# ZIONISM AND THE ARABS 1936–1939

Ian Black

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Ian Black

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# ZIONISM AND THE ARABS, 1936-1939

Ian Black

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# PREFACE

Another foray into fields as well-ploughed as Zionism and the Palestine conflict requires some explanation and definition. This work is not a history of the Palestine disturbances of 1936-1939 nor of the Zionist movement in those years, nor of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab national movement.

What I have attempted to do, by the description of several related issues and events during the period, and sometimes back-tracking slightly for the sake of continuity, is to show how the Zionists related to the Arabs of Palestine and of the neighbouring countries; to what extent they perceived the existence of an "Arab question," how they defined it and how they dealt with it.

The fact that it was in these years that the Palestine conflict moved fatefully and irrevocably beyond the borders of the country led me to believe that it was important to examine the question of Zionist attitudes to the Arab world in general and to the pan-Arab movement in particular and not to look solely at relations with the Arabs of Palestine, as several previous works have done.

The "Arab world" is something of a misnomer, as I devote two chapters to Zionist interest in and relations with four non-Arab peoples in the Middle East, arguing that this orientation (which to the best of my knowledge has never before been seriously studied) throws considerable light, by contrast and default as it were, on an understanding of Zionist relations with the Arabs.

It is extremely difficult to define what kind of history I

have tried to write, and while the whole work is not solely diplomatic, political, social, economic or cultural history, it contains, I hope, elements of them all. The brevity of the period covered and the range of subjects I thought it valuable to examine made it impossible to treat the whole period chronologically, although within thematic chapters I have attempted to follow a coherent chronology.

After the files of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, which form the documentary basis of this study, I have depended to a large extent on the Hebrew and Zionist press of the period, seeing this as the best way to gain an insight into the spectrum of views and opinions pertaining to Zionist relations with the Arabs. Where possible I have tried to demonstrate, particularly in chapter four, the relationship between the highly literate press and the formulation of policy and have quoted extensively from it in the belief that history should not only be social science and analysis, but also ambience and evocation.

The still highly controversial nature of the Palestine question has inevitably had its effect on the availability of primary source material. Some British documents are still closed to the public and all French Foreign Ministry material is inaccessible, which has left some gaps in my reconstruction of the Zionists' activities in Syria and Lebanon during this period. Most Zionist material is readily available, except the archives of the Hagana, which remained closed to me.

The publication of the notes and diaries of Zionist leaders like Moshe Sharett and David Ben Gurion is an enterprise which is to be welcomed for creating easy access to a wealth of fascinating historical material. Instinctively, however, one approaches such

works with caution, on the assumption -- born out by experience -- that the admirers and disciples of national leaders and guardians (self-appointed or otherwise) of traditions are concerned more with posterity than with history. "Official" history is different from history "wie es eigentlich gewesen" and although sins of omission are perhaps less nefarious than sins of deliberate distortion their effect on the search for historical truth may be just as great. I have always tried therefore, to locate the original document rather than use the later edited version.

I should like to thank the directors and staff of the following archives and libraries for their tireless help and advice: Central Zionist Archives, Israel State Archives, both in Jerusalem; Weizmann Archives, Rehovot; Mapai Archives, Beit Berl; Abba Hushi Archives at Haifa University; Public Record Office and British Library, London and the Zionist Archives and Library, New York.

My thanks too to the Social Science Research Council whose award made this research possible and to Neil Caplan, Yosef Heller, Moshe Mossek, Danny Rubinstein, Eli Rubinstein and Eli Shaltiel whose help in various ways contributed much to the finished product, although, needless to say, they are in no way responsible for its shortcomings. To my supervisor, Professor Elie Kedourie, I owe a great deal for his constructive criticism and advice over the past four years. My greatest debt is to Maya for her care and encouragement and above all, her overwhelming patience in living with the tribulations of this thesis and its writer.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AAH | Abba Hushi Archives |
| AHP | Association for Home Produce |
| AO | Agence d'Orient |
| BPEY | Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael |
| BB | Beit Berl (Mapai Archives) |
| CO | Colonial Office |
| CZA | Central Zionist Archives |
| FO | Foreign Office |
| HC | High Commissioner |
| ISA | Israel State Archives |
| JAE | Jewish Agency Executive |
| OAG | Officer Administering the Government |
| PICA | Palestine Jewish Colonisation Association |
| PRO | Public Record Office |
| SP | Sasson Papers |
| STH | Sefer Toldot haHagana |
| WA | Weizmann Archives |

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## INTRODUCTION

The Arab question is as old as the Zionist movement itself. From the moment that Zionists began to immigrate to Ottoman Palestine in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it became apparent that they were not "returning" to an empty land and that they could expect opposition to their enterprise, in one form or another, from the inhabitants of the country they considered theirs.

If early conflicts revolved around issues which might have been expected to arise between European settlers and a predominantly rural native population[1] there seems to have been a greater Zionist awareness of the existence of an "Arab question" than polemics like Yitzhak Epstein's famous "Unseen Question" article would suggest.[2] With the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 the Zionist leadership began groping towards contact with the leaders of the nascent Arab national movement[3] while at the same time attempting to influence Arab

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[1]See Neville Mandel, "Turks, Arabs and Jewish Immigration into Palestine, 1882-1914," in St. Anthony's Papers 17, (Oxford 1965) and Ya'acov Ro'i, "Relations between Rehovot and its Arab Neighbours, 1890-1914 in Zionism: Studies in the History of the Zionist Movement and the Jewish Community in Palestine, eds. Daniel Carpi and Gedalia Yogev, (Tel Aviv 1975) pp.337-383.

[2]Yitzhak Epstein, "The Unseen Question," HaShiloah (XVIII), 1907. See the important study by Yosef Gorni, "Shorsheya shel toda'at ha'Imut haLeumi haYehudi-Aravi ve'Histaqfuta be'Itonut ha'Ivrit be'shanim 1900-1918" [The roots of awareness of the Arab Jewish National confrontation and its reflection in the Hebrew press] in Tsionut, Vol.4, 1975, pp.72-114.

[3]Neville Mandel, "Attempts at an Arab-Zionist Entente, 1913-14" in Middle Eastern Studies, no.1, 1964. Also P. Alsberg, "HaShe'ela ha'Aravit be'Mediniut haHanhala haTsionit lifnay Milhemet ha'Olam ha'Rishona," [The Arab question in the Policy of the Zionist Executive before the First World War] in Shivat Tsion, IV (1956-7).

political developments within Palestine itself.[4]

The First World War, the defeat and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the Balfour Declaration, the British occupation and the establishment of the Mandate all brought far-reaching changes to Palestine, and also to the increasingly complex question of Zionist-Arab relations. With its recognition as a body for which the Mandate was a means to an end -- albeit an end no more precisely defined than "the establishment of a National Home" -- the Zionist movement looked increasingly to its Mandatory protector to deal with the truculent Arab national movement rapidly emerging in Palestine.[5] Although the Zionists were often disappointed with what they considered excessive British tolerance of Arab extremism, and on occasion even encouragement of it, they rarely considered that they had any alternative but to rely on the Mandatory authorities.

The work of the Arab Department of the Zionist Executive, supervised first by Dr. M. Eder, then by Colonel F. Kisch[6], and for

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[4]Ya'acov Ro'i, "Nissionotayhem shel haMosdot haTsioniyim lehashpi'a al ha'Itonut ha'Aravit be'Eretz-Yisrael be'shanim 1908-14 [The attempts of the Zionist institutions to influence the Arab press in Palestine] in Zion, XXXII, 3-4, (1967), pp.200-27. See also Ro'i's "The Zionist Attitude to the Arabs, 1908-1914," Middle Eastern Studies no.IV (1968), pp.198-242.

[5]On the early years of the Mandate see Y. Porath, The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab National Movement (London 1974) and Neil Caplan, The Yishuv and the Arab Question, 1917-1925, unpubl. Ph.D., (London 1973).

[6]For Kisch's own record of his work see his Palestine Diary, (London 1938).

ten years carried out almost singlehandedly by H.M. Kalvarisky,[7] was largely of a prophylactic nature, and included many expensive and mostly unsuccessful attempts to encourage the growth of "moderate" Arab organizations which would compete with the Mufti's iron grip on the politics of Palestinian Arab nationalism.

While the methods employed by Kalvarisky in dealing with his Arab contacts -- which almost invariably included some form of financial encouragement -- were often severely criticized, particularly by the increasingly powerful labour movement,[8] neither the socialists nor anyone else were able to find a successful way of abating Arab opposition. On the ideological level the Zionist labour movement favoured co-operation with Arab workers against the effendis, but the faith of the 1920's in joint Arab-Jewish class struggle had given way, by the mid-1930's, to a more or less general recognition that the Palestine conflict was between two national movements (albeit one "progressive" and the other "reactionary"), for the duration of which supra-national class loyalties would remain in abeyance.

Indeed, when the wunderkind of the labour movement, Chaim Arlossoroff, took over the Jewish Agency's Political Department in 1931 and thus became responsible for the Zionist movement's relations with the Arabs, the changes in methods and approaches to

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[7]For Kalvarisky's activities see Caplan, op.cit. esp. pp.192-202 and 258-317. Also Simon Schama, Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel, (London 1978).

[8]See Yosef Gorni, Ahdut HaAvoda 1919-1930: Hayesodot haRa'ayoniim vehashita heMedinit (Tel Aviv 1973) esp. pp.133-168.

the Arab question was more apparent than real. Although Kalvarisky was no longer employed by the department and was cast aside along with the debts he had incurred in the course of his work and the grandiose dreams of a pan-Semitic alliance to which he was prone, the Political Department continued to oil the rusty wheels of Arab moderation, although now across the Jordan.

Arlossoroff's greatest success during his short term of office was the establishment of cordial relations with the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, following the approaches made by Transjordan Beduin to sell their lands to the Jews. In the face of British opposition to Jewish settlement in Transjordan, the option on the Emir's land at Ghor al-Kibd became a way of keeping open the political connection with the Emir, which over the years was to cost the Political Department many thousands of pounds.[9] But although the Zionists found a friend in the mercenary and unreliable Abdullah, events in Palestine were less encouraging, and in the year before his murder in June 1933, Arlossoroff -- generally considered one of the most intelligent and perceptive of Zionist leaders -- was oppressed by an unrelieved gloom about the political future of the Zionist enterprise in the face of Arab opposition, a pessimism that he brilliantly expressed in his famous letter to Weizmann in June 1932.[10]

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[9]See Anita Shapira, "Parashat haOptzia al Adamat ha'Amir 'Abdallah b'Ghor al-Kibd: Rayshit haqesher bayn haHanhala haTsionit veha' Amir 'Abdallah," in Tsionut, pp.295-345.

[10]Arlossoroff's "prophetic" letter (to which there was no recorded reply from Weizmann) brilliantly analyzed the problems facing the Zionist movement in the creation of the National Home in Palestine. His most pessimistic and revolutionary conclusion was that "Zionism cannot, in the given circumstances, be turned into a reality without a transition period of the organised revolutionary rule of the Jewish minority; that there is no way to a Jewish majority, or even to an equilibrium between the two races (or else a settlement sufficient to provide a basis for a cultural centre) to be established

The 1929 disturbances had something of a traumatic effect on the Yishuv and the Zionist movement and created the feeling that time was working against them. The spectre of pan-Islam, conjured up by the Mufti in the service of the Palestinian cause, the hostile White Paper of 1930, and, as the Zionists believed, the untimely independence granted to Iraq in 1932, all augured badly for the continued uninterrupted growth of the National Home.

In order to stave off the expected attack on the front of parliamentary development, to which the Mandate committed the British Government, the Zionists declared, at their 1931 Congress, their adherence to the principle of the "non-domination" of one people over the other, a formula which was remarkable only for its vagueness and lack of committment to any specific course. They were nevertheless forced to wage a bitter struggle against the idea of a Legislative Council for Palestine in which Jews and Arabs would participate on the basis of their respective proportions of the country's population. It was an unpleasant campaign for the Zionists, who were all too aware that they were leaving themselves open to the charge of being "anti-democratic," with all the odium that attached to such an accusation, but they could nevertheless not afford to permit the creation of a body, which, according to

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by systematic immigration and colonisation, without a period of a nationalist minority government which would usurp the state machinery, the administration and the military power in order to forestall the danger of our being swamped by numbers and endangered by a rising (which we could not face without having the state machinery at our disposal)." (30.6.1932) The letter is best read in its original English in CZA S25/1508. Different interpretations of it are to be found in E. Elath, Shivat Tsion ve' Arav, pp.266-77 and Moshe Sharett, Orot sheCabu (Tel Aviv, 1969) pp.36-58. See also Miriam Getter C. Arlossoroff: Biografia Politit (Tel Aviv 1978) pp.61-63 and 181-9.

democratic principles, would be dominated by an Arab majority, which, to put it mildly, would hardly be likely to encourage the further development of the National Home.[11]

Apart, however, from the Legislative Council issue, which was fought mostly in London, and on the diplomatic level, the years immediately preceding the disturbances of 1936-39 were not marked by excessive Zionist interest in the Arab question. The economic prosperity of the first half of the decade, the massive influx of immigrants -- reaching an unprecedented peak of 62,000 in 1935 alone, created what although in retrospect may be seen as a very false sense of security, at the time seemed justified. With its growing economic strength and social cohesion, and under the best High Commissioner -- from the Zionists' point of view -- that the country had ever had, it took considerable foresight to see the traces of clouds on the distant horizon. If the Arab question was not forgotten, it was rarely remembered.

The financial insecurity and political instability in the Mediterranean area in late 1935 brought an end to Palestine's fat years. The fall in investments in the citrus sector led to the dismissal of both Jewish and Arab workers while riots and promises of constitutional change in Egypt and Syria had what for the Zionists were an ominous influence on developments within the

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[11]On the Legislative Council issue see Norman Rose "HaVikuah al haMoatza haMehoqeqet be'shanim 1929-1936" [The debate on the Legislative Council] in B. Oded, U. Rappaport, A. Schochat and Y. Shatzmiller (eds) Mehqarim be'Toldot Am Yisrael ve'Eretz-Yisrael, Vol. 2 (1972). See also his Gentile Zionists, (London 1973) pp.41-69.

Palestinian Arab camp.[12]

In this atmosphere of tension and uncertainty riots broke out in Jaffa on April 19, 1936 which were the signal for the start of disturbances that were to sweep Palestine intermittently until the outbreak of the Second World War, and which were to change the course of the history not only of Palestine, but of the entire Middle East.

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[12]On the economic crisis of late 1935 early 1936 see HaYishuv beYemei haBayt haLeumi, ed. B. Eliav, pp.362-6 and Yehuda Bauer, "The Arab Revolt of 1936," New Outlook, July 1966. For a graphic description of the effects of the financial instability in Palestine see Leo Kohn to Weizmann, 26.9.1935, CZA S25/1716. On developments in the Arab camp see Y. Porath, The Palestinian Arab National Movement, 1929-1939 (hereafter Palestinian Arab) (London 1977), pp.140-159.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, THE YISHUV AND THE ARAB STRIKE (APRIL TO OCTOBER, 1936)

### THE ARAB STRIKE AND THE ARAB QUESTION

HaMuor'aot -- the Hebrew word used at the time to describe the events of 1936-39 -- has something of the implication of the Irish "Troubles" of the 1920's -- a period of protracted yet sporadic and intermittent civil disturbance, violence and unrest, and of the French événements with its nuance of upheaval, tension and spontaneity. During the first period of the Palestine disturbances, the 6 months strike from April to October 1936, the Yishuv and the Zionist movement devoted a good deal of their energies to debating the question of whether the activities of the Palestinian Arabs could be described as muor'aot -- (the same expression had been used to describe the disturbances of 1920, 1921, 1929 and 1933) -- or as a rebellion.

In their contacts with the British, the Zionists played down the depth of popular Arab feeling, realising the implications of admitting that the strike and the accompanying disturbances could be described as a fully fledged national rebellion. In May, for example, Weizmann told the Colonial Secretary that

> the High Commissioner apparently felt that the Arab discontent went very deep. He was wrong in this and if one was prepared to spend the necessary money, there would be no difficulty in calling off the strike. In fact, a leading Jew had been secretly approached and informed that for £ 20,000 the strike would be called off, and for another £ 20,000 the Arab delegation would undertake to come to London.[1]

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[1]Weizmann interview with J.H. Thomas, 18.5.1936 S25/6329. He also told Baldwin that "Arab discontent was not really deep-seated; the Arab peasant was not interested but he was terrorised into it." Weizmann interview with Baldwin, 19.5.36 S25/7559.

While there is no doubt that such comments were made in good faith, they must also be seen as part of the Zionists' attempts to spur the vacillating Palestine administration[2] into more determined action against "disturbers of the peace." The Jews were also concerned, looking ahead to the forthcoming Royal Commission of Enquiry,[3] to present events as the result of terror, agitation and corruption on the part of the Arab leadership and not the expression of mass, popular sentiment -- an explanation that they had good reason to expect from officials of the Palestine Government.[4]

In Palestine though, such declarations could not be made with the same conviction as they were in London. The Yishuv had been caught off balance by the sudden outbreak, and for some time after the trouble began in Jaffa on April 19 observers were handicapped by past precedents in assessing the new development. Thus, on April 22 a member of the Political Department wrote to a colleague in the

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[2]See Michael J. Cohen, "Sir Arthur Wauchope, the Army, and the Rebellion in Palestine" in Middle Eastern Studies Vol. 9 1973.

[3]The appointment of a Royal Commission was announced on 18.5.36.

[4]For a graphic illustration of this train of thought, see the diary of Yosef Weitz (head of the Jewish National Fund's land purchases department) after a conversation with Lewish Andrews, District Commissioner for the Galillee. Andrews, generally considered one of the Administration's few pro-Zionist officials expressed the opinion that the revolt had a popular character and was not necessarily receiving foreign aid. "After the conversation," Weitz wrote, "I reflected on it. It's possible that everything he said is false...and that reality is completely different. The intention, however, is clear; to give the disturbances the character of a pure, strong, popular movement, which no force can defeat unless its demands are fulfilled, and that is apparently the interpretation that will be given by the Administration to the Royal Commission. If he, one of the best of them...is like that -- what about the others?" Yosef Weitz, Yomani ve'Igrotai leBanim Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv 1965) 30.7.36.

London Office that

> in all the general impression at the office here -- in particular also that of the Arab section of the Political Department -- is that while the possibility of some trouble tomorrow cannot be entirely ruled out there is no ground for apprehending anything in the nature of a serious disturbance of the peace.[5]

Others took a less sanguine view. Eliahu Epstein, the Political Department's specialist on the neighbouring Arab countries and the pan-Arab movement, on a visit to Beirut when the disturbances erupted, was a first hand witness to Lebanese and Syrian reactions to the Palestine troubles. Agitators were despatched from Damascus to Beirut and the Arab press described the cause of the outbreak as a Jewish attack upon the Arabs of Jaffa.[6] On his return to Jerusalem, Epstein lectured to the city's Mapai club on the pan-Arab background to the disturbances and emphasized their political character -- a characteristic that set them clearly apart from the events of 1920, 1921 and 1929. He described too how Palestine formed the latest link in a chain of events that ran through the Italian-Abyssinian dispute and the recent disturbances in Egypt and Syria, from which the Palestinians had learnt that they too might get their way by the application of pressure on the Government.[7] He related to his audience the story of Akram Zuaytir, an Istiqlal[8] leader from Nablus who had "picked up a lot of extremist views" during his years as a teacher in a Baghdad school, a hotbed of pan-Arab ideas. Zuaytir, Epstein

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[5]Leo Kohn to A. Lourie, 22.436 S25/1650, also daily bulletins of the Arab Section of the Political Department, 20-22.4.36, S25/3252 .

[6]E. Epstein to Shertok 21.4.36 S25/3668 .

[7]The Arab demands, first published in November 1935, were that Jewish immigration be halted, land sales to Jews prohibited and a democratic government be formed. They remained the Arab position until the end of the Mandate .

[8]Istiqlal -- independence in Arabic. A pan-Arab party led in Palestine by Awni ' Abd al-Hadi .

explained, did not belong to one of Palestine's rich and influential Arab families and he had found it difficult to get a job in Government service on his return to Palestine. Those Arab intellectuals who had succeeded in obtaining some kind of post which would satisfy their aspirations and capabilities had "stopped their meddling in politics," but men like Zuaytir, embittered, frustrated, and armed with the phraseology and techniques of modern European nationalism would in all likelihood continue to support the Mufti's demands.[9]

Epstein's relatively sophisticated analysis evidently impressed Ben-Gurion, who was arguing, only a week after the strike had begun, that the disturbance had a mass, popular character.[10] He was vigorously opposed to the view put forward by Yitzhak Greenbaum, one of the General Zionist members of the JAE, that the Jews should demand that the Government arrest all the Arab leaders, close down all their newspapers and declare the strike illegal.[11] Greenbaum's view, Ben-Gurion argued, resulted from "complete blindness, from total ignorance of reality."[12] If the Arabs were genuinely opposed to Zionism, he reasoned, then their actions could not be described as "agitation." It was simply impossible for the government to ban every newspaper article expressing Arab opposition to the Zionist enterprise. The bomb-throwing, the incendiarism and the uprooting of trees that were becoming ever more frequent features of daily life were defined by Ben-Gurion as "criminal acts accompanying the strike" and the Jews should, indeed must, demand that the Government put an

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[9]Epstein lecture to Mapai Club in Jerusalem 9.5.36 S25/10362. See also Epstein's memorandum "The Character of the Arab Nationalist Movement in Palestine." 26.11.36 S25/3003

[10]Mapai Political Committee 25.4.36 BR

[11]JAE 22.4.36 .

[12]Mapai Political Committee 25.4.36 .

end to them, but without pressing for the draconian measures that Greenbaum had suggested. It seems that at this stage Ben-Gurion was wavering between his increasing realization that Arab opposition was more powerful and united than it had ever been before, and the fear of the consequences this implied for the future of Zionism and the Jewish National Home. Ben-Gurion's long address to the Executive on the Arab question in mid-May[13], Ruppin noted, was "vague, utopian and full of contradictions."[14]

The attitude of Mapai, the Yishuv's most powerful and ideologically coherent body, and of its leader -- David Ben-Gurion -- to the Arab question had undergone radical changes over the years. Within Mapai, (created in 1930 by the unification of Ahdut HaAvoda[15] and HaPoel HaTzair[16]), since 1933 the dominant party in the Zionist movement, there had always been vigorous discussion as to the nature of Arab opposition to Zionism, and how the movement should approach the question of its relations with the Arabs of Palestine and the surrounding countries. The Ahdut HaAvoda convention of 1924, held at Ein Harod, had concluded that the solution of the Arab question lay in the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers, and that there was no Arab National Movement worthy of the name. It was agreed also that at that stage of the development of the National Home, a political agreement with the Arabs of Palestine was neither practical nor desirable.[17]

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[13]JAE,19.5.36.

[14]Arthur Ruppin Memoirs, Diaries, Letters (London 1971) 23.5.36 p.278.

[15]See Y. Gorni Ahdut HaAvoda 1919-1930, HaYesodot hara'ayoniim vehashita hamedinit (Tel Aviv 1973). Yonatan Shapira Ahdut HaAvoda HaHistorit, Tel Aviv 1975 and Y. Goldstein, Mifleget Poalei Eretz-Yisrael, Gormim leHakamata, (Tel Aviv 1975).

[16]See Yosef Shapira, HaPoel HaTzair-HaRa'ayon vehaMaase (Tel Aviv 1964).

[17]Gorni, op.cit. Especially part 3, Chapter 6.

Following the events of 1929 it became clear, within the framework of the amalgamation talks between Ahdut HaAvoda and HaPoel Ha-Tzair, that the majority of the future members of Mapai were prepared to accept the existence of an Arab National Movement, not so much because of the dangers of Arab opposition to Zionism, but rather because of the complications that this could and did create in the Zionist movement's relations with the British. It is, therefore, in this sense that it must be understood what Zionists, and Ben-Gurion in particular, meant when they repeatedly argued that it was the "British question" which determined approaches to the Arab question. Thus, in 1936 Ben-Gurion could claim in all sincerity that he had "made it a principle never to speak to an Arab in such a way that an Englishman could not listen."[18]

Attitudes to the Arab question in Mapai, and indeed throughout the Zionist movement, with the possible exceptions of the "anti-imperialist" Hashomer Hatzair[19] and Left Poalei Tsion[20] parties, were determined by relations with the British. A lone voice in Mapai, that of Moshe Beilinson, editor of Davar, had called in 1930 for an "Eastern Orientation" in Zionist policy, arguing that the Zionists and the British no longer shared common interests and that the Zionist movement must turn to the East and aspire to the creation of a Jewish state within an Arab federation.[21] But in 1930,

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[18]Administrative Committee of the Jewish Agency, 2-3.9.36 S25/1719.

[19]On Hashomer Hatzair see generally Elkana Margalit, Hashomer Hatzair meAydat neurim leMarxism mahapkhani, (Tel Aviv 1971) and more specifically, Y. Oron, HaShe'ela HaAravit be mediniut haTsionit shel Hashomer HaTzair, beshanim 1936-1942, unpubl. M.A. thesis, Jerusalem, 1976.

[20]See Elkana Margalit, Anatomia shel Smol: Poaeli Tsion Smol be'Eretz-Yisrael 1919-1946 (Tel Aviv 1977).

[21]See Y. Goldstein, Hitgabshuta shel hamediniut haTsionit vehaEretz-Yisraelit shel Mapai ad 1935 (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Jerusalem 1972 p. 235.

Beilinson's idea, like Victor Jacobson's partition proposal a year later, was premature. Once the shock of the 1929 disturbances was over and the Yishuv settled into a period of unprecedentedly high immigration and relative prosperity, such vague and radical concepts were poor substitutes for the high hopes held out by benign British encouragement of the National Home.

The disturbances of October 1933[22] had had a powerful influence on Ben-Gurion's perception of the Arab question[23], convincing him more than ever before of the existence of a dedicated and organized Arab national movement. Whatever doubts remained in his mind were quickly dispelled in the summer of 1936. Responding to charges raised at a meeting of the Mapai Party Centre, that the movement remembered the Arab question only in times of crisis, Ben-Gurion recalled his own and Shertok's attempts to meet Arab leaders and agreed that a de facto change had come over the party's conception of the Arab question:

> At the convention of Ahdut HaAvoda at Ein Harod (1924) I said that we could not cooperate with the Arab effendis. I would not say that now. As before, I believe in cooperation with Arab workers and peasants, but I am prepared to accept the representatives of the Arab people, whoever they are. We hold negotiations with Wauchope, with Baldwin, with Lloyd George and Ormsby-Gore and do not wait for a workers' government in England. I know there's a difference between an English conservative and an Arab effendi, but each generation has its own prophets and every people the leaders it deserves.[24]

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[22]On the demonstrations of October 1933, see Y. Porath, The Palestian National Movement Vol. 2 pp. 43-45.

[23]See Mapai Party Centre, 4.11.33, in D. Ben-Gurion, Zikhronot Vol. 1, (Tel Aviv 1971) p.686 and M. Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv 1975) p.311.

[24]Ben-Gurion to Mapai Party Centre 18.6.36, D. Ben-Gurion, Zikhronot, Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv 1973) p.281.

Although Ben-Gurion's "admission" of his mistaken assessment of how best to approach the Arab question may be seen as an important milestone in the history of Zionist attitudes towards the Arabs, it would be wrong to attach too much significance to it. His thoughts had been moving in this direction for several years, and if by his own admission he had been impressed by the readiness for self-sacrifice displayed by Arab rioters in 1933, evidence for the realization of the naivety and impracticability of his "anti-effendi" approach may be found even earlier, in the wake of the 1929 disturbances.[25] In addition, Ben-Gurion's election to the chairmanship of the Executive in 1933 was almost certainly not unconnected to the cooling of his ideological fervour and the adoption of a more pragmatic attitude towards the Arab question. What was important in 1936 was his public declaration of the need for a less theoretical approach to the question of negotiations with the Arab leadership, and when, in February 1937, he spoke in a similar vein to the Histadrut Council, observers commented on the "General Zionist" tone of his speech, a label which only a few years earlier would have been considered a fairly opprobrious insult to a Mapai leader.[26] The radical change in Ben-Gurion's views, however, becomes far less startling if considered in terms of the primacy of political -- as opposed to ideological -- premises which guided the leaders of the Zionist movement. No-one would have been shocked, for instance, if Weizmann, who stood aloof from the ideological hothouse of labour Zionism,[27] had

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[25]Eliyakim Rubinstein "Emdat Ben-Gurion beShe'ela HaAravit beshnot 1921-1933" Molad, April 1974 and Bar-Zohar, op.cit., p.308-9.

[26]HaAretz, 10.2.37, Pinkas, March-April 1937. See below p.64.

[27]For a comprehensive survey of Weizmann's attitude to and relationship with the labour movement see Y. Gorni, Shutafut VeMaavak. (Tel Aviv 1976).

made a similar statement. Concerned as he was with the solution of the Jewish problem, it was only natural that Ben-Gurion, who had previously expressed forceful opposition to the idea of population transfer,[28] should become one of its more enthusiastic supporters, when, in 1937, it became the linchpin for the success of the Peel partition plan.

Shertok was also struck by the mass, popular character of the disturbances and the self-discipline displayed by the Arab strikers. The participation of Arab women in demonstrations, he noted, was an entirely new phenomenon which bore eloquent witness to the depth of Arab national feeling.[29]

Ben-Gurion objected strongly to Moshe Beilinson's assertion that there had not been an Arab "uprising" in Palestine. If a rebellion had been and was taking place, if there was <u>such</u> powerful Arab opposition to Zionism, Beilinson argued in July, then the Jews might as well throw in the towel. What had in fact happened, he claimed, was that the government had acquiesced in Arab riots and general unrest. Put succinctly, as the administration was anyway "in Arab hands" there could not, logically speaking, have been a rebellion against it.[30] Angered more by the implications of this specious claim than its actual content, Ben-Gurion wrote sarastically to his party comrades from London:

> Perhaps in some book there is a scientific definition of a revolt, but what can we do when the rebels themselves do not act according to the laws

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[28]See D. Ben-Gurion, <u>Anakhnu veShekheinenu</u> (Tel Aviv 1931) p. 40-41.

[29]Mapai Political Committee 22.7.36, also "The Arab woman and the Disturbances" <u>Davar LaPoelet</u>, 10.5.36.

[30]Mapai Political Committee, 28.7.36. For similar views see <u>HaBoqer</u>, 21.4.36 and speech of B. Katznelson at Mapai Party Centre, 21.5.36.

> of science and revolt according to their own understanding, their ideas and their ability? The Arabs are fighting with a strike, with terror, sabotage, murder and the destruction of property... against the Government -- including Jewish immigration, which depends as they see it, on the government. What else do they have to do for their behaviour to be recognized as a rebellion and an uprising?[31]

While such discussions were going on in Palestine -- discussions which struck at the very core of the Zionist attitude towards the Arabs in this crucial period -- Zionist accounts of the disturbances appearing abroad, and in England in particular, played on the half-hearted and partial aspects of the strike and the heterogenous composition of the gangs.[32] The second edition of Lord Melchett's Thy Neighbour (October 1936), written in consultation with Ben-Gurion[33] described the Arab movement as

> led neither by a dispossessed Palestinian fellah nor by a disappointed Palestinian effendi, but by Fawzi Kawakji, an ex-Turkish officer of Syrio-Turkish extraction and of Syrian citizenship. He has collected around him Druses, Syrians, Iraqis and brigands who...flock to any place where there is chance for excitement and perhaps booty. He has issued a proclamation defying not only the Government of Palestine but also British imperialism in general, and calling to the Palestinians to rally to the standard of the South Syrian rebellion.[34]

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[31]Ben-Gurion to Mapai Party Centre, Ben-Gurion, Vol. 1, op.cit. p.364 11.8.36.

[32]New Judea, April 1936, Zionist Review, April, May, June, July 1936 New Palestine 15.5.36, 22.5.36.

[33]Ben-Gurion to Z. Rubashov (Shazar) 17.7.36, Zikhronot, Vol. 2, p.344.

[34]Lord Melchett, Thy Neighbour (Second edition) (London 1936), p.225.

A similar attempt to play down the role of the Palestinian Arabs in the disturbances -- although for entirely different reasons -- was made by Farmers Federation leader Moshe Smilansky. Proud of his extensive connections with the Arabs of Palestine, and foremost exponent of the employment of Arab labour in the Jewish sector as the sine qua non of peaceful Arab-Jewish relations, Smilansky refused to accept that the Arabs of Palestine -- who had so greatly benefited from Jewish settlement and initiative -- were actively participating in the disturbances. Instead he blamed the immigrant Haurani and Beduin workers who had flooded Palestine during the period of prosperity that had lasted until late 1935, and who had remained, unemployed and disaffected, when the depression hit the country a few months before the disturbances erupted. The desparately poor Hauranis, driven by the harsh conditions of their own desolate land to seek employment in relatively prosperous Palestine, were a familiar and highly unpopular feature of the Palestinian landscape in the 1930's, milling around the ports in Jaffa and Haifa and the country's orange groves and building sites, seeking a day's work.[35] Smilansky compared the Hauranis -- whom he held responsible for the outbreak of the disturbances in Jaffa -- unfavourably with the local fellahin, Beduin and effendis with whom he had talked and who had expressed their deep sorrow at the recent tragic events.[36]

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[35]To describe someone as a "Haurani" still has pejorative connotations. "Uneducated, uncultured, raggedly dressed, desparately poor." Dan Ben-Amotz and Netiva Ben-Yehuda, Milon Olami shel Ivrit Meduberert, Jerusalem 1972.

[36]Bustanai 29.4.36.

WE CANNOT LET THE SANDS OF THE DESERT OVERWHELM OUR NEWLY-PLANTED GARDEN.[37] HEBREW LABOUR AND THE ARAB STRIKE

From the moment the disturbances began many realized that the Arab strike provided the Jews with a golden opportunity to strengthen their economic positions.[38] The struggles for Hebrew labour and produce could now be waged in an atmosphere in which those who continued to oppose the idea of 100% Jewish labour in the Jewish sector could be branded not only as reactionaries motivated solely by their own selfish economic interests, but now as traitors too, giving succour to the Arab strikers. The campaign to increase Jewish economic autarky became the Yishuv's major preoccupation during the strike and gave it unprecedented short-term victories at a time when politically, and in the long run, it was losing.

The labour movement had always seen the Farmers Federation as its chief enemy in the struggle for Hebrew labour.[39] Individualistic and relatively unorganized, the anti-socialist farmers were felt to be a serious threat to the principles of national discipline in employment and consumption, supported, at least in theory, by the majority of the "organized" Yishuv. The farmers, for their part, deeply resented the labour movement's assumption of the mantle of Zionist legitimacy, and had a deep antipathy, born of experience, of the class warfare advocated by the left. The labour movement used the whole gamut of socialist analysis, and often plain abuse, to describe the farmers. The use of the strange hybrid term "citrus-

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[37]Palestine Review, 11.9.36.

[38]Mapai Political Committee, 25.4.36.

[39]On the web of relations between the Farmers and Mapai, see Anita Shapira, HaMaavak HaNichzav, Avoda Ivrit, 1929-1939 (Tel Aviv 1977).

effendiat"[40] hints at the light in which they were seen. It was an obvious and necessary distortion; not all the readers of Bustanai were "wealthy owners of orange groves"[41] or employers on Smilansky's scale, and the majority of them owned small plots of land and engaged a small number of Arabs seasonally, a far cry from the decadent planter aristocracy of the left's popular image.

A few days after the Jaffa riots, meetings were held in the moshavot to discuss how best to increase Jewish labour. On April 27, for example, an ad hoc committee was formed in Petah Tikva to bring Jewish labour into the village, and on the 29th the local Workers Council issued an appeal to the farmers to employ Jews "before it is too late".[42] A few days before the disturbances began only 745 Jews, as opposed to 2,555 Arabs, had been employed in the village's citrus groves.[43]

After the first shock of the disturbances was over, the public began to realise that things were, after all, not so bad. "The Arab

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[40]Enzo Sereni and R.E. Ashery (eds.) Jews and Arabs in Palestine (New York, 1936) p. 15a. This book, which aroused vigorous criticism from General Zionist circles because of its left-wing slant (see review in HaBoger, 22.1.37) was defined by Sereni, then working as a Zionist youth leader in America, as "part of the effort to mobilize the sympathy of progressive forces for the Zionist movement." Quoted in Ruth Bondi, HaShaliah (Tel Aviv 1974) p.233.

[41]Sereni and Ashery op.cit. "The Yishuv," reported Hashomer Hatzair (English edition) May 1936, "can now clearly see that it has suffered from unharnessed speculation and gross laissez-faire tactics. The pursuit after personal profit had gone so far amongst the bourgeoisie and the plantation owners that they actually employed Arab coolie labour -- the Hauranites who are now like clay in the hands of Arab agitators."

[42]Davar 28, 29.4.36, 3.5., 7.5., 10.5.36, HaPoel HaTzair 24.4.36, HaAretz 27.4.36.

[43]Palestine Review 17.4.36.

strike," one paper commented,

> has not been an unmixed curse. Apart from knitting more closely together the country's productive elements, to a decisive degree, on their own resources, it has brought out glaringly certain deficiencies in men and things which in normal times might have lain dormant.[44]

Although even Smilansky was prepared to admit that the strike held some potential advantages for the Jews, at least for agricultural produce,[45] he was not prepared to concede anything on the Hebrew labour question. Responding to calls for total separation from the Arabs and 100% continuous Jewish settlement as the only way to save the Yishuv from "disaster," he pointed to the absurdity of the doctrine of complete separation. Tel Aviv, with its population of 150,000 Jews, he wrote, was an area of continuous Jewish settlement, and even an area as large and "continuous" as that had to have a border somewhere.[46] "The murmur of 100% (Hebrew labour)," he had written in his first response to the troubles, "was heard by the open graves of the victims of the Jaffa disturbances -- as if these victims had not fallen on the very threshold of the centre of 100%!"[47] Mixed (Jewish and Arab) labour, Smilansky pointed out, did not hinder the creation of continuous areas of Jewish settlement. Petah Tikva, Rehovot, Gedera and Rishon Lezion (old moshavot which employed mixed labour) were no less "continuous" than Tel-Adashim, Ein Harod and Nahalal (Jewish labour only.) The older settlements based on mixed

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[44] Palestine Post 3.5.36 and Hashomer HaTzair (English), May 1936. "In times...of social eruption many elements and forces hitherto hidden reveal themselves openly for the first time. The Palestine scene finds itself in such a period. The Arab riots and the previous economic disturbance have revealed many vital elements in the structure of our Yishuv."

[45] Bustanai 6.5.36.

[46] Bustanai 13.5.36.

[47] Bustanai 29.4.36. See an angry response to Smilansky's leader in Gilyonot, April-May 1936.

labour were not, like the newer all-Jewish ones, cut off from the surrounding Arab area, and the farmers did not, he added, believe that such separatism was either possible or desirable.[48]

Smilansky's consistent and relentless criticism of the proponents of 100% Hebrew labour evoked vigorous and angry responses. His view that the Hauranis were largely responsible for the trouble was taken to imply that he was not prepared to accept that his "allies" -- the Arab effendis, were in any way guilty. Was the hatred for the Jews any greater near Ein Harod than in the Rehovot area "where Hawaja Musa (Smilansky's nom de plume) has so much influence?," asked Davar.[49] HaPoel HaTzair compared Smilansky's assertion that the Arabs had learnt the use of the strike as a political weapon from the Jews[50] to the charge familiar in Tsarist Russia that Jewish agitators were responsible for unrest amongst the peasants.[51] Everyone was incensed by Smilansky's use of such phrases as "Our Higher Committee" and "our Shabab"[52] -- such patriarchal even-handedness, his critics fumed, was grotesquely anomalous in the strife-torn Palestine of 1936. The mood on the left was steadfast and uncompromising. Davar la'Poelet told its readers:

> Now we are living our Hebrew, Socialist experience in great tension and clarity. All the weak

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[48]Bustanai 13.5.36.

[49]Davar 21.5.36 The evidence indeed shows that the old moshavot which employed varying proportions of Arab labour suffered as much, if not more from the disturbances than those settlements which excluded Arab labour. Arab workers in the moshavot evidently realised that if they uprooted and destroyed the fruits of their own labours there would be more work for them once the trouble was over. See HaAretz 5, 20.5.36 and Simon Schama, Two Rotschilds and the Land of Israel (London 1978) pp. 288-289.

[50]Bustanai 21.4.36.

[51]HaPoel HaTzair M. Grabovski, "The Enemy Within."

[52]Bustanai 28.10.36.

> points have been revealed. Foreign labour (Avoda zara) in the Jewish sector, not as a by-product, but as a basic phenomenon, can be seen in all its horror.[53]

The first big "conquest" for Hebrew labour was at the Nesher quarries, where pressure on the Jewish owner, who had long resisted 100% Jewish labour, allowed David HaCohen of the Histadrut-owned company Solel Boneh to introduce 55 Jewish workers alongside 200 Arabs.[54] HaCohen's action, Shertok told the High Commissioner, showed how,

> with a combination of courage, shrewdness and diplomatic dexterity, born of long experience in dealing with the Arabs, things could be done which at first sight seemed impossible.[55]

Despite HaCohen's promises to the quarry's Arab employees that the introduction of Jewish labour would not endanger their jobs, by mid-July too much stone had been prepared for marketing, and work had to be halted for a time. The Solel Boneh executive, Shertok noted in his diary, was using the break to "get rid of unwanted Arab workers."[56]

A PORT, AND A KINGDOM TOO.

The Jews had long been demanding a greater share in government public works, arguing that in a country like Palestine it was dangerous for the ports, railways and other public services to be solely in Arab hands.[57] Tel Aviv Municipality already had a plan for building a

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[53]Davar laPoelet 10.5.36, also Davar leYeladim 7.5.36.

[54]Mapai Political Committee, 25.4.36, David HaCohen, Ayt Lesaper, (Tel Aviv 1974) pp.65-68, JAE, 15.5.36, Berl Reptor, Lela Heref (Tel Aviv 1973) pp.301-2 and Anita Shapira "Even ve'Sid. Parashat Shotafut Yehudit-Aravit," Measef, May 1975. Also Bulletin of Vaad HaPoel of the Histadrut, 17.5.36 BB401/36/1.

[55]Shertok interview with Wauchope 19.5.36 S25/19.

[56]Shertok diary 18.7.36 Z4/10318(1).

[57]Shertok interview with Wauchope 10.2.36 in Yoman Medini 1936 (Tel Aviv 1971) pp.60-61.

jetty on the Tel Aviv shore[58] and the demand for a Jewish port was heard at the very beginning of the strike. As early as April 21 Shertok told the Government Chief Secretary that the conclusion the Jews had drawn from the situation was that a port must be built in Tel Aviv. On April 24 Davar carried the headline "We will not go down to Jaffa. We will not depend on the favours of murderers. Bring the Government Offices and a Port to Tel Aviv."[59] Tel Aviv Municipality, the Industrialists Federation and the Citrus Exporters Organization soon added their voices to these demands.[60] Infuriated by the government's inaction in dealing with the strike, the Jews found further proof of its indecision and vacillation in the fact that "one daring Jew" -- Yitzhak Hoz, brother of labour leader Dov Hoz -- had in effect broken the Jaffa strike and removed goods bound for the Levant Fair, by the simple expedient of bribing a member of the Traffic Department of the Jaffa Police.[61]

Although there is evidence that the Jews did make some attempt to break the Jaffa strike[62] they were far more concerned about the possibility of the strike spreading to Haifa port, and spent considerable

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[58]D. Remez at Mapai Political Committee 4.5.36.

[59]Davar 24.4.36, HaBoger 26.4.36, HaAretz 28.4.36, Bulletin of Vaad HaPoel of the Histadrut 27.4.36, BB 401/36/1.

[60]Davar 27.4.36.

[61]Shertok to JAE in London, 7.5.36 Yoman Medini 1936, pp.96-7, Ben-Gurion to Dov Hoz, 13.5.36, Zikhronot Vol. 1 p.182 and Baffy, the Diaries of Blanche Dugdale, (Ed. N. Rose) (London 1973) 30.4.36, p.17.

[62]A.H. Cohen to Shertok, 4.5.36 Secret, S25/9783, Also outline of a plan on back of envelope in files of Political Department (addressed to Dr. Joseph) Over a period of 3 days the strike in both the town and port was to come to an end. The Anglo-Palestine Bank was to decide whether the strike had ended or not. There were to be 3 payments over a period of two weeks after the strike had ended, in order to prevent its renewal. If the strike was broken by someone other than the Agency's client(s) they would receive only £1,000. The full sum was to be paid only if the strike was not ended by an announcement from the Arab Higher Committee or the Government. S25/10338.

sums of money keeping the Arabs there at work.[63] If Haifa remained secure, it was reasoned, there was little danger from the stoppage at Jaffa.

If the Yishuv as a whole was excited by the demand for a Jewish port at Tel Aviv, its most enthusiastic proponent was Ben-Gurion, whose zeal for the scheme was boundless. Normally a dry, unemotional man, he rose to heights of passion in spirited defence of his vision, waving aside technical problems, financial difficulties and the granting of government permission. At the end of a short visit to Palestine in July he visited the Jetty:

> what progress since I saw it before my last trip to London. Its length and breadth augur well. The suntanned lads asked with trepidation whether we'd send them back to Jaffa. One man asked me in Yiddish -- will there be a port here. I answered, a port, and a kingdom too.[64]

Public enthusiasm for the idea of a Jewish port was combined with a deep resentment against Jaffa, for it was felt, not without some justice, that the town had prospered because of Jewish immigration and now its Arabs had turned against their Jewish benefactors.[65] There were advantages though: no longer would this Levantine port, this "rancid town", as Ben-Gurion called it[66] be the first sight for Jewish immigrants as they reached the shores of the homeland. Davar

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[63]E. Agassi to Shertok 13.5.36, S25/3256, Agassi to Shertok 20.6.36, S25/9783 dealing with payments to prevent the outbreak of the strike in Haifa. See below p.65.

[64]Ben-Gurion to Z. Rubshov (Shazar) 17.7.36 Zikhronot Vol. 1 p.342 Diary, 10.7.36, ibid, p.334 and Ben-Gurion to Hoofien June 1936, S44/38b. Also D. Ben-Gurion "The Conquest of the Sea", Ba'Maale, 19.6.36 .

[65]Palestine Review 24.4.36, HaOlam, 30.4.36, Davar 20.5.36.

[66]Ben-Gurion diary 29.5.36 Zikhronot Vol. 1 p.220.

le'Yeladim explained to its young readers:

> For many years every immigrant was at the mercy of the Arab boatmen...who were often scornful...or mishandled his luggage. No sooner had the Jewish immigrant, yearning for redemption, set foot in the country and he tasted again the taste of exile,[67]

Although Shertok did not share Ben-Gurion's single-minded enthusiasm for a Jewish port, and felt that the government would be unwilling to grant permission for permanent Jewish harbour installations at Tel Aviv, he pressed the authorities for official recognition of the fledgling enterprise and complained to Wauchope of "a tendency in the administration to regard the Tel Aviv jetty as a makeshift arrangement to last only so long as the port of Jaffa was closed."[68] The High Commissioner's proposal that Jaffa port be re-opened by Jewish workers backed up by British marines caught Shertok by surprise[69] and after consultations with various interested parties the latter replied that the only condition under which the Jews would participate in such an operation would be if a substantial body of Arab lightermen could be found to re-enter the strike-bound port together with the Jewish workers and British troops, a condition which -- as the Jews knew perfectly well -- the government would find almost impossible to meet. Shertok also pointed out to Wauchope that the re-opening of Jaffa might well have a detrimental effect on the peaceful situation in Haifa, which was benefiting from the closure of Jaffa port.[70]

The High Commissioner was somewhat nonplussed by the Jews' stubbornness over the Tel Aviv port issue. They were unperturbed by

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[67]Davar leYeladim 28.5.36.

[68]Shertok interview with Wauchope 6.7.36 S25/19.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid and diary 13 & 14.7.36 Yoman Medini 1936, pp.201-6.

threats of the application of prohibitively high tariffs and warnings of insurmountable technical difficulties; nor were they seduced by promises of the construction of a direct access road from Tel Aviv to Jaffa harbour. Wauchope insisted that harbour dues be charged at Tel Aviv, just as they were at Jaffa, despite the lack of corresponding services. "If this were an ordinary commercial undertaking," the High Commissioner reported to London

> this condition might perhaps constitute an insuperable barrier to its profitable operation. Economic considerations, however, are not conclusive in the present case, for it is a matter of fact that many Jewish enterprises of a "national" character, which may be intrinsically uneconomic and unprofitable are successfully maintained by the financial support of Zionist sympathizers.[71]

Although the port at Tel Aviv had become the adoration of the Yishuv[72] -- "an expensive toy established with the object of pandering to Jewish sentiment" -- as a disgruntled Colonial Office official later wrote,[73] concern was expressed within Mapai that enthusiasm for the idea was waning, and that as the strike dragged on Jewish merchants and businessmen might be prepared to go back to using Jaffa port.[74] Ben-Gurion spoke with barely disguised contempt for those Jews who were even prepared to contemplate a return to the Arab port, and compared them unfavourably with the Arab strikers who

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[71]Wauchope to Secretary of State (July 1936) CO/733/393/75094, also Report on Tel Aviv Port, Mr. Luke, 16.8.39 Ibid.

[72]HaOlam 18.5.36, HaBoqer 20.5.36, HaPoel HaTzair 3.6.36, Palestine Review, 16.10.36. Y. Tabekin speech to sea cadets, September 1936 quoted in Y. Tabenkin, Dvarim Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv 1972), p.95. See Golda Meir My Life (London 1974), pp.120-125.

[73]Note of an interview with Mr. S. Hoofien, Chairman of the Board, and Mr. Van Vriesland, General Manager of the Maritime Trust, Tel Aviv, 13.12.38. CO/733/393/75094. (Unsigned).

[74]Y. Tabenkin, Mapai Political Committee 31.8.36.

were prepared to sacrifice so much for the sake of their national cause. A return to Jaffa, he told the Mapai Party Centre, would be an "unparalleled political disaster," "an irreparable national loss."[75] He even proposed the building of a second, purely Jewish port, in addition to Tel Aviv. This was too much for Shertok, who interjected to ask if his comrade had obtained government permission for such an enterprise:

> Shertok: Have you got a licence?
> Ben-Gurion: Have you got a licence for Tel Aviv?
> Shertok: In the beginning we had a licence.
> Ben-Gurion: Moshe, in the beginning we had our will.
> Shertok: But we didn't do anything before that.
> Ben-Gurion: Our will brought us the licence and preceded the licence. In the beginning there was no licence.
> Shertok: Before there was a licence not one sack was unloaded.
> Ben-Gurion: I'm not proposing the unloading of sacks but the conquest of the Jewish coast.[76]

As the end of the Arab strike approached in October, the question arose as to how the Jews would explain their refusal to go back to Jaffa, which might, it was pointed out, be interpreted as a boycott of the Arab port.[77] The discussion, however, was merely a semantic one, for the conditions under which the Jews had declared their readiness to return were so unlikely to be fulfilled as to make it almost impossible.[78] Ben-Gurion told the Smaller Actions Committee (the policy-making body which met between Zionist Congresses) of the need to organize public opinion against a return to

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[75]Ben-Gurion, Mapai Party Centre, 29.9.36.

[76]Ibid.

[77]JAE5.10.36.

[78]Mapai Political Committee 12.10.36.

Jaffa, and poured his wrath on those who raised pettifogging technical difficulties -- like the number of crates or oranges that Tel Aviv's primitive port facilities were capable of handling. "Every shopkeeper," he declared, "must know that goods imported via Jaffa are drenched in Jewish blood."[79] Even Bustanai added its voice to the rising crescendo of opposition to a return to Jaffa.[80] It was a sign of the times. There had once been no greater partisan of economic co-operation with the Arabs than Smilansky, and for all the self-serving paternalism of the farmers attitude towards the Arabs, they remained moderate on questions connected to Arab-Jewish relations in a way that Mapai and the labour movement never were. The events of April to October 1936 pushed popular support for Jewish economic and political separatism to new extremes. Mapai's, and particularly Ben-Gurion's position on the question of Tel Aviv port and the refusal to go back to Jaffa had a powerful effect on this process.

The Jews, Shertok told Wauchope at the end of October, were all in favour of partnership in Jaffa port, but the partnership had to be real. It was out of the question for the Jews to go back to Jaffa in its present position, but it would, of course, be a different matter if a proper harbour were constructed to embrace both Jaffa and Tel Aviv, of which the Jews would be the masters in the same degree as the Arabs. The line the Jews were taking at present, Shertok argued, could not properly be described as a boycott of the port of Jaffa:

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[79]Zionist Limited Actions Committee, 13.10-15.10.36 S25/1827.

[80]Bustanai 28.10.36, New Judea, October 1936, HaAretz, 16, 18.10.36 Davar 15.9.36, HaBoqer 24.9.36, HaPoel HaTzair 29.10.36.

> We had been living for years as tenants in a landlord's house. The rent which we had been paying had enabled the landlord to extend and embellish his house. Suddenly, in the middle of the night the landlord gets crazy and kicks out the tenant with all his belongings into the street, without any notice whatsoever. Having no roof over his head, the tenant starts building for himself a small hut but which he afterwards sees a possibility of enlarging into a real house. After six months the landlord's craze has passed and he beckons the tenant to come back. Very naturally the tenant replies that he has been made wise by experience and knows better than to resume his old lodgings and be at the mercy of the landlord's whims and temper. Could a tenant so behaving be described as "boycotting" his landlord? It was a different matter if the landlord would propose to him to extend the plot and build a joint house in which he and the tenant would be equal partners, each owning his section. It stood to reason that the tenant might find it more advantageous to have one half of a large house than the whole of a smaller one, but until such an offer was forthcoming, he would go on with his own building.[81]

THE STRUGGLE FOR JEWISH PRODUCE

The demand for a Jewish port in Tel Aviv served as an example for the Yishuv's general campaign to free itself from dependence on the Arabs, both in labour and goods. The question of Jewish (or Hebrew) Produce (sometimes called Home Produce -- "Totzeret HaAretz") was seen as being tied to the development of the National Home in the same way as the employment of Jewish Labour. If Zionism was to be realized, and a "normal" self-sufficient economy built in Palestine, and if there were to be sufficient jobs for immigrants, then there had to be some measure of interdependence between town and country, and if the people of Tel Aviv continued to buy cheap Arab agricultural produce then there was little future for and purpose in the lives of hard-working Jewish farmers. The campaign for Jewish

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[81]Shertok interview with Wauchope 28.10.36 S25/19. Also Davar 14.10.36 HaBoqer 14.10.36, HaPoel HaTzair 21.10.36

produce also frowned upon the purchase of imported goods of all kinds, whose competition could stifle the growth of nascent Palestinian Jewish industry. Although the demand for Hebrew produce was in a sense far less controversial than the demand for Hebrew labour, in the sense that there was no organized body of opinion against it — like the Farmers Federation, the intensity of the campaign and the amount of newspaper space taken up by it suggests that even during the disturbances it was an issue which was decided for most consumers on the basis of economic calculations and not on the basis of the Zionist approach that it was their duty to take the long view and buy the more expensive and often worse quality Jewish goods only. It was only occasionally, and then usually in the columns of Bustanai, that the question was raised as to the possible effect of the de facto boycott of Arab agricultural produce resulting from the "Buy Jewish" campaigns.

Hashomer Hatzair was also troubled by the slogan of Hebrew produce only, arguing that, like the demand for 100% Jewish labour, it undermined the basis for co-operation between Jewish and Arab workers and encouraged economic separatism which the enemies of Zionism could argue laid the foundations for "cantonization" (later, of course, partition).[82] Yet this most ideological of Zionist parties found itself caught in an increasingly glaring contradiction between theory and practice. When the strike ended, stormy debates took place within the movement as to whether its settlements, which prided themselves on their efforts to create good relations with their Arab neighbours, should continue buying manure from the Beduin who had attacked them during the strike. Mapai commentators, resenting Hashomer Hatzair's

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[82]See Oron, op.cit and Hashomer HaTzair (English) December 1936 "Notes on the question of Totzeret Ivrit" A. Prag.

criticism of their lack of a true socialist perspective on the Arab question, smugly pointed out the inconsistencies in Hashomer Hatzair's position, and prophesied that the day would soon come when the Marxist-Zionist party would realise not only the wisdom but also the inevitability of total Jewish economic independence.[83]

For those whose approach was less ideological, the question of the effect of the Hebrew produce campaign on Arab-Jewish relations was less obvious than it was in the case of demands for Jewish labour, because it was not simply a choice between Jewish and Arab good, but between Jewish goods and all other goods, including imports from Europe and elsewhere. Agricultural produce, however, apart from the occasional glut of cheap Syrian eggs, came from the Arabs of Palestine, and the constant demands to buy Jewish vegetables, were, everyone knew, at the expense of the cheaper Arab produce.

The Association for Home Produce (AHP) (Irgun lemaan Totzeret Haaretz), affiliated to and supported by the Vaad Leumi was the organization responsible for activities in the field of Jewish produce. The AHP's first organized campaign during the strike period was a "Nine days of Jewish Butter" appeal, an ad hoc response to the glut of milk produced because of delivery problems during the disturbances.[84] The tense atmosphere and the energetic propaganda of the AHP created the highly desirable situation that it became not far short of a crime to deal in non-Jewish produce, and if the Jews had possessed their own legislative powers, they would doubtless have

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[83] HaPoel HaTzair, 12.9.36, Yosef Baratz "Theory and Practice".

[84] Palestine Post 3.5.36, Davar 2.6.36, HaBoqer 4.6.36, HaAretz 4.6.36 HaOlam 11.6.36.

made laws to this effect. In fact, during the "30 Days of Home Produce" campaign held in July and August, the AHP decided to create a "Supreme Court" to deal with infringements of agreements made between it and shopkeepers and businessmen. The judgements of this "court" were to be made public and would be recognized as "moral and national judgements."[85] In lieu of actual legal coercion, therefore, there was created an atmosphere of tremendous public pressure against those who continued to buy non-Jewish goods. Although the number of Arabs who dared to enter wholly Jewish areas during the strike period was very small, for those who managed to save their goods from the Shabab, there was always the danger that the produce would be destroyed by Jews, and during the strike period there were many cases of Jews being arrested and convicted of the destruction of Arab agricultural produce.[86] Some people, "mostly Oriental Jews," HaAretz reported[87] circumvented public disapproval by continuing to buy the cheaper Arab produce and repacking it in boxes labelled "Totzeret Ivrit".

The finest hour of Jewish produce came, undoubtedly, during the "30 days" campaign. In Jerusalem it was arranged that members of the AHP, wearing special armbands, would visit shops and families to persuade them to adhere to the use of Jewish produce only and on July 18th sermons were given in the city's synagogues exhorting the worshippers to buy Jewish.[88] The children played a particularly

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[85]HaAretz 16.7.36.

[86]HaAretz 12.6.36, 2.7.36 and S25/3321 for list of such cases.

[87]HaAretz 5.8.36.

[88]HaAretz 16, 17.6.36. HaOlam 2, 7.6.36. Davar Lapoelet 12.7.36. BaMaale 24.7.36. See also AHP to Haifa Workers Council, 17, 25.6.36. AAH 30/10.

important role in these campaigns. Davar le-Yeladim was full of appeals to youngsters to educate their wayward parents in the paths of national righteousness:

> Yaacov, Shlomo and Pnina,
> sitting down to tea.
> Mummy's made it ready,
> eat and feel free.
> Sit down kids and eat some butter,
> its creamy tasty and fresh.
> But Mummy, its foreign butter!
> On the farms they milk the cows.
> We don't want it to go to waste.
> We won't eat foreign produce.
> Let's run to the shop
> and bring back Tnuva[89] butter.
> We won't eat foreign produce.
> ...
> Not only for nine days,
> not just on holidays or Shabbat
> but every day of the year,
> milk, butter and cheese, only from Jewish farms.[90]

Poems, acrostics, puzzles and stories all played their part in educating the children towards the idea of Jewish produce. If these were of no avail, then the patriarchal and omniscient "Ram HaHakham" (the wise) who sat by the telephone in the offices of Davar le-Yeladim could answer young readers' questions, which of course ranged over topics of general interest to children, and not just questions of Zionist ideology. But if Ram knew how a wireless set worked, or the truth behind the paper's current series on "Lobengula, King of the Jungle," then his pronouncements on political issues must have carried some weight for the young and impressionable readers:

> (The telephone rings)
> Hello, Ram HaHakham speaking.
> Shalom Ram, this is Margalit from the Geula school speaking.
> What can I do for you Margalit?

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[89]Tnuva — dairy produce cooperative owned by the Histadrut.

[90]Davar LeYeladim 4.6.36 and 16.7.36.

> They told us at school that we should buy everything from Totzeret Haaretz, and my Mummy says she buys Tnuva butter.
> What's better, Tnuva or Totzeret Haaretz?
> Don't you know, Margalit, that Tnuva is Totzeret Haretz.
> Everything made here, by Jewish workers, is Totzeret Haaretz, like Gilboa cheese, or Leben, or kfir.
> Ah, so my Mummy is doing a good thing.
> Yes, Margalit, very good, tell all your friends' Mums to buy Tnuva butter.[91]

The readers of Bustanai le-Noar were also asked to "fulfill the commandment" of buying Jewish and warned not to "desecrate" themselves (lehitg'ael) with foreign produce.[92] An article on the grape harvest in Zichron Yaakov digressed with the question:

> By the way, are you making sure you eat only our fruit and vegetables? We're not calling for a boycott against the Arabs but we must realise that by buying non-Jewish produce we're limiting the possibilities of work and closing the gates to new immigrants. Also, the Arab fellahin pay a special tax to their strike committee for a licence to sell their produce to the Jews. This tax is mostly spent on buying weapons for the murderers, to buy guns and bullets aimed at us.[93]

The children did not have to rely on their papers for information on this subject. During the "30 Days" campaign Jerusalem children had received special lessons on the need for Jewish produce, accompanied by maps and diagrams, and meals had been served composed solely of Jewish grown food.[94] The pupils of a Tel Aviv school, who began their day on parade around the raising of the flag of Hebrew

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[91]Ibid. 24.7.36.

[92]Bustanai leNoar 15.8.36.

[93]Ibid. On the harvest in Zichron Yaakov see Davar 12.8.36.

[94]HaAretz 15.7.36 For "30 Days" campaign in Haifa see AHP report, 12.8.36 AAH/30/14.

produce, were told to write a composition on the subject "What I have done for Totzeret Haaretz." One child, a boy of 8 or 9, wrote proudly

> In his day Abraham smashed the statues in the house of his father Terah and thus drove foreign labour from the house. Like Abraham, I too break and throw foreign statues out of my parents house.[95]

The main way of exploiting the childrens' natural interest and enthusiasm was the distribution of "Totzeret Ivrit" labels with all Jewish produce. Thus a child, eager to collect the treasured labels and compete with his friends, and even win a prize,[96] could make life a misery for his parents:

> The demand for labels has gripped our children. Thus the most practical criticism of the consumer and the shopkeeper has been passed to the younger generation. The children, imbued with the holiness of the war for Home Produce, have brought this spirit into the kitchen and the living room, and Father and Mother have made sure they follow the commandment of fidelity to our produce because of the devotion and stubbornness of their children.[97]

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[95] HaAretz 15.7.36. It is sadly entertaining to speculate as to what might have been the reaction of the parents of this zealous child. Would they have mourned the loss of a fine antique statuette, perhaps a beloved family heirloom, or welcomed, with proud resignation, their child's grasp of the essentials of Zionism? For activities in Haifa Schools see Report on activities of the Haifa branch of the AHP, November 1935-November 1936, AAH 30/14. Also Davar 14.7.36.

[96] Later the AHP offered children the opportunity to plant trees in Jewish National Fund forests in exchange for "Totzeret Ivrit" labels. See Report on Activities of AHP April 1937-September 1938. pp.2-4.

[97] HaAretz 20.8.36. During the "30 Days" one million labels were distributed to 30,000 children and 600 teachers mobilized. There is some evidence that the public was not entirely happy with the AHP's frenzied campaigns. In April 1936, Meir Dizengoff, the Mayor of Tel Aviv, had severed his connections with the AHP because of his disapproval of its "gangster tactics" which could turn the city into "a second Chicago." (HaOlam 23.4.36) In June 1937 a popular satirical magazine carried a cartoon of pregnant women entering a factory, and emerging on the other side with their new-born children, queueing to have them stamped with the omnipresent symbol of "Totzeret HaAretz." Taysha BaErev 10.6.37.

Long lines of shopkeepers queued outside the Tel Aviv offices of the AHP waiting to get the increasingly indispensable "Totzeret Ivrit" labels; the boy scouts were mobilized to check whether the shopkeepers were doing their duty. The public was asked to eat Jewish bread, use Jewish cement[98] and as well as the "Nine days of butter" and "30 days" campaigns there were appeals to buy Jewish grapes, honey, and so on.[99] People were forced to deny their association with non-Jewish produce or employees or suffer social stigma and possibly boycott.[100] By mid-July 1936, Tnuva had quadrupled its sale of vegetables as compared to the same period in 1935.[101]

Although there were complaints that the AHP had spent thousands of pounds on organization and propaganda, without achieving tangible results,[102] its influence cannot be measured in terms of the number of shopkeepers who signed agreements to sell Jewish goods only. The contribution of the activities of the AHP to the atmosphere of Jewish economic and political separatism in Palestine was incalcuable,

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[98]Vaad HaPoel of the Histadrut to Haifa Workers Council 14.7.36 AAH/27.

[99]HaAretz 15, 20.7.36.

[100]Haifa, as a city with a large Arab population, seems to have been particularly prone to the informing and sneakiness that was the inevitable concomitant of this atmosphere. For a summary of claims in the case of the denunciation of Mrs. Shoham-Finkelstein by Haifa Working Womens Council, for employing Arab laundresses, see Davar 14.9.36. See also anonymous letter addressed to Abba Hushi, accusing a certain Jewish cobbler and a number of fruit merchants of employing Arabs (Summer, 1936) AAH12/4. Also AHP to Haifa Workers Council, 24.9.36, asking them to "deal with" a recalcitrant Mr. Pinkus, who, despite many appeals, insisted on using foreign-made locks in a house he was having built, AAH30/14.

[101]At the beginning of July, however, the AHP calculated that 30-40% of the vegetables being sold in Tel Aviv were "non-Jewish". AHP-Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency 5.7.36 BB4/1/36 Vol. 1, Tel Aviv Part 2.

[102]HaAretz 13.9.36.

and even if the long term effects of its intense propaganda campaigns were felt only when the readers of Davar le-Yeladim and Bustanai le-Noar grew up, it played an immeasurably important role in the education of a generation.

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As the strike continued, so did the debates on the question of Hebrew labour, and many people, although firm supporters of the principle, were concerned by the 100% Hebrew labour slogan and the strident manner in which it was voiced,[103] although there continued to be demonstrations against the employment of Arabs.[104] For the proponents of Hebrew labour, there was considerable satisfaction in having proved that Jews were just as capable as Arabs of working in the orchards, for the farmers had always claimed that Jews could not work as well as Arabs, and that the tendency of organized Jewish workers to strike was detrimental to their interests. Now the farmers faced a strike far more damaging than any Jewish strike had ever been, and only the influx of Jewish labour had saved many of them from economic disaster.[105] Some farmers, even in the staunchest strongholds of Arab labour, were forced to admit that it wasn't so bad, after all, employing Jews. In August Shertok was told

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[103] HaAretz 24.6.36 See also letter from import-export agent Yitzhak Hoz to all major newspapers and the JAE "I try to imagine the reaction of a Goy," he wrote, "even a good Goy, who reads an announcement in the newspapers, like the one that appeared a few days ago, signed by workers and supervisors, which shows that no Arab has set foot in their groves for many months. Won't he think that 'the Jews are already showing their claws, and what will happen later?' And 'is there no truth in the Arab complaints about dispossession and their fears for the future?'" 21.9.36 S25/5181.

[104] HaAretz, 16, 17, 18.8.36 .

[105] HaAretz 20.8.36.

> of the reaction in Zichron Yaacov and Atlit when they introduced Hebrew labour. One farmer worked out that Jewish grapes cost him only 3 mils more per ton than Arab grapes, and as well as that he saves his health as he doesn't need to stand in the sun all day shouting "Yallah" at the Arab women.[106]

Such changes, however, did not take place without conflict. In Petah Tikvah, the members of Workers Council, increasingly bitter about having to guard the farmers at night from the Haurani and Beduin workers they employed by day, demanded the removal of all Arab labour from the village. It was impossible, they argued against the farmers, to separate the security situation from the labour situation. By the end of August 1936 there were no Arabs left working in the "Mother of the Moshavot."[107]

THE SEMANTICS OF BOYCOTT

With the danger that the Government might halt immigration as a result of the intervention of Nuri Said in August,[108] discussions took place as to the desirability of declaring an economic boycott of the Arabs. The proposal had originated with Avraham Haft, a member of the Vaad Hapoel of the Histadrut and one of the organizers of the AHP and he had arrived at the idea, not surprisingly, as a result of his work on behalf of Jewish produce. He believed that once the strike ended "all the dams would burst" and Jewish capital would start flowing again into the pockets of the Arab community. The Jewish economy had adjusted itself more or less to meet the needs of the Yishuv during the strike, and a wholesale return to Arab produce and

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[106]Shertok diary 5.8.36 S25/443.

[107]Davar 16.8.36, HaAretz 20, 25, 31.8.36.

[108]See Norman Rose "The Arab Rulers and Palestine, 1936: The British Reaction." Journal of Modern History, June, 1972.

labour could have a disastrous effect. If, on the other hand, it were possible to galvanize the Yishuv into giving a political answer to the proposed stoppage of immigration, it might be possible not only to safeguard existing conquests in Hebrew labour and produce, but also to make further gains. The substance of his proposal was that if immigration was halted the Yishuv would organize a total economic boycott of the Arabs. All Arab workers would be removed from the moshavot; there would be no buying from Arabs and the maximum possible encouragement would be given to Jewish produce. In addition, there would be a complete boycott of Jaffa port and Jews would leave all rented accommodation belonging to Arabs.[109] There were disadvantages that would have to be considered, in particular the fact that the deterioration of relations with the Arabs that was bound to result would place the Yishuv in a daily struggle with the Arab community. There was also the danger of an Arab counter-boycott against Jewish goods and a refusal to sell land, as well as the near certainty that it would be very bad propaganda. Yitzhak Tabenkin pointed out the absurdity of declaring a boycott of the Arabs when it was the government which would halt immigration, but his ideological objection -- that such a move would undermine the basis of the Jews' consistent claims of their right to economic independence -- carried greater weight. Also, a boycott would destroy Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael (BPEY) -- the Arab workers organized by and faithful to the Histadrut -- and put an end to any chances for Jewish-Arab negotiations. Berl Katznelson favoured the proposal, but refused to accept that it constituted a "boycott," preferring to call it a "cessation of relations." As the debate continued it became increasingly clear that

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[109]Mapai Political Committee, 31.8.36.

all the participants agreed that Arabs should not be allowed to return to the moshavot and that the Jewish public must be encouraged to hold on to its economic gains, and that it was simply the creative power of the word "boycott" that was the cause of the apparent disagreements. Katznelson asked, sarcastically, whether Tabenkin would agree to Haft's proposal if it were called "a regime of self-defence."[110] Shertok summed up:

> I use the word boycott. We will certainly find another expression but the Government and the Arabs will call it a boycott, and, in fact, it will be a boycott. The boycott must achieve two things. Firstly, it must create the maximum public pressure to fortify our economic positions and conquer new ones. This won't be done without an electrified atmosphere. Without such an atmosphere we won't save the jetty in Tel Aviv, Hebrew labour in the Moshavot, increase our own produce, etc.

"Secondly," he continued,

> it must hit at the Arabs. We must make them realise that they cannot fight immigration...and at the same time benefit from it. Certain classes of Arabs must feel tangibly what halting immigration means. A mass exodus of Jewish tenants from Arab houses will create such a feeling in one sector...I know it won't influence the Arab nationalists; on the contrary, it'll give them further material for incitement and propaganda, but there are also groups of fellahin and workers who've worked in the Jewish sector who will feel very bitter about the Arab leadership.[111]

Smilansky, not surprisingly, was opposed to the boycott idea. Even if they accepted that "cultured" peoples used boycotts, was it not obvious, he asked, that such a weapon was a double edged sword? In order to achieve its aims the boycott would have to be complete and general, and it would not be possible, he felt, to exclude the

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[110]For similar semantic disagreements see discussion of Secretariat of the Vaad HaPoel of the Histadrut, 1.9.36 BB4/1/36/Vol. 2 Tel Aviv.

[111]Mapai Political Committee 31.8.36 and Ibid.

Arab workers in joint Arab-Jewish enterprises, or the Haifa port stevedores who had remained faithful to the Jews, or even the people of some of the Arab villages near Rehovot who had not joined the strike. There was almost certainly bound to be an Arab counter-boycott, and since the Jewish sector was incapable of supplying its own needs a boycott would threaten the Yishuv with starvation.

> ...And finally, we all say endlessly...that unless we create relations [yahasim] with the Arabs we have no revival here. Will a boycott by us help us at all to create these relations? Will we not thus continue the destruction that our neighbours began? No, the ways of vengeance and destruction are not our ways. We can only take revenge in one way -- by doubling our constructive efforts. We have no other way.[112]

It was easy for Smilansky's enemies to see his behaviour simply in terms of his own self-interest, his concern for the citrus crop or his ability to exploit his Arab workers. Yet in many respects he showed a far more genuine concern with the future of Arab-Jewish relations than the leadership of Mapai, bent, not so much on revenge, as on exploiting every available opportunity to increase the economic independence of the Yishuv at any price. For all his calculations about crates of oranges and their shipment that Ben-Gurion despised, Smilansky could write of Jews and Arabs as "two children in one womb"[113] and call, however fruitlessly, for the establishment of peaceful relations with the Arabs with whom they were destined to live. Yet his spirited defence of the need for peace and rapprochement, his almost ritualistic incantation of the desirability of "relations" with the Arabs, had the tone of a man reciting his

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[112]Smilansky to Shertok 4.9.36 S25/9783.

[113]Bustanai 21.10.36.

catechism when he no longer has faith.

JEWISH GAINS AND CONCLUSIONS

Immigration was not halted, and the boycott proposal was not fromally implemented, although with the end of the strike the press stepped up its demands for increases in Hebrew Labour and local Workers Councils did their utmost to prevent the return of Arabs to the moshavot.[114] The Rabbinate of Petah Tikva promised to devote one of the following Sabbaths to propaganda for Hebrew produce and the local branch of the Teachers Union volunteered to do its bit.[115]

Considerable gains had been made in the public works sector too. Haifa did particularly well, gaining 300 new workplaces in a few days in August.[116] The Jewish response to the Arab strike, where they themselves stood to gain from it, was anything but passive. In one case, when the Agency learned in advance of an impending Arab stoppage, they informed the government, with almost indecent haste, that Jewish workers could be supplied in place of the strikers.[117]

One day before the strike officially came to an end, the Jewish Agency submitted a memorandum to the government on Jewish labour requirements for the coming six months. It was quite unequivocal in its assessment of the effects of the Arab strike:

> It can now be safely asserted that not only has the Arab strike failed signally in its object of bringing the economic life of the country as a whole to a standstill, but that it has fortified in the

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[114] HaAretz 13, 14, 29.10.36.

[115] HaAretz 19.10.36.

[116] Berl Reptor to JAE 11.8.36 S25/9163.

[117] Shertok diary 8.8.36 S25/443.

> Jewish population the spirit of self-reliance and, on the balance, strengthened the economic basis of the Jewish National Home.[118]

Out of 9000 workers employed in the Jewish citrus sector, 8000 of them were now Jews.[119] The actual increase of 2000 more workers employed in the orange groves was the result, the memorandum noted, of the Arab strike and disorders and the general exodus of Haurani labour. The demand for 3,300 labourers to work in the citrus sector would not entail displacement of Arabs, but was intended to fill the void created by the large-scale deportation of Hauranis:

> If any deficiency remains, it will inevitably call forth renewed penetration into Palestine of labourers from the neighbouring countries. The negative effects of this process from the social standpoint have too often been stressed to need elaboration. The present disturbances have moreover demonstrated its most harmful character from the point of view of public security.[120]

The end of the Arab strike on October 12 was met with mixed feelings by the Yishuv. On the one hand the various Jewish achievements were felt to be extremely positive, while on the other it was realized that great dangers lay ahead, especially from the coming of

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[118]JAE to Commissioner for Migration and Statistics 11.10.36, Confidential. 24/20708 (1)

[119]Ibid. A survey carried out on 5.9.36 found 81.5% Jewish labour in the Jewish citrus sector. The table below shows increases in Hebrew labour between March and September, 1936:

| Place | % March | % September |
|---|---|---|
| Rishon Lezion | 34.8 | 67.4 |
| Petah Tikva | 20.6 | 99.8 |
| Petah Tikva area | 73.0 | 100.0 |
| Rehovot | 46.6 | 88.7 |
| Nes Tsiona | 29.9 | 42.5 |
| Nes Tsiona area | 69.8 | 86.5 |
| Hadera | 48.0 | 77.4 |

From Pinkas November 1936

[120]JAE memorandum, 11.10.36 op.cit.

the Royal Commission[121] and possibly also as a result of the precedent set by the intervention of the Arab Kings. Just as the strike had been "stage-managed"[122] throughout so was its conclusion.[123] From the Arab point of view, the Hebrew press concluded, the strike had been an utter failure, and its organizers had not succeeded in proving, as they had hoped to do, that Palestine was an Arab country. Davar warned of the dangers of judging the Arab strike by European standards and of the exaggeratedly false impression that could be given of the extent of Arab opposition to Zionism.[124] Mapai's HaPoel Hatzair attacked Hashomer Hatzair for its recurrent claim that the strike was merely the result of the incitement of a corrupt and feudal leadership and that work with the Arab labouring masses would solve the so-called national conflict. The task of organizing Arab workers was indeed important, but the only way to prevent further disturbances was by a political agreement with the present Arab leadership.[125] The Yishuv's children, at least, were left with their illusions. The Arab strike, the readers of Davar le-Yeladim were told, was organized by wealthy effendis and Sheikhs, large landowners, lawyers and religious leaders "without one representative of the working masses." This leadership "organized gangs of robbers -- most of whom were criminals -- murderers and bandits

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[121] HaAretz, 13.10.36.

[122] HaBoger, 13.10.36.

[123] BaMaale (M. Assaf) 16.10.36.

[124] Davar, 12.10.36. On the intervention of the Arab kings see Chapter 5 following, pp.218-220.

[125] HaPoel HaTzair, 15.10.36 "At the Hour of decision," M. Grabovski.

who had fled from their own countries to escape the arm of the law."[126]

For Ben-Gurion, the results of the strike were further affirmation of the essentially constructive nature of Zionism; where the Arabs had destroyed, the Jews had built. Their major gains were in Hebrew labour, Hebrew produce, and above all, the port at Tel Aviv:

> We should always have done these three things, and what the laws and logic of Zionism could not do, the Mufti...did for us. Without riots and disturbances many Jews did not understand that the return to Eretz-Yisrael is not only a geographical return, but a return to economic independence, and that we cannot grasp the homeland unless we build our lives alone, unless we sow and reap, plant and harvest, pave and build and labour and toil by ourselves. In economic independence as in cultural independence lies the difference between exile and homeland.[127]

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[126] Davar le-Yeladim 22.10.36, also 19.11.36. Recent research refutes the widely-held view that a large proportion of Arab rebels during the 1936-39 disturbances were people with criminal backgrounds or records. See Porath op. cit. p.264 and pp.388-403.

[127] Ben Gurion at Smaller Actions Committee, 14.10.36 S25/1827 cf. Y. Tabenkin at general assembly of United Kibbutz Movement, September 1936 in Dvarim, Vol. 2 p.97. Also HaPoel HaTzair, 15.10.36 and HaOlam 15.10.36.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE ARAB QUESTION, NEGOTIATIONS AND THE "NATIONALISATION OF THE SOUL"[1]

The period of the 1936-39 disturbances was one of the richest in Mandatory times in attempts to reach a solution to the Palestine problem. Reacting to the Arab strike and subsequent disturbances, many Jews, both groups and individuals, took it upon themselves to find ways out of the apparent deadlock between Zionist aspirations and Arab demands. While considerable attention has been focused on some of the more prominent of these unofficial initiatives and those who launched them, less interest has been displayed in the responses and reactions of the official institutions of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement to such moves.[2]

It is in the interplay of private and public, official and unofficial interest in the "Arab question," in talks, negotiations and peace initiatives that the essence of the "Arab question" may be found. However defined, the "Arab question" was confined neither to the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, nor to the small group of enthusiasts who founded Kedma Mizraha, but to every individual or

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[1]The phrase is from Norman Bentwich, Wanderer between Two Worlds (London 1941), p.217.

[2]See, for example, Susan Lee Hattis The Bi-National Idea in Palestine in Mandatory Times (Haifa 1970).

group who cared to express an opinion, and sometimes to act upon it. The fact that many components of the debates that took place, and the conclusions drawn from them often had little relationship to objective political reality, does nothing to diminish their importance or interest. The "Arab question" was a whole formed by the sum of extremely disparate parts.

EXTREME COOING DOVES

The gradual ascendancy of the Labour movement to a position of prominence within the Zionist movement brought changes in the manner in which the Jewish Agency organized its relations with the Arabs. The changes, although not as far-reaching as some members of the Zionist left would perhaps have liked to have believed, nevertheless felled one monument to what they considered not only an unsavoury, but also a negative and self-defeating past policy. Not only was Haim Margalit Kalvarisky the Grand Old Man of the Arab question, but also, in a way, its essence and symbol. His scores of years of activity in the field of Arab-Jewish relations, from his work as a land purchaser and administrator for the Rothschilds, to his experience in the Zionist Executive's Arab Department had left him with the reputation of a well-meaning, good-natured and bumbling incompetent whose intense belief in the importance of good relations with the Arabs was as much an embarrassment to the official institutions of the Zionist movement as it was a drain on his own meagre financial resources, which he did not spare in pursuit of the cause which he made his life's work.[3] The connection between Kalvarisky and the

[3]On Kalvarisky's activities see Neil Caplan The Yishuv and the Arab Question, unpubl. Ph.D. London 1973. Also Simon Schama, Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel (London 1978).

Jewish Agency was officially severed as from August 1, 1931. Colonel Kisch advised his successor that he definitely considered the old Arab hand "unsuitable for work in the management of the [Jewish Agency's Joint] Bureau."

> On the basis of long experience I advise my successor to maintain this decision, although Mr. Kalvarisky's experience may be useful in an advisory capacity, I consider it definitely undesirable that he should be involved in executive work.[4]

Kisch's immediate successors, Arlossoroff and Shertok, indeed followed this advice and Kalvarisky was never again to occupy any official position on behalf of the Zionist movement. Kalvarisky, however, was too dedicated and resilient to be deterred from his mission by the Jewish Agency's hostility to his activities, and he appeared again and again with the politically doubtful and often mercenary Arab contacts and grandiose and usually expensive schemes that were the cause of official reservations about his talents. The changed attitude to Kalvarisky, increasingly one of annoyance mixed with the qualified respect that those who occupy official positions reserve for well-meaning eccentrics, was a sign of the times.

The activities of the Brit Shalom Association also made an impact on the way in which not only the Jewish Agency, but the Zionist world at large, viewed the question of the Yishuv's relations with the Arabs. The association, which had achieved prominence far out of proportion to its numerical strength -- largely due to the fact that amongst its members were some of the most articulate and respected of the Yishuv's intellectuals -- had become tarred with the brush of notoriety because of its interest in the

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[4]Colonel Kisch's Notes for His Successor, (n.d.) [1931] S25/4141.

Arab-Jewish relations. Its members were regularly castigated as a bunch of over-intellectual central European Jews whose undue concern with the Arab question was unbecoming for Zionists and smacked of the intellectual liberalism that was so unceremoniously rejected by the majority of Zionists in the harsh realities of Palestine in the 1920's and 1930's. Early objections to the existence of Brit Shalom were to hold true for its successors, and for the individuals associated with it. In 1930, the association had been in touch with a British M.P. (Henry Snell) who had expressed interest in its activities. "It is really lamentable," Colonel Kisch complained to Lewis Namier,

> -- and herein lies my chief objection to the very existence of Brith Shalom -- that he [Snell] should be under the impression that this negligible group of political theorists represent the only effort being made within Jewish Palestine for an improvement of Arab-Jewish relations.[5]

Namier's reply, too, throws considerable light on the further development of official views on Brit Shalom and its intellectual offspring:

> Another point which...I...try to make clear when I have to deal with the question of Jewish-Arab relations with Labour members is that the right way of approaching the problem is by real, positive work for the Arab labouring classes, and not by pandering to the effendis (as the Brith Shalom does). The Brith Shalom and their adherents are becoming a nuisance almost worse than the Revisionists....Weizmann thinks that the time may come soon when the Brith Shalom, or at least some of its extremer cooing doves, will have to be kicked out of the [Zionist] Organization.[6]

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[5]Kisch to Namier, 12.5.30, S25/3064.

[6]Namier to Kisch, 22.5.30, Ibid. On Brit Shalom see Aharon Keder, "Brit Shalom, the early period, 1925-28" in Pirkei Mehkar beToldot HaTsionut (Jerusalem 1975) pp.224-286.

Matters never came to such an extreme as the expulsion of the members of Brit Shalom from the Zionist Organization, but the very name became synonymous with the liberal critics of Zionist policy (or rather lack thereof) on the Arab question. In periods of crisis in Arab-Jewish relations, the term Brit Shalom took on an intentionally pejorative connotation, a blanket condemnation of criticism generally unrelated to its actual content.

Namier's advice that it was useful, when talking to Labour members, to stress "the right way of approaching the [Arab] problem" as "real positive work for the Arab labouring classes" was a recurrent theme in the approach to the Arab question, and, most important, a vital part of how the majority of the Zionist movement (broadly speaking Mapai and leftwards) viewed their handling of the matter. American Zionist leader Louis Lipsky gave classic expression to this self-image when he addressed an American Zionist forum in 1937. "In the early days," Lipsky declared,

> Ussishkin was the head of the Zionist Commission in Palestine. There came to him a group of enthusiastic young men, bred in the Levantine School, who thought the time was right to begin a social propaganda among the Arabs to extend good will. They proposed the usual Turkish method. They suggested that the Zionist Commission appropriate a substantial sum (for gifts or bribes) to create cordial relations with some of the Arabs' political leaders, important cafe habitués, young lawyers looking for clients, etc. This did not appeal to Mr. Ussishkin. He thought he had come out of the Galuth [Diaspora] into a Jewish land, and should not use methods familiar among oppressed Jews to lessen the stringency of despotic government. He hated the system of baksheesh that prevailed in the days of the Turks; he had not come to Palestine to continue that system. He thought that the most important and immediate task of the Jews was to begin cleaning up the land, labouring side by side with the working Arabs and through creative work establishing neighbourly relations with them. In a rational, organized

> society, this would be regarded as the proper way. And so it is.[7]

Louis Lipsky, of course, was no more a socialist than Lewis Namier, but both men, despite the seven-year interval between their words, were subscribing to and perpetuating the assumption that it was possible, through cooperation with "working" Arabs, to create relations which could not be made with non-working Arabs, with the group derisively referred to as effendis. One of the more interesting features of the history of Zionism is the fact that commitment to "national" goals required considerable flexibility on questions of class loyalty, and thus solid middle class lawyers, businessmen and academics, staunchly conservative in their home countries, expressed enthusiastic support for the idea of the organization of workers, albeit in faraway Palestine, on a socialist and internationalist basis. The theoretical problem that this posed was mitigated only by the fact that the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers whose cause these unlikely advocates so enthusiastically preached, was, well before 1936, far more a fiction than a reality, more a reminder of past ideals than a signpost to the future.

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[7]"Zionism and Arab Fears." Lecture delivered before the Zionist forum, Louis Lipsky, Education Department of the Zionist Organization of America, 1937. Cf. Weizmann's speech at the Administrative Committee of the Jewish Agency, 2-3.9.36. "The process whereby an understanding [with the Arabs] could be achieved was a very long one. He was all in favour of the introduction of the teaching of Arabic language and literature in Jewish schools, and of attempts to establish co-operation in the economic sphere. But he had no hope of coming to terms with the present leaders. Their only chance was to go straight to the Arab masses, whom the leadersdid not in the least represent, and to win their hearts by helping them to free themselves from the clutches of their Arab oppressors. There was a task worthy of our workers -- to educate the under-dog and to help him to a better life. By accomplishing it they might contribute very substantially to drawing at least that section of the Arab population into our orbit." S25/1719.

BRIT POALEI ERETZ-YISRAEL

The idea of the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers had its origin rather in the political pragmatism of the Palestine deadlock than in socialist commitment to international proletarian organization.[8] For a movement which devoted a good deal of its time and energy to the struggle to replace the cheap unorganized Arab workers in the citrus plantations of the old moshavot with organized Jewish workers, the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers, agreed on in principle at the third Congress of the Histadrut in 1927, could only have limited practical application. Even the simplest tenets of proletarian solidarity were inapplicable in Palestine, and no amount of commitment to the distant socialist utopia could persuade members of Mapai to picket a Jewish orchard whose owner had arbitrarily reduced the wages of his Arab employees, for to do so would have unthinkably implied the legitimization of the place of the Arab worker in the Jewish sector.[9] The success of Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael (BPEY), was limited to government public works, like the railways and postal and telegraphic services, where Jews and Arabs worked together, and, to a lesser extent, to the industrial enterprises in the Haifa area, where the economic boom of the first half of the 1930's had created a nascent Arab proletariat. The election of an "Arab Secretariat" by the Histadrut in September 1934 did not, despite the considerable talent and energy it

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[8]Anita Shapira HaMaavak HaNichzav, Avoda Ivrit, 1929-39 (Tel Aviv 1977), pp.64-85.

[9]Ibid., p.85.

contained,[10] win BPEY the place its members felt it deserved in Zionist Arab policy, and complaints were regularly voiced that Mapai functionaries ignored the demands of BPEY to be consulted when the interests of Arab workers were concerned.[11] There was a general feeling too, that interest was limited to the small band of enthusiasts who ran the organization, while the majority attached little importance to its work, feeling that energies and financial resources should be concentrated on Jewish immigration and construction.

BPEY was almost totally destroyed by the Arab strike. David HaCohen, one of the few Mapai leaders who took an active interest in the organization's activities, admitted in January 1937 that he saw little hope in the organization of Arab workers. He rejected the self-accusatory breast-beating that said it was the Jews' fault that such attempts had failed due to lack of effort, persistence and enterprise. The objective nature of Arab nationalism, he argued, prevented the success of such a venture. The 1150 members of BPEY had, overnight, been reduced to a mere 15, and if even these 15 would not dare to defy their leaders and stand in the souk and tell their fellow Arabs that cooperation with the Jews was the only way, then there was no hope.[12] In a discussion on the Arab question held by the Haifa branch of Mapai, Abba Hushi accused the party's leadership

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[10]Ibid., p.181. Members were A. Hushi, David HaCohen, Yaacov Riftin, R. Zaslani, E. Agassi and N. Harnaz.

[11]Agassi and Zaslani to Histadrut Executive, 18.2.36, BB401/36/2 and Mapai Party Centre, 16.1.37.

[12]David HaCohen at discussion in home of D. Ben-Gurion, 29.1.37, BB4/1/37, Haifa files.

of knowing only to tell its critics from the left how not to deal with the Arab question and of themselves being unable to appreciate the importance of the subject.[13]

The Haifa workers' leader returned to the attack at the 35th session of the Histadrut Council, in February 1937, where he again charged his comrades with lack of activity in the Arab sector.[14] Even the usually mild HaAretz complained that Ben-Gurion had confined himself to attacking Hashomer Hatzair for its accusations that Mapai had ignored the Arab question, while failing to articulate any clear policy of his own. The Mapai leader's admission of his "mistake," 13 years previously at the famous Ein Harod conference of 1924, that an agreement was possible only with Arab workers, was welcomed. Several participants noted the "General Zionist" tone of Ben-Gurion's speech.[15] Indeed, ideologically, it was only a few members of Mapai and Hashomer Hatzair who attached much importance to BPEY's organization of the Arab worker. All that remained of BPEY after the Arab strike was a handful of members in Jaffa and Haifa, and its greatest achievement in 1937 was the participation of 250 Arab "intellectuals, workers and peasants" in the May Day parade in Haifa.[16] The extent of proletarian solidarity in

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[13]Discussion on Arab question in Mapai branch in Haifa, 29.11.36, BB4/1/36/2.

[14]35th Council of the Histadrut, 7-10.2.37, Pinkas, March-April 1937; HaAretz, 8,9.2.37.

[15]HaAretz, 10.12.37. See above p.24 . For views of Poalei Tsion a Smol at the Histadrut conference see Elkana Margalit, Anatomia Shel Smol: Poalei Tsion Smol Be'Eretz-Yisrael, 1919-1946 (Jerusalem 1977), p.216.

[16]See E. Agassi, Mapai Party Centre 16.1.37, E. Agassi, Report on Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael, Sept. 1936-May 1937, 20.5.37. BB401/37. E. Agassi, Pinkas January 1937, Davar 1.5.37 and A. Hushi Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael (Tel Aviv 1943), p.22.

that city was the exception rather than the rule, the result of its being the only industrialized area in the country and the single-minded efforts of Abba Hushi in the field of Arab-Jewish cooperation. There is some evidence that Hushi's zealous belief in the power of honest propaganda to prevent the Arabs of Haifa from joining the strike and terror in 1936 met with a cynically amused response in the Political Department which had to authorize payments to Arabs to keep them working.[17] By the time the strike ended in October 1936, BPEY was, to all intents and purposes dead.

AN ARABIC NEWSPAPER

By early January 1937 the Mapai party centre[18] and the Histadrut Council had decided upon the publication of a newspaper in Arabic, and the training of a number of party members in the Arabic language.[19] The suggestion that a Zionist body should publish a newspaper in Arabic, with the aim of explaining the true character of Zionism to the Arabs of Palestine and the neighbouring countries, was not a new one, but the failure of Itihad al-'Ummal, the newspaper of the railway workers union, after a brief appearance between 1925-27, had left grave doubts about the Jews' ability to produce an effective Arabic-language organ. Nevertheless, groups and individuals periodically brought up the question of an Arabic newspaper and the debates around the subject, not only of Haqiqat al-Amr, but also of the need for and role of Zionist propaganda in Arabic in

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[17]A.H.Cohen to Shertok 4.8.36 S25/9161. Agassi to Shertok 20.6.36, S25/9783. Shertok to Agassi 13.5.36 S25/3256. (See above p.34 ).

[18]17.1.37.

[19]Pinkas March-April 1937.

general, reveal a broad spectrum of views on ways of dealing with the Arab question.

As early as May 1936 Shertok had agreed in principle to the suggestion but had pointed out that there was no-one suitable to carry out such a difficult and responsible task.[20] During the strike the Hebrew press was full of desparate pleas for action and angry accusations that the Jewish Agency was doing nothing to halt the wave of lies and agitation in the Arab press.[21] The current disturbances, wrote M. Assaf, typically, in Davar, had not created the need for an Arabic newspaper, nor could an Arabic newspaper prevent disturbances, but "they have reminded us that we are deaf and dumb, and that when the storm passes, there is no-one in the East who will speak up on our behalf."[22]

Ben-Gurion felt it was a "sin" that the Zionist movement had not produced a newspaper in Arabic and although, he agreed, there were difficulties involved, felt that Shertok had exaggerated them.[23] The latter, meanwhile, doggedly resisted growing public pressure for an Arabic newspaper by repeating his assessment of the organizational and financial problems involved in its publication. He told a meeting of the representatives of Galilee settlements that the question of a newspaper would be decided upon by the national

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[20]JAE, 22,31.5.36.

[21]HaAretz 16,17.6.36, HaBoqer 27.9.36, Davar 31.5, 14.6.36. Also Hashomer Hatzair (English), May, 1936.

[22]Davar, 1.7.36. M. Assaf "Why do we need an Arabic newspaper?"

[23]Ben-Gurion to Mapai Party Centre, 18.6.36, D. Ben-Gurion, Zikhronot 1936, p.281.

institutions, but that he felt that the demand was more the reflection of the need to know that an Arabic newspaper existed rather than the result of the careful consideration of its possibilities and potential influence.[24]

In July 1936 Mapai held a detailed discussion on the question of an Arabic paper. Shertok once again expressed apprehensions, shared by B. Katznelson, that the Arabic paper was first and foremost a question of Jewish self-satisfaction. One serious problem, apart from the editorship, was which body would be responsible for the paper's publication, a question connected to the problem of which sections of the Arab reading public it was hoped to reach. The Vaad Leumi, with its non-socialist and conservative Sephardi elements, would not take kindly to participating in the publication of an Arabic newspaper intended solely for Arab workers,[25] while the Histadrut and Mapai would be unwilling to accept the conservative influence that the participation of the Vaad Leumi would inevitably mean, and cooperation between the different bodies would be extremely difficult. How, it was asked, would a paper run jointly by the Histadrut and the Vaad Leumi (which included representatives of the Farmers Federation) present the question of Hebrew labour to its Arab readers? The general conclusion of the discussion was that the paper should be published by the Histadrut or Mapai, that they should strive to produce a weekly paper, and that it should be edited by M. Assaf.[26]

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[24]M. Sharett Yoman Medini 1936, Meeting with Kibbutz representatives, Haifa, 13.7.36.

[25]Y. Klausner, HaBoqer, 19.3.37.

[26]Discussion on the publication of an Arabic newspaper, 20-22.7.36, BB23/36.

After the decision of the Histadrut Council, Haqiqat al-Amr (The Truth of the Matter) began to appear weekly from 24 March 1937.[27] Its reception by the Jews was generally friendly, although criticism was expressed that its standard was too high for the "extremely backward" Arabs of Palestine,[28] and that it would have been better had the paper been published under the auspices of the Vaad Leumi, "for it may be possible to reach also effendis who might be disabused of misconceptions about Zionism, but [who] are hardly likely to be attracted by a Labour paper."[29] The Political Department too, was critical of the paper being directed solely to Arab workers,[30] while the government took measures to prevent the distribution of Haqiqat al-Amr to Arab workers in the Haifa Railway yards.[31] After the first few issues the paper was printed in 4000 copies[32] and distributed, partly by post and partly by hand, in Palestine and the neighbouring countries. Some copies were returned unopened, whilst in several places the paper met with a favourable response, although all reports indicated that most Arabs were too intimidated to be seen openly reading or distributing a Zionist newspaper.[33] The paper stressed the constructive achievements of Zionism, the corrupt self-interest of the Arab leaders and dealt with subjects like the need

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[27]See BB401/37 for contents of first edition.

[28]Zionist Review, April 1937.

[29]Palestine Review, 1.4.37.

[30]Y. Golan to M. Assaf, 15.7.37, S25/5811.

[31]Agassi to Zaslani, 25.8.37, and Chief Engineer's announcement, S25/3187.

[32]Agassi Report, 20.5.37, loc.cit. Also E. Agassi "Echoes of Haqiqat al-Amr," Pinkas, May-June 1937.

[33]Views of readers and distributors of Haqiqat al-Amr, 5.12.37, BB401/37/2.

for labour legislation, an agreement with the Jews in order to avoid partition and so on.[34] Shertok's prediction that the function of an Arabic paper would be more to satisfy the Jews than to affect the Arabs was borne out by the subsequent Jewish attitude to the paper, which was characterized by a self-satisfied smugness and pride, which was far out of proportion to the real significance of the enterprise.[35] Haqiqat al-Amr played, in its limited way, a useful part in the Jewish Agency's propaganda war and Assaf was supplied with secret information on Arab affairs and in return published what the Agency asked him to.[36]

METHODS AND OPINIONS

From December 1938 the Political Department published a daily news bulletin in Arabic entitled Al-Akhbar al-Yahudiya (Jewish News) which was distributed to the Arab press in the neighbouring countries in addition to a number of Arabic pamphlets on specific topics that appeared from time to time.[37] Public opinion in general, particularly on the Left, favoured this type of propaganda activity,

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[34]M. Assaf, Davar, 30.6.37, 1.7.37; E. Agassi, Ibid. 8.8.37.

[35]See Pinkas, November 1937, Davar, 23.4.38 (year's anniversary), Zionist Review, February 1938, 5.5.38, 6.7.38.

[36]See for example Shertok to Assaf, 20.2.38, S25/5813 and Joseph interview with Assaf on line to be taken by Haqiqat al-Amr during the London Talks; Joseph Diary, 6.2.39, S25/43.

[37]Report on Al-Akhbar al-Yahudiya D. Neustadt, 19.3.39, S25/3208. See also S25/2991, S25/3109 and S25/2973 on Arabic publications. The pamphlets were on Weizmann's Statement to the Royal Commission, Jewish Settlement in Palestine, Economic relations between Palestine and Syria, "Thou Shalt not Kill," on Arab terror.

on the assumption that the reasonable explanation of Zionist aspirations might have some effect on the demagogic lies of the Arab leaders and their press. It was an axiom which Hashomer Hatzair brought to a tragic reductio ad absurdum when they argued that it was crucial to print leaflets for distribution to Arab workers, prevented from working in Jewish orchards ostensibly for security reasons, explaining that their exclusion was due to security considerations and that they were not being prevented from working because of any principled objection to Arab labour.[38]

Such faith in the power of rational explanation was not shared by everyone. While the Revisionists, to all intents and purposes, ignored the "Arab question" and therefore displayed no interest in the question of propaganda amongst the Arabs that exercised more moderate Zionist parties, the more amorphous General Zionists, or rather some individuals within their camp, had quite clear views on such matters, and expressed their opinions in the columns of HaBoqer. The eminent Professor Yosef Klausner, for instance, bitterly attacked Mapai, Hashomer Hatzair and the Zionist Left in general for their commitment on the one hand to the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers, and, on the other, to 100 per cent Hebrew labour, which necessitated the removal of Arab workers from Jewish orchards and buildings. The Arabs, Klausner argued, were not interested in cantonisation, parity or bi-nationalism, and those who perpetuated such beliefs were simply deluding themselves and others. There was an urgent need, he felt, for Zionist propaganda in Arabic, but not for an Arabic newspaper, which could not hope to compete with the

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[38]Hashomer Hatzair, 15.10.36 quoted in Y. Oron HaSheala HaAravit beMediniut shel Hashomer Hatzair 1936-42, unpubl. MA Thesis, Jerusalem 1976.

existing Arab press and would end up being read only by Jews. He started out from the assumption that "first we must know the enemy," and suggested that the Jews follow the example of the Italians, who, after their defeat at Adawa in 1896, had spent large sums of money on propaganda in Amharic and on the study of Ethiopia.[39] Concerned as he was that the Jews should, must understand the nature of Arab nationalism, Professor Klausner already had some very clear notions of his own. "Arab nationalism," he had written, "is neither profound nor fundamental, because it has neither profundity nor foundation." The range of his own understanding, however, was severely circumscribed by a stubborn refusal to accept the existence of a "true nationalism" without a "true culture." "He who has not beheld the joy with which young Arab lads throw stones at their victims, has never in his life beheld the combined joy of savage and urchin."[40]

A reply to Klausner's HaBoqer article questioned the value not only of an Arabic newspaper, but of Arabic propaganda in general. An Arabic translation of Weizmann's statement to the Royal Commission, published by the Political Department, had been burnt by Arab youths. The only Arabs who did not oppose Zionism were illiterate peasants who could not read propaganda. The Italians, the writer added, had not conquered Abyssinia with books and propaganda in Amharic, and the measures that Klausner had suggested would lead only to "internal

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[39] HaBoqer, 19.3.37, Y. Klausner "On the Arab Question." See response of Reb Benyamin, HaOlam, 8.4.37 and Y. Klausner "Arab-Jewish Agreement," Palestine Review, 17.7.36.

[40] New Palestine, 29.1.37, "Arab Nationalism declared a myth" Y. Klausner. Cf. HaOlam, 28.5.36.

demoralization and political defeat."[41]

HaBoger's permanent Arab affairs correspondent, David Sitton, a member of a prominent Sephardi family and onetime correspondent for the Revisionist HaYarden, also denied the efficacy of the Jewish Agency's Arabic publications. The Arabs, Sitton argued, were dominated by dark, uncontrollable instincts, and no amount of rational argument, persuasion, facts and figures could free them from the grip of these forces.[42] Sitton was a master of the technique of the dismissal of a fact or view by the simple expedient of putting words and phrases in inverted commas and thus giving them an ironic infexion. Thus, in the same way, in which his Stalinist contemporaries wrote of the "'revolutionary' past of Trotsky," or the "'humanistic' bleatings of the liberal press," Sitton was sufficiently deft with his punctuation to come up with such variations as "the 'Arab' National movement," "the Arab 'National' movement," "the 'Arab' world," "the Arab 'world'" and "the Arab 'leadership'" or "the 'Arab' leadership." "The 'noble' Arab nation" or simply "the noble Arab nation" appeared throughout the Zionist press, regardless of political affiliation, and if Sitton was the unchallenged master of this form of political punctuation it was a reflection of the determined rearguard action being fought in the nether regions between General Zionism and Revisionism, against the Left's increasing acceptance of the existence, in one form or another, of an Arab national movement.

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[41]S. Schwartz "The Arab question again," HaBoger, 22.3.37.

[42]HaBoger, 24.6.37.

A review of Sereni and Ashery's Jews and Arabs in Palestine gave HaBoqer an opportunity to express General Zionist frustration with the Left's monopolising of the Arab question. The anthology, with its decidedly leftist slant, reminded Shalom Schwartz, always on guard against manifestations of diaspora mentality in Zion, of the books that used to be published in Germany proving that Germans and Jews should and could live together in peace for their mutual benefit. He objected strenuously to the book's strident anti-British tone, and the suggestion that Jewish Palestine must find its place within an Arab Federation, a "slogan of strangulation" that until now only members of Brit Shalom had dared to voice.[43]

If there were differences of opinion within the General Zionist camp, and between it and the Left, within and between Mapai and Hashomer Hatzair on the correct ways of dealing with the Arab question, there was almost unanimous agreement as to who should not be allowed to deal with it. This unanimity, which ran through the organized Zionist political spectrum from Left to Right, was expressed in hostility towards what could be described as unofficial attempts to hold talks, negotiations, and, worst of all, to come to peace agreements with Arabs. The danger of such unofficial and unauthorized initiatives was seen to be twofold. On the one hand they could lead the Arabs involved to believe that the Zionist movement was prepared to make concessions on certain vital issues -- the central one being, of course, the immigration question -- and on the other, to undermine the authority of the Jewish Agency,

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[43] HaBoqer, 22.1.37, S. Schwartz Review of Sereni and Ashery Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

both internally and as the sole body authorized by the Zionist movement to hold negotiations on political matters.[44]

THE "FIVE"

The initiative of the "Five," in the summer of 1936, were seen as involving precisely these dangers. The five men, J.L. Magnes, President of the Hebrew University,[45] Gad Frumkin, a judge in the High Court,[46] Moshe Novomeysky, head of the Palestine Potash Company, Pinhas Rutenberg of the Electric Corporation, and Moshe Smilansky of the Farmers Federation,[47] discussed plans for talks with Arabs for the first time on May 24, 1936.[48] On the basis of an earlier conversation between Frumkin, Musa al-Alami and Judge Mustafa al-Khalidi, during which the possibilities for a 10-year Arab-Jewish agreement had been discussed,[49] the five decided that they would attempt to find some way out of the current deadlock, and explore paths towards some form of agreement. The group agreed to keep the Jewish Agency informed of its progress, and would take no action without the approval of that body.[50] Before the group's chosen representatives were able to contact the Agency, however, Magnes met Musa Alami, and the two agreed that in a symbolic gesture of peace and reconciliation, the Jews would agree, during the period

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[44]JAE, 2.6.36.

[45]See Norman Bentwich, For Zion's Sake, (Philadelphia 1954), pp.190-2.

[46]See Gad Frumkin, Derech Shofet BeYerushalayim, (Jerusalem 1954).

[47]See Moshe Smilansky Tequma veShoa, (Tel Aviv 1953).

[48]Ben-Gurion, Talks with Arab Leaders, p.71.

[49]Mapai Political Committee, 23.5.36.

[50]Frumkin, pp.325-9.

of the negotiations, to forgo the use of the immigration certificates that they had already received from the government. The Magnes-Alami proposals included three sections, dealing with immigration, land and government. After 10 years the Jews were to form not more than 40 per cent of Palestine's total population, and, discounting natural increase, this came to a total annual immigration of about 30,000. Also the Jews were to undertake to employ a certain percentage of Arab labour in their industrial enterprises. On the land question the proposal stated that the Jews should guarantee to take the subsistence requirements of the Arab fellah into consideration when purchasing land, and to provide him with financial and technical assistance to develop the remainder of his land. The third section agreed that Jews and Arabs would both enter the administration in such a manner as to guarantee that every Arab head of department would have a Jewish deputy, and vice versa, and that a Legislative Council be created on a parity basis.[51]

Most of the members of the JAE were opposed to the undertaking to employ a percentage of Arab labour in Jewish enterprises, although some were more flexible on the proposed limitation of immigration.[52] Within Mapai, ideologically a far more cohesive body than the JAE, forceful opposition was expressed to the unofficial initiative. Berl Katznelson, who acted as a go-between between the group and the JAE, described the five men as "a group of Jewish notables" and expressed concern that what had begun as a private affair was rapidly taking on public dimensions. He suggested that the clause

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[51]JAE, 2.6.36.

[52]JAE, 22.5.36.

mentioning a percentage of Arab labour in the Jewish sector might well have been introduced by the Jews themselves (Smilansky was intended). Yitzhak Tabenkin felt that there was no hope of any reasonable agreement with the present Arab leadership, which was "not interested in peace," and warned that the whole question of the negotiations might be a government trick. The Jews involved were guilty of "treason," their moves "a break in the united Jewish front." There was, it was felt, one advantage -- if nothing came of the contacts then at least the JAE would not be held responsible for their failure.[53]

The JAE's debates on the proposals of the "Five" ended with the decision that negotiations covering a period of 5 years could be held with the Arabs only on the basis of the 1935 immigration figures (62,000) and provided that the initiative came from the Arab side.[54] The "Five" however, and particularly Dr. Magnes, were not considered sufficiently responsible or close to the JAE line for them to be authorized to conduct negotiations, and everything should be done to avoid the unpleasant prospect of the group reaching some form of agreement with the Arabs, only to have it subsequently nullified by the Jewish Agency.[55]

When Shertok and Joseph met Musa Alami (21.6.36), the full extent of the damage became clear, as Alami claimed that he was unsure as to who his recent interlocutors represented. Shertok

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[53]Mapai Political Committee, 3.6.36. Mapai Bulletin, 15.6.36. Vaad Leumi, 18.6.36, J1/7248.

[54]JAE, 14.6.36.

[55]Ibid.

reiterated that the Jewish Agency Executive was the only body authorized to hold negotiations, and that there was no question whatsoever of its agreeing to halt Jewish immigration, even for a short period.[56] After a further meeting with Alami, on 24.6.36, after which it became clear that he was unable to get any authorized Arab backing for negotiations with the Jews, the contacts between the Agency and Alami were discontinued, both sides blaming the other for the failure of the contacts.[57] In turn, Shertok did not give the "Five" his promised answer on the question of negotiations, and the matter was allowed to lapse.[58]

The initiative of the "Five," at the height of the Arab strike and disturbances, left the JAE with a fear of such unofficial moves in the future. Objections to such initiatives were based not so much on the content of the proposals as on the fact that their backers were eminent Jews who could exploit their public status to gain credibility with their Arab interlocutors. The objection was a political one, the feeling being that some of the participants, particularly Smilansky, were acting in their own interests, and it was only natural that the JAE and Mapai should oppose an agreement which they believed contained a threat to the dominance of Hebrew labour in the Jewish sector. Pinhas Rutenberg, it has been suggested, similarly, was motivated to participate in the talks in the hope of

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[56]Political Committee of Mapai, 21.6.36. Also Ben-Gurion Talks, pp.84-7.

[57]Shertok Diary, 7.7.36, S25/443.

[58]For memorandum of the "Five," see Ben-Gurion, Talks, pp.97-103. Also A. Sela "Sihot veMagaim bayn Manhigim Tsionim le'bayn Manhigim Aravim-Falastinim 1933-9" part one, HaMizrah HeHadash, No. 4 1972.

putting an end to the huge losses suffered by the Electric Corporation as a result of the strike.[59] Ben-Gurion subsequently expressed opposition to the initiative on the grounds that Smilansky's intention of oiling the wheels of agreement by paying £ 50,000 to the Arab Higher Committee was wrong, on both moral and practical grounds. "I knew," Ben-Gurion wrote later

> that the Arab people as a whole could not be bought for money, and I was convinced that the notables ...with whom Smilansky negotiated, did not represent this people and that any agreement with them would be worthless, since the Arab people would not follow them.[60]

As for the terms mentioned in the abortive negotiations, the figure of 30,000 annual immigration contrasted unfavourably with the Jewish Agency's demand for bargaining on the basis of 62,000 (the record 1935 figure), but it was not long before, under the threat of partition, regrets were being expressed that an annual ceiling of 30,000, for 10 years, with real Jewish and Arab participation in the Administration, had been rejected.[61] In December 1938, with the threat of minority status, drastically limited immigration and a prohibition of land sales menacing the future of Zionism, Yosef Sprinzak recalled that "two years ago,"

> we discussed the proposals of the "Five," and... we were pleased that they had no concrete proposal from the Arabs. I was not very happy with that "victory" and I thought then that we should have helped them find an Arab partner; not to call them traitors, but on the contrary, to see

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[59]Aharon Cohen, Israel and the Arab World, pp.274-5.

[60]Ben-Gurion, Talks, pp.78-9.

[61]M. Glickson in Congress of General Zionists reported in HaAretz, 18.6.37.

them as a weapon of Zionist and Jewish policy.[62]

FORWARD TO THE EAST

The formation of the Kedma Mizraha Association (Forward to the East) in the summer of 1936 was another manifestation of public concern with the increasingly worrying political situation. Kedma Mizraha however, saw itself as a primarily cultural and educational body rather than a political organization and defined its goal as "knowledge of the East and the creation of cultural, social and economic ties with the peoples of the East and correct explanation of the work of the Jewish people in this country."[63] Initially, the association was regarded as being a successor to Brit Shalom, but the preponderance of Sephardi personalities, with the addition of Professor Y. Klausner who so bitterly opposed Brit Shalom, and, of course, Kalvarisky, gave it a different character. This strange coalition took pains to differentiate[64] itself from the notorious Brit, and promised, from the outset, to work only with the knowledge of and in coordination with the Jewish Agency and the Vaad Leumi.[65] The Association proposed the creation of an "Advisory Committee on Arab Affairs" in conjunction with the Agency and the Vaad Leumi,[66] but the proposal was not taken very seriously and Kedma Mizraha complained that it was not even getting replies to its letters to the JAE.[67] The association stressed its non-party character, its

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[62]Y. Sprinzak at Mapai Party Centre, 7.12.38.

[63]Kedma Mizraha to M. Shertok, 16.7.36, S25/3111.

[64]Ben-Gurion meeting with representative of Kedma Mizraha (n.d.) [1936] S25/9785.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ben-Tsvi to Shertok, 8.7.36, S25/3119.

[67]Kedma Mizraha to JAE, 9.8.36, S25/3111.

commitment to the fulfillment of Zionism, combined with the conviction that this involved no damage -- indeed only benefit -- to Arab interests, and its firm belief that the Arab question had been seriously neglected and although it advertised its position on a number of platforms achieved no tangible results.[68]

A meeting with Hebraist David Yellin, Kalvarisky, and other representatives of Kedma Mizraha gave Ben-Gurion an opportunity to reiterate his claim that the Agency had in no way neglected contact with the Arabs, and to express his doubts about the efficacy of cultural work in bringing about Arab-Jewish rapprochement. Knowledge of Arabic, he pointed out, somewhat absurdly, had not helped the Jews of Yemen, and he warned the association's leaders not to get involved in the question of Hebrew labour -- did they also intend to discuss the question of the Hebrew language? Only those with absolute faith in the eventual realization of Zionist aspirations, and a knowledge of and respect for Arab nationalism should enter into political discussions with the Arabs, he argued.[69]

Reports reaching the JAE of the associations activities did little to abate its natural scepticism. The talk given by Egyptian journalist Mahmoud Azmi to Kedma Mizraha at Kalvarisky's home in April 1937 conveys some idea of the group's milieu and interests:

> Le moment le plus pathétique pour moi [said Azmi] fut le jour où...je vis des ouvrages en hébreu avec caractères arabs et des écrits en langue arabe en hebreu. J'ai trouvé honteux pour nous

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[68]Y. Eliachar at Asefat HaNivharim, 17.8.36, J1/1147; Kedma to Zionist Actions Committee, Zurich and to Rabbi Meir Berlin, (n.d.) [mid-August 1936] S44/38b.

[69]Ben-Gurion meeting with Kedma. op.cit.

> de laisser cet héritage d'interpénétration s'évanouir pour des causes de lutte nationale bien ou mal comprise.[70]

"Vilensky," Leo Kohn of the Political Department reported,

> who knows Azmi well....generally describes him as a shrewd, sly and corrupt journalist. He had been entirely bankrupt in Egypt in the material and political sense when Mr. Kalvarisky picked him up (my emphasis I.B.) and provided him with the possibility of going to Baghdad where he had fixed himself up very nicely again.[71]

The Agency's general attitude to Kalvarisky was sufficiently disparaging for it to rub off on Kedma Mizraha too. Since the beginning of the disturbances, Kalvarisky had taken every available opportunity to remind the Jewish public of his past efforts to come to an agreement with the Arabs, and of the JAE's neglect of the question.[72] Enumerating the lost opportunities of the past, he warned the Jewish Agency against "groping in the dark" towards a solution, particularly now that the threat of partition was imminent.[73] Kalvarisky's 70th birthday, in March 1938, was marked by an article in HaOlam which emphasized, rather too pointedly, the active septuagenarian's "deep commitment to the principles of Zionism" and "total loyalty to the higher authorized national institutions."[74] Although pleased with the appearance of Haqiqat al-Amr[75] Kalvarisky continued to press for the establishment of an

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[70]Report on Kedma Mizraha meeting, 7.4.37, S25/3111.

[71]L. Kohn to Shertok, 30.4.37, Ibid.

[72]See H.M. Kalvarisky "Open letter to..." Bustanai, 29.4.36 and "Kinship of Cousins," Palestine Review, 24.7.36.

[73]Kalvarisky lecture to Kedma Mizraha, 17.5.37, J1/2010.

[74]HaOlam, 24.3.38; also Bustanai, 16.3.38.

[75]Kedma Meeting, 7.4.37, op.cit.

Arabic weekly, to be published in Cairo and, Shertok reported, instantly sceptical,

> painted a rather glorious picture of a group of men possessed of civic courage and ready to fight prejudice, swim against the current and risk a great deal in sponsoring an unpopular cause. The two names he mentioned did not sound very convincing, but he was full of faith and zeal, and begged for an opportunity to prove that he was right.[76]

The apparently indefatigible Kalvarisky needed £1500 for this enterprise and was asking the Agency for £500, having been promised £500 each from Magnes and PICA. There was some discussion in the JAE as to whether such a journal might be more effectively published in Cairo or Jerusalem, and objections were expressed to supporting any effort in which Magnes had a hand. Some executive members felt that the current method of publishing articles in the Arab press was more effective than a pro-Zionist Arabic journal could be. Eliezer Kaplan complained that the activities of Magnes and Kalvarisky were "damaging" and that they were "confusing the public" and thus serving as unknowing tools in the hands of the Arab gangs.

Finally it was decided that since it would be too difficult to control a paper appearing in Cairo, the JAE's contribution of £500 could be better spent on exploiting existing opportunities in the Arab press.[77] There was an additional reason for rejecting what Joseph, characteristically, called "Kalvarisky's pet Arabic newspaper,"[78] when it was discovered that Azmi, Kalvarisky's

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[76]Shertok Diary, 1.7.38, S25/269.

[77]JAE, 30.10.38.

[78]Joseph to Shertok, 2.11.38, S25/1513.

candidate for editor, had recently "fixed himself up very nicely again" and had been appointed to Egyptian Government service, and this, apart from his other unsavoury qualities, put an end to the whole matter as far as the JAE was concerned.[79]

Joseph, who ran the Political Department during Shertok's frequent absences, and whose distaste for Kalvarisky's activities was surpassed perhaps only by his dislike of Pinhas Rutenberg, probably because the latter had the funds at his disposal which Kalvarisky always chronically lacked, lost his patience with the entreaties and accusations of these self-appointed diplomats when it was suggested that Kalvarisky be a delegate to the 1939 London talks. It was in fact the non-Zionist Dr. Senator of the JAE who put forward the proposal, but Kedma Mizraha was demanding independently that David Yellin and Kalvarisky be sent to London as representatives of the Vaad Leumi.[80] Menahem Ussishkin, surprisingly perhaps, was in favour of Kalvarisky's going to London, while Joseph and Kaplan were opposed on the grounds that he had never had contacts with the representatives of the Arab states who would be in London, and, as Joseph put it, although Kalvarisky did know some Arabs in Palestine, they no longer played any role in public life.[81] "So far as the Political Department was concerned," Joseph recorded in his diary,

> it should be permitted to do its work in its own way. I felt I had once and for all to take exception to the attitude which was adopted in some

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[79]See Joseph interview with Kalvarisky 13.12.38, S24/43; also Diary entry for 16.1.39.

[80]Kedma Mizraha to Vaad Leumi, 3.2.39, S25/7628; A. Lourie to Joseph 9.2.39, S25/45.

[81]JAE, 25.12.38.

> quarters, such as by Kedma Mizraha, that on the one hand stood their group of Jews who were anxious for an Arab-Jewish understanding, and on the other, the Executive of the Jewish Agency which had no such desire. That was not at all the case. The Kedma Mizraha would, in my opinion, spend its time more profitably if it did something to improve Arab-Jewish relations instead of talking about the fact that other people are not doing enough. The methods of dealing with the Arabs that Mr. Kalvarisky had been familiar with 20 years ago were not adequate nowadays. At any rate I considered that the Political Department should have a free hand to carry out its task according to its own understanding and with the assistance of its own experts.[82]

JUDAH MAGNES AND THE ARAB QUESTION

If Kalvarisky's unauthorized and incompetent activities were seen as a threat to the Political Department's monopoly of Zionist relations with the Arabs, then the pacifist and bi-nationalist views of the influential J.L. Magnes, President of the Hebrew University and highly respected in British, Arab and Jewish circles alike, were seen as potentially far more dangerous. A certain ambivalence in the JAE's attitude towards Magnes' unauthorized activities resulted from its awareness that it was both difficult and embarassing to attempt to control or reprimand such an esteemed figure, but he nevertheless found himself the object of bitter attacks in the press and in Zionist councils when he took political matters into his own hands.

Magnes' participation in the negotiations of the "Five" had remained secret beyond the limited political circles which were kept informed of such events and he had therefore not then been exposed to the kind of odious attacks that were later to be directed

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[82]Joseph Diary, 25.12.38, S25/43.

against him when his personal diplomacy and criticism of Zionist policy became more widely known. After the abortive talks in the summer of 1936, Magnes avoided public issues for some time, and although invited by the Peel Commission to testify before it, refused to do so fearing that "I might add to the deep suffering of my people here and elsewhere,"[83] although he did send the Commission a copy of his 1930 pamphlet Like all the Nations? He was bitterly disappointed with the conclusions of the Commission and felt that it "illustrates in all its nakedness our miserable failure -- the failure of each one of us, Jew, Arab and English. An extraordinary work of building up wasteland has been achieved. But we have failed. We have not known to make peace."[84]

Magnes' attack on partition in an impassioned speech at the Jewish Agency Council following the Zionist Congress in August 1937 opened the floodgates of public dislike of the man and his views. He talked of the constant war and bitter irredentism that partition would mean, and of the need to create a bi-national state under British auspices. His comment that the Jews were pressing for a Jewish state without seeking to gain Arab approval, evoked the following angry interruptions from the floor:

> Ben-Gurion: Do you have Arab approval of Jewish Immigration?
> Rabbi Berlin: Did you have Arab approval to found the Hebrew University?
> (Magnes attempts to continue)
> Ben-Gurion: Did you have Arab approval to come to Eretz-Yisrael?
> Magnes: I came to Eretz-Yisrael before a Jewish State was mentioned, and always tried to reach an agreement with the Arabs.

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[83]Magnes to Coupland, 7.1.37, quoted in Hattis, p.172.

[84]New York Times, 18.7.37 in Hattis, p.170-1.

Golomb, Harzfeld, Yavnieli: (in unison) Magnes is slandering the Jewish people.
Magnes: Not by the sword...but by the spirit!
Yavnieli: And in slavery![85]

Davar described Magnes as motivated by "simplistic Jewish and humanistic feelings...but totally out of touch with reality."[86] Weizmann, according to the New Judea, "resented the homiletical ammunition of Dr. Magnes and his warning not to take anything from the Arabs."

> The Jews never took anything away from others. It was always the other way about. People, especially in America, continually talk of peace with the Arabs, creating the impression that Zionists do not desire peace. Such talk is banal and is likely to be misinterpreted. From the very beginning the Jews have paid very dearly for every inch. Already Abraham had paid very dearly for the Cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah. No-one did more to improve relations with the Arabs than he. In 1918 he was already seriously attempting to arrive at an understanding with them.[87]

Gilyonot could not discover the source of Magnes' "reverential preaching" in the various species of assimilationism, and felt that Magnes was a "pathological" phenomenon, standing in awe and admiration before the "Ishmaelite murderers" while despising the feelings and anguish of his own tortured people. A movement concerned with its honour, the Journal wrote, could not permit the existence of such "tragicomic curios," especially when they were perched on the

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[85]HaAretz, 19.8.37.

[86]Davar 24.8.37. For a similar view see Hashomer Hatzair (Hebrew), 1.9.37, quoted in Oron, op.cit., p.88.

[87]New Judea, August-September 1937.

heights of Mount Scopus "in our supreme cultural institution."[88] Magnes' suggestion that the Jews find their place amongst the awakening movement for pan-Semitism was seen by the journal of the United Kibbutz Movement as a classic manifestation of "degenerate assimilationism."[89]

THE HYAMSON-NEWCOMBE PROPOSALS

If Magnes' indictment of Zionist failure and his opposition to the creation of a Jewish state aroused public wrath, he met with even greater opposition when he once again took political affairs into his own hands and became involved in the Hyamson-Newcombe proposals.

The JAE was first informed of the initiative in a letter from Albert Hyamson to Arthur Lourie of the Jewish Agency in London on 4.11.37.[90] Hyamson, a British Jew, was the former director of the Palestine Immigration Department and Colonel F. Newcombe, a professed and active Arabophile, director of the Palestine Information Office and former representative of the Arab Higher Committee in London before that body was outlawed in September 1937.[91] The main points of the proposals were: a sovereign Palestinian state with

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[88]Gilyonot, September-October 1937.

[89]Mebifnim August-September 1937. For the results of public disapproval of Magnes' views see his description of the "stony silence" which greeted his address at the opening of the Hebrew University term. Magnes to Bentwich 18.11.37, A/255/393.

[90]Ben-Gurion Memorandum 3.2.38, S25/10094.

[91]See chapter four for various comments on Hyamson and Newcombe.

equal rights for all citizens; a ceiling on Jewish immigration limiting the Jews to 50 per cent of the total Palestine population, and a Jewish National Home but not a Jewish State. Hyamson had "excellent reasons for believing that responsible and representative Arabs are prepared to meet representative Jews to discuss the possibility of a settlement of the Palestinian question."[92] The tone of the whole episode, which was to last for about three months, was set by Lourie's reply to Hyamson. "I notice," he wrote,

> that one of the conditions of the proposed scheme ...is that the Jewish population of the new Palestinian state should remain a permanent minority. I feel it is only right to point out at once that there is very little likelihood of such a proposal being considered by any responsible Zionist, but before sending your letter on to the Executive in Jerusalem, I should be glad if you would let me know the names of the representative Arabs whom you have in mind.[93]

Magnes had received the text of a "Suggested basis for discussion between Jewish and Arab representatives," on his evidence, "towards the end of October 1937"[94] i.e. before the text was transmitted to the Jewish Agency. The character of the initiators, the content of the proposals, the timing -- a period when the British Government appeared to be seriously vacillating on the partition question -- combined to make the JAE suspicious of the whole venture from the very start. The fact too, that the identity of the Arabs involved remained throughout uncertain cast serious doubts on the

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[92]Hyamson to Lourie, 4.11.37, Ben-Gurion, Talks p.142.

[93]Ben-Gurion memo., 3.2.38, loc.cit. Also Lourie to Neville Laski, 10.11.37. Ben-Gurion, Talks p.144.

[94]Magnes Report, 13.1.38, Ben-Gurion, Talks p.168.

value of the proposals. Magnes, it appears, had nothing to do with the original draft, but considered the proposals worthy "of particular attention, both because of the participation of Col. Newcombe in [their] authorship as also because of [their] form and contents."[95]

The plan was first discussed at the JAE meeting of 21.11.37, when it was decided that the proposals should be pursued, despite apprehensions that they might be an Arab ploy to sabotage the creation of the Jewish state. If the proposal indeed emanated from an Arab source, it represented a considerable advance in seeking a compromise settlement with the Jews, mentioning a figure of 50 per cent Jewish population.[96] The sine qua non of any move by the JAE, however, was to discover the identity of the Arabs behind the scenes. "The intermediaries have applied to the Executive of the Jewish Agency -- a body of unmistakeable identity and indisputable standing. Such a body is entitled to know, before it commits itself to any expression of opinion, the exact identity of its opposite numbers to whom its reaction is to be communicated."[97] The Agency's tactics, Shertok told Selig Brodetsky, should be twofold:

> We should not give an unwarranted or premature negative reply which would be interpreted as mere intransigence on our part and give rise to a new legend about there having again been a golden opportunity of coming to an honourable peace with the Arabs which had been killed by the folly of the Jewish Agency. On the other hand we must endeavour to manoeuvre the other side, or the intermediaries, into a position where they must

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[95]Ibid.

[96]JAE, 21.11.37; Ben-Gurion, Talks pp.145-9.

[97]Shertok to Brodetsky, 25.11.37, S25/1649.

> lay all their cards on the table. If the cards which they now keep hidden are such as to make it necessary for us to say No, that No would then be justified. If they are such as to make the proposal appear to us as worthy of consideration, then there would be no harm in taking a further step.[98]

Leo Kohn thought the JAE was doing the right thing in not refusing to explore the proposals: "It must never be said that we turned down any suggestion which might have helped towards an Arab-Jewish understanding."[99] He thought, though, that Hyamson's reply to Lourie[100]-- that the future Palestine state should be neither an Arab nor a Jewish state -- was "eyewash."[101] The essential aim underlying the draft, he continued, was evident from section two -- that every Palestinian was to have "equal and complete political and civil rights."[102]

> This sounds eminently liberal, but what does it mean in the reality of political life?....that ...every Beduin and illiterate is to count at the polling-booth with the most advanced European Jew. The crudely major-itarian design of the agreement is very skillfully covered under that sweeping liberal phraseology.[103]

Section seven, providing for the interests of the minorities being watched over by the British Government after the creation of the independent state, moved Kohn to recall the case of Iraq, and the proviso included in section one -- that the independent state will

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[98]Ibid.

[99]Leo Kohn to A. Lourie, 26.11.37, ISA 68/20.

[100]Letter received on 20.11.37, Ben-Gurion, Talks pp.149-50.

[101]Kohn to Lourie, loc.cit.

[102]See S25/10094 for draft.

[103]Kohn to Lourie, op.cit.

only be created when the League of Nations has certified that the population of Palestine is fit for self-government -- also tempted him to

> refer to the example of Iraq, when that certificate was given by the Council of the League despite the serious misgivings of the Permanent Mandates Commission...which were justified only too soon by the slaughter of the Assyrians by regular units of the Iraqi army in the next -- following year.[104]

After the clarification, albeit only partial and unsatisfactory, of some of the vaguer points of the original text between Magnes and Hyamson -- points, incidentally, which were answered with such speed from London as to make it virtually impossible that Hyamson and Newcombe were in fact conferring with anyone in the Near East -- Shertok informed Magnes, on 6.12.37, that the Agency had decided that "the only way to bring out the facts as they are and to arrive at real negotiations, in case such are possible, is to arrange a meeting between us and the Arabs who may be ready for negotiations," and authorized Magnes to propose such a preliminary meeting to Arabs "of appropriate status."[105]

The publication in Falastin on December 9,[106] of reports of an agreement between Weizmann and Nuri Said on the Palestine question, according to which the Jews would not form more than 35 per cent of the population, Jewish immigration to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and the creation of a Legislative Council in Palestine, confirmed the

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[104]Ibid.

[105]Shertok to Magnes, 6.12.37, Ben-Gurion Talks pp.153-4.

[106]Quoted in Sela, loc.cit., part two p.13. See uneasy leader in HaAretz, 12.12.37.

Agency's suspicions that the whole Hyamson-Newcombe affair was nothing but an Arab plot to frustrate partition.[107] In addition, a meeting between Musa Husseini and Levy Bakstansky of the Jewish Agency in London made it clear that "the impression was conveyed to the other side or the side received the impression that the Jewish Agency had given its assent in principle to the proposals of Mr. Hyamson."[108] Following the information published in Falastin, the Jewish Agency convened a press conference on 21.12.37 at which Ben-Gurion declared that the demand for a Jewish minority was not a basis for negotiations:

> Reports that negotiations were proceeding on this basis were designed to confuse public opinion in Britain and amongst Arabs and Jews and to assist those assimilationist Jews who had no right to speak for their people whom they had never assisted and who wished to combat Zionism.[109]

The strongly-worded statement published a week later by the Vaad Leumi was intended to discourage well-meaning persons from further unilateral attempts to negotiate an understanding between Jews and Arabs and evoked the following editorial in the Palestine Post, a response which clearly illustrates the general issues seen to be involved in such unofficial initiatives:

> Misguided persons who undertake a quest for a solution outside the framework of properly constituted authority are not only flying in the face of accepted democratic procedure but are causing incalcuable harm to the object which they wish to serve. Whether it is Lord Samuel

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[107]Shertok to Magnes, 13.12.37, Ben-Gurion, Talks p.156.

[108]Shertok to Magnes, 28.12.37. Ibid. p.159. Also L. Bakstansky meeting with M. Husseini, 15.12.37, S25/10095.

[109]Report of press conference in Palestine Post, 22.12.37; full text in S25/2960. Also HaOlam 23.12.37.

> or Dr. Magnes...or any others who have propounded schemes for settlement, in private or in public, they have themselves to blame for the public disavowal they evoked from the representative organ of the Palestine Jewish community. And the greater the distincti n of the author of this or that proposal, the greater the responsibility and the heavier the offence. That such propositions are unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of the people whom they would benefit must be clear to them from the fact that the authorised spokesmen for the people have rejected them. To go over the heads of a constituted authority is to do a definite disservice to the people and to the aim equally dear to all. The disservice is twofold by prejudicing the issue, does harm to the prospects of negotiations which might legitimately and authoritatively be undertaken, and it places the Jewish people who are bound to reject the basis of such private negotiations, as the private negotiators know, in the invidious position of intransigence. The Jewish people fighting for their future on the basis of rights which have been approved by the entire civilized world are entitled to ask for better treatment at the hands of those of their sons who find surrender the better part of patriotism.[110]

"PROPAGANDA IN THE GUISE OF SOLUTIONS"

British hesitancy in implementing the partition proposals resulted, it was believed, at least in part, from the impression given by unauthorized statements and negotiations that there were "moderate" Jews who, as opposed to the "extremist" Jewish Agency, were prepared to compromise on basic political issues.[111] The worst feature of the situation, Weizmann complained, was that the failure of the British Government "to show its hand in the political field inevitably opens the door to all kinds of political intrigues."

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[110] Palestine Post, 30.12.37, see also Davar, 30.12.37.

[111] HaAretz 29.12.37; HaPoel Hatzair, 24.12.37 "Whispers of an Agreement" talked of "usurpers" and "political tresspassers." Gilyonot, January 1938 demanded an end to the "anti-Zionist germs....pimping at our expense."

> There is unfortunately no lack of agencies, both self-appointed and foreign paid, who would try their hands at that entertaining game. There has been a rich crop of "solution" schemes of late, coming from every conceivable quarter, British, Arab and even Jewish. All these projects are inspired by the desire to find "reasonable" alternatives to partition which, their authors tell us, has in any case already been dropped by the British Government. The common feature of all and sundry is that the Jews will have to agree to remain a permanent minority and to accept Arab sovereignty and the inclusion of Palestine within an Arab Federation, in consideration of which they are to be assured the inestimable boom of "minority rights" and the generous tolerance extended, as we all know, by Moslem rulers to Jewish ghetti from time immemorial.[112]

This "propaganda in the guise of solutions," Weizmann continued, "has of late assumed the form of a concentric attack."

> It emanates simultaneously from Cairo....from London, where our old trusted friend Col. Newcombe is in close collaboration with Mr. Albert Hyamson devising "solutions" which are launched here with the obliging assistance of Dr. Magnes; from Jerusalem, where the Anglican Bishop is busy, with the moral support of no-less spiritually minded members of the Administration, in exorcising the evil spirit of partition, nobly assisted by that convinced Achad Ha'amist, Mr. Neville Barbour, pro tem correspondent of the London Times; and finally from Baghdad where the spirit of King Feisal is raised from the dead to father another "solution" ....It is a veritable witches Sabbath. The clear object of all these efforts is to utilise the present condition of unsettlement for strangulating the National Home.[113]

The belief that there was some kind of international conspiracy at work to defeat Jewish aspirations had its effect too on the complex course of the Hyamson-Newcombe proposals, which came to an end in a welter of resentment and mutual recriminations. Magnes was accused by the Agency of having overstepped the bounds of the

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[112]Weizmann to S. Wise and L. Lipsky, 21.12.37, S25/1649.

[113]Ibid.

authority given him to find out whether the Arabs purported to be behind the original proposals were prepared to meet representatives of the Jewish Agency, while Magnes, in turn, argued that Ben-Gurion's statement of 21.12.37 had put an end to the chances for the proposals.[114] Magnes did his best to preserve his dignity in the face of the Agency's charges and commented, after the Agency informed him that the proposals could no longer be considered a basis for discussion, that

> Everyone observing the methods of politicians knows that they are ready too often to disavow mediators and peacemakers. When preliminary feelers meet with obstacles, "strategic retreats" and jockeying for tactical position and political advantage are a time-worn custom. It comes hard, however, to realise that at such a critical hour we seem to be "like all the nations," making the end justify whatever means we think it necessary to employ.[115]

Was Magnes' view justified? However bitter his resentment for the "methods of politicians" and cruel his realization (surely no surprise) that Zionist statesmen were like those "of all the nations," it could not be fairly said that the Jewish Agency was acting capriciously or high-handedly in throwing cold water on the approaches made to it via Hyamson and Newcombe. The identity of the Arabs behind the scheme never became fully apparent and the false and sensational reports in the Arab press, coupled with the well founded suspicion that the whole "initiative" was nothing but a

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[114]For a detailed account of the whole affair see Herbert Parzen "A Chapter in Arab-Jewish relations during the Mandate era" Jewish Social Studies Vol.29 (1967) p.203 and A. Sela, op.cit. The Arab sources indicate that the Arab Higher Committee attempted to use the affair as a tactic to prove that it was possible to solve the Palestine problem by an Arab-Jewish understanding and thus to undermine the basic assumption of the Peel Report that no political peace between Arabs and Jews in Palestine was possible. See Y. Porath, Palestinian Arab p.242 and p.365, notes 72 and 73.

[115]Magnes to JAE, 21.2.38, Ben-Gurion Talks p.180. See also JAE meetings, 16.1.38, 20.2.38, 27.2.38, 3.4.38, and 24.4.38.

manoeuvre designed to foul up what chances remained of partition made the official Zionist response the only possible one.

"SLAVERY WITHIN FREEDOM"

Magnes' involvement in the Hyamson-Newcombe affair, with all its ramifications for the Jewish Agency's authority to conduct negotiations, and the role of unauthorized but influential individuals in political matters, led the Agency to take an increasingly stern view of the intervention of such people in the realm of high politics. With the British Government's steady withdrawal from the Peel partition proposals (the appointment of a new Technical Commission was announced on 4.1.38) the Agency saw the need for Jewish unity as even greater than before, and responded angrily to unauthorized voices which could even further undermine the rapidly deteriorating position.

When Dr. Morris Karpf, the American non-Zionist member of the JAE, told the "American National Conference for Palestine" of non-Zionist eagerness for Arab-Jewish understanding and his group's endeavour "to bring about such an understanding through whatever channels are most suitable," he aroused a particularly angry response.[116] Weizmann, who was "amazed" by the contents of Karpf's speech, which included an expression of opposition to discrimination against Arabs in the field of employment, and also to terrorism, and other "apodictic pronouncements," took a formal position. "You are aware," he wrote to Karpf

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[116]For Karpf speech see S25/5168 and New Palestine, 28.1.38.

> that at the Zurich meeting of the Council of the Jewish Agency a resolution was adopted empowering the Executive "to enter into negotiations with a view to ascertaining the precise terms adopted by H.M.G. for the establishment of a Jewish State." What is one to think in the light of this if a member of that very same Executive which is entrusted with this task comes out with a public declaration that [Weizmann quoted from Karpf's speech] "the Jewish state issue is the cause of confusion and division." This is rank anarchy. If the Jewish Agency is to be regarded as a responsible public body, its members, and especially those who form its Executive, must maintain corporate responsibility. The action which you have taken in making such a public statement would, if followed by other members, of necessity lead to the break-up of the entire structure of the Jewish Agency.[117]

The "homiletical ammunition" and "apodictic pronouncements" of men like Karpf and Felix Warburg -- a group of men ungenerously described as "Yahudim," rich Anglo-Saxon, often American Jews, non or anti-Zionists and often unjustly characterized by their "assimilatory" tendencies and ignorance of the realities of the Palestine situation -- grated more and more on "official" Zionist ears. Non-Zionist philanthropist Felix Warburg had attracted even more criticism than Magnes for his part in the fifth Council of the Jewish Agency in August 1937. Rumours[118] that he had held talks with Izzat Tannous and Amin Rihani on the boat from America to Europe added insult to injury after his spirited opposition to partition at the Agency Council and the threats of the non-Zionists to leave the Executive, on the grounds that when they had agreed to join the enlarged Jewish Agency in 1929, there was to be no committment to a Jewish state in Palestine. In order to placate them Shertok had

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[117]Weizmann to Karpf, 3.2.38 and HaAretz, 8.2.38.

[118]HaAretz, 23.8.37 and Mapai Party Centre, 18.9.37.

been forced to agree to a clause instructing the JAE to continue its efforts to reach understanding with the Arabs.[119] Warburg had claimed, somewhat disingenuously, that the partition proposal "substituted minature photography for a large canvas." Weizmann responded that

> it was difficult for him, just as it was painful, to engage in polemics with Mr. Warburg, whose steady work on behalf of the Jewish Agency he valued so highly; but, he continued, wise men should value their words. And this applied equally to Zionists and non-Zionists.[120]

Avraham Elmaleh of the Vaad Leumi spoke for many when he wrote that Warburg's behaviour at the Agency Council reminded him of the corpulent and conservative Jewish notables of the Ottoman Empire, who remained unaffected by the Young Turk revolution and entrenched themselves even further in patriarchal idleness and corruption.[121] This was hardly a fair comment on a man whose tireless philanthropic efforts had provided large sums of money for Zionist work in Palestine. The relationship between Warburg and the Jewish Agency was fraught with the tension that inevitably resulted from the combination of an often desparate need for cash and disagreement on basic political questions. In September 1935, for example, Weizmann wrote what he himself called "a begging letter"[122] for funds to help counter growing anti-Jewish propaganda in the Middle East and Warburg replied that

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[119]Shertok at Mapai Party Centre, 29.8.37 and New Palestine, 3.9.37.

[120]New Judea, August-September 1937.

[121]HaBoqer, 1.9.37. A. Elmaleh "Removed from reality."

[122]Weizmann to Warburg, 20.9.35, Z4/17026a.

> You naturally are not able to control the nationalistic outbursts of some of the Zionist wings and, while I appreciate that you have the intention of getting on a better footing with the Arabs, so long as Jews crow "Jewish state" and "National land" your efforts will not be taken very seriously by the Arabs.[123]

Elmaleh expressed deep public resentment of this "rich uncle"

> who once again played that familiar tune, whose present and future failure no-one doubts for a moment, except perhaps those "Yahudim," removed from the realities of Eretz-Yisrael, who don't know its stubborn Arabs, or who know them only from a boat trip with some of them, no doubt concerned to "squeeze" from the American Jewish millionaire whatever they could squeeze from him by extravagant promises of a "Round Table," so-called "peace" and Arab-Jewish agreement.[124]

LORD SAMUEL AND THE ZIONISTS

Of all the "non-official" Jews who took it upon themselves to criticize the activities of the Jewish Agency with regard to the political future of Palestine and relations with the Arabs, and to propound their own solutions, the most prestigious and controversial was Sir Herbert Samuel. Palestine's first High Commissioner had become increasingly critical of Zionist policies, and the Zionist attitude towards him, always ambivalent, became openly hostile.[125]

The Agency had first been annoyed by Samuel's "unauthorized and ill-advised" talks with Nuri Said and Winterton in September 1936, and, Shertok wrote to Brodetsky,

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[123]Warburg to Weizmann, 10.10.35 Ibid.

[124]HaBoqer, 1.9.37.

[125]For aspects of Samuel's relations with the Zionists, see Bernard Wasserstein, "Herbert Samuel and the Palestine Problem," English Historical Review, No. 361, Oct. 1976.

> it is vitally important that we should be able to disavow Samuel with regard to his proposals and take effective steps to prevent the rcocurrence of such irresponsible initiative on the part of himself and those behind him.[126]

Samuel's attack on the partition plan in the House of Lords debate of 20.7.37 and his proposal of an upper limit of 40 per cent to the Jewish population of Palestine, earned him the dubious honour of being included by Ben-Gurion in the "non-Zionist International" along with the other "Yahudim" -- "Warburg, Waley-Cohen, Magnes and all the rest of the gang."[127] Other speeches in the debate were harsh. Lord Dufferin's, which preceded Samuel's, was "full of brazen lies," "cruel" and "idiotic." "But," Ben-Gurion wrote bitterly, "'Our' Lord Samuel outdid him."[128]

The 20th Zionist Congress was a stormy, emotional affair. Weizmann's defiant and resounding "We do not need Lord Samuel to teach us about Arab Nationalism" was, the New Judea reported, drowned in a sea of deafening applause. When had the Jews ever denied the existence of Arab Nationalism?

> Their records, in Congress and elsewhere, bear witness to their desire to see the day when the two national groups would meet together to build up their common country. Lord Samuel would have done better to tender his advice to the other side. He was aware of Lord Samuel's merits. He had defended him in Congress before now. But it has pained him that a Jew of his standing should have spoken as he did. Of course, he did not speak as a Jew. He was careful, he spoke as a great British Peer -- so he thought. And he had

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[126]Shertok to Brodetsky, 25.9.36, S25/5808; JAE 20.9.36.

[127]Ben-Gurion to N. Goldmann, 22.7.37, Zikhronot 1937, p.314.

[128]Ben-Gurion Diary, 20.7.37 Ibid. p.310.

> no word to spare for the great Jewish tragedy -- He, the chairman of the British Council for German Jewry. Why my Lord, say why?[129]

Samuel's short visit to Palestine in February 1938 prompted HaOlam to survey the Zionist Movement's attitude towards him. He had been criticized during his period as High Commissioner, but basically he had been admired and respected. The Yishuv was prepared to forgive him the "pogroms" of 1921, his cessation of immigration, his giving the Beisan lands to the Arabs, his mild attitude to the Mufti -- but his speech in the Lords demanding a Jewish minority had cut to the very quick, and could never be forgiven.[130]

It was not surprising then, when, in December 1938, with the noose of British "betrayal" tightening around the neck of the National Home, that Samuel's return to his suggestions of July 1937 enraged the Yishuv once more. His name was removed from Jewish streets; a resident of Petah Tikvah sent him a kufiyyah and'igal as a "token of appreciation."[131] Samuel's support for the Government and his failure to defend the rights of his people was, it was felt, merely another manifestation of that "patriotic objectivity" traditionally adopted by influential Jews when their loyalties were threatened.

> Whatever else Lord Samuel can claim, there is no originality in his method of approach. In the long and chequered history of the Jewish people, there have been many instances of distinguished Jews addressing a non-Jewish audience in criticism of their own people and apparently without regard for its plight.[132]

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[129] New Judea, August-September 1937.

[130] HaOlam, 24.3.38.

[131] HaBoger, 29.12.38.

[132] Zionist Review, 15.12.38.

Davar abandoned the "Lord Samuel was an honourable man until..." approach and catalogued his crimes against Zionism and the Jewish people, of which the recent House of Lords speech was merely the most recent.

> Is there a psychologist who will explain the dark internal need of the noble Jewish Lord to serve as patron and tribune for the priests of blood? Ahad Ha'am described this phenomenon as "slavery within freedom."[133]

Attacks on Samuel were so fierce that even HaBoger was moved to comment on "our hysterical bitterness and lack of thought" and felt that it was wrong to attack every Jew who did not agree completely with Zionist policy.[134]

This hyper-sensitivity to criticism and meddling was not confined only to that of Jews. H.St. John (Haj Abdullah) Philby,[135], Daniel Oliver,[136] Neville Barbour[137] and others regularly came under attack for their unauthorized meddling in Palestine affairs, especially when they played on the pan-Arab themes that were so grating on Zionist ears. But it was natural that it was Jewish critics who bore the brunt of Zionist attacks.

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[133]Davar, 12.12.38.

[134]HaBoger 29.12.38; also Palestine Review, 16.12.38 "A letter to Lord Samuel."

[135]HaAretz, 26.10.37; Davar, 16, 19.11.38.

[136]Davar, 11.5.39, wrote that Magnes was Oliver's "ideal Jew."

[137]Zionist Review, May 1937.

"GERMAN INTELLECTUAL TYPES" AND THE ARAB QUESTION

As a group, the Jews of Germany were considered particularly prone to the kind of mistaken notions about Zionist policy, particularly on the Arab question, that caused so much annoyance in official Zionist circles. The liberal traditions of German Jewry, the close links between German Zionism and Brit Shalom, and the demands of the Judische Rundschau for negotiations with the Arabs at a time when the Yishuv was still reeling from the shock of the 1929 disturbances, had all created a special hostility to criticism from the German Zionists.[138] The tendency too, of German immigrants to isolate themselves from the national life of the Yishuv, and the difficulties they often experienced in acclimatizing to the new and strange levantine surroundings in which the "Yekkes"[139] found themselves had tended to cut them off from others, and they met with considerable resentment when they began to interest themselves unduly in the Arab question. Gilyonot viciously attacked the Judische Rundschau for its habit of printing any accusation ever made against "stubborn and uncompromising Zionism" and of publishing translations of Moshe Smilansky's articles from Bustanai. The German Zionist paper's suggestion that one way of approaching the Arab problem might be to forgo the idea of a Jewish majority and to invite Arab co-operation in Jewish industry and technology -- was summed up by its critic as "Jew-boys, give your property as well as your minds."[140]

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[138]See Hattis, pp.59-60. Also Stephen M. Poppel "German Zionism and Jewish Identity," Jewish Journal of Sociology, Dec., 1976, pp.115-122.

[139]A corruption of the German "Jacke" derived from the Germans' tendency to dress formally, even in the heat of Palestine.

[140]Gilyonot, April-May 1936.

The Political Department was extremely annoyed when it heard of a recent German immigrant who had given a "lecture" on the subject of Arab-Jewish relations in an Arab village near Ein Harod, and reprimanded the Kibbutz's Mukhtar, a man renowned for his knowledge of and good relations with the local Arabs, for allowing a naive and pretentious new immigrant to take it upon himself to "improve" Ein Harod's relations with its neighbours.[141]

A meeting of the German Zionist Students Union on the Arab question in November 1939, addressed by Leo Kohn and Klinov, of the Agency's newly-founded Information Department, gave expression to the views of some of these "German intellectual types," as Kohn described his audience:

> Then there began a lengthy debate in which one man after another got up and made speeches on the most extreme Brith Shalom lines. The first was Dr. Bruenn, who worked himself into a great temper and asserted in most aggressive and combative terms that it was impossible to live in an atmosphere of aggression and hatred and that under such conditions it was impossible to build up a National Home. The Jews had to seek ways of economic and other cooperation with the Arabs and to limit their claims and then it would be possible to find ways of political cooperation. The next speaker was Dr. Bilaski, a gentleman notorious for his combination of an aggressive pacifism with an equally aggressive arrogance.[142]

Kohn's response was that the first preliminary to becoming a political entity was to stop living in a world of illusions and to begin facing realities:

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[141]Shertok to Chaim Sturman, 11.3.38, S25/3119.

[142]L. Kohn to Joseph, 4.12.39, ISA 68/10.

> We German Jews (deliberately said "we") [Kohn was German-born] had made the mistake in Germany of building up for ourselves a picture of our German neighbours which made it easy for us to live with them, but which was utterly contrary to realities as we had come to see at the end when it was too late. If we started hugging similar illusions about our Arab neighbours in Palestine similar shocks would be in store for us, as in Germany. Just as the ordinary German was not that high moral and politically mature being as which he had been conceived by us during the liberal era, so the Arab of Palestine was not an English liberal of the Manchester type. The Arabs were still a primitive people with many good qualities and fine instincts, but they had a tremendous inferiority feeling which found vent in all kinds of crude ways.[143]

IMMIGRANTS AND ADJUSTMENT

The activities of German immigrants were only part of a more general problem. The immigration figures for 1931 (4000) had shown the slight but steady decline that had set in in 1929, but the following year, 1932, they more than doubled to 9,000. In 1933, the fateful year of Hitler's rise to power in Germany, this figure tripled to over 30,000. 1934 saw the entry of 42,000 people, while the 1935 figures reached new heights with a total immigration of 62,000. Thus, discounting natural increase, there were about 150,000 Jews in Palestine in 1936 -- more than forty per cent of the Jewish population -- who had been in the country for five years and less.

It is difficult to say what this sizeable proportion of the country's Jewish population knew of the Arab problem before their arrival in Palestine, or how long it was before they were able to form their own opinions. What they knew of the Arabs was more than

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[143]Ibid.

likely drawn from Zionist literature in their countries of origin and what they saw in Palestine undoubtedly strengthened whatever opinions and prejudices they held. In the harsh realities of Palestine, often so different from the ideal picture many must have imagined, or been led to imagine, many must have learnt quickly of the existence of an Arab problem and in a far more tangible form than the pious declarations of the wish for peace and understanding with the Arabs that they had seen in the Zionist press, or heard from the platforms of Zionist meetings and congresses.

If they had come to Palestine, not out of any particular ideological motive, but simply because of persecution in their native countries, then they perhaps approached their new experiences with a more open mind than those who had been more or less educated as to what to expect. Even for this latter group, however, the disappointments must have been great. For the young members of Hashomer Hatzair, for example, who found themselves boycotting Arab workers in Jewish orchards, in blatant contradiction of all the tenets of proletarian solidarity, but a dire necessity in the new Palestinian reality, for the Central European intellectuals who saw Jewish children destroying Arab vegetables and for the settlers who found themselves guarding by night what they tilled by day, the gap between expectations and reality may have been painful. For the majority, of course,the struggle of adapting to their new environment and learning a new and difficult language sapped their physical and mental energies and unless they had been deeply involved in Zionist politics before their immigration, it was unlikely that they would have either the time or the inclination to delve deeply into the Arab question, and there were, after all, more important questions. It was, though, occasionally pointed out that an effort

should be made to introduce new immigrants to the Arab question and HaAretz,[144] for example, published a series of articles in easy vowelled Hebrew, on the Palestine Arab movement. For people who had escaped from violence and persecution in Europe, the realization that their last refuge was also the scene of bloodshed and danger could have a detrimental effect on the development of their Zionist awareness.[145]

THE PRESS AND THE ARAB QUESTION

Just as it is difficult to assess how the new immigrants responded to the disturbances and the intermittent violence in which they found themselves, so it is hard to determine the extent to which the Jewish public was affected by press discussions on the Arab question. The number of such journalistic debates is too great to deal with anything but the smallest proportion of them, but the examination of some of these articles will give us an at least partial picture of the terms and ambience in which the Arab question was discussed in the Hebrew press.

The views of "Reb Benyamin" (Y. Radler-Feldman) were always sufficiently unusual and provocative to evoke a spirited response. Combining a deep committment to maximalist "Herzlian" Zionism, (although without subscribing to Revisionism) with Jewish religious orthodoxy, liberalism and some traces of pan-Semitism and pacifism, he wrote extensively on the Arab question. His most famous piece was probably his plea, in his introduction to the March 1939 pamphlet Al Parashat Darkenu ("At the Parting of the Ways"), for the

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[144] HaAretz, 17.8.36.

[145] HaAretz, 28.6.36, Dr. G. Hildheim "The Disturbances and the New Immigrants."

recognition of the Arab question, and not the "English question" as the "cardinal question of Zionist policy,"[146] but in fact he wrote on the same theme throughout the period, constantly reiterating his warnings that "something must be done while there is still time."[147] An article that appeared in HaOlam in the summer of 1936 reaffirmed his "Herzlian-Maximalist" views and complained of the neglect of the Arab question by the official institutions of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement. He scorned the value of Ben-Gurion's much vaunted talks with Arabs in Geneva -- why was it more useful to speak to Shakib Arslan in Switzerland than to rural Mukhtars and fellahin in Palestine?[148]

Reb Benyamin regularly succeeded in evoking critical reactions from official quarters. When he attacked both supporters and opponents of partition (though he himself opposed it) and accused the Jewish Agency of having "neglected, ignored and rejected" the Arab question, and having failed to follow up an Arab initiative as recently as the Geneva Congress,[149] his claims were specifically dismissed by Shertok at a Jewish Agency news conference.[150] This strange eclectic, whose importance may be described as catalytic rather than direct, defended those Jews who were prepared to accept temporary minority status in exchange for peace and attacked those

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[146]Al Parashat Darkenu, (At the Parting of the Ways) ed. Reb Benyamin, March 1939.

[147]See for example Zur Arabischer Frage: ein wort in zwölfter stunde, published for Kedma Mizraha (Jerusalem 1936).

[148]HaOlam, 23.7.36 and also 8.4.37.

[149]"Will they partition?" Moznaim, Winter 1937. Cf. HaTsofe, 24.12.37.

[150]Davar, 5.1.38.

supporters of partition who were willing, albeit grudgingly, to give up 9/10ths of historic Palestine and leave the future open to wars and irredenta. This stand was criticized by M. Assaf for its naivety and misunderstanding of the true nature of Arab nationalism, which was concerned, Assaf argued in Davar, with political domination rather than numbers.[151] Writing under the pen-name "Brutus," Reb Benyamin returned to the offensive in HaTsofe, responding to an article that had argued that "for us the Arab question is an English question"[152] and claiming that this statement contained in essence the Zionist leadership's total failure to deal with the Arab question. He attacked the obsession with a Jewish majority -- "we can be a majority in this country and still live in Hell."[153]

One of Reb Benyamin's sworn enemies -- at least on paper -- was Shalom Schwartz, who wrote regularly for HaBoqer and HaOlam, and who seems to have reserved a particularly strong brand of vitriol for the treatment of the ageing publicist, who, Schwartz wrote, was affected by the "spiritual slavery" of Brit Shalom.[154] Schwartz accused Benyamin of the "artificial inflation of feelings of semitic solidarity" ( a reference to his pan-Semitism) and of undermining the

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[151]Davar, 10.1.38; M. Assaf "Opponents of Partition with an Agreement."

[152]HaTsofe, 5.9.38, S. Shragai "The Arab question."

[153]HaTsofe, 9.9.38, Reb Benyamin "The Arab question is also a Jewish question." See also "Needs and abilities," Ibid. 28.8.38 and response in HaOlam 22.9.38, Y. Persitz "Something on the Arab question." Reb Benyamin's article moved S. Schwartz to remark (HaBoqer, 19.9.38) that the pen-name "Brutus" was particularly appropriate as the article was "murder of our national aspirations."

[154]HaOlam, 15.12.38, "The idea of an Arab Federation."

greatest achievements of Zionism. His faith in the Arab fellah reminded Schwartz of the belief of Jewish assimilationists in the Russian peasant or worker -- and in Palestine too, just as in Russia, the main participants in the "pogroms" were those very peasants.[155] Thus the debates went on, often conducted in terms and concepts that were as remote from the reality of Palestine as the solutions propounded. Neither pan-Semitism nor Russian peasants had much to do with the real political situation.

One genre that was particularly in vogue in the Hebrew press during these troubled years was a kind of feuilleton describing a chance meeting (more often than not on a train) between a Jew and Arab(s), sometimes old friends whom political circumstances have prevented from meeting for some time. The fellah complains (in 1936) of the destruction of his vegetables by the Shabab, curses his leaders, and says many bold and outspoken things, the most outrageous of which are gently explained to the Hebrew reader as "typical Oriental exaggeration, of course!"[156] By the beginning of 1938 such casual encounters have begun to include complaints about the internal Arab terror,[157] while by 1939, fat, snappily-dressed "Salim Effendi" has bowed to the authroity of the gangs and replaced the noble tarbush that used to crown his manly forehead, with the crude kufiyyah and 'igal of the hills and desert.[158]

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[155]HaOlam 23.2. and 2.3.39, S. Schwartz "Cures for the Arab 'disease'." Also Reb Benyamin's articles in Moznaim, December 1938, January 1939. Cf. Shmuel Yavnieli, "Answer to Mr. Brutus," HaPoel Hatzair, 7.11.38.

[156]HaAretz, 2.7.36, "Conversation with an Arab." Cf. BaMaale, 15.5.36, "Conversation with Ibrahim."

[157]HaTsofe, 20.1.38, 8.2.38.

[158]HaOlam, 12.1.39, "Meeting with Salim Effendi."

The inevitable effect of such caricatures must have been to create a certain stylized prototype of "the Arab" for the Jewish reading public, and if they had any contact with Arabs, no doubt found confirmation of what they read in the newspapers. The constant harping too, on the lack of an indigenous Arab culture in Palestine, the dangers of "Levantinization" and other oriental pitfalls can have neither endeared Zionist hearts to their Arab neighbours nor encouraged their minds to exert themselves unduly over the much mentioned but little considered Arab question.

SEPHARDI JEWS AND THE ARAB QUESTION

One group which laid claim to particular expertise in the field of Arab-Jewish relations was the country's Sephardi Jewish community. Without entering into a general discussion of the relationships between Palestine's different Jewish groups (a subject eminently worthy of further research) and with all the caution required in using such simultaneously amorphous and schematic terms as Ashkenazi and Sephardi, it is clear that relations between these two communities were not all that the ideology of national unity might have hoped for. The flight of "Oriental" Jews from the Manshieh Quarter of Jaffa at the beginning of the 1936 troubles shocked the Yishuv with the spectacle of an unorganized mass of desparately poor Arabic-speaking Jews fleeing their homes in panic, something, some observers intimated, which would have been unthinkable for "European" Jews, who would never abandon their positions.[159]

Disturbing as the realization of the domestic gap may have been, it was in the field of Jewish-Arab relations, and the correct way of

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[159]See JAE, 15.5.36 and Davar laPoelet, 10.5.36 "The Manshieh Refugees."

dealing with them, that the real conflict arose. The demands of the Jerusalem Sephardi Council to appear before the Royal Commission[160] and to send its own delegation to the St. James Conference[161] in order to present their view of the correct way to develop peaceful Zionist-Arab relations (a view inevitably influenced by the fact that many of the Sephardim were natives of Palestine), was seen in official Zionist quarters as an arrogant assumption of a monopoly on relations with the Arabs.[162] Not only was the Agency unwilling to allow separate Sephardi representation before British forums but was also wary of entrusting its propaganda in Arabic to Jews whose Zionist committment was not beyond doubt, and thus a potentially invaluable asset to a comprehensive Arab policy was never exploited.[163]

Equally annoying to the Jewish Agency were the occasional representations of Jews in Arab countries purporting to be able to find some way out of the Palestine deadlock, by virtue of their unique position as Jewish citizens of Arab states concerned with a solution of the Palestine problem. While the occasional pressure applied to these Jews in their own countries to disassociate themselves from Zionism and to praise Arab and Moslem tolerance could not be prevented, the conservative and anti-Zionist Egyptian Jewish establishment in particular raised the hackles of the Jewish Agency by its attempts to send a delegation to the London talks. Suggestions

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[160]JAE, 25.10.36.

[161]JAE, 25.12.38.

[162]See Mapai consultation on Arabic Newspaper, 20-22.7.36,BB23/36.

[163]See for example, Y. Wahmani to Y. Ben-Tsvi, 26.6.36, S25/9783 on this subject.

that Egyptian Jews might be given some representation on the Jewish Agency Executive prompted Bernard Joseph to write:

> The trouble with these gentlemen was that in normal times they did not give two hoots for Palestine. Only when they were afraid that our activities might possibly trouble them did they show signs of life. I do not know on what basis [we are] expected...to trust these people who are avowedly anti-Zionists in discussions about Palestine, concerning which, incidentally, they know nothing.[164]

Meeting the "Jeunesse Dorée" of Egypt's Jews on a visit to Egypt with Weizmann in April 1939, Joseph commented that it was "remarkable how rapidly European Jews living in Egypt can become levantinised" and noted that Weizmann gave them a "good trouncing"

> with the result that....the Egyptian Jews will at least for the next few weeks not be so terrified about the activities of the Zionists and not quite so anxious to sell the Zionists lock, stock and barrel in order to appease the Egyptians.[165]

The 1939 White Paper all but killed the Arab question as a substantive issue in the politics of the Yishuv, and the war once and for all gave indisputed primacy to the "English question" over the Arab question, despite the well-meaning enthusiasm of the "League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement" which met with roughly the same response from the Jewish Agency as had its forebears in the field.[166]

The Arab question during the 1936-1939 disturbances was as much an internal Zionist and Jewish question as anything else. As the

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[164]Joseph Diary, 9.1.39, S25/43.

[165]Ibid., 10.4.39.

[166]See Hattis, pp.212-230 on the "League."

objective possibilities of reaching some form of agreement with the Arabs of Palestine receded, so the debates and discussions within the Zionist movement as to how such an agreement could be reached, and what the bases for cooperation should be, intensified. The Arab problem between 1936 and 1939 was no longer an "unseen question" but it was an increasingly insoluble one.

The struggle by the Jewish Agency to maintain its monopoly over dealings with the Arabs, and its opposition to those groups and individuals which threatened this monopoly, was a perfectly natural phenomenon. It was unfortunate, however, that this struggle was accompanied by what Norman Bentwich described as "the growth of the totalitarian spirit, the nationalisation of the soul,"[167] and the increasing inability of those who disagreed with the policies of the Jewish Agency -- and particularly on the Arab question -- to affect the course of events.

Leo Kohn had an answer for the Agency's critics and for those Jews who did not meet its rigorous standards of Zionist clarity and committment:

> There is a famous passage in Exodus providing for some rather harsh treatment to be meted out to those who would remain slaves when freedom was offered to them. I fear that despite the lessons of centuries we have still in our midst a good many candidates for such forceful enlightenment.[168]

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[167]Norman Bentwich, Wanderer between Two Worlds, p.217.

[168]Leo Kohn to A. Lourie, 26.11.37, loc.cit.

# CHAPTER THREE

## ZIONISM AND TRANSJORDAN

When the disturbances broke out in April the first formal move pertaining to relations between Palestine and Transjordan took the shape of a letter from the Chief Secretary of the Palestine Government to the JAE forbidding Jewish travel to Transjordan in the light of the uncertain security situation.[1] In its trivial way this restriction was symbolic of the Zionist connection with Transjordan: only with peace in Palestine could this emotional Rubicon be crossed.

Yet Hall's letter was in fact the prologue to a period of intense and intimate contact between the JAE and the Emir of Transjordan. At a time when Zionist contacts with Arabs both inside and outside of Palestine reached unprecedented frequency and intensity, the relationship with Abdullah was the most intimate and the most fruitful of all.

While a large proportion of the contacts between the JAE and the Emir's palace were taken up by exchanges of information and Jewish advice to Abdullah on tactical matters relating to the situation in Palestine, neither of the protagonists lost sight of their respective long-term strategic interests.

For the Jews, the question of their entry into Transjordan remained a serious political ambition and formed the basis for their interest in the country. Abdullah, for his part, always entertained

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[1]Chief Secretary, J. Hall, to JAE, 20.4.36, S25/3515.

hopes of one day being able to reunite both sides of the Jordan under his rule, and it was this ambition that lay behind his interest in the problems of Palestine. It is worth noting that a central feature of the relationship between the Zionists and Abdullah was the spirit of tactical compromise with which both sides approached relevant issues. Both parties must have been aware of the contradictory nature of their aspirations, yet were often prepared to aid the other in ways which would help the fulfillment of the other's designs. A tentative answer to this apparent paradox can perhaps be found in the idea that because neither side had any real hope of carrying their wishes to their logical conclusions (Jewish settlement in Transjordan and Abdullah's rule over the whole of Palestine) while the Palestine problem remained such an open sore, they co-operated to try and fight what both considered, to a greater or lesser extent, to be the cause of the problem.

It was, therefore, in the Mufti of Jerusalem and in uncompromising pan-Arabism that the Zionist movement and the Emir Abdullah found the focus for their common interests. It is clear that the Zionists were more threatened by this extremism than Abdullah was, but it was lucky for the Jews that their neighbour in Transjordan was not a man to see his ambitions easily thwarted. In short, both sides needed each other and used each other accordingly. It is an indication of how much the Jews needed Abdullah that they were often prepared to suffer what could at best be described as his astonishing ability to manoeuvre, and, at worst, his betrayals. The motivations of both parties are perhaps most succinctly caught by the Hebrew phrase "Not out of love for Mordechai, but out of hatred for Haman."

THE JEWS, ABDULLAH, AND THE ARAB STRIKE.

From the moment the disturbances began, the Emir's representative, Mohammad al-Unsi, became a useful source of information about what was going on in the Arab camp, both within the Arab Higher Committee, and in Transjordan itself.

The message he brought from Abdullah in the middle of May 1936 was that the Jews had to help the Arab Higher Committee out of the complicated situation they'd created by their own irresponsible action.[2] He reported that in Transjordan the Istiqlalists were inciting the Beduin to take revenge on the Jews and the government. Accordingly, Aharon Chaim Cohen, the official of the Political Department responsible for contacts with Transjordan, suggested giving the Emir £500 for expenses.

> ...information from the Arab press and from secret sources corroborates the hostility against us, and its worthwhile doing everything possible to stop this spreading.[3]

Throughout May, reports reaching the Political Department indicated intense activity in Transjordan. The Istiqlalists were holding secret meetings to discuss the creation of a federation of Syria, Transjordan and Palestine; British troops no longer went into Amman unarmed for fear of spontaneous demonstrations and disturbances; and, most important, members of the Arab Higher Committee had been to Amman and seen the Emir.[4] Following disturbing reports on May 24, Aharon Cohen telephoned Mohammad al-Unsi.

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[2]A.C. Cohen to Shertok and Ben-Tsvi, 18.5.36, S25/3539.

[3]A.C. Cohen to Shertok and Ben-Tsvi, 18.5.36, S25/3252.

[4]M. Nisani, Report, 24.5.36, S25/3241.

> When he began to stutter and evade a clear answer, I told him that we'd heard a rumour that the Emir had sent a memo to the High Commissioner which included proposals for a solution of the complex situation in Eretz-Yisrael. I added that the question that interested us at the moment was not whether the Emir was consistent in this memo with our interests or not, but information on the situation, even if he does have something against us.[5]

At Cohen's request, al-Unsi came to Jerusalem and delivered a report on the contacts between the Emir and the Arab Higher Committee. After the meeting on May 1 between the Emir and the committee, Abdullah sent a memorandum to the High Commissioner in which he proposed stopping immigration to Palestine. According to al-Unsi, the Emir knew in advance that this suggestion wouldn't be accepted, but he made it under pressure from the Arab Higher Committee who came to him as an individual and asked him to help the Palestine leaders get out of their difficult situation. While the government was grateful to the Emir for his help, it was not prepared to discuss stopping immigration but was prepared to keep its promises on the sending of a Royal Commission which would thoroughly investigate the Palestine question. When the Emir was visited by Jamal al-Husseini and Awni Abd al-Hadi on May 21, Abdullah tried to persuade them to stop the strike and trust in the Royal Commission. As a result of this meeting the Emir began negotiations with the Arab Higher Committee on a suitable formula for a demand to stop immigration which would convince the English of the need to fulfill Arab demands. After discussions the Mufti agreed to ask that the government take into account the present tense situation and stop immigration. The Emir's intention, al-Unsi reported

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[5]Meeting between A.C. Cohen and M. al-Unsi, 24.5.36, S25/3241.

> is to find a way out which will split the extremists and at the same time will weaken the position of the Arab Higher Committee in the eyes of Arab public opinion and of the government.[6]

The Emir then wrote to the High Commissioner and to the Arab Higher Committee, sending the committee a copy of the letter he'd sent to the High Commissioner. He also wrote privately to the Arab Higher Committee asking them not to take extreme anti-Government decisions and not to deepen anti-English feeling. The Emir's feelings towards the Jews were mixed, but he made his position clear

> he's attacking us because we're not proposing terms for an Arab-Jewish agreement. Therefore he doesn't see himself connected to us on the Palestine question. This (according to him) doesn't mean that he's our sworn enemy. He was the first to tell the Arabs that they should recognize the Jewish enterprise and he promises to do this in the future, as long as his personal position in the Arab Movement isn't damaged.[7]

Despite a certain testiness from Abdullah towards the Jews, he had been in touch with Moshe Shertok on how best to deal with the Arab Higher Committee. Before the meeting on May 1, Shertok had written to him explaining the damage being done to the Arab economy in Palestine.

> I also explained that the Arab leaders are in the hands of young gangs inexperienced in political and economic life. I proved that there is unlikely to be any Arab agreement with the British without the Jews.[8]

On June 6, seven members of the Arab Higher Committee went to Amman again.[9]

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Shertok at JAE meeting, 3.5.36.

[9]D. Ben-Gurion, Zikhronot 1936 "History of the Intervention" p.493.

> The Emir applied to us through an intermediary asking how, in our opinion, he should talk to the committee. I advised him to tell them that by continuing the strike they were courting disaster both for the country and for themselves ....The Emir should ask them to accept the following solution; He would appeal to them on the strength of his moral authority to stop the strike in order to avoid bloodshed and would promise to put himself at their disposal, to proceed with them to London to negotiate with H.M.G. and to appear before the Royal Commission.[10]

Unfortunately, the Arab leaders came back from Amman empty-handed and disappointed and concerned that the terror they had unleashed was out of their control.

The Political Department, meanwhile, continued its efforts to persuade Abdullah to exercise his influence over the Arab Higher Committee. On June 28, Aharon Chaim Cohen wrote to al-Unsi suggesting again, along the lines of Shertok's earlier advice, how the Emir might bring pressure to bear upon the Arab Higher Committee to stop the strike.

> He can prove to them that they have displayed sufficient sacrifice....that all this has strengthened their position. However, continuation of the strike and the violence and bloodshed will make understanding between them and the government quite impossible. The Palestinian Arab leaders should publish a declaration to the people in answer to his highness' demands, praising the sacrifice, etc. of the Arab people, but asking them to stop the strike and restore order after the people has succeeded in revealing its strong will and proven its devotion to its leaders.[11]

Cohen continued in a manner suggestive of the nature of relations between the Agency and Abdullah and evocative of those troubled

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[10]"Shertok's Report on the Political Situation as presented at the Meeting of the Executive on June 7, 1936." Translation from the Hebrew. Confidential, Z4/10318(1).

[11]A.C. Cohen to M. al-Unsi, 28.6.36, S25/3781.

times:

> You understand, my dear friend, that the head of my department would be happy if he could meet his highness during these difficult days. We were afraid to suggest this lest we thus make his highness' position more difficult. The head of my department feels that in this complicated situation the appearance of a car in your city might cause undesirable agitation. What is more, such a visit cannot be undertaken without the agreement of the government and he doubts whether the government would welcome such a visit. The head of my department thinks constantly of the help that his highness could provide to find a way out of the present situation.[12]

Al-Unsi's answer was non-committal. He urged the Jews to put forward a proposal for rapprochement with the Arabs and didn't see any advantage in preferring more advice to the Arab Higher Committee.[13] Al-Unsi was of course speaking for Abdullah, just as Aharon Chaim Cohen was for Shertok.

On July 5 Cohen reported worrying movements in Transjordan, as if large reinforcements had been sent there; Al-Unsi was suddenly afraid to return to Amman:

> He managed, however, to transmit his master's request that we pay £2000 for the expenses of calming things down. According to him, they've got nothing from the government, in contrast to our information.[14]

It is not clear whether al-Unsi was lying or not. As early as June 27 the High Commissioner had telegraphed to the Secretary of State in London suggesting that a sum of £ 5000 be allotted so that Abdullah could distribute subsidies to the Beduin in order to avoid

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[12]Ibid.

[13]M. al-Unsi to A.C. Cohen, 3.7.36, S25/3781.

[14]Shertok diary entry, 5.7.36, S25/443.

the spread of disturbances.[15] At the end of August Wauchope reported back that £3,500 had been distributed by the Emir, and the rest by Major Glubb.[16]

By way of introduction to his request for money, al-Unsi reiterated Abdullah's committment to peace in Palestine and recalled his exile of Istiqlalists to Aqaba, etc. etc. He had only taken a position on the immigration question when forced to do so by the Arabs and the English and although his stand on this issue was necessarily harmful to Zionist interests, he'd used moderate language which hadn't always been liked by the Arab Higher Committee. Abdullah thought that the situation was still serious and that the Jews shouldn't entertain false hopes -- and they certainly wouldn't get anywhere by doing nothing. A solution must be found by stopping immigration for a given period, or by directing the stream of immigration to Eastern Transjordan, on the clear condition of the unification of both sides of the Jordan under Abdullah's rule. If the

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[15]High Commissioner to Secretary of State. (Telegram). Most Secret, 27.6.36, CO/831/39/77139.

[16]High Commissioner to Secretary of State, 31.8.36. Wauchope wrote: "Both the British Resident and Major Glubb are of the opinion that the subsidising of Tribal Sheikhs is proving efficacious and H.H. the Amir also attaches very great importance to this method of keeping the Beduin in hand. As Lt. Col. Cox observes, the natural reaction of the Transjordan Arab, whether he is a Beduin Sheikh or a village notable, when he is called upon to do something for the Government, or merely to refrain from something undesirable, is to ask for a quid pro quo. The consideration may be money or the remission of some payment due from him, or the grant of a coveted plot of land, or the pardon of a relative sentenced to imprisonment, or the employment of some relation; and of all of these possible methods I think that the offer of a present in money is the most suitable for the Amir to adopt. I consider that His Highness' remarkable success in preventing the spread of disorder to Transjordan during the past four months is to be attributed in part to the judicious use which has been made in the disbursement of subsidies." CO/831/39/77139

Jews didn't agree to halt immigration, at least temporarily, then the disturbances would drag on and no Jews would be allowed in at all. To this, Aharon Cohen replied unambiguously

> that not only would we not propose any limitation on immigration, but that we'd try and increase it in accordance with the country's economic absorptive capacity.

As for the proposal on the unification of both sides of the Jordan, it couldn't come from the Jews because it had never been considered by the Jewish Agency or any other Zionist Institution; such a proposal would encourage Abdullah's enemies to see him as completely identified with Zionist interests and because the British, who for a long time had been trying to restrict the Emir's intervention in Palestinian affairs, would see it as a plot between the Jews and Abdullah.[17]

On July 21, Cohen saw al-Unsi again.

> The Emir feels bad, Pressure's growing on him; there's a danger of outbreaks.....he's especially concerned about the oil pipeline and the rivers .....he has to go to Irbid to calm things down, but his hands are empty. The hint was obvious. I said I'd give him £500 -- a quarter of what he'd asked for. That's the second sum of£ 500 we've given him during the present disturbances.[18]

Shertok presumably felt that this was a worthwhile investment. The following day the Political Department's informant corroborated al-Unsi's information and sent details about an attempt to blow up the oil pipeline.[19] The Zionists had very good intelligence contacts in Transjordan and the reports from these sources were useful in

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[17]Talk with M.U. on 5.7.36, Secret. A.C. Cohen, 9.7.36, S25/10093.

[18]Shertok diary, 21.7.36, S25/443.

[19]E. Sasson to B. Joseph, 22.7.36, S25/10122.

verifying possible doubtful information transmitted by al-Unsi. The man whom Elias Sasson quaintly called "our Amman correspondent" reported the open smuggling of arms and ammunition on a train from Ma'an.[20]

If the Jews gave Abdullah financial support it was not because they put much faith in his efforts to bring about peace, or that he was in fact capable of doing so. Talking to Pinhas Rutenberg, who pinned great hopes on the Emir, Shertok warned him

> against having too much faith in Abdullah's ability to bring the Arabs to an agreement with us. If its worth their while, they'll accept it and praise Abdullah for it; but if its not worth while, they'll reject it and Abdullah's position as head of the Hashemite family won't save him from all the abuse and accusations of treason that they'll throw at him.[21]

Although the Agency recognized Abdullah's need to manoeuvre between his friends and enemies, the Emir sometimes tried the Jews' patience. Meeting al-Unsi on July 5, Aharon Cohen complained about the anti-Zionist character of an interview given by Abdullah to the News Chronicle. Al-Unsi apologized on his master's behalf and explained tortuously that the reporter had exaggerated what the Emir had said; that the despatch was held back by the government censor and that the article had been changed. However, since the Emir had felt that the reporter would probably print the original version instead of the censored one, he had thought he should try and soften the blow by publishing it in the Syrian and Egyptian press before it

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[20]E. Sasson to B. Joseph, 1.7.36, S25/10122.

[21]Shertok diary, 17.7.36, S25/443.

appeared in the News Chronicle![22]

Despite problems of this nature, reports indicated that Abdullah was doing his duty. On August 25 a despatch from the Political Department's agent in Amman reported that the Emir had distributed money to the tribal leaders and lectured them on the need to keep the peace, if only because the Arabs were not strong enough to fight the British.[23]

The Zionists realized, of course, that although Abdullah's good will was important, the crucial factor, as always, was British determination to prevent trouble. Enumerating the gains of the strike period for the Jews in mid-August, Ben-Gurion pointed out that one important indication that the British had not completely failed (a charge most forcefully expressed by Moshe Beilinson and other members of Mapai) was their prevention of intervention from Transjordan and other Arab countries.

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[22]Talk with M.U., 5.7.36, op.cit. A similar episode took place in August 1938 when a strongly anti-Zionist memorandum that Abdullah had sent to the Royal Commission was published in the Syrian and Iraqi press. After remonstrations from the Agency, al-Unsi protested that a)the memo had been written "only to express the opinion of the Arabs of Palestine and her neighbours on the painful question of Palestine" and that Abdullah was "keeping his own opinion to himself and would reveal it at another opportunity" and b)that the memo had in fact been stolen by a palace official and sent to the Palestine Defence Committee in Baghdad which gave it to the press with the evil intention of causing a split between the Agency and the Emir. Abdullah was astonished that the Jews had fallen into this trap. A.C. Cohen and M. al-Unsi meeting, 17.8.38, S25/3486.

[23]E. Sasson Report, 25.8.36, S25/3241.

> we shouldn't underestimate this at all.....this prevention demanded and still demands great efforts, both from the High Commission and from....London, and these [efforts] were made to a far greater extent than is generally known.[24]

THE JEWS, TRANSJORDAN, AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION

From the moment it was announced that a Royal Commission was to be appointed to look into the Palestine question, Transjordan again became an object of discussion in Zionist councils. Faced with what promised to be a comprehensive survey of the working of the Mandate and the reasons for the outbreak of the disturbances, the JAE lost no time in realizing the importance of the Transjordan issue, both in terms of the potential of the comparative economic argument, and in terms of its role as part of a comprehensive solution to the Palestine question. That the role of Transjordan in this solution was presented from the Zionist point of view, and in terms of Zionist aspirations did not diminish the importance the Jews attached to it as part of a settlement.

A week before the outbreak of the disturbances in Jaffa, and after the successful conclusion ("a moral victory") of a Parliamentary debate on the Legislative Council issue, Ben-Gurion reported to the JAE on a meeting he had had with the Bishop of Winchester, who described for the Zionist leader how the land question in Ireland had been the ruin of the Irish. It wasn't easy, Ben-Gurion said, to explain to a "Goy" the special situation in Palestine. The Arabs would make much use of the dispossession argument in their propaganda.

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[24]Ben-Gurion to Ihud Council, 18.8.36, in Zikhronot 1936, p.385. It was generally accepted that Abdullah was playing a positive role. See, e.g. B. Katznelson at Mapai Party Centre, 3.6.36.

One of the Zionists' main propaganda possibilities was to compare the situation in Palestine with that in Transjordan.[25] On his arrival in London in mid-July Ben-Gurion was angry that the subject of Transjordan had not been raised sufficiently by the London office with the Colonial Office. In contrast to Shertok's more pessimistic views[26] on the possibility of entry into Transjordan, Ben-Gurion felt that the Transjordan issue was still an open one, and that it could be easily used to pressurize the government, particularly in connection with the land question.[27]

Shertok, either more honest or more fickle (or both) than Ben-Gurion, had accepted the very arguments used by the British for their opposition to Jewish settlement in Transjordan.[28] As soon as Jewish

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[25]Ben-Gurion diary, 10.4.36, Zikhronot 1936 pp.120-21.

[26]JAE, 22.5.36.

[27]Ibid.

[28]These arguments are examined in detail by Anita Shapira in her excellent article "Parashat haOptzia al Adamat ha'Amir 'Abdallah b'Ghor al-Kibd: Rayshit haqeseher bayan haHanhala haTsionit veha'Amir 'Abdallah" in Tsionut, published by the Institute for Zionist Research, Tel Aviv University, pp.295-345. It is interesting to compare this cool and well-documented appraisal of the British refusal to allow Jewish immigration into Transjordan with the following passage that appears in a prestigiously-edited textbook published in Israel recently: "Few episodes [writes Sefer Toldot haHagana editor Yehuda Slutzky] reveal so clearly the hypocrisy of British policy. The English were adept at preaching rapprochement and compromise between Arabs and Jews and wept crocodile tears over these two narrow-minded peoples who didn't want peace. They were, however, terrified at the first sign of real rapprochement and did everything they could to frustrate it. This was a stark revelation of the cruel principle of 'divide and rule' on which imperial policy rested." HaYishuv be'Yemei haBayt haLeumi, ed. Binyamin Eliav (Jerusalem 1976) p.55.

settlers got to Transjordan they would demand official recognition of the Hebrew language, defence of their lives and property etc. etc., and all this would lead to a change of regime in Transjordan which Britain could not allow.[29] Ben-Gurion knew all this, having heard the arguments many times, but was tenacious enough to continue to attach great importance to Transjordan, and to believe that the difficulties could be overcome. Menahem Ussishkin, at the other end of the Agency Executive, felt very much the same as Ben-Gurion. He believed that the time was ripe to demand from the British that the whole of Transjordan be re-attached to Palestine, and that it be used either for Jewish settlement, or, if that was not acceptable, for the settlement of Arabs from Palestine. As far as Ussishkin was concerned, there was no difference between sending an English farmer from "the district of Liverpool" to the "district of Manchester" and sending an Arab from Galilee to Transjordan. "Either," he concluded, "all the 25 million dunams of Transjordan will become an object for Jewish settlement, or they will be for the settlement of the Arabs of Eretz-Yisrael."[30]

In London in June, Ben-Gurion had considered the possibilities for Arab-Jewish negotiations. In exchange for limitations on Jewish immigration and Arab participation in the administration, the Arabs could offer to open up Transjordan, even if this did not include a formal change in the status of the regime.[31] "If," Ben-Gurion noted

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[29]JAE, 22.5.36.

[30]JAE, 19.5.36.

[31]Ben-Gurion diary, 7.6.36, BB201/1/34.

in his diary

> we could get.....a million dunams in the west and three millions in the east, I wouldn't mind giving Abdullah another title as Moslem head of all the Arabs in the Mandatory area, east and west. By this gesture we'd certainly win the support of the Emir and the Nashashibis, but [he added] it might make it difficult to get an agreement with the Mufti's people, and without the sanction of the Mufti and his clique, an agreement isn't worth much.[32]

Ben-Gurion later gathered these rather confused ideas together into a letter to the Jewish Agency Executive,[33] to which Shertok's response was uncharacteristically curt:

> ....as for the plan for an agreement which you've drawn in your imagination there are several things that astounded me. Do you really think that the Arabs can accept our insistence on aliya of 65-80,000 a year as a concession in their favour -- a concession for which we can demand as compensation from them Jewish settlement in Transjordan? .....the idea of a title for the Emir Abdullah is an artificial invention with no basis in reality.[34]

Unperturbed by Shertok's response, Ben-Gurion wrote to the Mapai Party Centre, reiterating that he thought it was worthwhile giving Abdullah some title "if we'll thereby get closer to getting into Transjordan,"[35] although he was prepared to concede that his colleague knew better than him on this question.[36]

There do not seem to have been any further Zionist excursions into the dangerous and sensitive area of Arab or Moslem king or priest making, but interest in Transjordan did not lapse. While the

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[32]Ibid., 6.6.36.

[33]Ben-Gurion to JAE, 9.6.36, in Zikhronot 1936, p.257.

[34]Shertok to Ben-Gurion, 14.6.36, Ibid., p.256.

[35]Ben-Gurion to Mapai Party Centre, 18.6.36, Ibid., p.280.

[36]Ben-Gurion to Shertok, 18.6.36, Ibid., p.283.

strike was still going on, the question of long term plans for relations between the Jews and Abdullah were being discussed, if only informally. When Tawfiq Abu al-Huda, the ex-Prime Minister of Transjordan, called at the Jewish Agency in early September, Shertok asked him whether he felt that the question of Jewish entry into Transjordan was dependent on the relations of the Jews with Transjordan alone, or whether it was connected to the relations between Jews and Arabs in Western Palestine. Al-Huda's opinion was that Transjordan was a country in its own right, and although the mood there was influenced by the situation in Palestine, as it was in other Arab countries, the question of Jewish settlement was a problem for which a solution could probably be found without reference to the question of the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Western Palestine.[37]

Whether Shertok realized it or not, the question he posed to Tawfiq Abu al-Huda struck at what was perhaps the unseen core of one of the paradoxes which characterized Zionist dealings with the Arabs. If Transjordan was "a country in its own right," and the question of Jewish settlement in it was unrelated to the problems of Palestine, then there were serious implications not only for Zionist aspirations to live in, and by extension participate in the political life of, that country, but also for the increasingly widespread idea that it was possible to transfer the Arab population of Western Palestine across the border in order to make room for Jewish immigrants; or, more precisely, to ensure the political domination of Jews in Western Palestine and to remove the problems attendant upon the existence of a sizeable Arab minority within the area of Jewish

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[37]Shertok diary, 9.8.36, S25/443.

sovereignty.

If, on the other hand, the question of Jewish entry into Transjordan was dependent on Arab-Jewish relations in Western Palestine, a view which implied some identity of interest between the Arab populations on both sides of the Jordan, then it was unlikely that the common feelings evinced by that identity of interest would be favourable either to Jewish settlement in Transjordan or to the forced transfer (and few people believed that it could be done voluntarily) of, say, the Arabs of Galilee to Jerash or Irbid. The assumption of an identity of interests between the Arabs of Western Palestine and those of Transjordan was, of course, a necessary basis to the hope that a fellah from the Galilee could without difficulty change his abode to Transjordan, but what it implied for pan-Arab acceptance of Jewish sovereignty over Western Palestine (excluding the possibility of the much discussed Arab Federation ready to embrace the Jewish State) was somehow lost in the corners of the contradictory arguments and irreconcileable aspirations so confusedly espoused by the Zionists.

It was because of this paradox and these contradictions that the Zionists were often disappointed when Abdullah failed to fit the mould of the independent ruler of an independent country in which they had cast him. If Abdullah was seen as the enemy of the uncompromising and intolerant pan-Arabism typified for the Zionists by Iraq and Syria, it was because of his personal political ambitions and not because of his devotion to a solution of the Palestine problem on anything like Zionist terms. Fond of denigrating Transjordan as a neglected, primitive backwater, an artificial creation living parasitically off British subsidies and the Palestine Treasury, they should not really have been disappointed when they

found that the Emir Abdullah was unable to accommodate Zionism by defying both his British masters and the whole Arab world.

This contradiction, of course, goes beyond the question of Zionist aspirations in Transjordan and relations with Abdullah, and forms the backbone to an understanding of how the Zionist movement viewed its relations with the whole Arab world in this period. We shall return to this question later.[38]

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The strike had come to an end on October 12 as a result of the "appeal" of the Arab rulers to the Palestinian Arab leadership and the Emir Abdullah had been one of the signatories.[39] Weizmann had briefly suggested that the Emir be dissuaded from participating in the appeal and thus frustrate the intervention, but nothing appears to have come of this.[40] In fact, just before the end of the strike, when Shertok complained to Wauchope of the far-reaching implications of the rumoured intervention, the former added that

> we would have nothing against such an appeal being made by the Emir Abdullah, not because the Emir was generally inclined to be conciliatory and was not the arch enemy of the Jews, but because he himself was under the Mandate -- so to speak -- a part and parcel of the Mandatory regime and not an outsider. An appeal by him would not be considered as a foreign intervention.[41]

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[38]See chapters four and five for a detailed discussion of this question.

[39]See N.A. Rose "The Arab Rulers and Palestine, 1936: The British Reaction," Historical Journal 1972 and Gabriel Sheffer, "The Involvement of Arab States in the Palestine Conflict and British-Arab Relationship before World War Two, "Bulletin of the Israel Oriental Society, 1975.

[40]Ben-Gurion diary, 30.9.36 in Zikhronot 1936 p.447.

[41]Shertok interview with the High Commissioner, 29.9.36, S25/19.

With the relative calm brought by the end of the disturbances, the JAE was able to get down to the exacting task of preparing for the arrival of the Royal Commission. The meeting of November 1 carried a motion by Ben-Gurion proposing that if the government was not prepared to allow Jewish settlement in Transjordan, then the Jews should demand to be allowed to purchase land there for the settlement of Arabs from Western Palestine who would sell their land to Jews. The only opposition to this resolution came, significantly, from the two non-Zionist members of the executive, Drs. Hexter and Senator, who argued correctly that there was, in fact, no opposition to Arab settlement in Transjordan, so the demand was in effect being made only for the Jews. In his usual blunt and incisive manner, Ben-Gurion put the differences of opinion down to the different political views of the members of the executive. Concerned with attacking the non-Zionists, Ben-Gurion was nonetheless careful to distinguish his own position from that of Ussishkin, although his fine and essentially polemical distinction was not to stand the test of time and reality.

> Ussishkin's view is that all of Eretz-Yisrael belongs to us alone and if there's room for both us and the Arabs, then all very well; but if not, then it's the government's duty to make room for us. [In Ben-Gurion's opinion,] this view is incorrect. We do not deny the rights of the Arabs who live in this country and we don't see any hindrance to the implementation of Zionism by the existence of that right. Dr. Senator's view is that the Arabs have a greater right to Eretz-Yisrael and that their interests are more important than our own, and thus he comes to the conclusion that even if the Arab agrees to accept land in Transjordan, we cannot agree to it.[42]

In November, for the first time since February 1936, Shertok was able to meet Abdullah personally and thank him for the generally

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[42]JAE, 1.11.36.

constructive role he had played during the disturbances.

> ...although we knew that he had taken up a stand against us in the present conflict, we appreciated very much the fact that whenever he was faced with a choice between two different courses or decisions he invariably adopted the more moderate one.[43]

The Emir responded by pointing out that his position had been, and still was, extremely difficult and the Jews should bear that in mind. He remained, as ever, convinced that a way of peace and agreement could be found. Provided the Jews were reasonable and restrained and dropped their "extreme" demands he was sure that the conflict could be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. Abdullah also told Shertok that he might himself appear before the Royal Commission as an "Arab Spokesman."

The Jewish Agency was presumably concerned by the fact that Abdullah would speak to the Commission and it is interesting that it did not try and directly influence his appearance before it.[44] It can be assumed, though, that it was felt that Abdullah would not, on his past record, prove to be more hostile to Zionist aspirations than lip-service to Arab interests demanded, and even if he was, it would not be difficult to find out about it.

The Agency did in fact receive a rather cryptic report[45] from al-Unsi based on a stenographic record of the Emir's meeting with the

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[43]"Note of a Call on His Highness the Emir Abdullah. Confidential." 24.11.36, S25/188.

[44]Shertok did in fact visit the Emir again sometime in January 1937 Report on Political Situation, January 1937 CO/831/41/77065. I have not been able to find any record of such a meeting in the Zionist Archives.

[45]A.C. Cohen report, 16.2.37, BB901/36. Al-Unsi brought the record of the meeting with him to Jerusalem on 8.2.37.

Commission and must have been pleased to note Abdullah's answer to Lord Peel's question as to whether, when the Palestine problem was definitely settled, his highness might be in a position to accept that Jews settle in Transjordan:

> If the Palestine question is solved I do not object that the Jews be settled in Transjordan. When they come to this country, they will come as settlers with no discriminating status or rights. They will live with us as citizens living in Transjordan.[46]

As well as raising the issue incessantly in London and Jerusalem, the Jewish Agency had made its own representations to the Royal Commission on the question of Transjordan. Under the heading of "Jewish Grievances," the Agency had merely said that it considered the closing of the area to Jewish immigration to be "unjustified," and that it was

> convinced that with the active assistance of the Mandatory Government, a beginning could be made with Jewish settlement in a suitable part of Transjordan which would redound to the benefit of the Transjordan population.[47]

There were other ways of influencing the Royal Commission. The Political Department's discussions with Rafifan Pasha al-Majali were a throwback to the heady days of the early 1930's when Beduin chiefs from Transjordan declared their interest in Jewish settlement to

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[46]Undated, unsigned memorandum. A.C. Cohen Translation of Stenographic Report, S25/9783. Perhaps to balance the fact that the report recorded the fact that Abdullah had recommended that the proportion of Jews in Palestine should not exceed 35 per cent, the writer prefaced it with extravagant praise for the Emir: "When all looked dark and impregnable, Abdullah, the humane, the tolerant and soft-hearted, was there to save the situation. Whether his proposals were acceptable by both communities or not, what is true is that Abdullah showed unsurpassed tolerance and exemplary love of peace."

[47]Summary of Grievances Submitted by the Jewish Agency to the Palestine Royal Commission. Confidential, January 1937 p.7, Z4/17138.

relieve the country's desparate economic plight. The initial suggestion was that this pasha would submit a memorandum to the Royal Commission in favour of foreign capital being encouraged to invest in Transjordan. Perhaps because this was not explicit enough the arrangement was rejected,[48] but when the pasha subsequently agreed to state that he wanted his country to be opened to Jewish capitalists "in the light of the great good they have done in Palestine," it was agreed to approve the suggestion.[49] Rafifan Pasha seems to have had second thoughts, because by April 1937 he had still not signed the proposed petition, although he reassured Bernard Joseph that when the Emir returned from the coronation festivities in London, he and a group of like-minded leaders would make representations to the Emir to give effect to the policy of permitting Jews to acquire and develop land in Transjordan "for the general welfare of its inhabitants."[50]

The question of Transjordan was, of course, very much in evidence in the press during this period. HaAretz[51] reprinted an

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[48]B. Joseph diary, 14.2.37, S25/50.

[49]B. Joseph diary, 15.2.37, S25/1511. "The pasha had made up his mind that he was bound in duty to his countrymen to speak his mind and declare that the country was stagnant and impoverished compared to Palestine as the Jews had been kept out. I assured him (the pasha's messenger) that the pasha was right in his estimate of the cause of Transjordan's poverty and asked him to congratulate the pasha on his wisdom and political courage."

[50]B. Joseph diary, 14.4.37, S25/1511. Also meeting between Rafifan Pasha al-Majail, Khalil Bey al-Madinat, B. Joseph, and A.C. Cohen, 15.4.37, S25/3485. Like so many of the Agency's Transjordanian contacts, Rafifan proved less than reliable. "The project for a memorandum to the Royal Commission to be submitted by Rafifan Pasha has not materialized. A memorandum was handed in purporting to bear the signatures of a number of notable Transjordanians. The seals looked too much as if they were manufactured at the same time. Moreover, Rafifan personally was reluctant to sing the memorandum. The matter had therefore better be dropped." Joseph diary, (n.d.) [May 1937?].

[51]HaAretz, 16.2.37.

article from Palestine, the journal of the British Palestine Committee, reaffirming the historical unity of both sides of the Jordan. The organ of the Zionist Organization of America, the New Palestine, recalled that

> historically, the two countries have been one. Gilead, perhaps the most intensely patriotic part of Old Testament Palestine, lies across Jordan.[52]

The almost mystical reaffirmation of the unity of Eastern Transjordan and Western Palestine found one of its strongest echoes not amongst the Revisionists, but from within the ranks of the kibbutz movement. At a seminar of the United Kibbutz Movement,[53] before the publication of the Peel Commission's report, Yitzhak Tabenkin, recalling the "treachery" of the 1922 separation, contrasted the cynical opportunism of British imperialism[54] -- which had turned Transjordan into an English province ruled from headquarters in Cairo or Jerusalem -- with the deep-rooted attachment of millions of Jews throughout the world to the land conquered by Joshua. Tabenkin's

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[52]New Palestine, 24.1.37. For a passionate exposition of the historic connection between Palestine and Transjordan see E. Epstein, Report on Transjordan, February 1931, S25/3489. Also E. Elath, Shivat Tsion ve'Arav, pp.108-138.

[53]Discussion on the partition question at a seminar of the United Kibbutz Movement (HaKibbutz haMeuhad), quoted in Mebifnim, July 1937.

[54]Cf. "The First Partition of Eretz-Yisrael," Tuvia Ashkenazi, Moznaim, January 1937 and Ben-Gurion's speech at Mizrahi conference, quoted in HaBoger, 5.4.37. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Tabenkin, interestingly, became one of the founder members of the expansionist Land of Israel Movement. See Rael Jean Isaac, Israel Divided: Ideological Politics in the Jewish State, p.49 and note 13, p.183.

observations on the unity of both sides of the Jordan rose above the routine appeals to historical precedent to include a reference to the ethnographic unity of the Arabs on both sides of the river. Using relatively sophisticated quasi-Marxist tools to show how the development of the Arab nation (umma) was related to the continued existence of feudal social relations which perpetuated only tribal consciousness, he went on to prove that the Jordan was an artificial barrier, and that by virtue of Joshua's conquest, the Jews had as much right to be there as they did in Western Palestine. This juxtaposition of "scientific" analysis and nationalist passion must surely be one of the most glaring examples of the confusion created by the unmanageable conflict between irreconcilable views on the "Arab Question" in Zionist thought on the subject. It would be difficult to find a more obvious case of the double standard which required that the Arabs pass through the "necessary" stages of historical development while Zionist legitimacy was to be found in irrational appeals to biblical precedent. A more realistic and honest assessment of Zionist views on Transjordan was given by another participant in the same seminar:

> In the Yishuv, in the [Labour] movement, and in the kibbutz, we've always felt the smallness of the country, and the pain of the first partition, [1922], the pain of the tearing-away of Transjordan with all its land and water. When we gaze eastwards to the mountains of Transjordan that close us in, we feel that we've been squeezed into a narrow strip of land....we've never accepted this...we've always aspired to burst out...to the areas that were stolen from us and which form a national, geographic and economic part of the Eretz-Yisrael to which we've been tied for generations.[55]

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[55] Mebifnim, July 1937.

More modestly, but no less significantly, there was a spate of articles on the sad economic state of Transjordan compared to Palestine:

> Why is Transjordan poorer? It has a national Government, a Legislative Council, but no Jewish immigration. According to the argument of the Arab leaders of Cis-Jordan, that country should have been a veritable paradise. Why then, is it constrained to appeal for help from Palestine? It is not intended here to labour the point, which should be self-evident. But opponents of the Jewish National Home would be well advised to consider the lesson of Transjordan.[56]

The New Judea recalled that the country was once known as a Roman granary and criticized the government's stubborn opposition to Jewish immigration and settlement "in spite of the growing evidence that the inhabitants, both settled and Beduin, would welcome Jewish immigration and enterprise."[57] Another journal summed up this approach by quite bluntly captioning an article on Transjordan with the words "Without Jews."[58]

This journalistic onslaught was only one of several fronts on which the Transjordan issue was being fought. In May, Ben-Gurion was excited by a request from the Secretary of the Royal Commission for material on the possibility of settlement in Transjordan, especially on the number of settlers for whom land could be provided,[59]

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[56]Palestine Review, 4.12.36, "The Lesson of Transjordan." Cf. Yalqut HaMizrah HaTikhon, July 1937, p.14; HaOlam, 12.11.36, "Transjordan;" Hameshek Hashitufi, 13.12.36, "Palestine and Transjordan." Also A.C. Cohen memo., 26.11.36, "The Question of our Penetration into Transjordan," S25/3515.

[57]New Judea, May 1937, Cf. Zionist Review, "The Truth about Transjordan," November 1936. See also Palestine and Middle East Economic Magazine, May 1937, "A Parasite State."

[58]New Palestine, 12.2.37.

[59]Ben-Gurion to Shertok, 13.5.37. (telegram) S25/3515.

and Shertok tried in vain to obtain from the government a copy of a 1934 report dealing with the possibility of developing the country's resources.[60] Shertok was, however, able to send to London a memorandum on the possibilities of development in Transjordan which had been prepared for the Jewish Agency in November 1936 by "an authoritative and official Arab in Transjordan."[61] Dealing at length with the backward state of Transjordanian agriculture, the memorandum put aside the exaggerated fears of the British authorities with regard to the entry of Jews into Transjordan.

> The majority of the inhabitants of Transjordan and the tribal chiefs certainly do not share the fears of the British authorities. A section of the population have stated this publicly and many of the tribal chiefs are in frequnet touch with Jews in Palestine; others do not articulate their belief for fear of getting into trouble.

Jewish work, starting in the Jordan valley, could, the memorandum continued, "serve as an example of the possibilities for progress and development in Transjordan and could open a new era for the whole country."[62]

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[60]JAE to Chief Secretary, 18.5.37; Chief Sec. to JAE, 31.5.37, S25/3515.

[61]Shertok diary, 15.5.37, Yoman Medini 1937, p.127 and Ben-Gurion diary, 13.5.37, Zikhronot 1937, p.176.

[62]"Memorandum on the Possibilities of Development in Transjordan." Confidential Translated from the Arabic, 23.11.36, Z4/20689. See also A. Lourie to J. Martin (Secretary of the Royal Commission), 24.5.37, CO/831/41/77033. Lourie asked that the existence of the memorandum be treated as strictly confidential: "It was prepared at our request by an Arab agricultural expert who was formerly a leading official of the Transjordan Government. With regard to this memorandum, I am asked by the Executive to state that, while they have no reason to question the facts and figures there given in so far as they refer to the actual conditions prevailing in Transjordan, they are unable to vouch for their accuracy; it is believed, moreover, that the writer's views of the openings for development in Transjordan are far from exhausting the actual possibilities in this direction." Also Shertok to L. Stein, 25.11.36, S25/6331.

This memorandum was submitted to the commission during a period of intense Zionist diplomatic activity in London, the period of the coronation celebrations in May 1937, when the profusion of visiting Oriental representatives made for a multitude of contacts for the Zionists. The Political Department had been in contact with the Emir before he left for London and he had been given another £500.[63] On May 14, Dov Hoz and David HaCohen held a preliminary meeting with Samir Rifa'i, the Chief Secretary of the Transjordan Government, and the following day the two Zionist emissaries met Abdullah himself. They first repeated the usual statements about Transjordan's economic difficulties and then offered their package deal of permission for Jewish settlement in exchange for substantial material and economic aid from the Jews, Jewish influence on behalf of Transjordan in Britain and other countries, etc. The Emir's response was guarded (possibly, according to Hoz and HaCohen, because of the presence of Samir Rifa'i, whom they felt that the Emir had tried to get to leave the room[64]) and seemed to have been prepared in advance a kind of

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[63]Shertok at JAE, 2.5.37.

[64]Report of a Meeting between the Emir Abdullah, Dov Hoz and David HaCohen, 15.5.37, London, Secret, S25/3485. Abdullah's unwillingness to discuss the question of Jewish settlement in Transjordan in front of Samir Rifa'i is further corroborated by Cosmo Parkinson of the Colonial Office. Meeting Abdullah also on 15.5.37 to ask him about Jewish proposals for developing land in the Jordan Valley (Rutenberg's scheme), Parkinson noted: "Incidentally, Samir Pasha, who was interpreting, was taken by surprise when he heard of these proposals, and it seems that they are not known yet to the Transjordan Government." Note of 17.5.37, CO/831/41/77033.

official communique. Abdullah had not changed his position from his previous meetings with Moshe Shertok. He was the ruler of Transjordan, which was an Arab state, and like all the other Arab states, he had to judge matters in the light of his country's essential interests. He pleaded ignorance as to the deliberations of the Royal Commission and expressed the hope that the Commission would find an acceptable solution.[65]

Ben-Gurion, for one, must have been disappointed by this meeting. He had instructed Hoz and HaCohen to press the Emir on the Question of Jewish settlement and to promise him help to fight "the intrigues being waged against him." If the Emir gave a positive reply, they were to tell him that the talks would be continued with a representative of the Jewish Agency in London in order to work out a joint policy towards the Colonial Office.[66] If Abdullah's response did not come up to expectations, Ben-Gurion may have comforted himself by thinking that it was unlikely that Abdullah would feel as free to speak in London, and in the presence of Samir Rifa'i, as he did with Shertok in Amman or Jerusalem, or through his mouthpiece al-Unsi.

Shertok was astonished when he read Ben-Gurion's diary account of this period. He considered that both Ben-Gurion, and Berl Katznelson (with whom Ben-Gurion had discussed the question of relations with Abdullah) had misunderstood the Emir's position. Katznelson, pessimistically, had thought that Abdullah would argue that there was

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[65]Meeting, Abdullah, Hoz and HaCohen, 15.5.37, op.cit.

[66]Ben-Gurion diary, 15.5.37, Zikhronot 1937 p.177.

no need for an agreement between him and the Jews, because the deciding factor was the threat of another Arab rebellion.[67] Katznelson's view, Shertok wrote, made Abdullah sound like an Istiqlal leader:

> Abdullah would never give an answer like [that] ....for the simple reason that he does well out of our very existence and he very much hopes to keep on profiting. He sincerely believes that one day there'll be a big joint operation together with us. So he'll never give an answer which implies rejection or underestimation of our power.[68]

But if Katznelson was unduly pessimistic, Ben-Gurion and Rutenberg were dangerously optimistic in their assessment of the Emir's potential. Shertok felt that the assumptions that a)Abdullah could "deliver the goods" and b) that he was likely to dare to make an agreement with the Jews before making an agreement with his British masters were both unfounded and misleading:

> If I'd known in advance of the hopes that you attached to the possibility of meeting Abdullah in London I would have warned you of possible disappointment. Dov and David cannot, in the course of one conversation, reach the same frank relations with him that I have after a dozen meetings when he finally began to pour out to me his bitterness about his weakness, his complete dependence on the British, his total lack of ability to take up any position .....without them telling him in advance what they want; about the poisonous thorn in his side [Haj Amin], that only the Jews can get rid of and that we're not doing what we should etc, etc. P.[inhas] R.[utenberg] goes further than you in his belief that it's possible to get real results from negotiations with Abdullah before we've achieved them in negotiations with his masters.

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[67]Ibid.

[68]Shertok to Ben-Gurion, 25.5.37, Yoman Medini 1937 p.149.

> This way he's likely to lose a lot of Jewish money and to get both himself and us into a mess.[69]

Ben-Gurion later rejected Shertok's charge of these incorrect assumptions. He'd never assumed that Abdullah was capable of "delivering the goods," but had merely felt that it was important to visit Abdullah so that the Colonial Office wouldn't argue that the Emir was opposed to the Jews. As for the second "incorrect" assumption that Abdullah was likely to come to an agreement with the Zionists before he did so with the British, Ben-Gurion pointed out that Pinhas Rutenberg had claimed he had indeed made such an agreement, and although Ben-Gurion doubted this, he felt -- citing the precedent of the controversial option signed on the Emir's land at Ghor al-Kibd in 1933 -- that "its not completely impossible to meet Abdullah halfway so that the matter can be ratified by the real [British] government."[70]

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[69]Ibid.

[70]Ben-Gurion diary, 28.5.37, Zikhronot 1937, p.195. On the Ghor al-Kibd affair see Anita Shapira, "Parashat HaOptzia...." in Tsionut (See note 28 above). After offers by impoverished Transjordanian sheikhs to sell their land to Jewish bodies the option on the Emir's land at Ghor al-Kibd, consisting of between 50,000 and 70,000 dunams between the Allenby bridge and the Zerka river, was signed in January 1933. Although it was resolutely opposed by the British and caused considerable anger in the Arab press, the option was renewed annually until 1939, when it was allowed to lapse. As it was known as early as the summer of 1933 that the land had virtually no economic value (See Cox to Wauchope, 3.9.34, CO/831/26/37702) and the Zionists realized that the British were unlikely to allow Jewish settlement in Transjordan within the near future, the obvious conclusion was, as Shertok told Selig Brodetsky (7.6.34, S25/3515), that "the transaction has taken the form, for all practical purposes, of a political subsidy to the Emir."

PINHAS RUTENBERG AND TRANSJORDAN

No account of Zionist relations with Transjordan would be complete without the story of Pinhas Rutenberg's involvement. Once active in the Russian revolutionary movement (he was alleged to have personally killed Father Gapon, the notorious Tsarist agent provocateur who had led the famous "Bloody Sunday" demonstration of 1905), engineer and businessman extraordinary, Rutenberg's electric power plant at Naharayim had captured the imagination of the Zionist leadership and won him the respect of senior British officials in London and Jerusalem. A non-party man, a rugged individualist in an often harshly collective society, he was treated with an ambivalent mixture of respect and suspicion by the Jewish Agency, and in particular by Ben-Gurion. The stubbornness and personal initiative with which, as president of the Vaad Leumi from 1929 to 1931, he had tried to involve that body in the "high policy" which had previously been the sole domain of the Zionist Executive, and to create an independent stance on political questions for a body whose activities had hitherto been limited to Jewish communal affairs and the sending of petitions and protests, had not endeared him to a Mapai dominated executive bent on consolidating the Jewish Agency's control over at least external political issues.[71] Nor had his participation in the negotiations of the "Five" in the summer of 1936 helped to destroy the image of him as a political maverick who tended to irresponsibility.

Abdullah and Rutenberg seem to have been on as close terms as possible for two men who shared the characteristics of deviousness,

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[71]For a brief account of Rutenberg's activities as President of the Vaad Leumi, see E. Rubinstein in HaYishuv be'Yemei haBayt haLeumi pp.180-81.

ambition and astonishing manoeuvrability and whose relationship was lubricated by large sums of money, flowing, it is perhaps superfluous to add, in one direction.

Rutenberg's "agreement" with the Emir,to which Ben-Gurion had referred, did in fact exist. Sent to Abdullah in early April 1936 (apparently before the outbreak of the disturbances) Rutenberg's proposals were in the form of a 16-point plan based on the formation by Jews of a company registered in England with an authorized capital of at least 2 million. The object of the company was to be the financing and direct management of the settlement of Jews and Transjordan Arabs and for the general economic development of Transjordan. Arab and Jewish settlements were to be created north and south of the Zerqa river. There areas were to have autonomous religious, cultural and educational organization in their respective languages.[72] The company guaranteed to adhere to the principle of mutual equality -- i.e. whatever was done for the Jewish settlers would also be done for the Arabs. According to Elie Eliachar, Rutenberg even argued that if a road of a certain width were laid on the Jewish side, or if a storied building were erected, parallel constructions were to be built on the Arab side.[73] While section two of the original plan had mentioned the settlement of Jews and Transjordan Arabs, (my emphasis), when Rutenberg sent a copy to the Colonial Office in May 1937 he appended the following note:

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[72]"Points of Proposal for the Development of Transjordan through Jewish-Arab Collaboration." Secret. (n.d.) [April 1936] CO/831/41/77033.

[73]See Elie Eliachar, Lihiot im haFalastinaim, p.73.

> In paragraph two, the Arabs to be settled should be not only Transjordanians, but also Palestinian citizens.[74]

Dealing with Abdullah and Rutenberg it is particularly difficult to disentangle historical truth from the web of dissimulation and bluff with which they surrounded their affairs. In July 1936, Aharon Chaim Cohen heard from the indefatigable al-Unsi that one Hassan Khaled Pasha had come to Abdullah and proposed breaking off links with the Jewish Agency and working instead with a Jewish capitalist prepared to lend £2 million at low interest for a long period for agricultural development and the general economic improvement of Transjordan. In exchange, the Jews were to be allowed to settle in Transjordan and a plan was worked out to build a Jewish village next to every other Arab village. This Jew was reported to have been interviewed twice by the Emir, but to date (July 1936) there had been no results.[75]

Rutenberg told Parkinson and Downie that in his discussions with Abdullah in May or June 1936, the Emir had expressed his general agreement to the proposals, "subject always to the consent of the government being obtained." Rutenberg pointed out that he did not regard the Emir as reliable and referred to the confidential memorandum which the Emir had submitted to the Royal Commission in which he had adopted an attitude of "full-blooded opposition" to Jewish settlement, not only in Transjordan, but also in Palestine.[76] In spite of the memorandum, which he described as "disgusting," Rutenberg remained involved with the Emir. Sometime in February

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[74]Rutenberg to C. Parkinson, 13.5.37, CO/831/41/77035.

[75]Meeting between A.C. Cohen and Mohammad al-Unsi, 5.7.36, Secret, S25/10093.

[76]"Note of a Discussion with Mr. Rutenberg at the Colonial Office," 13.5.37, CO/831/41/77033.

1937 Abdullah asked Rutenberg for £2,000 in order to keep his Sheikhs in order during his absence in London for the coronation. On receipt of the "disgusting" memorandum Rutenberg refused to give Abdullah the money and told him why. The Emir then sent his "man of confidence" to Rutenberg, with "all kinds of explanations testifying to the Emir's good intentions towards us Jews and explaining the necessity of his double game policy." Despite obvious misgivings Rutenberg felt that he had to continue support for Abdullah:

> In view of the seriousness of the present situation, my answer was that the Emir's envoy succeeded in convincing me in [sic] the Emir's good intentions....I will give him...on my own responsibility £1,000. The other £1,000 it will be possible to consider only in London after I will talk over there the matter with my friends who will certainly wish to see the Emir personally.[77]

What made the situation so serious for Rutenberg was the following piece of "very confidential" information:

> The Emir ordered a golden dagger set with diamonds, a present to King George on the occasion of his Coronation....On the dagger there is the Emir's coat-of-arms on which it was to be inscribed in Arabic "Emir Shark El Ordan" meaning "Emir of Transjordan" About three weeks ago the Emir instructed that the inscription be changed to "Emir El Bilad El Ordonia" which means "Emir of the Jordan States." I have seen myself the coat-of-arms and the inscription.[78]

Rutenberg's conclusion was that the Emir would not dare to make such an inscription without authority and that thus "everything was settled" in London. It was this conviction that accounted for his concern that the Colonial Office, and thus also as he hoped, the Royal Commission, should hear of the tentative agreement between

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[77]Rutenberg to Sir Herbert Samuel, 26.3.37, WA.

[78]Ibid. See also "Baffy" The Diaries of Blanche Dugdale, 20.5.37, p.42.

Abdullah and himself and draw the appropriate conclusions. Together with Herbert Samuel and the young Lord Melchett, Rutenberg met the Emir in London at the end of May. The discussion, according to Elie Eliachar, who acted as interpreter, centred around the development of the Electric Corporation and the potential of electric power for the development of Transjordan. Rutenberg already held the concession for the electricity supply for all of Transjordan excluding the towns of Amman, Kerak and Es-Salt but was facing fierce competition from a Syrian company and a Palestinian Arab concern for the concession to supply electricity to Amman.[79] In December 1936, Rutenberg had been advised by the Jewish Agency to postpone raising support for his being given the conession in Amman because of the delicate political situation, and there is no doubt that Rutenberg was capable of raising such support, for as well as his excellent relations with Abdullah he had such influential friends as Tawfiq Abu al-Huda and Ibrahim Hashim.[80]

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[79] HaAretz, 16.3.37.

[80] Report on a Conversation with Pinhas Rutenberg, Aharon Chaim Cohen, 24.12.36, S25/3515. In a biographical note on Tawfiq Abu al-Huda, Dov Joseph wrote: "In favour of Jews obtaining concessions to develop country, but no political rights, therefore helped Rutenberg loyally and without reward." (n.d.) [1938] S25/3405. It seems that an arrangement was eventually reached to Rutenberg's satisfaction. During negotiations with the Syrian Company for the Amman electricity concession, Moharmad al-Unsi appeared and intervened with Ibrahim Hashim and Abdullah on behalf of the Jewish Agency. Although Hashim was unable to leave the matter closed until 1939, as Shertok had requested, he agreed not to let any company have a permanent concession for illuminating the city until the Palestine question was solved. Instead, the Syrian company was given an option for three months, renewable every three months: "Unless something appears on the horizon to prevent the government from continuing with the concession. M.U. says that these two clauses should satisfy your friend P.R. and asks that Ibrahim should be paid. Last year, incidentally, P. paid I. £200 and M.U. £100; this time M.U. is prepared to forego his money but asks that you get P. to pay I." Aharon Chaim Cohen to Shertok (n.d.) [mid-1938], S25/3491.

While on the one hand the Jewish Agency valued Rutenberg for his prestige and economic contacts, his enthusiasm for the flag following trade, as it were, was a source of concern to them. When Ben-Gurion was told of Rutenberg's agreement with Abdullah, Ben-Gurion remonstrated with him for jeopardizing relations with the Emir and the British by his secret diplomacy. Rutenberg defended himself, as he had also done at the Colonial Office, by saying that his scheme was merely a "business venture" and non-political in character.[81] This extraordinarily disingenuous argument was successful neither with the Colonial Office nor with Ben-Gurion, who pointed out that although a purely business character could be given to a discussion with the Emir Abdullah, for the British Government the question of Jewish enterprise in Transjordan was a political one. The Agency had learnt its lesson about Zionist "merchant adventurers" during the storm over the Ghor al-Kibd option and was not prepared to see Rutenberg give a repeat performance. Ben-Gurion was nonetheless charitable enough to say that although he didn't share Rutenberg's optimism he valued his efforts.[82] Rutenberg certainly was optimistic, for at the beginning of June 1937 he was still able to present his tentative agreement with Abdullah as a practical solution to the voluntary transfer of Arabs out of the area of the Jewish State,[83] of which he was an enthusiastic supporter[84] and he energetically mustered his considerable resources and influence to

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[81]Rutenberg, Parkinson and Downie meeting, 13.5.37, op.cit.

[82]Ben-Gurion Diary, 3.6.37 Zikhronot 1937 p.200.

[83]Rutenberg to Sir John Maffey, 5.6.37, Z4/17136.

[84]Ben-Gurion wrote, unfairly, that: "Rutenberg agrees to a 'state', even if its only Tel Aviv. A Jewish 'passport' is important to Rutenberg -- a state at any price." Ben-Gurion diary, 13.5.37 Zikhronot 1937 p.176.

ensure that it had defensible borders, sufficient sovereignty and as few Arabs as possible.[85]

"STIFFENING THE EMIR'S BACK"

After the considerable efforts made to influence the Royal Commission on the question of Transjordan, it came as a great disappointment that the only reference to Jewish settlement in the commission's report was that in the present political situation it should not be proposed.[86] It now seemed that the Royal Commission's interest in Transjordan had been intended merely to clarify the possibilities of population transfer.[87] Equally disturbing was the fact that because of the proposed subsidy to the Arab State, it was felt that Abdullah would not need to come to terms with the Jews because he'd

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[85]Rutenberg's optimism on the possibility of reaching an agreement with Abdullah was matched by his pessimism about the likelihood of an Arab insurrection: "With the Arabs remaining within the proposed Jewish territory...our situation will become worse than now. Arab riots are bound to come. Their suppression with our proposed army will not help. The remainder of Arabia will produce larger armies than ours....with or without compensation the Arabs must evacuate the territory of the proposed Jewish State." Rutenberg to Samuel, 26.3.37, op.cit.

[86]See Ari Ankorion, The Problem of Self-Government in Palestine, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, London University 1938. "It may be safely assumed that the real key to a solution of the Palestinian difficulties lies in Transjordan and this point of view has been brought to the notice of the Peel Commission. It is most unfortunate that a Royal Commission which did not hesitate to exceed its terms of reference in recommending Partition, found itself precluded by such terms of reference from extending its enquiry to Transjordan." Ch. 13, pp.552-70 deals with Transjordan. Ankorion, a member of Mapai who later became a well-known lawyer, was Davar's London correspondent during this period.

[87]Shertok at Mapai Party Centre, 5.5.37.

be getting money from them anyway.[88] For many, the disappointment over the apparently final removal of Transjordan as an area for Jewish settlement only strengthened their resolve not to accept it under any circumstances.[89] Even Hashomer Hatzair (the organ of the political party of the same name) saw the partition as yet another concession at the Jews' expense on the possibility of developing Transjordan.[90] Yitzhak Tabenkin vented his wrath by asking rhetorically what was Abdullah's political importance compared with Weizmann's? -- Abdullah was merely "a little Arab Prince, a wretched vassal in the hands of an English official."[91]

As the expected date of the report's publication approached, the press, of course, had a field day repeating the by now stock arguments about Transjordan. The country had been "bisected," "vivisected," "raped" in 1922. Transjordan was "a primitive state awaiting stimulus"; the partition of 1922 was "treacherous," "artificial" and "illogical," etc.[92]

It is a tribute to Abdullah's ability to hedge his bets that no-one really knew what his position was. On his return from London he told journalists in Turkey (just being there was a provocative move in the light of the Alexandretta conflict) that his own kingdom would only experience changes as a result of the position in Palestine,

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[88]Katznelson, Ibid.

[89]Katznelson at Mapai Council, 10.7.37, reported in Mapai bulletin for 21.1.38.

[90]Hashomer Hatzair, 15.7.37. For Hashomer Hatzair's position on Transjordan see Y. Oron, HaShe'ela HaArevit beMediniut HaTsionit shel Hashomer Hatzair, 1936-42, unpubl. MA thesis, Jerusalem 1976, pp.38 and 118.

[91]Y. Tabenkin, Secretariat of the United Kibbutz Movement, Bayt Ha-Shita; end of July 1937; Quoted in HeBifnim, August-September 1937.

[92]See, for example, Palestine Post, 12.5.37 and 8.6.37; Zionist Review, April and June 1937 and Palestine Review, 16.4.37 and 11.6.37.

or, as the Palestine Review put it:

> He is clearly steering a careful course which will enable him to adapt himself to such a combination of circumstances as may be most favourable to his interests.[93]

When, however, it was discovered that the Emir had made a statement to the Turkish correspondent of L'Aurore about the "Throne of Israel," the same journal was less charitable:

> In the spate of statement, denial and counter-statement which has enveloped his recent utterances, it is not easy to detect the false from the true.[94]

In spite of the uncertainty about what the Emir had actually said, his diplomatic skills won him rare praise from HaAretz:

> This Arab Prince is following in the footsteps of his late brother Faysal. He realises the importance of considering the political forces which every realistic Arab statesman should take into account. The Arab peoples cannot build their future on war with all these forces simultaneously. War against two powerful European states.....against Turkey whose star is rising....and against the Jews....is not the way for the Arabs to guarantee themselves the possibility of development -- and the Emir Abdullah is apparently one of the few who understand this simple political truth.[95]

Whatever Abdullah had said or the Royal Commission had reported, the Zionist movement was not put off its resolve not to surrender its rights in Transjordan. Political Resolution number two of the 20th Zionist Congress held in Geneva in August 1937 recalled that:

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[93]Palestine Review, 11.6.37.

[94]Palestine Review, 18.6.37.

[95]HaAretz, 15.6.37. Cf. Haboqer, 13.6.37, D. Sitton, "The Return of the Emir Abdullah." One of the Emir's many statements was that he'd been told in London that the Partition plan had been abandoned because of Jewish and Arab opposition. Shertok thought that the statement was a conscious attempt to mislead, a)in order to lessen his own responsibility for the Partition idea and b)to give the Husseinis a sense of false security and make them give up their war against partition. Shertok diary, 23.6.37, Yoman Medini 1937, p.225.

> the field in which the Jewish National Home was to be established was understood, at the time of the Balfour Declaration, to be the whole of historic Palestine, including Transjordan.[96]

The Jewish Agency kept the Emir informed of the congress' deliberations. In the interim period before the congress came to its equivocal conclusions, the Agency was careful to encourage Abdullah. Speaking to al-Unsi on August 5, Bernard Joseph

> did not wish to stress our influence or power to assist the Emir, but one thing I would safely say....if the British Government made an offer of Partition to which we would be able to agree, then the Emir would learn the value of our friendship and our ability to assist our friends.

Dr. Joseph found it difficult to comprehend the Emir's pessimism:

> A kingdom easily obtained over the counter, was hardly worth having. If he [Abdullah] wanted an increased kingdom he must be prepared to overcome difficulties.[97]

The Agency was particularly concerned by reports of a rapprochement between the Mufti and the Emir, who had apparently decided that because of his lack of means with which to fight the Mufti, it would be better to arrange an armistice with him until the position in Jewish circles and at the Colonial Office was clearer. After some rather clumsy thrusting and parrying in his talk with Joseph, al-Unsi stopped beating about the bush:

> What could the Emir do? In Transjordan he had fought the Mufti successfully. In Palestine he had no power. He had already drawn all his salary for the year and spent it on his fight against the Mufti. The government had, as it were, tied the Emir's hands and thrown him into the sea. They would not do anything to restrict the Mufti's activities against the Emir and they

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[96] 20th Zionist Congress. Public Session of 10.8.37, reported in New Judea, August-September 1937.

[97] Meeting between Joseph, al-Unsi and E. Sasson, 5.8.37, S25/3052.

> knew the latter hadn't the means to protect himself.[98]

Al-Unsi explained that the Emir's rapprochement with the Mufti was merely a tactical move, and in no way affected Abdullah's wish to co-operate with the Jews. Dr. Joseph was nobody's fool.[99] Tactical move it may have been, but urgent measures were required to avoid being faced by the Emir turning the tactic into a new strategy which could be extremely harmful to Zionist interests. The impression given by records of meetings around this time is one of meekness, almost subservience from Abdullah towards the Jews. Even allowing for the likelihood of dissimulation on the Emir's part, his representations to the Agency display an exaggerated concern to do what the Zionists wished. In accordance with Dr. Joseph's suggestion, the Emir had sent away to Syria one of the main proponents of rapprochement with the Mufti, Sheikh Fuad al-Khatib, and had similarly decided not to hurry over negotiations with the Mufti. Abdullah was merely concerned that the Jews keep him informed of their plans so he could act accordingly. Joseph reassured al-Unsi that the Jews regarded the Emir as a factor in Arab politics and would do nothing behind his back.[100] Joseph realized that Abdullah's obsequiousness was not without reason. He suggested that the government provide funds for the Emir's fight against the Mufti[101] and that the Agency

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[98]Ibid. For a Zionist view of the rivalry between Haj Amin and Abdullah, see M. Assaf, "Arab Party Developments in Palestine," HaTequfah, October 1936.

[99]Joseph to Shertok (telegram), 6.8.37, S25/1663; Joseph at JAE (Temporary Executive), 8.8.37.

[100]Joseph diary, 11.8.37, S25/1511.

[101]Joseph to Shertok (telegram), 12.8.37, S25/1513.

provide £500 immediately plus another £500 for September and October.[102] Abdullah was in fact given £500 on August 25.[103] Leo Kohn wrote to Weizmann, with his usual astuteness, about Abdullah:

> The position of the Emir has been going from bad to worse....the agitation conducted by the Mufti against him in his own Transjordan became ever more fierce.[104]

He had been forced into making a public display of his Arab patrotism by issuing a reply to Sir Henry McMahon's letter in the Times. The Iraqis had stigmatized him as a traitor to the Arab cause; even Ragheb Nashashibi had dissociated himself from the Emir, who, unlike the Mufti, had no Waqf funds at his disposal with which to fight his enemies:

> When he finally saw that the administration was again changing its policy towards the Mufti, he, like every other Arab, became apprehensive of the real intentions of that enigmatic entity, the British Government. His own contact with the British official hierarchy in Palestine, whose pro-Mufti activities are well-known to him, tended to accentuate these fears. He felt a completely isolated man and it is not surprising that there should have been reports during the past few weeks...that he had made overtures to his arch-enemy the Mufti.[105]

In the light of all this, the conclusion, Kohn wrote, was that

> steps should be taken without delay by H.M.G. to raise the prestige and strengthen the position of the Emir Abdullah. They should provide him with special funds for counteracting the propaganda of the Mufti and for financing a journalistic campaign in his favour both in Palestine and in the neighbouring countries.[106]

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[102]Joseph to Shertok (telegram), 15.8.37, S25/1513.

[103]List of Payments made to Abdullah. Aharon Chaim Cohen, 8.5.38, S25/3513.

[104]Leo Kohn to Weizmann, 18.8.37, S25/1716.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid. See also Y. Ben-Tsvi to A.C. Cohen, 16.8.37, A116/70/1 (Ben-Tsvi archive).

A little later Joseph also wrote to Weizmann that the government should do something to strengthen the hands of the Emir and the moderate Arabs if they really wanted partition to go through.[107]

There was no doubting Abdullah's enthusiasm for co-operation. The Agency was gratified to hear that the Emir had dissuaded the sheikhs of Transjordan from attending the openly anti-Partition conference at Bludan; that he intended to set up a strong youth organization to fight the interference of foreign Arabs in the affairs of Transjordan and to send a delegation of sheikhs (including the dependable Rafifan Pasha al-Majali) to the League of Nations "to put forward the point of view of the inhabitants of Transjordan."[108]

> Aharon Cohen [Shertok noted in his diary] showed me the latest message from the Emir in the form of a letter written by his trusted man. His Highness seems to be full of impatience to make hay while the sun shone [sic]. The downfall of the Mufti [who had fled to Lebanon in mid-October] had opened up new vistas and he only required our assistance in order to make full use of the great chance which the present situation offered.[109]

He wrote to Weizmann in a similar vien:

> There seems to be no lack of guts on the Emir's part -- according to the messages I get from him he is full of energy and impatience to exploit the great chance if only we would foot the bill.[110]

But here, Shertok continued, he was faced with a "very grave doubt"

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[107]Joseph to Weizmann, 22.9.37, S25/1716. Also Joseph at Mapai Party Centre, 18.9.37.

[108]Joseph diary, 9,19.9.37, S25/1511. See HaAretz, 21.9.37, for Abdullah's measures against the Bludan conference. The organizers of a new party to be headed by Rafifan Pasha asked the Agency for financial help to buy a six seater car and for office expenses for the party. Khalil Bey al-Madinat to A.C. Cohen, 13.10.37, S25/10097.

[109]Shertok diary, 17.10.37, A245/4. Also Shertok at Mapai Party Centre, 18.10.37: "The Emir has big hopes and now his time has come."

[110]Shertok to Weizmann, 19.10.37, Z4/17032.

> After all, we do not know for certain whether the British stand definitely committed to a policy of backing the Emir against all his external and internal foes, particularly the former. I have heard so much in British circles, both in London and here, how much the Emir is hated in the Arab world, that I do not feel justified in dismissing off hand even such a wild rumour as the one which reached me today; namely that in the event of partition it is not the Emir but Ibn Saud or one of his sons who will become the head of the new Arab State, while the Emir will be pensioned off.[111]

Whatever doubts Shertok may have had about the Emir's continued political standing, there was no question of withdrawing support from him. It was planned to give Abdullah another £500 at the beginning of November 1937 but al-Unsi protested that he needed at least another £1,000. His master had already drawn all his salary until February 1938 for political work and with the approach of Ramadan the Emir needed the money for political conversations to be held at the evening meals. Aharon Chaim Cohen was in favour of giving him £1,000 "so that in the future he can't claim that we didn't do everything possible at this very opportune time,"[112] but a compromise was reached and Abdullah was given £700 and al-Unsi £100.[113] It seems that the money was well spent, at least from Abdullah's point of view. Mohammad al-Unsi couldn't remember a festival when the Emir had received so many greetings. Abdullah had also managed to extract a promise of good behaviour from the fractious tribes of the Ajalun area in exchange for the release of some of the Mufti's supporters from exile in Aqaba.[114] The Agency could not

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[111]Ibid.

[112]A.C. Cohen to Shertok, 1.11.37, S25/3486.

[113]List of payments, 8.5.38, loc.cit.

[114]A.C. Cohen meeting with al-Unsi, 8.12.37, S25/3491.

have been particularly thrilled by any of this, but at least Abdullah was keeping Transjordan quiet and this was increasingly important in the light of the growing violence in Palestine.[115]

Contacts with the Emir via al-Unsi continued throughout 1938 although not without some problems. In March Abdullah urged a)that the Agency continue its efforts in London to speed up the coming of the new Commission; b)that it influence the British Government to recognize him as the sole representative of the Arab people in Palestine (which the Emir justified by pointing out the intended Palestinian boycott of the Commission); c)that he be given financial help to pay for a propaganda campaign to win support for Partition; and d)that the Jewish Agency refrain from holding negotiations with any Palestinian Arabs on the question of Transjordan and its place in the Partition plan. Abdullah also informed the Agency that under pressure from various Arab groups he intended to demand from the new commission that it include the triangle in southern Judea in the Arab state and give the Jews another part of the country instead. He hoped the Agency would understand his position. Aharon Cohen was able to agree to all these requests. On the question of the southern Judea triangle, he understood that it was for tactical reasons, but warned that if the Emir was too ambitious he would ruin the whole plan and kill his own hopes that the Jews would reject the reduced

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[115]Haaretz, 10.1.38. On Abdullah's reaction to the government statement of 4.1.38, see A.C. Cohen report, 9.1.38, S25/3541. Also Leo Kohn to Shertok, 9.2.38: "Please speak to Chaim [Weizmann] about Abdullah. He must tell Billy [Ormsby-Gore] that they must bolster him up politically and financially. As we know ....the Mufti's propaganda is most effective in ruining him in the Arab world. His reputation has to be restored at all costs." S25/442.

plan for a Jewish State.[116]

When it became known that Abdullah had proposed to the Woodhead Commission a scheme for the unification of both sides of the Jordan under his rule, with autonomous Jewish areas into which immigration could continue "to a reasonable extent," the Emir suddenly became a knight in shining armour who had made a princely gesture towards recognition of Jewish rights. No-one suggested for a moment that his proposals were acceptable, or even constituted a basis for negotiations, but, as the Palestine Review noted

> they do represent the first serious attempt...on the part of a responsible Arab leader to face realities and to see the Jewish side of the problem, not merely the Arab. These are the first glimmerings of sanity and statesmanship breaking through the clouds that have darkened the minds of our Arab cousins for two long years.[117]

The joy with which the Zionist press jumped upon Abdullah's hopelessly impractical proposals must be seen more as an indication of despair after two years of intermittent violence than as a manifestation of real faith in the Transjordanian ruler. It was as if all the love and respect they had for the Arab people had been stored away, unused, during the last two years and they had suddenly found

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[116]A.C. Cohen talk with al-Unsi, 16.3.38, WA. For Jewish Agency memo. to Woodhead Commission see S25/5105, 7.6.38. The memo. stated that "the stagnation and economic distress of Transjordan, as compared with the progress and prosperity of Palestine revealed ever more patently the injustice of the artificial separation which not only restricted the scope of Jewish settlement in a very marked degree but also denied its benefits to the population of Transjordan." See also JAE general memo. to the Woodhead Commission, 23.5.38, Z4/15065.

[117]Palestine Review, 10.6.38. For correspondence concerning the proposals, see Abdullah to High Commissioner, 21.5.38; Abdullah to Chairman of Technical Commission, 22.5.38; Abdullah to Awni Abd al-Hadi, 24.5.38, S25/5171.

an Arab worthy of their boundless affection. "The Jews," the Palestine Review enthused,

> have not forgotten the statesmanlike and friendly spirit in which Feisal approached the question of Arab-Jewish relations, nor the gesture he made towards rapprochement. It is most important to realise that in his brother we have a Prince, animated by the same tradition, who appraises realistically the weight and dynamic force of the Jewish factor and is moved by the vision of the Arab lands propelled towards progress and greatness by Arab Jewish collaboration under the friendly aegis of the Empire.[118]

Other papers were more measured in their praise, but pointed out that the very fact that Abdullah had submitted a memorandum to the Commission was outstanding, in the light of its boycott by other Arabs. Most important of all, over and above the actual content of the proposals, was the fact that this was a plea for compromise. This enhanced the Emir's reputation as a moderate, realistic Arab leader, who, in contrast to those who mouthed only empty slogans, was prepared to accept the principle of Jewish rights:

> The time has come for an end to illusions. If the various "defenders" in Damascus, Cairo, Beirut and Baghdad can understand this, it will be an important step forward towards a solution. In the Jewish camp this has been understood for a long time, and therefore the Emir Abdullah's words have made a very powerful impact.[119]

The Political Department, not surprisingly, took an even less sanguine view of the whole affair, which, Shertok felt,

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[118]Ibid. and HaOlam, 9.6.38, "The Emir's Proposal."

[119]HaAretz, 30.5.38 and 2.6.38; Bustanai, 8.6.38; Davar, 3.6.38, M. Assaf, "The Emir's Plan and the Arab position."

> should be regarded as a tactical move designed, on the one hand to screen, vis à vis the Arab world, the Amir's undoubted acquiescence in partition in the event of its coming off, and on the other hand, to serve as a feeler for exploiting an alternative.[120]

In spite of Abdullah's reincarnation as the spirit of peace and Jewish-Arab understanding, he was still causing the Agency some considerable trouble. In July, after demonstrations in Amman, he published an anti-Zionist article in Al-Ahram in order, according to him, to calm things down. Al-Unsi explained that his master's action, however displeasing to the Jews, had saved Transjordan from pan-Arab intrigue, and expressed the hope that the friendly understanding between them would remain intact.[121] Relations were so intimate, in fact, that Abdullah proposed that the Jewish Agency pay part of the expenses of the Transjordan delegation to the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Conference due to be held in Cairo in September.[122]

In October 1938, Abdullah had been disturbed by the negotiations between Dr. Weizmann and Tawfiq Suwaydi, the Iraqi Foreign Minister. The Emir was concerned that relations with the Agency had not been as cordial as they had been in the past. Dr. Joseph was not aware of any such cooling-off:

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[120]Shertok to Lourie, 27.5.38, S25/5171.

[121]"Between the Political Department and the Emir's Palace," A.C. Cohen report, 18.7.38, S25/3486. See Davar, 15.7.38 (leader) for an attack on Abdullah for not condemning Arab terror in Palestine. Also HaAretz, 1.8.38 for a veiled warning to the Emir to stay out of Palestine.

[122]A.C. Cohen report, 17.8.38, S25/3486.

> There were occasions when the Emir was compelled, no doubt because of his position as an Arab Prince, to do things which we might otherwise have grounds to object to. The Emir could certainly not complain of anything we had done.[123]

There is no doubt that Joseph played down the seriousness of the situation for the anxious al-Unsi:

> He [al-Unsi] must not assume that everything he read in the press is correct and that the British Government had already taken a decision unfavourable to the Jews. That was not the case, and although we knew that certain dangers confronted us, we were still confident that in the end everything would turn out all right.[124]

It was clearly important to keep Abdullah interested in the spoils he could gain from partition and to conceal from him its increasing unlikelihood. Even when partition was officially abandoned, the Agency did its best to prevent Abdullah from doing anything drastic, and explained the British move as resulting from strategic/military considerations unconnected with the Mufti's violence:

> If we for a moment thought that partition had been abandoned because of the opposition of the Mufti, we would be most depressed. We knew, however, that there were clear reasons for this and did not take too pessimistic a view of the position, but armed ourselves with patience and proposed to continue our political efforts notwithstanding the government's constant change of heart.[125]

Considering how "depressed" the Zionists really were by British withdrawal from partition, and by the de facto recognition of pan-Arabism in the form of the proposed Round Table Conference, the Agency seems to have been extremely concerned about keeping the Emir

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[123]Minute of a Conversation with M.U., 11.10.38, S25/188.

[124]Ibid.

[125]Joseph and al-Unsi, 11.12.38, S25/3485.

calm:

> Even when one's friends let one down one should not immediately rush to the conclusion that the friendship should be terminated. One must show some measure of indulgence towards friends and we were sure that despite everything it would be possible to continue our friendship with the British people and I thought that the Emir should take the same attitude to the matter. Even if he feels that he may not have been treated well by them over the whole question he should nevertheless continue to maintain his attitude of friendship for the British and do his utmost to co-operate.[126]

Reporting on this talk with al-Unsi, Dr. Joseph explained:

> This was our first meeting with the Emir's representative after the government's decision on partition. It's no secret that the Emir is in despair because of the government's decision. We had a feeling that he wanted to do something against England, and that wouldn't have been desirable for us at all. We wanted to calm him down and we said that no decision is final and that the question may be raised again.[127]

Abdullah had accepted the government's invitation to send representatives to London and he wanted the Jewish Agency's views on the best line of action to take at the conference. The Mufti and his associates were making a strong effort to form a united front of all the Arab delegates and hints to that effect had already been received in the Emir's palace from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It might, therefore, al-Unsi admitted, be difficult for the Transjordan delegates to take an independent position. Joseph knew that it would not be easy for the delegation to say things publicly, but there was no reason why they should not speak privately to the members of the other delegations. For instance, if their Prime Minister

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[126]Ibid.

[127]Joseph at JAE, 25.12.38.

were to meet privately with the Egyptian delegate, and tell him quite frankly that Palestine would have remained a desert were it not for Jewish development efforts and to insist that Transjordan had been held back long enough, and that they demanded the right to develop their country with the assistance of the Jews, who were prepared to provide the funds and the experience necessary to do so, he need not convey the impression that the Emir wanted to throw open the gates of Transjordan to mass immigration, but he could say that they controlled the government and were thus not at all afraid of a fixed number of Jews entering Transjordan every year:

> Their representatives could talk in a similar vein to the Iraqi representative and possibly also to the Saudi representative. If these people heard privately from Arabs they would realize what the true position was and would bring pressure to bear upon the Arab representatives from Palestine. The important thing was that the Transjordan representatives should press at the private meetings of the Arab group for a constructive and not a destructive policy. That was a reasonable view for them to take and would not expose them to the charge of failing to have regard for the welfare of the Arabs of Palestine.[128]

It was arranged that Shertok would be in touch with the Transjordan delegation in London, but the Agency control over the delegation got off to an inauspicious start when the Transjordan Prime Minister and head of the delegation gave a statement to an Ankara newspaper to the effect that the Arabs were united in their opposition to the establishment of a Jewish National Home and that they objected to the establishment of any Jewish State or to any Jewish invasion of Palestine. "I wonder," Dr. Joseph noted in his diary, with a hint

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[128]Joseph and al-Unsi, 11.12.38, op.cit.

of schadenfreude, "what P.[inhas] R[utenberg] will say to this."[129]

> I arranged for a letter to be written to Mohammed Unsi complaining strongly against this statement and expressing the hope that it was not symptomatic of what we might expect in London. I pointed out that on this occasion there was not even the excuse that there was any necessity of making such a statement for internal reasons.[130]

MONEY, PASHAS AND POLITICS

The Jewish Agency had grown accustomed to this kind of behaviour from its friends in Transjordan. It had no choice, more often than not, but simply to accept the fact that they could never expect undying loyalty from these "allies." The bond that tied the Jewish Agency and the Emir's palace was one of neither love nor loyalty. It was a bond of expediency and necessity, held together by money, more than by anything else. The case of Mithqal Pasha al-Faiz, head of the Beni Sakhr tribe, is instructive in illustrating the tenuousness of this relationship.

Mithqal had been involved with the Agency in the events that led to the leasing of the Ghor al-Kibd option, and had been in intermittent contact with it since the early 1930's. He seems, by all accounts, to have been a rather unsavoury character, and at least as mercenary as Meir Hasidoff, the Jewish land speculator who complained to Shertok that he had not been reimbursed for all the money he had expended on Mithqal.[131] When the disturbances broke out in Palestine, Mithqal began to cause trouble. Encouraged by the Arab Higher Committee, he had organized an assembly of tribal

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[129]See note 80 above.

[130]Joseph diary, 25.1.39, S25/43.

[131]M. Hasidoff to Shertok, 27.10.37, S25/3513.

leaders and because of this Abdullah had considered exiling him to Aqaba. However, the links between Mithqal and the Jewish Agency were so well-known that the Emir was afraid that such a move would allow Arabs to say that the Jews had succeeded in causing a split amongst the Arabs of Transjordan.[132] In exchange for the money to buy a combine harvester, Mithqal betrayed the Agency. As well as holding protest meetings in his village of Umm al-'Amad he regularly met the Mufti and other members of the Arab Higher Committee and even went to Syria to organize anti-Jewish propaganda.[133] Remonstrating with him after the end of the strike, Aharon Chaim Cohen told Mithqal that the Political Department had been astonished to hear of all this, for they'd believed in his friendship and his devotion to the idea for which he had worked for the last four or five years -- of joint work between Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Transjordan. Mithqal claimed, in answer to these charges, that he'd in fact been trying to restrain the Arabs who had been incited by the Arab Higher Committee, and that it was as a result of his unflagging efforts that Transjordan had remained calm throughout the disturbances and that no-one from Transjordan, and certainly no-one from his tribe, had been a member of the gangs. Mithqal seems to have been a little over-wrought by the prospect of losing the friendship of "Hawaja Aharon," for, in the next breath he did not deny that many of the Beni Sakhr had taken part in the terror, but said that he had advised them not to attack the Jews, but only the British:

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[132] A. Cohen and al-Unsi, 5.7.36, S25/3435.

[133] HaAretz, 10.8.36.

> Mithqal tried to justify himself; he hadn't done us any harm, nor had he plotted against us. Arab blood flows in his veins; he couldn't stand aside completely; it was inevitable that his tribe should take some part -- so he'd concentrated all the work in his own hands. He was sorry about one thing -- that it was he who'd restrained the people of Transjordan and another man [Abdullah] who'd reaped all the rewards, both from the government and from the Jews.

Cohen didn't know what the rule was in Islam, but in Judaism, he told the pasha, under no circumstances may a husband who has divorced his wife return to her after he has married another woman.[134] Although in 1938 Mithqal tried several times to make peace with the Agency via a Jewish intermediary who was operating his combine harvester for him, and via al-Unsi, nothing seems to have emerged from these attempts and the Political Department was wary of renewing its contacts with this uncertain character.[135]

Although Mohammad al-Unsi was less volatile than Mithqal, Abdullah's "man of confidence" caused the Jewish Agency some considerable trouble. A Colonial Office report described him as "an unscrupulous person."[136] His contacts with the Political Department were lubricated by regular payments and between April 1936 and April 1938 he received a total of £800. (In the same period his master received £3,700).[137] When the money was not forthcoming he could turn nasty. He put himself in some considerable danger because of his loyalty to the Zionists; in December 1937 shots were fired at

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[134]Meeting with Mithqal Pasha. A. Cohen and E. Sasson, 27.10.36, S25/3491.

[135]A.C. Cohen to D. Kamhi, 21.6.38 and A.C. Cohen to Shertok, 20.6.38, S25/3491.

[136]Unsigned note (n.d.) [1935] in CO/831/31/77033.

[137]List of Payments, A.C. Cohen, 8.5.38, op.cit.

his home near the Allenby Bridge.[138] More than once he refused to accept the money the Political Department offered him, holding out for a higher price. The money they paid him, he claimed, was hardly enough to cover the baksheesh he had to pay. The Agency was generally unconcerned by these outbursts, since it was unlikely, it was reasoned, that he would find such lucrative employment elsewhere. Even his family, al-Unsi whined, considered him a traitor.[139]

In 1939, in a fit of pique at the pittance he got from the Jews, he threatened to stop his contacts with the Agency. Aharon Chaim Cohen's reply may stand as an epitaph to this period of intense contact between the Jewish Agency and the Emir's Palace: "You won't stop them because it's not every day you get customers like us."[140]

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[138]"The Amir frequently visits Mohammed al-Unsi and it is quite possible that M. al U. himself may not have been the object of the attack; on the other hand, it is quite likely that an attempt should be made on his life, as he is a go-between with the Jews and is well-hated by most Arabs." Political Reports, 1937, Most Secret, CO/831/41/77065.

[139]Following the Mufti's activities in Syria in September 1938, Elias Sasson was talking to some Palestinian exiles: "..at my question about the purpose of Nuri el-Said's visit to Amman, Khaled...answered that Mohammad al-Unsi had no doubt already presented a report to the Agency about it. Everyone smiled. There is no doubt, continued Sheikh Hassan, that the English and the Jews should be grateful to the Emir Abdullah, who has succeeded in restraining his countrymen from participating in the disturbances." Sasson Papers, 4.9.38.

[140]A.C. Cohen to Shertok, 4.7.39, S25/3491.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## ZIONISM AND PAN-ARABISM: A "JEWISH AGENCY VERSION"?

"Turning points" in history are notoriously difficult to locate and attempts to establish a moment in time, or a specific event which changed, altered or deflected the course of subsequent developments are prone to the danger of being over-schematic and misleading.

It is, however, generally agreed that sometime in the course of the late 1930's, with the British government clearly withdrawing from its committment to the Peel Partition plan, a significant change can be observed in the course of the Palestine conflict.[1]

This change can be described in terms of twin, inextricably related processes of, on the one hand, British abandonment of support for the continued growth of the Jewish National Home as embodied in the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate and the various White Papers and declarations of policy, and on the other, of the assumption of involvement in the Palestine question by Arab states outside Palestine. The right of these states to take part in deciding the fate of the country was given official British approval with the invitation of the representatives of Iraq, Egypt, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen to the St. James Conference of 1939.

Apart from normal means of persuasion and influence on British policy -- and taken their unwillingness to display open hostility to

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[1]See E. Kedourie, Arabic Political Memoirs, "The Arab-Israeli Conflict," p.219 and A. Kleiman, "HaRegionalizatsia shel haSikhsukh haEretzyisraeli," in Molad 1974.

the Mandatory power -- the only real avenue left open to the Zionists was to attack the increasingly accepted notion that the pan-Arab movement was a real reflection of the needs and desires of the peoples of the Arab states and the wisdom of British encouragement of this view. Criticism of the leaders of the new Arab states for their lack of responsibility and political maturity, their neglect of pressing internal problems and their use of external questions to distract the attention of their peoples from domestic issues, were all components of the Zionist critique of pan-Arabism. Underlying all this was a basic complaint that it had been, and still was a mistake to grant independence to any of the Arab countries, the best evidence of which was the cruel fate of the Assyrian minority in Iraq, the victims of wholesale slaughter when Iraq had been granted its independence in 1932. A similar fate, the Zionists argued, would be reserved for all non-Arab and non-Moslem minorities left under the sole rule of Arabs and Moslems. One of the issues of the propaganda war, then, was not only the injustice, but also the great danger of leaving Jews, Maronites, Copts, Kurds and Druze, etc., at the mercy of the Arab nationalists.

These Zionist views on the nature of pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism, current events and politics in the Middle East were expressed in a number of ways and in several different forms and versions, depending upon who was being addressed, where, and under what curcumstances. In their "purest" form, these views were expressed in private correspondence and conversations between Zionists. The same views appear too, in slightly distilled form, in Zionist public forums, where it was not always wise to give full vent to their feelings.

In conversations with British and French statesmen, journalists

and public figures, the same version was trotted out again and again, with the addition of appropriate nuances connected with the interests of the party concerned. In contacts with the Turks and Iranians[2] too, the pan-Arab threat was explained in a manner which was directly pertinent to the interests of these countries. With some people, of course, it was both possible and desirable to be completely frank, as with the Maronites of Lebanon, or the Druze, who totally shared Zionist apprehensions about the pan-Arab movement, although for different and less "sophisticated" reasons.

The accent was slightly different, of course, when these views found their way into the Arab press. An article written by Elias Sasson, or Nahum Vilensky, and inserted in the Syrian, Lebanese, or Egyptian press could not, if only for reasons of security and the need to hide the identity of the writer, speak in the same tone as an article in an English newspaper, but nevertheless usually managed to get the message across.

ZIONISM AND THE ARAB WORLD BEFORE 1936

Before examining the use made of the press in disseminating Zionist views on the Arabs, and the structure and division of tasks within the Political Department, it is pertinent to briefly examine the nature of Zionist views on and extent of contact with the Arab world beyond Palestine in the period prior to 1936.

Until 1934, when Eliahu Epstein, specially groomed for the task by his mentor Arlossoroff, was appointed to the Political Department with special responsibility for contact with the neighbouring countries, there had been little systematic contact with any of Palestine's Arab neighbours.

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[2]See chapter seven on Turkey and Iran.

(With the exception, of course, of Transjordan, which was in a category of its own, by dint of the "special relationship" perceived to exist between Palestine and Transjordan, and the highly individualistic and mercenary character of the Emir Abdullah, who had little in common with Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis or Lebanese, both in terms of his personal political aspirations and his attitude towards the Jews of Palestine.)

Occasionally, Zionist leaders had met Arab leaders from the neighbouring countries, more often than not for desultory conversations that did little to clarify the real intentions of either side, and left the Zionists with a feeling that there was little point to such encounters unless there was some substantial proposal to discuss.

It is hard to discover any record of Zionist concern over what was later to become a crucial question. Should they seek contact and agreement with the Arabs of Palestine or of the neighbouring countries? Could the solution to the problem of relations with the Arabs be found in an agreement with the local Palestinian leadership, "corrupt" and "reactionary" as it was, or would it be necessary to seek the agreement of the "Arab world"?

While on the one hand it was felt to be sufficient to develop normal "neighbourly" relations with the Arabs of Palestine by whatever means were at their disposal, bribes, the avoidance of unnecessary conflicts and the settlement of those that did exist, the organization of Arab workers, joint sports and cultural activities, medical and agricultural aid for _fellahin_; in short, the "relations" (_yahasim_) which were considered to be the _sine qua non_, of a peaceful Palestine, the Zionists aspired, on the other hand, to find an Arab leader, necessarily a pan-Arab leader, who could command the loyalty of _all_ the Arabs and agree to a Jewish state in exchange for Jewish

technical, financial and political aid in the creation of a vast, independent and united Arabia.

The prototype for such a leader was the late King Faysal and the model for agreement was seen to exist in the Weizmann-Faysal agreement of 1918 which had, in the course of time, become endowed with an almost mythic quality. Berl Katznelson, one of Mapai's most influential and respected leaders, forcefully rejecting the charge that the Zionist movement had "sinned" in neglecting contacts with the Arabs, recalled, in 1936, how, "18 years ago Weizmann sought and found Faysal in the wilderness."[3]

Contacts with mercenary Transjordanian tribesmen, wily Maronite clergymen and smooth-tongued and unconvincing pan-Arab leaders in the Middle East and Europe were no substitute for meetings with an internationally recognized Arab leader of the stature and renown of Faysal. Ben-Gurion's much vaunted "talks with Arab leaders," Musa Alami, George Antonius, Shakib Arsian and Ihsan Bey al-Jabari -- the latter two representatives of the Syrian-Palestinian delegation in Geneva -- were of a very different order too.[4] Such contacts were a far cry from the "heroic" conception of Jewish-Arab cooperation embodied in the mythical version of the Weizmann-Faysal agreement. Cordial as relations were with Abdullah, he was a disappointing substitute for his elder brother.

Propaganda -- a mechanism to fight the enemy without the shedding of blood -- became more sophisticated. By 1936 we may observe the beginnings of a propaganda system which became, in the course of the

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[3]R. Benyamin, HaOlam, 23.7.1936.

[4]D. Ben-Gurion My Talks with Arab Leaders, pp.14-40 and M. Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, pp.312-318.

events of 1936 to 1939, the propagator of a consistent "Jewish Agency Version," a more or less comprehensive and coherent presentation of Zionist views on Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism and the politics of the Arab world.

"AN EMINENTLY USEFUL INSTRUMENT."

One of the Jewish Agency's most effective means of influencing the Arab as well as the European press was via the Agence d'Orient or Al-[Wakala] Al-Sharqiya, based in Cairo. The news agency, whose role in presenting the Zionist version of Palestinian and Middle Eastern events can hardly be exaggerated, was run by Nahum Vilensky, a young and talented Palestinian-born journalist who made his headquarters in Egypt. His first contact with the Jewish Agency was in the days of Colonel Kisch, who thought very highly of this "exceedingly able young Jewish journalist,"[5] possibly due in part to his willingness to serve the Joint Bureau without remuneration. Vilensky was not without his own opinions on political matters and a 1931 letter from Kisch to Vilensky says much, both about Kisch's views on "Arab policy" and the qualities of the young journalist who was subsequently to play such an important role in the execution of the Agency's propaganda war. "I absolutely endorse your observations," Kisch wrote,

> that the Arab policy must not be an aim of Zionism but a means. It is the failure to understand this elementary conception which has doomed the Brith Shalom from the day of its birth. You are also very right in stressing the dominant part which personal interest plays amongst the peoples of the Orient....In this connection I fully share your view that the only possible system of payment

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[5]Kisch to Namier, 27.5.1930, S25/3136.

> in the East is that of payment for actual services rendered in the form of propaganda articles etc. I have made it my business to put an end, as far as this Executive is concerned, to all payments of regular subsidies and subventions by which it was hoped to gain useful friendships.[6]

After consultations with Shertok, the Agence d'Orient (AO) was set up during January 1934,[7] with the promise of financial support from the Jewish Agency and the Anglo-Palestine Bank. Its function was clear from the start. It must not have an obvious Jewish or Zionist character and one of its main aims would be "to fight the harmful exaggerations and distortions being published about Eretz-Yisrael in the press of the neighbouring countries."[8] After the appearance of the first few daily bulletins Shertok found it necessary to advise Vilensky that in order to obscure the AO's real character, it was advisable that its bulletins occasionally omit to mention Palestine affairs completely.[9]

By 1936, nine leading Egyptian newspapers, including the Egyptian Mail and La Bourse Egyptienne, were printing the AO bulletins almost in full. Seven Syrian papers used the bulletins, including La Syrie, Le Jour, L'Orient Al-Balagh and Lissan al-Hal. One indication of Vilensky's success in preserving the AO's apparently non-partisan character was the fact that in the summer of 1936 some influential Palestinian Arab papers were still using its material.[10]

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[6]Kisch to Vilensky, 26.5.31, S25/3136.

[7]See Ben-Gurion's Diary, 7.12.33, noting the decision to set up "an information bureau for the press in Cairo." BB/101/33.

[8]Shertok to Vilensky, 15.12.33, S25/3138.

[9]Shertok to Vilensky, 21.1.34, Ibid.

[10]Epstein to Shertok, 15.5.36, S25/3137.

One of Vilensky's greatest achievements was the release, in June 1936, of the "scoop," first to La Bourse Egyptienne and thence to the Times of the Weizmann-Faysal agreement of 1918.[11] The timing of course, was not accidental; at a time when the Zionists were interested in showing the lack of foundation to the Arab claims of the "Zionist danger," and the possibility of cordial relations and even agreement between the two national movements, the publication of the 18-year-old agreement was intended as a powerful boost to Zionist legitimacy. That the revelations of the agreement did little more than lead to accusations of forgery and Zionist plots does nothing to diminish the symbolic importance of the act of revealing the only existing agreement, and a dubious and qualified one at that, between an Arab leader of "national" stature and a leader of the Zionist movement. It was the classic formulation of the essential compatibility of the interests of the opposing sides, what could be called the "exchange of services" solution to the conflict. The Jews would bestow upon the Arabs the benefit of their technological and economic skills and political influence, and in return for this the awakening Arab nation would recognize Jewish independence in Palestine, a tiny and unimportant corner of the vast Arab domains.

Throughout the 1936 disturbances the AO faithfully served the Zionist cause by the publication in its daily bulletins of reports and articles on subjects like "The Progress of the Jewish Port," "Rumours of a Jewish decision to boycott Syrian and Lebanese holiday resorts," "The cruelty of Arab attacks on innocent Jews" etc.[12]

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[11]The story was published in La Bourse Egyptienne on 10.6.36; in the Times on 12.6.36 and Davar on 12.6.36.

[12]E. Sasson, Report on Operations of the Agence d'Orient, 10.7.36, S25/3135; and Shertok at JAE, 22.5.36.

Apart from the AO's routine operations, Vilensky succeeded, during the strike period, in placing 16 articles, "mostly of an editorial character," in a number of leading Egyptian newspapers, "including the foremost organ of the Wafd party." "In these articles," Shertok wrote to Weizmann in October, "water of political realism was constantly poured on the hot heads of the Arab intransigents in Palestine."[13]

There were occasions when Vilensky's work was especially effective. Acting on a "brainwave" from Leo Kohn, he succeeded in placing an article in Al-Jihad of October 2, warning the Arab rulers to leave the Palestine question alone, and that serious conflicts would be likely to break out amongst the Arabs if the strike were to end without results. J., Vilensky's friend at Al-Jihad was paid for his trouble, but it was well worth it. The contents of the article were at once reported by the Iraqi and Saudi delegations in Cairo to their respective capitals. (This with the help of another Al-Jihad employee, "who also gets crumbs from us.")[14] The following extract from Vilensky's report on this episode gives a vivid picture of his mode of operation:

> On the 3rd of the month I sent Abd al-Rahman Effendi Hilmi to the Iraqi Legation. He's the political editor of Al-Siyasa and has close links with us. Abd al-Rahman asked Kilani [the Iraqi delegate in Egypt] for his opinion about the Al-Jihad article, and in order to allay any suspicions, said that he wanted to write an article in Al-Siyasa on the same subject.

Having thus discovered the Iraqi delegate's private views on the Al-Jihad article, that certain Arab leaders would use the kings'

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[13]Shertok to Weizmann, 2.10.36, S25/1716.

[14]Vilensky Report, 4.10.36, S25/3135.

appeal to blame the latter for the failure of the strike, the enterprising Vilensky proceeded to write an article for Al-Siyasa using precisely these arguments. It would therefore appear to the Iraqi representative that this article was written by Hilmi following their interview, and, flattered by this echo of his views in the Egyptian press, would send on to Baghdad the article written by Vilensky precisely for that purpose.

As part of the same effort to discourage the intervention of the Arab kings, Vilensky contacted the Italian propaganda officer in Cairo. He told Captain Dadana that the British wished to use the Palestine disturbances to create a united Arab bloc, one of whose aims would be to remove Yemen from the Italian sphere of influence. The Italian, Vilensky reported, immediately contacted the Yemeni representative in Egypt in an attempt to halt the Imam's intervention in Palestine, a move which was, as it were, playing into British hands.[15]

Through J., who also ran a news agency in Cairo, it was arranged to publish an appeal against the intervention of the Arab rulers, and articles of a similar nature were sent to Al-Ayyam in Damascus and Al-Nahar in Beirut, in the hope of influencing Fuad Hamza, Ibn Saud's representative, then in Damascus.[16]

Vilensky's tasks, therefore, were not limited to the narrow sphere of the AO's daily bulletins and he often represented the Political Department in meetings with prominent Arabs. Thanks to his efforts close links were established with Dr. Abd al-Rahman Shahabandar and Amin Said, who attempted, in the summer of 1936, to act as

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[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

mediators between Zionists and Palestinians.[17]

Vilensky also made several visits to Turkey on behalf of the Political Department and tried in vain to arrange a meeting between Shertok and Rustu Aras, the Turkish Foreign Minister, during the latter's visit to Egypt in April 1938.[18] He did, however, manage to exert sufficient influence on Aras for him to counsel moderation and acceptance of partition when he met one of the Mufti's representatives in Beirut.[19]

He maintained strong links with the semi-official Turkish news agency in Cairo, Al-Anba al-Sharqiya, which had been in contact with the Political Department since 1935 and whose news bulletins were sent to Davar, HaAretz, HaBoqer and the Palestine Post.[20] Epstein reported that this news agency was Iranian just as much as it was Turkish, and that there was an agreement between these two countries on the distribution of news about the Arab world. Both Turkey and Iran were interested, for their own political reasons, in publicizing the negative aspects of the pan-Arab movement, and this created, Epstein argued, a basis for cooperation between Al-Anba al-Sharqiya

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[17]See Vilensky to Shertok, 13.7.36, S25/3135, on meeting with Amin Said. On meetings with Shahabandar, Aluba Pasha, Vilensky to Shertok, 9.6.36, S25/9166. B. Joseph's Diary, 8, 15, 17, 21.7.36, S25/443 and for meetings between Joseph, Vilensky, Shahabandar and Amin Said see reports dated 21.9.36 and 23.9.36, S25/3052.

[18]Vilensky to Shertok, 13.4.38, S25/281.

[19]Shertok to Vilensky, 24.4.38, S25/5814.

[20]Epstein to these newspapers, 6.3.35, S25/3205 and Epstein to Al-Anba al-Sharqiya, 29.3.37, S25/10121.

and the Political Department, based on the principle that "My enemy's enemy is my friend."[21] Vilensky's friendly relations with Mr. Abd al-Ilah of the Anba al-Sharqiya provided the Political Department with a useful source of information about the official Turkish position on political questions, particularly over Alexandretta.[22]

Although he was often entrusted with tasks of considerable importance, requiring skill and diplomacy, the attitude to Vilensky in Jerusalem was somewhat ambivalent, possibly because of his readiness to use baksheesh to get what he needed, or perhaps because of his habit of writing long and unsolicited letters to Dr. Weizmann in verbose French, a fault for which he was on at least one occasion gently reprimanded by Shertok.[23] Vilensky's letters, however, are not uninteresting and his views on Arab and Middle Eastern affairs were those of a man whose daily contact with the demi-monde of Egyptian and pan-Arab journalism and politics had left him with strong convictions, as a fervent Zionist, as how best to struggle against the enemy. A conversation with the Syrian Dr. Shahabander led him to voice the following conclusions:

> Nous devrons combattre le panarabisme de toutes nos forces afin de lui montrer que nous, aussi, pourrions lui devenir dangereux et l'obliger à compter avec nous comme avec un facteur politque important. Nous avons déjà realisé des progrès assez importants dans cette direction, mais il reste encore beaucoup à faire, surtout a Londres, où certains dirigeants anglais semblent être intentionellement mal informés en ce qui concerne les événements dans les pays de

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[21]Epstein to Shertok, 27.1.35, S25/10162. See chapter seven.

[22]Secret, Arab Bureau Information from Egypt, 4.10.36, S25/3135.

[23]Shertok to Vilensky, 24.6.38, S25/5814.

> l'Orient.....détruir la légende panarabe, telle que le concoit le romantisme britannique, est, a mon avis, une question vitale pour le sionisme et je suis persuadé que le problème restera entier, quelle que soit la solution que le gouvernement donnera au problème palestinien.[24]

Extreme caution was called for in the presentation of the views and information sent from Jerusalem that appeared in the AO bulletins. Shertok often reminded Vilensky that if a piece of information could be easily suspected as emanating from a Zionist source, it should be released through the Arab News Agency run by Vilensky's friend J. from Al-Jihad, or perhaps through the good offices of Mr. Abd al-Ilah of the Anba al-Sharqiyn.[25] Another way of disguising the source of items appearing in the bulletins was to slightly change a piece of "raw" information by the omission of part of it, or by the addition of something else to it. Thus, for example, Shertok received information that Taufiq Suwaydi, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, had complained to the British Embassy in Baghdad of the damage being done to the Iraqi Petroleum pipeline because of the trouble in Palestine, and had been ridiculed by the British and told that his own links with the Arabs of Palestine would be the most effective means of safeguarding Iraqi interests. Transmitting the information to Vilensky, Shertok suggested that the AO should say that Iraqi officials were worried about damage being done to the pipeline by acts of sabotage and were discussing how to protect it, without mentioning the British at all.[26]

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[24]Vilensky to Weizmann, 10.5.37, S25/3135.

[25]Shertok to Vilensky, 3.7.39, S25/3573 and Vilensky Report 31.7.39, S25/3135.

[26]Shertok to Vilensky, 19.11.37, S25/3135.

On another occasion Shertok had to reprimand Vilenski for his lack of caution. The AO bulletin of the November 8, 1937 reported the postponement of the debate in the French parliament on the Franco-Syrian Treaty. This was reprinted in the Syrian press together with slanderous attacks on the AO and the "Zionist plots" motivating its publications. "It was," Shertok wrote,

> extremely careless of you to mention the AO as the primary source of this information, and you must take care to prevent such occurences in the future. You will certainly recall that information of this kind was placed by E. Sasson with the Arab News Agency in Syria and passed on to you from there. That is a much better way of getting such information into the Arab press.[27]

Shertok's warnings were not unjustified. In November 1938, for instance, the Damascus newspaper La Chronique commented that the AO was an "agence remarquable en ceci qu'elle n'a ni correspondants ni rédacteurs."[28]

Apart from information culled from the Hebrew press and the occasional titbits of information sent from Jerusalem, Vilensky was given clear guidance by the Political Department and usually directly from Shertok or Epstein, his immediate superior. Thus in July 1939, for example, Shertok wrote to Vilensky suggesting subjects for publication in the AO bulletins. One topic was the implications of the struggle between Iraq and Saudi Arabia for the leadership of the Arab unity movement, artificially bolstered up by the Palestine issue. Another idea was to stress French annoyance with British encouragement of pan-Arabism and the lack of cooperation between the

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[27]Shertok to Vilensky, 12.12.37, S25/3135.

[28]LaChronique, 2.11.38, quoted in Sasson to Shertok, 4.11.38, S25/3138.

two powers in the Middle East. The aim of such articles, Shertok wrote quite explicitly, was, by highlighting inter-Arab strife, to prove the failure of British policy to unite the Arab countries and the falseness of the claim of "Miles Lampson and his friends" that only the Jewish National Home in Palestine was spoiling the unity of the Arab lands under British hegemony. Exposure of the differences between British and French Middle Eastern policy was designed to question the necessity of British anti-Zionist and pro-Arab orientations.[28A]

Vilensky and the Agence d'Orient, then, played an integral part in the Jewish Agency's propaganda war against pan-Arabism. Just as Vilensky's information from Egypt was incorporated into top-level documents emanating from Jerusalem,[29] so he received reports and clippings from Damascus via Jerusalem, which he used in composing his articles and daily bulletins.[30]

A 1939 report summed up the achievements of five years of the Agence d'Orient. The daily bulletin, in French and Arabic, was sent to 100 newspapers in Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Greece. In addition 300 copies were sent to influential individuals in the Middle East. The AO also ran a special service for foreign journalists in Egypt, thus creating a useful avenue of influence upon important newspapers. Amongst the European

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[28A]Shertok to Vilensky, 3.7.39, S25/3573.

[29]See Vilensky to L. Kohn, 25.11.37, ISA 68/20 and "Arab reactions to Government Policy in Palestine," handed in to the Foreign Office by Weizmann on 4.3.38, PRO CO/733/368/75156/23/Part 1.

[30]Epstein to Vilensky, 21.1.38, S25/5814. Shertok to Vilensky, 26.10.37, S25/3135.

newspapers regularly using the AO bulletins were the Daily Herald, Daily Express, Paris Soir and Le Temps. With all the necessary caution Vilensky tried, on the one hand to give a true picture of Jewish achievements in Palestine, in response to the anti-Zionist propaganda being waged in the Oriental press, and on the other, to exploit Middle Eastern events directly or indirectly proving the internal weakness of the pan-Arab movement.[31]

It is difficult to assess the real achievements of the Agence d'Orient, for the distribution figures of its bulletins may have only a tenuous relationship to its actual influence. It is, however, beyond doubt that Vilensky provided the Political Department with an extremely effective organization for the dissemination of its views, and if the political struggle was not in the long run affected by the propaganda war in which Vilensky and his "news agency" played such an important part, it was not for lack of effort or enterprise.

THE PRESS AND THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT

Apart from its official links with the Agence d'Orient, the Palcor News Agency, papers like HaOlam and Yalqut HaMizrah HaTikhon as well as the Palestine and Middle East Economic Magazine, the Political Department had close links with the Palestinian Jewish press, and, of course, the Zionist press abroad.

The department expected the "responsible" press (i.e. not the out and out Revisionist or Communist newspapers) to subject itself to "national" discipline and was quick to rebuke infringements. Translations, phrasing, and style were all subject to criticism.[32]

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[31]Vilensky report, 31.7.39, op.cit.

[32]See, e.g., Shertok to Agronsky 25.5.37, S25/5810. Shertok to Moshe Glickson (HaAretz), 5.11.36, S25/5809.

The irresponsible printing of political information was considered a particularly heinous transgression of the unwritten code, and even the mild-mannered Shertok lost his temper when the General Zionist HaBoger reported the rumour, in July 1936, that Weizmann had agreed to a temporary stoppage of immigration, (in spite of the Jewish Agency's prior denial of the story), a rumour which was gleefully seized upon by the Arab press.[33]

The Political Department's influence though, was not only negative. Close scrutiny of the Hebrew and Zionist press reveals that articles on political matters, especially editorials, and particularly on developments in the Arab world and Palestine, written from the normal anti-pan-Arab angle, were composed by a very small number of people in key positions, whose consistent presentation of their views on pan-Arabism and the Middle East must have had its effect on the formation of the views of the reading public on these subjects.

It is notoriously difficult to discover the relationship between the press and formation of public opinion, but it is at least clear in our case precisely who was behind the press presentation of current political events in the Middle East. This is not to suggest that this presentation of events was false or distorted, but simply that journalistic utterances on political questions, and particularly questions related to relations with the Arabs, were the monopoly of individuals either working for or with the agreement of, the higher institutions of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement.

Thus Michael Asaf, Mapai's "orientalist-in-chief" and editor, from 1937, of the Histadrut's Arab weekly, Haqiqat al-Amr wrote virtually all the articles on Arab and Middle Eastern affairs for

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[33]M. Sharett Yoman Medini 1936, 22.7.36, p.217.

Davar, HaPoel Hatzair, Bamaale, and other labour movement publications, as well as occasional articles in unaffiliated journals, like Moznaim, Gilyonot or HaTequfah. Similarly, Leo Kohn of the Political Department regularly wrote leaders and articles for the New Judea, Davar and the Palestine Post. His relationship with this last paper merits careful examination.

"FULLY REFLECTS THE PROGRESS OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME."

The great political importance of the Palestine Post lay in its being the only English language daily in Palestine, and in the fact that it was widely read in the neighbouring Arab countries as a reliable indicator of the mood in the Zionist camp. It advertised itself as

> The only English newspaper in Palestine, Transjordan and Syria. It deals with events of equal interest to all communities and fully reflects the progress of the Jewish National Home.

This was something of an understatement. When the paper was founded in 1932, Arlossoroff had promised it the Agency's financial support, which at the time, Agronsky, the paper's founder and editor, had not required. Sometime later, after Arlossoroff's death, Shertok had come to the Post's aid at a time of financial difficulty. The Post was in fact a public company, with the shares jointly held by a number of private individuals, including Agronsky himself, who had, however, consistently argued that it was dangerous for the shares to be in private hands, for, if he were to resign, or something were to happen to him, the editorship of the paper might well pass to undesirable hands.[34]

When, in 1938, one of the Post's larger shareholders, Bernard A. Rosenblatt, began negotiating the sale of his shares to two

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[34]Shertok to Senator, 31.3.38, S25/5814. Also G. Agron Asir Haneamnut, (1964), pp.80-89.

people, who, as Shertok put it, might have an "anti-public" influence on the newspaper, the head of the Political Department stepped in and bought Rosenblatt's shares for £1,750. Thus together, Agronsky and the Political Department held a controlling interest in the paper.[35] The relationship, then, between the Post and the Political Department was not merely one of collaboration, but of de facto control, and the Post's views may therefore be seen as a direct expression of the views that the Political Department wished to be transmitted to the English reading public in Palestine and abroad.

Cooperation between Kohn and Agronsky was not always smooth. Kohn was, by all accounts a fairly pompous character, convinced of his own importance and somewhat dazzled by his own brilliance, and had little patience with Agronsky's more liberal approach to press questions. The Post's editor had, for instance, a penchant for free expression and the publication of readers' letters, whatever views they expressed. "Every man must save something from his youth, and I have saved a drop of incurable liberalism where other peoples' opinions are concerned."[36]

Agronsky's journalistic laissez-faire, however, was not to Kohn's taste. Just as it was forbidden to publish anti-Government articles in the press, so it should be forbidden to publish articles and letters "hostile to the spirit of Zionism." "I would respectfully suggest," Kohn wrote to Agronsky,

> that among the conditions governing your procedure there should also be included the principle that no letters should be published from Jews which are definitely designed "to give comfort to the

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[35]Ibid. and Agronsky to B. Rosenblatt, 31.12.37, A209/28.

[36]Agronsky to Kohn, 21.6.39, S25/4638.

> enemy." (the enemy in this case being quite well-known to you) This, as you know, is generally included in the term "seditious" which I take you apply not only to the Government, but also to the cause of the Jewish National Home.[37]

Kohn was also naturally sensitive about the treatment of his own material by the Post. When, for technical reasons, it was necessary to edit and reduce a leader he had written until it became "useless," "effete" and "emasculated," he did not spare his wrath. For their part, the paper's editors were slightly wary of Kohn, and often had to warn him "not to overdo himself."[38] Kohn saw fit to advise Agronsky on the smallest matters too, and complained bitterly over the authorship of a book review:

> I was so sorry to see from today's Palestine Post that you had entrusted the review of Rom Landau's book to [Albert] Hyamson. It was eminently a subject for your own pen -- and let me add, in its most pugnacious style. Landau is a rat, a Polish Jew who has become a convert to Catholicism and now trades in religion, looking at everything with contempt, praising the Mufti up to the sky and then complaining in London to Lady Reading about us.....The book.....is a disgusting performance from our point of view. The world is told that in Palestine we are even more repulsive than we were before and similar fine things. He has never met Weizmann, yet he establishes a resemblance between his character and that of the Mufti. The book should have been torn to pieces instead of being used by Hyamson for an attack against partition and for praising the author. This is really an opportunity lost. It seems to me, in general, that Hyamson in his latest phase is the most unfit of men for reviewing books on Palestine, however good he may conceivably be for writing on Jewish historical or diaspora books.[39]

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[37]Kohn to Agronsky, 27.6.39, S25/4638.

[38]T. Lurie to Agronsky, 8.8.37, A209/28 (G. Agron Archive).

[39]Kohn to Agronsky, 13.3.38, ISA 68/21.

There seems to have been more than a little conflict between the two men over the nature of the relationship between the Political Department and the Post. "To you," Kohn wrote to Agronsky,

> it may appear sufficient if something fairly readable appears in your leaders. To me it is a calamity if the editorial column contains an ineffective or defective presentation of our arguments. This is worse than if nothing appears, because it implies that the Jews have no case. It also reduces the standing of the editorial column in the eyes of your readers so that nobody looks at it if it does contain anything of value.[40]

Kohn's perception of the nature of the collaboration between press and Political Department was quite unequivocal. "In other places," he wrote,

> leading papers are anxious to get advice and guidance from those working in Foreign Offices [my emphasis I.B.] It is rare that they have actual members of those offices collaborating in their columns. You have this advantage, but it means very little to you. I am constantly being pressed by Davar to write for them, but I have to refuse. I am doing it for the P.P. because I attach special importance to this medium for stating our case and because I know that you are without any guidance at present. You know less of what is happening than most of the Hebrew journalists who, because of their party affiliation or membership of official bodies have opportunities of getting inside information which are denied to you. I am giving you gladly whatever help I can, but it is -- if you will permit me to say so -- ridiculous if, with your limited knowledge you set yourself up as a censor over the contributions of one who is in the very midst of things....There is a general rule in all papers that there are certain contributors whose stuff is printed without alteration. I think that I may claim that position as far as the P.P. is concerned.[41]

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[40]Kohn to Agronsky, 27.6.39, S25/4638.

[41]Ibid.

"MYSTIFIED BY THE CHECKERED COURSE OF ORIENTAL POLITICS."

Kohn, whose importance in presenting the "Jewish Agency Version" to the Palestine Zionist press cannot be overestimated, also had close links with important English journalists, which he exploited to the full. In an age before the terms really came into being, Kohn was a propagandist and public relations man par excellence and was recognized as being so. He was on particularly close terms with Philip Graves, the Times' influential political editor, and corresponded with him regularly, and in March 1936 travelled to Egypt especially to see him.[42] Kohn's letters to him, particularly from 1938-39, are some of the most lucid examples of the eloquent and caustic presentation of the "Jewish Agency Version" of which he was such a successful exponent. His role in the creation and dissemination of the Agency's position on subjects of political importance was very great indeed. Officially in charge of what was innocuously headed "contacts with European newspaper men,"[43] he was as influential in his sphere as Eliahu Epstein was in the analysis and explanation of the pan-Arab movement and events in the Middle East. Together, these two men, neither of them in executive positions, but both holding key posts within the Political Department, exercised an incalculable influence on the formation of the dominant Zionist view on Near Eastern affairs.

A short, plumpish, and physically unimpressive figure, Kohn was quintessentially a European. German-bred and English-educated, he was equally at home in the central European ambience of Jerusalem's

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[42]Joseph to Shertok, 23.3.36, S25/442.

[43]Minutes of a Conference of the Staff of the Political Department, 22.9.37, S25/442.

cafes and in the company of foreign journalists and intellectuals, but was, as he wrote on one occasion, "mystified....by the checkered course of Oriental politics."[44] His note of an interview with George Antonius in 1934 tells us as much about Kohn as it does about the celebrated author of The Arab Awakening. Antonius, Kohn reported,

> is a typical Levantine, shrewd, quick in taking up political points, but in no way clever. He once or twice involved himself in contradictions and felt rather embarrassed when he became aware of it. He is anxious to give himself the airs of a man with many interests, and aesthetically inclined, but it is easy to see that he has no real culture or even education. There is in spite of his shrewdness a certain wooliness about him; he is certainly no dialectician. There is also a certain gaucherie of manner; he served me with a cup of tea and did it very badly.[45]

Antonius asked Kohn about his work on Ireland, (Kohn had received his Ph.D. for a thesis on the Constitutional problems of the Irish Free State and was fond of discussing the parallels between Irish and Jewish Nationalism) and told him that he was at present engaged on "an elaborate study of the origin and development of the National Movement among the Arabs." During the course of their conversation, Kohn brought up the question of recent anti-semitic developments in Europe. Antonius, he wrote, side-tracked this point by commenting on the anti-semitism which prevailed amongst the British administration in Palestine;

> he said that he had studied in England, had many friends there and that he mixed freely amongst British officials in Palestine, but that never had he found in England anything resembling the anti-Jewish feeling that was rampant among the officials of the British administration in

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[44]Kohn to Joseph, 8.4.37, S25/436.

[45]Report on Meeting with George Antonius, 31.1.34, ISA 68/51.

> Jerusalem. He said this with a certain air of noble indignation befitting a cultured man of the 20th century, as which he was anxious to present himself throughout our conversation.[46]

Kohn's assessment of Antonius was harsh and unyielding, but this early record throws considerable light on the later development of Kohn's and similar views on Arab Nationalism. "As he took me to the door," he concluded the report,

> we stood for a few minutes on the steps of his beautiful villa looking down on Jerusalem spread out below in the starlit night. "How beautiful it is here," he mused, "yet I fear that I shall have to leave." It sounded so impressive, but I did not believe a word.[47]

With a deep respect for the importance of public opinion, Kohn was particularly concerned about anti-Zionist propaganda being waged in the English left-wing press, and urged that it be fought tooth and nail. The anti-Zionist and anti-Mandatory propaganda articles written by Thomas Hodgkin in the Labour Monthly were, he felt, particularly dangerous.[48]

An aide memoire entitled "Points for letter to Left-wing men," dated January 1939, highlights Kohn's concern on this subject. It was tragic, he wrote, that the Zionists were misunderstood by the Left.

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[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Kohn to Dov Hoz (n.d.) [Summer 1936] S25/5810. Hodgkin, who had been a member of the Palestine Government Secretariat, had previously been an Assistant Lecturer in the University of Manchester, and after resigning from the service was being reconsidered for the post. L. Namier, Professor of History at Manchester, writing to Shertok, declared that he was "absolutely opposed" to Hodgkin's reappointment, "as I do not think that a semi-Bolshevik who behaved in Palestine in a very indiscreet manner is a suitable person to teach political philosophy to our undergraduates." Namier asked for information about the facts concerning Hodgkin, the attitude he took, the connections he cultivated, and his kind of talk about "British Imperialism." Namier to Shertok, 30.10.36, ISA 68/38.

In this respect they were worse off than the Spanish Republicans, "who at least have the sympathy of progressive people throughout the world." Kohn was sufficiently shrewd to know what would appeal to his audience, and it might be said, without being unduly cynical, that he could just as easily have composed an equally convincing memorandum entitled "Points for letter to Right-wing men." "We are in the absurd position," he noted,

> that while the Right Wing hates us because we are progressive and socialist, the Left Wing attacks us because it associates us with British Imperialism in the East, a ridiculous position because as everybody on the spot knows only too well, the British imperialists in the East hate us like poison and are working against us with all their might (men like Smart[49]) because we are an unpleasant disturbance to their pan-Arab schemes.[50]

People of the Left in England, he advised his "Left-wing men," made the mistake of looking at the Mufti and his gang as genuine national leaders like Gandhi, De Valera or Zaghloul:

> Did any of these leaders murder their fellow nationals in the cynical way in which the Mufti has bumped off everyone who disagreed with him like a mediaeval Italian city dictator by hired assassins and bravi? The Mufti and his set take German money, engage the services of desparadoes, have their political opponents assassinated....terrorise the peaceful Arab population and then ride off as great national leaders and heroes of a national revolution -- when in actual fact they are a set of high class criminals of the truly Oriental type out for jobs and power.[51]

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[49]Oriental Secretary of the British Embassy in Cairo, married to a sister-in-law of George Antonius and the daughter of Faris Nimr, editor of the influential Egyptian paper Al-Moqattam.

[50]Points for letter to Left-Wing Men, January 1939, ISA 68/26.

[51]Ibid.

He was concerned to destroy the naive illusions of the English Left which made the mistake of looking on the Arabs as

> a set of Manchester liberals who will run Palestine on democratic lines on the patter of British liberalism of the Gladstone and John Bright type, with free elections, dignified oppositions, the army will be under the full control of the civil power, administration and justice free from corruption and all the other paraphernalia of a Victorian democracy. And they expect us, who know the realities in this part of the world, to submit to the tender mercies of this kind of Arab self-government because this is an Arab country and we have to be satisfied with the status of a minority.[52]

Minority status for the Jews under Arab rule was unthinkable and the political evolution of an independent Arab state in Palestine was fraught with dangers. "Fascism," he wrote, "is a political philosophy very palatable to the Arabs with their crude instincts and their inferiority complex."[53]

He asked the socialists to consider the implications of handing over the labour settlements in Palestine, which represented "the only free form of socialist settlement in the world today -- because there is no freedom in Russia -- to the rule of a rapacious set of reactionary effendis." He further appealed to them to see how ridiculous was the notion of sending European Jews to "all kinds of wild parts" and depriving European civilization of their services:

> In Palestine they are still part of Europe and can be of help to general progress. In Madagascar and Dutch Guiana they will become a class of planter parasites. Here in Palestine they will become hard-working socialist settlers.[54]

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[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

Kohn's views and the considerable skill with which he presented them become even more significant in the light of the fact that he actually wrote, or supplied detailed notes for many important letters signed by Weizmann. His influence, therefore, was not restricted to "contacts with European newspaper men," but was connected to the articulation of Zionist views on the Arabs at the very highest level. A letter from Shertok to Vilensky gives a clue as to the kind of mechanism that operated in the transmission of views:

> I enclose for your information a copy of a letter that I wrote to one of the editors of the Times in Rome, whose traces may be found in the leading article accompanying the big article on the Pan-Arab question. This article was written on the basis of a letter from Dr. Leo Kohn to Dr. Weizmann, a copy of which I gave to the Times correspondent while I was still in London.[55]

ELIAHU EPSTEIN AND THE "JEWISH AGENCY VERSION."

Perhaps in the long run even more influential than Leo Kohn, was Eliahu Epstein, whose particular contribution to the formation of the "Jewish Agency Version" was his analysis of the problems and politics of the Middle East, and in particular of the pan-Arab movement.

Epstein came to the Political Department as a trained Orientalist, having studied at the Hebrew University and the American University of Beirut. He brought with him a style and approach to the problems of the Middle East that was far removed from the "grass roots" knowledge of the manners and mores of the Orient that was the contribution of Elias Sasson and Aharon Chaim Cohen. His approach was essentially scientific and sociological. When he formally joined the department in 1934 he had already carried out extensive

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[55]Shertok to Vilensky, 26.10.37, S25/3135.

studies of the Beduin of the Negev, of Transjordan and the sedentarization of nomads. The contacts he had made with Arab political and intellectual circles during his three years in Beirut were to prove very useful in his work.

Epstein's special contribution to the creation of the Zionist view of the Arab world was his combination of sociological research with practical political sense. Thus he was at his best, for instance, when presenting a report on a conference (in which he had participated) of Italian orientalists held in Rome in late 1935.[56]

He had many contacts in the world of European oriental studies, including such eminent scholars as Louis Massignon, with whom he met and corresponded regularly.[57] He was a member of the Royal Central Asian Society and contributed to its journal, a medium which he did not hesitate to use for the dissemination of his views on the Arab world. In September 1937 he wrote an article on the situation in the Persian Gulf, concentrating on the tense relations between Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. "The intention of the article," he reported to Bernard Joseph, "was to stress the artificiality of the understanding and mutual relations apparently reigning in the Arab world."[58]

The guiding thread behind Epstein's activities was his struggle, from the point of view of his own knowledge and perception of Middle Eastern realities, and as the representative of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, against what has subsequently been

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[56]Report on a Conference of Italian Orientalists (n.d.) [November 1935] S25/3603.

[57]Note on Professor Louis Massignon (n.d.) S25/3145, Epstein to Massignon, 14.7.37, S25/891.

[58]Epstein to Joseph, 13.9.37, S25/3145.

described as the "Chatham House Version,"[59] its propagators and supporters. In numerous conversations with British and French orientalists, Foreign Office officials, professional arabophiles, influential and public figures, Epstein brought to bear the full weight of the anti-pan-Arab thesis of which he was the Zionist movement's most cogent and prolific exponent.

A typical encounter was with Colonel F. Newcombe in London in May 1937. Newcombe described himself as an anti-Zionist for both personal (love of the Arabs) and political reasons (British patriotism). In 1913 he had been sent on a secret mission to Damascus where he had met and been impressed by Arab nationalists. The fact that Newcombe was concerned with the welfare of the Arabs, Epstein told him, meant that he should not be satisfied with his knowledge of them before the war, but should take the trouble to examine their new conditions and problems. The happiness and progress of the Arabs did not depend on political conditions, but mainly on social and economic factors (my emphasis I.B.). Achieving independence, he explained to this diehard arabophile, was easier than consolidating it, and it had little value if not used wisely and with maturity. Like any successful diplomat, Epstein knew how to appeal to the aspects of a question that would particularly interest his listener. He told Newcombe who, like many of his colleagues, combined a staunch arabophilism with domestic conservatism, that his "Arab friends in Palestine" on the one hand support the Communist Gallacher[60] and on the other display pictures of Hitler and Mussolini

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[59]E. Kedourie, The Chatham House Version.

[60]Willie Gallacher, Communist M.P.

on the Prophet's birthday.[61]

A similar meeting was with the Oriental Secretary of the British Embassy in Baghdad. Visiting Iraq with Elias Sasson on behalf of the Political Department, Epstein presented himself as a member of the Royal Central Asian Society who had come to the country to study the problems of the new government. Holt, Gertrude Bell's successor as Oriental Secretary, though now for the Embassy, was considered an expert on Middle Eastern affairs, and extremely influential upon the making of British policy towards Iraq. Again, Epstein knew how to turn the conversation in the direction which interested him and asked Holt for his opinion of Glubb. Iraq, according to the Oriental Secretary, was the school that had educated some of the best British officials in the East. The principal teachers had been Arnold Wilson, Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell, and they had reared men like Leachman, Shakespear and Glubb:

> When I asked him if he didn't consider that experience had proven that many of the conceptions and plans of these respected teachers were false and without foundation, he said that it was still too early to come to conclusions.[62]

If Holt, as Epstein concluded his report, was almost certainly in favour of the pan-Arab idea, it was instructive to compare his views with those of another British official, C.J. Edmonds, an adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior. Edmonds, "profoundly versed in Iraqi and especially Kurdish affairs,"[63] and absorbed by his work at the Ministry of the Interior -- "the central artery in the body

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[61]Report of meeting with Col. Newcombe, 20.5.37, S25/3144.

[62]Meeting with V. Holt, 3.2.37, S25/5575.

[63]S.H. Longrigg, Iraq from 1900-1950, p.244.

of the state" -- was, according to Epstein,

> far more practical in his description of the disadvantages and assessments of the country's achievements, and less "political" in these matters than Holt, who views Iraq not only because of what he knows about her affairs, but mainly, perhaps from a specific and basically deductive viewpoint.[64]

The many meetings of this kind in which he participated must have given Epstein a keen insight into the inner workings of British policy in the East, and convinced him further of the need to stress the Agency's interpretation of events.

In sharp contrast to men like Newcombe, Holt and Storrs (Epstein met him too, in May 1937[65]), was Major C.S. Jarvis, the former governor of Sinai. Jarvis, Epstein reported, hated the romantic myths of the Beduin fostered by Lawrence and Glubb and was concerned to oppose English Orientalists "who turn the Arab into a symbol of nobility, gentlemanliness, the guardian of a sublime tradition and son of the desert, a contemporary knight."[66] The Palestinian peasants, Jarvis believed, were the descendants of the Jews of ancient times and a "rabble" whose right to Palestine from the point of view of their antiquity was less than the right of the Irish to New York. He dismissed with contempt the existence of a homogenous Arab nation, and the Arab nationalist claims to their share in the spoils of victory over the Turks. His Desert and Delta, the Palestine Review felt, "should be in the hands of every official working east

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[64]3.2.37 Report, loc.cit.

[65]Meeting with Storrs, 18.5.37, S25/3144.

[66]Meeting with Jarvis, 18.5.37, S25/3144.

of Suez."[67] Epstein was particularly fond of his Three Deserts, and extracts from it are to be found in the files of the Political Department, including the following passage:

> I frequently hear fat and juicy Syrians and equally fat and juicy Palestinians -- men who could not sit on a camel for five minutes -- talk proudly of their Arab birth. I have lived and worked with Arabs for 18 years and know the race, and no amount of oily food and cloying sweetmeats could turn this hardy desert stock into the effete and languid creatures that now claim kinship with the nomads of Arabia and talk so loudly of the Arab independence for which they fought.[68]

Jarvis' analysis of Arab affairs was considered "pertinent." "The backbone of the whole organization," he wrote in 1936 in the Morning Post,

> is probably not so much the big men at the head of Arab affairs, nor the actual bandits in the hills, but the semi-educated, tarbushed effendi of the towns and villages.[69]

For Epstein, Jarvis was the "complete opposite" of writers like Freya Stark, Rosita Forbes and Glubb "Pasha," whose books on the East were characterized by their regret for the coming of progress to the unchanging Orient:[70]

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[67]Palestine Review 9.12.38. A reviewer of Jarvis' Three Deserts in the Palestine Review, 15.5.37, commented that Jarvis' long acquaintance with the Arabs had not turned him "into a romanticist or their blind admirer despite the Arab complex of the British." A letter from Jarvis to Epstein, describing the fate of the Negev under Arab rule was incorporated in the JA memorandum on the subject to the Woodhead Commission. List of memoranda for the Commission, S25/5120.

[68]Extract in S25/3162.

[69]Morning Post article quoted in New Judea, October 1936.

[70]Davar, 19.7.39, and E. Elath Shivat Tsion v'Arav pp.156-60.

What these authors had in common, in contrast to Jarvis' healthy empirical and unromantic attitude, was their refusal to admit the changes that had taken place in the East since the Great War, the "far-reaching conclusions they draw from isolated events, and their lack of thorough analysis and explanation." In Glubb's case in particular it was not always possible to distinguish between personal reflections and observations and the reality he claimed to be describing. What really concerned Epstein, however, was not the literary merits of English literature on the East, but the reinforcement of mistaken assumptions and the acceptance of distorted facts which contributed to British support for pan-Arabism.

A confidential memorandum, written in 1938, entitled "The Character of the Pan-Arab Movement: Its Political and Social Value," is perhaps the Locus classicus of Epstein's analysis, and the marks of the ideas contained in it can be observed in many other places -- Leo Kohn's letters and memoranda, Weizmann's and Shertok's speeches and letters etc. Dealing at length with the falsity of the claims of the Arab nationalists as to the existence of an Arab nation, and the part of the Arab revolt in the victory over the Turks, it is succinctly summarized in the following passage:

> There is perhaps no place in the world where artificial organisation and political activities may be staged so easily as in the oriental countries, separated and divided as they are, into sects, creeds, tribes, clans etc., vacillating between a tottering feudal regime and a backward and rotten "democratic" government of so-called "parties," where the press is at the service of the highest bidder, ~~and where~~ religious fanaticism and primitive instincts give those interested in "fishing in troubled waters" a broad field for their activities.[71]

Epstein's views on the problems of the Arab East were largely

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[71]"The Character of the Pan-Arab Movement; Its Political and Social Value," 4.2.38 (English), S25/10366. Also in Moznaim, Summer 1938, (Hebrew).

expressed by the negative comparison of the social and economic achievements of the Arab states with those of Turkey and Iran. These two countries, as well as the Zionist undertaking in Palestine, served the Arabs, as he put it, "as encouraging examples of the value of organised human energy when directed towards a specific goal." "However," he wrote,

> political ambition in the Arab countries usually got beyond the understanding and appraisement of the social and moral factor in the creation and establishment of political might in the life of nations and countries. The exaggerated political desire, compared with the limited economic and social abilities, is the main reason for the present crisis in the Arab World. (my emphasis I.B.)[72]

There was no objection in principle to the idea of a form of Arab "unity" brought about by the gradual eradication of regional, ethic and religious differences. Such "internal rapprochements," however, would take place, if they took place at all,

> not through solitary acts or by means of propaganda, political adventure, conquest or revolution, but through the natural social, cultural and economic developments towards the establishment of common ground in the principal activities of their countries.[73]

What was required if the Arab countries were to work towards the mutual adjustment and correlation of the aspirations and interests of their numerous component units was a combination of cooperation and decentralisation.

The role of the Jews of Palestine in the future of the Arab East would be to offer their "rich spiritual and technical abilities and the extensive experience lacked by their Arab neighbours," to

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[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

real and "constructive" plans for the progress of the Arab countries. At the same time, however, Epstein warned,

> the Jewish people will vigorously oppose imaginary schemes whose principal aim is to establish a regime of compulsion and despotism and to do away with any possibility of understanding and cooperation between the various units participating in this broad and variegated framework.[74]

A 1936 report written by Epstein on the situation in Syria and Iraq, chosen as characteristic illustrations of the political and social aspirations of the Arab national movements in the neighbouring countries, summed up the problem of the Arab states. "A constructive policy is bound to be more difficult and give rise to more serious complications than the negative nationalism in which the nationalist leaders have so far been dabbling."[75]

The more young Arab governments were forced to struggle with their own problems, and the consolidation of their states, both in terms of their international status and internal integrity, the less they would be able to embark upon diverting and useless pan-Arab adventures. Correspondingly, the more they were burdened with these new responsibilities and difficulties, the more likely they would be to seek the diversion of intrigue and adventure in the wider inter-Arab sphere.

It could be argued that Epstein's analysis, cogent and perceptive as it was, underestimated the ability of the Arab governments to gloss over internal difficulties and direct public attention to external issues. Alexandretta, Druze and Alawite separatism in

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[74]Ibid.

[75]Notes on the Present Situation in Syria and Iraq, 17.12.36, Z4/17024B.

Syria, Kurdish autonomism and Shi'ite resentment in Iraq should theoretically have acted as checks on the pan-Arab dreams and plots of these countries' leaders. In reality, the more urgent the internal problems became, the more adventurous and irrelevant the external policies adopted. Instead of a decrease of pan-Arab activity in inverse proportion to the growth of internal chaos, inefficiency, violence and dissession, pan-Arab adventurism increased to undreamed-of dimensions. In this sense, Epstein's analysis erred on the side of being unjustifiedly over-schematic and failed to take into account the manipulative ability and propagandistic powers of the leaders of the Arab states, and of Syria and Iraq in particular.[76]

The concept of "negative nationalism" became the stock in trade description of Arab nationalism, both in Palestine and the Arab world as a whole. The basic theme underlying all Zionist views on the nature of the Palestine problem became, to a highly developed degree, the negative and destructive character of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, as opposed to the positive and constructive nature of Zionism. In this sense, Epstein's responsibility for the publication of the Palestine and Middle East Economic Magazine, published by the Political Department in collaboration with the Palestine Manufacturers Association, the Institute for Foreign Trade and the Jewish Agency's Institute for Economic Research, and dealing with questions of industrial growth, trade, demographic problems and agricultural development in the Middle East, with the emphasis, naturally, on construction and growth, was both the practical and symbolic application of his views on the Arab world.

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[76]Epstein memorandum, The Arab Federation Movement (n.d.) [1936] S25/10180.

The journal, sent to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen, and to the representatives of those countries in Palestine,[77] was ostensibly non-political in character and only rarely ventured into the field of political comment as such. With its concentration on the economic achievements of Jewish Palestine and the future potential of the Arab world, it hinted seductively at the possibilities for a peaceful, progressive and rational orient if it rid itself of its obsessions with grandioise political intrigue, inveterate corruption and its destructive irresponsibility.

Aware as he was of the immense propaganda value of such publications, and the need for a pragmatic rather than a theoretical attitude to the subject,[78] Epstein's approach to the problems of the Middle East was nevertheless marked by serious and perceptive thinking, intellectual integrity, and a genuine desire for a better understanding of the Arab world, both from the point of view of a correct appreciation of the progressive role of Zionism, and for its own sake. A plan submitted to Gerald de Gaury, British Political Agent in Kuwait and fellow contributor to the Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, entitled "Outline of a project for research in social and political conditions of the Middle East" typifies the seriousness of Epstein's approach. "Even under normal conditions," he wrote,

> consolidation and stabilization would be a very long process, for in the Arab countries of the Middle East, these conflicting elements which make unity and consolidation within a state so difficult, proliferate.

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[77]Epstein; Report on activities, December 1939, S25/436.

[78]See chapter seven, note 31.

> The form of their independence is often not backed by content, the hiatus between their desires for independence and their power to give effect to these desires gives rise to deep fundamental contradictions and conflicts.[79]

Epstein gave expression to his methodical approach to the study of the Middle East, when, sometime in 1937, when it still seemed that a Jewish state would be created, he put forward a plan for the creation of a "Political Archive for Palestine and the Middle East," to be administered by the Political Department. Nothing illustrates Epstein's approach better than this down-to-earth, practical and eminently sensible plan for the concentration of material on countries, political parties, institutions and individuals in the Middle East. The archive would have sufficient material at its disposal to enable the staff of the Political Department to prepare monographs on various subjects.

Not surprisingly, Epstein chose Lebanon as an example, and listed the following topics as being of possible interest: The Maronite Church and community, the Druze and their parties, the Armenians and their political organization, the Young Phonecians Organization and its activities, the Moslem organizations, the press. On more general issues he detailed the following possibilities: The Pan-Islamic movement, Nazi and Fascist activities in the Middle East, the Freemasons in the Middle East; organizations and associations in Europe and America dealing with the Palestine question and the Middle East (with special emphasis on England). There should also be a comprehensive catalogue of information on individuals, run along the lines of the file in the Political Department of the French High Commission in Beirut with information

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[79]Outline of a project for research in social and political conditions of the Middle East. (n.d.) [1937], S25/3163. See Appendix.

on Arab political figures as well as non-Arabs with an interest in the Middle East. (Charles Crane, Daniel Oliver, Colonel Newcombe)[80] This detailed plan, written with the expectation that the Political Department would soon become a Foreign Office, was, for lack of funds, never systematically implemented,[81] but it was not the last time that Epstein called for the reorganization and concentration of the Political Department's information on the Middle East.[82]

Epstein summed up his view of the problem of objective research on the Middle East in his memorandum to De Gaury:

> The conservative approach to Middle Eastern politics, based as it is largely on generalization of a pseudo-psychological and sentimental nature, has less validity now than at any other time. Present conditions demand that objective observers should view pragmatically and realistically the particular local developments in each country in order to obtain a true picture of the general condition of those countries taken as a whole.[83]

The importance of Epstein's contribution to the creation of a more or less comprehensive Zionist attitude to the Arab world can only really be appreciated if we leave for a moment the somewhat abstract level of the development and articulation of his views and consider how they were disseminated and absorbed by other people.

First and foremost, all the material coming into the Political

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[80]Secret. Proposal for the creation of a "Political Archive for Palestine and the Middle East." (n.d.) [1937].

[81]Interview with Eliahu Elath, 10.6.77.

[82]Epstein to Joseph, 9.2.39, S25/10368.

[83]"Outline" for de Gaury, op.cit.

Department from Vilensky in Cairo, Amos Landman, Yosef and David Farhi, Dr. Pinto and David Luzia in Beirut and Damascus, from various sources in Baghdad, Turkey, India, Aden and North Africa went to Epstein, who often turned this "raw material" into his own reports on the situation in the country concerned.

Secondly, Epstein's own reports and letters from his numerous visits to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran, and his conversations with his regular round of orientalists, arabophiles and officials in London, Paris and Geneva, were circulated to Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Joseph and Leo Kohn and sometimes to the JAE members in Jerusalem and London.[84]

Except in a few cases it is impossible to say with certainty that a particular letter, speech or comment was directly influenced by Epstein's work. Considering, however, that he was the only member of the Political Department who dealt solely with such matters, and with such sophistication, that his reports were circulated to the top leadership of the Zionist movement, and that the direction of his thinking so suited the propagandist needs of Zionism vis à vis Great Britain and the Middle East, the importance of his role can hardly be underestimated.

If, as time went on, Epstein no longer had a monopoly of such an approach, it was because others began to follow the direction in which he had pointed. Thus, in 1939, young Aubrey Eban began to write for the Zionist Review on the adventurous and irresponsible nature of Arab politics in the same vein that had by then become

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[84]See "Distribution of Material" list, September 1937, S25/442.

common currency in a number of Zionist periodicals.[85] A review Eban wrote of George Antonius' The Arab Awakening in 1939 was considered important enough for an effort to be made to have it published in one of the big English monthly or quarterly reviews:

> It contains a good deal of matter which is most pertinent to the issues now under discussion and it explodes a good deal of the common pro-Arab propaganda.[86]

The approach that Epstein established in his examination of the Arab world was to set the tone of virtually all important Zionist pronouncements on this subject, and his work at the Political Department should be borne in mind when examining the views expressed in the Hebrew and Zionist press, and in secret and public statements, speeches and memoranda.

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[85]Articles by Eban in the Zionist Review include "The Arab States and Palestine," 26.1.39; "Palestine's Neighbours," 9.2.39; "Transjordan and Palestine," 6.7.39; "Some aspects of Middle Eastern Strategy," 26.10.39; "Palestine and Syria," 16.11.39.

[86]On Eban's review of The Arab Awakening see Kohn to A. Lourie, 17.1.39. See also M. Assaf's review in Davar, 24.1.39.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## ZIONISM AND THE ARAB WORLD

As in most political situations, there was an inevitable hiatus between the implications of an ideology and the conclusions drawn from it, and it is therefore not surprising that the Zionist movement did not always act in accordance with the principles that might, at least theoretically, have been expected to result from its view of the Arab world -- what we have called the "Jewish Agency Version."

The reasons for this are twofold. On the one hand the Zionist movement was concerned to find ways towards peaceful coexistence with the Arab world, however unpalatable the potential partners were, and could not therefore afford to stand on high-flown principles concerned with the character of the regime or individual in question. Thus, for instance, Eliahu Epstein and David HaCohen held many conversations with Fakhri al-Barudi, the leader of the Syrian "Iron Shirts" Movement, who, even if concepts taken from the vocabulary of European totalitarianism were irrelevant and misplaced in Middle Eastern conditions,[1] was hardly a suitable political bedfellow for a socialist-dominated Zionist movement, one of whose most serious charges against Arab nationalism was its penetration by and support for European Fascism.

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[1]M. Sharett, Yoman Medini 1936, 22.7.36, p.218.

It would, however, on the other hand, be mistaken to take the view or views on Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism and related subjects emanating from the Political Department and the Zionist press as forming anything but a policy guideline of the vaguest kind, and often not even that. The main function of the Zionist view of the Arab world -- to the extent that anything so amorphous can be said to have a function -- was to oppose what was felt to be the myth of pan-Arabism fostered by British and Arabs and to supply the Zionist movement with an explanation of the character of increasing Arab opposition to it.

TALKS WITH THE SYRIAN NATIONAL BLOC

In the summer of 1936, with the Arab strike raging in Palestine, the French Government committed itself to the granting of independence to Syria and to the creation of two independent states of Syria and Lebanon. Ben-Gurion was quick to see the dual implications of such a move; on the one hand an independent Syria would be almost bound to oppose Zionism, while on the other it was not in the interests of the Zionist movement for there to be unrest in Syria.[2]

Although theoretically committed to the independence of the Middle Eastern mandated territories, since the bitter experience of independent Iraq and the increasingly vociferous demands of the pan-Arab movement for the independence of all Arab territory, and the annulment of the rights given to the Zionist movement in Palestine, the Jewish Agency had become extremely cautious about Arab independence, and while official statements continued to profess support for Arab aspirations, attempts were made behind the scenes to prevent the creation of new independent Arab states.

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[2]D. Ben-Gurion, Zikhronot 1936, 17.6.36, p.276.

The Syrian National Bloc (al-Kutla al-Wataniya), interested in using Zionist influence on Leon Blum, was concerned that the Zionists were not sincere in their professions of support for Syrian independence, and, it seems, with some justification.[3] In April 1936, rumours of Zionist attempts to obstruct the progress of the Franco-Syrian talks had become so rife that it was felt necessary to issue a denial to the Arab press.[4] The rumours were not without foundation. Ben-Tsvi insisted that Mapai use its connections with the French Socialist Party on the question of the Franco-Syrian talks, warning of the great dangers involved in granting independence to Syria and it was decided that Histadrut leader Dov Hoz be sent to France for a few weeks with this end in view.[5]

In Paris during the first week in June, Weizmann had a brief conversation with Jamil Mardam, the head of the Syrian delegation. Mardam, Weizmann reported, had great hopes that Blum would give up the Mandate and come to some agreement with Syria similar to that reached by the British in Iraq:

> Jamil said that they would be prepared to tell the Arabs of Palestine to lay off, if we would help them in Syria; the assumption being, apparently that we had Blum in our pockets. Dr. W. referred, on the other hand, to an interview which Mr. Elmaleh[6] had had with the French Consul in Jerusalem....in which the Consul, with an eye to French Imperial interests, had suggested that the Jews should, for their own sake in Palestine, bring influence to bear on the new socialist

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[3]Orientalist Louis Massignon told Riad al-Sulh that Weizmann had been in Paris trying to persuade the French government not to grant independence to Syria, Zikhronot 1936, 29.5.36, p.218.

[4]The denial was published in al-Liwa, 12.4.36. Hebrew translation in S25/3453.

[5]Shertok to Ben-Gurion, 31.5.36, Z4/10318; Ben-Gurion to Ben-Tsvi, 5.6.36, Zikhronot 1936, pp.237-8.

[6]Avraham Elmaleh, member of the Executive of the Vaad Leumi.

> government in France not to give way to the Syrians. Dr. W.'s own opinion was that, no matter whether the Syrians obtained their independence with or without our assistance, the reactions in Palestine could only be disadvantageous.[7]

(Seeing Blum later that month, Weizmann was careful to dampen the French Prime Minister's enthusiasm for Syrian independence, and pointed to the relationship between events in Syria and Palestine: "While on the one hand Damascus would like to push the Lebanese into the sea, Nablus would like to do the same to us in Palestine."[8]

While offering advice on specific points of the proposed Franco-Syrian treaty, suggesting, for instance, that it would be a disaster if Tyre and Sidon were given to Syria, Weizmann commented, in general, that the withdrawal of the French from Syria might well endanger the whole French Empire in the Mediterranean, for it was more than likely to stimulate unrest in French North Africa.[9]

Although the Zionist leader obviously had to be careful about what he said to Blum and could not come out with a forceful demand against Syrian independence, it was nevertheless clear where his sympathies lay. He had seen Sous Secretaire Viennot at the Quai d'Orsay, and he had in general confirmed the impression that he had got from his talks with Blum as to the imminence of the treaty:

> It seemed that the Syrian delegation were to be invited to a déjeuner on the 4th or 5th of July which might possibly serve as a preliminary to the signing of the treaty. Nevertheless, Dr. W. was still of the opinion that the French public was beginning to realise that what was happening in Syria might have the widest repercussions

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[7]Political Advisory Committee, London, 8.6.36, WA.

[8]Political Advisory Committee, London, 25.6.36, WA.

[9]See Weizmann's report on a conversation with Louis Massignon, Political Advisory Committee, 8.6.36, op.cit.

abroad so that there remained some possibility of a slip-up before the final signature.[10]

The Hebrew press, commenting on the impending Franco-Syrian agreement and the proposed creation of two independent states in the former mandated territory, was anxious to point out the differences between the situation in Syria and Palestine, lest the granting of Syrian independence be felt to have implications for the Arabs of Palestine.[11]

In mid-July Epstein visited Lebanon and Syria and held a long conversation with Fakhri al-Barudi, a member of the Central Committee of the National Bloc as well as the founder of the "Iron Shirts." The Syrians, Epstein reported, although more reserved than the Lebanese in their attitude to the Jewish National Home, also wanted the benefit of Jewish influence in France. In return they were prepared to try and influence events in Palestine, but as most of the Arab leaders were already in detention in Sarafand, they did not know who they could talk to.[12] Epstein forcefully rejected the suggestion that the Jews might be prepared to halt immigration temporarily in exchange for an end to the disturbances. Al-Barudi

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[10]Political Advisory Committee, 25.6.36, op.cit.

[11]HaAretz, 5.7.36, commented that the decision to terminate the Syrian Mandate did not in any way result from the disturbances that had swept the country the previous winter. The decision had been taken, it said, independently of Syrian opposition and anyway, the paper comforted its readers, France would retain the right to station troops at strategic points in the country and still have considerable economic influence. HaBoqer, 14.6.36, felt it ironic that Syria would be granted her independence by a Jew (Blum). "Although we would not wish to deny independence to anyone, we have serious reservations about granting it to Syria."

[12]Report of meeting with al-Barudi, 17.7.36, E. Elath, Shivat Tsion ve'Arav, p.241. Political Committee of Mapai, 22.7.36, JAE, 26.7.36, Yoman Medini 1936, 22.7.36, pp.217-8.

promised, however, to bring to the attention of the National Bloc the Jewish Agency's wish for further, more official talks. Through his contacts in Syria, Epstein kept in touch with the discussions of the National Bloc, which decided, at its meeting of July 21, to examine Epstein's proposal to al-Barudi.[13]

Meetings took place between representatives of the Jewish Agency and the Syrian National Bloc on August 1 and 9. The plenary session took place in Damascus with Shukri al-Quwatli, Faiz al-Khouri and Lutfi al-Haffar for the Syrians, and Epstein, David HaCohen, Dov Hoz and Yosef Nahmani for the Agency. Although the talks were held in a cordial atmosphere and the Zionists felt able to frankly describe their aspirations in Palestine (with appropriate caveats regarding fellahin and immigration limited to the economic absorptive capacity of the country), as they passed from generalities to details "the deep gulf between the sides"[14] became apparent. Although the meeting was of considerable significance -- "the first meetings between representatives of an official Zionist institution and the official representatives of the Arab national movement in Syria"[15] -- the upshot of it all was that the Syrians were unprepared to recognize either Jewish national rights in Palestine or the special position of the National Home and reiterated their concern for the future of the Arabs of Palestine if the Zionist enterprise continued to develop.[16]

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[13]Epstein to Amos Landman; Epstein to Pinto, 26.7.36, S25/10121.

[14]Shivat Tsion, p.290.

[15]Record of a meeting between Representatives of the Jewish Agency and the Central Committee of the "Syrian National Bloc," at Bludan, 1.8.36, S25/10093.

[16]Record of a meeting between Representatives of the Jewish Agency and the Central Committee of the "Syrian National Bloc," at Damascus, 9.8.36, S25/10093.

The experience of these talks suggest that as the Zionist-Arab conflict in Palestine escalated, meetings between the two sides, even beyond the borders of the country and even when the Arab interlocutor was a party as relatively disinterested as the Syrian National Bloc, are more appropriately described as dialogues de sourds than talks or conversations. The contents of such encounters -- which by virtue of their very existence required both sides to muster up an atmosphere of geniality which belied their mutual apprehensions -- tell us little about the real attitude of the Zionists towards the Arabs, and vice-versa.

Such an attitude is surely far more likely to be located in comments made amongst the Zionists, between themselves, as it were, and to the masters of the Middle East situation, the British and the French, than to the Arabs, with whom it was rarely possible or prudent to speak with complete candour. It must also be borne in mind that talks with Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere very often took place in anticipation of the familiar charge that contacts with the other side had been ignored and neglected. Many such meetings, then, took place more for the sake of posterity than with real hope of practical results.[17]

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[17]Shortly before the publication of the Peel Report (when the Zionists already knew that partition would be proposed) there was a classic cacase of this kind. "I told you before I left [Shertok wrote to Weizmann] of my idea to come now to the Arabs and offer peace negotiations as the only way of escaping Solomon's judgement [partition]. I am meeting Auni Abdulhadi tomorrow and will see what his reaction will be. Even if nothing comes out of this, it will be interesting to learn something about the Arab frame of mind and I consider it also important to go on record that at this eleventh hour before the cutting of the baby we have again offered peace [my emphasis I.B.]" Shertok to Weizmann, 22.4.37, Z4/17302. The meeting was fruitless. The Istiqlal leader told Shertok: "We will fight. We will struggle against the partition of the country and against Jewish immigration. There is no compromise." Mapai Party Centre, 27.4.37 and JAE, 2.5.37.

OUTSIDE INTERVENTION

In this connection, it is pertinent to glance at how the Zionists responded to political developments within the Arab world itself, and what connection these developments were perceived as having with the question of Palestine.

Since the attempted intervention of Nuri Said, the Foreign Minister of Iraq, in August 1936, and the appeal of the Arab rulers to their Palestinian Arab "brothers" in October, the Zionists had been increasingly aware of the fact that the Palestine question was rapidly becoming one which went far beyond the confines of the country itself, and,with the help and encouragement of the British Foreign Office, was becoming a subject of considerable political interest from Riyadh to Baghdad.

Apprehensive as they were about the introduction of foreign powers on to the scene, the initial Zionist reaction was relatively mild and restricted itself to formal complaints to the British Government and laborious explanations as to why such a move defied both the spirit and letter of the Mandate.[18] When Nuri's initiative became known in August 1936, Shertok explained that he had no a priori objection to an Iraqi statesman taking part in the settlement of the Palestine conflict, provided, of course, that it was a real settlement, that is to say one to which the Jews were also a party. Amidst rumours that Nuri Said claimed to represent Ibn Saud and the Imam Yahya of Yemen, Shertok was concerned about "the impression produced on the Arab mind...by [the intervention] and the expectations which it had raised for the future."[19]

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[18]Shertok to Wauchope, 30.8.36, S25/4169.

[19]Report on a Conversation with two RAF officers, 27.8.36, S25/4169.

It was at this stage that there began to emerge an attitude of unmitigated hostility towards the interest of non-Palestinian Arabs in the Palestine question -- an attitude that was later to become the hallmark of Zionist criticism of Arab meddling in a question which did not concern them and which they were using, so the Zionists argued, merely as a diversion from their own pressing internal problems. Although HaAretz felt that the interest of Arab leaders from Iraq and Saudi Arabia in Palestine was a "natural and comprehensible" phenomenon, similar to the interest of world Jewry in the country's affairs, and hoped for "positive" results from such moves,[20] other papers were less charitable about the motives behind Nuri's initiative:

> The Arabs have not looked upon him as an intermediary between them and the Jews, or even between them and the government. They have looked upon him as a representative of an external Arab power brought into Palestine for the purpose of using the pressure of this external Arab power in order to force the Mandatory to annul Jewish rights in Palestine and tacitly or overtly to recognise Palestine as an Arab land. This goes beyond honest mediation....and it has for some weeks been clear from everything said in the Arab press that he [Nuri] had come, not as a peacemaker, but as a person taking sides with the definite aim of weighting the scales in favour of the Arabs.[21]

A month later HaAretz was much more forceful in its reaction to the intervention of the Arab rulers. It reminded the world of the strength of the Yishuv and affirmed that "in spite of the combined efforts of the Foreign Office and the Arabs Kings," the Jewish

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[20] HaAretz, 24.8.36.

[21] Zionist Review, August-September 1936.

people would win through.[22] Jewish feelings towards the manner in which the strike had been ended were marked by "misgivings at the possible results of the intervention of Arab states in Palestine affairs," wrote the Palestine Post:

> The intervention of the Arab kings [it continued] is perhaps useful in the present instance as an excuse for the surrender of the Arab Higher Committee, but it must not be regarded as a precedent as otherwise this will lead to interference by Iraq or the Wahabi kingdom in the British sphere of influence in the Persian gulf or intervention by Yemen in the disputes of Aden and the hinterland.[23]

The Jewish Agency Executive was alarmed by the Arab rulers' appeal[24] and interpreted it as a strengthening of the pan-Arab movement and the creation of a dangerous precedent for future outside intervention

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[22]HaAretz, 7.10.36. The Yishuv, the paper noted, was numerically as large and economically no less influential than the Christian community of Lebanon "and despite the success of the Syrian nationalists, Lebanon remains an independent community which will make a separate treaty with France and which cannot be swallowed by Moslem Syria. This does not mean, however, that the 400,000 Jews in this country and world Jewry see themselves as enemies of the Arab states.....There is no need to recall the official announcements of the institutions of the Zionist movement about our aspirations to find a way to cooperation. And if this way has not yet been found, one thing is certain -- that intervention in the affairs of Eretz-Yisrael and the erection of barriers to the progress of our enterprise are not the way."

[23]Palestine Post, 14.10.36.

[24]For a succinct summary of the circumstances surrounding the Arab rulers' appeal, see Porath, Palestinian Arab, pp.210-216.

in the affairs of Palestine.[25]

THE IRAQI COUP

The military coup d'état that took place in Baghdad on October 29 1936 was the subject of considerable comment in the Hebrew and Zionist press. Before being outpaced by Syria, from about 1938 onwards, Iraq was seen as the very incarnation of the failure of pan-Arabism.

As the first Middle Eastern mandated territory to be granted its independence, in 1932, it was not surprising that Iraq won first place in the Zionist rogues gallery of Arab politics. Yet it was not only the chronological factor that made Iraq, for the Zionists, the epitome of the nightmare of Arab independence. The domination by the Sunni minority, the slaughter of the Assyrians, the persecution of other minorities (including Jews), the constant changes of government, the tribal risings and administrative ineptitude, all contributed to the creation of this image. Iraq, as Epstein described it in one of his memoranda, was

> a very instructive example of Arab independence -- a national government turning in a short time into the oppressor of any national or religious body which refused to submit itself to complete assimilation and subservience to the ruling element.

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[25]JAE, 4.10.36, esp. speech by M. Ussishkin; JAE, 11.10.36. Shertok thought that the two most worrying parts of the kings' appeal were (1) that they relied "on the good intentions of our friend the British Government and their declared desire to see that justice is done" and (2) they would "continued our endeavour to help you [the Palestinian Arabs]." Ben-Gurion, who had earlier described the Nuri Said intervention as an attempt to create an "Anglo-pan-Arab condominium," said that English agreement to the Arab rulers' appeal did not give them any formal status, but did give them a moral right. "Even if there is no obligation behind the appeal, its very existence ....gives them a certain moral standing.....and places England under a certain obligation to the kings," Smaller Actions Committee, 13-14.10.36, S25/1827.

> Iraqi nationalism is bound to be a source of disaster to all national minorities who live in Iraq itself as well as in the adjacent countries. It already constitutes a centre of political intrigue for foreign powers against British rule, and when opportunity arises it might turn into a military base against the very power to which it owes its independence. The history of independent Iraq also gives some idea of the nature and methods of the Pan-Arab movement.[26]

If however, Iraq was "one of the strongest centres of the Pan-Arab movement," as expressed by Nuri Said's intervention in Palestine, there were many internal constraints on the pan-Arabism of Iraq's leaders, from the Kurds, the Shiites etc., who had their reasons for being hostile to a movement which ignored their independent aspirations.[27]

The overthrow of the government of Yassin Pasha al-Hashimi, and along with him veteran pan-Arabists like Jaafar Pasha al-Askari and Nuri Said[28] was seen as being a direct blow to pan-Arabism, and Hikmet Suleiman's new government, although with marked anti-British tendencies, as refreshingly constructive. However, while the deposed leaders could hardly be described as democratic, HaAretz noted, the new ones brought into power by the coup were preceded by their bad reputations. Bakr Sidqi in particular was singled out for his role in the notorious massacre of the Assyrians in 1932.[29] HaBoger expressed its regret that independence had ever been granted to this

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[26]E. Epstein "Notes on the Present Situation in Syria and Iraq," 17.12.36, Z4/17024B.

[27]E. Epstein "The Arab Federation Movement," (n.d.) [1936], S25/10180.

[28]See Shertok to Nuri Said, 9.11.36, S25/5809.

[29]HaAretz, 2.11.36.

"primitive nomadic country," and warned that

> this reinforcement of extreme and immature nationalism, combined with the increasing militarism in the political life of the Arab countries, does not augur well for the Jewish community in this country, which aspires to bring peace and construction to the Near East.[30]

Davar pointed out, in the light of what could only be described as Iraq's "primitive" political life, how absurd it was to allow such a country to act as an adviser, let alone judge, in matters which did not concern her.[31] The Palestine Review summed up Iraq's problems:

> Iraq's post war history may be described as an attempt to synthesise East and West. The modern nationalistic state is an exotic growth on Iraqi soil. Transplanted from the West, it has come into inevitable conflict with established customs and old mores. Tribal unrest has coloured the recent history of the young Iraqi state. The imposition of the machinery of a western state was bound to clash with the individualistic tendencies and traditional loyalties of the tribesmen.[32]

The country's new direction was felt to have more affinity with Kemalist Turkey than with Pan-Arabia or Pan-Islam, and the inclusion of Iraq in the so-called "pan-Arab bloc," Weizmann noted in his preparations for his evidence in camera to the Royal

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[30]HaBoqer, 3.11.36.

[31]Davar, 1,6.11.36, M. Assaf, "The Coup in Iraq." Cf. HaOlam, 5.11.36, "The Revolt in Iraq," E.[liahu] E.[pstein?].

[32]Palestine Review, 6.11.36.

Commission, was both false and misleading.[33] Shertok described the change in the Iraqi regime in similar terms. He argued that if the Iraqi government at the time of the Palestine disturbances had had the same character as the new one, there would have been no Iraqi intervention. To the extent that the new government was interested in Palestine, it was simply following the line set by its predecessor. "This government," Shertok claimed,

> is based on opposition to Pan-Arabism. Its approach to matters is more Iraqi than pan-Arab. Although it is too early to say whether this line will hold -- there are rumours, for instance, that Nuri Said will rejoin the government -- for the moment the anti-Pan-Arab direction is strong ...and this will not improve relations with Britain.[34]

The events in Iraq and the increasingly clear anti-pan-Arab

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[33]Secret, Notes for proposed further evidence in camera before the Royal Commission, 17.12.36, Z4/17139. See also record of Weizmann's secret evidence before the commission on 23.12.36. "What is this Arab bloc today," he asked. "Look at Transjordan.... look at Iraq. Iraq's troubles are only just beginning. As long as Iraq's life consisted in shouting against the oppressive foreigner, the British, they could go on shouting, but now they have got to do the business; they have to develop their country, and they find themselves beset by difficulties and by enemies; there is Turkey, there is Persia and there are internal divisions. There has been a change in Iraq's background. They have thrown overboard...those people who have made Iraq..and not one man has risen to protect them...because these people hitherto have been pure politicians; their nationalism was purely political; it was not social, economic or cultural, but it was what the Germans would call Macht Politik, force, the majority oppressing the others. They live by force and they may die by force. They live by the dagger and they may die by the dagger."

[34]Shertok at Smaller Actions Committee, 11.2.37, Yoman Medini 1937, pp.20-21; also at JAE, 31.1.37. Leo Kohn too, thought that the change in Iraq was an indication of the decline of pan-Arabism. Kohn to JAE London, 23.3.37, Z4/17302.

orientation of Turkey and Iran pointed, Shertok felt, to a struggle between the Arab nationalist, or pan-Arab outlook, and the "statist" (mamlakhti) view, represented by the above developments. The fate of Zionism depended to a certain extent on the result of this struggle, whose course the Jews could influence by the very fact of the growth and consolidation of the National Home and by the judicious use of propaganda.[35]

Epstein and Elias Sasson visited Iraq in February 1937 to take a close look at the new regime and to examine the possibilities of creating friendly ties with it. On this visit, as on the many others they made together to Arab countries, the two emissaries divided the work between them along the following lines: Epstein would meet high-ranking government and British officials while Sasson made contact with lower-ranking officials, journalists and members of parliament. This division of labour was to a certain extent a linguistic one -- the Syrian-born Sasson could converse freely in Arabic, while Epstein's command of English and more cosmopolitan air made him acceptable to senior Arabs and British alike. Their respective modes of introduction confirms this: Sasson presented himself as a representative of the "Egyptian" Wakala al-Sharqiya,[36] while Epstein told the British that he was a member of the Royal Central Asian Society and others that he was a European journalist based in Palestine.[37]

Epstein held conversations with the new Prime Minister, Hikmet

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[35]Smaller Actions Committee, 11.2.37, Ibid.

[36]Report on Visit to Iraq, 17.2.37.

[37]Epstein Report, 28.2.37, S25/5575.

Suleiman, the Ministers of Education, Finance and the Economy, and came away with the clear impression that the new regime would be a considerable improvement on the previous one. Epstein was particularly interested in the rumour that Suleiman was a fervent admirer of Ataturk and his methods and that he wished Iraq to join the alliance of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.[38] The journey to Iraq, he reported,

> was a very successful one and we have created a foundation for our relationship with the leaders of that country. The present Iraqi government is much more liberal and moderate than that of Yassin Pasha and there are many opportunities for establishing amicable relations with it after it gets stronger.[39]

Iraq's "new direction" was soon incorporated into the Zionist struggle against pan-Arabism. The claim of the "ubiquitous and peripatetic" Neville Barbour in an article in the Evening Standard that there were strong ties between the Arabs of Iraq and Palestine were forcefully and characteristically rejected by the Zionist Review:

> Iraq has her hands full at the moment consolidating her position as an independent Arab state. She has much leeway to make up in putting her own house in order, and even if she wanted, she has no surplus energy to engage in extranational activities. But it is now common knowledge that she has no desire to take part in such activities, for the coup de'état of October last year put in a government with a Turkish Prime Minister (Hikmet Suleiman) and a Kurdish Generalissimo (Bakr Sidqi). And it is an open secret that the Iraqis will have nothing to do with a Pan-Arab movement. Nor is it certain that their sympathies are with the Arabs of Palestine, for a peaceful and prosperous Palestine is of fundamental importance to her economic stability.[40]

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[38]Interview with Hikmet Suleiman, 15.2.37, S25/5575.

[39]Epstein to Pinto, 24.2.37, S25/10121 and Joseph at Mapai Party Centre, 1.3.37.

[40]Zionist Review, May 1937.

Shertok complained to Michael Assaf about an article in Davar that had suggested that Hikmet Suleiman's government was hostile to Britain. It was true, Shertok wrote, that British officials with pan-Arab tendencies were apprehensive about the new Iraqi regime's attitude towards pan-Arabism, but the Jews had always tried to explain to the English that opposition to pan-Arabism did not mean opposition to Britain. It would have been far wiser, and a better service to Zionist interests, Shertok remonstrated, had the Davar article stressed the rapprochement between Iraq and Turkey and ignored or played down the anti-British tendencies.[41]

As it turned out, Hikmet Suleiman's government was little better than previous Iraqi governments, and although formally uninterested in Palestine, his sudden intervention in July 1937, prompted, as Epstein reported,[42] by a conflict with Bakr Sidqi and a desire for publicity, was no different from the interest of other Arab governments in Palestine. The pre-arranged demonstrations in Baghdad against the partition proposals, the attacks on Jews and Iraqi participation in the Bludan conference all suggested that Zionist enthusiasm over a "new" Iraq had been somewhat exaggerated and optimistic and more a reflection of the requirements of a convincing propaganda than of the political reality of this troubled state.

It also seems that the Zionists' view of developments in Iraq was based on a misreading of the idiosyncratic nature of political life in that country. Although they were -- the "experts" among

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[41]Shertok to M. Assaf, 30.3.37, S25/5810.

[42]Epstein Report on visit to Iraq, July 1937, S25/3145.

them at least -- aware (and this is to their credit) of the complex role played by ethnic and communal loyalties in that most heterogeneous of "Arab" countries, they adopted an over schematic approach (a general shortcoming in the Zionists' view of the character of the Arab world) to political changes which owed something to personal rivalries and ambitions, something to group identification and something to the effect of foreign ideologies, but never as much to coherent and unambiguous ideas -- and pan-Arabism, "statism" and pro or anti-British sentiments were neither of these -- as outside observers, including Zionists, tended to believe.

THE BLUDAN CONFERENCE

The increasingly wide manipulation of the Palestine issue in the Arab world has been seen as reaching a new level in the Bludan conference of September 1937. Attended by some 400 delegates from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Transjordan but mostly from Syria and Palestine, it was the culmination of the attempts of the Arab Higher Committee to mobilize Arab public opinion and organizations against the proposed partition of Palestine. The Mufti's representatives couched their demands in unequivocally pan-Arab terms, stressing that in Palestine Arabism and Islam confronted "World Jewry" and they therefore "every Arab and Moslem must bear his share of the burden of her defence."[43]

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[43]See Porath, Palestinian Arab, pp.231-2, quoting conference secretary Izzat Darwaza. For a graphic eyewitness account of the Bludan proceedings, see David HaCohen to Shertok (reporting a conversation with an unnamed Arab friend), 16.9.37, S25/1513. The conference resolved, according to Keesings Contemporary Archives (15.9.37), quoting from Le Temps, (1)that "Palestine is an integral part of the Arab Fatherland" and (2)that "The Arab nation rejects the idea of the partition of Palestine and opposesthe establishment of the Jewish State. It demands the annulment of the Balfour Declaration, the abrogation of the Mandate, and the conclusion of an Anglo-Palestine treaty recognising the independence and sovereignty of Palestine and establishing a constitutional state guaranteeing minority rights recognized by international principles. Jewish immigration must be stopped and legislative

Bludan was seen by the Zionists as a direct continuation of the 1931 Moslem Congress in Jerusalem, as part of the Mufti's attempts to create a general Arab organization to fight Zionism while at the same time retaining firm political control over the struggle. It was felt to be an Arab response to the Zionist Congress in Zurich which had just ended.[44]

Press comments played down the significance of the conference and concentrated on its unrepresentative character. The participants were invited and not elected and were almost all faithful to the Mufti. There were, Michael Assaf wrote in Davar, no important Egyptians present and no Saudis or Yeminis at all. Iraqi representation was unconvincing; most of the 12 delegates were on holiday in Syria anyway; Bludan, only an hour from Damascus, had not seen any official representative of the Syrian Government.[45]

The participants in the conference, HaAretz felt, dealing in the "politics of generalized and uncompromising refusal," had learnt nothing from the events of the last two years. The Jews would not be deterred by Arab threats of boycott. Bludan's only function, the Zionist press felt unanimously, had been to serve internal Arab purposes, and to divert attention from troublesome domestic

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measures be taken to prohibit any transfer of Arab land to Jews. The Congress declares that Anglo-Arab friendship depends upon the realisation of these demands and that an understanding between Arabs and Jews cannot exist save upon a basis of these demands."

[44]Davar, 10.9.37; HaBoqer, 12.9.37.

[45]Davar, 19.9.37, M. Assaf, "Assessing the Bludan Conference," Ibid. 21.9.37, Aviva Turovski, "The Arab Countries and the Bludan Conference." HaTsofe, 19.9.37, N. Tajjar, "Around the Bludan Conference."

situations.[46] It was nevertheless encouraging to note that the Lebanon had "not departed from her policy of friendly non-intervention in Palestine affairs"[47] and that the Emir Abdullah was taking strong measures against Transjordanians who had attended the meeting.[48] HaBoqer stressed the behind-the-scenes politicking and intriguing that had been necessary to give a semblance of Arab unity to the event.[49]

The Zionist press' appraisal of the Bludan conference was extremely forceful; yet for an event of such negative significance its interest in it and obvious need to comment on it at length was an indication of a certain nervousness. The reaction to Bludan was exaggerated, a result of the hidden fear that despite it being little more than a facade, etc., it was a propaganda victory of considerable importance for pan-Arabism. Indeed, it was admitted in private that the conference was not quite the farce the Hebrew press made it out to be. Individuals like Shakib Arslan and Ihsan Bey al-Jabari had been present, and although they were in the pay of the Italians, and although it was unlikely that the conference delegates would be prepared to make real sacrifices on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine, it was nevertheless to a certain extent a victory for the

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[46]HaAretz, 13.9.37.

[47]Palestine Post, 12.9.37. See chapter six, p.300.

[48]Davar, 13.9.37. See chapter three, p.157.

[49]HaBoqer, 28.9.37.

Mufti.[50]

EXPLOITING THE SANJAK QUESTION

The events surrounding the Alexandretta question gave the Zionists ample opportunity to illustrate the considerable gap between the myth and reality of pan-Arabism. An important port in northern Syria, Alexandretta had been included in the area of the French Mandate after the war. The large Turkish minority of 40 per cent in the city and surrounding district allowed Turkey to press for special status for the Sanjak. When the Franco-Syrian negotiations began, and it was realised that Syria was to be granted independence, rioting broke out in Alexandretta.

The Zionists were quick to realise that they could make considerable political capital out of the Turkish threat to Syria, the strong opposition of the Turkish minority to Syrian rule and the relative indifference of the Arab world to the whole episode. Nahum Vilensky saw the Sanjak question as "an integral part of the Zionist front-line."[51] Ben-Gurion welcomed the calming effect it would have in diverting Syrian and Iraqi interest away from Palestine to matters nearer home.[52]

As early as March 1937, Ben-Gurion described the significance

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[50]Joseph's speech at Mapai Party Centre, 18.9.37. The uneasiness in the press seems to have been justified. According to Porath, Palestinian Arab, p.232, the real importance of Bludan was what went on behind the scenes, where Palestinian and Syrian delegates, dissatisfied with the prevailing mood of the conference, met secretly and resolved to use violence to fight partition. This led on to the preparations for the second stage of the Arab revolt, signalled by the murder of Lewis Andrews on 26.9.37. Shertok, for one, was aware of this aspect of Bludan, and told the JAE of it at its meeting of 25.10.37.

[51]Vilensky report from Cairo, 4.10.36, S25/3135.

[52]Ben-Gurion at JAE, 10.1.37, 31.1.37 and at Mapai Party Centre, 5.2.37.

of the Alexandretta dispute in a manner which was to be repeated and elaborated upon again and again by Zionists over the next two years. He told Lord Lloyd, concerned about the possible repercussions of partition on the Moslem world, that the lack of Arab response to the events in the Sanjak showed that pan-Arabism was a myth, and that therefore there was no need to fear the consequences of partition, or of dealing forcefully with the Arabs of Palestine.[53]

The Zionists attached considerable importance to the possibilities of "exploding the pan-Arab myth"[54] by the judicious use of such arguments and were all the more disappointed when they found that they had little obvious effect. Leo Kohn, describing his feelings on this subject, thought it "truly amazing,"

> that at a time when Pan-Arabism is so obviously on the decline -- as evident, for instance, from the recent change in Baghdad -- British colonial officialdom should continue with fanatical romanticism to support the protagonists of that piece of political bluff -- the only support they will retain. Surely the Alexandretta episode, when not a single one of the Arab states raised a voice in support of the Syrians, should have convinced these romanticists of the unreality of the Pan-Arab conception, but they appear to be unteachable.[55]

When, in July 1937, France agreed to Turkish annexation of the Sanjak, the Syrians saw it as an infringement of the as yet unratified

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[53]Ben-Gurion conversation with Lord Lloyd, 28.3.37, Zikhronot 1937, p.111. For Ben-Gurion's views on how partition would solve the "Arab question," and especially his belief in the need for large scale population transfer, see Ben-Gurion to his son Amos, 5.10.37, Mikhtavim el Paula, pp.211-3. Also Y. Donitz, "A New Approach to Ben-Gurion's Concept of Politics and Security," Medina ve'Mimshal, Summer 1971.

[54]Shertok at JAE, 31.1.37.

[55]Kohn to JAE, London, 23.3.37, loc.cit.

Franco-Syrian treaty and a specifically anti-Arab move.[56] Sasson was sent to Syria to examine the situation. From his report Shertok concluded that the Alexandretta question could have a double effect on Palestine. While on the one hand the lack of response of other Arab countries to Syria's difficulties augured well, from the Zionist point of view, for the revelation of the bankruptcy of pan-Arabism, the danger arose, on the other hand, that the Syrian Government would use the Palestine issue to divert public attention away from the Alexandretta failure.[57]

The press reacted vigorously. HaAretz pointed to Turkey's political maturity as the secret of her success, and while Syria's anger was comprehensible, it was not clear what she hoped to gain, for France would be unlikely to quarrel with Turkey for her sake and young Syria would do better to concentrate on improving herself internally, rather than waste energy on external affairs.[58] This attitude was echoed in the Palestine Review:

> The young state requires peace to consolidate itself....the young states in the Near East are not in a position to withstand storm and stress while the tender roots of their independence still need to be fostered. This explains the alleged indifference of the Arabs of Iraq, Palestine and Egypt towards Alexandretta, although there is no question as to where their sympathies lie.[59]

For Bustanai, the Alexandretta question revealed the vast cracks in

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[56]Sasson report, 14.6.37, SP.

[57]Yoman Medini 1937, 8.6.37, p.175

[58]HaAretz, 10.6.37.

[59]Palestine Review, 11.6.37.

so-called Arab "unity," and it condemned the "hypocritical and half-hearted protests of the Palestinians."[60] The Palestine Post felt that

> it would be unwise to deduce from the Alexandretta affair that the various Arab c untries are uninterested in each others fate. But it is no doubt safe to conclude that unless the Great Powers encourage intervention in each others affairs they are not likely to take any action which would lead to mutual embarassment.[61]

HaBoqer commented caustically -- as it did on all Arab affairs -- that despite the fact that Syria was not designated as a Jewish National Home, nor troubled by the land purchases of the Jewish National Fund, neither affected by Jewish immigration nor vexed by the question of Hebrew Labour, the French had "never had a moment's peace."[62]

The Alexandretta issue per se was hardly discussed within the Zionist movement and was not an issue which was felt as having any direct bearing on developments in Palestine or whose course it was really possible to affect. Its propaganda value, on the other hand, was immense, and the considerable newspaper space devoted to it bears eloquent witness to this. When the Syrian flag in the Sanjak was lowered in December 1937, HaAretz expressed its opinions on the significance of the Alexandretta events for the Middle East in general. It deplored the "Balkanization" of the area, but at the same time called for a "non-imperialist," realistic policy from the leaders of Baghdad and Damascus:

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[60]Bustanai, 16.6.37.

[61]Palestine Post, 4,10.6.37.

[62]HaBoqer, 10.6.37.

> Only a policy based on the independence of the various parts of the Near East and on maximum consideration for different national interests, both internal and external, has a chance of success.[63]

The riots were considered to be without significance, since the Syrians were wont to take to the streets with such frequency as to render such "protests," the fruit of "agitation" and "incitement," and not "national" feeling, completely meaningless, and it was felt that it would not take the Syrian nationalists long to adjust themselves to the loss of this territory.[64]

The Alexandretta argument was used at the very highest level. Weizmann told Lord Halifax in March 1938, that

> very recent history has given irrefutable proof of the weakness of Pan-Arab feeling in the Middle East. The separation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta from Syria aroused hardly a ripple of protest from the surrounding countries.[65]

A memorandum, "Arab Reactions to Government Policy in Palestine," handed in by Weizmann to the Foreign Office at the beginning of March 1938, provides a succinct illustration of how the Alexandretta question was used to persuade the British to take a more forceful stand against pan-Arab agitation:

> There was at the outset a strong outburst of feeling in Syria, but this was soon checked when the French made it clear that they were in no degree disposed to convert this issue into a casus belli against the Turks. The relative indifference of the Arab world outside Syria to the Turkish claims came as a further disappointment. But the Syrian nationalists soon

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[63]HaAretz, 1.12.37, "The Lesson of Alexandretta."

[64]Ibid. and HaAretz, 16.12.37.

[65]Interview with Lord Halifax, 14.3.38, S25/5476. Weizmann spoke in a similar vein to the Prime Minister, 10.3.38, Ibid.

> found consolation in anti-British activities, since these did not meet with the same opposition in official quarters. It is a striking commentary on the situation that while the government in Damascus tolerated, and even encouraged, the Bludan Congress, the calling of a similar Congress in connection with the Alexandretta issue was prohibited. The attitude of the Syrians may be summed up in the following terms -- "We cannot oppose Turkey, which is today a first class military power. But since it is essential to the nationalist spirit to maintain the offensive, we must redouble our efforts in the Palestine field, where the attitude of the British permits us to give full expression to our feelings without subjecting our cause to the slightest danger."[66]

There were several aspects to the use of the Alexandretta argument. First and foremost was the "proof" it provided of the artificiality of the pan-Arab idea, and this was an assumption shared by most of the comments made about it. For Bustanai, for example, Alexandretta was a kind of "Eretz-Yisrael in the North," lacking none of the manifestations of anarchy and disorder that were the unhappy lot of Palestine. Syria's French officials, just like British Middle Eastern officials, had created the "myth of the Arab world," and this "host of little Lawrences" was largely responsible for the dissemination and propogation of this disreputable idea. Two years of Syrian independence had achieved nothing, and were it not for the French army the country would have disintegrated long ago.[67]

The same journal stressed the predicament created for the pan-Arab movement by the fact that the Alexandretta conflict was between Arabs and Moslems, an aspect of the struggle which clarified the

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[66]"Arab Reactions to Government Policy in Palestine," 4.3.38, CO/733/368/75156/23/I.

[67]Bustanai, 15.6.38, "Alexandretta to the Turks?"

relationship between pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism. The conclusion was that Islam no longer played a decisive unifying role in Middle Eastern politics. If pan-Islam had been the same as pan-Arabism, then there would have long since been a jihad against the apostasy of Kemalism. The fact was that the most powerful and influential state in the Middle East, with its progressive forward-looking regime, was the determined enemy of pan-Arabism. And what had the Syrians done with their golden opportunity to demonstrate the truth of the unity of the Arab world? Some short-lived and desultory demonstrations in Damascus, the threat of the resignation of the Mardam government, replaced by Mardam's promise to visit Paris to attempt to speed up the ratification of the Franco-Syrian treaty, a mission which, Bustanai was sure, was bound to fail.[68]

HaOlam turned the events of June 1938 into the occasion for a treatise on the role of democracy in the Middle East. Forcefully expressing opposition to what Leo Kohn described in another but related context as "crude majoritarianism,"[69] a long article pointed out that although the Turks formed a minority in the Sanjak, they were, according to the Franco-Turkish agreement, to be guaranteed a permanent majority in the administration of the area. The implications for the Zionist movement were clear: although a numerical majority was important, it was mistaken to attach a "magic" quality to the "fifty-one per cent" required for a formal majority. What was important was a full and creative national life which would lead to the further development of the people. Alexandretta had

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[68]Ibid., 6.7.38, "Alexandretta and the 'Arab World.'"

[69]Kohn to Lourie, 26.11.37, ISA 68/20. See chapter two, p.90 .

proved that the "creative force" of the Turkish people could triumph over a formal majority. Political wisdom did not end with an insignificant majority, but was composed of the creation of a full and constructive cultural and economic force, backed up by diplomatic and military power.[70] In an article entitled "A moral near Home," the Palestine Post commented, similarly, that

> the agreement to give the minority Turks in the Sanjak over half the representation of the population is a striking comment on the Palestine situation. When some time ago it was suggested that this country's Legislative Council be composed of equal numbers of Jews and Arabs, some adherents of democracy presumed to be shocked. But there is at least an equally good case for parity in Palestine as there is for control by the minority Turks in the Sanjak.[71]

Convenient as it was to draw such parallels between the Turkish minority in the Sanjak and the Yishuv, from the point of view of minority creativity versus majority immaturity and irresponsibility, it was clear that what lay behind the pro-Turkish settlement of the Alexandretta question was military and diplomatic strength, and Turkey's readiness to deal forcefully with any truculent Arabs who might stand in the way of the fulfillment of its designs. What was really to be learnt from the episode, then, was that it paid to take a tough position against pan-Arabism, and in this respect the Turks had much to teach Britian. "Reality has shown," commented HaPeel HaTsair,

> that those same Arab leaders who defend the peoples of the Arab countries with British help,have recently allowed a whole Arab area -- much larger than the Jewish State within the Peel Commission borders -- to be swallowed up without the throwing

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[70]HaOlam, 9.6.38, "The Lesson of Alexandretta."

[71]Palestine Post, 4.7.38.

> of bombs or the declaration of rebellions, because behind this conquest they saw a force which does not take into consideration "All-Arab Conferences" in Cairo or Damascus.[72]

THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

The Zionists' response to the news that an "All-Arab Inter-Parliamentary Congress" was to be held was similar to the reaction to the Bludan Conference held in Syria a year earlier. It was expected once again that the meeting would serve as a platform for the vociferous expression of verbal solidarity with the Arabs of Palestine, and as a fine opportunity to divert attention away from problems nearer home, such as the loss of Alexandretta.

Plans to hold the conference in Cairo, however, were felt to be unduly optimistic, for Cairo was not Bludan, and it was surely unlikely that the British Government would approve the holding of such an assembly in Egypt's capital.[73]

First signs were encouraging: Lebanon refused to participate and the Egyptian Prime Minister, on a visit to London declared that he was the Prime Minister of Egypt and not of Palestine and therefore had no interest in Palestine affairs.[74] Steps were nevertheless taken taken to try and prevent the conference from taking place. Weizmann wrote to MacDonald asking if nothing could be done by the Foreign Office for the conference "seems likely to do us nothing but harm." By tolerating it the British Government would help create an instrument that would ultimately be turned against it.[75]

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[72]HaPoel HaTzair, 21.10.38, Prof. M. Lazarson, "Before the Decision."

[73]HaAretz, 25.5.38, 25.7.38.

[74]HaOlam, 28.7.38.

[75]Weizmann to MacDonald, 22.9.38, FO/371/21881.

Attempts were made on the Arab level too. Sasson was sent to Beirut and Damascus to try and influence Lebanese and Syrian delegates either not to attend the conference or to attend and to supply information on the proceedings. With the help of Kheir al-Din al-Ahdab[76] and Elias Harfush, editor of al-Hadith, Musa Namur, due to head the Lebanese delegation, and two other maronites were dissuaded from attending. Sasson also arranged for the publication of eight articles in the Beirut press opposing Lebanese participation, arguing that delegates could attend only as private individuals, and had no right to speak for Lebanon or to bind her to anything.[77]

Nasib al-Bakri and Lutfi al-Haffar used their influence to prevent the attendance of Nabih al-Azmeh, Riad al-Sulh and other Syrians.[78] Al-Bakri promised to raise questions at the conference which directly concerned the Jews in Palestine. He would bring up the issue of the situation in Syria, presumably to divert attention away from the Palestine question around which the conference had been called, and would propose the convening of a round table conference between Jews and Arabs. He also promised to try and participate in the political committee of the conference and to maintain close contact with Sasson, who had arranged to be in Cairo throughout the

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[76]On relations between the Political Department and al-Ahdab see chapter six pp.304-6.

[77]Sasson to Shertok, 2.10.38, SP.

[78]Via these contacts Sasson also received a comprehensive report on the consultations of the Syrian delegates to the Cairo conference held on 30.9.38. The main speaker was Palestinian Izzat Darwaza. Sasson report from Damascus, 3.10.38, S25/9900. See also Porath, Palestinian Arab, pp.276-7. The reasons for al-Bakri's willingness to help the Zionists lay in the fact that as a supporter of the Hashemites and therefore of Abdullah's "Greater Syria" project, he refused to aid the Husseini-inspired revolt. Ibid., p.244.

proceedings.[79]

Weizmann's efforts in London and vigorous editorials calling for the prevention of this conference of "agitators, anti-Zionists and enemies of Britain,"[80] were of no avail, and the Cairo Conference opened on October 7. It was felt to be especially shocking that at the conference, controlled by the Mufti and held in a country which was an ally of Great Britain, speeches were made "which differed little from what was said at the Nuremberg rally."[81] The tone of dismissal in the press was similar to that used when describing Bludan -- internal dissension, conspicuous absences, the unsuccessful attempts to impart a facade of unity -- but this time there crept into the reports a note of marked anxiety that a congress "whose purpose was the direction of subversive action and propaganda in Palestine should have been permitted to take place in a country linked to Great Britain by a friendly treaty."[82]

Although foreign opinion was not greatly impressed by the value of the "much heralded assembly," its significance, warned the Palestine Review, "will depend largely upon the degree of consideration which the British Government attaches to its memoranda."[83] Shertok told the Smaller Actions Committee that Britain had actively

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[79]Sasson to Shertok, 2.10.38. op.cit.

[80]HaAretz, 3.10.38.

[81]Davar, 14.10.38, HaAretz, 12.10.38.

[82]Zionist Review, "Notes of the Week: The Cairo Congress," 14.10.38.

[83]Palestine Review, 14.10.38.

encouraged the conference, and the fact that it was once again internal Arab and Egyptian rivalries that had been decisive was only a secondary issue.[84]

It was British encouragement that made the Cairo Conference of far greater importance than its Syrian predecessor and highlighted the fact that pan-Arabism was only dangerous when encouraged and supported by the British. In this sense the Cairo Conference left the Zionists with an unpleasant sense of foreboding about what was to come.

The Jewish Agency made sure, of course, that its friends were kept informed of the significance of the conference, and Leo Kohn wrote to Philip Graves "with some very interesting inside information from the Cairo Inter-Parliamentary Conference -- supplied by two prominent participants -- which is too precious to be kept locked away in the files."[85]

The conference, Kohn admitted, was certainly a more representative meeting than Bludan had been. Among its members were the chairmen of the Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi parliaments, and in addition, the Egyptian government gave the conference not merely hospitality but every form of encouragement and political support, "though it would appear less out of any particular fervour for the cause of the Palestinian Arabs than because of tactical considerations of internal politics." On the other hand, the conference was by no means as representative of the whole Arab or Moslem world as had been suggested. The whole tenor of the conference, even in the more moderate parts of the proceedings, was strongly anti-British, a

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[84]Shertok at Smaller Actions Committee, 11.10.38, S25/444.

[85]Kohn to Graves, 26.10.38, ISA 68/21.

fact, Kohn pointed out, gleefully noted by German pressmen. In addition, threats were made against the Jews of Egypt and Syria that hinted at the launching of a policy of explicit intimidation. One of the most mystifying features of the matter, Kohn continued, was the part played by certain British officials in the calling and organisation of the conference:

> When the conference was first called in Egypt everybody there and here wondered how the Egyptian government, which had just professed its deep loyalty and dependence on Great Britain in the recent international crisis, could tolerate the assembly in its capital of a pan-Arab conference whose very object was to attack and defeat the policy of the British government in the neighbouring mandated territory ....Leading Egyptian officials gave it to be understood that British official circles in Egypt had not merely not raised any objection to the conference being held but were actively sponsoring it...The general view among the participants of the conference was that certain influential British personages in Cairo were anxious to convince HMG that the whole Arab world was opposed to the Jewish National Home policy and to prepare British public opinion for the inevitability of its abandonment.[86]

"THE WHOLE ISSUE OF THE ARAB WORLD"

Leo Kohn's letter quoted above, and many others like it, was part of what was described as the effort, "so far as authoritative opinion in England is concerned, of placing the whole issue of the Arab world in its proper perspective." "Thus," commented a June 1938 "Summary Report on Recent Political Developments,"

> it has been shown that Syria, which is a compound of conflicting factions, is virtually disintegrating today; while the internal situation in Egypt is also critical, and is one in which any adventurer who wishes to bring himself into political prominence has only to play the part

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[86]Ibid.

of a super-patriot.[87]

An important part of this effort was Weizmann's correspondence and meetings with influential British and French statesmen and public figures. In his letters (a large number of which were written by Kohn) Weizmann presented a consistent and uncompromising picture of the pan-Arab menace, of Arab nationalism and its characteristics. An examination of at least some of them is an indispensable part of any study of the expression of Zionist views towards the Arabs.

Two things are clear from such letters. The first and most important is the change in Weizmann's views on the Arab world, from his "Faysalist" conception of future relations between the Zionist movement and the Arab national movement, from an "exchange of services" between two essentially compatible and complementary movements, to a view of the Arab world as a sordid conglomeration of corrupt and unstable states led by unscrupulous and dishonest Levantines. A letter to Ormsby-Gore written in January 1938, shortly after Weizmann's return to Palestine from London, gives classic expression to this new and distinctly unheroic view of the Arab world. Iraq, Syria and Egypt, he wrote,

> are just beginning their careers as independent states. The inestimable privilege of statehood did not come to them (with the possible exception of Egypt) as a result of a natural evolution, but fell into their lap after the war and chiefly in consequence of the war weariness of Britain and France. The new kingdoms have all borrowed the current forms and formulae of European political institutions and have foisted a pseudo-democracy on backward illiterate peoples with primitive

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[87] Strictly Confidential, "Summary Report on Recent Political Developments in Neighbouring Near Eastern States," June 1938, S25/434. Cf. record of Weizmann's interview with MacDonald, 22.6.38, WA.

> social and economic structures. The result is mostly sham democratic government by cliques possessed of feudal instincts and pursuing unscrupulous methods, cloaked over by a combination of oriental rapacity with a hollow and destructive nationalism.[88]

The situation in Palestine was being used by "astute superpatriotic Levantine politicians" as a diversion from their own innumerable difficulties. A large part of the blame for this grotesque situation Weizmann attached to British officials in the Middle East, who, "in order to justify and rationalise their own conduct, put the highest value on Arab nationalism as a great force and indeed as a challenge to Great Britain." Most of the troubles in the area were caused by "Frankensteins which the British have themselves created in various parts of Arabistan." In such letters Weizmann could permit himself to be far more frank in the expression of his attitude towards the Arab question than he could in public forums, including the Royal Commission hearings and the Zionist Congresses, where he was inevitably limited by the constraints of publicity.

The second conclusion that emerges from the examination of Weizmann's letters is that his views were more or less identical with those propagated by Kohn and Epstein in the Political Department. If it was sometimes felt, as Shertok commented, that Weizmann

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[88]Weizmann to Ormsby-Gore, 20.1.38, S25/5476. Cf. Weizmann's secret evidence before the Royal Commission, 18.12.36, Z4/17139. "I do not underrate Arab Nationalism; I only think it is hollow, it is shallow, and in contradistinction to the nationalism of the Czechs, or the nationalism of the Jews, it is singularly free from cultural, social and economic forces. Nevertheless it is a force, so many bayonets, so many revolvers, but at the same time I think other people have erred, if I may say so British statesman have erred in overrating it, and in considering it as a formidable force."

still had a "heroic," "Faysalist" conception of relations with the Arabs, then as the Palestine disturbances progressed he increasingly used the arguments which were the fruit of Epstein's researches and Kohn's articulation, thus, as it were, closing the circle of opinion on the Arab world, and presenting a unified and consistent "Jewish Agency Version" that began with Vilensky, Sasson and various agents, passed through Shertok, Epstein, Joseph and Kohn to London, Geneva, Paris and Cairo, and ended with Weizmann's letters, speeches and memoranda. A December 1937 letter to Leon Blum highlights this. "It is clear," Weizmann wrote,

> that all these states which have just reached, or are about to reach the stage of sovereignty and independence need most of all internal peace and concentration in order to ensure their ordered progress. They have in front of them the example of Turkey which, by following a policy of intense concentration has transformed itself from a moribund empire into a powerful national state. Unfortunately that instructive example is not being followed. The leaders of most of these new states, instead of facing their own problems and sometimes because they are unable to cope with them, allow [this] destructive approach to go on, sometimes even with the indirect support of the government, and fail to realise that in doing so they are digging their own graves.[89]

Weizmann's correspondence was also marked by a remarkable consistency. The same basic format could be used in writing to a number of people with slight changes to suit the circumstances. Thus in December 1937 and January 1938 several people received letters from Weizmann complaining about the multitude of schemes for the settlement of the Palestine conflict, all without the consultation of the authorized institutions of the Zionist movement.

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[89]Weizmann to Blum, 8.12.37, ISA 68/20. The letter was drafted by Kohn and corrected by Weizmann before being translated into French.

All these schemes had one and the same object:

> the liquidation of the National Home and the virtual handing over of the country to the clique of so-called Arab leaders who organised the disturbances....and are now running the terrorist campaign from their hiding-places. This noble gentry is not particularly fastidious in the choice of its instruments. In Palestine its principal agents are the gunmen and paid assassins who ambush soldiers and policemen and throw bombs at Jewish street buses. In London they are represented by glib-tongued gentlemen who have no other concern but to propound "reasonable" solutions and are as profuse in their protestations of loyalty to the British Empire as their fellows in Geneva, Damascus and Cairo are ready -- for a not immaterial consideration -- to propagate Pan-Arab unity under Italian auspices.[90]

"Let there be no mistake," Weizmann continued," about the reaction of the representative bodies of the Jewish people to any of these schemes:"

> Jews are not going to Palestine to become in their ancient home "Arabs of the Mosaic faith," or to exchange their German or Polish Ghetti for an Arab one. Whoever knows what Arab government looks like, what "minority status" signifies nowadays and what a Jewish ghetto in an Arab state means -- there are quite a number of precedents -- will be able to form his own conclusions as to what would be in store for us if we accepted the position allotted to us in these "solutions." It is not for the purpose of subjecting the Jewish people, which still stands in the front rank of civilization, to the rule of a set of unscrupulous Lebantine politicians that this supreme effort is being made in Palestine. All the labours and sacrifices here owe their inspiration to one thing alone: to the belief that this at last is going to mean freedom and the end of the ghetto. Could there be a more appalling fraud of the hopes of a martyred people than to reduce it to ghetto status in the very land where it was promised national freedom.[91]

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[90]Weizmann to Sir John Shuckburgh, 31.12.37, ISA 68/20.

[91]Ibid.

The above passage, with its stirring appeal to justice and the righteousness of the Zionist idea, was included in letters sent, among others, to Leon Blum, Shuckburgh, Ormsby-Gore and Sir Oswald D'Avigdor Goldsmid. It was first used in a private letter from Leo Kohn to Arthur Lourie in London.[92]

THE MYTH OF ARAB TOLERANCE

The question of the meaning of minority status for the Jews of Palestine was one to which an increasing volume of comment was devoted as British withdrawal from Partition became more and more obvious.

The moving passage quoted above was only one particularly felicitously phrased example of a subject which became more and more a cause for concern as 1938 progressed. There had always been a fairly strong awareness of the reality of life under majority Moslem rule, and it was not surprising that the slaughter of the Assyrians in newly independent Iraq was a subject of almost obsessive interest.[93] Books on the Assyrian question were regularly reviewed in the columns of the Zionist press. The "inner significance" of A.M. Hamilton's Road through Kurdistan (the review was captioned "Britain and the Assyrians") was

> to show the world the falseness of Britain's assertion that Iraq was fit to govern herself. In this she wronged not only the minorities who were put at the mercy of the country's rulers but also the Iraqi Arabs themselves.[94]

A review of P. Ireland's Iraq: A Study in Political Development in

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[92]Kohn to Lourie, 26.11.37, loc.cit.

[93]For Zionist reactions to the slaughter of the Assyrians in 1933, see Shmuel Dotan, "HaTragedia HaAshurit be'Iraq ve'She'elat Eretz-Yisrael," Kolad 1973, pp.191-202.

[94]Palestine Review, 2.11.37.

the New Judea felt that "Iraq's attitude towards the Assyrians is a crucial test of her fitness to be an independent state."[95] M. Medzini's review of Yusuf Malek's The British Betrayal of the Assyrians was entitled "A painful reminder." Medzini, who also wrote leaders for HaAretz, commented that "few will be able to understand this sore chapter in Middle Eastern politics better than the Palestinian, more particularly the Jewish reader."[96] "The Iraqi treatment of the Assyrians," noted the Zionist Review,

> contains a profound lesson for those who look forward to a Jewish minority under an Arab regime with equanimity. At a time when in Central and Eastern Europe minority treaties are being torn up and scrapped, the creation of a new Jewish minority in the very homeland of the Jews is out of the question. The Jews will resist it to the very end.[97]

Arab tolerance, Weizmann told MacDonald bluntly, was a myth:

> they were by nature totalitarians -- and in a much worse sense than the Germans. They would treat all their minorities as dogs. As long as the Jews were the underdogs, well and good, but otherwise there would be the knife waiting for them.[98]

The Arab threats to keep Jews in Near Eastern states as hostages was met with controlled anger. A telegram sent to Shertok by Nabih al-Azmeh,[99] threatening dreadful calamities for the Jews of the Arab

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[95]New Judea, December 1937.

[96]Palestine Review, 22.1.37. Cf. Ibid., 12.5.38; HaAretz, 1.10.37; Bustanai, 25.8.37; Davar, 3.5.38; Zionist Review, February 1938.

[97]Zionist Review, 12.5.38.

[98]Weizmann and MacDonald, 4.7.38, WA.

[99]"The Goebbels of the Mufti propaganda machine," Zionist Review, 16.2.39.

countries unless the Zionists submitted to Arab demands, was given "the only possible reply."[100] The sole effect of such threats would be "to stiffen Jewry's refusal to accept minority status in Palestine."[101]

The Zionist press, particularly in England, was full of reminders about the treatment of minorities in Arab lands. It was felt to be most important to explain these questions to the Zionists' friends abroad, and especially to Jewish "assimilators" who believed in the Arabs' promises. Examples of Arab intolerance were not confined only to the case of the Assyrians in Iraq, although "no picture showing Arab treatment of Jews would be complete without mention of the Assyrian nationality."[102] The anti-Coptic agitation in Egypt,[103] the "mediaeval" status of the Jews of Yemen, the insecurity of the Jewish minority in "modern" Iraq, the fear of the Christians of Lebanon of Moslem domination and their refusal to countenance the inclusion of their country in an independent Syria, all provided the clearest possible indication of the trust these non-Moslem groups placed in the promises of Moslem Arabs. The use of these examples was a vital propaganda necessity in order to counteract Arab assurances of security for minorities in their midst:

> The Arabs, before audiences of free peoples, are careful to assure with bland magnanimity that Jews would be treated with the "traditional Arab hospitality" renowned throughout the world. Occasionally, of course, they forget themselves. When the Mufti.....appeared before the Royal Commission in January 1937, he was asked by Lord Peel: "You

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[100]Kohn to Graves, 26.10.38, loc.cit.

[101]Zionist Review, 16.2.39.

[102]Ibid., 11.5.39, "Minorities in Arab lands."

[103]Vilensky to Shertok, 19.1.38, S25/9223.

> want completely to stop Jewish immigration. What do you want to do with the 400,000 Jews here at present?"
> The Mufti replied: "They will live as they always did previously in Arab countries with complete freedom and liberty, as natives of the country."
> But when Lord Peel wanted some elucidation on this point and asked: "But if you felt there was no accommodation here for so many, some of them would have to be removed by a process kindly or painful as the case may be?" The only reply of the Mufti was: "We must leave all these things for the future."[104]

IN THE SYRIAN CAULDRON

The Mufti's flight from Palestine after the murder of Lewis Andrews and the outlawing of the Arab Higher Committee opened a new stage in the Arab disturbances. The pan-Arabization of the conflict became more and more marked, and Syria became the propaganda and logistic centre for the Arab rebels operating in Palestine.[105]

In response to these developments, Syria became the centre of attention in the Zionist struggle against Pan-Arabism, both on the practical level of attempts to restrain the growing volume of anti-Zionist activity by representations to the French and the British and various methods of influence on the Arabs, and on the propaganda level.

It was highly ironic, it was felt, that the Bludan Conference, one of the early milestones for the pan-Arabization of the Palestine conflict, had been convened in Syria, the cradle of the Arab National idea:

> Il y a un élément indescriptible de tragi-comedie dans cette réunion de politiciens desillusionnés et d'aventuriers discredités dans le berceau même du pan-arabisme qui est aujord-hui le siège d'un gouvernement incapable d'unir même son petit pays

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[104] Zionist Review, 11.5.39.

[105] On pro-Palestinian activities in Syria during this period see Porath, Palestinian Arab, pp.242-4.

> sous un controle central, après la decision de la France d'accorder à la Syrie son independance.[106]

A government which identified itself with and propagated the wildest dreams of pan-Arab unity was unable to achieve the minimum of internal unity of its diverse regions; Alexandretta had become autonomous; Government officials did not dare enter the Jebel Druze without a strong police escort, the Alawites were demanding autonomy; al-Jazirah too was pressing for secession. Syria, in short, was disintegrating. The governing party was unable to implement its promises, the economic situation disastrous, the ramshackle political structure shaken by internal and external pressures:

> Dans cette position embarrassante, la situation en Palestine leur est tombée du ciel comme un cadeau providentiel. Que signifient toutes ces petites affaires et qui a le droit de critiquer le gouvernment à un moment ou, de l'autre côté de la frontière, un peuple arabe lutte pour sa libération? Y-a-t-il meilleur moyen de maintenir les feux de l'enthusiasme arabe -- feux qui s'éteignent si facilement dès que les buts nationaux sont atteints -- que de concentrer l'attention du peuple sur ce qui se passe au delà des frontières.[107]

Soon after the Mufti's flight, the Political Department began working in earnest to try and moderate the danger from Syria. Elias Sasson was sent to Damascus to influence the Syrian press.[108] He proposed using French threats to postpone the ratification of the treaty to exert a calming influence on the situation and put forward a detailed plan for influencing public opinion by the judicious exploitation of internal conflicts. The strong anti-government feeling in Aleppo could be used, as could the conflict between the

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[106]Vilensky to Weizmann, 19.9.37, S25/1649.

[107]Ibid.

[108]Sasson to Joseph, 5.10.37, SP; Joseph at JAE, 10.10.37.

National Bloc and Dr. Shahabandar, who had taken a strong stance on the Alexandretta issue. The re-publication of Shahbandar's speeches, Sasson suggested, might force the opposition leader and his supporters to continue their struggle for the retention of Alexandretta and prevent the Syrian parliament from ratifying the new regime in the Sanjak. Hints could be made too at the effect on the Syrian economy of any boycott of British or Jewish goods.[109]

Representations were to be made to the British Government too, to bring pressure on the Syrian authorities to stop meddling in Palestine affairs. Contacts with the British press were to be utilized to suggest that in the light of the agitation in Syria, it was desirable that the ratification of the Franco-Syrian treaty be postponed.[110]

A proposal that there should be a boycott of Syrian goods was met with reservations on the Jewish Agency Executive. Kaplan felt that it would be dangerous to declare such a boycott, for there was no guarantee it would succeed. If it was decided to boycott Syrian produce, which would mean a serious blow for the Damascus government, it should be done without any publicity and without any formal declaration of support or involvement from the Agency or the Vaad Leumi.[111]

At the same time, an attempt was made to show good will towards

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[109]Sasson to Joseph, 6.10.37, SP; See also letters of 10,12,14,24. 10.37, SP.

[110]Joseph to Shertok, two telegrams, 8.10.37, S25/1649. See also JAE meetings of 10.10.37 and 17.10.37 and interview with Battershill (O.A.G.), 19.10.37, Yoman Medini 1937, p.383.

[111]E. Kaplan at JAE, 10.10.37. Veiled threats of boycott, did, however, appear in the press. See HaAretz, 11.10.37 and Palestine Review, 15.10.37.

the Syrians, in the hope that it would restrain agitation. It was decided to send condolences and financial aid for the victims of the disastrous flood which hit the country at the beginning of November. In order to avoid the impression that the move was simply the opportunistic exploitation of human tragedy for political ends, the contribution was to be sent on behalf of the Yishuv. Thus, with the help of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, £300 was donated in the name of the Vaad Leumi and the Agency, and was received with grateful thanks by Jamil Mardam, who was happy to see that the Jews, like himself, felt that humanitarian interests preceded all others.[112]

The gesture did not go unadvertised. "We are genuinely anxious," Weizmann wrote to Blum,

> to establish friendly neighbourly relations with [the Syrian Government] and we have recently endeavoured to give some indication of our good will by making a substantial contribution to the relief fund for the sufferers from the recent floods. On the other hand [he continued], I cannot but view with the utmost apprehension the tendency which appears to be prevalent in Syrian semi-official and even official circles to utilise the tension in Palestine as a useful means for deflecting the attention of the Syrian people from the disturbed condition of their own country. It is an old-tried manoeuvre of embarrassed politicians and it is useful for demonstrating their loyalty to the pan-Arab cause... but I am convinced that the Syrian government will soon discover that that policy is a very short-sighted one and that its effects may come down like a boomerang on its own head.[113]

The recent attempt on the life of Nahas Pasha, Weizmann wrote, was an indication of the dangers of the "crude slogans of the dogmas of force" being used by foreign powers to poison the "raw minds of the Arab youth." The emergence of "a new type of political gunman,"

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[112]Ben-Tsvi to Shertok, 4.11.37; Pinto to Shertok, 13.11.37; Mardam to Shertok, 14.11.37, S25/5576.

[113]Weizmann to Blum, 8.12.37, ISA/68/20.

commented the Palestine Post, was the result of

> westernized methods grafted onto a primitive plant [which] have produced a sinister combination of fanaticism and ruthlessness which manifests itself in conspiracy and gangsterism.

"Such acts," the article went on, were "a perversion of the ideal enunciated by Pan-Arabism:"

> Pan-Arabism has its uses and if aimed at the revival of the glorious period of the Caliphs through a form of Arab Federation, no-one seriously concerned with the future of this part of the world would think of obstructing it. But if pan-Arabism is to resort to agents who set themselves up as pistol-arbiters....the movement which has not yet emerged from its period of incubation is bound to degenerate, wither and die.[114]

As 1937 came to a close, the Agency stepped up its attempts to bring influence to bear on the British and French governments to restrain the Syrian agitation. Yarblum in Paris was instructed to pass on information to the Quai d'Orsay about the activities of Palestinian exiles in Syria.[115]

On the Syrian front, Sasson was working at full steam, and published 28 articles in the Syrian press during a 10-day visit in December.[116] Shertok was concerned that the Political Department's paltry budget would not be able to stand such expenses for long, and was also worried that such a spate of articles might arouse suspicions about their origins. Considering the extent and viciousness of the propaganda war being waged in the Arab press, Sasson could not accept the limit of two articles per week imposed by his superior. The wide range of subjects dealt with had the effect, Sasson claimed, of disguising the origin and interests of the writer and such

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[114]Palestine Post, 30.11.37; cf. Davar, 9.12.37.

[115]Epstein to Yarblum, 26.12.37, S25/3156. See also chapter six, pp.301-2 for Yarblum's activities in Paris.

[116]Sasson to Shertok, 22.12.37, S25/5568.

articles were often signed in the names of little-known Palestinian exiles living in Bierut or Damascus and always expressed concern for the fate of the Palestinian Arabs. In addition, no less than 27 daily Arabic newspapers were published in Beirut and Damascus and Shertok's suggested two articles per week could have no noticeable effect on the immense volume of incitement, lies and agitation contained in them. There was also a practical problem: It was highly unlikely, Sasson argued, that any Syrian or Lebanese newspaper would agree to publish only the occasional article, accompanied by a meagre payment which could hardly compensate for the deviation from its normal militant position.[117] Shertok, however, did not accept Sasson's arguments, and the latter was forced to come up with a compromise proposal. Finally it was decided that Sasson would arrange for the publication of one article per week in three Damascus papers and four Beirut papers. This would cost the Political Department £60 per month -- a small price to pay for such an important operation. Weekly consultations of the department's staff, Kohn, Epstein, A.C. Cohen and Sasson should take place to decide on subjects for publication.[118]

The Hebrew press did not lag behind with comments on the Syrian situation. An article in HaAretz entitled "The Birth-pangs of Syrian Independence," attached little significance to the rumours that France wished to delay still further the ratification of the Syrian treaty. It was hardly likely that she would be willing to once again take up responsibility for that complex situation in that

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[117]Ibid.

[118]Sasson to Shertok, 29.12.37, Ibid. The papers included Fath al-Arab, al-Ayyam, Sawt al-Ahrar, Bayrout, al-Nahar and Lissan al-Hal.

country, which had worsened considerably since the announcement of moves towards independence.[119]

The metaphor was a popular one. By February 1938, Syria, according to a long article in HaOlam, was suffering "growing pains," and was behaving with the grotesque quality of a child trying to imitate an adult. Syrian politics were characterized by a fanaticism akin to that of the Nazis, using the guise of religious and national feeling as a cover for their bitterness and frustration. Unable to provide the masses with their requirements, the leadership had broadened their horizons to beyond the borders of the country. The Orient, the article concluded, was a tabula rasa in terms of public affairs, and it was an easy matter for any demagogue or agitator to do with it as he wished.[120]

Conflicts between Syria and Lebanon over customs tariffs provided an opportunity to highlight the differences between Christian Lebanon and Moslem Syria, and Syria's resentment of her Christian neighbour. "Such conflicts," commented HaAretz

> were the natural consequence of the difference of principle and direction between the two states. Pan-Arab Syria is not happy with the existence of an independent Lebanon with a Christian majority, nor with the Lebanese government's position....on the Palestine conflict. Damascus believes that Lebanon and the Jewish National Home are stumbling blocks in the path of the realization of the pan-Arab idea.[121]

Industrial unrest in Syria was welcomed as a refreshing and constructive change from the excessive preoccupation with purely "political" problems. The fact, declared an editorial in the

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[119] HaAretz, 22.11.37, "The Birth Pangs of Syrian Independence."

[120] HaOlam, 24.2.38, "Growing Pains of a State."

[121] HaAretz, 18.4.38, "No agreement between Damascus and Beirut."

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> that workers are striking, not to achieve some nebulous political end of no immediate concern to the people and possibly of doubtful eventual benefit to them, but to improve the conditions under which they are living and working, should be taken as an earnest of their desires to rid themselves of the tutelage of ambitious politicians whose concern for the material welfare of the people is the slightest.[122]

Syria was seen as the very incarnation of the failure of pan-Arabism. "Can one," asked Vilensky in one of his very few articles to appear in English,

> after this decisive experience of Syria, speak seriously of "Arab solidarity" and the "dynamic force of Pan-Arabism"? Does not the example of Syria prove, to the contrary, that behind the pompous phraseology of Pan-Arabism there is nothing but a fiction created and maintained by foreigners for an end which has nothing to do with the true interests of the Arab countries? Arab separatism has opened the eyes of many Arab intellectuals who no longer allow themselves to be led astray by romantic formulae and who are beginning to understand that before realising the plan of an Arab Confederation the Arab peoples must make a serious effort at internal reconstruction. Unfortunately, these intellectuals are not numerous and seem to be powerless to impose their point of view. The great majority of Arab politicians prefer to go another way -- that of demagogic appeal, which is much easier and more convenient than constructive work and the thankless task of practical realisation.[123]

Together with the Syrian response to the loss of Alexandretta, the country's internal disintegration became the major focus of Zionist interest in the Syrian situation. For Bustanai the disturbances in al-Jazirah, like the Alexandretta events, were further

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[122] Palestine Post, 1.6.38.

[123] Palestine Review, 10.6.38, N. Vilensky, "The Failure of Pan-Arabism in Syria." Ibid., 30.9.38, "The Plight of Syria," K. Nivel (apparently a partial anagram of N. Vilensky).

proof of the inability of the Syrian Government to rule the country and to impose "national" control over the minorities, which formed 4/5 of the population in this troubled province.[124] Syrian inability to fulfill the obligations towards the country's minorities, HaAretz suggested, was sufficient reason to prevent the ratification of the treaty.[125]

The crisis in Syria deepened in December 1938 when Jamil Mardam returned empty-handed from Paris. The country was plunged into an unprecedented state of internal ferment as the Druze, Alawites and al-Jazirah clamoured for freedom from the yoke of Damascus.[126] In February 1939 a regular column entitled "Around the Separatist Movements in Syria" began to appear in HaOlam. HaBoger's Arab affairs writer, David Sitton, unchallenged master of the quotation mark,[127]

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[124]Bustanai, 8.6.38, "Al-Jazirah." Ibid., 15.6.38, "Alexandretta to the Turks." See also Epstein's report on al-Jazirah, April 1938, S25/5167. The report was prepared on the assumption that the Syrian government might be interested in the settlement of Palestinian Arabs in al-Jazirah in order to ward off Beduin incursions, buttress the province against the Turkish threat in the north and balance the Kurdish autonomism that so concerned the Damascus government. See minutes of the meetings of the Jewish Agency's Population Transfer Committee for April and May 1938 in S25/10061, S25/42 and S25/5103. Also Yosef Weitz, Yomanai ve'Igrotai le'Banim, Vol. 1 for this period. See too Palestine and Middle East Economic Magazine, "Al-Jazirah, the Syrian Mosul." and Shivat Tsion, pp.160-75.

[125]HaAretz, 29.9.38.

[126]Report on the Situation in Syria, 1938, January 1939, S25/266. Zaslani report, 22.1.39, S25/57, for details on the struggle between Mardam and Shahabandar.

[127]See chapter two, p.72.

published a series of articles entitled "In the Syrian Cauldron," an "obituary" of "Arab" Syria. Now Syria was seen in its true light as

> a land of countless peoples, sects and races, and now we can understand how mistaken we were in believing in the existence of a united Arab land beyond our northern border. In the light of current events everyone will realise that Arab Syria, as seen by European and especially British statesmen, does not exist at all.[128]

It was a welcome discovery to be able to reveal the reality behind the facade of Arab nationalism at a time when Zionist hopes were being cruelly dashed upon the rock of pan-Arabism at the London Conference. The St. James Conference was, as it were, the logical conclusion of the process of the pan-Arabization of the Palestine conflict that had begun with the intervention of the Arab rulers to end the strike in 1936. The fact that the Zionist movement had, by 1939, developed a cogent and comprehensive analysis of the Arab world that stood in direct contradiction to the assumptions and motives underlying British Middle Eastern policy, could do nothing to halt this process.

The unrest in Syria did not put an end to interest in Palestine. On the contrary, the worsening internal situation meant an increase in intervention in Palestine affairs. Sasson published an article in the influential Damascus newspaper Alif-Ba, entitled "A fire at home, and they're busy abroad."

> Why has the Palestine question attracted so much attention compared to the Syrian question? Palestine has its own excellent politicians who can look after their own affairs by themselves, especially when they get help from the Pan-Arab

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[128] HaBoqer, 31.1.39, David Sitton, "In the Syrian Cauldron." Ibid., 24,25,26.1.39.

> politicians. Give us leaders who will run the affairs of Syria with responsibility![129]

The Political Department wanted to send Nasib al-Bakri, or even Jamil Mardam ("who can be bought, although he's expensive"[130]) to the London Conference to supply information on the Arab side of the proceedings, and possibly to influence the Arab delegates. This though, turned out to be impossible, and although attempts were made to try and persuade al-Bakri to go to Cairo, to participate in the consultations being held there prior to the London Conference, this too, fell through.[131]

French toughness in Syria, and her unwillingness to give in to nationalist demands, were favourably contrasted with British concessions to and encouragement of pan-Arabism. Without any fuss or official declarations, the French had simply withdrawn from Syrian independence without making any concessions to the Arabs.[132]

Separatism in various parts of Syria was seen as the main reason for the postponement of the ratification of the 1936 treaty. Such movements, Sasson felt, detailing proposals for propaganda activities in Palestine and the surrounding countries in April 1939, should be encouraged. A federal solution to the Syrian problem, he explained, would serve "as decisive proof" of the justice of Jewish opposition to any solution of the Palestine problem by the creation of an independent Arab state. Encouragement of the Druze separatist

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[129]Sasson to Shertok, 8.11.38, SP.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Zaslani to Joseph, 22.1.39, S25/57.

[132]Davar, 9.1.39, M. Assaf "What happened between Paris and Damascus?" Also Weizmann report on meeting with Bonnet in Paris, JAE (London), 14.3.39, Z4/30223.

movement[133] as well as Sasson's contacts with Alawite separatists in Lataqia must be seen in this context.[134] Sasson obtained a copy of a memorandum written by an Alawite deputy in the Syrian Parliament, expressing Alawite opposition to inclusion in a united Syrian state. "You assume," the anonymous author wrote to Blum,

> that it will be possible to ensure the rights of the Allouites and of the minorities by means of treaties and agreements. I must, however, warn you that the Moslem Arabs attach no importance to agreements. The value of the treaty between Iraq and Great Britain has already been proved. That treaty did not prevent the Iraqis from butchering the Assyrians, the Kurds, the Shiites and the Yazidis.

Not surprisingly perhaps, this document found its way to Leo Kohn, who edited it, possibly intending to use it in the propaganda war against pan-Arabism.[135]

Zionist preoccupation with Syria was not accidental. On both the internal and external fronts it provided them with the ingredients they required for a successful propaganda war against the pan-Arab myth. The large number of editorial articles, speeches and discussions devoted to these questions must have had the affect of creating an idée fixe of the Arab world, and it was certainly not an attractive picture.

Criticism was often mixed with a genuine pedagogical appeal to the Arab leaders, urging them to mend their ways for the good of their countries and peoples. An article in HaPoel HaTzair pleaded with the Syrian leaders, "once and for all, to take a good look at

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[133]See chapter seven, pp. 336-364.

[134]Sasson to Shertok, 20.6.39, reporting on visit to Lataqia, SP.

[135]"From Lataqie to M. Leon Blum," 9.5.36, ISA 68/27. (Leo Kohn papers).

reality." Were they to do so, they would no doubt abandon their pan-Arab adventures and begin to devote themselves wholeheartedly to creating the civil peace and economic construction that they so seriously lacked.[136]

Iraq, and to a lesser extent Egypt too, were criticized in similar tones, although in nothing like the same degree as Syria. The desire to carry out some kind of transfer of Palestinian Arabs to Iraq may have played some part in the more moderate approach to that country, while Egypt's problems were different, and although anti-Coptic feeling was often mentioned as an example of Arab intolerance in that country, German and Italian activities bore the brunt of Zionist criticism.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia, which came to play an increasingly important role in the Palestine problem as the disturbance progressed,[137] was rarely mentioned by Zionists at the propaganda level, possibly because so little was known about the desert kingdom, and because of the great differences between it and the Mandated territories of the fertile crescent.

Contacts with the Saudis, however, did take place, and in April 1937 Ben-Gurion and Epstein met Fuad Hamza, Ibn Saud's Director of Foreign Affairs, in Beirut. Epstein held an exploratory meeting with Hamza, a Lebanese Druze by origin, on April 8. The two men exchanged generalities of little significance. Hamza explained to Epstein that Ibn Saud's interest in the Palestine question resulted

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[136] HaPoel HaTzair, 13.1.39, Ari Ankorion, "Over the Border."

[137] See Gabriel Sheffer, "Saudi Arabia and the Palestine Problem," HaMizrah HeHadash, no. 2, 1972.

from three factors: (1) that most of the population of Palestine were Moslems; (2) because of the desire to help England solve the question of its relations with the Palestinian Arabs, and (3) because Palestine was one of Saudi Arabia's neighbours.[138]

A few days later Ben-Gurion met the Saudi emissary and although they explained their respective positions to each other, with the Zionist leader promising the usual benefits to the Arab world from constructive cooperation with Jewish Palestine, nothing emerged from the meeting. Ben-Gurion, who attached considerable importance to the Saudis, maintained contact with them through Philby who he met in London in May 1937, but this too, came to nought.[139]

Ibn Saud was not considered a real threat by the Zionists. His dependence on England, it was argued, despite the intrigues of German and Italian agents, was too great to allow him to embark upon an adventurous Palestine policy, and it was noted that he had not sent any delegates to the Bludan Conference, and had even attempted

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[138]Joseph diary, 6.4.37, S25/1511 and Ben-Gurion, Talks, pp.121-7.

[139]Ibid. pp.127-141; Also Ben-Gurion at JAE, 11.4.37. A further attempt was made to make direct contact with Ibn Saud via Sheikh Fawaz Sha'alan, but this was abandoned when the Sheikh suggested taking a disproportionately large cut of the several thousand pounds in gold with which it was felt necessary to soften-up Ibn Saud and his court. Epstein to Shertok, 28.5.37, S25/3163. Also David HaCohen, Avt Lesaper, p.179. In August 1938, Ben-Gurion met the Saudi Ambassador in London, Hafiz Wahbah, in another attempt to meet Ibn Saud, but Wahbah was evasive. Ben-Gurion said that he had "come to the conclusion that the only personality in the Arab world who was sufficiently strong and independent to do something was Ibn Saud," Talks, pp.196-8.

to disrupt it.[140]

The Saudi leader, although "the most significant personality in the Arab world," was also "an eminently reasonable man," whose objections to partition were based far more on his hatred of Abdullah, who stood to gain if partition was implemented, than on any sense of "Arab patriotism." His refusal, in December 1937, to participate in a joint memorandum of Arab states on the Palestine question, was another example of his cautious statesmanship. "He no doubt realises," pointed out the Agency's March 1938 memorandum on "Arab Reactions to Government Policy in Palestine,"

> that however great his strength in the desert, outside Arabia his economic and military force is quite negligible....all the territory his forces have to cross before invading neighbouring territory is pitilessly open to attack from the air; his strength lies in Arabia and Arabia alone. And finally his policy has always been one of attachment to Great Britain on whom he knows he is ultimately dependent.[141]

Any Saudi attempts to pay too much attention to the Palestine question were nipped in the bud. When, in December 1938, the Agency heard of plans to hold a conference on Palestine in Mecca during the pilgrimage season, it was felt that urgent representations should be made to the Foreign Office, warning of the implications of such a meeting, and urging that it should be discouraged.[142]

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[140]Joseph at Mapai Party Centre, 18.9.37.

[141]"Arab reactions..." loc.cit.

[142]Joseph to Shertok, 22.12.38, S25/1513.

FAYSAL'S DREAM ALLOWED TO PERISH.....

Ibn Saud did not become a new Faysal for the Zionists, the supreme and acknowledged leader of the Arab world, who could agree to an exchange of services with them -- a Jewish State and an Arab Federation, or some other such grandiose plan -- it was because the Arab world, made up of disparate, conflicting elements, troubled by internal conflicts and forever embarking on foreign adventures, given to the influence of their British and French rulers or ex-rulers and the intrigues of Germans and Italians, had no such leader. The search for a new Faysal, therefore, was doomed to failure.

Zionist responses to events in the Arab world in our period show clearly that they were no longer pan-Arabists. Their desire to submerge the Palestinian problem in a wider "Arab" framework persisted, in theory, but in practice, pan-Arabism was the enemy.

It was only natural that under the pressure of daily events, political shocks, problems and worries, as well as more important and practical priorities, the Zionist leadership rarely had time to sit back and examine relations with the Arab world in perspective. Its normal responses to events were ad hoc and along the general principles that had emerged over the years. When the question of the apparent contradiction in the Zionist attitude towards the Arab world was discussed, confusion reigned. It is hard, moreover, to say with certainty that a clear-cut awareness of such a contradiction even existed.

On one occasion, though, in October 1937, the Jewish Agency Executive briefly discussed the question of the attitude of the Zionist movement towards pan-Arabism. Dr. Werner Senator, one of the JAE's two non-Zionist members, pointed out the contradiction between the Zionist movement's declarations of support for the pan-Arab movement

and its aspirations, and the constant propaganda being waged against it. Ben-Gurion, in response, declared that he still supported the idea of a Jewish State within an Arab Federation. The Arabs, however, would not accept this.

Shertok touched upon the core of the problem and showed, with rare precision, how the ship of theory foundered upon the rock of reality:

> Pan-Arabism is not an article of faith for us. If Zionist interests lead us to the conclusion that we need peace with the Arabs, and if we can achieve such peace by pan-Arabism, then we will support it. But today the pan-Arab slogan harms us, and we must fight it. The slogan does not serve the genuine unity of the Arab lands, but the particular interests of each one of them, or of cliques within them. The Bludan Conference discussed how to send weapons to Eretz-Yisrael for the gangs. The pan-Arab movement is therefore not constructive, but destructive and aggressive, and it is our duty to fight it.[143]

For the Zionist movement the very term "pan-Arabism" became synonymous with the enemies of Zionism, both the Arabs themselves and the British propagators of the doctrine. "Faysal's dream," it

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[143]JAE, 25.10.37. Shertok saw little political value in a precise definition of the relationship of Palestine to the Arab world. In 1940 a suggestion was put forward that the Jewish Agency help finance an historical survey that would show that the majority of the Arab population of Palestine was composed of the descendants of relatively recent immigrants to the country who had come from Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, the Balkans etc., as well as Maronites, Mutawalis, Circassians etc. (See B.Z. Luria, "Natives or Strangers?" Davar, 3.10.37.) "Although we can assume [Shertok wrote] that the investigation will prove that a large part of the Arab population penetrated the country during recent generations.....with all the significance of this conclusion its political importance is simply that it will be interpreted as further proof that Eretz-Yisrael and the neighbouring countries form one unit of population within whose borders the inhabitants wander from place to place." Shertok to Z. Schocken, 31.5.40. S25/3028.

was written later in the best tradition of Zionist historiography, "was allowed to perish.[144] The Zionist movement could not solve the problem of its relations with the Arab world, and, concerned by growing pan-Arab hostility, began hesitantly to look elsewhere.

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[144]Abba Eban, My People, p.377.

# CHAPTER SIX

## "MY ENEMY'S ENEMY IS MY FRIEND" (I)
## ZIONISTS AND MARONITES

As the Arab disturbances took their course, the Zionist movement became increasingly concerned about its isolation in a hostile Arab world. The "appeal" of the Arab rulers to the Palestine Arab leaders to end the general strike in October 1936 was a harbinger of the broadening of the scope of the conflict.

Despite prolonged and inconclusive debate as to the nature and character of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism -- terms which remained by necessity inexact and ill-defined -- in the course of the polemics, an atmosphere of pessimism reigned in Zionist councils with regard to the possibility of reaching an agreement with the Arabs of Palestine. One indication of the degree of this pessimism was the principled support of large sections of the Zionist movement for the partition of the country, a position which ran contrary to the most basic principles of their ideology. To what extent this support resulted from an awareness of the need to seize the opportunity, a blessed conjuncture of stars in the darkening political firmament, or from a realization of the impossibility of an agreement with the local Arabs, cannot be easily or definitively calculated, but there is no doubt that the latter factor weighed heavily on the minds of all concerned.

For most of the Zionist movement in 1936, Zionist relations with the Arabs were based on a piece of political mythology which by then retained even little of its earlier propaganda value. With the Arab strike in full force in the summer of 1936, the abortive Weizmann-Faysal agreement of 1919 was conjured out of the hat and beamed at the audience. From 1919 onwards this unsuccessful political rabbit had won a particularly self-righteous place of honour in the pantheon of agreements, declarations and statements upon which much Zionist legitimacy and self-justification so precariously rested. In 1936 this was all the Zionist movement had to offer -- not so much to the Arab world, but to itself.

For the Zionists, pan-Arabism became a political bogey. The bastard child of partisan British (and French) officials, it became a synonym for political adventurousness and irresponsibility, sometimes pan-Islam in thinly-veiled disguise, always the vehicle for the personal ambitions of corrupt and dishonest politicians, more concerned with their own positions and factional intrigues than with the welfare of their peoples.

In sharp contrast to Zionist criticism of pan-Arabism and its concomitant irresponsibility was the praise given to and interest shown in the "New" Turkey, Iran, the Christians of Lebanon and the Druze. In its increasingly bitter struggle with Arab nationalism, Zionists adopted an almost cosmic view of the Arab world. They were involved, they felt, in a battle between the desert and civilization, between irresponsibility and maturity, between corruption and honesty.

In closest physical proximity and faithful partner in the war against the desert were the Maronite Christians of Lebanon, and it was in this ancient community that the Jews of Palestine and the

Zionist movement found their staunchest ally.

"THE ONLY CHRISTIAN COUNTRY IN ASIA"

Zionist analyses of the Arab world, often seeking to disprove the existence of an Arab "nation," concentrated particularly on the ethnic pluralism of the Arab countries, and took particular pains to stress the factors which separated the Syrian and Lebanese Christians, and in particular the Maronites, from their Moslem Arab neighbours.[1] The accepted view on Lebanon was that it had

> a character and interests of its own, and it.... has a not unimportant role to play in this part of the world, forming, like the Jews in Palestine, a link between the West and the Orient.[2]

Noting the increasing anti-Zionist agitation in Syria during the Arab strike in Palestine, a leader in HaAretz noted the exception of "the Maronite Lebanon, which generally preserves a fair attitude for the Jewish community in Eretz-Yisrael."[3] The Christians had their Diaspora too; when, in July 1937, it was proposed that the right to vote for candidates to the Lebanese Parliament be granted to Lebanese immigrants in North and South America, one Hebrew paper noted that if these rights were granted there would be a considerable increase in the number of Christian deputies in the Sérail, and that therefore the Moslems were opposed to it. "Such a law," the journal noted pregnantly, "is likely to create an important historic precedent."[4]

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[1]See, e.g., Palestine Post, 24.7.36.

[2]Palestine Review, 16.10.36.

[3]HaAretz, 14.6.36.

[4]Bustanai, 14.7.37.

The Zionists saw, therefore, in the Christians of Lebanon, a community with similar interests to their own, interests based largely on a sense of the growing threat of Moslem and Arab aggressiveness and intolerance and a common need for political and cultural contact with the Western powers, upon which both groups had traditionally depended for their precarious existence in a hostile environment.

For both parties, however, beyond the comity of interests resulting from the common fear of domination by aggressive neighbours, lay concrete, material interests. For the Jews, there was the question of land for settlement. As early as 1926, Weizmann had reported to the Zionist Actions Committee in London about a proposal from the French High Commissioner for Syria, M. de Jouvenel, that there be Jewish settlement in Syria. Weizmann was convinced that

> the Jewish State, whatever form it should take, would extend from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea and it was our duty to achieve this. M. de Jouvenel's proposal for the colonisation of the Hauran fell in with this idea, and it would do much good if it were pursued tactfully and carefully.[5]

Jewish settlement in the Hauran, however, was to meet the same fate in the 1920's as did the attempted penetration into Transjordan in later years. The blissful consummation of the marriage between necessity and ideology was frustrated again and again by the intervention of the bride's jealous and ungenerous father in the form of the Mandatory government.

In March 1934, Weizmann visited the Maronite Patriarch Antun Arida at his Episcopal seat at Bekérké. One of the subjects they discussed was Jewish settlement in Lebanon and the hostile attitude

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[5]Quoted in J. Kimche, There Could Have Been Peace, pp.314-5.

of the French authorities to it. Weizmann (whom Arida addressed as "Le Chef du Parti International Sioniste) wrote later to the Patriarch:

> Votre Béatitude aura compris...que notre tâche n'est guère facilitée par l'attitude actuelle des autorités francaises de la Syrie et du Liban, qui ont encore...un peu peur de voir s'establir les Juifs dans les pays sous mandat francais.

What Weizmann wanted on this occasion was

> un mot pour me dire votre avis sur les meilleures dispositions à prendre en vue de changer l'attitude pas favorable des autorités francaises locales.

Arida's reply to Weizmann noted the Syrian opposition to Jewish land purchase and thought it unlikely that the Mandatory authorities would go against this. However, the question could be solved, he felt, by time and diplomacy.[6]

Despite Mandatory opposition, contact between Zionists and Maronites over the question of land purchase undoubtedly helped create a certain mutual cordiality in their relations which was to prove helpful in the future. Every now and then an offer would reach the Jewish Agency from Maronite quarters suggesting the sale of land for Jewish settlement. In February 1936, for example, Moshe Shertok was visited by Najib Sfeir, one of the many political travelling salesmen who knocked so frequently on the doors of the Jewish Agency peddling their doubtful wares. Sfeir had come to hear whether the Jews were interested in a plan for Jewish settlement in the Ghab swamps of northern Syria. Shertok, certain that Sfeir was acting behind the backs of the French authorities, insisted

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[6]Weizmann to Arida, 4.4.34. Also Arida to Weizmann, 12.5.34. WA. See also Dr. E. Meir, The Maronites: with special regard to the Political Development since 1860, typescript memorandum, 24.6.42. p. 21, S25/6639.

that nothing could be done until the latter agreed to the plan, and was aware that such a scheme might arouse Arab nationalist feeling. Sfeir went away disappointed, but was to reappear again and again in relations between Zionists and Lebanese Christians.[7]

Shortly before the outbreak of the 1936 disturbances, a meeting was held between Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Ruppin, Hankin and Thon, to discuss the possibility of land purchase in Lebanon. Hankin was authorized by Weizmann to conduct negotiations with this end in view and in May, Hankin concluded a deal with a M. Georges Moushawwar of Beirut, whereby 1500 Jewish families were to be permitted to immigrate annually to Lebanon over a 10 year period. The Jews were to be allowed to buy and develop during this period 100,000 dunams annually, provided that they undertake to employ 50% Lebanese labour in all branches of their undertakings. The deal, according to Moushawwar, would cost the Jews some £50,000.

Before continuing with the negotiations, Ruppin felt it necessary to solicit Weizmann's opinion. Both Ruppin and Shertok felt that in the light of the political situation, it might be dangerous to carry on:

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[7]Sfeir met Weizmann and Shertok in 1919 when he had approached them with a grandiose plan for a Jewish-Syrian-Lebanese agreement. Since then, Shertok wrote, "he has turned up meteorically every few years, always with some bold and imaginative proposal for a political or economic plan of vast dimensions. In recent years, his visits have become more frequent. Every visit ends in disappointment and rift, but after some time he reappears. M. Sharett, Yoman Medini 1936, 17.2.36., pp.64-5. In 1931 he had approached Arlossoroff offering his help in organizing Christian opposition to the Moslem conference of that year. Arlossoroff considered Sfeir "very intelligent and not uninfluential." Arlossoroff to Brodetsky, 17.11.31., S25/3061. Elias Sasson felt Sfeir could be useful in publishing pro-Zionist articles in the Lebanese press. Sasson to Ben-Gurion, 16.4.37., S25/5568.

> Even though the state of mind in the Lebanon is different from that in Syria and much less hostile towards the Jews, it would nevertheless be an undertaking involving the greatest responsibility to start negotiations about a systematic colonization in an Arab country under present conditions, as, in so doing, we would still further increase Arab hostility by furnishing them with material to prove that Jews are not content with confining themselves to Palestine but are preparing a dangerous invasion of the neighbouring Arab countries.[8]

Despite Hankin's enthusiastic support for the scheme, Weizmann cautioned prudence until he could take further soundings in Paris which he was due to visit on June 20.[9] Weizmann's whole political outlook had been moulded by his generally excellent relations with the British, and he was unlikely to endanger his equally good relations with the French government for the sake of a doubtful and extremely expensive land deal.

The subject of settlement was not forgotten, and it continued to be a subject of discussion between Zionists, [illegible]h and Maronites. When Eliahu Epstein saw President Emile Edde in September 1936, he had the clear impression that

> just because the Lebanon was on the threshold of independence, the ruling Maronite element was likely to be more interested than before in promoting a suitable scheme of Jewish settlement in the Lebanon. At present, although it is generally assumed that the Maronites are the preponderant community in the Lebanese Republic, actually, since the enlargement of the old Lebanon into Grand Liban, the Moslems there have a clear majority over the Christians.

"Quite naturally," Shertok explained to Weizmann,

> it is the paramount interest of the Maronites -- if they wish to maintain their political ascendancy in the Republic and prevent its fusion with Eastern Syria -- to force the Moslems down into the position of a minority. This they can do in one of

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[8]Ruppin to Weizmann, 1.6.36., WA.

[9]Weizmann to Ruppin, 11.6.36., Hankin to Thon, 2.6.36., WA.

> two ways; either by ceding strips of territory inhabited mainly by Moslems, such as the Phonecian coast, or the Baalbeck valley, which would mean throwing out the baby together with the bathwater; or by introducing a new element which, without swelling the ranks of their own community, would nevertheless make the Moslems lose their position of numerical superiority as against the non-Moslem communities.[10]

For certain classes of Lebanese, the most tangible expression of their common interests with the Jewish National Home was in the form of the thousands of Jewish holidaymakers from Palestine who spent the summer months in the cool Lebanese mountain resorts. Lebanese hoteliers borrowed money, increased their accomodation, engaged kosher cooks and ordered Hebrew newspapers for their Jewish guests. When the disturbances broke out in Palestine the resulting disruption of the Lebanese tourist industry struck a grievous blow to the Lebanese economy in general, and the pockets of Maronite businessmen in particular.[11]

Imports and exports between Palestine and Syria and Lebanon combined were in far greater volume than with any other of the neighbouring Arab countries.[12] Palestine Jewry was impressed by the greetings of President Eddé to the Tel Aviv Levant Fair and by the Lebanese pavillion there.[13] Commerce was seen as a way of improving neighbouring relations:

> Why hasn't our Manufacturers Association opened a permanent information bureau in Beirut...headed by an expert who will serve us as a sort of permanent commercial representative of Eretz-Yisrael

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[10]Shertok to Weizmann, 2.10.36., S25/1716.

[11]M. Sharett, Yoman Medini 1936, 21.7.36., p.216. and HaAretz, 4.4.37., S. Gottleib, "These days in the Arab Countries."

[12]HaAretz, 3.6.36.

[13]Palestine Review, 17.4.36. and HaMeshek HaShitufi, 25.6.36.

in Lebanon?

The Syrians, in marked contrast to the Lebanese, did not see fit to send any official representatives to the Levant Fair.

> The reason for her abstention was obviously political. Anyway, economists in Damascus also appreciate the value of the Eretz-Yisrael market and they will realize one day that fanaticism and business do not mix.

The same was true, mutatis mutandis, for Iraq:

> In Baghdad, as in Damascus, they will recognize one day that Eretz-Yisrael does not need to buy from people who are hostile to her existence.[14]

Ties of land settlement, tourism, trade, and above all, a sense of common destiny in the face of external threat, made the Maronites of Lebanon natural allies for the Yishuv. By the beginning of 1936 political relations were sufficiently good for Shertok to write to Eddé congratulating him on his Presidential appointment, and the assessment of these relations sufficiently sensitive and important for the Jewish Agency to advise the Jewish community of Beirut not to publish their greetings to Eddé "in order not to make Mr. Eddé's position difficult and not to arouse an attack on him by the hostile Lebanese press."[15] The Lebanese President was supposed to have visited the Levant Fair, but was prevented from doing so when the disturbances erupted just as the exhibition was due to open. Eliahu Epstein believed that Lebanese participation in the fair was

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[14] HaAretz, 3.6.36.

[15] Shertok to Eddé, 21.1.36 and JAE to Organization of Sephardic Jews, 5.2.36., S25/5576.

> a matter of the utmost political importance in connection with the question of the development of our relations with the country that is nearest to us in many senses.[16]

The outbreak of the trouble in Jaffa, in fact, found Epstein in Beirut, busy with arrangements for the Lebanese pavilion in Tel Aviv. He at once plunged into hasty attempts to redress the balance upset by the majority of the Lebanese press' presentation of the events in Jaffa as a Jewish attack upon the Arabs. Only George Vayssie, editor of La Syrie and on the Agency's payroll, reported with some "objectivity" on the situation in Palestine. Although Epstein succeeded in supplying L'Orient with correct information, there was no guarantee, he felt, that the Lebanese press could be permanently won over to objective reporting of the events in Palestine. He was opposed to the method adopted by the Beirut Jewish community, of paying to insert denials of false rumours or information appearing in the local press, as this merely encouraged these newspapers to print more wildly exaggerated reports in order to squeeze more money out of the local Jews. The correct way to influence the press, Epstein argued, was to buy permanent influence on various newspapers which could then be relied upon, if not to actively express support for the Jews, then at least to refrain from printing inflammatory or false information.[17]

On this occasion Epstein had arranged that a delegation from the Beirut Jewish Community (whose President, David Farhi, was to often act as the JAE's representative in dealings with Lebanese) visit the French High Commission and demand the suppression of newspaper agitation against the Jews. One of the arguments the delegation

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[16]Epstein to Joseph, 19.4.36., S25/436.

[17]Epstein to Sasson, 8.7.36., S25/10121.

used, at Epstein's prompting, was that anti-Jewish propaganda would have a detrimental effect on the Lebanese tourist industry, which had prospered the previous year from the visits of 5000 Palestinian Jews.[18] This barely-veiled threat was to be used frequently as a means of applying pressure on the Lebanese to preserve at least a modicum of neutrality on the Palestine conflict.

Eliahu Epstein had made the acquaintance of a considerable number of influential Lebanese and Syrians, including Maronites, during his period of studies at the American University of Beirut between 1931 and 1934, when he had been actively encouraged by his mentor, Chaim Arlossoroff, to make contacts with local political and intellectual circles.[19] The faith that the increasingly pessimistic Arlossoroff had in the ability of his gregarious and intelligent young protegé to serve Zionism in the crucial field of Jewish-Arab relations was not misplaced. By the time Epstein had finished his studies in Beirut he had constructed a network of friends and acquaintances who were to prove more than helpful in the Agency's contacts with Lebanon.

Particularly prominent amongst these were several influential Maronites, and of these the most interesting was undoubtedly Charles Corm, Christian and Lebanese nationalist, passionate francophile, founder of the Young Phonecians Union and editor of its journal, La Revue Phénicienne. The rich, bohemian and talented Corm was the chief propagator and popularizer of the "Phonecian" thesis, which argued that the Lebanese Christians were the direct heirs of the ancient peoples of Tyre and Sidon, and that there was no connection

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[18]Epstein to Shertok, 24.4.36., S25/3668.

[19]For Arlossoroff-Epstein correspondence for 1931 see S25/3561.

between them and the Moslem Arabs who had come from the desert. The goal of the Young Phonecians, as Epstein reported after one of his early meetings with Corm, was

> to revive Phonecian nationalism amongst the Lebanese in order to renew Phonecian culture and language and to create a separate political life, independent of Arab Syria.[20]

Corm wrote that the distinctive culture of the Lebanese, although expressed in modern languages and styles, revealed "the atavistic forms of the national sensibility." One eminent authority has written that Corm's vision was

> suffused with a Maronite romanticism; Lebanon is not only the heir of Phonecia, it is the child of the Church, the only Christian country in Asia.[21]

Corm and the Young Phonecians represented, without doubt, the most extreme wing of the Christian separatist movement in Lebanon. Epstein had other influential friends in these circles, notably Albert Nakkash, co-founder, with Corm, of the Young Phonecians, who was nicknamed the "Lebanese Rutenberg" due to his pioneering work of electrification in the Lebanon during his period as Minister of Public Works. As a powerful and rich industrialist, Nakkash was interested in the promotion of Jewish emigration to Lebanon, to the extent, it appears, that he might be able to profit from it, and not

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[20]See Report on a Journey to Syria and Lebanon, October 1934, S25/10225.

[21]A. Hourani, "Ideologies of the Mountain and City" in Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon Ed. R. Owen, (London 1976) p.39. See also Epstein to Corm, 24.2.35., S25/3143. Corm to Epstein, 23.2.38., concerning arrangements for the visit to Lebanon and lecture to "Phonecian" circles of Professor N. Chelouche on Phonecian-Jewish relations in antiquity, S25/5813. Corm to Epstein 11.4.38., offering the use of villas on the Lebanese coast for the temporary use of Jewish refugees from Europe, S25/5580. Also Report on a visit to Lebanon, May 1938, and Epstein to Joseph, 9.11.38., S25/5570.

out of particularly strong ideological motives as seem to have been genuine in Corm's case, although, it is true to say, ideology and profit often go hand in hand.[22] Indeed, not all Epstein's Maronite friends were idealists or patriots. George Nakkash, editor of the French-language paper, L'Orient, was described by Epstein as a "superficial Levantine" who was prepared to serve whoever was prepared to pay him. When George Vayssie's La Syrie began campaigning for Jewish immigration to the Lebanon, then L'Orient countered, simply out of spite, with propaganda bordering on vicious anti-semitism, opposing Jewish immigration to the Lebanon. Recently, however, Epstein reported at the end of 1934, Nakkash had been publishing pro-Zionist material, and had been using the bulletins of the Agence d'Orient (Al-Wakala al-Sharqiya), the Cairo-based news agency run by the JAE's representative in Egypt, Nahum Vilensky. The reasons Epstein gave for his contact with this unsavoury and corrupt journalist also illuminate the background to Zionist contact with the Maronites in general:

> Since the paper is Maronite, defending the rights of minorities in the East and with an anti-Moslem and pro-Mandatory orientation, it generally takes a positive attitude to all the forces which support the same political platform; decentralization of the Arab countries and defence of the right of territorial autonomy for all religious or national groups or communities which are concentrated in one area (Druze, Alawites, Kurds etc.) This position sometimes leads the paper to make favourable comments about Zionism, if not from love of Mordekhai, than at least out of hatred for Haman.[23]

Corm and George Nakkash both proved to be useful contacts for Epstein in his attempts to influence the Lebanese press, and their

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[22]Report on a visit to Syria and Lebanon, October 1934, loc.cit.

[23]Ibid.

pro-Zionist tone was the only friendly note to be heard in Lebanon, when, in 1938, the rest of the Lebanese press, with the exception of the ever-faithful Vayssie, had been bought by the Mufti, and was waging virulent anti-Zionist propaganda.[24]

During a JAE meeting on May 20, 1936, one month after the outbreak of the disturbances, a wide-ranging political debate took place, a large part of which was devoted to the question of Zionist relations with the Arabs, both inside and outside of Palestine. Yitzhak Greenbaum, representative of the General Zionists, felt that it was a "grave mistake,"

> not only in terms of class outlook, but also in terms of national outlook, if we think that the Arabs are one unit. Perhaps we are incapable of putting into practice the old Zionist idea of making an agreement with the Arabs of Eretz-Yisrael. Once it was thought that we could come to an agreement with the Arabs of the neighbouring countries. Now it seems that this too is extremely difficult and perhaps impossible, but we could make contact with the minorities in the Arab countries. Is it not possible to strengthen our contacts with the Lebanese, who are to a certain extent in a similar situation to us in Eretz-Yisrael?[25]

Greenbaum was unsure of the benefits of contacts with the Druze, and other minorities in Iraq, on the Syrian-Turkish border and in central Syria but was sure that cooperation with the Lebanese would promise success:

> Just as we're interested in England, Lebanon is interested in France. Just as France is interested in Lebanon, because it is the gateway to Syria, so England is interested in western Eretz-Yisrael being in Jewish hands -- so the Jews can at least flourish undisturbed. I see no reason why we

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[24]Report on a visit to Syria and Lebanon, May 1938, loc.cit.

[25]JAE, 20.5.36.

> shouldn't strengthen relations with the Lebanese. Why don't we go the Lebanese and tell them -- "We can make a pact with you, we'll help you and you'll help us." I think we should start thinking in this direction.

It was no coincidence that it was Greenbaum who raised the idea of cooperation with the minorities of the Middle East. As one-time leader of the minority factions in the Polish Seim, he had transferred the lessons of his East European experience to the Middle East, and however misplaced the parallels or misleading the assumptions which equated Polish nationalism with pan-Arabism, his views were of considerable significance. What is remarkable, however, is the apparent lack of contact between the Political Department and the JAE over relations with the Arabs. JAE members seem to have quite simply been unaware of some of the activities of the Political Department. This may be explained, perhaps, on the one hand, by the preoccupation of individual members of the executive with matters that concerned them directly -- the fate of European Jewry -- and on the other, by the unwillingness of the Political Department to divulge details of its activities to anyone not directly concerned with them. So while Greenbaum was advising the JAE to adopt a policy of trying "to separate the parts of the one unit we call the 'Arab People,'" diplomatic activity continued apace, apparently unaffected by the Executive's ponderous deliberations.

During the summer of 1936 the Zionists' efforts were concentrated, of course, in London, in attempts to spur the vacillating Palestine government into more decisive action against the strike and its leaders, and to prevent the implementation of the Arab demands. Contacts continued, however, on other fronts. In June, Histadrut leader Dov Hoz met the Maronite Bishop Mubarak in Paris, where the latter was pressing Maronite claims for a Lebanon separate

from Moslem Syria. The flamboyant Bishop was not a man to mince words. Mubarak said, Hoz reported,

> that only the Turks knew how to handle the Arabs. Hanging two or three of them in the town square would put an end to any trouble at once.

Hoz, the veteran labour leader, accustomed to dealing with British Trades Unionists, was somewhat taken aback by Mubarak:

> At the moment, said the Monsignor, wearing his priestly garb, his cunning eyes flashing, not too much attention should be paid to the scales of justice. Its unimportant how guilty an agitator is. In times of crisis one does not act according to the principles of absolute justice, but according to the needs of life, and Palestine's vital need is for peace. Only a firm policy can bring peace with the Arabs.[26]

Recording the meeting in his diary, Ben-Gurion noted of the Maronites that "the fate of the Assyrians is enough for them"[27] and, two weeks later, that

> the Lebanese are afraid of Damascus and don't want Syria to cut them off from the Jewish National Home. They see their situation as the same as the Jews and want to be neighbours with us.[28]

Discussing the impending Syrian-Lebanese settlement with Blum in June, Weizmann expressed his apprehensions about the proposed handing-over of Tyre and Sidon, and possibly Tripoli, to an independent Syria, and, indeed, about the granting of independence to Syria at all. Blum agreed with the Zionist leader, but, he argued, the previous French government had promised to grant independence to the Syrians and Lebanese, and England had set a precedent in Iraq which was impossible to ignore.[29]

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[26]Hoz to Shertok, 14.6.36., S25/6326.

[27]D. Ben-Gurion Zikhronot 1936, 14.6.36., p.260.

[28]Ibid., 30.6.36., p.307.

[29]Ibid., 25.6.36., p.288.

In July, continuing its contacts with the Maronites, the Agency sent Epstein to Lebanon to sounc out the mood in the Christian camp, which Epstein described as being marked by "vigorous opposition to the Moslems, especially on the question of Sidon and Tyre." Eddé, he reported, was grateful for Weizmann's efforts on this matter, and was prepared to sanction the settlement of 100,000 Jews there, if the area remained attached to the rest of the Lebanon. Eddé saw the Palestine disturbances as vindication of the Maronite fear of Moslem domination. "The experience of the present disturbances in Palestine," Shertok wrote to Weizmann, "has been grist to our mill as far as our relations with the Maronites are concerned."[30]

Weizmann saw Blum and Viennot, the sous-secrétaire d'état, in Paris at the begginning of September, 1936. The French negotiations with the Lebanese were about to begin and Blum thought that it was time for the Zionists

> to enter into relations with the Lebanese and if we have some definite proposals by the time the treaty is ready, it might not be impossible to incorporate such proposals in some form or another into the treaty and so obtain for them not only the agreement of the Lebanese but also the sanction of the French Republic.

Weizmann continued, in a letter to Shertok, asking him to take up "a little more seriously than at present," the question of land purchase in Lebanon.[31] Shertok decided to start from the top, by tackling the President of the Republic, since, as he pointed out, "this time it was a question of establishing a point of principle and not of detail."[32]

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[30]Shertok to Weizmann, 2.10.36., S25/1716.

[31]Weizmann to Shertok, 11.9.36., Z4/17032.

[32]Shertok to Weizmann, 2.10.36., op.cit.

Accordingly, Epstein visited Eddé again on September 29. The President offered, when the new status of Lebanon was settled, to come out with a public statement in favour of a Maronite-Jewish alliance.

> This time [Shertok wrote to Weizmann] Epstein broached the subject of giving some concrete shape to this alliance idea in view of the impending negotiations between France and the Lebanon which are to culminate in a Treaty. Eddé declared himself again all in favour, but made it clear that it was not enough for him to hear from us about the favourable attitude of the Quai d'Orsay to such an agreement. The Haut Commisariat in Beirut spoke often with a different voice. In order that he should be able to take any initiative in the matter it was essential that he should receive a proper tip from the French High Commissioner. If we were interested in seeing progress made with the Jewish Maronite accord, it was up to us to get our friends in Paris to send to Beirut a suitable instruction, and as soon as he would be informed by the French High Commissioner of this favourable attitude he would get in touch with us and enter into formal negotiations.[33]

The Maronite Patriarch Arida, whom Epstein visited on the same occasion was politically in a less delicate position than Eddé and was able to give vent to the full force of his feelings to the Zionist emissary:

> The Patriarch was much more emphatic about the Moslem danger to Christian Lebanon and Jewish Palestine, which demands, in his view, an agreement between these two bodies to defend their interests against the danger of Islam.[34]

In spite of a certain reticence in his manner, Eddé's definition of

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[33]Ibid.

[34]Conversation with the President of the Lebanese Republic, Mr. Emile Eddé, Beirut, 22.9.36. E. Epstein. Secret. S25/5581.

the common interests of the Christian Lebanon and Jewish Palestine was an accurate echo of the Zionist formulation. "The Jews and the Maronites," Eddé said,

> were natural partners because of their similar situation, both positively and negatively. Jewish and Lebanese cultures were both superior to that of the Arab neighbours and both were struggling for the same goal -- to build a constructive bridge between Eastern and Western culture. They also had a common neighbour in the East with aggressive intentions.[35]

By way of showing Eddé the possible bonuses of a Jewish-Maronite alliance, as well as some rather vague talk of economic and cultural contacts and the development of tourism, Epstein recalled that in his meetings with Blum, Dr. Weizmann had expressed Jewish friendship for Lebanon and had supported several issues concerned with the country's territorial integrity. Dr. Weizmann was a faithful friend of Lebanon and was always prepared to help her, in France or elsewhere.[36]

Epstein realized that his approach to Eddé created a highly delicate situation, and after their meeting he asked Amos Landman, a Palestinian Jew living in Beirut and who often acted on behalf of Epstein, to persuade Albert Nakkash to speak to the Lebanese President and urge him not to mention the Zionist proposal to De Martel until Weizmann had seen Blum.[37]

Weizmann, meanwhile, was keeping up Blum's interest in the

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[35]Epstein noted that Eddé did not use the word "Moslems," although that was obviously what he meant. Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Epstein to A. Landman, 29.9.36., S25/10121.

subject of the proposed Maronite-Jewish alliance. He saw the French Prime Minister on October 15[38] and wrote to him a few days later again mentioning the possibility of Jewish settlement on the Syrian (i.e. Lebanese) coast and described the relations between Zionists and Lebanese.

> Pendant ces dernières années mes collègues et moi nous avons été en contact avec plusieurs des Libanais, et en particulier les Maronites. Les Libanais desirent coopérer avec Le Foyer National Juif parce que le Liban, tout comme le Foyer National Juif, est menacé par des masses fanatiques musulmanes, de sorte que l'idée de la coopération entre le Foyer National et le Liban a beacoup d'attrait pour les plus instruits et les plus intelligents parmis les Libanais. Une telle coopération deviendra encore plus essentielle si -- quand le Grand Liban sera reconnu comme republique indépendante.

Lebanon, Weizmann continued, had a potential for industrial progress, a field where Jewish aid and expertise could prove most valuable. Eddé had expressed his desire to work with the Jews if the conditions were acceptable to the Lebanese and the French. Therefore, Weizmann wrote,

> Je voudrais vous demander si ce ne serait pas possible...de faire communiquer aux autorités Libanais l'attitude de la République Francaise sur ce problème. Il va sans dire que nous accepterons toute condition que le Gouvernement Francais voudrait imposer à des telles négociations. J'ai l'impression que nous avons ici la possibilité de faire quelque chose a l'avantage de tous les interessés.[39]

Weizmann next saw Blum at the end of January 1937. Speaking to

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[38]Weizmann to Shertok, 14.10.36., S25/6327. "I am seeing Blum tomorrow and shall have a word with him about the Arazim [Lebanon] as you suggested. I shall also try and impress upon him the necessity of holding a watching brief over developments. He has more right to do so than the Imam of Yemen."

[39]Weizmann to Blum, 22.10.36. WA.

him "both as the French Prime Minister and as a Jew," he told him again of the desire of the Lebanese to conclude a treaty of friendship with the Zionists. The major obstacle to the implementation of such a treaty was the Comte de Martel, the French High Commissioner in Beirut. The Zionist leader outlined to Blum the partition idea as it had been put to him by Professor Coupland (during the famous meeting at Nahalal in December 1936) and asked him again to encourage the Lebanese to ally themselves with the Jews, and to let the British government know of the favourable attitude of the French Government to the partition idea, if its details were acceptable to the Zionists.[40] Blum, according to Weizmann's report, was "most sympathetic" towards the idea of a Judeo-Lebanese alliance, which might form "a useful counterpoise to German ambitions in this direction."[41]

By 1937, it had become a commonplace in Zionist circles that the Christians of Lebanon formed a "natural ally" for the Yishuv, and the attitude of the Maronites to their Moslem neighbours was often cited to illustrate the injustice of expecting non-Moslem minorities to live under Moslem/Arab domination. For Selig Brodetsky, for instance,

> the desire of the Christians of Lebanon to establish friendly relations with us is an indication of what is likely to be the attitude of the Christian Arabs of Palestine.[42]

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[40]Secret: Summary notes of Two conversations with M. Leon Blum, Paris, 27th and 30th January 1937. 3.2.37. WA.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Strictly Confidential: Memorandum on the Partition of Palestine, S. Brodetsky, 12.4.37., S25/5474.

Bernard Joseph, similarly, preparing a memorandum on the "Causes of the Disturbances" for the Royal Commission, noted that

> the fact that the inhabitants of the Lebanon demand separation from Syria even after the abolition of the French Mandate proves that minorities are exposed to danger under an Arab Moslem majority, although they have a common language and culture. In the Lebanon the solution is independence and in Palestine the solution of that part of the problem which is to prevent a recurrence of disturbances could only be an increase of the Jewish Yishub.[43]

"A RATHER FRUITFUL SUGGESTION"

Zionist diplomatic activity in London reached fever pitch in the first few months of 1937, amidst an atmosphere of rumours, leaks, conversations and dinner parties, all of which centred around the awaited Report and recommendations of the Peel Commission. Writing from Jerusalem on April 22 Shertok listed for Weizmann the points on which he must stand firm in case of partition. The first point was "continguity with the Lebanon all along the frontier from the Metullah salient to Ras el Naqura on the coast. This means the inclusion of the whole of Galilee.[44] "Action is being taken," Shertok wrote,

> on a rather fruitful suggestion which came from Dov Hoz -- to arrange that the Royal Commission should hear from authoritative Maronite quarters the expression of a desire to have us, and not the Moslems, as their neighbours in the South. The President Eddé will not have the guts to say this but the Patriarch Arida might. The latter gentleman is now in Egypt and will soon be leaving for Rome and Paris. Hoz and Epstein will see him before he leaves.[45]

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[43]The Causes of the Disturbances. B. Joseph. n.d. [1936], S25/10212.

[44]Shertok to Weizmann, 22.4.37., Z4/17032.

[45]Ibid.

Around this time, the Zionist press was pleased to note the warm declarations of friendship for the Jews made by Arida and Bishop Mubarak at a reception held in their honour by the Jewish community of Beirut. These feelings were

> consistent with the traditional attitude of the Christian Lebanese. At a time when racial hatred is unfortunately deliberately fostered in this part of the world, the cordial relations in the Lebanon between the Jewish and Christian communities is of particularly happy significance. The Patriarch did not confine his good wishes to the Jews of Lebanon, but extended them to the Zionists in Palestine, and the Bishop pointed to the debt of the Holy Land to Jewish development....In the era which is opening up for the Lebanese Republic its Jewish subjects will not fail to reciprocate these friendly feelings by intensifying still further their efforts for the progress and happiness of that country. The Jews of Palestine, and indeed of the world, will continue to cherish good feelings towards a people who prefer cooperation and harmony to discord and misery.[46]

The General Zionist paper, HaBoqer, enthusiastically welcomed the Christians of Lebanon as "an ally in the ring of steel, forcing a way through the desert to the dark and slumbering East."[47] Another journal felt, more prosaically, but no less significantly, that

> the recent pronouncement of the Maronite Bishop of Lebanon is a clear indication that the Lebanese are on the side of the Jews in the present Palestine conflict.[48]

The public declaration by the leaders of the Maronite Church caused a minor outcry in the Arab world. The speeches, it seems, may have been intended less to praise the Jews than to display Maronite determination not to succumb to Moslem dominance. The Maronites' only

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[46]Palestine Review, 30.4.37. Cf., HaOlam, 29.4.37.

[47]HaBoqer, 9.5.37.

[48]Zionist Review, May 1937. See also Yalqut HaMizrah HaTikhon, no. 17, May 1937.

loyalty, Mubarak declared, was to the Pope in Rome. M. Vayssie added his voice to the fray:

> Lebanon belongs neither to Syria, Iraq or Palestine. She welcomes the Jews and invites them to settle in the Lebanon, and for anyone who doesn't like that, the Arabian desert is open wide before them.

One Syrian paper, loyal to the National Bloc responded by dubbing the editor of La Syrie "Haim" Vayssie and Bishop Mubarak "Rabbi."[49] Al-Liwa reported secret negotiations between Paris, Beirut and Jerusalem on the impending extension of the Jewish National Home to Lebanon.[50]

Unaffected by this war of words, plans went ahead for getting open Christian support for Lebanese contiguity with the future Jewish State. Epstein had seen Arida at Bekérké at the beginning of March and learnt of the Patriarch's plans. "It was arranged," Epstein wrote later,

> that Dov Hoz and I would sail on the same boat in order to meet with him during his journey and influence him so that in his meetings with the Pope, and later with the French government in Paris, he would advance our joint interest in the Partition plan, along the lines of the talks we'd had with him on this subject in the past.[51]

Speaking to the Maronite leader in his private cabin on the Marco Polo on May 2, Hoz told the Patriarch that only by close cooperation in all spheres could Jews and Christians face the danger from their neighbours, who were totally unprepared to come to terms with the existence of independent national minorities amongst them. It was, therefore, up to the leaders of the Maronite community to be on their guard and make sure that when the partition map was

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[49]Quoted in HaAretz, 2.5.37.

[50]Quoted in HaAretz, 28.5.37.

[51]E. Elath, Shivat Tsion v'Arav, p.294.

decided upon, it would adhere to the principle of a contiguous and joint border between the Jewish State and the Lebanon and that there should not be corridors between the two states which would pass through Moslem territory. Hoz suggested that the Patriarch, in all his meetings in Europe, should stress this point and its importance from the point of view of the Christians of Lebanon. He should ask the French to try very hard to influence the British Government on the question of the future borders of the Jewish State, if it was created.

Epstein stressed to Arida the aggressive intentions of the Mufti, Haj Amin, as a Moslem leader, and not simply as an Arab, and the dangers that could be expected from those intentions, not only for the Jews of Palestine, but also for every other community in the Middle East which was "not prepared to return to the situation that existed under the Ottoman Empire." He added that it was important for the Maronites in Lebanon to win the sympathies of the Shi'ite Moslems (Mutawalis), who lived along the northern border of Palestine, and who did not like the Mufti's Pan-Islamic activities.[52]

The Patriarch's response to the entreaties of the Zionist emissaries was somewhat disappointing. The subject of the borders between Palestine and Lebanon had occupied the British and French governments much in the past, and this time too it would be neither Jews nor Lebanese who would decide the results, but the interests of the two powers who would determine the issue in conjunction with their plans for the whole area. Epstein felt that from what the Patriarch had said he was very wary of binding himself to something

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[52]Ibid. pp.295-6.

that went beyond purely community interests and which had a clear international political character.

> Dov and I felt that despite his dignified stand against the attacks of the press and the criticism by Moslems after his speech in the Synagogue, he would be careful not to give a new excuse for attacks by his enemies and the enemies of the Maronites if it was discovered that he, the head of the community, not only spoke but also acted on behalf of Zionism and its aspirations..... therefore we couldn't see any point in continuing the conversation at this point and we understood that we couldn't expect, especially at this stage, the help that we'd asked for during his visits to Paris and Rome.[53]

Nevertheless, as the Patriarch left for Rome, and Hoz and Epstein went on to London to carry on their political activities during the Coronation period, it was arranged that Arida would meet Dr. Weizmann in Paris. The Jewish Agency's representative there, Marc Yarblum, kept in close contact with Bishop Féghali, the Patriarch's delegate in Paris, in order to find out when Arida was due to arrive in the French capital, and what arrangements had been made for his stay there.[54] From London Epstein wrote to Shertok:

> Although we haven't been successful with the Old Man [Arida]...Dov and I think that this operation should be transferred to our people on the spot -- in order to make them aware of the danger of a corridor between us. Najib [Sfeir] can also be effective in this matter through his group, but we can't depend just on him. It's important to speak to Albert Nakkash, who, as a local, could begin work in various circles.[55]

By "our people on the spot," Epstein meant a group of Maronites led by Monsignor Abdullah Khouri, Arida's deputy and a kind of "Foreign Minister" for the Maronite Church, who were opposed to Eddé. The

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[53]Ibid. p.296.

[54]E. Epstein, Report, 10.5.37., S25/3163.

[55]Epstein to Shertok, 12.5.37., S25/3163.

President was, they felt, too moderate in his opposition to Moslem pressure and they wanted to replace him by a stauncher Christian patriot. Khouri's group even considered getting rid of all the Moslems in Lebanon and replacing them by Christians from other parts of Syria and by Maronites returning from America. Najib Sfeir had tried several times to enlist Zionist help for this group. The practical proposition was that since the Zionists were interested in a strong Christian Lebanon they should use their connections with Blum to help this group take power. When Sfeir saw Shertok in early 1937 he tried to convince him that Eddé would not dare to take a strong position on the border question and that only the Khouri group felt strongly enough about the common danger to Jewish Palestine and Christian Lebanon to act effectively. According to Sfeir, the French Government was prepared to replace Eddé by Monsignor Khouri and to base its policy in Lebanon on a Christian government without bothering about the Moslems. The only problem was, Sfeir explained, the policy of the French High Commissioner, who had entered into an "unholy alliance" with the Syrian Moslems. Shertok, however, again rejected the persistent Sfeir, repeating what he had said on previous occasions, that the Jewish Agency could not intervene on behalf of one group in the Maronite community against another.[56]

On June 5, 1937, Epstein went with Yarblum to greet the Patriarch at the Gare de Lyon on his arrival from Rome:

> Yarblum procured an invitation to the reception and we were the first to greet him after the government representatives. I'm staying at the same hotel as the Patriarch and can thus follow what's going on around him.[57]

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[56] Yoman Medini 1937, 25.5.37., pp.141-2. Also Shertok to Epstein, 25.5.37., S25/5810.

[57] Epstein Diary, 5.6.37., S25/3144.

The Patriarch wanted common borders with Jewish Palestine if the country was partitioned, but was unwilling to raise the question because he was unsure of the French position. Epstein explained to Rahma, Arida's secretary, the dangers likely to result from a corridor between Jews and Maronites, from which the latter would suffer worse. A new port would doubtless be created which would compete with Beirut and it would trun into a sea outlet for Moslem Syria. Lebanese exports to Palestine would suffer from a customs barrier and it would be bad for tourism. Rahma reiterated the Patriarch's position that there was no question of disagreement between Maronites and Zionists, but that everything depended on France.

Because the Patriarch's fear of upsetting the French, the meeting between him and Weizmann on June 6 was something of an anti-climax. Weizmann had already decided not to press Arida to intervene with the French Government, especially since Blum and Delbos (the Foreign Minister) had made encouraging promises in that direction and, as Epstein said,[58] they had known in advance that little could be expected from Arida. The Patriarch, however, brought up the question himself.

> He spoke cautiously and it was clear that he was not prepared to intervene in the matter. He merely commented that Lebanon "would be happy" with common borders with Jewish Palestine if the country was indeed partitioned.[59]

After the meeting, on June 7 Epstein wrote to Shertok. He had not, he argued, changed his views about the honesty or reliability of

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[58]Epstein to Ben-Tsvi, 12.6.37., A116/70/1.

[59]Shivat Tsion, p.296.

Najib Sfeir, of whose doubtful quality Shertok had reminded him.[60] It was, however,

> a fateful period for us and the border question is vital. In order to make it easier for our friends in the government here [i.e. Paris] who want to intervene on our behalf, there must be some formal basis for their intervention, and a Lebanese request about the borders can serve as such a basis.[61]

Epstein no longer believed that Eddé would make such a request, for his position was more delicate, or, more precisely, less anti-Moslem than that of the Patriarch and the Maronite group of Abdullah Khouri. With all his reservations about Najib Sfeir and his proposals, Epstein could see no alternative but to exploit the Khouri group. He was aware of the dangers of using these people but the moment was "unique" and "we cannot afford to miss any opportunity when there are no better ones."[62] Epstein's plan was that Abdullah Khouri present a petition to the French government on the border question, an act which would demonstrate their committment to a Christian Lebanon more than their war against Eddé. The Khouri group would see such a move as being identical with their own interests, which were the same as French interests -- the preservation of the independence of Christian Lebanon within its existing borders and their guarantee against attack by the Moslem neighbours. Thus the Zionists could have got what they wanted without getting involved in Lebanese local politics.

Shertok had obtained a copy of Khour's letter (written in March) from Sfeir, who had asked him to forward it to Blum.[63] The

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[60]Shertok to Epstein, 25.5.37., loc.cit.

[61]Epstein to Shertok, 7.6.37., S25/3163.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Shertok to Epstein, 25.5.37., loc.cit.

point of the letter was as follows: "Il est très regrettable," Khouri wrote,

> que les derniers événements et surtout la politique suivie actuellement tendent clairement à placer le Liban, seul rampart de la Chrétienté en Orient, sous le joug de l'Islam. En effet, la politique adoptée en ce moment, par les dirigeants, est une politique à tendance nettement musulmane, et qui consiste à confier le pouvoir à des personalités non-Chrétiennes. Cette politique, vous en conviendrea, n'est pas de nature à nous tranquilliser sur le sort que nous est réservé.[64]

The letter placed the Jews in a highly delicate position, as Eddé was due to visit Paris in a few weeks time and it was quite possible that the source of the letter would be revealed to him, either by someone from the Quai d'Orsay, or even by the volatile Sfeir. It would be disastrous if Eddé discovered that the Jews were working hand in hand with the Maronite opposition group, and it may be assumed that both Shertok and Epstein realized that were Eddé to discover the cooperation, he would be more concerned with the treachery this represented than by the fact that the Jewish Agency was merely using the Khouri group for its own ends without necessarily supporting the separatists' aims. Epstein decided, therefore, not to forward Khouri's letter to Blum and advised Shertok to inform Sfeir that

> some of our friends here have advised A. Khouri and his group not to write their letter while Eddé and de Martel are in Paris. Those friends likewise advised against the use of Jewish help in this matter, in order not to give ammunition to the enemies of Abdullah Khouri and his group. These are the same friends who also advised exploiting the border question to increasethe prestige of A. Khouris group.[65]

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64A. Khouri to Leon Blum, 18.3.37., S25/3775. (See appendices).

65Epstein to Shertok, 7.6.37., loc.cit. For later meeting with Khouri, see report on a visit to Syria and Lebanon, May 1938, S25/5570. Also Khouri to Weizmann, thanking him for his efforts "en faveur de la cause commune de nos deux pays." 10.5.38., WA.

After the failure to win official Lebanese support for a common border with Jewish Palestine, there was a decrease in diplomatic activity between the Agency and the Lebanese. The Zionists, however, did not give up hope that their ties of friendship with the Lebanese provided a valid argument for the demand for a common border. Replying to Wauchope's request for his "personal opinion on certain aspects of the partition question," Shertok wrote that it was

> vitally important for the Jews that the area of their settlement should remain contiguous with the Lebanon. Ties of friendship have already sprung up between us and the Maronites and among the thinking people of both communities there is a strong hope that in future this friendship will be cemented into a permanent economic and political alliance to the advantage of both communities and countries. Any wedge driven between us and the Lebanon will reduce the chances of stability and prosperity for both countries and for the Mediterranean littoral as a whole.[66]

When, in August 1937, it was rumoured that the Lebanese Government was about to publish a statement on the Palestine political situation in favour of the Arabs, similar to one which had just been published by the Syrians, Shertok's deputy, Bernard Joseph, was sent to Beirut with a view to endeavouring to prevent the publication of any such statement. Eddé was, as usual, friendly but cautious, and reiterated his view that the Jews and Lebanese had

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[66]Shertok to Wauchope. Confidential. 21.6.37., S25/5474. See also report of Dov Hoz meeting with Martin (Secretary of the Royal Commission), stressing the importance of contiguity with Lebanon. Ben-Gurion to Eliezer Kaplan, 24.5.37., in Zikhronot 1937, p.188. Cf. Pinhas Rutenberg to Sir John Maffey, 5.6.37, Z4/17136. For a further attempt to persuade the French to express their opposition to any Arab zone separating Lebanon and Jewish Palestine, see report of Yarblum interview with M. Francois de Tessan, Viennot's successor as sous-secrétaire d'état at the Quai d'Orsay, in Yarblum to Weizmann, 16.7.37., Z4/17111.

"a common programme in the East" and that both were "occidental peoples living in the Orient."[67] Joseph obtained Eddé's assurance that no such statement would be published.

There was a further proof of Lebanese neutrality, when, in September 1937, the Lebanese government forbade its members attendance at the Bludan Conference. Syria, the host country, was sneered at by the Palestine Post for using the pan-Arab issue to divert attention from its own serious domestic problems:

> The Lebanon, on the other hand, in spite of great pressure, has not departed from her policy of friendly non-intervention in Palestine affairs. She is supposed to be the country most in danger from the Zionist "invasion".....Nevertheless, the Lebanese government has withheld all recognition of the conference, unafraid of the Zionist "menace." A close neighbour of Palestine, we may assume that the Lebanon considers co-operation with the Jews to be in the mutual interest of Palestine and herself.[68]

It is possible that Lebanese abstention from the Bludan conference was a result of Jewish Agency activities, since a year later, Elias Sasson was able to dissuade several Lebanese from attending the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Cairo, by various means, including payments to Lebanese newspapers to encourage the publication of appropriate discouraging material, bribes to individuals and the insertion of his own articles in the local press.[69]

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[67]Minute of an Interview of Dr. Bernard Joseph with the Prime Minister of the Lebanese Government on Friday, August 6, 1937. S25/5581 and Mapai Party Centre meeting, 18.9.37., BB.

[68]Palestine Post, 12.9.37.

[69]See, for example, Sasson to Shertok, 21.7.38. and 27.7.38., Z4/17024B. Also Sasson to Shertok, 2.10.38., Sasson Papers.

THE EXILE OF EL-ZOK

When the Mufti fled to Lebanon in October 1937 following the outlawing of the Arab Higher Committee, a new phase opened in Zionist-Lebanese relations. Beirut and Damascus became centres for pan-Arab propaganda and logistical bases for the Arab rebels operating in Palestine. Reports from Beirut indicated a growing involvement in the events in Palestine, even at the expense of interest in the elections then being held for the Lebanese Parliament.[70] With the widening of the battle zone, as it were, to include Lebanon, the Jewish Agency's efforts were directed towards pressuring the French Government to curb Palestinian activities in Lebanon, and, to a lesser extent, at encouraging the Lebanese Christians to demand more forceful action by the Mandatory administration. It was felt, however, that French officials in Syria and Lebanon would not be prepared to take firm action against the Mufti, partly out of fear of annoying Arab opinion in the French colonies, and partly, Epstein believed, out of a wish to take revenge on the British for what the French saw as their two-faced attitude during the Druze rebellion of 1925. In practice, nevertheless, things were better:

> The French in Syria obviously reject any accusation of inactivity and theoretically agree completely with the assumption that any damage caused to England's position in the East must harm French interests. We are in permanent contact with one of the important departments in the French High Commission in Beirut and the contact helps to clear up many questions -- especially in the field of security.[71]

In line with the policy of pressuring the French government, the

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[70]Sasson to Shertok, 5.10.37., S25/3779.

[71]Epstein to Yarblum, 26.12.37., and Epstein to Security Department of French High Commission, Beirut, advising the Lebanese authorities not to give a visa to Mounif al-Husseini, 28.2.38, S25/3156.

Jewish Agency's man in Paris was kept supplied with information on the Mufti's activities and with instructions to show it confidentially to senior officials at the Quai d'Orsay.[72] Yarblum's visits to the Quai d'Orsay, Epstein informed him, had "very practical results." The Lebanese Prime Minister, Kheir al-Din al Ahdab, personally told Epstein that the French High Commissioner had told him that Paris had complained strongly that De Martel's reports on the situation were inadequate and incorrect, and that well-founded information had been received in the French capital attesting to the Mufti's dangerous and subversive activities.[73] Yarblum was also instructed to point out to the French authorities the dangerous effect of the pan-Arab propaganda emanating from Beirut and Damascus on the French North African colonies.[74]

If the efforts to convince the French were crowned with little success, the Lebanese Christians were proving even less helpful. When Epstein met Eddé in March 1938 he was able to add to his by now almost ritual incantation of the dangers of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism the fact that the Mufti was turning Christian Beirut into a centre for movements hostile to the interests of both France and the Lebanon. Although Eddé agreed with Epstein and reaffirmed his friendship for the Jews and promised to speak to the High Commissioner, he had little to offer. The Lebanese President felt, Epstein reported,

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[72]Epstein to Yarblum, 16.1.38., S25/3156.

[73]Epstein to Yarblum, 17.2.38., S25/5813.

[74]Epstein to Yarblum, 8.3.38., S25/3156.

> that we should concentrate our efforts in Paris on influencing the Quai d'Orsay to give appropriate instructions to the High Commission. It was clear from what he said that he has little hope in the government's activities in Lebanon itself.[75]

By April 1938 it was clear to the Agency that if real pressure was to be exerted upon the French to take a firm stand against the Mufti's activities it could only be done effectively by the British. In spite of valiant efforts by Yarblum in Paris, Nahum Goldman in Geneva and Epstein in Lebanon itself, to say nothing of Weizmann's own representations on the subject, nothing had been done. Leo Kohn summed up the position:

> M.[Martel] has never been a great friend of ours, but quite apart from that he does not see why he should inconvenience himself vis-à-vis the Arabs on account of the British. It is easy enough for him to make out a case to his superiors at the Q.d'O. that it would not be in the French interests in Syria and North Africa to continue pressure, and they will no doubt be more impressed by his arguments than by ours. In addition, it is perfectly obvious, in the light of all the information we have received about the far-flung organisation which the Mufti and his associates have built up in the Lebanon and Syria, that even if the French authorities were much keener than they actually are to impose an effective check on the Mufti's political activities, it will be very difficult for them to do so.[76]

Weizmann, therefore, had written to Ormsby-Gore, urging the Foreign Office to make "effective representations" to the Quai d'Orsay on the question of the removal of the Mufti from Lebanon, and enclosing a memorandum written by "a very prominent Moslem personality in the Lebanon" (almost certainly Ahdab) showing that "the ex-Mufti's presence in the Lebanon is regarded as a standing danger not merely

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[75]Epstein to Shertok, 15.3.38., S25/5580.

[76]Leo Kohn to N. Goldmann, 20.4.38. ISA 68/21. Joseph to Shertok, 11.1.38., describing meetings with officials at the Quai d'Orsay, S25/5476.

to the peace of Palestine but also to the peace and political consolidation of the neighbouring countries."[77]

The Zionists, however, did have one notable success in this period. Cordial relations existed between the Jewish Agency and Ahdab, a Sunni Moslem from Tripoli, who had once been one of the principal defenders of Pan-Arabism in the Lebanon. By the time he agreed to form a government under Eddé in January 1937 he had abandoned his pan-Arab views and was unmoved by the reaction of his fellow Moslems to his agreeing to serve under one of the staunchest Lebanese separatists. "Should the Arabs decide to unite," he was reputed to have said, "my presence in the Lebanese Sérail will not stop them."[78] By the beginning of 1938 he was being threatened by an increasingly vigorous opposition and needed cash if he was to hold on to his position. Like many others, he turned to the Jews. Shertok met him at the home of one of the Nashashibis, where the beleagured Ahdab described a plan of operations to be carried out against the Mufti's activities. One proposal was that the Jews help finance a newspaper which would wage a propaganda war against Haj Amin with the aim of having him removed from Beirut. Although Shertok doubted whether such an operation would be effective, and was again concerned that the Jews might leave themselves open to the charge of intervention in Lebanese internal affairs, he felt that it would be unwise to refuse to help the Prime Minister in his distress.[79] It was presumably at this time that Ahdab wrote the

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[77]Weizmann to Ormsby-Gore, 7.4.38., S25/5476.

[78]Quoted in Kamal Salibi The Modern History of Lebanon, p.183.

[79]Yoman Medini 1938, diary entries for 13.2.38. and 7.3.38., pp.37-38 and p.78.

memorandum that Weizmann sent to Ormsby-Gore.

When it appeared that the Palestine Government was going to veto the settlement of Hanita, on the Lebanese border, Shertok decided that the promise of police measures on the Lebanese side would strengthen the Agency's position vis-à-vis the Palestine administration, for the implementation of security measures would demonstrate to the government that the Lebanese Administration was prepared to enforce public security while the British were not. It would add weight to the Zionist case for settlement if they were able to show the British that the new settlement's position was guaranteed by a promise of good relations with the local Arabs, encouraged by the Lebanese authorities.[80]

This was the period, it must be remembered, when an all-out effort was being made to establish faits accomplis of Jewish settlement in the Galilee, based on the conviction that the boundaries of Jewish settlement would determine future political boundaries. From this point of view, Hanita's position, right on the border with Lebanon, was a particularly strategic one. An article in the Zionist Review described the political and strategic considerations which would make the inclusion of Galilee within the borders of the Jewish State "an act of prudent foresight."

> With Galilee in its borders, the Jewish State would have the Lebanon as its neighbour. The significance of this geographical fact cannot be overestimated. For the Lebanon needs friends, and its economy is largely dependent on the tourist traffic to which Palestinian Jews contribute no small share. This small Christian island surrounded by a Moslem sea would be the natural ally of the Jewish State, and not in any spirit of anti-Moslem exclusiveness. The common interests of Lebanon and the Jewish

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[80]Ibid. 10.3.38., p.78.

> State would bring into existence an economically progressive combination controlling the Mediterranean seaboard with which the surrounding Arab countries would find it well worth their while to come to terms.[81]

Shertok wrote to Ahdab on March 16, informing him of the intention to create the settlement of Hanita. He asked that police posts in the border area be reinforced, in order to prevent any possible attacks on the isolated outpost, and that it be made clear to the villagers on the Lebanese side that the settlement was being carried out "en parfaite coopération entre le Gouvernement de la Republique Libanaise et nous mêmes."[82] Ahdab's positive reply, fulfilling Shertok's requests, came two days later, but its significance should not be exaggerated. Ahdab did not remain in office much longer, and the main reason for Shertok's approach was the need to add weight to the Zionist argument with the British, who eventually withdrew their opposition to the settlement.

Ahdab remained faithful to the Zionists for some time, and despite pressure from the Moslems of Beirut to raise the Palestine question in the Lebanese parliament, he refused to comply. Due to visit Paris in May 1938 he promised to speak forcefully to officials at the Quai d'Orsay on the subject of more severe measures against the Palestinian exiles in Lebanon and advised Elias Sasson to threaten the Maronite leaders with a Jewish boycott of the Lebanese resorts.[83]

Relations with Ahdab's successor were no less cordial. When,

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[81]"The Future of Galilee," Professor Sanson Wright, Zionist Review, 2.6.38.

[82]Shertok to Kheir al-Din al Ahdab, 16.3.38. S25/5581.

[83]Sasson to Shertok, 5.5.38., S25/10571. See also Sasson report on meeting with Kheir al-Din on the Patria in Haifa harbour, on 18.5.38. and Epstein to Yarblum, 17.5.38., S25/5814.

in July 1938, a bomb was thrown at some Jews in Sidon, Sasson interviewed the new Prime Minister, the Emir Khaled Shehab. Sasson thanked him for the vigorous security measures on the Sidon-Ras al-Naqura road, including new police stations which would cost the Lebanese Government 25,000 Syrian pounds per year. There had been strong opposition from some members of the government who had argued that it was not their duty to guard the borders of Palestine, but the Prime Minister's arguments had prevailed. He had claimed that in building the new police stations, the Lebanese government was concerned about holiday-makers coming from Egypt and Palestine. Sasson also thanked the Emir Khaled for the prompt action he had taken after the bomb incident in Sidon:

> The Prime Minister added that it was up to us to make sure that the Lebanese press condemns the attempted attack and demands that the government seriously punish those responsible. I promised to take care of that matter.[84]

"THE MUFTI WILL NOT BE A GOOD ADVERTISEMENT FOR SUMMER VISITORS"

In the first months of 1938, the Zionist press began to rail seriously about the freedom of movement for the Mufti and the organization of the terrorists in Lebanon. Deploring the indifference of the administrations of Syria and Lebanon to the Mufti's movements, the Palestine Post noted, in an editorial almost certainly written by Leo Kohn, that the toleration of "a nest work of intrigue and worse, just because its effects are now being felt only over the frontier, is a sorry attitude."

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[84]Sasson to Shertok, 21.7.38., Z4/17024B.

> It is likely to lose for them the good will of a people by no means negligible and by no means impotent. The Jews are willing to cooperate with their neighbours in reviving this part of the world and increasing its rate of progress. This presupposes friendly understanding on the part of the governments of our neighbouring lands. The lack of such understanding will not thwart Jewish development, but it will jeapordize the advantages which Syria and Lebanon could undoubtedly enjoy from the extension of their goodwill to this country.[85]

Towards the end of April the same newspaper declared that

> we are on general principles opposed to boycott measures, whether they be directed against commerce or tourist trade, and we should deeply regret it if the resentment which is being widely felt in Palestine against the Lebanon and Syria being used as a centre of operations against the peace of the country were to lead to a boycott of Syrian and Lebanese goods or to a cancelling of holidays trips to the north.[86]

These two editorials in the Palestine Post were entitled, in chronological order, "A word to our Neighbours" and "Another word to our Neighbours." By the beginning of May, they, and similar articles in the Hebrew press, had evoked a reaction. On the 5th and 6th of May, the newspaper Beirut published published articles under the headline "The Jews Threaten us with boycott," in answer to the veiled threats of the Palestine Post and the attacks of the pro-Zionist La Syrie against the Arabs of Lebanon and Syria for their undue interest in the Palestine troubles. The Beirut articles, probably written by a Palestinian exile, attempted to prove that the Jews were not buying anything from Lebanon and Syria, and that the holiday-makers from Palestine were largely Arabs. Elias Sasson felt that all this required a vigorous reaction from the Agency, and submitted a list

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[85]Palestine Post, 4.4.38.

[86]Palestine Post, 21.4.38.

of proposals to Shertok. The first proposal, to publish articles in the Lebanese press discussing Lebanese freedom to preserve its neutrality over the Palestine conflict, Sasson carried out without awaiting permission from Jerusalem, for he was an old hand at the insertion of suitable material in the Arab press. His other proposals, all connected to the boycott issue, included the sending of a Jewish delegation to see Eddé, the Maronite Patriarch and the heads of the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and to demand the cessation of the vicious anti-Zionist propaganda on pain of boycott, and the mobilization of the friendly press in Paris, London and Geneva to attack the French, Lebanese and Syrian governments for their toleration of the Mufti's activities.[87] The press war got so fierce that even Eddé complained. He told Epstein that the Jewish Agency should not take the attacks of the Lebanese papers at face value, since they were simply paid to do so by his Moslem enemies, and that their opinions were not those of the majority of the people of Lebanon.[88]

By the end of May, another leader in the Palestine Post, this time bluntly entitled "Plain Speaking," declared:

> It is not at all likely that...Jews, who have been in the past an important element among the summer tourists in the Lebanon, will visit that country while it harbours Haj Amin. Even Arabs are chary of proceeding to a country which permits the chief agent of terrorism and intimidation to be free to continue his activities.[89]

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[87]Sasson to Shertok, 6.5.38., S25/10571.

[88]Epstein interview with Eddé during visit to Lebanon, 23-27.5.38., S25/5570.

[89]Palestine Post, 30.5.38. See also HaAretz, 13.5 and 25.5.38. HaOlam, 2.6.38. HaBoger, 7.6.38. Gilyonot, June 1938.

Other efforts were made to get across to the Lebanese the seriousness of Jewish intentions to carry out the boycott threat unless there was an improvement in the security situation. Epstein asked Dr. M. Stern, of the Association of Jewish Doctors in Palestine, due to send a delegation to the forthcoming medical congress in Beirut, to visit the French High Commission and the Lebanese President and present the greetings of the Jewish Doctors of Palestine. They were to say, Epstein suggested, that Jewish Doctors saw Lebanon as a pleasant health resort and advised their patients to visit there for rest and recuperation during the hot summer months in Palestine. This year, however, the doctors feared that their advice and recommendations would not be accepted willingly by the Jewish public which was angry with the vicious anti-Zionist propaganda being waged in the Lebanon:

> It is very important to stress all this [Epstein wrote], and at every available opportunity when in contact with the French administration and especially with local government. It is also desirable that your delegation get in touch with the "Organization for the Advancement of Tourism in Lebanon." The leaders of this organization are important people and what you say will doubtless have an appropriate political echo.[90]

Despite an impressive marshalling of resources[91] to show the Lebanese that they meant business, the threat to boycott tourism and trade seems to have had little tangible effect. The Zionists'

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[90]Epstein to Dr. M. Stern (n.d.),S25/5580 and Epstein to Y. Farhi, 29.4.38., S25/5814.

[91]The Political Department published a booklet in Arabic dealing with the economic relations between Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, in particular stressing the contribution of the Jews of Palestine to the Lebanese tourist industry. Signed "Lebanese researcher," about 1,000 copies of the booklet were distributed in Lebanon and Syria. Sasson to Shertok, 30.6.38., S25/3109.

friends in Lebanon were as concerned as they were themselves by the Mufti's activities, but there was a strictly defined limit to what the Lebanese could actually do.

By September 1938, Epstein was writing gloomily from Beirut that the Lebanese authorities were drawing nearer to the "Arab idea" than previously. The tourist industry had not been damaged by the quasi-boycott of Palestine Jewry and there had been an influx of tourists from Iraq and Egypt, giving Lebanon its best summer season for several years:[92]

> This fact is seen by many people here as proof that Lebanon should not exasperate the Arabs by maintaining an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Jews.[93]

In a way, the much discussed boycott misfired, or rather backfired, on the Jews. It gave useful fuel to the Palestinian and pan-Arab propagandists to show the negative attitude of the Jews towards the Lebanon. This, as well as the weakness of the British in suppressing the revolt, and the relative success of the rebels, pushed Lebanese opinion, including the Christians, more towards Arabism than they had been previously.[94] If the security position on the northern frontier improved towards the end of 1938, it was due far more to British determination finally to crush the revolt than it was to the intense Zionist activity directed towards the Lebanese and the French.

The story of the Jewish Agency's contacts with the Lebanese in this period is an instructive one, for despite the failure to reach

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[92]Epstein, "Letter from Beirut," 11.9.38., S25/17024B.

[93]Epstein, "Letter from Beirut," 18.9.38., Ibid.

[94]Epstein, "Letter from Beirut," 14.10.38., Ibid.

an actual alliance, the depth and extent of the contacts between them was on a far greater scale than with any other of the countries surrounding Palestine. The ideological basis for Maronite friendship with the Zionists promised, at least potentially, a far more stable ally than the ambitious and dishonest Abdullah, but in this case too, the motivation of both parties was both ideological and practical, and often practical in the basest sense.[95]

Of Jews and Maronites, one Zionist expert wrote, in 1942, that

> there are some analogies in the national life of the two peoples which perhaps have attracted the attention of Maronite leaders. In this case it may be possible that there is something more at the bottom of the friendly words which we have heard, and that in the future, these two minorities will still have to say and to give something to each other.[96]

The contacts made and nurtured in the 1930's were to bear fruit in 1946, when a secret agreement was reported to have been made between Zionists and Maronites, and in 1947, when a Maronite source submitted a memorandum to the United Nations Organization supporting the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine.

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[95]Ahdab was still pestering the Jewish Agency for money in 1940. See Ahdab to Shertok, 16.4.40. and 10.5.40., S25/3045. Also Shertok to Yarblum: "I continue to get letters from the same man demanding money. I would ask you to tell him, first of all, that its better not to contact me directly, but should do so via you, and secondly, that the sum I gave him when I was in Europe was the last one and I can't give him any more. Quite simply, the till is empty." 22.5.40., S25/3045.

[96]Dr. E. Meir, The Maronites, loc.cit.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## "MY ENEMY'S ENEMY IS MY FRIEND" (II)
## ZIONISTS, TURKS AND DRUZE

### ZIONISM AND THE "NEW" TURKEY

Kemalist Turkey was regularly lauded by European observers for its attempts at modernization and "europeanization." Ataturk's lessons for illiterate peasants and the unprecedented emancipation of women in an Islamic country were seen as symbols of the unflagging effort to drag the country from the twilight of Ottoman stagnation into the bright new dawn of enlightenment and progress. The Palestine Post struck a characteristic note:

> For an admirer of nationalism, Turkey of today must figure as the model example of how political emancipation should be achieved. Apart from its military inception....the almost effortless, self-contained and markedly unrepressive onward sweep of reform from Mediaevalism to Westernization is in pleasant contrast to the highly dramatised, loudly proclaimed and intolerant resuscitations which have been witnessed in post-war Europe. So too, is the contrast between the taciturn Anatolian Staff officer who defied the armies of Europe and then proceeded to help himself to as much as he wanted of the European culture which might restore the fallen strength of his own country, and the bewildering and often exasperating pronouncements of less discreet dictators.[1]

The attitude of Zionists to Turkey was composed of several

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[1]Palestine Post, 4.10.36. Review of The Making of Modern Turkey by Sir Harry Luke.

separate but related factors. It was of considerable importance to use the achievements of the "new," "national" Turkey in order to reject, by contrast and default, the idealization of an Ottoman "paradise" in Palestine before the imposition of the Zionist "yoke." For many Zionists the Ottoman Empire conjured up memories of administrative corruption, arbitrary justice and the "levantinism," which, in an impressionistic sense, stood in sharp antithesis to the values and aspirations of Zionist-Socialist constructiveness.[2] The "new" Turkey, however, was something quite different from its imperial predecessor:

> Palestine is not the only country in the Near East to have forged ahead with spectacular rapidity. Turkey has also advanced remarkably and to a point that would have been inconceivable to the pre-war Ottoman. In the few short years since it discarded the palsied heritage of the later Sultans, it has emerged in almost every sphere as a model of progress for its neighbours.[3]

The Zionist press played at length on the common traits of Jewish Palestine and the "new"Turkey. The Palestine Review assessed

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[2]For an evocation of this atmosphere see Louis Lipsky, Zionism and Arab Fears, lecture delivered to the Zionist forum, Zionist Organization of America education pamphlet, 1937, quoted above, Chapter two, p.60 . See also the Jewish Agency memoranda prepared for the Peel Commission. "The Arabs under the Turks" by S. Hareli, S25/10502 and "Palestine and the Arabs, 1516-1908," by S. Hareli. S25/10489.

[3]Palestine Review, 28.1.1938, and Ibid. 22.4.1938, "....the preeminence of Turkey in this quarter of the Globe has long been an established fact, and she is gaining strength every day. Her policy in Near Eastern affairs has been to combine neighbourly relations with vigilance....every attempt should be made to establish closer relations between the Jews of Palestine and Turkey. Turkey's policy is far-sighted, and we have no reason to suppose that it would not welcome the creation of actively cordial relations between itself and another peaceful and progressive people in its neighbourhood."

a new book about Turkey, Allah Dethroned by Lilo Links:

> The Palestinian reader will be struck by the great similarity in the mental make-up of the modern Turk and of the Palestinian Jews. He is no longer the easy-going Osmanli, sitting in his bazaar and smoking his nargileh. We find in him the same optimism, the same driving energy, the same concentration of forces, mental and physical, for the building up of a homeland and of a great future. 'When you will return here next year, you will see.....'Doesn't this sound Palestinian? And the Governor of Izmir, the city of the Fair, full of ideas and schemes, certainly reminds us somewhat of Tel Aviv's late Mayor, Dizengoff. The proud young engineer in charge of the new textile combine, the doctor in the trachoma village, they are all old friends of ours.[4]

Turkey was seen then, as the very incarnation of enlightened progress: Davar described it as "a country of dynamic social and political forces [which] deserves the rapt attention of every country in the Middle East."[5] The emptiness of Arab nationalism was unfavourably contrasted with Turkish achievement. The veteran Dr. Jacob Thon wrote:

> The natural ultimate aim of the Arab national movement is the uniting of all the Arab countries, the realization of which depends on external factors. Only the economic and cultural conditions of these countries and their relations to each other can give substance to this idea and without them all political concessions are vain. The builders of the New Turkey, which has become so inspiring an example to the East, recognised this and built up their country accordingly. Characteristic of the Turkish Renaissance is the concentration of all energies on the creation of a new and self-supporting

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[4]Palestine Review, 18.6.37.

[5]Davar, 23.5.36, Dr. A. Bonne, "Travel Notes from Turkey."

> economic system, and on the raising of their cultural standards to those of the leading European nations.[6]

When the Palestine disturbances began in April 1936 there was little political contact between the Zionists and Turkey and relations were based almost solely on trade. Turkish participation in the Levant Fair was felt to be particularly impressive, and businessmen were urged to display their products at the forthcoming Izmir Fair.[7] There was, however, no Palestine Pavilion at the Izmir Fair held in August 1937, and this was felt to be regrettable both politically and commercially in the light of the serious inbalance in Palestine-Turkish trade (600-700 per cent in Turkey's favour). "Turkey," commented the Palestine Review:

> is undergoing rapid modernization on the basis of a robust nationalism. Its attitude to the Palestine Mandate.....is to desire to have the Mandate implemented fully and completely. There is no reason, political or sentimental, to neglect any opportunity of cultivating closer commercial contact with Turkey.[8]

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[6]Palestine Post, 14.9.36. See also Thon's 1938 memo. "A New Epoch in the Near East," written especially for Weizmann. Thon wrote that "the widest political freedom of a state or nation is practically useless unless accompanied by an adequate cultural and economic development. That truism was recognized by the builders of the New Turkey, who preferred to concentrate all their forces on internal progress rather than on external splendour, which they renounced. The New Turkey has undergone a profound revolution such as no other nation, except, perhaps Russia, has experienced, has become an inspiring example to other eastern countries as has been recently proved by Iran. The guiding characteristic in the Turkish revolutionary renaissance is the concentration of all its energies on the creation of a new and self-supporting economic life and on the attainment of the cultural stage of the leading European nations." (S25/3003) Epstein suggested that the memo he sent to the Turkish and Iranian consuls in Jerusalem, as well as to English and French supporters of Zionism. Epstein to Shertok, 28.2.38, S25/3003.

[7]HaAretz, 3.6.1936. The Turkish pavilion at the Levant Fair was "built in the most modern European style, without a trace of Oriental exoticism," according to HaOlam, 14.5.1936.

[8]Palestine Review, 30.4.1937.

There was, however, a Palestine Pavilion at the 1938 Izmir Fair, where it was cordially received by the Turkish authorities. The Zionist Review wrote that

> the big success of the Palestine Pavilion at the recent international fair at Izmir brings to the foreground the question of the relations between Palestine and Turkey. Turkey, like the Jews in Palestine, is attempting to fuse the Orient with the Occident. The same task of economic development as the basis for better living faces both the Turkish and the Jewish peoples. The Jews, therefore, naturally look with keen interest at Turkey's development since the war, and the decision of the Foreign Trade Institute of Palestine to exhibit at Izmir was the expression of a desire to cement the economic bonds between the two countries.[9]

A short time later another journal gave a classic expression of Zionist interest in Turkey:

> There is probably no other country (except Great Britain) which so deserves the sympathetic attention of the Jews in Palestine, than the New Turkey. In addition to the many political and economic interests which the two countries have in common in the Near East, there is between both nations a great similarity in their approach to national problems. Both have introduced the methods of western civilization in order to rebuild their old homes situated on the fringe of the East, and to bring about a renaissance of their old cultures. The dynamic spirit applied in both cases is very similar and is something new in the still slumbering Orient. The most striking expression of this new spirit is the modernization of the economic life of these countries.[10]

Peaceful and progressive as the "rejuvenated" Turks may have been, they were prepared to use their growing military power against

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[9]Zionist Review, 6.10.1938, Cf. Davar, 6.9.38 and Palestine Review, 9.9.38.

[10]Palestine Review, 28.10.38. Review of Redressement Économique et Industrialisation de la Nouvelle Turquie by O. Conker & E. Witmeur. Cf. Palestine Post, 5.9.38.

the Syrians over the Alexandretta issue, and while the Zionist press did not hesitate to wield the threat of Turkish military action to chastise intransigent pan-Arabism,[11] fears were also expressed that Turkey might not always remain inimical to the Arab countries of the Near East, and that her neutrality on the Palestine question could well give way under Arab pressure. Shertok privately had misgivings about the "progressive" character of the "new" Turkey,[12] and, in September 1937, depressed by the combined forces of the Arab delegations at the League of Nations, and the absence of any official Jewish representatives, he confided pessimistically to his diary that Turkey was likely to give in to pressure from the increasing number of Near Eastern states represented in Geneva and abandon her erstwhile neutrality.[13]

The Jewish Agency was well aware of the potential complications involved in friendship with Turkey, because of what the Syrians saw as Turkish "imperialist" ambitions and Shertok had, therefore, in the summer of 1936, opposed a suggestion emanating from a friend of Weizmann's, a Middle East expert, that the Turkish leader be approached to influence the Arabs to come to an agreement with the Zionists.[14] The Agency did, indeed, find itself in a difficult

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[11]HaBoqer, 7.2.37 and Palestine Post, 12.1.37.

[12]He described Ataturk as a "dictator" and Turkey as a "totalitarian" state. M. Sharett Yoman Medini 1937, 16.6.37 and 5.11.37, p.200 and p.400.

[13]Yoman Medini 1937, op.cit. 16.9.37, p.213.

[14]Mapai Political Committee, 21.6.36. See also Ben-Gurion's Diary, 11.6.36: "According to the expert, Kemal wants England's friendship because he's afraid of the Italians, and he has much influence in the Arab world. It will cost us £3-4,000. Chaim asked if I thought it was worth it. In my opinion we must try all ways to stop or weaken the opposition of the Arab world to us. BB201/1/34.

situation when, after cordial negotiations with the Syrian National Bloc, the Turks asked for Jewish help in influencing the English press over the Alexandretta issue, after an anti-Turkish article had appeared in the Manchester Guiardian.[15]

In March 1937, the Jewish Agency's man in Cairo, Nahum Vilensky, of the Agence d'Orient, was sent to Turkey. The visit had an unofficial character, and, travelling as a journalist, Vilensky succeeded in making contact with a number of important and influential people, including the Turkish Foreign Minister.[16]

Until late 1938, though Zionist contacts with the Turks were of little or no immediate practical value. The contacts that did take place were confined to cautious forays into what was recognised as a sensitive field, but they were exploited to maximum effect.

In London to take advantage of the presence of the Oriental guests at the Coronation festivities in May 1937, Eliahu Epstein met, among many others, the head of the Turkish Legation in Britain.[17] Mr. Zaki complained to Epstein that the Jews had not been sufficiently active on the Alexandretta question; the world press

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[15]Zionist Smaller Actions Committee, 11.2.37. Yoman Medini 1937, pp.19-20. JAE, 31.1.37. "Recently the Turks in London have tried to get political help from us over the Alexandretta question. Professor Namier and Mr. Lourie have had several meetings with representatives of the Turkish Legation in London. We must be extremely careful on this question and we must not turn the Syrians against us creating the impression that we are working against them."

[16]Mapai Party Centre, 1.3.37, Cf. Joseph's Diary, 2.3.37. S25/1511. On his return from Turkey, Vilensky accompanied Ben-Tsvi on a visit to the Turkish Consul in Jerusalem. The consul, Ben-Tsvi reported, was neutral, and claimed that Turkey saw the Palestine problem as an internal British affair. Ben-Tsvi Diary, 9.3.37, BB901/37.

[17]E. Epstein. Report of a Meeting with the Head of the Turkish Legation, London, 8.5.37. Secret. S25/5576.

was at their service and they had done nothing. God help the Jews if they were left at the mercy of the Arabs who were "religious fanatics and national chauvinists." The Arabs would never accept the Zionist enterprise and would fight it as long as they were able. Epstein was given his chance to do his much-practiced pièce de résistance when he was asked for his opinion on the pan-Arab movement. He described the present situation in Iraq, Syria and Egypt, and explained the pan-Arab aspirations of leaders like Shakib Arslan, the Mufti and Nuri Said. He recalled how Haj Amin had sent an anti-Turkish memorandum to the League of Nations on the Alexandretta question and had attacked Turkey on other occasions and how Shakib Arslan had made a bitterely anti-Turkish statement to the Royal Commission. Not only the Iraqis, but also the Syrians would be able to live in peace with Turkey, Epstein argued, were it not for the fact that the Istiqlalists and the Mufti would oppose any agreement. Epstein told Zaki about the Mufti's delegation in London which was carrying out pan-Arab and pan-Islamic propaganda and exploiting the Alexandretta issue to incite Muslims and Arabs who'd come to the Coronation. The Turks, he continued, certainly knew all this better than the Jews and no doubt correctly assessed the threat to their interests from the Arabs of Palestine.

> Zaki didn't answer, but I could see I'd made an impression on him, and a few moments later he asked me who the members of the [Mufti's] delegation were and how long they'd been in London. I gave him details and mentioned that many important Englishmen, and perhaps many friends of Turkey were helping, unconsciously, of course, the work of the delegation which was damaging Turkish as well as Jewish interests.

Epstein was naturally concerned to deny the charge that the Jewish Agency was in any way anti-Turkish and pointed out that the Jews had supported the Turkish minority in Alexandretta and that a

number of pro-Turkish articles had appeared in the Zionist press.[18] He thought that Revisionist emissaries[19] who had talked to the Turks had described the Zionist Organization as being pro-Arab and did his best to correct this impression, not by compliments to Turkey, but, characteristically,

> by a description of our approach and our attitude to the questions of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism and to the struggle of the minorities in Arab countries for their survival and development.

After the Zionist Congress in August and the session of the League of Nations in September 1937, when Zionist observers had so uncomfortably noted the growing cohorts of Eastern states arraigned against them, it was decided that a representative of the JAE, Richard Lichtheim, (the veteran German Zionist who knew Turkey from his work there before and during the World War) be sent to Turkey "to hold political conversations with Turkish officials on the possibilities of mutual understanding between their state and the Jewish enterprise in Palestine."[20]

Turkey's role in the League of Nations was felt to be of particular importance and Zionist appreciation of her neutral stand on the Palestine question[21] was coupled with the fear that neutrality

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[18]See, e.g., Davar, 17.12.36, M. Assaf, "France between Syria and Turkey." Haboger, 7.2.37, Sh. Ettinger, "Turkey & the Arab Countries." Davar, 10.3.37, M. Assaf, "In the New Turkey."

[19]The Revisionists (New Zionist Organization), had the irritating habit of sending representatives to talk to people with whom the Jewish Agency was interested in making contact, much to their annoyance, whether they belonged to Jabotinsky's Zionist Organization or to a different one.

[20]Shertok to JAE, 2.2.38, Z4/10318 (II).

[21]Significantly, it was considered a measure of Turkey's reservations about pan-Arabism that the Emir Abdullah had been so cordially received in Ankara on his way back from the Coronation festivities in London.

was only a short step from hostility. One of the results of Lichtheim's mission was an assurance that if the Palestine question came up at the League of Nations, Turkey would remain neutral.[22]

Lichtheim was in Turkey for nearly six weeks, and on his return to Palestine presented a particularly lucid report which was widely distributed amongst supporters of Zionism in London.[23] Although the Turks had no intention, Lichtheim reported, of "coming into the open with any public declaration in our favour," they were firmly opposed to the creation of an Arab state in Palestine which would give fresh impetus to pan-Arab propaganda and

> they also hope that a modern state, that is to say a Jewish State in Palestine, will have a steadying influence on the surrounding unsettled Arab states which might learn from the Jews that the way of progress and peaceful work is preferable to their present attitude of economic idleness coupled with political intrigues and religious fanaticism.[24]

Lichtheim had observed from his talks in Turkey that her political orientation was now definitely pro-British and that she would follow Britain on the Palestine question. "The Turks have," he continued,

> much sympathy and understanding for the progressive, European and modern character of our movement and work. I have done my utmost to underline this aspect of Zionism because modern Turkey, and, particularly, Kemal Ataturk, believe in the victory of western civilization over a backward and mediaeval Orient.[25]

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[22]JAE, 20.4.38.

[23]Lourie to Lichtheim, 19.4.38. A/56/22 (Lichtheim papers) A copy of the report was sent also to Herbert Sidebotham "as it seems to constitute a definite step forward towards the realization of the theory of Turco-British-Jewish relations of which he has so long been a champion."

[24]"Report on My Journey to Turkey, February-March 1938." R. Lichtheim, 11.4.38. A/56/22.

[25]Ibid.

For the Jewish Agency, Iran played a similar role to Turkey vis à vis the pan-Arab threat[26] and the two states were often coupled together in this respect, especially when the League of Nations was discussed.[27] As well as their common opposition to aggressive Arabism these two countries were seen as sharing, along with Jewish Palestine, the characteristics of a constructive national revival,"based on a robust nationalism," and they were praised in similar accents by Zionist commentators.[28] More significantly, the Zionists used the examples of Turkey and Iran as

> non-Arab Oriental States...in whose friendship.... Great Britain should be interested, as also the sympathy of the non-Arab or non-Moslem communities within the Arab States.[29]

Shertok told Chief Secretary Hall that

> the interest of Great Britain lay in the direction of being friends with all Oriental States as separate states, and not of trying to establish the ascendancy of the Arab race as such.[30]

Eliahu Epstein regularly met the Turkish and Iranian Consuls in Jerusalem and, indeed, would often visit them on the same day. His conversations with the heads of the legations of thos countries in London in May 1937 were almost interchangeable.[31]

What contact there was with the Turks and Iranians was largely

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[26]See E.G., Epstein to Shertok, 27.1.1935, S25/10162.

[27]HaAretz, 22.9.37.

[28]Moznaim Vol. 2, 1937, Dr. Y.Fischel, "The New Iran." For regular reports on Iran see also Yalqut HaMizrah HaTikhon for this period and E. Epstein, Talk on Palestine Radio, "Iran's Progress." (n.d.) [1940] S25/787.

[29]Interview between Shertok and Chief Secretary Hall, 13.5.37, WA.

[30]Ibid.

[31]See interview between Epstein and the head of the Iranian legation in London, 7.5.37, S25/5576. Misgivings about the reactionary and oppressive nature of the Shah's rule were not allowed to influence the Political Department's assessment of the importance of contacts with the country, and Epstein vigorously rejected complaints that a supplement on Iran appearing in the Palestine and Middle East Economic Magazine had bypassed the question of the character of its regime. Epstein to Joseph, 9.5.39, S25/10381.

prophylactic in purpose. While it would be reckless to discern in Epstein's work a new departure in Zionist diplomacy -- a few rather desultory conversations at Consular level can hardly be described as feverish diplomatic activity -- and increased interest in these countries is nevertheless quite apparent, and is indicative of the Zionists' growing sense of isolation in an hostile environment and the need for non-Arab allies in the Middle East.

The "Asiatic" (or Saadabad) Pact of July 1937, composed of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq, was seen as a salubrious counterweight to the idea of an Arab federation and was lauded by the Zionist press.[32] When the Turkish Foreign Minister visited Cairo in an attempt to persuade the Egyptians to join the alliance, HaAretz warmly priased the "new" Turkey for its lack of irredentist designs on the former territories of the Ottoman Empire and Ataturk for his success in turning an "old fashioned and religion-riddled oriental country into a secular European state."[33]

Generally there was an increasing awareness of Turkey's importance in international affairs and it was Dr. Ari Ankorion, Davar's London correspondent and in touch with the political mood in the metropolis, who pointed out, at the beginning of 1938, that it was time the Zionist movement took a fresh look at Turkey.[34] Turkey was

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[32]Palestine Post, 1.4.37.

[33]HaAretz, 11.4.38. During the Turkish Minister's visit to Egypt Vilensky tried to arrange a meeting between him and Shertok but to no avail. Aras declared, however, that he was prepared to meet Shertok in Ankara, Geneva or London. "I proposed the meeting," Vilensky reported, "in an apparently spontaneous manner, and in such a way as not to damage the prestige of the Agency. You know how careful I am on questions of this kind where the Agency is concerned." Vilensky to Shertok, Secret, 13.4.38, S25/281.

[34]Davar, 2,3.2.38, A. Ankorion, "Turkey and our Interests."

on good terms with Russia, Greece, France, and most important of all, with Great Britain, and occupied a key position in the Mediterranean at a time when the main problem in international relations was not whether war would break out, but when. Ankorion reported that Herbert Sidebotham, fervent supporter of Zionism, was waging a vigorous campaign in the Sunday Times for a British agreement with Turkey, and for Britain to abandon her worthless friendship with the Arabs and support an agreement between Turkey, Greece and Jewish Palestine.[35] On the eve of the London conference Ankorion returned to the same theme of an alliance between Jewish Palestine, Turkey, Christian Lebanon and possibly Egypt, in the Mapai journal HaPoel HaTzair.[36] The influential orientalist Michael Assaf felt that the lesson of Alexandretta had dashed the hopes of pan-Arabism for ever and given Turkey a new standing in the East. No longer the "sick man of Europe," Kemalist Turkey had proved itself a valuable and dependable ally, and the struggle being waged in London between the partisans of Lawrence and Bell and the proponents of alliance with Turkey was an instructive lesson for the Zionists. The danger was, Assaf warned in Davar, that Britain might find a way of co-existing with both the Turks and the Arabs, with concessions to the latter at Jewish expense not affecting British friendship with Turkey.[37]

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[35]See note 23 above.

[36]HaPoel HaTzair, 30.12.38, A. Ankorion, "The Talks and Roads to Agreement." See also his article "With the end of the Talks," Davar, 12.3.39. Here Ankorion argued the need for immediate activity in Turkey and Iran "lest we remain without friends in the Near East."

[37]Davar, 24.6.38, M. Assaf, "England between the Arabs & Turkey" and Davar, 11.7.38, M. Assaf, "With the Franco-Turkish Agreement." See also Palestine Post, 1.2.39., "Turks & Arabs" (reprinted from English Palestine) HaBoger, 24.6.38, H. Rosenblum, "The Turks Return to the Sanjaq," and HaAretz, 24.7.38, (Leading article) "The Success of Kemalist Turkey."

It was in this atmosphere, towards the end of 1938, that Weizmann decided to try and use Jewish influence to attach Turkey, flooded with cheap German goods, secret agents and propaganda, to Britain and France.[38] Weizmann had been in contact with a Dr. Ginsberg, Ataturk's dentist, and other influential Jews in Turkey. "Ataturk," according to Ginsberg, "wanted to make his mark in the world," but disliked having to rely on loans from governments, which were essentially political loans; he felt that Turkey had grown beyond that stage. There was great need, on the other hand, for money for development purposes, and the only people who could do it were the Jews. Ginsberg suggested that a consortium of bankers should visit Turkey and see what could be done. Also, if the Jews wanted to exert decisive influence on the Arab world, "the gateway was through Turkey."[39] Weizmann seems to have been under some pressure from influential Turkish Jews to act with regard to the loan, and although

> the long tradition of friendship between the Jews and Turkey would make the establishment of cooperation between the two peoples at the present juncture doubly valuable,[40]

he nevertheless urged caution in the light of the threat of war in Europe. In spite, however, of the complicated international situation, Weizmann went ahead with plans for his journey to Turkey. On October 13, following the Munich settlement, he met MacDonald.

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[38]C. Weizmann, Trial and Error, London 1949, pp.459-461 and N. Rose, The Gentile Zionists, London, 1973, pp.111-114.

[39]Weizmann and Ginsberg interview, 28.6.38, WA.

[40]Weizmann to Professor Philip Schwarz, 7.9.38, WA.

"Despite everything," he told the Colonial Secretary

> we were the people who could help in saving them out of this mess. It had happened before in history that a mouse had saved a lion. What this country had lost through Czechoslovakia it would still be possible to save, but the next trench was the Bosphorous.[41]

At a time, though, when the British were engaged in a process of withdrawal from their committments to the Zionists, they remained lukewarm towards Weizman's initiative, although, "no doubt if something of substance would have emerged from the visit they would not have withheld their support."[42]

In Palestine reactions were mixed to Weizmann's idea. Shertok was immediately sceptical:

> he wasn't sure at all whether Turkey needed a loan, and if she did need it, whether she needs our help, and if she needs our help, whether we can give it.[43]

Also Ataturk was ill, and a meeting with him was unlikely. Ussishkin saw no benefit in Weizmann's journey. The Jews couldn't buy Turkish policy by a loan and if Britain knew that she could buy Turkish sympathy she could do it easily alone. Ruppin agreed and felt that the journey to Turkey would only strengthen Arab opposition. Ben-Tsvi, on the other hand, thought that Turkey was "the only power that could help us now." Shertok finally put aside his doubts and declared his support for Weizmann's journey as "<u>it shows we have a horizon on the East!</u>" (my emphasis)[44]

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[41]Weizmann and MacDonald interview, 13.10.38, WA.

[42]Rose, op.cit., p.112.

[43]JAE, 21.10.38.

[44]Ibid.

The Political Committee of Mapai, meeting on October 26, came up with equally varied responses to the proposal. Eliahu Golomb, the éminence grise of the Hagana, thought the initiative "extremely important" and if it succeeded it would create an Anglo-Turkish front which would halt Hitler's expansion into southern Europe and bring closer the prospect of an Arab-Jewish agreement. Pinhas Lubianker (Lavon) believed it was an "illusion" to think that the Zionists could return Turkey to England. David HaCohen vigorously opposed sending Weizmann to Ankara and was also concerned about the possible repercussions of friendship with Turkey on future relations with the Arabs. Avraham Katznelson saw the journey as "a provocation to the Arab world."[45]

Shertok pointed out the conflict between the fabian methods of the Political Department and Weizmann's impetuous initiative which could well lead to financial loss and damage to the Jewish Agency's prestige. Weizmann, he felt, still had an "heroic, Faysalist conception," but not every period was heroic. Shorn of the grandiloquent rhetoric with which it was so often envelopped, Zionist interest in Turkey was that

> Turkey has no interest in supporting pan-Arabism. On the contrary she wants the separation of the Arab countries and to help other forces in the East.[46]

Shertok was pessimistic about the chances for Weizmann's visit. He recalled how Turkish Foreign Minister Rustu Aras had avoided

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[45]Mapai Political Committee, 26.10.38.

[46]Ibid.

meeting Weizmann the previous year in Geneva[47] and pointed to the possibility that Weizmann could go to Turkey and simply be ignored by the government there or that he would be interviewed but that nothing would come of it and there'd be widespread and adverse publicity.

Nevertheless, plans for the journey went ahead. Shertok engaged a teacher to help him brush up his rusty Turkish and arrangements were made in an atmosphere of tense expectation.

The journey turned out, however, to be something of a fiasco. Dr. Ginsberg, Shertok reported, although an excellent dental surgeon, was something of an "adventurer," a kind of Turkish "Court Jew," and Professor Schwartz, another of Weizmann's contacts, although a Zionist, knew very little of Palestine and was "extremely naive" in political matters.[48] Ginsberg had somehow g[illegible] the Turks the idea that the Jews were prepared to loan them £50 million. Weizmann wrote later that the Turks had "the naive impression that I was in control of vast fortunes and was merely putting them off,"[49] but Shertok's account of the troubles they encountered shows that half the problem at least was these well-intentioned but naive intermediaries, the like of whom we are more accustommed to meeting in the company of Kalvarisky and Lord Samuel than with the President of the World Zionist Organisation and the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency.

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[47]M. Sharett. Yoman Medini 1937, p.313, 16.9.37.

[48]JAE, 6.12.38

[49]Weizmann, op.cit., p.461.

> Professor Schwartz travelled with us from London to Constantinople....When we met Ginsberg it transpired that he'd told the Turks that we were prepared to lend them £50 million. An argument began between Schwartz and Ginsberg as to whether this was justified. Dr. Weizmann said immediately that he couldn't talk at all according to that formula and that he was going back to London. For two whole days we discussed how to present matters to the Turks and I was astonished at Weizmann's patience. From Constantinople we went to Ankara (and Dr. Ginsberg, as is his habit, took his instruments with him).[50]

Weizmann met the Prime Minister, Celal Bayar, three times. During the first meeting the conversation turned within a vicious circle. The Turks had been prepared to hear suggestions from the Jews and the Jews to hear proposals from the Turks. Neither side in fact had any concrete ideas. At the second and third meetings the Turkish Prime Minister put his cards on the table and asked Weizmann for hard cash for specific investments. Weizmann, according to Shertok, acted with extreme caution. He said that he'd only come for an exploratory visit but would nevertheless do his best. Summing up, Shertok told the JAE that Turkey's hopes had been exaggerated and that the Jews had disappointed them. If Britain did however, decide to grant Turkey a loan, it would be seen as being thanks to the Jews.[51]

The visit did not remain a secret. A somewhat self-contradictory leader in HaAretz pointed out that the visit was of no substance, especially in the light of the recent death of the country's

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[50]JAE, 6.12.38.

[51]Ibid.

creator.[52] Turkey's concentration on internal affairs, the article continued, was often seen as a sign of weakness. Even the smallest and weakest states in the area poked their noses into the affairs of other countries, but Turkey concentrated on internal construction. Precisely because of this Turkey was now the most important political force in the Near East.[53]

Nothing came immediately of Weizmann's visit, although shortly after his return to London he was able to inform Ginsberg that he had managed to interest two important bankers in sending representatives to Turkey to examine the possibilities of a loan.[54] Ginsberg was in London in February and together with Weizmann visited Vansittart at the Foreign Office. The enthusiastic Turkish Jew apparently made an impression on the English by saying that they'd neglected Turkey and abandonned it to German influence.[55]

With the victory of the pan-Arab school of British Middle Eastern policy at the London conference, Weizmann increasingly articulated the Zionist version of a Middle Eastern strategy for Britain. At the conference he had explained the theory of the "outer circle" of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan which was, in his opinion, far more important than the "inner circle" of Syria-Iraq-Saudia Arabia, upon which

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[52]Ataturk's death on 10.11.38 was the subject of a eulogistic obituary in HaAretz, 14.11.38. He was "a military genius and a great statesman, and although an unsentimental dictator, was devoted to the education of his people." See also Leo Kohn to Turkish Consul in Jerusalem, 11.11.38 and Kohn to Shertok, 11.11.38. He and Epstein, Kohn reported, had visited the consul to express their condolences on Ataturk's death. "I also drew his attention to the reaction of the Hebrew press this morning which was really impressive (I had last night telephoned to all the papers and asked them to make a big 'trask')."

[53]HaAretz, 2.12.38.

[54]Weizmann to Ginsberg, 12.1.39, WA.

[55]Yoman Medini 1939, 6,8.2.39, pp. 21 and 31.

Britain had built its strategy in the Middle East and which was bringing ruin to the Zionist enterprise.[56]

Weizmann's "theory," oddly reminiscent of a later Middle Eastern theory of concentric circles, was anything but a mere rhetorical device. However out of touch he may have been with the day to day work of the Political Department, however trapped he was by his "heroic, Faysalist conception," he came round in the end (and for all political intents and purposes the 1939 conference was the end) to follow the direction that, albeit in a sporadic and haphazard manner, the Political Department had been following since 1936. Weizmann expressed these views on Middle Eastern strategy at the end of June, 1939, in a private letter to Professor Rappard, vice-chairman of the Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva:

> I think there may have been some misplaced emphasis ...on the overriding strategic importance which seems to be attached to the Arab states. The fact is that I am not alone in thinking this -- that the real key to Middle Eastern strategy is not the Arab states, but Turkey and Turkey's neighbours, Afghanistan, Persia etc.....We have all along been doing our small best to counter German propaganda in Turkey and have been, and still are endeavouring to bring Turkey within the British orbit on the industrial and commercial side. If this can be successfully achieved then I honestly believe that there is very little to be feared from "the Arab World."[57]

In March 1939 Vilensky visited Turkey again. Concern that the rise of Ismet Inonu to power would be accompanied by the growth of anti-semitism was dispelled. As regards Zionism the position remained unchanged, that is to say one of neutrality. "The Turks,"

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[56]Ibid., 14.2, p.52. Also official Minutes of the fifth session of the St. James Conference, 14.2.39, S25/7632.

[57]Weizmann to Rappard, 26.6.39, WA.

Dov Joseph noted

> would have no objection to the establishment of a Jewish state even in the whole of Palestine if England agreed to such a course. At the same time, [he continued] although the Turks dislike the Arabs cordially and are firmly opposed to the Pan-Arabist movement which they consider would interfere with their own political plans for the future they have no particular desire to antagonise Arab public opinion by any overt declarations or acts friendly to the Zionist cause.[58]

The Jewish Agency found then, in Turkish opinions on the Middle East situation less a mere likeness to its own views than a version of Middle Eastern history and politics that resulted from a deep-rooted common opposition to pan-Arabism:

> The Turks regard Britain's apprehensions about the Arabs making trouble in the event of an international war as a joke. They consider that the military strength of the whole Arab world is not worth more than one Turkish division. They do not think the Arabs will ever be able to form a properly organised. The Arabs get tired after a month or two of fighting and want to go home. They regard the Pan Arabist movement as having no basis whatever in reality. They believe that the ultimate fate of Iraq is that it will be divided between Turkey and Iran.[59]

Throughout 1939 Turkey came to dominate Middle Eastern affairs. Her designs on the upper portions of Syria, which the Turks were waiting to "fall into their hands like ripe fruit",[60] their activities in Hatay (Alexandretta),[61] the Anglo-Turkish and the Franco-Turkish agreements,[62] concentrated attention on her. M. Assaf declared in Davar that the Franco-Turkish agreement was the "crowning

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[58]Dov Joseph Diary, 27.3.39, S25/43.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]"Turkey's demands in Syria." E. Sasson-D. Joseph, 2.5.39. S25/9900.

[62]Zionist Review, 29.6.39, "France and Turkey."

glory of Ataturk's achievement" and that "strict realism" was the basis of Turkish policy.[63]

In August Eliahu Epstein represented the Jewish Agency at the Izmir Fair, where there was, as usual, considerable interest in the Palestine Pavilion.[64] His work this time and on a further visit in September was more or less confined to the cultural and commercial sphere, arranging for the exchange of Turkish and Jewish students and for contact with the Sieff Institute in Rehovot for cooperation in the production of pharmaceutical products.[65]

With the outbreak of war contact between the Agency and the Turks was reduced to a minimum. In November the Turkish Commercial Attache in Egypt, Dr. Naday, visited Palestine and met members of the Jewish Agency, the Institute for Foreign Trade and economic experts to discuss the further development of trade relations between the two countries.[66]

Commenting on the Anglo-Turkish and Franco-Turkish agreements of October 1939 the New Judea noted that the treaties would be "warmly welcomed in Jewish Palestine and among Jews throughout the

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[63]Davar, 30.6.39, M. Assaf, "Rejuvenated Turkey & Arab Unity."

[64]Davar, 20.8.39. Also Epstein to Ben-Tsvi from Izmir, 21., 29.8.39, A116/76/1 (Ben Tsvi papers) and Epstein's reports on two visits to Turkey, 13.8-12.9.39 and 20.9.-10.10.39. S25/4130.

[65]Note on the committee on relations with the neighbouring countries. 31.10.39, S25/3599. The first Jewish student sent to Turkey was Uriel Heyd, who later became a noted Israeli Middle Eastern scholar. On pharmaceutical matters see Weizmann to Ginsberg, 8.12.39, WA.

[66]Report on Visit of Dr. Naji Naday to Palestine, 12.11.39, WA. and Zionist Review, 16.11.39, and 29.12.39.

world."[67] "The Turkish Pact," the Zionist Review said,

> has been received with satisfaction in the Near East and not least by the people of Palestine, where there has long been an appreciation of Turkey as a stabilising influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. A strengthening of Anglo-Turkish relations has always been the anxious desire of the Zionist movement and Dr. Weizmann's visit last year to Angora, where he was well received, was symptomatic of the close ties between Turkey and the Yishuv.[68]

In the last analysis, Zionist interest in Turkey was determined by the decidedly negative consideration of their common opposition to pan-Arabism, and, towards the outbreak of war, by their common ties to Britain. The thread that briefly tied their disparate interests together was provided by the intransigeant and uncompromising behaviour of their joint adversary.

An article in HaBoqer at the beginning of 1939 on Turkish foreign policy enumerated Ataturk's achieveme. everything connected with Islamic culture, the tarbush, the Arabic alphabet, the woman's veil. "Exactly the opposite," the author remarked,

> of what we see our neighbours doing when they support the slogan of the kuffiyah and the 'iqal.[69]

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[67]New Judea, October, 1939.

[68]Zionist Review, 26.10.39.

[69]HaBoqer, 2.3.39.

THE ZIONISTS AND THE DRUZE

Relations between the Zionists and the Druze community of Palestine are dated variously from 1925,[70] the year of the famous revolt against the French in Syria, and 1928, when Yitzhak Ben-Tsvi persuaded the Druze Sheikh Hassan Abu Rukn to refrain from aiding Arab gangs in their forays against the Yishuv.[71] It was Ben-Tsvi, well known for his interest in the ethnographic structure of the population of Palestine, who was largely responsible for the creation of relations with Druze leaders, and his personal intervention on their behalf with the government on many issues endeared him to them. Caught as they often were between the Muslim hammer and the government anvil, Bel-Tsvi realised that Jewish aid and friendship for the Druze could help win their loyalty to the Yishuv.

There was another aspect, however, to the question of Zionist relations with the Druze, which went beyond the relatively simple question of good neighbourly relations with a small, subdued and politically insignificant community within the borders of Palestine. In a 1930 report Ben-Tsvi urged that once good relations existed between the Yishuv and the Palestinian Druze, "steps should be taken to put ourselves in touch with their chiefs in Hauran, Syria, and Lebanon."[72] It was precisely this point which Colonel Kisch, head of

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[70]Arnold Sherman, The Druze, Bazak, (Jerusalem, 1975), p.48.

[71]Musbah Halabi, HaDruzim be Yisrael (unpaged), (Tel Aviv, 1973). A 1932 report by A.C. Cohen stated that contacts with the Druze of Palestine were initiated by the Agency's "Joint Bureau" in 1930-31. A.C. Cohen, Secret, Report on Druze Villages in the North, 30.9-6.10.1932, S25/6638. Porath, Palestinian Arab, p.271, says that the JAE first established contact with the al-Atrash family in 1934.

[72]Y. Ben-Tsvi. "For the creation of good relations with our Druze neighbours in Eretz-Yisrael." 28/8/1930, S25/6638. For a similar view see Y. Nahmani to Ben-Tsvi, 21.3.32 in Yosef Nahmani, Ish Hagalil (Tel Aviv, 1969), pp.81-2.

the Jewish Agency's Joint Bureau for Arab Affairs, considered dangerous. He attached little importance to "this small community of Fellahin" and saw no justification for special activities to make contacts with them. The main significance of the Druze, Kisch agreed, was their links with their brethren outside Palestine, and the Jews should therefore be most careful not to annoy the French in Syria and Lebanon who would undoubtedly be suspicious if the British-supported Zionists made friendly overtures to the anti-French Druze.

The main aim of the Yishuv and Zionist institutions in their contacts with the Druze was the prevention of the participation of the latter in the sporadic disturbances that swept the country, and, until 1939, when interest in the Druze took on a more overtly political hue, prevention was the keynote of the interest. There was, for this reason, much contact between representatives of the Hagana and the Druze community and although much of this relationship still remains shrouded in secrecy, what little information is available indicates that as the Arab disturbances took their course, cooperation increased between the Yishuv and the Druze.[73]

The Druze community of Palestine, numbering about 10,000 souls in 1936, was concentrated in the villages of Northern Galilee and in two large settlements near Haifa, Ussfiyah and Daliyat al-Karmil. During the summer of 1936, attempts were made by the Druze, both in Palestine and the Jebel Druze, to contact the Jews and the local Druze declared their "neutrality" for the duration of the disturbances.

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[73] Sefer Toldot Hahagana ed. Y. Slutsky, Vol. 2, p.676; Halabi, op. cit. Sherman, op.cit., p.47; H. Blank, Hadruzim, (Jerusalem 1958), p.43; H. Blank, "Hadruzim," Molad, March-April, 1954; A. Hushi, Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael (Tel Aviv, 1943), p.24 and Salman Falah, HaDruzim be-Eretz-Yisrael, pp.78-79, unpubl. MA Thesis, Jerusalem, 1962 all make veiled reference to cooperation between the Druze and the Hagana.

Ben-Tsvi proposed trying to use Zionist contacts in Paris to gain a maximum of autonomy for the Jebel Druze, which was the aspiration of the Druze separatist leader, Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, exiled in Transjordan since the abortive rebellion of 1925. Al-Atrash's representative in Palestine, Ben-Tsvi reported at the beginning of July 1936, was seeking Zionist help to persuade the French to allow the exiled leader to return to the Jebel.[74]

The Druze question was apparently thought to be of considerable political importance, for on July 8 Ben-Gurion, Shertok, Ben-Tsvi and Epstein met to discuss the matter. The appeal of the Druze leader to the Zionists was connected, it was felt, to Blum's rise to power in France and the notion that the Zionists would be able to exert influence upon him. It would be likely to help good relations with the Druze, especially if it was possible to encourage the development of their political autonomy in Syria and their religious autonomy in Palestine. The local Druze had indeed remained neutral during the current disturbances, and there was amongst them a separatist tendency opposed to the Mufti's leadership. Amongst the Druze in Lebanon and Syria there were three tendencies; one of complete unity with Syria and assimilation within the Arab movement; a second tendency of complete separation combined with reconciliation with the French, and a third, represented by Sultan Pasha, seeking Druze autonomy within Syria. It was decided, Shertok recorded,

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[74]Diary of the Political Department, 5.7.1936, S25/443.

> first of all to inform Sultan al-Atrash that we are prepared to help him only if we can be sure that on his return to the Jebel he will be loyal to the French and will not cause them any trouble. Ben-Tsvi will see one of al-Atrash's men next time he's in Haifa and Epstein's going to Syria soon.[75]

Although French documents for the period still remain closed, it is reasonable to assume that within the framework of Zionist contacts with the French over the question of Syrian independence and the possibility of the insertion of a "bon-voisin-age" clause between Lebanon and Jewish Palestine into a Franco-Lebanese agreement, representations were made on the question of the return of Sultan Pasha and autonomy for the Jebel. For the Zionists, concerned as they were about the untimely granting of independence to Syria as a boost to irresponsible pan-Arabism, about the preservation of the territorial integrity of Lebanon and the political dominance of the Maronites within it, it was natural that they should, in a period of growing animosity from their Arab and Moslem neighbours both inside and outside of Palestine, seek to strengthen their ties with the Druze minority in Palestine and over the border in Syria and Lebanon.

Contacts with the Druze at the start of the disturbances were confined to making sure that they maintained their neutrality towards the Yishuv. Much of the burden fell upon individuals who had already established friendly relations with Druze and who used their personal influence to persuade them that the Jews were their best option. Veteran PICA worker, Yosef Nahmani of Tiberias distributed an Arabic leaflet amongst the Druze leaders of the Galilee, declaring:

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[75]Ibid. 8.7.1936.

> Ben-Tsvi and I are astonished that Druze are joining the gangs and we ask you, in the name of the friendship between us, to explain to the Druze in the villages of Palestine and the Druze people on the Jebel that they must preserve good relations with us and warn hot-headed trouble-makers not to fight the Jews. We are sure, as you are wise and clever, that you will influence your people that the good of your cause demands that you help us at this difficult time and not turn against us.[76]

In other cases, however, persuasion was unnecessary. The elders of Ussfiyah approached Haifa Workers Council and asked for their help in persuading the district administration to provide them with adequate protection against terrorist pressure to join the gangs.[77] On July 14 Abba Hushi and Shmuel Alafiyyah, a young Damascene Jew active in the organization of Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael in Haifa met three elders of the influential Abu-Rukn family from Ussfiyah. The Jews were cautious; "We explained to them," Hushi reported to Ben-Tsvi,

> that at the moment it would be damaging to give open and official expression to the ties of friendship being woven between us and we promised them in your name that when peace is restored you will meet them and see how the agreement between them and us can be strengthened.[78]

The Druze of Ussfiyah were, it seemed, most anxious for Jewish friendship and Hushi believed that the Vaad Leumi should make a special effort to display Jewish amity for them. "We think," he

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[76]Hebrew translation of Arabic leaflet, "To the Sheikhs of the Druze Community." Yosef Nahmani, Tiberias, 29.9.1936. Abba Hushi Archives, AAH 30/10. See also Ish Hagalil, op.cit. pp.91-93.

[77]E. Agassi, Report on Haifa Branch of Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael, September 1936-May 1937, BB 401/37/2.

[78]A. Hushi to Y. Ben-Tsvi, 26.7.1936, AAH 30/10.

continued,

> that a meeting should be arranged between these Druze and representatives of neighbouring Jewish areas at which a kind of agreement be made between them. This agreement should be in the form of a document or membership card or some other external symbol so they can see the difference between it and the agreements they make amongst themselves.[79]

The Druze, often characterized as a hardy, self-reliant, faithful people, also seem to have been easily prone to external influences. When Haifa Workers Council presented a radio set to the people of Ussfiyah, it aroused the envy of the Druze of neighbouring Daliyat al-Karmil and they too made overtures to the Jews.[80]

It was as a result of these contacts with Druze in the Haifa area that Ben-Tsvi and Epstein were able to meet Yussuf Bey al-'Ismi, leader of the Druze exiles in Palestine and that contact was made with Sultan al-Atrash in Transjordan and emissaries were sent to Druze villages on the Palestine-Syrian border to ask them to refrain from participating in the disturbances.[81] Hassan Abu Rukn from Ussfiyah sent a representative to Kerak where he met the exiled leader and described to him the good relations between Druze and Jews in Palestine, and how the latter had enriched the country and all its inhabitants. Sultan Pasha, according to the report, was initially suspicious of the paeans of praise the visitor from Ussfiyah sung to the Jews, but after a "detailed discussion," the Druze leader gave his blessing to neutrality in the present conflict.[82]

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[79]Ibid.

[80]Agassi Report, loc.cit.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Hushi and Alafiyyah to Ben-Tsvi, 29.9.36, J1/6184.

Zayid Abu Rukn was similarly despatched to Druze villages in Lebanon where he spread the word about the wisdom of friendship with the Jews.[83]

Ben-Tsvi, who had provided much of the impetus for interest in the Druze at this stage, was much encouraged by Zayid Abu Rukn's mission, believing that when the strike was over the Druze could take a more active step towards real alliance with the Yishuv. "Such a move," he wrote to Alafiyyah as the strike came to an end,

> could serve as an example to other elements among our friends who have been shy until now....to express their opposition to terror and their wish to renew peaceful relations with the Jews.[84]

Ben-Tsvi's optimism, however, was short-lived. Only a few days later he wrote to Abba Hushi asking for information about an additional group of Druze who had joined the gangs, which were showing no signs of ceasing their activities despite the official end to the strike in Palestine. Particularly disturbing was the news that a Druze gang leader, one Sa'ad Bey, had recently been killed in action in the Hebron area. The question was, Ben-Tsvi wrote, whether he had arrived in Palestine before or after the visit to Sultan Pasha when the Druze leader had promised his people's neutrality. "You know, Comrade Hushi," he continued

> what we promised the Druze and what I confirmed to Sheikh Abu Rukn when he visited me in Jerusalem. This promise is still in existence and binds us to certain activity in Paris -- and for this reason we have to know exactly where we stand with Sultan Pasha. It's unlikely that his men are leading the gangs and that he doesn't know about it, and if he does know, then he should tell us.[85]

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[83]Hushi and Alafiyyab to Ben-Tsvi, 4.10.36, J1/6184. See also Bulletin on the Activities of the Executive of the Vaad Leumi. 29.9.1936. BB601/36/2.

[84]Ben-Tsvi to Alafiyyah, 11.10.1936, J1/6184.

[85]Ben-Tsvi to Hushi, 15.10.1936, AAH 30/10.

It was, of course, possible that these Druze were not subject to the authority of Sultan al-Atrash, but Ben-Tsvi was nevertheless left with an uncomfortable suspicion that the Druze leader was playing a double game.[86] It seems that the president of the Vaad Leumi, however deep his admiration and respect for the Druze, may have been a little naive in attaching such significance to Sultan Pasha's "declaration of neutrality," made at a moment when his people were subject to intense pressures from hostile Arabs, and when he himself was far away in his Transjordanian exile.

From Haifa, the contacts continued. A meeting with a Druze gang leader near Umm al-Fahm may serve as an example of the methods adopted to influence these wayward warriors: -

> Had the Muslims helped the Druze in their revolt? What were Shahabander, Nasib al-Bakri and the Kutla Wataniya doing for the Druze? The Jews had brought benefit both to Palestine and to the Druze. Would this revolt do them any good?[87]

This approach seems to have worked. In February 1937 Abba Hushi and David HaCohen submitted a proposal to the Political Department for the establishment of friendly relations with a Druze rebel leader who brought a band of terrorists into the country during the disturbances. "It appears," Dr. Joseph noted in his diary,

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[86]Ibid. and Ben-Tsvi to Hushi, 20.10.36, AAH 30/10. See also Ben-Tsvi's speech to the Mapai party centre on 18.9.37. ".... we must also develop friendly relations with the Druze. The Druze, who are a warlike people, nevertheless maintained their neutrality right through the disturbances, but this neutrality is not 100 per cent certain. The Druze, like all Arabs, have evil instincts, and their neutrality will not be guaranteed unless we pay constant attention to the creation of relations with them. There 10,000 Druze in Eretz-Yisrael proper who can cause us trouble, especially if they encourage the Syrian Druze to attack us. The development of good relations with the Druze is likely to prevent their intervention against us at this difficult time."

[87]Alafiyyah to Ben-Tsvi, 26.10.1936, J1/6184.

> that he did so entirely for mercenary reasons and now that his Druze friends in Palestine expressed their disapproval of Druzes operating against Jews, he was willing for a consideration, to turn coat.[88]

Ben-Tsvi, meanwhile, wanted to use contacts with the local Druze to improve the security situation for Jewish settlements in the north and especially for the Jews in the isolated village of Peki'in.[89] The institutions of the Yishuv occasionally intervened with the government on behalf of the Druze and in April 1937 Ben-Tsvi personally demanded and secured the release of Druze elders from Rama after their arrest on the charge of harbouring Arab gangs.[90]

As the possibility of partition became more and more likely as 1937 progressed,[91] interest in the Druze widened and they increasingly became the province of the Political Department rather than the sole concern of Ben-Tsvi and the men on the spot in Haifa and the north.[92]

When Sultan Pasha came back to the Jebel Druze in the summer of 1937, Ben-Tsvi proposed sending a message of greeting "together with an appropriate gift."[93] Elias Sasson made enquiries via David

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[88]Dr. Joseph's Diary, 16.2.1937, S25/1511.

[89]Ben-Tsvi to Alafiyyah, 10.2.1937, A116/70/1.

[90]A.C. Cohen to Ben-Tsvi, 5.4.1937, Ben-Tsvi to Moody, Chief Secretariat, Palestine Government, 11.4.1937. Moody to Ben-Tsvi, 30.4.1937, J1/6184. There was also close contact between Jews and Druze over the question of land purchase. See correspondence relating to 260 dunams belonging to Hassan Abu Rukn near Haifa. Alafiyyah to A.C. Cohen, 12.3.1937 and 4.4.1937, S25/2973.

[91]Amidst rumours of a renewal of Arab attacks if partition was declared, Shertok cabled Lourie on 2.7.1937, "taking steps to strengthen ties with various racial minorities Galilee." S25/1663.

[92]The Political Department, overworked and understaffed, had declared its readiness to cooperate with the Vaad Leumi in contacts with the Druze in March 1937. Ben-Tsvi to Alafiyyah, 8.3.37, J1/6184 and Ben-Tsvi to Hushi, 8.3.37, BB4/1/37.

[93]Dr. Joseph's Diary, 10.8.37, S25/1511.

Luzia in Damascus as to whether the Druze on the Jebel were prepared to receive a Jewish delegation. It was suggested that the Agency send gifts of some value, carpets, or a silver tea or coffee service and not just the usual rice, sugar and coffee.[94] In his talks with al-Atrash's representative, the Agency's man, Moshe Nisani, played down the importance of the proposed visit for the Jews. Its purpose, he told his Druze contact, was nothing more than the fulfillment of duty towards a neighbour who had been away from home for a long time and he avoided mention of long-term political motives or interest. Al-Atrash's representative, however, told Nisani that there had been violent demonstrations in the Jebel against the Syrian National Bloc and that the time was not ripe for and official visit by a Jewish delegation. After consultation with Jerusalem, therefore, it was decided to postpone the visit until things had quietened down.[95]

The proposed visit to the Jebel was supposed to have taken place in mid-August[96] and an answer was still being awaited when, in mid-September, Bernard Joseph reported to the Mapai Party Centre on contacts with the Druze. In October Sasson was on one of his periodic visits to Syria and discussed the planned visit with David Luzia and Dr. Pinto. Through a Druze friend of theirs, Sasson learned of Haj Amin's attempts to persuade the Druze to help the Arab effort in Palestine and of the Druze leaders' desire to preserve the neutrality of the Jebel, as well as their urgent need for cash.[97] Shertok, for

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[94]M. Nisani to Shertok, Secret, 24.8.1937, S25/5570.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Ben-Tsvi to A.C.Cohen, 16.8.1937, A116/70/1.

[97]E. Sasson to B. Joseph, 14.10.1937, Sasson Papers.

one, had no illusions about the quality of Druze friendship for the Jews. He told Battershill; the Officer Administering the Government (O.A.G.) that al-Atrash had made tentative moves towards demanding money from the Agency while at the same time hinting broadly that generous financial offers had been made by the "other side."[98]

In the last week of October, 1937 Abba Hushi, accompanied by Sheikh Hassan Abu Rukn and Alafiyyah, left Haifa for the Jebel. Passing through Hassbaya, en route for Damascus, they were given a warm reception. They too learnt that attempts were being made to entice the Druze shabab to join the gangs and that the village elders were opposed to this.[99] In Damascus the party conferred with Elias Sasson who pressed them not to do anything which might annoy the Syrian government, and urged them not to meet al-Atrash himself, but to make do with seeing one of his "secretaries." Sasson felt that he should have been included in the party "for it seems likely that the matter will develop and take on an official character."[100] At Imtan, on the Jebel, the group was given "a truly royal welcome" by Sultan's brother, Ali al-Atrash and Yussuf Bey al-Ismi[101] and hordes of shabab and elders. Hushi proposed, (a) that Yussuf Bey

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[98]Interview with Battershill, 19.10.1937. Yoman Medini 1937, p.379.

[99]A. Hushi to R. Zaslani. "Report on my journey to the Jebel Druze and Damascus." 1.11.1937, S25/5570.

[100]Sasson to Shertok, 26.10.1937, Sasson Papers.

[101]"Yussuf is intelligent, astute, wise and noble. The Druze call him the brain of Sultan al-Atrash. Sultan is no diplomat -- he's barely literate and Yussuf Bey acts as a kind of foreign secretary to him. He's very influential on the Jebel and Sultan does nothing without consulting him." Hushi to Zaslani, 1.11.1937, loc.cit.

supply thorough and regular information on events in Damascus and on the Jebel, (b) that he use his great influence to prevent Druze from joining the gangs and (c) that he influence Sultan al-Atrash and his family to work towards making a treaty of friendship with the Jews of Palestine. Yussuf accepted the first two proposals, and showed that he had in fact been working in that direction since the end of September at the request of Hassan Abu Rukn, whom Hushi had sent to Damascus. Twice in October, Yussuf explained, he'd been summoned to Damascus by high-ranking Palestinian leaders who had asked him to use his influence to encourage Druze enrolment in the gangs and that Haj Amin be permitted to live in the Jebel. On both occasions, Yussuf claimed, he had persuaded Sultan Pasha that it was the Jews who were the real friends of the Druze and that the Palestinian demands should be rejected. As for the third proposal of a treaty of friendship with the Yishuv, Yussuf had his own demands: the Jews would help the Druze in the following areas; (a) agricultural experts, (b) finding water and irrigation experts, (c) influence Jewish banks in Palestine and abroad to loan money for development purposes and (d) the Jews were to use their influence in France on behalf of the Druze. In exchange the Druze in Palestine and on the Jebel would declare their friendship for the Jews. For his services, Yussuf Bey asked for a generous monthly salary, plus the payment of any special expenses. Although they were invited to see al-Atrash, Hushi and Sheikh Hassan decided not to, because, as Hushi reported,

> It was better to show them that we weren't in a hurry to answer every invitation and we thought we should emphasize the importance of Yussuf Bey. We therefore told the messengers indifferently that we'd only come for a short visit.[102]

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[102]Ibid.

Hushi's report was circulated to the members of the Political Department's Arab Section. Shertok's immediate response was that al-'Isrni's financial demands were excessive and that it would be difficult to stop the payments after an initial three month period.[103] Eliahu Epstein commented that although he valued contacts with the Druze, the time was not ripe for an agreement with them. During the present period of tension between the Druze and Damascus, the Syrian Government would see the Jews as helping the Druze separatists while the French would be likely to suspect the Zionists of acting on behalf of the British to encourage unrest in Syria.[104]

Aharon Chaim Cohen, the junior member of the Arab section, was enthusiastic about the possibilities of contact with the Druze. He saw no reason for hesitation or overdue caution about the likely reactions of French, English or Syrians. Convinced as he was of the unbending enmity of the pan-Arabs to Zionism, it mattered little that the Arabs might be annoyed by a Zionist alliance with the Druze. Transjordan and Lebanon certainly would have no objections. As for the possibility of adverse publicity, the whole Arab world knew of the relationship between the Jewish Agency and the Emir Abdullah, and despite some trouble from the Arab press when the Agency stepped up its contacts with the Lebanese, nothing had happened. The Zionist movement was facing partition and the creation of a Jewish state which would include, according to the proposed plan, 18 villages populated by some 10,000 Druze. "It is possible," Cohen wrote,

> that relations with Druze leaders on the Jebel will help us in the future to transfer also those Druze

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[103]Handwritten note on Hushi to Zaslani, 1.11.37, op.cit.

[104]E. Epstein to Shertok, 2.11.1937, S25/5570.

> who live here to the Jebel or elsewhere in Syria. The connection with the Druze can exist for many years because the Druze is known to be on a higher cultural level than our Arab. The way for us [Cohen continued] is to create points of light in the dark Arab sea surrounding us: one in Transjordan, another in Lebanon, a third in the Jebel Druze and a fourth elsewhere, which we may perhaps be able to unite together. Only by such acts can we improve our standing in the eyes of the Arab governments and force them to take us into account as one of the decisive factors in the Near East.[105]

Elias Sasson's response to Hushi's report was more measured, and slightly scornful of Aharon Cohen's histrionics about the need to create "points of light" in the surrounding pan-Arab darkness. France, Sasson felt, would be strongly opposed to a Zionist-Druze alliance, seeing in it the hidden hand of perfidious Albion. The Jebel Druze, Sasson pointed out, was neither Transjordan nor Lebanon, both of which were at least partially independent, while the Jebel was still an integral part of Syria. The Syrian government would see any official move towards the Druze as a "Zionist plot" and would not recognize it as a purely preventive measure to stop Druze participation in the Arab terror. This latter argument, Sasson argued, could not be pursued anyway, as it implied lack of faith in the Syrian government, which had promised to cooperate with Britain to prevent the movement of men and arms to Palestine. The Agency's relations with Transjordan, Sasson went on, were based on direct contact with the Emir, and not the people of one district. The same was true of relations with Lebanon, arranged with responsible government leaders, and not the opposition or the people of Tyre or Sidon. Care must be taken, Sasson warned:

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[105]The Fate of our Relations with the Druze People, A.C. Cohen. 2.11.1937, S25/3539.

> A separate agreement between us and the Druze is not likely...to pave the way to an agreement with Syria. The harm to Syria involved in such an agreement is too obvious.

He proposed, therefore, making do for the moment with unofficial friendly relations with the Druze.[106]

Shertok, as head of department, had the last word. The Druze, he said, were more interested in getting support from the Jews than proffering their aid. The same was true of all Arab groups and individuals who wanted Jewish friendship or help:

> They always expect greater courage from us than they are prepared to display themselves. The reason is clear: a policy of mutual understanding with neighbouring peoples is the dominant policy amongst Jews, while a policy of peace and understanding with the Jews is swimming against the current in the Arab world.[107]

It was true, Shertok agreed, that the French, English and Syrians might be suspicious of Zionist-Druze friendship, but these considerations should not, he felt, be decisive. Apart from the possible negative consequences, an independent policy pursued by the Zionists would force others to take their aspirations into account. Relations with Transjordan, Shertok corrected Sasson, had not begun directly with the Emir but with the sheikhs. Connections with tribal leaders in Transjordan and the expectation of large-scale aid from the Jews had encouraged Abdullah to look for a Jewish company which would lease his land and it was as a result of all this that the connectionwith the Jewish Agency was created. The same cautious, gradual approach should be applied in the case of the Druze, Shertok argued. There was no question for the moment of an

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[106]The Fate of our Relations with the Druze. E. Sasson, 5.11.1937, S25/6638.

[107]Comments on our Relations with the Druze, n.d. [1937] S25/6638.

official alliance which would only "encourage exaggerated hopes and appetites, cost us a lot of money and finally cause disappointment and bitterness."[108]

In the wake of all this discussion, however, nothing was done, and the Druze question was allowed to lapse, much to the annoyance of Abba Hushi, who was soon being pressed for money by Yussuf al-'Ismi.[109] The Political Department, it seems, was preoccupied with more pressing matters and what contact remained was kept up by Hushi via his Druze friends on the Carmel. When it was heard that Sheikh Assad Kanj wanted to join the Mufti, a letter was despatched from Ussfiyah to Hassbaya reminding the Druze there of the benefit the Jews had brought to Palestine and their efforts to help the Druze. It described how Jews had stopped British troops attacking Daliyat al-Karmil after traces of an Arab gang were discovered there.[110]

In June 1938 Elias Sasson met Sheikh Hussein Hamadah, the religious leader of the Druze in Lebanon, in connection with a plan discussed between the tireless Najib Sfeir[111] and Dr. Weizmann concerning the strengthening of relations between Druze and Jews both inside and outside of Palestine. Sheikh Hussein talked at length about the close relations between Druze and Maronites in Lebanon. The leaders of both communities, he told Sasson, had come to the

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[108]Ibid.

[109]Hushi to Joseph, 29.11.1937, S25/3600.

[110]Druze leader from Ussfiya to Hassbaya, 2.4.1938, S25/6638.

[111]See chapter six, above, note 7.

conclusion that there was a need to open serious negotiations with the Jews about the means necessary to put an end to increasing Moslem influence in both Lebanon and Palestine; the present priority, however, was the suppression of the terror and the removal of the Palestinian exiles from Lebanon.[112]

Hamadah's proposal was a sign of the times. As 1938 progressed and the Arab revolt increased in scope, the Druze found themselves with their backs increasingly to the wall. Sheikh Hassan Abu-Rukn was killed, a warning to those members of his community who were brazen enough to cooperate with the Jews.[113] His death, however, increased rather than diminished Druze-Jewish cooperation, and it was proposed that a meeting be held between the Jewish Agency and Palestinian Druze leaders.[114] Sheikh Hassan's place was taken by his younger brother, Labib Abu Rukn who travelled to Hassbaya to describe how Moslems, led by the notorious Abu Dura, had attacked Daliya and Ussfiya, desecrated holy books and beaten Druze women and even children.[115] The Agency intervened with the government at this time on behalf of the Druze in an appeal for protection against the gangs,[116] and Ben-Tsvi took great pains to try and find an alternative market in the Jewish sector for Druze tobacco, boycotted by all the Arab cigarette factories[117] as well as going to some

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[112]Sasson to Shertok, 12.1.1938, S25/5568.

[113]Halabi, op.cit.In 1972, 34 years after his death, the Organization of Members of the Hagana decided to recognize the sheikh as a soldier who had fallen in the line of duty and a memorial was erected to him in Ussfiya.

[114]Yoman Medini 1938, 13.7.1938, p.178.

[115]Labib Abu Rukn to the "Honoured Ra'is" [Abba Hushi], 4.12.1938, S25/6638 and appeal by Carmel Druze to Sultan al Atrash, Majid Arslan and Asad Bey Kanj, Ibid., (n.d.) [1938].

[116]See Bernard Joseph interview with Sir Charles Tegart, 17.1.1939, S25/43.

[117]Ben-Tsvi to Hushi, 27.1.39, A116/75/1; Hushi to Ben-Tsvi, 31.1.39, J1/6184, Ben-Tsvi to Palestine Cigarette Co. Tel Aviv, 29.1.39, J1/6184.

lengths to locate a Dutch cow stolen from a Druze friend.[118]

"THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE LAST FIFTY YEARS"

It was around this time, in the first months of 1939, that relations with the Druze took on a new, if not unexpected turn. Abba Hushi, reporting on a three-day visit to Damascus and the Jebel in mid-March, informed the Political Department that Sultan al-Atrash was offering the sale of all the Druze villages in Palestine, and the transfer of their inhabitants to the Jebel. For the Jews, Hushi commented,

> these villages are likely to bring great benefit, both because of the quality of the land and because of their geographical and strategic position. This transfer is likely to be an example and an important political fact in Eretz-Yisrael.[119]

It is impossible to discuss the plan for the transfer of the Palestinian Druze to the Jebel and the acquisition of their lands without recalling the detailed proposals for the transfer of Arabs from the area of the Jewish state allotted by the Peel Commission. By the end of 1938 the British withdrawal from partition was almost complete and the scheme was going through its death agonies in the august halls of St. James Palace at the time the Druze offer was made. In the heady days after the partition proposal, population

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[118]The cow was the property of one Yusuf al-Qassim. Ben-Tsvi to Hushi 30.3.39, A116/75/1. When Hushi was slow to reply and showed no sign of dealing with the matter of the missing animal, Ben-Tsvi wrote angrily: "I am absolutely astonished that you haven't yet replied. You should know that things like this that seem small to us are not so for our neighbours, and that it is according to such things that they judge us and the degree of our friendship for them." Ben-Tsvi to Hushi, 25.4.39. A116/75/1. The cow was not found. Ben-Tsvi to al-Qassim, 5.7.39, A116/76/1.

[119]A. Hushi. Report on my Journey to Damascus and Negotiations with Sultan Pasha al-Atrash and his Representatives. 14-17.3.1939, S25/8221.

transfer, despite the many difficulties it involved, had seemed to be the key to the successful creation of a viable Jewish state. An article in Davar had asked rhetorically what future there was in Palestine

> for a minority of 10,000 Druze in a few villages. Wouldn't it be better for them to join their brothers on the Jebel Druze and make room for Jewish settlers in Galilee and on the Carmel?[120]

Now, at the very moment when the last sparks of hope were dying, the Druze offer opened up new vistas; not only did al-Atrash propose the sale of 300,000 dunams but also an official alliance between Druze and Jews as a preliminary stage to an agreement between Druze, Christians and Jews to safeguard these minorities against Moslem aggression and intolerance.[121]

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[120]Davar, 12.9.1937 "Zionism and the Deserts of Arabia," Y. Ben-Tsur. The area allotted to the Jewish state by the Peel Commission would contain 99% of the Druze population of Palestine. Their exact number, in 1938, was 10,716, concentrated in 16 villages, 11 of which were in the Acre subdistrict. In 10 out of the 16 villages, the Druze formed 80% or more of the total number of inhabitants.

| Village | Sub-District | Druze as % of Total Pop. |
|---|---|---|
| Yanuh | Acre | 100% |
| Beit Jann | Acre | 100% |
| Daliyat al-Karmil | Haifa | 99% |
| Jatt | Acre | 99% |
| Julis | Acre | 95% |
| Sajur | Acre | 95% |
| Yirka | Acre | 95% |
| Hurfeish | Safed | 90% |
| Kafr Sumei | Acre | 84% |
| Kisra | Acre | 80% |
| Ussfiya | Haifa | 67% |
| Buqei'a | Acre | 55% |
| Abu Sinan | Acre | 53% |
| Mughar | Tiberias | 51% |
| Rama | Acre | 28.5% |
| Shefar'amr | Haifa | 18% |

Figures taken from Memorandum prepared by E. Epstein for the Woodhead Commission. "Exchange of Population: the Religious and Ethical Minorities," S25/5103.

[121]Hushi, Report on Journey, op.cit.

Al-Atrash's proposition also came at a time of intense internal ferment in Syria. The movements for local autonomy in the Jebel Druze, Al-Jazirah and the Alawite area were threatening to tear the country apart, and the appointment of Gabriel Puaux as the new High Commissioner augured final French withdrawal from their committment to Syrian independence. For the Zionists, Syria had become a symbol of the dismal failure of the pan-Arab dream and its distortion of Middle Eastern realities, as well as a rude lesson in what Arab domination of non-Arab minorities would mean, more than a mere academic exercise in Palestine in 1939.

In January 1939 the Druze of the Jebel proclaimed their total independence from the Damascus government and their loyalty to the French.[122] The Zionist press was quick to seize upon the connection between the internal collapse of Syria and the terror in Palestine. "Now the Druze have again proclaimed their independence," wrote the Palestine Review

> and it is significant that the people to whom the hardy mountaineers are opposed are those who are identified with the Arab extremists in Palestine.[123]

It did not escape the notice of Dr. Joseph that the Druze proposal had been made under the pressure of the highly specific political circumstances of the Jebel Druze. He noted in his diary that

> Abba Hushi had recently visited Sultan al-Atrash in the Jebel Druze and gave an interesting report on the friendly attitude of the Sultan to the activities of the Jews in Palestine. He believes it may be possible to work out an arrangement whereby a number of Druze villages would emigrate

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[122] Davar, 9.1.1939 for Druze declaration of autonomy.

[123] Palestine Review, 6.1.1939. See also HaAretz, 4.1.1939 and HaBoger "In the Syrian Cauldron," 24, 25, 26, 31.1.1939.

> en masse to the Jebel Druze and turn their holdings over to Jews. The Druze were anxious to strengthen their position in the Jebel in connection with their desire to obtain a greater measure of autonomy.[124]

The proposal was taken up at high level. Ben-Gurion and Weizmann were sent lists of Druze villages in Palestine.[125] Eliahu Epstein, the Arab section's top man, set to work on a detailed memorandum on the Druze question and the proposed transfer. At the end of April Weizmann, who felt the matter was of "extreme importance," wrote to an American Zionist leader, describing the plan, its potential and implications. "If the land could be acquired," he wrote

> the whole problem of upper Galilee could be definitely settled. This would give us a territory almost contiguous from the Huleh down to Rehovot, which in its size almost equals the territory allotted to us by the Peel Report...The realisation of this project would mean the emigration of 10,000 Arabs,[126] the acquisition of 300,000 dunams and the creation of a block from Huleh, through the Emek, down the coastal plain to Beer-Tuviah, with a reserve of land which would enable us to work quietly for the next 5 or 10 years, without any fear of whatever restrictions the British government might contemplate. In fact it would break the attempt to crystallize the National Home. It would offer all the advantages of Partition without a single one of its disadvantages. We are actively pursuing the enquiries into this matter and understand that it will cost us something like 3 million pounds (or an average of 10 per dunam). A certain stretch of this land is on the Eastern Carmel....so that by buying it up, the overwhelming part of the Carmel would become Jewish.[127]

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[124]Dr. Joseph's Diary, 26.3.1939, S25/43.

[125]D. Horowitz to Ben-Gurion, 9.4.1939, S25/6638 and Joseph to Weizmann, 20.4.39, WA.

[126]My emphasis. See note 133 below "not Arab but Druze."

[127]Weizmann to S. Goldman, 28.4.39, ISA 68/26.

Weizmann was almost beside himself with excitement. It was the greatest opportunity they'd had for the last fifty years and could "only be compared with what Baron Edmond De Rothschild did when he acquired the lands in the coastal plain." "It would," he continued,

> relieve us of a great many of our political troubles for a long time to come, and by consolidating our holdings in upper Galilee, Huleh and the coastal plain we would be able easily to expand further when the time comes. It would also create a significant precedent if 10,000 Arabs[128] were to emigrate peacefully of their own volition, which would no doubt be followed by others.[129]

Epstein's two-part memorandum was ready by the end of April. Part one consisted of a detailed description of the Druze of Palestine, the number and history of their settlements, communal organization, demographic and occupational structure, political tendencies and their relationship with the Jebel.[130] Part Two of the memorandum, headed "Most Secret," and entitled "Comments on the plan to

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[128]My emphasis. See note 133 below "not Arab but Druze."

[129]Weizmann to S. Goldman, loc.cit. Yosef Weitz, head of the JNF's land purchasing department, was extremely sceptical about the whole scheme. "A new myth," he wrote, "is being woven. Someone talked to Sultan al-Atrash about transferring the Druze from Eretz-Yisrael to the Jebel Druze...and selling their property here to the Jews. Ben-Gurion heard of it...and seems to consider it a big deal. And as usual they're getting carried away with discussion as to what should be done. I heard that Weizmann is also going around with the Druze dream. The Statistics Department is collecting material, the Technical Department fiddling with maps...and Mapai meetings are doubtless building castles in the air." Yosef Weitz, Yomani ve'Igrotai le'Banim Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv 1965), diary entry 9.4.39, pp.142-3.

[130]E. Epstein to Eliezer Kaplan, 3.5.1938, S25/3523. Secret "Memorandum on the Druze and a plan to transfer them from Eretz-Yisrael to the Jebel Druze." Under the heading "HaDruzim be-Eretz-Yisrael," Part One appeared in Yalqut HaMizrah HaTikhon, May-June, 1939, pp.25-43, and, with modifications, in E. Elath, Shivat Tsion v'Arav, pp.60-80.

transfer the Druze of Eretz-Yisrael to the Jebel Druze," dealt with the probable reactions to the plan of the parties involved; the Druze of Palestine and the British government, and the Druze of the Jebel and the French government.[131]

The Jebel Druze, Epstein wrote, was no longer just a place of shelter for dispersed Druze, but a kind of "national home" for this beleaguered people, increasingly concerned about the "hidden and half-hidden intentions of the Arab nationalists to assimilate the minorities, and first and foremost the Arabic-speaking minorities." Although theoretically conditions were ripe for the transfer, these were likely to be upset by the internal competition within the Palestinian Druze community and it was quite likely that an argument would break out when the transfer question was raised. Absolute secrecy was vital to the success of the plan:

> If the plan is known about in advance, the Mufti will make sure that the argument within the Druze community takes on such a form as to destroy the plan before it reaches the operational stage.[132]

As for the British, they would almost certainly oppose the plan as they would be unwilling to lose the benefit of their carefully nutured relations with the Druze in Palestine and Syria, especially as the deteriorating international situation was enhancing the strategic value of the Jebel. There was also the aspect of the Druze as a loyal group among the non-Jewish public in Palestine, and, of course, British opposition to the growth of the Jewish population of

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[131]Part Two. Most Secret, 3.5.1939, S25/3523.

[132]Ibid.

the Galilee.[133]

The main interested party to the agreement, Epstein felt, was the Druze of the Jebel. The addition of 10,000 of their brethren from Palestine would strengthen the homogeneity of the Druze population and encourage separatist tendencies. Enriched with money from the sale of their land in Palestine, the new immigrants would cause a revolution in the economic life of the Jebel, freeing the Druze peasants from dependence on Damascene grain merchants and giving free rein to the movement for the autonomy of the Jebel. The influx of money and people would also cause an increase in the area of cultivated land and provide as Epstein put it, "wedges against the penetration of undesirable types of nomad from west to east."

Nothing could be done, however, without French agreement. It was true that the present orientation in French policy in Syria was towards the minorities, but the tense international situation and unwillingness to cooperate with the Zionists and the British might well mean French opposition to the plan.[134]

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[133]Weizmann had dealt with this point at some length. For him, the Druze question was "a typical example of the unsoundness of what British official quarters have been saying about Upper Galilee since the publication of the Peel Report. Their thesis was that since the Peel Commission had blundered in offering the Jews a part of Palestine which is so thickly populated by Arabs that its colonisation would mean a constant war with them. The heart of upper Galilee is not Arab but Druze [my emphasis] and we could acquire it peacefully with the consent of the Druzes. All the district along the Acre-Safed road as far as Hanitah and Nahariyah could become Jewish in a perfectly peaceful manner, with the added benefit of something like 10,000 souls. This is a typical example of the grotesque exaggeration preached by these British officials all these years. I cannot help feeling that this distortion of facts is intential and malevolent. Unfortunately, one must not breathe a word about it publicly, as it would ruin the prospects of the purchase, but to our friends in America this could be pointed out as a typical example of mendacious anti-Zionist propaganda." Weizmann to Goldman, 28.4.1939, loc.cit.

[134]Part Two of Epstein Memorandum, op.cit.

The key to French agreement to the Druze transfer lay in Paris. There, according to Epstein's friend, Capitaine Bertrand of the Security Department of the Haut Commisariat in Damascus, the Zionists would find a sympathetic response from circles opposed to British support for pan-Arabism, the surrender of minorities to Moslem rule, and the creation of an Arab state next to Christian Lebanon. It was particularly important, Bertrand advised, to exploit the conflict between the Army, which wanted a tough policy in the Levant, and the Quai d'Orsay and the local administration, which were in favour of Puaux following a cautious and moderate policy towards the Arab nationalists.[135]

Weizmann was in Paris in May and June and discussed the Druze question with Army commanders and the Quai d'Orsay. Bonnet felt the plan was "very logical" and promised to write to Puaux about it.[136] The talks in Paris, however, were only exploratory. Although the Army and the Quai d'Orsay had indeed displayed some interest in the plan, the matter depended -- as Shertok had to remind Weizmann, who showed signs of slipping into one of his capricious, "Faysalist" moods -- on the Druze and not on the French. "The question is," Shertok wrote,

> whether the Druze will agree to uproot themselves from their villages in Eretz-Yisrael and move to Syria. Weizmann's answer was that as had been explained to him...the Druze are waiting for an invitation from Sultan al-Atrash and he cannot approach them until he's sure of French agreement. His work in Paris, therefore, has paved the way.[137]

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[135]Epstein to Joseph, 19.5.39, Report on Capt. Bertrand's visit to Jerusalem, ISA/68/27.

[136]Shertok Diary, 25, 28, 31.5.39. A245/11.

[137]Ibid., 4.6.1939.

In Palestine, the plan had meanwhile got under way. Letters were again exchanged between the Druze in Palestine and on the Jebel attesting to the Jews' qualities and the desirability of cooperating with them, particularly when the Mufti's gangs were making life in the villages of Palestine increasingly difficult for them.[138]

Yussuf al-'Ismi wrote regularly to Hushi about the progress of the plan amongst the Druze. He reported that Palestinian Druze were very excited by his promise to pay them the full price for their land, and before they left it. At the beginning of July he felt that success was guaranteed.[139] In mid-August he was receiving deputations of Palestinian Druze who returned enthusiastically to their villages with the gospel of transfer. There were incentives too: "I told them," the enterprising Yussuf Bey wrote to Hushi,

> that we'd find a very rich man who wanted to buy a whole village, and that whoever sold first would get more than the others.[140]

The plan was progressing unexpectedly well and fast, and had received considerable impetus from the deteriorating security situation in the Druze villages. "Without any pressure from me," Hushi told Weizmann,

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[138]"We swear by Allah and by the honour of the Druze that without Jewish help we could not have stayed in this country." Druze of Ussfiya to Lebanese Druze, 1.7.39, 5.7.39, S25/6638. For a report on the attack on Shefar'amr by Abu Ibrahim's gang see letter to R. Zaslani, 8.1.1939, S25/57. There was considerable interest in leaving the "country where they were degraded" and going to the Jebel, especially after the murder of seven Druze near Semakh. Al-'Ismi to D. Hoz (n.d.) [mid-1939] S25/6638.

[139]Al-'Ismi to Hushi, 5.7.39, S25/6638.

[140]Al-'Ismi to Hushi, 13.8, 28.8.1939, S25/6638.

> in the last few days several Sheikhs from Shefar'amr have come to me and asked me to buy 5000-8000 dunams of their land which borders on Jewish areas. Our Druze friends have also managed to influence the religious leaders for the good of our plan.[141]

It is difficult to assess what proportion of the Palestinian Druze displayed real interest in, or actually participated in the move to the Jebel, or to what extent Yussuf al-'Ismi's work was approved or authorized by the Druze of Palestine or the Jebel. It is, however, beyond any doubt that he was working in collaboration with Sultan Pasha and that both sides were seriously interested in the project. On the Zionist side at least, the personal involvement of Weizmann as well as Shertok and other senior officials of the Jewish Agency, at a time of intense and unprecedented crisis for the Zionist movement, testifies to the extreme importance attached to the plan.

In the excitement about the transfer plan and the possibility of the acquisition of such a large and strategically important area of land, nothing more was heard of the suggestions that had accompanied the original proposal, of an alliance of Jews, Druze and Christians, or of a visit to the Jebel by a Jewish delegation.[142] For all the gratitude expressed by the Druze to the Jews, and Jewish professions of friendship for them, what was being discussed was a hard-headed, carefully calculated transaction which left little room for sentimentality. "On my last visit to Beirut," Epstein wrote to Hushi at the end of July,

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[141]Hushi to Weizmann, 8.8.1939, S25/6638.

[142]Hushi Report, March 1939, loc.cit.

> I heard.....about a plan of Puaux's to develop.... the minority areas upon which French policy in Greater Syria rests at the moment. The French are mainly interested in the Jebel because of the strategic and military value of the Druze population ....Puaux will try and get loans for the development of the Jebel Druze and the Alawite area. If the information is correct, we must expect difficulties in the progress of our plan. If the material situation of the Druze on the Jebel is improved, their interest in getting what they need by the transfer from Eretz-Yisrael will lessen. Clearly the material factor is not the only one involved in our plan, but we must take it into account.[143]

Without adequate documentation, it seems reasonable to assume that the plan was dropped, or perhaps was simply allowed to peter out, because of the outbreak of war, and perhaps also because the relative calm that gradually returned to Palestine lessened the zeal of the Druze to uproot themselves to the Jebel. The imposition of the land law, too, must have had its effect.

Already by the end of December, contacts with the Druze, which had reached such intensity in the preceding months, were being neglected and allowed to lapse for lack of funds.[144] Sultan Pasha was disappointed that the plan had come to a standstill and was now trying to secure the agreement of the Emir Abdullah to the transfer of the Palestinian Druze to the Druze villages of northern Transjordan, in the hope of their being annexed to the Jebel.[145] Relations did continue, but were confined now to declarations of

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[143]Epstein-Hushi, 27.7.39, Secret, S25/5580.

[144]Hushi to B. Joseph, 2.11.1938, S25/3523 and Joseph to Hushi, 12.11.1938, S25/6638.

[145]Sasson to Joseph, 20.12.1939. "Details of my visit to the North," S25/3140(1) Sasson learnt this from a conversation with Abba Hushi who had recently returned from a visit to the Jebel.

friendship and the transmission of useful information.[146]

The grandiose plan was filed away.[147] Zionist interest in the Druze in this period was intense, if intermittent, and although the Druze could hardly be described as an ally of supreme importance, the possibility of their loyalty, their transfer out of Palestine, the acquisition of their lands and the concomitant weakening of pan-Arabism in neighbouring Syria briefly endowed them with considerable significance for the Zionists.

Zionist-Druze relations came, in a way, to their logical conclusion, when, in 1948, the Druze of Palestine largely fought with the Jews against the invading Arabs.

In the Palestine of the 1930's, Zionist interest in the Druze was a natural phenomenon; as a non-Moslem minority in the Middle East, they, like the Maronites of Lebanon, offered the Zionists the possibility of a partner in a coalition of minorities against what they saw as the pan-Arab menace. Of the Druze, it has been commented in a different context, but which is equally appropriate here, that their

> politics were by necessity flexible. The simple need of self-preservation made it expedient for them to stay neutral in any struggle for Palestine, or, once that position became untenable, to range themselves on the winning side.[148]

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[146]See reports of Alafiyyah's meetings with Asad al-Kanj, Hamza al-Darwish and Zaid Bey al-Atrash, 2.2.1940, S25/3051. Also Sasson to Shertok, 24.7.1940, on Hushi's meeting with Asad Kanj. S25/3140(1).

[147]A similar plan was discussed in 1944. See Weitz, op.cit. Diary entry for 6.7.44, p.381.

[148]Netanel Lorch, Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949, p.18.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## HAVLAGA, THE ARAB OPPOSITION, AND THE LONDON CONFERENCE.

### TERROR AND RESPONSE

Havlaga (self-restraint) was a subject of almost continuous debate throughout the 1936-39 disturbances. The best way to preserve the Yishuv's security, Ben-Gurion argued, as early as April 19, was to refrain from responding to Arab provocation and to depend on the police and army to quell the disturbances.[1] The murder of two Arabs by members of Irgun B near Petah Tikva on 16.4.36, in response to an Arab attack on a Jewish car near Tulkarm the previous day[2] (as a result of which two of the passengers died) was a harbinger of the pattern of attack, reprisal and counter-reprisal that was to repeat itself over the next three years.

The Jaffa riots were not followed by the reprisals which had been the Jewish response to the events of 1921 and 1929.[3] Attempts to go further than the beating-up of several Arab carters and shoe-shine boys in Tel Aviv were restrained by both the municipal authorities and the Hagana Command in the city, which exerted a firmer discipline over its members than it had in previous years.

The immediate reason for the policy of havlaga was the desire

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[1]Meeting of the Zionist Parties in Jerusalem, 19.4.36, Ben-Gurion, Zikhronot 1936 p.125.

[2]M. Sharett, Yoman Medini 1936 p.79 19.4.36. Sefer Toldot HaHagana ed. Y. Slutsky Vol. 2, p.632 (STH).

[3]STH p.833.

to prevent the government presenting the disturbances, as it had done in 1921 and 1929, as a clash between Jews and Arabs, and the wish, for obvious reasons for the events to be seen unequivocally as an Arab attack upon Jews. The underlying explanation, however, for the Zionist leadership's insistence on preventing Jewish retaliation against Arabs throughout the period, is to be found in its perception of its relationship with the government. The British Mandate, for all its faults, prejudices, shortcomings, failures and hostility, had gone a long way towards encouraging the growth and consolidation of the Jewish National Home, and notwithstanding periods of crisis and tension, showed signs of continuing to nurture its charge from strength to strength.

In the summer of 1936, then, there was no reason for the Zionist leadership, and Weizmann, Ben-Gurion and Shertok in particular, to endanger the relationship with Great Britain by allowing the Yishuv to be swept away by a wave of counter-terror and revenge. Throughout 1936 Ben-Gurion, perhaps the most forceful defender of the "British orientation" (Weizmann, of course, never even considered any other orientation), constantly reiterated his formulation of the question: there was indeed an "Arab question," but the main orientation of the Zionist movement must be towards Britain.[4] The policy of havlaga must be seen in this context, and while the moral arguments often used to explain the need for havlaga cannot be ignored, they must be seen as a self-serving buttressing of the Zionist's image of themselves rather than the result of an inviolable moral imperative.[5] That the moral factor was considered secondary to the political

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[4]Ben-Gurion to Rubashov. Zikhronot 1936 pp.221-5.

[5]Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel p.191.

considerations is clearly borne out in records of discussions that took place on the issue. Shertok, who said that it made his "blood boil" to hear criticism of havlaga as a manifestation of Jewish cowardice, gave classic expression to the JAE's position on the need for restraint. Speaking to the Mapai party centre in June 1936 he explained that the question was not one of 400,000 Jews against 800,000 Arabs. The Yishuv was fighting not just its own battle but was responsible for the fate of millions:

> The wave of bloodshed sweeping the country could lead to an immediate stoppage of aliya....and if we demand that the Government stand firm in the face of Arab agression and continue aliya, if we argue that aliya is itself a way of getting over the disturbances and preventing bloodshed we cannot permit ourselves to carry out acts of revenge that will make the situation even worse, and we must adhere to the policy of havlaga. At the moment I'm considering the practical side only and not taking the -oral factor into account. If we want aliya we must subordinate everything else to it and must refrain from doing anything that might interfere with it.[6]

The frequent charge that havlaga could be interpreted by Arabs and British as a sign of Jewish weakness was forcefully rejected. "We are not Arabs. They judge us by different standards," Ben-Gurion thundered at Rachel Yanait Ben-Tsvi during a meeting of the Vaad Leumi.[7]

For good reason perhaps, the Jews made the most of their self-restraint in the face of intense provocation and did not hesitate to imply, in meetings with government officials, that despite their remarkable self-control, there could well come a point when, unless the administration took the necessary measures to improve the security situation, the national institutions would no longer have the

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[6]Mapai Party Centre 9.6.36, (BB) & Golda Meir, My Life p.119.

[7]Vaad Leumi 5.5.36 CZ J1/7236 and Asefat Hanivharim, May 1936 J1/1127.

power to restrain certain elements in the Yishuv. Jewish patience, Shertok told Wauchope in August 1936, was running out. Adherence to the principle of havlaga had led the Arabs to believe that the Jews were cowards and that their enemies could therefore act with impunity.[8] At the time of Nuri Said's intervention in 1936 Shertok told the High Commissioner that if the government betrayed the Jews and halted immigration, the Jews would claim that they had been criminally misled by a leadership which had advocated havlaga against often intense opposition. The policy of restraint, therefore, was presented as being the result of a conscious decision on the part of the responsible Zionist leadership to help the government maintain law and order. The press, naturally, made much of the Yishuv's restraint. "It needs courage to go and fight," wrote the Zionist Review,

> but it needs greater courage to restrain outraged feelings of justice and stand by passively and hear of almost daily attacks on one's brethren. The young men of the Yishuv have shown this courage and have stayed their hands at a time when the extreme provocation of the Arab hooligans would have condoned any form of retaliation. The riots have had the effect of strengthening the determination of the Yishuv to continue its work with redoubled energy and the reply of the men and women of Eretz-Yisrael has been made not with knives and bullets, but with a firm resolve not to be deflected one iota from the task of building up the Jewish National Home.[9]

"Havlaga," wrote English Zionist Paul Goodman, "springs from that feeling of patriotism which would not sully Jewish honour by murder and arson, but which would manifest that the Jews in their National Home represent not only a material factor but also a moral civilizing

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[8]Shertok interview with Wauchope 15.8.36 Yoman Medini 1936 pp.207-8.

[9]Zionist Review May 1936.

force!"[10] Many, similarly, thought Jewish behaviour "marvellous" under the circumstances.[11] The outspoken Gilyonot complained of an exaggerated amount of self-praise. If others found Jewish behaviour laudatory, well and good, but one was left with a distinct sense of distaste reading the smug and self-satisfied compliments on havlaga, creating the danger, the journal warned, that the concept would become a fetish, detached from the political reality that had created it.[12]

The psychological and propagandistic importance of havlaga, then, was no less important than its primary political function -- to stress the Yishuv's loyalty to Britain and to avoid providing the Mandatory authorities with any excuse to curtail immigration. The Jewish ability to refrain from official reprisals, and the general disdain for the apparently wanton and indiscriminate acts of terror that were the hallmark of some Arab attacks, allowed the leaders of the Zionist movement to present their struggle with a sense of moral self-certitude that nicely complemented their view of the negative, violent and corrupt character of Arab nationalism. "We had not yet qualified as a nation," Weizmann told Colonial Office Officials bitterly in August 1936, "because we did not go and kill nurses and children."[13]

The policy of havlaga, officially in force throughout the three years of the disturbances, was extremely unpopular, and not only with the "dissidents!". Official historiography[14] has it that the

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[10]Ibid. July 1936.

[11]HaAretz 5.6.36.

[12]Gilyonot May 1936.

[13]Weizmann interview at Colonial Office 31.8.36, S25/6329.

[14]See Y. Heller "Bayn Historia le'Autohistoria" Ammot, 1964-65, for a caustic critique of the politicized historiography of Sefer Toldot HaHagana.

main opponents of havlaga were the Revisionist members of Irgun B, a faction of the Hagana that had left in 1931 to form its own organization, and which did not accept the authority of the national institutions. In April 1937 Irgun B split and about half of its membership of 3000, led by Avaraham Tahoni, rejoined the Hagana. Those remaining, for the most part dedicated Revisionists, led by men like David Raziel and Avraham Stern, formed the nucleus of the Irgun Tsvai Leumi, the military arm of the Revisionist movement.[15] Irgun B had been supported by the Yishuv's "civilian" (i.e. non-socialist) parties and other groups opposed to the Left's domination of the Hagana, who wanted, they feared, to turn it into a kind of Palestinian Schutzbund.[16] Apart from such class antagonisms there were other differences of outlook between Irgun B and the Hagana. A strong Sephardi element gave the dissident organization an activist position on how best to deal with the Arabs. "As a native of the country who knew the Arabs," one Irgun B member recalled later,

> I knew very well that havlaga would be interpreted as weakness and would encourage an increase of Arab attacks upon Jews. Wanting to calm things down amongst the Arabs and show them the damage that was being caused to them by the increasingly serious disturbances, I knew that I couldn't let the Arab rioters led by the Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee run wild and believe that attacks, murders and ambushes would defeat the Yishuv.[17]

While infringements of havlaga by Irgun B, and later by the Irgun Tsvai Leumi were described as serious transgressions of national discipline, unofficial reprisals carried out by local Hagana commanders or disgruntled members of the rank and file met with less severe condemnation. The death of three Jews after shots were fired

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[15]STH chapter 38 and D. Niv, Ma'archot HaIrgun Hatsvai HaLeumi Vol. 2.

[16]STH p.727. E. Eliachar, Lihiot 'im HaFalastinaim p.65.

[17]Eliachar p.66.

at a crowd leaving Jerusalem's Edison Cinema, on 16.5.36 was responded to by a Hagana grenade attack on a cafe in the Romema district of the city, causing the deaths of "three well-known gang members from Lifta."[18] The response was even more vigorous, when, in mid-August 1936, the Hagana command authorized large-scale reprisal actions in the Tel Aviv area after a bomb was thrown at a train in Tel Aviv and two Jewish nurses murdered on their way to work at the Government Hospital in Jaffa.[19] Such incidents were only two of a great number of official and non-official reprisals that were carried out throughout the period in direct contravention of havlaga.[20] But it was only when opposition to havlaga took on a more overtly political dimension that went beyond the natural frustration and anger of armed, alert men watching their fields and orchards burn, or being sitting duck targets for Arab snipers on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, that the national institutions and the press waged a more forceful campaign against the dissidents. It was with the utmost conviction that the Hagana's reprisals were imparted with a greater sense of moral justification than those of Irgun B, but charges that only the dissidents used indiscriminate terror and were therefore "no better than the Arabs" were most patently the result of the JAE's need to contain the Revisionist threat rather than the absolute truth about Jewish reprisals. The official history of the Hagana records at least one case when an official Hagana reprisal in Haifa succeeding only in killing a number of women and children -- fellahin on their way to market who had no connection with the recent Arab attacks that had

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[18] HaHagana b'Yerushalayim, (Jerusalem 1973) pp.153-192.

[19] STH p.671, E. Dekel, Alilot Shai p.146, Niv, Vol. 1 pp.267-8.

[20] STH pp.671-2, 840-4.

led to the reprisal decision.[21]

The principle of the "purity of arms" was a useful and comforting device for internal and external propaganda, but bore little relationship to the reality of Jewish anger and frustration in the face of Arab attacks. The cruel reality of the disturbances played havoc with the ideals of socialist settlers. "Havlaga!," wrote one member of Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz Afikim despairingly;

> all night the watchman hears rustling from the orchard, and in the morning finds all uprooted. Havlaga! The frontier police forbid us to put out fires in the fields -- the fields burn. Havlaga! A rifle is stolen from a watchman in Rishon Lezion....Havlaga!....What is Havlaga? Restraint or fear? We won't go and uproot orchards or burn Arab villages, but will we just make do with collecting funds for the victims of the sabotage? Is that the answer to the wild desert rising to destroy us? That is not the way.[22]

The renewal of the disturbances on a large scale in October 1937 brought a new crisis for the policy of self-restraint. The murder of Avinoam Yellin, a senior official in the Government department of education[23] and of five Jewish workers on the road to Jerusalem, triggered off a wave of reprisals. The five were murdered on November 9. Two days later a dead Arab was found in the city's Sanhedria quarter; a bomb was thrown at a group of Arab workmen and one Arab was killed in a bomb explosion on Jaffa road. A report described "furious [Jewish] youngsters roaming the streets knocking over the goods of Arabs from the Old City and smashing carts of vegetables."[24]

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[21]Ibid. pp.830-1.

[22]Ibid. p.839.

[23]Yellin's death was linked with that of Levi Billig (killed on 20.8.36), a lecturer in Arabic at the Hebrew University. Both men had devoted their lives to the study of and friendship with the Arabs, and both murdered. Billig's corpse was found surrounded by Arabic manuscripts.

[24]Report. A.C. Cohen 12.11.37, S25/4964.

A special meeting of the Vaad Leumi was called to warn of the danger of Jewish retaliation. At a time when the government was, for the first time beginning to take more forceful action against the Arabs, it would be disastrous if the Yishuv were to lose control, Shertok lectured, stressing the utilitarian not moral arguments:

> If a Jew in Rehavia or Tel Aviv, or anywhere else kills an Arab on his way to work, or selling milk, or just one or two Arabs going about their business, this does not stop a gang in the Judean Hills from killing five Jewish lads when they find themselves an easy target.[25]

Morality, however, still remained a consideration and there was deep concern about the effect of anti-Arab retaliation on Jewish children. A member of the JAE had been horrified to find a group of Jewish children dancing round the corpse of an Arab worker murdered in Rehavia, apparently in retaliation for Yellin's death.[26] The Education Department of the Vaad Leumi held a special meeting to explain to teachers the need to discuss the question with their pupils. "Any attempt at retaliation," declared a JAE appeal, "not merely tends to intensify Arab terrorism but constitutes a slur on the moral record of Palestine Jewry, hampers it in its political struggle and undermines its own security."[27] The November reprisals were the work of the Irgun, which on the orders of David Raziel, killed seven Arabs in Jerusalem on November 14,[28] but it is not impossible that angry individuals, members of the Hagana, also infringed havlaga.[29] The

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[25]Vaad Leumi 15.11.37, J1/7237.

[26]Ibid. and R. Benyamin on Jewish reprisals, Moznaim Winter, 1937.

[27]Appeal in S25/4964, 15.11.37. Arthur Ruppin noted: "all the members [of the JAE] expressed their disapproval of these acts of terrorism on the part of the Jews -- strangely enough with the exception of Rabbi Fishman, who even defended them with quotations from Maimonides." Arthur Ruppin, Memories, Diaries, Letters 14.11.37 p.288.

[28]STH p.846, Niv, Vol. 2 pp.33-38, and Yaakov Shavit, Onat HaSayd: HaSaison p.29.

[29]STH p.803, 1056.

non-Revisionist press expressed its outrage at the atrocities. Everything must be done, Moshe Smilansky argued, to avoid the impression that a state of war existed between Jews and Arabs. Only by refraining from acts of revenge could the Jews be seen as the attacked, injured party and maintain their superior moral standards over the wild desert.[30]

The trial and execution of Shlomo Ben-Yosef, a Betar[31] member from Rosh Pina, convicted of shooting at an Arab bus on 21.4.38 in retaliation for the previous murder of five Jews, led to new pressure on havlega, though, as Shertok confided to his diary a few days before the hanging, it was really meaningless to threaten to end the policy when between seven to 10 Arabs had already been killed by Jews who could no longer restrain themselves.[32] The atmosphere in the Yishuv was described as "hysterical."[33] Ben-Gurion realised the dangers in hanging Ben-Yosef. Alive, he argued, a handful of irresponsible Betarists and the Irgun could not hope to win wide public support, but one martyr could do much to popularize their extremism.[34] If the Jewish Agency struggled for leniency for Ben-Yosef, it was more out of concern for the possible negative consequences of his death for the Zionist movement as a whole than for the life of the young terrorist. Extreme Revisionists, according to one source, even tried to interfere with attempts to save Ben-Yosef, in the

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[30]Bustanai 27.10.37, 3, 17.11.37. HaOlam 18.11.37 and HaAretz 16.11.37 demanded that the 'Organized Yishuv' turn against the Irgun.

[31]Betar -- initials for Brit Yosef Trumpeldor, Revisionist Youth Movement.

[32]Shertok, Yoman Medini 1938, 24.6.38.

[33]Mapai Political Committee 22.6.38 (BB).

[34]JAE 7.6.38.

knowledge that he would be far more valuable to them dead than alive, and two days before the execution held demonstrations calling for an end to havlaga.[35]

The Irgun went wild following the execution, carrying out a series of anti-Arab reprisals that brought Zionist terror to unprecedented heights. In a tragic caricature of the organization's simplistic ideology, an Arab was hanged in Haifa. It began placing bombs in Arab markets and public places, using young Oriental Jews to mingle anonymously with the Arab crowds. A bomb that exploded on the 25th of July 1938 in a busy Haifa marketplace killed 35 Arabs.[36] The Irgun's operations did not have the desired effect of causing Arab resentment against their own leaders and they in fact increased Arab hostility.[37] The response of the "organized Yishuv," led by the Jewish Agency, to these manifestations of indiscriminate Jewish terror was uncompromisingly hostile. The Arabs, Ben-Gurion argued, were displaying astonishing determination to resist the British and the Zionists. The glimpse he had first seen in 1933 in the activities of Sheikh al-Qassam, of a dedicated Arab National Movement, prepared to make sacrifices for a national cause, was now an everyday phenomenon. True, the Palestinian Arabs received outside support, but the source and inspiration of the movement, he stressed, was Arab. This required, more than ever before, dependence on and loyalty to

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[35]STH p.811.

[36]STH gives the number of dead as 50. Zionist Review, 28.7.38, said 30; Niv, Vol. 2 quotes government source as giving figure of 35 dead. Since it is likely that the government and the non-Revisionist press underestimated, and the STH exaggerated, for political reasons, the figure could be anywhere between 30 and 50.

[37]See Porath, Palestinian Arab p.238.

Britain and Zionist counter-terror could only damage this crucial relationship.[38] The fate of the Yishuv and of the Zionist movement would be decided "not in the suburbs of Jaffa, nor in the Nablus hills nor in the Government Offices in Jerusalem, but in London."

Public objections to the wave of Jewish terror were based on both practical and ethical grounds.[39] "Despite all provocation," wrote one English Zionist paper:

> the Jews cannot and must not compete with the methods of the Arab gangsters. The daily toll of Jewish victims and the inability of the authorities to give them adequate protection, are humiliating and mortifying. But apart from the ethical objection to reprisals -- an objection deeply rooted in Jewry -- Jews in Palestine will gain nothing by employing such methods, and can lose much; a day after the incidents in Jerusalem, five more Jews were murdered ....as we go to press 6 Jews have lost their lives in Haifa.[40]

The press, united in its hostility to the Irgun and the Revisionists, was nevertheless unwilling to accept that Jews responsible for such terrible outrages. After a bomb explosion in the Old City of Jerusalem on July 15, timed to go off as crowds were surging out of the Mosques, Davar felt it highly unlikely that it could be the work of Jews, who could not move freely in the Old City, let alone plant bombs there.[41] The Palestine Post thought that "it would be idle to pretend that there are not mischief-makers among Jews," but blamed the distribution of a distorted version of a private letter from Colonel Wedgewood to the "Association of Former Jewish Army Officers,"

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[38]JAE 7.7.38.

[39]HaPoel Hatzair 15.7.38, "On the Chasm's edge," P. Lubianker. HaAretz 12.7.38, HaOlam, 14.7.38.

[40]New Judea July 1938.

[41]Davar 17.7.38.

("an organization of some fussy and presumptuous non-entities with patent Revisionist leanings"[42]) calling for reprisals against innocent Arabs, for increased support for anti-Arab retaliation. "In the circumstances," the Post editorialized,

> the "revolt" is on the verge of collapse, and nothing short of a "war" involving the whole population could give it fresh impetus. What surer way of spreading the seed of inter-racial war than to make each Arab believe that each Jew is his enemy, and what surer means can there be of creating that belief than by manufacturing the type of crime which, in its sacrifices and resultant panic, makes the credulous Arab point to the Jew as its author.[43]

The press was even more reluctant to believe that Jews had carried out the Haifa explosion of July 25.[44] "Within a short time," wrote one paper,

> interested parties spread a rumour....that it was the action of Jews, and very soon Jewish passers-by were being stoned and shot, and Jewish houses and businesses being set on fire. The toll of killed and wounded from this single act was the highest ever recorded. If anything were calculated to inflame the Arab people against the Jews it was this outrage.....The weapon of libel in the hands of Jews and anti-Zionists is no new one. The celebrated blood-libel has been used extensively to fan the flames of anti-semitism. Yet no reasonable person now believes that there is any foundation to it in fact. In Palestine it is easier to produce libels, and easier still to impress the inarticulate Arab peasant as to its truth.[45]

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[42]Shertok to Lourie 14.7.38, S25/4964. Also for original Wedgewood letter of 30.5.38 and distorted Hebrew version.

[43]Palestine Post 17.7.38.

[44]See Niv. Vol. 2 p.79 for a graphic description of the operation.

[45]Zionist Review 28.7.38. cf. HaOlam 28.7.38 and A. Ruppin Memories op.cit., p.294, diary entry for 26.7.38: "The Arabs naturally regard this as a Jewish reprisal. I think it doubtful. I am inclined to believe that this is an intervention by some external factor who would like to see civil war break out."

Ben-Tsvi and Elmaleh of the Vaad Leumi proposed the publication of a denial that Jews had any hand in the Haifa atrocity, and claiming that it was the work of Arab agents provocateurs. Shertok, Joseph, and in particular Ben-Gurion, however, were opposed to such a statement, arguing that it was bad enough that Arabs were dying in such numbers without accusing them of being responsible, and there was, anyway, a strong suspicion that it was the work of Revisionists.[46]

The summer of 1938 and 1939 saw the concentration of official Jewish defence activities within the framework of cooperation with the British. Wingate's Special Night Squads, with their policy of active pursuit and engagement of the Arab gangs, were never considered an infringement of havlaga, highlighting the fact that the real definition of Jewish restraint was, in practice, the extent to which a policy of retaliation was sanctioned by the British. Official hostility to the Irgun's activities increased together with the growth of legal Jewish defence. The left-wing press, and particularly Mapai's Hapoel Hatzair, argued that the Revisionist's breaking of havlaga on July 8, 1938 (a more or less arbitrary date that ignored earlier Irgun and Hagana infringements) had contributed to a process of internal consolidation within the Arab camp. This argument stood in at least partial contradiction to the recurrent claims that internal Arab solidarity resulted from the internal terror and intimidation that marked the later stages of the disturbances. The main thrust of the attack against the Irgun, however, was directed against its challenge to the authority of the Jewish Agency, a serious blow at the strength and unity of the Yishuv.[47]

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[46]Yoman Medini 1938, p.207-8, 25.7.38.

[47]HaPoel Hatzair 21.10, 4.11.38, BaMaale 19.8.38.

While on the one hand the JAF attached considerable importance to the struggle against Jewish terror, it was wary of allowing the anti-terror campaign, which grew in scale in the summer of 1939,[48] to become the monopoly of groups and individuals who, as Leo Kohn put it, were "not in agreement with the general line of the Yishuv and the Agency." Kohn's objection to an appeal entitled "Thou Shalt Not Kill," for which signatures were being collected in June, 1939, was that, "like so much of the political activity of our Jews, the present effort is governed preeminently by the motive (of satisfying) the personal feelings, or the conscience, national or individual, of those who take part in it." He was particularly concerned about the appearance of a disproportionate number of names associated with the Brit Shalom group:

> These men whose names crowd this list are known to the community at large to be opposed to the general line of our national policy. I am not a nationalist fanatic. I believe that the Zionist faith is comprehensive enough to permit of many shades, and that a man may be a good nationalist, even if he does not adopt the full-blooded line that we are taking officially.[49]

But a list like the present one, including such names, Kohn continued, would have the effect of tarring other, more politically acceptable names -- of which there were an impressive number -- with the same brush,

> while our real interest in the present position is to convey that those who most strongly oppose the White Paper and any compromise with the policy it embodies, are also those who, because of their

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[48]The killing of 11 Arabs by the Irgun on 29.6.39 met with unanimous condemnation from the press. HaAretz, Davar, HaTsofe & Palestine Post 30.6.39.

[49]L. Kohn to Shertok 3.7.39 TSA 68/27.

> intense nationalism, oppose murder and terrorism as a political weapon.[50]

Kohn proposed, therefore, that the organization of the appeal should be taken out of the "incompetent, if well-meaning hands" which were running it, that a planned reference to the [Jewish] "terrorists and their sympathizers" should be deleted in order not to give the impression that the Irgun had a mass following, and that only a small number of people should be asked to sign, including some representatives of the Right, without the Revisionists of courxe.[51] An anthology that appeared around this time argued that the Irgun's operations were merely broadening the base of the Arab terror. Martin Buber described them as a "fly bothering a busy man," and Robert Weltsch wrote that if the wave of Jewish terrorism was likely to lead to the victory of Zionism, then it was preferable to give up and accept defeat.[52]

The issue of havlaga can only be understood within the framework of the Zionist-British relationship. The bitter debates and controversies that the question aroused resulted from the fact that those who infringed it were seen as threatening the very lifeline of the Zionist movement -- the relationship with Britain, and it was only a small minority who related to the issue in terms of its possible effect on future relations with the Arabs.

THE JEWS AND THE ARAB OPPOSITION

One of the legacies of Kalvarisky and Colonel Kisch in the Political

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[50]Ibid. For draft petition and list of signatures see S25/4964.

[51]The Political Department published an Arabic version of "Thou Shalt not Kill." 2,500 copies were sent to the neighbouring Arab countries. Davar 21.7.39.

[52]Neged HaTerror ed. R. Benyamin & Y. Petersheil, quoted in Shavit, Onat Hasayd, op.cit., p.37.

Department was an intense suspicion of the idea of the "moderate" Arab. Early hopes that the existence of such a creature would prove to be the salvation of the Jewish National Home in the face of Husseini-led extremism were replaced by a stark pessimism that the Arab camp was more or less united in its opposition to Zionism.[53] It is important to make the distinction between "moderates," which for the Jews meant Arabs who were not totally opposed to the growth of the National Home and continued immigration, and the considerable number of Arabs who were prepared to cooperate with Jewish institutions for the sake of financial gain, either by the supply of information, help in land purchases or the publication of certain material in the Arab press. None of these activities necessarily implied what the Zionists meant by "moderation" although in many cases the Arab concerned was opposed to the activities of the Mufti, which gave him at least some common ground with the Jews.

The activities of Raghib Bey al-Nashashibi, founder of the National Defence Party (Hizb al-Difa'a al-Watani), chief rival of the Mufti of Jerusalem and recognized leader of the Arab opposition on the Arab Higher Committee in the summer of 1936, highlight the difficulties for Jewish cooperation with "moderates." Originally opposed to the declaration of a general strike, once it started he decided to support it, in order, it was felt, to compete with Haj Amin. Subsequently he had become "plus papiste que la pape" and the most extreme views and proposals emanated from the so-called "moderates," possibly, Shertok conceded, in order to make the strike so dangerous as to force the British to suppress it,[54] a tactic which Ben-Gurion

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[53]See N. Caplan, The Yishuv and the Arab Question, esp. pp.423-4.

[54]Mapai political committee 25.4.36., JAE 3.5.36.

described as "Revisionist."[55] Musa Alami told Ben-Gurion that the strike and the rebellion were nothing more than a new stage in the traditional Husseini-Nashashibi feud, a conflict that in reality had little to do with the Jews at all.[56]

Despite uncertainty as to his true position, attempts were made to hold negotiations with Raghib in June 1936, in the hope of stopping the strike. Raghib expressed an interest in travelling to London "in order to serve his people" and asked the JAE to pay for the journey. Chaim Solomon, a member of Jerusalem Municipality, who had been on good terms with Raghib since his days as Mayor, acted as an intermediary between him and the JAE, but this attempt fell through.[57]

Other efforts were made to create friendly relations with Arab groups opposed to the Mufti. In December 1936 representatives of the JAE met Sheikh Abd al-Fatah Darwish, leader of the Beni Hassan tribe in the Jerusalem area, who had recently been released from the detention camp at Sarafand. Sheikh Darwish proposed the creation of a rural political organization "that would free the villages from the yoke of the effendis and the urban political activists." He was confident that such an organization would soon form a threat to the monopoly of the extreme urban parties over the village youth, and urged the Jews to name a sum they would be prepared to allot him for a year's work, expenses to include salaries for himself and his son, office, telephone, travelling and propaganda budgets. The Jewish representatives (Ben-Tsvi, Chaim Solomon and Aharon Chaim

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[55] Zikhronot 1936 13.9.36 p.432.

[56] Ben-Gurion meeting with Musa Alami 6.5.36 My Talks with Arab Leaders, Ben-Gurion to Dov Hoz 7.5.36 Zikhronot 1936.

[57] Talks, p.87.

Cohen) suggested he be allotted a minimum sum of £1200 for the first year's activities.[58] Some months later Darwish received death threats if he continued to deal with the Jews and asked for the Jewish Agency's support to embark on a campaign against the terrorizing of Arabs who wished to sell land. Ben-Gurion and Joseph nevertheless refused to publish the names of prominent Arabs who had sold land in order to help the Sheikh refute his enemies' charges.[59] In spite of the attempts of Elie Eliachar, a prominent member of Jerusalem's Sephardi community who had bought considerable amounts of land from Darwish, the Political Department was not prepared to support the Sheikh to the extent that he asked, although he claimed to have found considerable support in the Jerusalem area, and was convinced that once the new party got off the ground, Raghib Nashashibi would agree to accept the leadership.[60]

The Political Department's unwillingness to commit itself too deeply to ventures of this nature resulted primarily from its inability to bear the financial burdens involved and from the wariness that inevitably resulted from the demands of such "moderates" for considerable sums of money to finance their activities.

With the emergence of the partition proposal, the JAE realised that it was important to maintain contact with the Nashashibis, particularly because of Raghib's warm friendship with the Emir Abdullah, united as they were by their common opposition to the Mufti. The Jews were not averse to exploiting Raghib's constantly difficult financial position to force him to cooperate with them and offered,

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[58]A.H. Cohen, Report 20.11.36. S25/3051.

[59]B. Joseph diary. 12.3.37. S25/1511.

[60]Ibid. 5.4.37. Eliachar, op.cit. p.67.

on more than one occasion, to help him get loans in return for a guarantee of political support.[61] In May 1937, however, Raghib, still in financial trouble, was "completely exhausted" and too scared to face up to Haj Amin.[62]

It was not until late 1937, with the dissolution of the Arab Higher Committee and the flight of most of the Mufti's supporters that the Nashashibis were able to embark on an independent political initiative. Although in October they still maintained contact with the Mufti (for appearances' sake, some claimed), there were also signs that they wished to reorganize the National Defence Party.[63] Ben-Tsvi, Shertok noted in his diary on 16.10.37,

> raised the question of whether we should take the initiative in gingering up the Arab opposition-Nashashibi and his crowd, into political activity together with the Emir. Rutenberg appears to be very keen on taking this line immediately.[64]

Shertok's initial reaction was sceptical and he decided that first it would have to be ascertained whether the existence of the Nashashibi group was still a political reality, and, if so, whether it was prepared to come out in open support of the government, and whether they and Abdullah were real allies. "In general," he wrote,

> it might be worth while to help an Arab group which had the courage of its convictions -- or interests -- but lacked other necessities, but ....it was no use at all wasting money and political efforts in order to help those who were still terrorised into a state of complete self-obliteration.[65]

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[61]Political Department Diary, 8.8.36. S25/443. Also JAF 2.5.37.

[62]Shertok Diary, 19.5.37. Yoman Medini 1937, pp.132-3.

[63]JAE, 10.10.37. Mapai Party centre, 10.10.37. (BB).

[64]Shertok Diary, 16.10.37. A245/4.

[65]Ibid. and Shertok to Weizmann, 19.10.37. Z4/17032.

Raghib, meanwhile, was unwilling to make any kind of open alliance with the Jews, as he was unsure that the government's new policy had come to stay. He would like back his old job as Mayor of Jerusalem, but would be afraid to assume office now if offered it although "he would not mind having an Englishman appointed to keep the seat warm for him."

> With regard to the political future of the country, he was quite prepared to cooperate and fall in with whatever line we would decide to take. He claimed, of course, that all his friends, the mayors, some of the big landowners, the soap manufacturers of Nablus, etc., were solidly behind him but that the time for open action had not yet arrived. All this [Shertok continued] did not sound very convincing and in any case lacked the touch of any immediate importance.[66]

Fakhri Nashashibi, younger and more adventurous than Raghib, was extremely excited about the new possibilities opened up by the Mufti's flight. The hour of the opposition, he enthused, had come at last. Fakhri was angry with his uncle, who, he said, was old, senile and opportunist, and too cowardly to do anything. He, Fakhri, would begin a campaign of immediate action, strengthening the party, attracting new members, bringing the population under its sway. All he needed was Jewish money.[67]

A meeting arranged between Shertok and Fakhri at the beginning of November did not take place, possibly due to the increased tension caused by the wave of Jewish retaliatory measures initiated by the Irgun in November.[68] In December, however, Raghib contacted the Jewish Agency, again via Chaim Solomon, asking for money to help fight the terrorists. Shertok was in favour of the proposal, but

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[66]Ibid. 17.10.37, discussion with Ben-Tsvi and Solomon.

[67]Ibid. D. HaCohen, talk with Fakhri Nashashibi.

[68]Ibid. 4.11.37.

Ben-Gurion felt that although political help was alright, the Agency had to draw the line at participating directly in the war against the terrorists.[69]

It is not clear what steps, if any, the Political Department took to maintain contact with the Nashashibis. At any rate Raghib was still pestering in March 1938 and told Y. Franco, the secretary of Jerusalem Municipality, that it was worth the Jews' while to spend money on him. He lacked neither men nor arms to fight the Mufti's terrorists, but, as usual, was short of money. For £2000, he said, he could weaken the terror and explained that "if the Jews thought a little about the future, they'd buy people like us, and not like the ones Kalvarisky bought." He asked the Agency to arrange that the Anglo-Palestine Bank give him a loan of £5000 at eight per cent interest so that he could settle his personal debts, fight the terrorists and buy two newspapers to wage a campaign against the Mufti and for the restoration of peace.[70]

Such appeals were hardly calculated to dispel Jewish Agency's apprehensions about the efficacy of cooperation with the Nashashibis, nor were they seen as offering a viable alternative to the rule of the Husseinis. Leo Kohn described the opposition group as "played out" and felt, in April 1938, that the position of the Palestinian Arabs, disillusioned, economically broken, leaderless, and with partition hanging over their heads, provided the Jews with an opportunity "by an active policy in the economic and political field, to consolidate out of the amorphous mass of the various strata of

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[69] Zikhronot 1937 14.12.37. p.473.

[70] Y. Franco -- Shertok, 18.3.38. S25/3051.

Palestinian Arabs some political groupment of a novel kind."[71]

Fakhri, who had meanwhile parted company from his uncle, was no less persistent in demanding Jewish help. Despite his willingness to wage open war against the terrorists, the government had refused to come to his aid, and it was therefore up to the Agency to step into the breach. Shertok told Fakhri's emissary, Jamil Abyad, a Christian Arab from Haifa, who had sold much land to the Jews in the north, that the Jewish Agency could not help Fakhri if he was fighting the Mufti on his own terms. Like his uncle in 1936, Fakhri too would be forced to "out-Mufti the Mufti" in his opposition to partition, Jewish immigration etc. Ignoring Abyad's protests that once they got rid of the Mufti Fakhri would "change his spots," Shertok was adamant:

> I said that such tactics wouldn't do us any good and what is more, the proposals could not succeed. It would be a different matter if he took a strong line against the terror and for the restoration of peace, but his attempt to compete with the Mufti's Arab patriotism was doomed to failure.[72]

The late summer and autumn of 1938 saw an increase in the frequency and intensity of Arab attacks. On 8.9.38 an attempt was made to conquer the Old City of Jerusalem; two days later seven workers of the Palestine Electric Corporation were killed in the south; the following week seven people were killed by mines; on 2.10.38 19 Jews were killed in an attack on Tiberias. Jewish retaliation, apart from the activities of the British Army, must have played some part in the deterioration of the situation; on August 6 the Irgun planted a bomb in Jaffa, which had become the site for the frequent murders of townsmen who refused to submit to the authority of the rebels.[73]

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[71]Kohn to Shertok. 21.4.38. ISA 68/21.

[72]Yoman Medini 1938, 21.7.38. p.194 and Ibid., 23.6.38. p.137 on Thon meeting with Fakhri Nashashibi.

[73]STH pp.771-4.

Jaffa and Jerusalem, a report from the end of August stated, were full of rural rebels, who were forcing the urban population to don the kufiyyah and the 'iqal instead of their Ottoman tarbush, to allow them to mix freely with the local population and frustrate the attempts of the security forces to locate them. One version was that it was being done to boost the sales of an enterprising Iraqi kufiyyah manufacturer, supporting the terror in Palestine for purely commercial reasons.[74] The Zionist press expressed its utter contempt for the fickle and cowardly submission to terror that this move symbolized, and sneered at the emptiness and superficiality of Arab nationalism:

> When the history of these stirring times is written, and the devastation suffered by the Holy Land assessed, the chronicler will add a postscript: in the third year of the disturbances the Arab townsfolk acknowledged the hegemony of the wild banditry by substituting for the tarboosh or panama, the kefia and agal. That was their contribution to the national cause.[75]

Some individuals acted on their own initiative to do what they could to help and encourage the Arab opposition. Gad Makhnes, a native of Petah Tikva and prominent member of the Farmers Federation, was in contact with Abd al-Rauf Bittar, who was ready to go back to Jaffa provided he was given 30 pistol licences for his men "who would help the troops clean up the terrorist nests in that town." Joseph explained the Jewish Agency's position on the Arab opposition at this stage. (October 1938) --

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[74]A.C. Cohen Report 30.8.38 "The replacement of the Tarbush by the Kefiyeh and Aqal," S25/3541 & A.C. Cohen Report on Internal Arab terror, 9.1.38-12.9.38, 6.11.38, S25/9902.

[75]Palestine Post, 1.9.38. "Fashion Note," Davar, 2.9.38. Palestine Review 9.9.38 "A Sermon on Hats" Daoud Bey al-Yahoud. HaPoel Hatzair, 21.10.38.

> I said that we are generally favouring the policy of producing an open rift but we have to be careful about every single step we take, keeping always in mind the possibility of the Opposition realising that they can't break the Mufti but have got to come to terms with him.[76]

If it was not felt possible to actively cooperate with the opposition, it was nevertheless considered important to remind the English public of the existence of Arab "moderates" and to explain that any statements they made against partition, etc., were valueless, since they were almost certainly made under the pressure of threats and intimidation.[77] The existence of an Arab opposition became increasingly prominent in Zionist propaganda while the question of practical cooperation between the Jews and the Nashashibis was relegated to a position of secondary importance. With the Government's publication of the Woodhead Report and announcement of its intention to convene a Palestine conference it became particularly important for the Zionists to show that the Palestinian Arabs were not united behind the extremist and uncompromising demands of Haj Amin and his supporters.

Fakhri's memorandum to the High Commissioner, prompted by the government announcement of November 9, was welcomed by the Jews as a reminder that there were other Arabs in Palestine besides the Mufti and his clique, and that these had the right to representation at the forthcoming conference. There were no illusions about Fakhri's intentions towards the Jews, however, and his three demands, an end to immigration, land sales, and for self-government, were no less extreme than those of the Mufti. Unlike his rival, though, he

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[76]Joseph to Shertok, 8.10.38. S25/1513.

[77]Kohn to Epstein, Zaslani, Sasson, 15.6.38. ISA 68/21.

did not mention the Jews simply under the heading of "minorities" and talked of "guaranteeing justice and equality for the two peoples living in this country."[78] Having embarked on his campaign, Fakhri, David HaCohen reported, was "in good spirits,"

> confident that he will succeed, fully cognizant that failure means death. HaCohen as a friend asked whether he could assist F. in any way but the latter declined with thanks. He said that he merely wished the Jews to know what he was doing and that the Mufti did not represent all the Arabs of Palestine. F. hopes shortly to be able to take a number of further steps which will prove to the public that there is a strong opposition to the Mufti in the country and that the majority of the Arabs of Palestine really want peace, and if they fear the Jews, they fear the Mufti more.[79]

Fakhri's first big success was the organization of a meeting of people opposed to the Mufti at Yatah, near Hebron.[80] Encouraged by his progress he hoped to be able to persuade other members of the opposition, including Suleiman Touqan, Mayor of Nablus, and Ragheb, to come back from Egypt to take part in the struggle. He also hoped to gain control of Falastin and use it in the campaign.[81] The Palestine Post rejected charges that the Jews were financing Fakhri's activities:

> We very much doubt whether any Jewish body could find the money the Jews now need so desparately in helping Arabs oppose the terrorists, but even if

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[78]HaAretz, 17.11.38. Davar, 16.11.38. HaPoel Hatzair, 25.11.38. "The Arab Leadership," A. Ankorion.

[79]Joseph Diary, 27.11.38. S25/43.

[80]A.C. Cohen Report on Yatah Meeting, 18.12.38. S25/3045. JAE, 18.12.38. Mapai party centre, 19.12.38. For Davar, 20.12.38, the real value of the Yatah demonstration was that it proved that there were others besides the Mufti who had the right to be represented at the conference. Also Davar 25.12.38, "The Struggle of the Arab Opposition," M. Asaf. and Porath, Palestinian Arab p.254.

[81]Joseph Diary, 20.12.38. S25/43.

> that were contemplated it is certainly a far less reprehensible action than to accept the money of foreign powers in order to finance bloodshed. As it happens neither the Emir Abdullah nor Fakhri Bey need the stimulus of the Zionists to oppose the bloody regime from which the Arabs have so terribly suffered. If the Jews are encouraged by the revival of the opposition to Haj Amin it is not because they expect it to be necessarily more favourable to Zionist aims, but because it is a move against the use of the gun and the bomb which have disgraced Palestine for so long.[82]

At first the Political Department was in fact a little puzzled as to who was financing Fakhri. Neither the Italians, nor the Germans nor the Jewish Agency were helping him. Fakhri's proud, heroic, answer was that he and his men neither needed nor wanted money, their only desire was to fight the Mufti. This was hardly convincing, however, since he had only recently stopped pestering the Agency for financial aid:

> When Sasson pressed him again enquiring whether the government or the military authorities were helping him, Fakhri gave an evasive answer. He said that higher government officials were against him and favoured strengthening the Mufti's party, but there were certain lesser government officials with whom he was in touch and who gave him advice from time to time.[83]

This was borne out by an interview between Dr. Joseph and Kirkbride, the District Commissioner of Galilee. Kirkbride, Joseph reported,

> said that he thought it necessary to encourage the moderate elements among the Arabs. He had been distressed to see the attitude of the central government when the opposition first began to show signs of life. It took him some time to persuade them that it was necessary to encourage the opposition. He had had a letter recently from Suleiman Toukan who, he understood, would soon be returning to Palestine. The Bittars were also returning to Jaffa. He himself had done what he could in this

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[82] Palestine Post, 5.12.38.

[83] Joseph Diary, 29.11.38. S25/43.

respect to help them.[84]

The bulk of Fakhri's money, however, was probably coming from Pinhas Rutenberg, who, on the advice of Elie Eliachar, and in line with his faith in the Emir Abdullah, had made the cause of the Arab opposition his own.[85] Rutenberg, Joseph reported in December, had complained that the Agency was

> not reacting properly to the Fakhri Nashashibi development in local politics. He evidently would like us to keep our hands off the matter and leave him to deal with it by himself. I am afraid I do not share his high opinion of his adviser on Arab political affairs [(Eliachar)] who is no doubt capable of handing out money lavishly but is not so particular as to worry about any political quid pro quo whatever.[86]

The Political Department did help Fakhri to a certain extent, organizing the printing and distribution of his memorandum to the High Commissioner[87] and suggested to him the publication of a booklet in English on the Mufti's activities, for distribution in London during the forthcoming talks.[88] Its main efforts, though, in December 1938

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[84]Joseph Interview with Kirkbride, 23.12.38. S25/43. Also Porath Palestinian Arab pp.255-6.

[85]In Lihiot 'Im HaFalastinaim (pp.67-9), Eliachar describes how he persuaded Rutenberg to support Fakhri's request for arms and Rutenberg convinced Eliahu Golomb and Yaakov Pat, the Hagana's Jerusalem commander, to supply the opposition with weapons, a decision which, according to Eliachar, was authorized by the JAE and the Vaad Leumi. Although Eliachar had his doubts about the operation, "especially depending on a young man who was known for his recklessness and irresponsibility," arms were delivered to Fakhri and "not 24 hours later everyone knew that three of the Mufti's men had been killed by the opposition." Eliachar claims that this incident took place in late 1937. Interview with the author, 21.7.1977.

[86]Joseph Diary, 29.12.38. S25/43 and JAE 29.1.39.

[87]E. Sasson, memorandum, 9.12.38. S25/3045.

[88]Joseph Diary, 27.12.38, S25/43. Sasson meeting with Fakhri, 28.12.38, S25/3139. Joseph to Shertok, 30.12.38. S25/1513.

and January 1939 were directed towards preparations for the London conference, including the question of the participation or non-participation of the Palestinian Arab opposition.

THE LONDON CONFERENCE[89]

Even before the Government's statement on November 9 the Jewish Agency and the Yishuv in general had been engaged in vigorous discussions as to whether they should participate in the London talks. The instinctive reaction was that the proposed conference could not do the Zionist movement any good, and, at worst, could do great and irreparable damage. The greatest danger was seen to be in the fact that non-Palestinian Arabs were destined to play an important role in the negotiations, a move which, according to reports reaching the Zionists, was the fruit of the Foreign Office's attempts to Pan-Arabize the Palestine question.[90] Another danger was the proposed participation of non-Zionist Jews -- Yahudim,[91] as Shmuel Dayan called them, who might undermine the authority of the Jewish

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[89]There are several good accounts of the course of the London Conference, notably in Y. Bauer Diplomacy and Resistance Chapter 1, N. Rose, The Gentile Zionists, Chapter 8 and C. Sykes, op.cit. Chapter 9. I have chosen to concentrate here on the contacts between the Jews and the Arab opposition, and the manifestations of "The Jewish Agency Version" at the conference.

[90]Mapai political committee, 26.10.38. Mapai party centre, 1.11.38. See Sasson to Vilensky, 29.10.38. S25/3139 for instructions on propaganda. Vilensky was instructed to stress that Awni abd al-Hadi, Alfred Rok and Jamal al-Husseini, applying for visas from the British Consulate in Cairo in order to attend the London talks, were members of a body [The Arab Higher Committee] which had been disbanded and outlawed by the British government. Also that the rumours that the Egyptian Prime Minister had been given permission to negotiate with the Mufti had caused astonishment, and that Mr. Smart from the British Legation in Cairo was behind this initiative.

[91]Derogatory East European term for rich, usually Anglo-Saxon, non or anti-Zionist Jew.

Agency by their willingness, resulting from their ignorance and "diaspora mentality," to make concessions to the British or Arabs.[92] The only person to welcome non-Jewish Agency participation was Dr. Senator of the JAE, who argued that this paralleled the participation of non-Palestinian Arabs in the conference.[93] The conference was soon dubbed as a new "Munich"[94] and the press expressed grave doubts as to whether the Jews should attend at all.[95]

At the meeting of the Mapai party centre on December 7 (at which Sasson and Zaslani were symbolically present) Ben-Gurion explained his view of the matter: due to British imperial considerations, connected to the fear of the coming war, Britain intended to appease the Arabs at the expense of the Jewish National Home. The debate in London would simply be the format, the procedure, in which the surrender would take place, the principled decision having already been made. The demand for immigration certificates for 10,000 Jewish refugee children from Germany should not prevent Jewish participation in the conference, although for a while Weizmann used the allocation of the certificates as the sine qua non of Jewish attendance.[96]

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[92]Mapai political committee, 26.10.38. Also A. Katznelson to Ben-Gurion, 24.10.38., BB, 4.1.38.

[93]JAE, 23.10.38.

[94]HaAretz, 16.12.38. M. Glickson "Towards the 'Munich' Conference" and A. Katznelson to Ben-Gurion, op.cit. 24.10.38.

[95]HaOlam, 4.12.38. Davar, 11.12.38.

[96]Rose, op.cit. pp.179-80. For Ben-Gurion the question of the children was a political, not a humanitarian question. "If I knew that all the children could be saved by sending them to England and only half by sending them to Eretz-Yisrael, I would choose the latter option, because we face not only the question of the children, but the historical interest of the Jewish people." Mapai party centre, 7.12.38.

The question of the composition of the Palestinian Arab delegation played a considerable part in the Zionists' debates on participation in the conference. It was realised that the representatives of the Arab countries would wish to give the Palestinian delegation a united character, and although they certainly wouldn't take Fakhri Nashashibi, who, Eliahu Golomb noted, was making a "considerable echo" in the Arab camp, it would not be difficult to persuade some other, less determined "moderate" to participate in the delegation and support the Mufti's demands. The encouraging of the Arab opposition to the Mufti, therefore, was one way of defeating the aim of the London talks. Golomb's approach was pragmatic: it would be a mistake to idealize the Arab opposition; they were not necessarily the Jews' allies, but it was in the Jewish interest to encourage any Arab group "which will destroy the image of an apparently unified Arab camp."[97] Ben-Gurion argued that there was no difference between "moderates" and "extremists" with regard to Zionism, and felt that not only was there no point in the "moderates" participating in the delegation, but that also it would be better for the Jews if the delegation was composed solely of "extremists," for a delegation with "moderate" representation would demonstrate to the world that the Arabs of Palestine were united in their demands, while the absence of the latter would allow the Jews to attack the unrepresentative character of the Palestinian delegation.[98]

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[97] Mapai party centre, 7.12.38.

[98] Ben-Gurion to Smaller Actions Committee, 17.12.38., ISA/68/21. Ben-Gurion at JAE, 11.12.38. E. Kaplan at Mapai party centre, 19.12.38. Lewis Namier wrote, in a memorandum entitled "Notes on the forthcoming Palestine Conference," that he was "personally inclined to believe that it might well be a positive advantage from a Jewish point of view that the Mufti attend the conference and be forced to show his hand," 18.12.38., S25/10350.

After much deliberating it was decided that the Jews would not boycott the conference, not because there was much hope that anything positive would emerge from it, but because public opinion, to which so much -- perhaps exaggerated -- importance was attached, required Jewish attendance. Ben-Gurion talked in grandiose terms of the Zionists' demands: "the government is gathering the Arab Kings in London; we'll assemble the Jewish Kings in America." They would argue on the basis of the Weizmann-Faysal agreement; the Jewish people needed "all of Eretz-Yisrael, at least western Eretz-Yisrael (my emphasis I.B.)," and would offer Iraq £10 million to settle 100,000 Arab families from Palestine. If it was a question simply of dealing with Iraq, he declared, such a plan might succeed, but Ibn Saud and the Egyptians would be in London too, and it was unlikely that they would allow Iraq to accept such an offer.[99]

In spite of the Jews' conclusion that they would have no choice but to attend the conference, it was felt prudent to let the British know that they were extremely unhappy about the whole affair. A letter from Leo Kohn to Weizmann, clearly intended, according to its tone and content, to reach a wider audience than just the recipient,[100] mentioned three factors which were regarded as vitiating the prospects of the talks. The first was the admission, implicit in the invitation of the Arab rulers to the conference, that these

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[99]Ben-Gurion at JAE 11.12.38.

[100]This was a relatively common practice, particularly between Kohn and Weizmann. It was unlikely that Kohn would write that "Tel Aviv is now part of Palestine as Bath is of England and the Emek with its chain of settlements is today as characteristic a feature of the Palestinian landscape as the Yorkshire moors are of England," unless he intended the letter to be read by someone other than the head of the Zionist Organization. Kohn to Weizmann, 23.12.38., ISA/68/25.

states had nay right to have a say in the government of Palestine, a move which was felt "to strike at the foundations of the Palestine Mandate and, indeed, at the Mandatory system in general." The second consideration -- and for our purposes the central one -- was the knowledge that, apart from the Arab states, the Jews would not be faced at the conference table with the freely elected representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, but exclusively with the spokesmen of the Mufti. "In these circumstances," Kohn wrote, with the influential British reader in mind,

> no settlement except one in accord with the desires of the Mufti -- about which neither Arabs nor Jews nor British are in any doubt -- can be expected to obtain Arab consent. Even if the Mufti were to agree, as a concession to the Government, to the inclusion of a "moderate" in the Palestine Arab delegation, the latter could not -- under the two-fold pressure of the terror within Palestine and the Arab rulers without -- do other than support the Mufti's demands. It has even been suggested that it might be a good policy for the Mufti to admit such a moderate like, for instance Ragheb Nashashibi, to the conference, in order to demonstrate through the latter's enforced assent, that all the Arabs, without exception, were backing his demands and that there was no such thing as an Arab moderate.[101]

The third ground of Jewish apprehension lay in the adverse tactical position in which the government had placed itself by dropping the partition plan, thus removing the only possible form of pressure on the Mufti.

While on the one hand, then, suggesting that Arab "moderates" would be helpless in the face of the Mufti's control, it was pointed out, on the other, that the opposition was in reality a powerful force whose views were worthy of the government's consideration. "It was absurd," Kohn noted,

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[101]Ibid.

> to call the Opposition, which represents the creative party in the country, by the name of Opposition as though the Mufti were in power and these are just a lot of cantankerous nuisances. Unpleasant taste attaching to the word Opposition in English official ears. In general the method of linguistic suggestion very cleverly used on behalf of Mufti; bands now called rebels, Mufti's nominees to London, no longer Mufti's delegates but delegates of the Arab Higher Committee.[102]

He commented, similarly, one of a series of points for a letter to Weizmann, that Fakhri Nashashibi was

> important only as a symptom. If he had been an ordinary man of the street he could have produced the same results if he had taken up the flag against the terror. If such a nobody and generally not very courageous fellow as he has taken up this strong line, it can only be because there is a tremendous movement behind that line; it is different than if a really heroic leader had taken up the cudgels against the terror and rallied the people behind him. Here it is a real people's movement for which Fakhri is but a symptom.[103]

Practical steps were taken too to demonstrate the opposition to the Mufti's terror. The Political Department arranged a meeting between a senior army intelligence officer and the people of Abu Ghosh (a village near Jerusalem whose inhabitants had maintained friendly relations with the Jews for some time) who strongly condemned the terrorists and appealed to the government to strengthen moderate Arab elements. "Such demonstrations of divergences of opinion between the Mufti's clique and other Arabs are all to the good," Joseph noted.[104]

Contacts were also maintained with opposition leaders in

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[102]L. Kohn, Notes for further letters [to left wing men] January 1939. ISA/68/26.

[103]L. Kohn, Notes for a letter to Dr. Weizmann, January 1939. ISA/68/26. Also Kohn to Philip Graves, 1.2.39. ISA68/26.

[104]Joseph Diary, 30.12.38., S25/43 and JAE, 31.12.38.

Palestine and Cairo with a view to clarifying the question of their inclusion in the Palestinian delegation to the talks. It was discovered, through Vilensky -- authorized to spend up to £100 on information[105] -- that Nuri Said, recently appointed Prime Minister of Iraq, had been trying to arrange that Raghib Nashashibi be invited to London.[106] If Raghib did go then Fakhri would accompany him as an "adviser," "to prevent R. from knuckling under to the Arab extremists." Considering that Raghib claimed he shared the Mufti's views on the "Jewish question," it was only natural that the Agency should be interested in Fakhri's restraining influence on his uncle in London. The Political Department's position vis a vis Raghib, therefore, was by no means unqualified. If the opposition intended to go to London and ask for the cessation of Jewish immigration, then the Jewish Agency was not interested in helping them.[107] The Agency did, nevertheless, attempt to get Raghib to stick to his demand for equal status with the Mufti's representatives,[108] presumably in the hope of strengthening the impression of the unrepresentative character of the Palestinian delegation, and on the assumption, of course, that the Husseini and the Nashashibi delegates would not sit together. Leo Kohn issued a stern

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[105]Shertok to Joseph, 10.12.38. S25/1513.

[106]Sasson to Shertok, 7.1.39. S25/3139, and Eliachar p.85.

[107]Joseph Diary, 12.1.39. S25/43.

[108]JAE, 15.1.39, 22.1.39, 29.1.39. Also Joseph to Vilenski, 20.1.39 (telegram) "Elias voyez Ragheb d'urgence dites lui impératif qu'il exige promesse Nuri et Mohammed Mahmoud qu'ils ne proposeront ni consentiront délégation Palestinienne sans Ragheb." S25/3139.

warning as to what might result were the Mufti's nominees to be recognised as the sole representatives of the Palestinian Arabs:

> If the British Government accepts as the representatives of the Arabs those who, under the cloak of a "national revolt" have let loose on the country bands of gangsters and adventurers, hired with the money of foreign powers, who, by murder, torture and blackmail have terrorised the peaceful Arab population into silence and turned the country into a shambles, then it will not be very long before similar "national revolts" flare up in other corners of the empire. Goebbels and his young men will see to it. They have attained mastery in that craft.[109]

It is important to see the whole question of Zionist interest in the participation or non-participation of the Arab opposition in the Palestinian delegation in its context. The Jews had few illusions about the possible outcome of the talks, or about the efficacy of the opposition in affecting their course. What they did hope, however, was that by supporting the opposition and encouraging it to stand firm on its demands, they would in some way be able to sabotage the proceedings, or at least to undermine the validity (from the point of view of representation) of talks held solely with the Mufti's delegates. The British attempts and eventual success at getting the Palestinians to agree to form a single delegation and their refusal to accept the Mufti as a delegate, dashed Jewish hopes finally.[110]

Contact with the Arabs behind the scenes in London was complicated by the fact that there were two different operations going

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[109]L. Kohn to Philip Graves, 1.2.39. ISA/68/26. Cf. Palestine Post, 26.2.39. (leader).

[110]See N. Katzburg, MeHaluka l'Sefer Halavan pp.63-4 on British attempts to secure Raghib's attendance and the refusal to permit the Mufti's presence. For a graphic description of how MacDonald succeeded in getting Raghib to join the delegation see R. Zaslani to Joseph, 12.2.39., S25/47 and Yoman Medini 1939 pp.36-39, entries for 8.2 and 9.2.39.

on -- that of the Political Department and of Rutenberg, who pinned considerable hopes on being able to frustrate the aims of the conference by backing Fakhri. Rutenberg, who by the beginning of February had already given the Nashashibis almost £5000,[111] was angry that his name had been associated with the Conference. "I hope," he wrote to Weizmann,

> that no representative of the Opposition will take part in the Conference. The Opposition are already declaring publicly that they are the only representatives of the very large majority of the Palestine Arab population. I think that we must demand open doors in Palestine for Jewish immigration. Life justifies such a policy. The Conference might and should die naturally. There is a tangible possibility of coming to a dignified and reasonable agreement with the Arabs now in Opposition.[112]

Rutenberg, "Baffy" noted in mid-January, was "pinning the moderate Arabs to our side by the usual methods. Fakhri Nashashibi is earning his keep by staying in Jerusalem and stating aloud that the Mufti and his friends do not represent Palestine."[113] In London, however, Shertok considered Rutenberg's work little more than a nuisance. After Raghib had agreed to join the Palestinian delegation, and Fakhri, furious, threatened to pack his bags and leave for home, all that could be done was to persuade Raghib to prolong for as long as possible the illness he had developed in response to Fakhri's attempts to get his uncle to change his mind.[114]

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[111] TAM, 5.2.39. According to Ben-Gurion, Rutenberg also planned to "buy" Nuri Said. See M. Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion, Vol. I, p.39.

[112] Rutenberg to Weizmann, 6.1.39, 2.2.39. Rutenberg to MacDonald, 5.1.39., Z4/17136.

[113] "Baffy": The Diaries of Balnche Dugdale, ed. N. Rose. 16.1.39.

[114] Yoman Medini 1939, 10.2.39. p.43.

Attempts by Rutenberg's representatives, Baharab and Eliachar, to persuade Raghib, having given in to the pressure on him to join the delegation, to take such an extreme position as to prevent any compromise and thus ruin the conference, were dismissed by Shertok as useless. Once Raghib agreed to participate in the Palestinian delegation he lost whatever right he had previously to demand separate representation for the moderates and doomed himself to impotence as a member of the delegation. Raghib's diplomatic illness, assiduously encouraged by the Zionists and Fakhri could not go on forever, and after pressure from Nuri Said to "recover,"[115] Raghib made his first appearance at the conference on February 16, eight days after it began. Thus failed the Zionists' attempts to influence the composition of the Palestinian delegation to the St. James Conference.

"THE DREGS OF BLACKMAIL"

The course of the conference held few surprises for the Zionists. Agronsky, for one, (in London to exploit his contacts with the English press) although shocked by the extent of government control over the proceedings ("We're not fighting Tannous or Mansour, but N.[eville] C.[hamberlain] himself, and his hold is complete"), was not surprised by developments. "Evidently," he wrote, "the drinking of the dregs of blackmail is bitterer than mere anticipation."[116]

Presentation of the Zionist case was along by now familiar lines. Weizman's opening statement on February 8 reminded his British and Jewish audience that the history of Zionist efforts to

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[115]Ibid., 12.2.39. p.46.

[116]G. Agronsky to Joseph, 14.2.39, S25/47.

come to an understanding with the Arabs was as old as the Balfour Declaration, and his agreement with Faysal, of course, was given prominent mention. Arab nationalism, he declared,

> may be judged by what it does for its own people -- by its efforts to achieve progress and prosperity. From this standpoint, the Arab record is as yet extremely meagre. They have gained their independence almost without a struggle, but they have made remarkably little use of it in the interests of their peoples. They are still beset by serious internal difficulties which would suffice to absorb all their energies. Syria is disintegrating before our eyes; Iraq shows a singular lack of stability; even Transjordan under British Mandate is hardly a shining example of constructive effort.[117]

Weizmann talked of the "barren and destructive nationalism of the Arabs," of the influence of the totalitarian states, the Assyrians in Iraq, the sufferings of the Jews of Yemen, the significance of Alexandretta and the desire of the Arabs, "blinded by....a mirage of brute force," to dominate. He did not deny the existence of Arab nationalism or subscribe to the view that the "disorders" were solely the result of instigation by the "effendi class," but "he did not believe that Arab nationalism would have assumed its present proportions if it had not been supported from outside."[118] "The Arabs of Palestine," as Ben-Gurion put it, could not have it both ways,"

> if they considered themselves to be part of the Arab world, they must take the longer view, in which Arab national aspirations have been in general satisfied and would not be threatened by a relatively small Jewish state, even if this state comprised the whole of historic Palestine.[119]

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[117]Weizmann notes for opening statement, 8.2.39., S25/7630.

[118]12.2.39., S25/7632.

[119]10.2.39., S25/7632.

The familiar arguments, cogent and logical as they were, were not sufficient. Apart from one meeting between Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Shertok and Lord Bearsted for the Jews, and Tawfiq Suwaydi, Fuad Hamza and Ali Mahir for Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt respectively, there was no direct official contact between the two sides.[120] The appeal to the visions of the past had a hollow, tired ring to it:

> The Arab states have a great many difficulties; They will have still greater difficulties in time to come. A country becomes your country only when you have overcome great difficulties; I believe that as long as the Arabs are intransigeant they are cutting into their own flesh. Those vast countries will stand empty, may become anybody's prey. Any adventurer will consider them as something to covet. I truly believe -- and I am speaking with the utmost possible sincerity, -- that the Arabs and Jews can find a meeting-point beneficial to both. We can give them what they need badly today. They need advice, they need guidance, they need technical help, they need financial help, they need loyal allies. All these we can give them.[121]

The rejection of the final British proposals (an independent Palestinian state, limited immigration for the next five years, after which further immigration would depend on Arab and British acquiescence, and the prohibition of land sales) on March 17, 1939, brought Jewish participation in the conference to an end. "Never before," Weizmann wrote to Chamberlain, "have I quitted England with such a heavy heart:"

> a cloud hangs over the relations between the Jewish Agency and British Ministers. Through all the ups and downs of more than twenty years I have found support in the thought that, to quote Lord Balfour's words, we were "partners in the great enterprise" which means life or death to my people. If the announcement of the [government's] decision is postponed, [Weizmann continued] I do not mean to leave the time unused. Every effort

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[120]Ben-Gurion, Talks pp.258-63.

[121]8.2.39., S25/7632.

> will be made and every contact used, to explore the possibility of Jewish-Arab agreement or rapprochement. While I cannot promise any success, I would suggest that lapse of time may open possibilities in this direction.[122]

Following the breakdown of the talks the Jewish Agency devoted the bulk of its efforts to attempting to delay the expected government statement for as long as possible, and to mobilising support against the new policy.[123]

Contacts with the Arab opposition continued after the London Conference. In April, a meeting was held in Netanya between four representatives of the Jewish Agency (including Joseph, Golomb and David HaCohen) and "twelve very representative Arabs." The Arabs, according to "Baffy,"

> included the man who killed Trumpeldor 20 years ago, the Mayor of Nablus (Suleiman Touqan) and others. Never before have the Arabs met our people formally in a Jewish settlement. The conference will be resumed. The Arabs said that if HMG lets the Mufti come back to Palestine, or gives him more power, they will start an Arab terror against him.[124]

The Agency tried to prevent the Arab Opposition from operating on the basis of the acceptance of the White Paper. Joseph explained to "a prominent Arab" that

> whatever view Arab patriots take of the question of Jewish immigration, clearly with regard to the problem of land they could not possibly agree with the White Paper. I could understand an Arab being unwilling to sell land to a Jew. I could not understand an intelligent, educated Arab who claims that he is fit for self-government acquiescing in Government treating him as if he were a minor, saying that he could not be trusted in the matter of whether or not he should sell any more of his land to the Jews.[125]

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[122]Weizmann to Chamberlain, 24.3.39., S25/61.

[123]On these efforts see N. Rose, op.cit., Chapter 9.

[124]"Baffy," 26.4.39.

[125]Joseph Diary, 29.5.39, S25/43. Cf. Davar, 31.5.39.

Despite such attempts to appeal to the opposition's pride, the Nashashibis came out in support of the government's new policy. The administration, Joseph wrote,

> is arranging for district officers to visit every Arab village in the country to "explain" the W.P. to them and to point out its advantages. I understand that for this purpose a list of questions and answers have been prepared by the government for use by the district officers and that some of the answers given are tendentious and give an untruthful picture of the contents of the White Paper in order to make it more palatable to the Arabs.[126]

Zaslani and Sasson held a long talk with Abdul Rauf Bittar, a prominent opposition leader from Jaffa. Bittar, they reported back to the Political Department,

> took the line that so far as the moderates were concerned the W.P. offered them as much as they could expect to get at this juncture from Britain, and therefore it was difficult for them to oppose it. He knew that the Jews had objected to it and he thought the fact that they (the Arabs) did not oppose it while the Jews did was not a reason for them not to seek a common basis of cooperation. If we could work out a programme of cooperation acceptable to both sides that would be another matter. So far as land was concerned, as a landowner himself he personally objected to these restrictions. On the other hand there were Arabs who were really not fit to look after the land, but if we would work out a common programme it might be possible to organize a large section of the Arab community to come out into the open in support of such a programme. It was agreed that both sides would consider such a possibility.[127]

There was, however, little real hope that such an agreement could be made, because the Agency could not cooperate on the basis of the White Paper and because, moderate as they were, relatively speaking, the Arab opposition had nothing to offer the Jews. The Nashashibis, Elias Sasson wrote in a memorandum prepared for Ben-Gurion,

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[126]Ibid.

[127]Ibid. See also "Proposed arrangement of a secret agreement with the opposition." Zaslani and Sasson report of meeting with Jamil Abyad, 26.5.39., S25/3246.

were inconsistent, cowardly, and lacking in many other important qualities. To the extent that it was possible to cooperate with them, it was because of the "limitation of their desires to private gain within the country"[128] a field in which, apart from the seigneurial handouts of Pinhas Rutenberg, the Jews could do little. Eliachar, Joseph noted sourly, was continuing to support Fakhri (who favoured government policy "either despite of or because of Eliachar's efforts at cooperation with him.") and refused to participate in a demonstration against the White Paper "because he takes the view that the W.P. is not so bad because it will be easier for us to get along with the Arabs than with the British."[129]

The official, JAE view of the prospects for cooperation, let alone agreement with the Arabs of Palestine, "moderates" or extremists," was considerably less sanguine. The reputations of both the Husseinis and the Nashashibis had suffered considerably as a result of the tribulations of the last three years and the uncertainty of the future. There were signs of the emergence of unaffiliated Arab voices expressing opposition to the White Paper policy and the traditional leadership alike, some of which reached the Political Department.[130] The question of Arab-Jewish rapprochement, however, was further complicated by the fact that the government,

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[128]"Proposals for work amongst the Arabs in Palestine and the neighbouring countries." Sasson memo. to Ben-Gurion, 21.4.39., S25/3100. Cf. original memo. with the version published in Sasson's collected papers, where he writes that it is possible to cooperate with the Nashashibi opposition because of its "moderate and realistic approach." See Eliahu Sasson, BaDerech el HaShalom: Igrot veSihot (Tel Aviv 1978) p.158.

[129]Joseph Diary, 19.5.39., S25/43.

[130]A.C. Cohen report on meeting with the Mufti of Hebron, 13.7.39., S25/3051.

following the publication of the White Paper, was attempting to bring about the reconciliation of Arab villages and Jewish settlements, in an effort to prove that the new policy was working.[131]

The 21st Zionist Congress convened in Geneva from August 16-25, 1939 in what was later described as "an atmosphere of unreality and irrelevance."[132] Weizmann gave a masterly survey of the political developments of the last three years, from the Peel Commission to the May White Paper. Assessing the Arab position, he described their disappointment with the government's policy;

> They were just about to take over the ministerial positions, today, tomorrow, and there's nothing nicer than a quick hop from the Seychelles to a ministry in Jerusalem.....the Arabs were disappointed, even though they knew they'd won a victory.[133]

Weizmann believed that now the Arabs would finally learn the crucial lesson -- that the Jews could not be ignored. He offered the Arabs the example of what had happened in Syria in the last few months. That country, he argued, had recently gone through some of the stages through which Palestine would pass in the future, according to the provisions of the White Paper:

> Syria cannot integrate small minorities like 65,000 Druze and 300,000 Alawites to create a healthy political organism. The French have retreated from the principles of democratic government....the minorities are gradually becoming semi-autonomous entities, advised by French officials...but reality has destroyed this false, immature, supposedly democratic Levantine miasma. Democracy can not be

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[131]JAE, 2.7.39.

[132]C. Weizmann, Trial and Error, p.508.

[133]Report on the 21st Zionist Congress, p.39.

> bought....but is the fruit of long development.... the Arabs wanted to run before they could walk. I hope they will learn -- I have no reason to hope not -- to walk and run together. But they will only learn when they take reality into account. And reality today is the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz-Yisrael. (Prolonged applause) The Yishuv is no less strong than the Druze or the Alawites, or the Lebanon. The stronger we get, the more surely we can go forward towards peaceful cooperation with our neighbours, despite the Mufti and his leadership, who are merely the traces of a feudal regime fighting for their existence and finding support in English feudal circles.[134]

This was a fairly succinct summary of the Jewish Agency's view of the Arab world on the eve of the outbreak of the World War. Political resolutions number six and seven of the Congress were directly connected to the Arab question. The Congress declared (resolution No. six) that

> resistance to the policy of the White Paper is not directed against the interests of the Arab people, and reaffirms the resolve of the Jewish people to establish relations of mutual good will and cooperation with the Arabs of Palestine and of the neighbouring countries. Despite four years of bloodshed and destruction, the Congress expresses its opinion that on the basis of mutual recognition of the respective rights of both races, a way can be found to harmonise Jewish and Arab aspirations and instructs the Zionist Executive to persevere in its efforts towards that end.[135]

Resolution number seven, in the same spirit of concern for the future of Jewish-Arab relations, instructed the JAE to appoint a committee to study relations between the two peoples "in the political, economic and cultural fields" and to "explore the possibilities of cooperation between Jews and Arabs in these spheres of life, and to report to the organs of the Zionist Movement."[136]

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[134]Ibid. p.41.

[135]Ibid. and Zionist Review 31.8.39.

[136]Ibid.

The day the Congress opened, Leo Kohn wrote the editorial for the Palestine Post, as he did on so many other important occasions. True to his firm conviction that Zionism was one of those honest, true, moral, democratic and essentially constructive national movements, destined to overcome whatever obstacles History (aided by the forces of British, Arab and fascist darkness) placed in its path, he drew once again, as he had so many times before, on the lesson of Ireland. It was not to that country alone, he wrote, "that Parnell's dictum applies -- that no man -- not even a Colonial Secretary -- can set limits to the growth of a nation."[137]

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[137]Palestine Post, 16.8.39., (leader).

## CONCLUSION

The Palestine disturbances of 1936-1939 may be seen as an important stage in the history of the Zionist-Arab confrontation. Although the years that immediately preceded the spark that ignited the conflagration in April 1936 were marked by a number of ominous developments, which for the Zionists seemed to threaten the relative stability, progress and prosperity that the National Home had enjoyed since 1929, the period was not one of great interest in the "Arab question."

The buoyant optimism that characterized the first half of the 1930's, gave way, in late 1935, to concern that the tense international situation, the grave economic crisis in Palestine and events in Syria and Egypt could lead to renewed activity by the Palestinian Arab national movement, which, apart from the demonstrations of November 1933, had lain fairly dormant since the 1929 disturbances.

Although the outbreak of the Arab strike in April 1936 came as a blow to the Yishuv and the Zionist movement, they were quick to turn events to their own advantage. The intense campaigns for Jewish labour, produce and the establishment of Tel Aviv port succeeded in mobilizing large sections of the Jewish public and contributed immeasurably to a mood which came to see territorial separation -- partition -- from the Arabs of Palestine as the only way to prevent the recurrence of trouble in the future. The day to day violence

and tension engendered by the strike and subsequent disturbances also, it is perhaps superfluous to add, encouraged this trend.

The attitude of the Jewish Agency Executive and of the other authorized institutions of the Zionist movement to the question of peace negotiations with the Arabs was determined during this period by the fact that they rejected out of hand the Palestinian demands of 1935 for a national government, a halt to Jewish immigration and the prohibition of lands sales to Jews. The implementation of these demands would have "frozen" the Yishuv at its current stage of development and destroyed the raison d'être of the Zionist movement at a time when the increasingly desperate plight of European Jewry required, for the first time in Zionist history, that the National Home in Palestine play the central role in the solution of the Jewish problem that the founding fathers of Zionism and their disciples had always hoped and believed it would. This, together with the natural desire of the JAE, as the executive arm of the Zionist movement, to maintain its monopoly over contacts with the Arabs, and the need to prevent the undermining of its position, determined its response to peace moves and negotiations initiated by unauthorized groups and individuals.

The reaction of the JAE to the peace proposals communicated to the group of "Five" in the summer of 1936 and to the Hyamson-Newcombe proposals in late 1937 was marked by a natural hostility and suspicions -- justified in the light of experience -- that such "initiatives" were either unofficial and unauthorized by the Palestinian leadership or officially-backed subterfuges aimed at undermining the official Zionist stance and attempts to force them, in spite of themselves, to agree to entirely unacceptable conditions. Little could be done with such offers, made through the good offices of

self-appointed, well-intentioned but often naive Jewish intermediaries, especially when, as in the Hyamson-Newcombe case, the identity of the Arabs involved, if indeed there were any involved at all, remained unclear. To the extent that the JAE was prepared to take up these "offers" it was largely to forestall the possibility that they would later be accused -- by their own "cooing doves" -- of having irresponsibly ignored a chance to make peace with the Arabs. But given the total Arab rejection of Jewish rights in Palestine (except as a tolerated minority), of partition or any form of territorial compromise and the demand that Palestine be recognized solely as an Arab country, there was little point to negotiations.

The "Arab question," far from being an "unseen question," was much discussed in the Palestine Jewish press and the Zionist press abroad between 1936 and 1939. Those individuals who were concerned by and involved in the "Arab question" may be roughly divided between those -- the majority of the Zionist movement -- who asserted the primacy of the "British question" over the "Arab question," and those -- a small but vociferous minority -- who favoured the opposite view, that solving the "Arab question" was the most vital issue in Zionist politics. The "Arab question," as discussed at the time, was understood to mean the question of the relations between the Yishuv and the Arabs of Palestine. It did not include the broader issues of the relationship between Zionism and the Arab world, Zionism and pan-Arabism, etc., although as the period progressed and the conflict moved increasingly beyond the borders of the country these questions also began to exercise the Jews. On these matters there existed a far greater consensus of public opinion than on the narrower aspects of the "Arab question" in Palestine,

on the one hand because of their relative novelty and on the other because the press, in close contact with the Political Department, presented a remarkably similar set of views, regardless of the political affiliation of the newspaper involved.

Although the attitude of Mapai -- the Zionist movement's most powerful political organization -- to the "Arab question" had been undergoing a process of change since the 1929 disturbances, the events of 1936-1939 had the effect of crystallizing its approach. By the end of the Arab strike in October 1936, with Brit Poalei Eretz-Yisrael to all intents and purposes dead, there were few people who continued to believe that the key to Arab-Jewish co-existence lay in the organization of Arab workers. It was increasingly accepted in Mapai and on the Zionist left in general that opposition to the Jewish National Home was expressed by a strong and dedicated Palestinian Arab national movement that enjoyed a considerable measure of mass support, although with the qualification that this movement was "reactionary" and "shallow" and that its leaders cared little for the fate of the masses of the people. It was in this period that the Zionist movement -- or at least the most influential components of it -- reached its most perceptive and sophisticated assessment of the nature of Arab opposition, although debates on the existence or non-existence of a Palestinian Arab national movement tended to lose themsleves in semantic irrelevancies which served more to camouflage the unease of the Zionists than to clarify the true character of Arab objections to Zionism and the National Home.

As it became increasingly difficult to influence Arab political developments within Palestine, the JAE strengthened its links with the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan. Since 1932, when Transjordan tribal leaders had approached the JAE offering to sell land to the

Jews, and when an option had been taken on the Emir's land at Ghor al-Kibd, the Agency had maintained close contact with Abdullah. The option on his lands, in fact, served more than anything else as a way of keeping open the contact with this most moderate of Palestine's Arab neighbours. Throughout the disturbances the Jews held frequent conversations with Abdullah's emissary, which served both to exchange information, issue warnings and to co-ordinate strategy. The Emir's motives for co-operating with the Zionists were far from altruistic. It was his hatred for and bitter rivalry with the Mufti and Ibn Saud and his own desire to annex at least part of Palestine to his own domain that led him to behave with relative moderation towards the Zionists. Constantly in need of cash to finance his own political ambitions and to maintain the peace amongst the unruly Beduin of Transjordan, the payments he received from the JAE were a welcome addition to the regular subsidy he was paid from London.

The Jews, for their part, had no illusions about the character and motivation of their Transjordanian ally, although they were often disappointed by him when he found it prudent to pay lip service to their enemies. In the absence, however, of any genuine Palestinian Arab acceptance of their enterprise, they tacitly acknowledged the benefits of cooperation with the Emir. Significantly, Zionist memoranda, surveys, articles and speeches dealing with the Arab countries and pan-Arabism rarely discussed Transjordan, which, due to the highly individualistic character of its ruler and the Zionists' own belief in the indivisibility of both sides of the Jordan was not considered part of the "Arab world."

In retrospect, the most significant development of the 1936-1939 disturbances was the pan-Arabization of the Palestine conflict. The

first formal move in that direction came in October 1936 with the intervention of the Arab rulers to end the strike, an unprecedented act in contravention of the Mandate, which, to the Zionists' dismay, created a locus standi for non-Palestinian Arabs in Palestinian affairs.

As the disturbances continued, and the pan-Arab aspects of their organization and effects -- particularly on the British Foreign Office -- became more and more apparent, the Zionist movement adopted an attitude of extreme hostility towards the ideology and practice of the pan-Arab movement. Largely articulated in an increasingly sophisticated propaganda system, there emerged an approach to Middle Eastern politics and history which, while not specifically Zionist, stood in almost total contradiction to the spurious assumptions and wilful misrepresentations which have been subsumed under the heading of the "Chatham House Version." While it was infinitely closer to reality than the specious views propagated by British and French supporters of the pan-Arab movement, this "Jewish Agency Version" tended, because of the sharp dichotomy it posed between "irresponsible" and "destructive" pan-Arabism and "mature," "progressive" and "constructive" national movements (in which category the Zionists included themselves), to encourage an over-schematic view of the Arab countries of the Middle East and their problems. This view may also have led the Jews to underestimate the ability of pan-Arab politicians to exploit the Palestine issue for their own purposes. The fact too, that the Zionists were so familiar with the inveterate corruption and often blatant dishonesty of many Arab politicians, may have led them to exaggerate the weaknesses and conflicts that plagued pan-Arabism, and, concomitantly, to underestimate its strengths.

The emergence in this period of this Zionist view of Middle Eastern politics stood in sharp contrast to the belief, symbolically embodied in the Weizmann-Faysal agreement, that it would be possible for the Zionist movement to come to an agreement with a united pan-Arab federation or confederation. The various schemes for a Jewish state within such an Arab body which had been raised in the past were patently no longer feasible, if they ever had been.

While the Zionists, at least up to 1937, still believed in the possibility of settling the Palestine conflict within a broader framework that included other Arab countries -- a fact which has led to the belief that the Zionists were themselves pan-Arabists, or at least thus pandered to the ideology of pan-Arabism -- there is no evidence that they considered the question of population transfer on anything but the pragmatic level. Population transfer, which, owing to the recommendations of the Peel Commission, came to be seen by most Zionists as the sine qua non of any partition scheme, was seen as an essentially practical problem without reference to the existence or non-existence of a united Arab nation.

Indeed, the plan for the transfer of Palestinian Arabs to the Jazirah was considered on the basis of the explicit assumption that it was in the interests of the Syrian Government to bolster up a troublesome and thinly-populated border area with an influx of Moslem Arabs and prevent the encroachments of aggressive neighbours. The suggestion that Transjordan might be suitable for the re-settlement of Palestinians followed naturally from the Zionists' view of the essential unity of Palestine and Transjordan, and not from the acceptance or even consideration of the pan-Arab thesis. Later projects for population transfer to thinly populated parts of Iraq, or the removal of the Druze of Palestine to the Jebel Druze were no

less practical in inspiration. In short, population transfer did not in any sense imply, at least in so far as they themselves considered the implications, the Zionists' acceptance of the premises of pan-Arabism, although they undoubtedly rationalized their own political needs by emphasizing their interest in and potential contribution to the rational exploitation of human resources in the Middle East.

The pan-Arabization of the Palestine conflict, which came to its logical and tragic conclusion in the Palestine war of 1948, and which was carried further at the St. James Conference of 1939, forced the Zionist movement to look away from pan-Arabia in the search for a solution to the problem of its existence in a hostile Middle East.

While the activities of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency were carried on, it seems, on a particularly haphazard and ad hoc basis, and almost totally without prior consultation with the JAE, to which it was, at least formally, responsible, it is possible to discern a new direction in its interests during the period under discussion.

Zionist interest in and contact with the Maronite Christians of Lebanon and the Druze of Palestine was conditioned explicitly by the fact that these were non-Moslem minorities with strong autonomist impulses and, broadly speaking, with an antipathy to the pan-Arab movement as strong as that of the Zionists themselves. Their common ideological opposition to pan-Arabism was in addition accompanied by a number of eminently practical interests, such as the Zionists' desire for a Lebanese request for a common border with the future Jewish state and the need to prevent the Druze joining the rebels in Palestine.

There is no more succinct illustration of the precariousness

and cynicism of these relationships than the 1939 plan to transfer the 10,000 strong Druze population of Palestine to the Jebel Druze. In this plan the Zionists' desire to weaken pan-Arabism in neighbouring Syria by giving a financial and human boost to Druze separatism dovetailed nicely with the chance of effecting a considerable reduction in the size of Palestine's non-Jewish population, with the added bonus of acquiring the strategically positioned Druze lands in the north of the country.

The Jews' interest in Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Iran, was a result of the perception of these countries as representing the "progressive" and "constructive" stream of (non-Arab) Middle Eastern nationalism. Again, while not a specifically Zionist view -- Ataturk was second only to Mussolini in the praises heaped on him by European observers between the wars -- the hostility of the Turkish and Iranian regimes to the pan-Arab movement was a further important motive behind the Zionists' attitude to these two countries. The Turkish annexation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta gave the Zionists a golden opportunity to illustrate the weaknesses of the pan-Arab movement while at the same time to show the rewards of the dynamic and forward-looking nationalism represented by the Kemalist regime.

Since, however, the Zionists' interest in these non-Arab groups within and on the periphery of the Middle East was based on essentially negative considerations and because the other parties involved succeeded in reaching a <u>modus vivendi</u> with Arab nationalism, this orientation did not in the long run provide the Jews with a satisfactory substitute for peaceful relations with their Arab neighbours.

Within Palestine, the ferocity and dimensions of the revolt,

renewed in September 1937, precluded any agreement with the Palestine Arabs. Apart from the activities of a handful of concerned individuals, whose dedication was matched only by their unwarranted optimism, the Arab question had, by the outbreak of the Second World War, all but ceased to be a substantive issue in Zionist politics.

It was against the background of the latter, more violent stage of the revolt, that the Jews renewed their contacts with the Arab opposition. In desparation at the internecine struggle within the Palestinian camp, the Nashashibi faction attempted to obtain Jewish financial support for its struggle against the Husseini-led terror. With their by now ingrained suspicion of all manifestations of Palestinian "moderation," the JAE was reluctant to back the opposition too far. Although they did give Fakhri's group some support, the opposition leader met with a far more favourable response from Pinhas Rutenberg, who, acting independently of the Jewish Agency, hoped that sufficient financial backing for the Emir Abdullah and his Nashashibi allies would succeed in breaking the rebellion. The Agency was far more concerned, in late 1938, however, to make the maximum propaganda use out of the emergence of counsels of moderation within the Palestinian Arab camp, a fact which they hoped to use to their advantage in demonstrating the unrepresentative character of a Palestinian delegation to the London Conference composed solely of the Mufti's nominees. This hope, though, was thwarted by the British Government's success in persuading representatives of the opposition to join the united Palestinian delegation. Whatever hope there was that the emergence of a more militant Palestinian Arab opposition in late 1938-1939 might form the basis for Zionist-Arab cooperation was dashed by the Jews' unwillingness to cooperate on the basis of the 1939 White Paper.

In the terms which the Zionists themselves used, the outbreak of war in September 1939 finally asserted the primacy of the "British question" over the "Arab question." The Palestinian movement, ravaged by the excesses of its three year revolt, was never to recover, while the Yishuv emerged from the period, albeit cowed by the draconian restrictions of the White Paper, a stronger and more cohesive force than before, more prepared to face the future struggle that no-one doubted lay ahead.

APPENDIX I

CZA S25/3163 (n.d.) [1937]

OUTLINE OF A PROJECT FOR RESEARCH IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST (Asked to prepare by G. de Gaury)

ELIAHU EPSTEIN

1. Changes in the social and political conditions of the ME are dependent not only on internal factors which have, in some countries, notably Turkey and Iran, revolutionized the whole structure, but they are due also to many external factors which in many cases play at the present a far more decisive role.

2. The most significant factor making for change in the Arab countries of the ME which have received independence has been the friction, social, communal and economic, between the internal communities. This is obvioulsy true of Syria, which is at this moment in the process of becoming independent, but even Iraq exemplifies this important phenomenon.

3. Even under normal conditions, consolidation and stabilization would be a long process, for in the Arab countries of the ME, these conflicting elements which make unity and consolidation within a state so difficult proliferate. The form of their independence is often not backed by content; the hiatus between their desires for independence and their power to give effect to these desires gives rise to deep fundamental contradictions and conflicts.

4. The conservative approach to ME politics, based as it is largely on generalization of a pseudo-psychological and sentimental nature, has less validity now than at any other time. Present conditions demand that objective researchers should view pragmatically and realistically the particular local developments in each country of the ME, in order to obtain a true picture of the general situation of those countries taken as a whole.

5. The present international situation has placed the Arab countries in the Eastern Mediterranean within the sphere of German and Italian offensive and this complicates the issue and introduces another important factor in their development. A thorough appreciation of this question is of paramount importance to a proper understanding of the various problems at the moment affecting and deviating the political currents of the ME. Just as it was impossible on the eve of 1914 to understand the problems of the ME without taking into account the factor of Germany's "Drang nach Osten," so is it valueless to consider the ME today without an appreciation of Italy's "Mare Nostrum" conception.

6. A systematic study of the different social and political aspects of each of the Arab countries can be obtained only by the establishment of a special institute for the purpose. This can provide the means of keeping track of external interference and subversive activities as well as the necessary means of counteracting them.

7. Such an Institute should be staffed by specialists who combine academic ability with a deep and proper understanding both of the people and countries about whom they are concerned. It is of vital importance for the purpose of their work that their sources of information should not be limited to official data alone. It would be of enormous help in working out the project to bear in mind the Italian Institute Per L'Oriente, the Institutes for Scientific Research established by Marshal Lyautey and Massignon's Institut Francais in Damas in Syria.

E.[liahu] E.[pstein]

APPENDIX II

CZA S25/3775

ABDULLAH KHOURI TO LEON BLUM

Monsieur Leon Blum
Président du Conseil des Ministres
Paris

Bekirki
Le 18 Mars 1937

Monsieur le Président,

Je prends la liberté de vous exposer, dans le report ci-joint [See same file], la situation actuelle au Liban. Tout, mon éducation et mes sympathies francaises bien connues, ma dignité d'évéque et ma situation de Vicaire Général au Patriarchat Maronite m'autorise à ce faire.

En outre, vers le début de 1920 j'ai été désigné par me rendre à Paris à la tête d'une délégation dont faisit partie le Président actuel de la République Libanaise, Monsieur Emile Eddé, poursuivre l'oeuvre de S.B. le regretté Patriarche Hayek et pour nous entendre avec le gouvernement de la République Francaise sur les frontières à donner au futur état Libanais.

C'est d'ailleurs, à cette occasion, que Monsieur Millerand me remit une lettre en date du 24 Aout 1920 reconnaisant au nom due Gouvernement francais, les frontières actuelles du Liban et spécifiant que les villes de Beyrouth et de Tripoli éetaient considérées commes villes essentiellement libanaises, faisant partie intégrante du territoire de l'État libanais.

En consequence et vu que les questions soulevées dans mon rapport sont des questions vitales pour le Liban qui a toujours bénéficié de l'appui bienviellant de la France, j'ôse espérer que vous voudrez bien leur prêter toute votre attention et votre haute sollicitude.

Le Liban dans ses frontières actuelles, a été crée d'accord avec la France, pour constituer un foyer aux Chrétiens y résident présentement, et un refuge éventuel aux Chrétiens vivants dans les pays musulmans voisins au cas où ils se verraient dans l'obligation de fuir les persecutions dont ils pourraient être l'objet.

Il est très regrettable que les derniers événements et surtout la politique suivie actuellement tendent clairement à placer le Liban, seul rampart de la Chrétienté en Orient, sous le joug de l'Islam.

En effet, la politique adoptée en ce moment, par les dirigeants, est une politique à tendance nettement musulmane, et qui consiste à confier le pouvoir à des personalites non Chrétiennes. Cette politique, vous en conviendrez, n'est pas de nature à nous tranquilliser sur le sort que nous est reservé.

Devant l'incertitude de l'avenir et l'imminence du danger, j'ai été sollicité a plus d'une reprise, par mes corréligionaires de prendre en mains la défense de leur cause dont l'importance ne saurait échapper a votre haute clairvoyance et qui constitue pour le Liban une question de vie ou du mort.

Malheureusement plusieurs facteurs, éducation, culture, réligion, dévouement inaltérable à la France, sont autant d'obstacles a l'entente Islamo-Chrétienne et qui font que les Chrétiens seront toujours considérés par les Musulmans commes les adversaires irréductibles de la cause panarabe.

Par toutes ces considérations, je sollicite l'appui de votre Excellence, qui ne manquera pas sans doute, d'user son influence pour remédier à la situation présente et pour sauvegarder l'intégrité du Liban et son indépendance, en mettant un terme à la politique dangereuse suivie actuellement et qui tend a placer les destinées de seul pays Chrétien de l'Orient entre les mains d'un gouvernement musulman.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Président, l'éxpression de mon très haute considération.

A. Khouri

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