel Report), 67.

quite different than the visions either Khalidi or Lossin have of the period. The vision here is not purely of a unified population before their diaspora, living in a golden age of prosperity, who when they find their homes threatened by an external force, heroically attempt to resist it. Neither is the vision one of heroes and martyrs who came to a barren and desolate land with a small and apathetic population, and who build up that land in the face of brutal and unprovoked actions. The vision here is of a land occupied by people, with villages and small cities, with peasants and landowners, all living daily lives. And the vision is of another people who dreamed of a place where they might be allowed to live normal lives, occupying land. The vision is of promises made by world powers for the sake of strategy, and of promises broken or manipulated for the sake of strategy. The vision has no absolute heroes and martyrs, no absolute villains and aggressors. It has people on both sides who are sometimes heroic, and people who are sometimes aggressive. It is a vision of people, on both sides, who cared about something, and who were willing to fight for it, who had genuine fears and dreams, not to be lightly dismissed by superficial explanations that fit a thesis. Khalidi and Lossin never try to see the other side, just as the ideologies they represent fail to see the other side. And that is why the conflict remains.

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G L O S S A R Y

AE: The Arab Executive of the Muslim-Christian Associations.

ALIYA: Hebrew for ascent, specifically, immigration to Palestine, the act of coming to the Jewish homeland being regarded as ascent.

AL-NADI AL-ARABI AND AL-MUNTADA AL-ADABI: The two most extreme nationalist organizations.

EFFENDI: The governing class of the Turkish Empire.

FALLAHEEN: Peasants.

HAIJ-AMIN AL-HUSSEINI: Mufti of Jerusalem, and president of the SMC.

AL-HARAM AL-SHARIF: The Noble Sanctuary (the Arabic name for the Temple Mount in Jerusalem).

HUSSEINIS: One of the elite families of Jerusalem.

MCA: The Muslim-Christian Association.

NASHASHIBIS: One of the elite families of Jerusalem.

SANJAK: District in the Ottoman Empire.

SMC: The Supreme Muslim Council.

PALESTINIAN-ARAB CONGRESSES OF THE MCA

First Palestinian Congress--January-February, 1919--Jerusalem.

Second Palestinian Congress--April, 1920.

Third Palestinian Congress--December, 1920--Haifa.
(Establishment of the AE).

Fourth Palestinian Congress--May-June, 1921--Jerusalem. (First
Delegation to Britain appointed).

Fifth Palestinian Congress--August, 1922--Nablus.

Sixth Palestinian Congress--June, 1923.

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