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ARMY OF  
SHADOWS

PALESTINIAN COLLABORATION  
WITH ZIONISM, 1917-1948

• HILLEL COHEN •

TRANSLATED BY HAIM WATZMAN

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## CHAPTER 1

### UTOPIA AND ITS COLLAPSE

#### IN SEARCH OF POLITICAL COOPERATION

In July 1921 a formal delegation representing Palestinian Arab national institutions set out for London in a desperate, last-minute attempt to persuade Britain to back away from the Balfour Declaration and its commitment to allow Jewish immigration into Palestine. Hasan Shukri, mayor of Haifa and president of the Muslim National Associations, sent the following telegram to the British government:

We strongly protest against the attitude of the said delegation concerning the Zionist question. We do not consider the Jewish people as an enemy whose wish is to crush us. On the contrary. We consider the Jews as a brotherly people sharing our joys and troubles and helping us in the construction of our common country. We are certain that without Jewish immigration and financial assistance there will be no future development of our country as may be judged from the fact that the towns inhabited in part by Jews such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, and Tiberias are making steady progress while Nablus, Acre, and Nazareth where no Jews reside are steadily declining.<sup>1</sup>

This was one of many telegrams sent to the British high commissioner in Palestine and the British government by the Muslim National Associations and other Arab pro-Zionist organizations. Its purpose was twofold: to portray the national institutions of Palestinian Arabs as unrepresentative and illegitimate, and to promote the ratification of the Mandate. Shukri and his associates, from cities and villages throughout Palestine,

did not send these messages of their own volition. The motivating force behind them was the Zionist Executive, which also financed the activities of these organizations.

Seeking support among Palestine's Arabs was an innovation for the Zionist movement. In its early days, when Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, the movement put its major effort into world diplomacy, and the fruit of these labors was the Balfour Declaration. The question of future relations with the Arab inhabitants of the country was set aside. Only after the British conquest in 1917 did the Zionist movement's leaders begin to confront this challenge. The result was an ambitious program to obtain wide-ranging Palestinian Arab cooperation with the Zionist enterprise. When, in 1919, Chaim Weizmann signed an agreement about Palestine with Emir Faysal, one of the leaders of the Arab national movement, it reinforced the sense that the Arabs would consent to a Zionist homeland in their midst.\*

But at the same time, Palestinian Arab nationalists, some of whom had been opposing Zionism at the end of the Ottoman period, began to reorganize. Their new position was much improved, for the principle of self-determination for the region's peoples had been accepted by the international community. Furthermore, the Balfour Declaration and the Zionist aspiration to establish a Jewish state magnified the fears of the wider Arab public. Both of these intensified nationalist sentiments. Opposition to Zionism spread and found expression in the establishment, beginning in 1918, of the Muslim-Christian Associations. This was followed by anti-British and anti-Zionist demonstrations and attacks on Jews in April 1920 and May 1921.

The Zionist movement developed the strategy as a response to this process, with the objective of undermining the evolution of a Palestinian nationality from within. The means were Arab political figures and collaborators. Zionist activists on all levels were involved. The moving force was the Zionist Executive's Arabist, Chaim Margalio Kalvarisky, a veteran land purchaser for the Jewish Colonization Association who was well connected among the Arabs. Above him in the hierarchy stood Col. Frederick Kisch, a retired British intelligence officer and head of the Zionist Executive's political department in Palestine. The president of the

\*Faysal, the son of Sharif Hussein the Hashemite, served as his father's liaison with the British and led the great Arab revolt against the Ottomans during World War I. Despite Faysal's senior position in the Arab national movement, it quickly became clear that the agreement had no practical significance whatsoever. Faysal himself had reservations about it, and the Palestinian Arabs utterly opposed it.

Zionist movement, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, was also involved in the contacts. The three of them claimed, at least for external consumption, that Jewish immigration would do only good for the country's Arab residents. They believed that they could buy local Arab leaders. Most important, they refused to recognize the authenticity of Arab nationalism in Palestine. The telegrams sent to the British government by Arab oppositionists were part of that strategy.

During his visit to Palestine in spring 1920, Weizmann held a series of meetings with various Palestinians. Apparently the encounters gave reason for optimism. He drank coffee with Bedouin sheikhs in the Beit She'an/Beisan Valley and was received ceremonially in Abu-Ghosh, near Jerusalem. In Nablus the former mayor, Haidar Tuqan, promised to disseminate Zionism throughout the Samarian highlands.

Weizmann's meetings were arranged by members of the intelligence office of the Elected Assembly, the body responsible for intelligence and political activities within the Arab population. At the conclusion of his visit, Weizmann asked the office to draw up a comprehensive plan for countering Arab opposition to Zionism. Its proposal was as follows:

1. Cultivation of the agreement with Haidar Tuqan. Tuqan, who had served as mayor of Nablus at the end of the Ottoman period and represented the city in the Ottoman parliament after 1912, received £1,000 from the Zionist leader. In exchange, he promised to organize a pro-Zionist petition in the Nablus region and to open a pro-Zionist cultural and political club in the city.
2. Creation of an alliance with the influential emirs on the eastern side of the Jordan, based on the assumption that they would be reluctant to support a national movement led by urban elites, and thus be natural allies of the Zionists.
3. Establishment of an alliance with Bedouin sheikhs in southern Palestine, in order to sever the connections that already existed between them and nationalist activists.
4. Purchase of newspapers hostile to Zionism in order to ensure a pro-Zionist editorial policy. This tactic was based on faith in the power of the written word and on the assumption that presentation of the Zionist case could prevent the spread of Palestinian nationalism to the broader public.
5. Organization and promotion of friendly relations with Arabs, and the opening of cooperation clubs.
6. Provocation of dissension between Christians and Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

This is a key document. In 1920, Jews were just a bit more than a tenth of the country's population, but the principles the document sets out have

remained a basis for the relationship between the two peoples to this day. It advocated three strategies. The first was support of opposition forces within the Arab public with the object of creating an alternative leadership. The second was to deepen fissures within Palestinian society by separating the Bedouin from the rest of the population and fomenting conflict between Christians and Muslims (and Druze). The final strategy was developing a propaganda machine of newspapers and writers who would trumpet the advantages that would accrue to Palestine's Arabs if they did not oppose Zionism.

The plan was based on the presumption that there was no authentic Arab national movement in Palestine. This was true to a certain extent, but those who promoted it ignored the process taking place before their eyes. So, for example, Dr. Nissim Maloul, secretary for Arab affairs of the National Council, the governing body of the Jewish community in Palestine, termed a furious demonstration he witnessed in Jaffa in February 1920 a "counterfeit nationalist demonstration." He noted that most of the participants were fellahin, poor Arab farmers, "whose costume and countenances indicate that they do not know for what reason and why they are standing there." At the Zionist Congress a year later labor leader Berl Katznelson used similar phrases.<sup>3</sup> Such people chose to believe that opposition would lapse with the economic growth accompanying Jewish settlement. Such faith was reinforced when they found collaborators, whose very existence and enlistment served as proof that their perception was correct.

Kalvarisky organized the collaborators in nationwide political frameworks. The Muslim National Associations were set up first, then the farmers' parties. Members of the associations were not necessarily nationalists, and members of the farmers' parties were not necessarily farmers.

### THE MUSLIM NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Kalvarisky, who was appointed to head the Zionist Executive's Arab department when it was established, set Zionist policy toward the Palestinians for some fifteen years. Aiming to change Zionist as well as Arab attitudes, he sincerely believed in the possibility of cooperation on the part of Palestine's Arabs:

If we justify practically our claim that the establishment of a Jewish national home will bring benefit to its non-Jewish residents as well, we will find among most of the Muslim effendis, including most of their leaders, an element that will oppose the path of violence and hostility and will

resign from the Muslim-Christian Associations. It will not be difficult to break the Muslim-Christian alliance, but it cannot be done by direct and open action in that direction. A frontal attack will only strengthen that unity. The only way is to win the hearts of the Muslim members one by one, by granting a part of the economic benefits they expect from the establishment of a Jewish national home. After purchasing the effendis, most of the population of Palestine, which will in the future as in the past continue to be led by this caste, will also come over to our side.<sup>4</sup>

Though some challenged Kalvariski's intriguing analysis, for a variety of sometimes contradictory reasons, his plan was approved.<sup>5</sup> Thus commenced systematic Zionist intervention in Palestinian Arab politics.

The organizations Kalvarisky established with his Arab partners were meant to serve as a counterweight to the Muslim-Christian Associations, which were the hard kernel of the Palestinian Arab national movement. He dubbed his groups the Muslim National Associations. The name was designed to enable their members to feel "nationalist," as the times demanded, while sharpening the distinction between Christians and Muslims, a division rooted deeply in the local heritage the Arab national movement sought to diminish.

These associations' public activity was limited to public assemblies and petitions to the British authorities. In the petitions, which accompanied each stage of the political struggle of the 1920s, the Muslim National Associations attacked the Palestinian national movement and expressed explicit or indirect support for Zionist immigration to Palestine, for the British Mandate, and for the Balfour Declaration.

After the ratification of the Mandate in July 1922, the associations' members continued to help the Zionist movement, but in a new guise. The British were organizing elections for a legislative council that was to contain both Arabs and Jews. The Fifth Palestinian Congress, at which most of the Arab political organizations in the country were represented, decided to boycott the elections on the grounds that they were being conducted under the terms of the Mandate, which the Congress considered invalid. The Zionist Executive, for its part, viewed the council as a tool for advancing its interests, so it supported the elections.<sup>6</sup> While the Arab Executive Committee was holding public assemblies all over the country and emissaries of the mufti of Jerusalem, the spiritual and political leader of Palestinian Muslims, were preaching against the elections in the mosques, the Zionist Executive used the Muslim National Associations to encourage broad Arab participation in the elections.

On the coastal plain the pro-Zionist campaign was organized by Ibra-



him ‘Abdin of al-Ramla, whose family had a long history of ties with the Zionist movement. In Gaza the head of the local association, Kamel al-Mubashir, conveyed to Dr. Maloul optimistic reports on the chances of success. In Hebron pro-Zionist activity was directed by Murshid Shahin, a former police officer, who reported that there was intense resistance to elections in his city.<sup>7</sup>

Shahin’s evaluation was closer to reality. Except for some isolated areas (including Acre, a focal point of opposition activity, and al-Ramla thanks to ‘Abdin’s work), Arab voter turnout was thin. As a result, the legislative council was not established. The failure did not, however, bring about a profound change in the Zionist institutions’ approach or tactics. The contrary was true.<sup>8</sup>

### **THE FARMERS’ PARTIES: FIRST ROUND, 1924–1926**

In 1924 a new component of Arab pro-Zionist activity made its appearance—the farmers’ parties, a loose network of political parties set up in different parts of the country at the initiative of the Zionist movement or as a joint initiative. From the Zionist point of view, these parties would maintain and deepen the divide between Arab villagers and urban Arabs and weaken the Arab national movement. Colonel Kisch, who oversaw the establishment of the local parties, recommended that these branches be led by men he had met during his travels—Fares al-Mas‘oud of Burqa, a village in the highlands near Nablus; ‘Afif ‘Abd al-Hadi of Jenin; ‘Abdallah Hussein of the village of Qumey in the Jezreel Valley; and Sa‘id al-Fahoum of Nazareth.<sup>9</sup> These men belonged, for the most part, to leading regional families or families with land in the village, and not to the fellah class.

Even though many of the members of the farmers’ parties were already connected with the Zionist movement through the Muslim National Associations, the new organizational structure and the parties’ wide distribution gave them new energy. Influential heads of families from the Mt. Hebron region (such as Musa Hadeib of Duwaimah) and the Jerusalem highlands (such as ‘Abd al-Hamid Abu-Ghosh) became more active. In Nablus, Haidar Tuqan renewed his activity and led the new party. He reported to Kalvarisky in winter 1924 that he had already succeeded in organizing 200 villages under the banner of the party.<sup>10</sup> This was an exaggeration, growing perhaps out of a desire to get the

Zionist Executive to increase its financial support. But in the atmosphere of political stagnation that prevailed in the mid-1920s, even the plan offered by the parties' activists to compete in the elections to the Supreme Muslim Council and oust Hajj Amin al-Husseini was not perceived as completely implausible.<sup>11</sup>

The Palestinian opposition reached the pinnacle of its power in the mid-1920s, in parallel with the waning of the Arab national institutions.<sup>12</sup> But the Zionist movement was not able to exploit this opportunity. In 1926–27 the Yishuv was, like the Zionist movement overseas, deep in a financial crisis. The financial crisis in Eastern Europe had halted the flow of capital to Jews in Palestine, the construction sector had collapsed, and businesses had gone bankrupt. Jewish emigration from Palestine increased, and the movement's shrunken funds were directed to coping with economic problems. In the absence of funding, the farmers' parties ceased to function almost completely—until after the events of August 1929.

#### THE RIOTS OF 1929 AND THEIR AFTERMATH

The bloody riots of 1929, in which some 130 Jews were murdered in communities and settlements throughout the country, forced the Zionist movement and British administration to rethink their strategies. On September 13 of that year the British Colonial Office appointed the Shaw Commission “to enquire into the immediate causes which led to the recent outbreak in Palestine and to make recommendations as to the steps necessary to avoid a recurrence.” In the wake of the commission's conclusions, which questioned Britain's commitment to a Jewish national home in Palestine, the British government appointed Sir John Hope-Simpson to examine the question of Jewish immigration, settlement, and development of the country. He commenced his work in May 1930.<sup>13</sup>

In reaction to the commissions, the Zionist movement again needed the good services of collaborators, who, at the behest of the Zionists, persuaded dozens of Arabs to sign petitions formulated by the United Bureau (the body established after the riots to coordinate activities of the Zionist Executive and Jewish National Council). According to the United Bureau, the petitions were intended to prove that

the masses of the fellahin oppose the incitement and bloodshed of the Supreme Muslim Council, and that they wish for peaceful relations with the Jews and do not see the Council as their proxy. In this way we intend

to dilute the impression the world has received that the [Muslim] Council expresses the desires of the broad masses of the people and that it speaks and acts in the name of all the Arabs in the country.<sup>14</sup>

The goals were very similar to those of the petitions of the previous decade—to challenge the legitimacy of the Supreme Muslim Council and to highlight the benefits accruing to Arabs from Jewish settlement.<sup>15</sup> Some took an additional step. As'ad al-Fahoum of Nazareth, Fares al-Mas'oud of the Nablus highlands, Muhammad Hajj Dahoud of Jerusalem, and others established an association in opposition to the mufti and reported to the Zionist Executive—again with hyperbole—that 345 villages had joined them with the goal “of saving the country from the tyranny of Hajj Amin Husseini and his cousin (Jamal Husseini).” They even demanded of the high commissioner and the Colonial Office that they dismiss the mufti from all his positions.<sup>16</sup> They made the same charge against the head of the Palestinian national movement that he and his supporters made against them and other collaborators, claiming that his actions were dictated by personal interests.

In addition to submitting petitions, the Zionist Executive needed Arab witnesses to testify before the commission of inquiry about the chain of events. Many of those with ties to the Zionist movement refused to testify out of fear that they would be exposed. In the end, only a handful appeared. One of them was the *mukhtar* (village elder) of Battir (southwest of Jerusalem), whose alias was “Na‘aman.” His operative, Aharon Haim Cohen, recalled twenty years later that he was “a good man and loyal friend [with whom] the foundation was laid for the Shai [the Haganah’s intelligence service].”<sup>17</sup> “Na‘aman” collected information from the villages in his vicinity about the Arab attack on the Jewish village of Har-Tuv and conveyed his findings to both the police (who arrested the suspects) and the commission. He reported, among other things, that the planner and executor of the attack was Sami al-Husseini, the son of the chairman of the Arab Executive Committee, Musa Kazem al-Husseini. The mukhtar of Battir brought with him two sheikhs from the nearby village of al-Khader, who reported that emissaries from the Supreme Muslim Council had spread false rumors in their village to the effect that Jews had destroyed the mosque of Omar and killed 500 Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

Another witness before the commission was Muhammad Tawil, who was also active in the area of pro-Zionist propaganda. He gave testimony on the massacre of the Jews of Safed (“My heart pained me at these events, because it was clear to me that the Arabs fell upon innocent Jews

for no reason”),<sup>19</sup> but his testimony failed to impel the commission to lay the responsibility for the riots on any Arab organization or leader.<sup>20</sup>

### THE COLLAPSE OF THE PRO-ZIONIST PARTIES

The pro-Zionist petitions organized after the 1929 riots were the signal for the farmers' parties to resume their activity (the Muslim National Associations had slowly disbanded in the mid-1920s). This revival owed much to the local change of atmosphere after the riots, but also to the world Zionist movement's resurgence, which shored up the shaky finances of the Zionist administration in Palestine.

Most of the effort was made in the villages of the Jerusalem region. Attorney Isma'il al-Khatib of 'Ayn Karem and the sheikhs of the Darwish family of al-Maliha, who headed the villages of the Bani-Hasan subdistrict (*nahiya*), worked to organize these villages independently of the Arab national institutions. Their purpose, however, was to protect their interests against those of the urban elite. Unlike with the Muslim National Associations, collaboration with the Zionists was not a part of their public agenda. But the United Bureau followed their activities closely and tried to channel them for the benefit of the Zionist cause. It made use of A. H. Cohen's connections with senior members of the Darwish family and of the connections members of the bureau in Tel Aviv had with the mayor of Jaffa, 'Omar al-Baytar, an opposition figure who was involved in the initiative of al-Khatib and the Darwishes. (Al-Baytar sold the Zionists the land on which the town of Bnai Berak had been founded in 1924.)<sup>21</sup>

The high point of the endeavor was a village convention in 'Ajjur. The members of the 'Azzi family, the dominant one in the Beit Jibrin area, took part in convening it. The Zionist Executive allocated 50 Palestinian pounds for the delegates' travel and provisions—on condition that they pass resolutions against the Arab delegation's trip to London and announce the establishment of an Arab executive committee separate from that of the urban Arabs. About 500 people convened in 'Ajjur on 27 March 1930, many of them heads of families and villages from the Jerusalem hills, Mt. Hebron, and the coastal plain in the environs of Gaza. The convention was meant to issue a call to split away from the Arab Executive Committee to protect the interests of the fellahin. The United Bureau waited for encouraging reports from their people on-site, but members of the Arab Executive Committee ruined the scheme. They showed up at 'Ajjur, spoke against dividing the nation, and intimidated

that the Zionists were behind the whole move. The assembly broke up in the midst of harsh recriminations, which brought an end to this attempt to establish alternative leadership.<sup>22</sup>

The 'Ajjur convention was not fundamentally a pro-Zionist enterprise. It was an internal Palestinian initiative that its leaders hoped to further through their clandestine ties with the Zionists. The Zionists, for their part, hoped to exploit it to cripple the Arab national leadership. At the same time, parties in direct contact with the Zionist movement burgeoned. Fares al-Mas'oud of Nablus revived his party and wrote to Kalvarisky that, after a tour of the Jenin district, Nazareth, Tiberias, and Haifa, he was convinced that the Arabs in these areas were "prepared to work for peace and mutual understanding." He proposed to reorganize the quiescent farmers' parties in order to convene a national convention. Muhammad Tawil announced the establishment of the Northern Farmers' Party.<sup>23</sup> Hajj Saleh al-Sabbah founded a village organization with Kalvarisky's help. He claimed that eighteen villages east of Nablus and another nineteen north of the city had joined it. Two of the fifteen articles in its charter provided that the organization would refrain from politics and detach itself from the Arab Executive Committee.<sup>24</sup> Aid to a party with these principles indicated the beginning of a change in the Zionist conception: financial support was no longer conditional on active pro-Zionism. Disassociation from the opponents of Zionism was sufficient.

Kalvarisky was buoyant about the revival. Even the collapse of the 'Ajjur convention did not change his view: "There is a great deal of agitation among the fellahin to link up with the Jews and to work shoulder to shoulder for the advancement of agriculture. Not a day goes by that I do not receive delegations from all parts of the country on this matter. They all demand unity with the Jews," he wrote in a memorandum. He believed with all his heart in the importance of this activity: "Neither [British foreign secretary] MacDonald nor [Prime Minister] Lloyd George will come to our aid in bad times. The sympathy of the Arab nation is what will redeem us. In order to purchase that sympathy, contact between the two elements and common labor are vital."<sup>25</sup>

Others were more doubtful. Shabtai Levi, later mayor of Haifa and a member of the special committee established to encourage support for Zionism among the rural population, argued at a meeting in May 1930 that "there is no reason to hope for truly friendly relations between the Jewish fellah and the Arab fellah." Nevertheless, his practical conclusion was identical: the Arab fellahin would join forces with the Jews not out of love of Zionism but rather to protect their own interests.<sup>26</sup>

Activity reached a new peak in March 1931, before Chaim Weizmann's visit to Palestine. Representatives of all the fellahin organizations and other friends of the Zionist movement made contact with the movement's offices and asked to be allowed to meet Weizmann, in opposition to the explicit position of the Supreme Muslim Council.<sup>27</sup>

Cooperation with the Zionists was not limited to the farmers' parties. In Nablus and Jerusalem there were active associations for Jewish-Arab friendship (the Semitic Union), and Hebron's top leaders sought to meet Weizmann and discuss with him the return of Jews to their city. A workers' party was founded in Jaffa by two Nablusites who were close to Kalvarisky, Akram Tuqan and 'Aref al-'Asali. Its platform stated that "the party has no political affiliation." Jews who in subsequent years became central activists in Jewish-Arab relations attended the first meeting of the Jerusalem Semitic Union. Among them were Re'uven Zaslani (Shiloah), later a member of the foreign service and the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, and Eliahu Sasson, later a member of the Jewish Agency's political division and the Israeli foreign service.<sup>28</sup>

The Zionist movement and the farmers' parties hoped that the parties would fill the vacuum created by the decline of both the Husseinis (the Majlissiyyun) and their opponents the Nashashibis (the Mu'aradah), brought on by the two families' long-running feud. Fahoum of Nazareth even reported to Moshe Shertok (Sharret), then an official in the Jewish Agency's political department, that both groups were courting him, but that he was waiting to hear what the Zionists had to offer.<sup>29</sup> Another person waiting was 'Abd al-Qader Shibl, an attorney from Acre who had organized a fellahin congress some two months before the 1929 riots. He became the great hope of the Zionist movement's Arabists at the end of 1931. At the beginning of 1932, Shibl began organizing a second fellahin congress. Before it convened he met several times with Kalvarisky and Shertok.<sup>30</sup>

At these meetings the Jewish representatives took an interest in resolutions the convention might pass about the sale of land to Jews. Shibl could promise only that the gathering would not make decisions that were negative from the Zionist point of view. In exchange he asked that Jews buy 16,000 dunams (4 dunams = 1 acre) near Shefa'amr from his father (Shertok promised to pass the request on to the authorized institutions). He also asked for 30 Palestinian pounds for expenses.<sup>31</sup>

The Arab bureau decided to give Shibl the money, and the next day A. H. Cohen went to Jaffa to participate in the convention as a correspondent for the newspaper *Palestine Bulletin*. But this convention was

even more of a failure than the one at ‘Ajjur. Shibl had expected 400 delegates, but only a few dozen showed up at the Abu-Shakkush cinema. He refused to leave his hotel room for the convention site until the rest of the invited delegates appeared. Hours went by, and the delegates who had arrived dispersed. Shibl made excuses about giving back the money, and this last attempt to organize the fellahin also evaporated.<sup>32</sup>

### THE POLITICAL CHANNEL: THE NAKED TRUTH

After more than a decade of effort, the Zionist movement abandoned its strategy of establishing or encouraging organizations and parties to constitute an alternative leadership for Palestine’s Arabs. There were many reasons, but in retrospect it seems that the principal one was that the policy was futile. It was based on false assumptions. The Zionists had believed that the Arabs of Palestine had no real national sentiments. They also had assumed that conflicting interests between urban and rural Arabs and between Christians and Muslims would tilt the latter of each of those pairs toward the Zionist cause. But the Zionists realized, later than they might have, that there were national sentiments in both cities and villages, and among both Christians and Muslims. They realized that many Arab villagers preferred to follow the new national leadership, or to avoid any political activity, rather than to follow the traditional landowning leaders. This is not to say that all the population supported the militant path chosen by Hajj Amin; it is to say that the fear of takeover by the Zionists rendered overt political alliance with them unacceptable for the majority of the Palestinian population.

Another factor that forced a change of strategy was economic. Despite its omnipotent image in the Arab public, the Zionist Executive suffered a chronic fiscal deficit that limited its ability to help its Arab allies. This financial difficulty was exacerbated by embezzlement perpetrated by some of the paid collaborators and by their failure to fulfill their commitments.<sup>33</sup>

Internal processes within the Zionist movement also contributed to changing policy. Mapai, the labor Zionist party led by David Ben-Gurion, had gained strength. As a result there were personnel changes in the management of the Jewish Agency, the institution that now constituted the autonomous self-governing body of Jews in Palestine. Among the changes were new heads of the agency’s political department and Arab bureau. In August 1931, Chaim Arlorsoroff was elected head of the political department. One of his decisions was to neutralize Kalvarisky and the native

Oriental Jews while reinforcing Moshe Shertok. Arlorsoroff wrote in his diary that work in the Arab field should be pursued by professionals, “no longer on a diplomacy of bribery on the one hand and Sephardic acquaintance on the other.”<sup>34</sup> Ben-Gurion similarly rejected negotiations based on bribery.<sup>35</sup>

Shertok himself wrote an in-depth analysis of the attempts to establish dependent organizations and the reasons they failed. “The Arab resistance places Zionism in a horrible spiritual plight . . . and it is only natural that if a person is in spiritual distress and seeks for a way out of his tribulations, and this proves not to be easy, it is natural that he falls into illusions.” The basic illusion was that it was possible to achieve general political cooperation by granting financial inducements while ignoring Palestinian-Arab nationalism:

The foundation of this theory—as odd as it may seem—is principally materialist. Zionism, which by its very nature is at its sources an idealistic movement, while being a political-national movement in its forms of organization and action, tried to resolve for itself the Arab problem in terms of a purely materialist-sociological explanation, without taking into account the factors of politics, the factors of national consciousness, the factors of ethnic instinct that are at work here.

This theory said: we are bringing a blessing on the Arabs of the country, and a blessing means a material blessing. We are enriching the land, we are enriching them, we are raising their standard of living; indeed, we are bringing them not only material blessings but also a blessing in a more sublime sense. We are making possible wider public services, and by doing that we are making possible a rise in the level of education, making possible better education for the Arab child, a fairer status for the woman and the family, we are bringing light to the land. In general the Arab masses benefit from this blessing that we are bringing to the land, and therefore there are no contradictions between our fundamental interests and their fundamental interests, but rather a great correspondence, even if there are some discrepancies. . . .

The unrealism of this conception was evident in the fact that in our attitude to the Arab we tried to strip him of the entire realistic framework that he lived in and to depict him not as an Arab but as merely a human being.<sup>36</sup>

Following this evocative analysis, Shertok maintained that Arab nationalism in Palestine was an established fact, and that there was no way to reach an agreement that was acceptable to both competing national movements. His conclusion was that the Zionists had to put their principal effort into building Zionism’s strength and into propaganda that would advertise that strength, in the hope that recognition of



that power would impel the Arabs to compromise.<sup>37</sup> The contacts with Arab opposition political figures such as Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani and Ragheb Nashashibi (and more rarely with members of the mainstream) did not end, but their success was no longer perceived as a necessary condition for the continuation of Zionist activity.

### PRESS AND PROPAGANDA

Recognition of the need to spread the Zionist message among the Arabs of Palestine was not new. The older generation, headed by Kalvarisky, sought to construct an information campaign directed over the heads of the Arab leadership and press. Kalvarisky wrote to the Zionist Executive:

In my opinion, nothing has done us more damage and ruined relations between Jews and Arabs than the Arab press. From the day it was born in the Land of Israel (*al-Karmil*—immediately after the revolution of the Turks) to the present it has not ceased to denounce us and malign our name. This virulent activity has instilled deep hatred of us in the hearts of the Arabs and has poisoned the atmosphere not only in this land but also in the Arab countries (Transjordan, Syria, Egypt, and others). To clear the air and turn the Arab heart toward us again, it is vital that we gain influence over the Arab press, directly and indirectly.<sup>38</sup>

The first steps toward influencing the Arabic press were made as early as 1911, and in the early 1920s two newspapers received support from the Zionists: the Jaffa paper *al-Akhbar* (under Christian ownership and editorship of Jewish Zionist Nissim Maloul) and the Jerusalem newspaper *Lisan al-'Arab*, edited by Ibrahim Najjar. Both were supposed to publish pro-Zionist articles but did not always live up to this commitment. In April 1923, Kalvarisky had to admit that, despite the flow of funds to him, Najjar had not kept his end of the bargain. In general, Najjar takes neutral positions, Kalvarisky reported to the Zionist Executive, but “at times he abandons his neutral position and assails us and criticizes our actions.” Kalvarisky found himself in the classic trap of those who manage collaborators: He presumed that if he ended his support of Najjar, whom he described as “devious as a snake and a man of talent,” his newspaper would begin to print fierce anti-Zionist propaganda and might even publicize Kalvarisky’s tactics. On the other hand, he could not be sure that increasing the sums given to Najjar would lead to greater obedience. In the end Kalvarisky chose to continue funding Najjar despite his disappointment. He hoped to make *Lisan al-'Arab* the

mouthpiece of the Muslim National Associations, if not of the Zionist movement itself.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to buying newspapers and their editors secretly, the Zionists continued to seek out writers to publish articles praising Zionism and Jewish-Arab brotherhood under their own bylines or pseudonyms. One of those enlisted in this campaign was Sheikh As'ad al-Shuqayri of Acre (the father of Ahmad, later founder of the PLO and its chairman in 1964–68). Sheikh al-Shuqayri had been a senior cleric in the Turkish army, had taken part in various oppositionist initiatives, and did not conceal his ties with the Zionists. In 1925 he wrote to Kalvarisky that he was prepared to write “longer articles and in that way you will gain both materially and ideologically.” His assistant, Sa'id Abu-Hamad, did the same.<sup>40</sup>

These commissioned articles appeared in the Arabic press only as long as there was funding for them. During the recession of 1926–27 the flow of money ceased, and the propaganda effort resumed only after the riots of 1929 with the flowering of the Arabic press. Many newspapers appeared and disappeared, and the United Bureau established after the riots tried to obtain influence over some of them. Buying the hearts, or at least the pens, of Arab journalists was discussed several times in the bureau. A summary of one of the discussions casts light on the Yishuv leadership's perception of the role this propaganda campaign was to play:

The United Bureau and the press department should help Arab newspapers who are influenced by us fight the attacks of those who hate us and neutralize their accusations and admonish them about the unjust and baseless attitude they have toward the acts of Jews in Palestine, noting the damage and loss caused to Arabs by their opposition to reach agreement and understanding with Jews.

Emphasize the Arabs' inability to build Palestine with their own powers alone without the help of Jews, and the impossibility of development and progress if the two peoples do not work shoulder to shoulder. . . .

Stress the difficulty and the disturbances and the backsliding caused to all branches of life by the riots and insecurity in the country, from which both peoples suffer. . . .

Produce informational material on Jews' good intentions regarding Arabs, in keeping with the leaders' declarations and the Zionist Congresses, etc.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the 1929 riots, some Zionist officials continued to ignore the national character of Arab opposition to Zionism—in no little part

because there were Arabs who also ignored it and cooperated in the propaganda effort. The most productive of these propagandists was apparently Muhammad Tawil, a clerk and writer of court pleas in northern Palestine.<sup>42</sup> Tawil was also active in the farmers' parties and, as we have seen, testified before the Shaw Commission against the mufti. Author of a wide variety of journalistic pieces that fit well with the Zionist line, he had no compunctions about attacking Christians and what he saw as the unnatural bond the nationalist movement had created between them and Muslims. He argued that Jews and Muslims had more in common, and that Christians had joined the national movement only to advance their own narrow interests.<sup>43</sup> He also issued proclamations, pamphlets, and books denouncing the mufti and the Supreme Muslim Council. In his 1930 book *Tariq al-Hayah* (Way of Life) he fiercely attacked Hajj Amin al-Husseini. The mufti had failed as a leader, he argued; his policies were leading to the loss of Palestine, and the money he collected for national purposes had disappeared. In an open letter to the head of the Arab Executive Committee, Musa Kazem al-Husseini, Tawil wrote: "Your negative methods have harmed the country and brought devastation on the lives of its people. . . . Muslims want to live with Jews in Palestine . . . work to improve the internal state of the country as the Zionists are doing. . . . history will demand an accounting from you."<sup>44</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, more Arab writers made themselves available to the Zionist movement. One of the most prominent of them, Zahed Shahin of Nablus, who was in touch with Kalvarisky and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, chairman of the National Council, offered articles for publication in the Hebrew press. Ben-Zvi said that he preferred that his attacks on Arab leaders appear in Arab newspapers.<sup>45</sup> Additional propaganda publications were written by leaders of the Nablus farmers' party and founders of the party in Jaffa, such as Akram Tuqan and 'Aref al-'Asali. Tuqan published pamphlets under the title *al-Haqa'iq al-Majhoola* (Hidden Truths), in which he laid out proposals for Jewish-Arab cooperation based on his own experience as a party organizer. 'Asali issued a booklet, *The Arabs and the Jews in History*, in which he argued that the two peoples were closely related and stated that "the artificial alienation and separation between them are largely the result of politics."<sup>46</sup>

Three tactics were notable in the work of Arab mercenary writers: they portrayed Zionism's positive features and an idealized model of Jewish-Arab relations; they cast the Palestinian Arab leadership in a negative light; and they tried to widen the religious fissure in Arab society.

These tactics were consistent with the program drafted at the beginning of the 1920s, but as the illusion dissipated and the Zionist leadership abandoned its hope for general Arab acquiescence in the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, the use of Arab newspapers focused primarily on deepening the fissures in Palestinian Arab society and presenting the strength of the Zionist movement—just as Shertok had proposed.

### SELLERS ONLY: LAND BROKERS

Zionism's efforts to "redeem the land" were a part of Jewish immigration to Palestine from its very beginnings. Without Jewish-owned real estate, the Zionists could not immigrate in increasing numbers, establish settlements, or build a new Jewish society based on the return to the land. Palestinian cooperation was a necessary condition for realization of this Zionist vision.

Despite restrictions imposed by the Ottoman government and the opposition that began to make itself heard in the Arab public, by 1917 the Zionist movement had managed to purchase more than 420,000 dunams, most of it in five blocks: the eastern parts of the Upper and the Lower Galilee; the Hadera–Zikhron Ya'akov block, on the coastal plain south of Haifa; the Petah Tikva–Kfar Saba block, northeast of Jaffa; and the Judean colonies southeast of Jaffa. Generally speaking, the sellers were owners of large swathes of land; most of them were Arabs from neighboring countries (absent landlords), and the rest were Palestinian Arabs and some Europeans.<sup>47</sup>

Land purchases continued after World War I, and the political border drawn between the British Mandate in Palestine and the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon accelerated the sale of large estates whose owners lived in Beirut (e.g., a branch of the Sursuq family) or Damascus (e.g., the family of Algerian emir 'Abd al-Qader). With the beginning of British rule, Yehoshua Hankin renewed his efforts to buy land in the Jezreel Valley in the north from the Sursuq family. In 1920 he signed a contract for the purchase of 70,000 dunams.<sup>48</sup> In 1924 the Zionist movement bought an additional 15,500 dunams from Linda and Nicholas Sursuq and 25,000 dunams from Alexander Sursuq. A year later 28,000 dunams more of the valley were purchased from the Sursuqs and another Beirut family, the Tuweinis, in addition to land in the Zevulun Valley, along Haifa Bay. In 1927 the Zionists bought lands in the Heffer Valley (Wadi al-Hawareth), south of Haifa—some 30,000 dunams that were auctioned

off after a legal dispute among the owners, the Tayyan family of Lebanon and their creditors.<sup>49</sup> The heirs of ‘Abd al-Qader, who owned thousands of dunams in eastern Galilee, continued to sell.

These huge land purchases were accomplished by two Zionist organizations set up for this purpose, the Jewish National Fund (known as KKL, *Keren Kayemet le-Yisra’el*) and the PLDC (Palestine Land Development Company, known as *Hachsharat ha-Yishuv* in Hebrew). As Jewish immigration increased and the demand for land amplified, the willingness of Palestinian Arabs to sell to Jews grew apace. As a result, by 1930 the Jewish population owned 1,200,000 dunams, of which about 450,000 had been purchased from foreign landowners, approximately 680,000 from local owners of large estates, and the remaining 75,000 from fellahin smallholders.<sup>50</sup>

The deals made with the large estate owners had the most significant effect on the map of Jewish settlement. In 1921 Nasrallah Khuri of Haifa sold Hankin the land on which the Jewish settlement of Yagur was established; in 1924 the Shanti family of Qalqiliya sold the land on which Magdiel was established; the sheikh of the Abu-Kishek tribe sold, in 1925, the lands on which Ramat ha-Sharon, Ramatayim, Bnei Berak, and other settlements were built (this after he offered the land to several Jewish buyers in order to bid up the price). Another piece of Bnei Berak was bought from the mayor of Jaffa, ‘Omar al-Baytar, and his brother, ‘Abd al-Ra’ouf. The sheikh of the village Umm Khaled, Saleh Hamdan, sold his village’s land in 1928, and the city of Netanya was built there. In 1932 the Hanun family of Tulkarem sold about 10,000 dunams, on which Even-Yehuda was established. That same year Mustafa Bushnaq sold, with the assistance of the Shanti family, land on the Sharon plain on which Kfar Yona was built; in 1933 Isma‘il Natour of Qalansawa sold the lands on which Qadima was built. The Shukri brothers and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Taji al-Farouqi sold 2,000 dunams from the land of the Arab village of Zarnuqa, on which the Jewish kibbutzim Givat Brener, Na’an, and Gibton were built. Sheikh As‘ad al-Shuqayri sold 700 dunams that became the neighborhood of Neve Sha’anana in Haifa. And this is but a partial list.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, although most of this land was sold by large landowners, it is important to remember that numerically there were many times more fellahin who sold land to the Zionists. In the two years between June 1934 and August 1936, Jews bought more than 53,000 dunams in 2,339 land sales. Of these, 41 sales involved more than 500 dunams and 164 involved 100 to 500 dunams. The vast majority—2,134 sales—were of

plots of less than 100 dunams.<sup>52</sup> This means that thousands of Arabs of all walks of life—poor and rich, Christian and Muslim, members of the political mainstream and oppositionists, city dwellers, Bedouin, and villagers—acted contrary to the norms laid down by their national movement.

This assistance to the Zionists went beyond land sales to other forms of cooperation. Zionist land buyers needed information about land available for sale, and they received this first and foremost from their informants. KKL and other purchasers used agents to find potential sellers. Moshe Goldenberg, a KKL official, explained how the system worked in the Beit She'an (Beisan) area:

Sheikh Rashid Hasan was a fine and well-known figure. He was the mukhtar of the town of Beisan and, of course, there were many people in the town who were interested in selling. . . . He would find the people in Beisan who had to sell for economic reasons, for all sorts of reasons, and he'd send them to me, and I would take them to Haifa and they would sell their land. Not a single plot in Beisan was sold without his knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

Concluding a deal was relatively simple when the voluntary seller applied via such a collaborator to KKL, knew the boundaries of his plot, and possessed ownership documents. But the ownership of many plots Zionist agencies wanted to buy was not clear, and they needed to obtain information about the owners or locate documents. Arab collaborators helped in these tasks as well. For example, difficulties arose during the purchase of land at the village of Taybe-Zu'biyya in the eastern Lower Galilee in the early 1930s. The purchase was handled by Aharon Danin, who related:

One of the village elders, an uncle of Sayf al-Din Zu'bi [later vice-speaker of the Israeli Knesset], Ibrahim 'Abd al-Rahman Zu'bi . . . was then the village mukhtar, and I went to him. This gentile, really, a gentile with a physique, puts his hand on his eyes and says, *ya bnayya* [my son], take a pen and start writing. A phenomenal memory. He began by telling me immediately who were the owners of 72 and a half parcels, and began one by one . . . how the ownership was split, whom they sold it to. I found the registration according to the instructions he gave me. Some in Jenin, some in Nablus, and some in Tyre in Lebanon [because the region had been transferred from one district to another].<sup>54</sup>

After the owners were located, they had to be convinced to sell their land. Here professional land brokers or influential figures entered the picture and helped persuade the hesitant. Such was the case in the aforementioned sale of Zu'bi lands: "The head of the tribe was Muhammad Sa'id

Zu'bi, the father of [future] Member of the Knesset Sayf [al-Din] Zu'bi. It would be hard to say that he was an intermediary. It wasn't mediation. It was more relationships, I won't say family, but he brought about the sale of lands that in his opinion were dispensable for the owner."<sup>55</sup>

That was the case when the "persuader" was a local leader. Sometimes the task was handled by a professional land broker. As Danin described it, "We had agents among them who could, by the strange approaches that our cousins have, bring certain people to sell."<sup>56</sup> His brother, Ezra Danin, recounted the way one of these brokers worked: "[Sharif] Shanti had a clear conception that he had to buy *musha'* [land belonging in common to the villagers]. When he needed to buy something from the village, he'd use his tricks to cause horrible arguments and dissent in the villages, which could force them to need a lot of money, for lawsuits and self-defense or attack. In situations like these he would buy lands and we bought from him."<sup>57</sup>

Purchase was sometimes not sufficient. The next stage was removal of the tenant farmers who lived on the land, or clearing away trespassers who had squatted on it so that they could receive compensation. Collaborators assisted in these areas as well. Hankin enlisted thugs from Nazareth to take possession of lands he bought in Ma'lul (near the Jewish settlement Nahalal): "Hankin used one of the hooligans of Nazareth who had both land and property in Ma'lul. His name was Sa'id Khuri. This Sa'id was later murdered by his brother over money matters," Aharon Danin related. The Jaffa newspaper *al-Hayat* reported that Hankin paid agents to persuade the tenant farmers in Wadi al-Hawareth (the Heffer Valley) to sign (in exchange for payment) release documents for their lands.<sup>58</sup>

Collaborators had a function in the following stages as well, such as marking the land and guarding it against squatters (in cases where establishment of a Jewish settlement was not organized immediately). The third Danin brother, Hiram, recalled that the son of the former mayor of Beer-sheva, Mahmoud Abu-Dalal, worked as a tractor operator for PLDC and marked out lands the company purchased in the Negev. This achieved two goals: it actively took possession of the land, and it provided a steady job for the mayor's son, therefore ensuring that the mayor could not oppose the land deals.<sup>59</sup> Marking land was sometimes a risky matter. In one case, a boy from the village of 'Attil who was helping buyers stake out lands in Wadi Qabani was shot at by a posse of Arabs who sought to prevent the land transfer.<sup>60</sup>

This help was not restricted to the practical level. As the British, re-

sponding to Arab pressure, took steps to limit Jewish land purchases, the Zionists enlisted Arabs to join them in opposing this initiative. When Hope-Simpson arrived in Palestine in summer 1930, several Arabs appeared before him and claimed that Jewish immigration and land sale to Jews would actually help the Arab population—claims that matched those of the Zionist institutions. One of these Arabs was Fayyad al-Khadraa (al-Jarrar), who said:

I have about 5,000 dunams that are no use at all, and I owe money to creditors. If the gates of immigration were open I could hope that in a year or two companies of immigrants would come to buy 4,000 dunams of land from me, which will rescue me from my debts and allow me to cultivate what is left of my land and in that way I could live happily, me and my descendants after me.

Hafez Hamdallah of ‘Anabta, west of Nablus, spoke in the same vein. Hamdallah, whose ties with the Haganah’s intelligence service (the Shai) are noted later, testified to the benefits derived from the sale of 2,000 dunams in the Heffer Valley to Yehoshua Hankin. Three more men made similar statements in their testimony before the commission.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the ongoing campaign against land sales, many Palestinian Arabs continued to sell land to Jews throughout the period of the Mandate. It seems that Palestinian Arabs as a group accepted the nationalist ideas formulated by the national institutions, but that individually many of them put their personal interests before their political ideas.

### KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: INFORMERS AND SPIES

As opposition to Zionism grew, so did the Zionists’ need to gather intelligence—political and military—about the general trends and operational plans of the Palestinian national movement and its radical activists. The first initiatives to establish an intelligence service that would recruit Arab agents and informers were made immediately after the British conquest. Members of early Zionist defense organizations ha-Shomer and Nili competed to receive responsibility for this task. In spring 1918, members of ha-Shomer submitted a proposal to the Elected Assembly laying out the subjects worth collecting information on. They offered themselves for the job. The subjects were the location of land for sale, the influence of Christians on the population at large, events among the Bedouin, and “study of the Arab attitude toward us”—in other words, political intelligence.<sup>62</sup> Members of Nili submitted a parallel pro-



posal, and in the end the job was assigned to them. This established the Elected Assembly's information office.<sup>63</sup> Its staff managed collaborators within Arab organizations in Palestine and adjacent countries and gave special weight to early-warning intelligence. The office's staff, made up of residents of the established *moshavot*, the Zionist farming villages established under Ottoman rule, already had a comprehensive network of acquaintances among Arabs that allowed them to obtain considerable information. The office's hundreds of intelligence reports, preserved in the Zionist archives, contain minute details that testify to deep intelligence penetration of Palestinian Arab society.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, Jews who did not work for the intelligence office but had their own connections with Arabs also obtained information from their contacts. So, for example, in 1920, during a concentrated effort to gather intelligence on an organization called al-Jam'iyyah al-Fida'iyyah (the Association of Self-Sacrificers) operating in Damascus, Jaffa, and Jerusalem, an Arab from Jaffa approached Yosef Rivlin, who was living in Damascus and working as a teacher. The informant, named Husni, provided information about the organization's plans ("to commit terrorist acts in Jerusalem and assassinate [British high commissioner] Herbert Samuel"). He also gave the names of the organization's leaders ('Aref al-'Aref, Muhammad al-Imam, 'Abd al-Qader al-Muzaffar, and others) and even volunteered to assist in activities against it by joining the assassins and traveling with them to Jerusalem, so that he could "hand them over at the right moment."<sup>65</sup>

At this same time, a network of Palestinian Arab spies was also active in Syria. They were sent by the Elected Assembly via brothers Yisrael and Yonatan Blumenfeld. The cell was headed by Murshid Shahin of Hebron, who was enlisted by Ibrahim 'Abdin of Ramla. Shahin recruited five men, who gave him information on events throughout the country. He was later sent to Syria and Transjordan on short intelligence assignments, along with four of his colleagues. Their mission was, apparently, tracking Palestinian nationalist activists who were staying in these countries.<sup>66</sup>

The riots of April 1920 began with the Nebi Musa celebrations and ended with the attack on Jerusalem's Jews, in which five were killed, 211 wounded, and many homes and businesses looted. During the following summer the information office received considerable intelligence on plans to attack British and Zionist officials. Yet, even though the office's staff gave full attention to every scrap of information, the riots of 1921 caught the Yishuv insufficiently prepared. In the wake of these events, the Yishuv's intelligence activities were again augmented. Most of those

involved were members of the old *moshavot*, some of them veterans of the information office, who tracked assailants independently of the Haganah, the Yishuv's defense organization established in 1920.<sup>67</sup> Here began the familiar and natural pattern of collecting increased intelligence *after* terrorist attacks. After a short period there was again a lull in intelligence activities for a few years, although information gathering never ceased entirely.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, except for a short period, during this time there was no real organized intelligence activity or operation of informants in any regular, ongoing way. A significant leap came after the riots of 1929, when Zionist institutions reevaluated the entire subject of Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine.

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Two weeks before the riots broke out in 1929, the Haganah mustered its members in Jerusalem on a field in the Beit ha-Kerem neighborhood. The commander announced an alert and asked who was prepared to serve as a spy in Arab territory. A. H. Cohen, then a 17-year-old print worker, recalled that he stepped forward—and saw that he was alone. He was summoned to a meeting with Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who instructed him to leave his job and begin gathering intelligence.<sup>69</sup> Within a short time, Cohen became one of the lynchpins of Zionist intelligence activity—which shows just how lacking in intelligence infrastructure the Zionist institutions were.

Cohen specialized in two methods. One was undercover spying in Arab guise, the other overseeing agents. He received his instructions from the United Bureau, which had since its establishment in 1929 been responsible for gathering information on the Arab camp. The principal agent Cohen operated was the mukhtar of the village of Battir, who was known as “Na‘aman” (mentioned above as having testified against the mufti’s men in 1929). On Cohen’s testimony, “Na‘aman” enlisted the mukhtars of the villages of Beit Safafa, Walaja, Wadi Fukin, and others to assist him.

A good example of the type of work Cohen engaged in is the finding of weapons caches in Gaza. He and two of his helpers went to Gaza equipped with false papers that identified them as representatives of the Arab Executive Committee sent to examine the state of the weapons in the city. After examining the weapons, the three returned to Jerusalem, and Cohen reported to Ben-Zvi on the locations of weapons. “The next day the British took two wagons loaded with rifles from those places.”<sup>70</sup>

Kalvarisky continued to be in charge of political intelligence. His most

important informant was Abed Rashid Qawwas (al-Mutanabbi), whose alias was “Ovadiyah.” “Ovadiyah” provided a continuous stream of information, and his reports arrived once every week or two. He reported on a plan to renew the boycott of Jewish merchandise, on internal discussions in the Arab Executive Committee concerning leaks to the Jews, and on the mufti’s efforts to broaden his influence in the country.<sup>71</sup> After a brief period, his operators grew suspicious that “Ovadiyah” took his information from the Arabic press, fleshing it out with his imagination. In contrast, the information provided by “Na‘aman” was confirmed when it was cross-checked with additional sources, such as material from secret recordings and photographed copies of documents from the Muslim Council and the Executive Committee obtained by the Bureau.<sup>72</sup>

Jerusalem, the hub of the Palestinian Arab national movement, was also at the center of Zionist intelligence activity, but the intelligence web was also spread throughout the rest of the country. The men who represented Tiberias (Zaki Alhadif) and Haifa (Shabtai Levi) in the United Bureau also operated informants in their cities and in the north in general, and Arab activists in the Palestine Labor League (an Arab affiliate of the Histadrut, the Zionist labor federation) more than once passed on information to Ben-Zvi and their acquaintances in the Histadrut’s local workers’ councils.<sup>73</sup> There were also local networks set up by guards, mukhtars of Jewish settlements, and others that depended largely on Arab neighbors and friends who shared information—whether in the form of warnings or otherwise—about what was happening around them.<sup>74</sup> During that same period the Haganah began to institutionalize its intelligence work and share information its agents gathered with the Arab bureau of the Jewish Agency’s political department.<sup>75</sup>

In summer 1933, David Ben-Gurion joined the Zionist Executive and added impetus to its intelligence activity. The Arab bureau added new informants and defined areas of information gathering with the purpose of arriving at a clearer picture of activities in Arab society.<sup>76</sup> The intelligence network was not limited to Palestine’s borders. Members of the Jewish Agency’s political department also operated in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, and even more so in Transjordan, where their ties with Emir ‘Abdallah grew stronger. This work was in part political and in part alarmist intelligence. In the mid-1930s the focus in Palestine was on the latter and on the attempt to find Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam and his band and other underground groups.<sup>77</sup>

On the eve of the rebellion of 1936, a great deal of information flowed in from various regions, both to the Arab bureau of the Jewish Agency

and to the Haganah's intelligence division, on the growing tensions within the Arab public and the organization of armed groups and mounting expressions of extremism in internal forums (especially among the young).<sup>78</sup> This did not prevent the rebellion from catching the Yishuv by surprise, but the failure to prepare for it was not due just to the immaturity of the information-gathering system. There were two additional factors: lack of information about the precise time when violence would erupt (information that did not exist), and failure to analyze the existing information properly. In any case, Arab informers proved the usefulness of a well-developed system of collaborators. The ongoing rebellion increased Jews' dependence on intelligence-gathering collaborators, and the collaborators also became a central issue for the Palestinian Arabs, who saw the fight against them as an essential part of the rebellion, as we see in part II.

### **MONEY HAS NO ODOR: ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

Zionists also aspired to cooperate with Arabs in the economic field. Zionist interest in such cooperation had two components, practical and public relations. On the practical side, the Arabs of Palestine were a natural market for consumer goods produced in the Jewish sector and had buying power that was important for Jewish businesses. They thus supported the Yishuv's economy. In addition, it was important for the Zionists to avoid giving the rest of the world the impression that they were creating a separate economy at the expense of the country's natives. After all, the Balfour Declaration, the basis of Zionist argument in international politics, stipulated that Jewish immigration was not to prejudice the rights of Palestine's non-Jews. It is in this context that Meir Dizengoff's statement in 1920 should be read: "The main thing is to make them parties in our business activities; [otherwise] people overseas will come to conduct an investigation of the situation and find that we have really entered into our own cocoon and have no regard for the great Arab masses who live in the country."<sup>79</sup>

The Palestinian national movement, for its part, tried from time to time to impose a boycott on Jewish products for these same reasons. It sought to harm the Jewish economy and to prevent the Zionists from depicting the relations between Jews and Arabs as mutually beneficial. This, for example, was the basis of Arab opposition to connecting Arab villages and towns to the electrical grid set up by Zionist entrepreneur Pinhas Rutenberg. Agreeing to such linkage would, they felt, not only be seen as consent to the grant of the sole franchise for the production of

electricity (and use of water) to a Zionist Jew but also make them permanently dependent on the Zionists. Rutenberg used a tactic like that of Kalvarisky (and with much more success): when he sought to connect Jaffa to the grid, he gave a bribe of 1,000 Palestinian pounds to one of the most influential Arabs in the city, and he achieved his goal.<sup>80</sup>

After the 1929 riots, the Arab Executive Committee declared an economic boycott, an idea that had been suggested several times before. It called on the Arab public not to buy in Jewish stores and to purchase only Arab products. The United Bureau set out to fight the boycott. Its members tracked the Muslim Council's enforcement squads and handed its members over to the police if they violated the law. The Bureau also tried to use collaborators to break the boycott.

Ya'akov Mizrahi, a Haifa merchant, reported to the Bureau in January 1930 on an assembly of dignitaries and businessmen in Nablus who discussed the boycott. Mizrahi apparently heard about it from one of his friends. Ahmad al-Shak'a, a well-known merchant (who apparently also dealt in land sales), spoke there heatedly in favor of sanctions against Jewish goods, but sheikhs from the surrounding villages were opposed. They claimed that the city merchants supported the boycott in order to force farmers to take loans from them at exorbitant interest rates, and so to preserve the city's dominance over the villages.<sup>81</sup> The United Bureau encouraged such thinking at that time, with the aim of deepening the fissure between cities and villages.

The Bureau tracked the boycott in Hebron as well. According to A. H. Cohen's report in spring 1931, a delegation from the Arab Executive Committee did not succeed in persuading Hebron's merchants to join the sanctions. Their reason was economic—they received 80 percent of their merchandise from Jewish businessmen, on credit terms no Arab would give them. This group was headed by merchants and dignitaries who even expressed a desire to meet Chaim Weizmann during his visit. They told Cohen that they ardently wanted Jews, who had fled Hebron after the massacre, to return to live in the City of the Patriarchs.<sup>82</sup>

In some cases the violators of the boycott were linked to political parties supported by the Zionist movement. The Bureau's intention was to impel Jewish businessmen to develop commercial relations with the violators and to strengthen them economically. It also pursued an information campaign, publicizing the damage done to the Arab population at large by the boycott and the profits being raked in by businessmen with connections to the national movement. The propagandist Muhammad Tawil took an active part in this campaign.<sup>83</sup>

In fact, the boycott did not hold up for long, because Arab merchants needed Jewish merchandise and gradually but increasingly began violating the ban. The dissipation of the boycott accelerated when many Arab merchants saw their competitors buying Jewish merchandise, openly or under the table, whether because of Zionist encouragement or for economic reasons. Here too it turned out that, in the absence of unity, nationalist sentiment was often no match for personal interest.

In addition to cooperation between businessmen and merchants, socialist Zionist bodies initiated cooperation on a class basis. This included the establishment of Arab workers' organizations as well as the Palestine Labor League, the Arab branch of the Histadrut. The conventional scholarly wisdom is that the purpose of organizing Arab workers and raising their wages was to keep them from competing with Jewish workers whose wages were higher. In other words, the purpose was to improve the lot of the Jewish, rather than the Arab, workers.<sup>84</sup> In this sense the Arab workers' organizations were part of the Zionist project. However, the Arab national institutions' opposition to Arabs joining Jewish-Arab labor unions did not necessarily derive from this economic analysis. Principally, they opposed any link at all to Zionist institutions. An example of such opposition came during the Haifa carpenters and garment workers' strike in 1925. The strike was organized by Avraham Khalfon and his pro-Zionist assistant, Phillip Hasson. The Arabic newspaper *al-Karmil* expressed support for the strike in principle but warned Arab workers against the trap the Zionists were setting for them. "They want to enrich themselves at the expense of the workers' sweat."<sup>85</sup>

It was no coincidence that the northern port city was a focal point of labor organization. The city had large factories that employed Jews and Arabs and a powerful workers' council. Even on the eve of the great Arab rebellion, when Haifa was a center of religious-nationalist activity inspired by Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, some activist Arab workers who had ties to the Histadrut's workers' council continued to maintain good relations with Zionist activists. At that time the contacts broadened into actual intelligence activity, which further confirmed Arab nationalist fears about cooperation of any sort with Jews.

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The switch in emphasis from recruiting political collaborators to security-intelligence work testifies to a changed perception of reality by the Yishuv's leadership. No longer naïvely believing that Arabs would accept

Jewish immigration as a blessing, they now recognized that armed conflict was inevitable. No longer were the Arabs a mixed multitude without a political agenda. The Zionists recognized (though not fully) that the Palestinian Arabs had gained a national consciousness. From the moment the Zionists had this insight, the Arab population was seen, first and foremost, as an enemy. As an enemy, they were an intelligence target, and those whose opposition to Zionism was less virulent, or whose personal interests were more powerful than their national affiliation, became potential informers.

The cause of this conceptual transformation by Yishuv leaders lay first and foremost in the changes in the Palestinian public's political awareness. One of the principal expressions of this was the ever-increasing intensity of the nationalists' battle against collaborators. The message conveyed by this struggle was not directed at Jews, nor at the collaborators alone. It was directed at the Arab public as a whole. The nationalist leaders sought to use it to instill national norms—what was permitted and what forbidden, what behavior was acceptable and what was treasonable. At the same time, the struggle was also intended to make clear to the masses who decided what was permitted and what forbidden, who determined what actions were fitting and what despicable. It was meant, in other words, to show who was in charge.