

## THE RISE OF ZIONISM

Zionism—the drive for the return of the Jews to, and sovereignty in, Eretz Yisrael—was rooted in age-old millenarian impulses and values of Jewish religious tradition and in the flourishing nationalist ideologies of nineteenth-century Europe. Its emergence as a mass political movement was triggered by the outbursts of anti-Semitism to which these ideologies had given rise. The mid- and late-nineteenth century saw the rapid secularization of the millenarian-Zionist goal amid an increasingly secularized Jewish population.

The return to Zion was conceived as a social and political act that would remedy the Jews' abnormal existence as an oppressed minority in the Diaspora. But ever since the Jews' exile from the land at the start of the first millennium A.D., the idea or vision of a return had been closely bound up with the cosmic, messianic theme of collective redemption and salvation. The religious energy generated by this idea over the centuries was transmuted during the decades of Zionist fulfillment into that potent political force which swept all before it and ultimately forged a state in circumstances and in an environment where crude logic dictated that no Jewish state could ever arise. There is no understanding Zionist behavior in Palestine or the development of the Arab-Zionist conflict without comprehending the messianic roots and European background and propellants of Zionism's emergence.

With Zionism, ideology in great measure preceded reality. Its precursors spoke out almost a generation before the start of the Eastern European pogroms that in fact set the movement in motion. But they were not speaking in a void or from their imagination. The reality of Jewish life, when most of the world's Jews lived in the European part of the Russian Empire known as the "Pale of Settlement," running from Memel in the north to Crimea on the Black Sea, was one of continuous discrimination and insecurity and occasional oppression and violence. The historian Elie Kedourie once spoke of the "deep insult of diaspora life." Basic freedoms—of movement, place of residence, language, occupation, and worship—were severely curtailed or regulated by the state. The restrictions, including prohibition of landownership, assured the impoverishment and socioeconomic immobility of most Jews in the Pale. During the mid-nineteenth century, Jews were subjected to a brutal system of twenty-five-year military conscription, which occasionally entailed the virtual kidnapping of their children at the age of twelve, or even sometimes at eight or nine, and their attempted conversion to Christianity by the authorities in special preparatory military schools. Indeed, an official Russian government commission in 1888 defined the Jews' condition as one of

"repression and disenfranchisement, discrimination and persecution."<sup>23</sup> The impulse to Zionism arose out of and was a product of this reality.

The three prophetic harbingers of political Zionism, Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798–1878), Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), and Moses Hess (1812–1875), preceded by a full generation the actual emergence of the mass movement, and their visionary works had little immediate impact on their milieu. It took the successive shocks of the Russian pogroms of 1881–84 and the Dreyfus affair in France in the 1890s to set the stage for the blossoming of Zionism.

Alkalai, Kalischer, and Hess were all influenced by the plight of the Jews and by contemporary nationalist movements. Both rabbis, Alkalai in Serbia and Kalischer in Poland, saw a return to the Land of Israel as a stage in the redemption of the Jews. Hess was a thoroughly westernized German socialist ideologue who had collaborated with Karl Marx before dramatically returning to the Jewish fold in the 1850s and publishing his major Zionist work, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last Nationality Question*, in 1862. He sensed the emergence of modern anti-Semitism, which would prevent the Jews from assimilating in Christian society, and he also understood that the Middle East was about to be swept by a wave of national liberation movements in conflict with the Ottoman Empire. He felt that the state the Jews would establish in the heart of the Middle East would serve Western imperial interests and at the same time help bring Western civilization to the backward East.

Alkalai, Kalischer, and Hess were dead by the time the Zionist movement was launched. On March 13, 1881, a band of young Russian revolutionaries assassinated Czar Alexander II, unleashing a wave of political unrest. Anti-Semites spread the rumor that the assassins were Jews (in fact, only one was). A wave of pogroms swept the empire, particularly the Ukraine, where mobs pillaged and destroyed Jewish neighborhoods, beating, raping, and killing the inhabitants. Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), who was to emerge as a major Zionist ideologue, spent May 1881 cowering with his family in a cellar in Odessa. His diary entries afford a glimpse of the terror that gripped the millions of Jews in the Pale of Settlement:

*May 5:* The situation is terrible and frightening! We are virtually under siege. The courtyards are barred up, and we keep peering through the grillwork to see if the mob is coming to swoop down on us. . . . We all sleep in our clothes and without bedding . . . so that if we are attacked we will immediately be able to take the small children . . . and flee. But will they let us flee? . . . Will they have mercy on the youngsters? . . . How long, O God of Israel?

*May 7:* The rioters approached the house I am staying in. The women shrieked and wailed, hugging the children to their breasts, and didn't

know where to turn. The men stood by dumbfounded. We all imagined that in a few moments it would be all over with us.<sup>24</sup>

But Lilienblum was fortunate: In Odessa, soldiers intervened, frightening off the rioters.

The pogroms were followed by a series of laws and edicts institutionalizing discrimination against Jews, including the *numerus clausus*, restricting their entry into secondary schools and universities, hampering them from practicing law, and clamping down on their freedom of movement and residence. In 1891–92, about twenty thousand Jews were expelled from Moscow. The cumulative effect of the destruction of property and the discriminatory edicts was the rapid pauperization of the empire's Jewish communities, which had not been prosperous to begin with.<sup>25</sup>

Most people, including the community leaders in each town (there was no central national Jewish communal organization), at least initially assured themselves that all would be well. The pogroms were a passing aberration; full emancipation was on its way. But many of the better-educated, who had previously watched with hope the slow penetration of Russia by Western ideas and had anticipated a gradual liberalization of the czarist realm, began to despair. Things were only going to get worse. Some Jews had identified with the revolutionary movement and had believed that the overthrow of the hated ancien régime would lead to real emancipation. The events of 1881–82 were a stunning slap in the face to both the liberals and the revolutionaries.

The solution had to lie elsewhere. Jews who had toyed with the possibility of assimilation, who believed that the march of Westernism and modernity would bring them to the bright uplands of full and equal integration, at last acknowledged that history was not necessarily moving in that direction; that the blood pulse of modern nationalism also led or could lead back to the dark forests of tribalism and reaction, and to resurgent anti-Semitism.

In the wake of the pogroms, Leo Pinsker (1821–1891), a respected Russian-Jewish doctor, was moved to dash off his classic, *Auto-Emancipation: A Warning to His Kinsfolk by a Russian Jew* (published anonymously, in German, in September 1882). Pinsker had been something of an assimilationist, who regarded the spread of the Russian language among the Jews as a means to “Russification” and to Jewry’s gradual integration into the body social. Then came the pogroms. A badly shaken Pinsker called, in effect, for a giant exodus. In the Diaspora the Jews were and would forever be unwanted, often reviled strangers. They must evacuate Europe and move to a “Promised Land”; that way alone lay both personal salvation and national resurrection. Pinsker was moved above all by an acute sense of dishonor and shame. The pogroms had highlighted the Jews’ impotence and humiliation: “When we are ill-used, robbed, plundered and dishonoured we dare not defend ourselves, and, worse still, we take it almost as a matter of course. . . . Though you prove

patriots a thousand times . . . some fine morning you find yourselves crossing the border and you are reminded by the mob that you are, after all, nothing but vagrants and parasites, outside the protection of the law.”<sup>26</sup>

The Jews, “everywhere [guests], and nowhere at home,” would, in the Diaspora, always be subject to that “incurable . . . psychic aberration,” anti-Semitism. This, Pinsker argued, was not some illogical holdover from medieval Christendom. It had always existed and always would, primarily because the Jews’ condition was unnatural and abnormal: Lacking territory, they lacked substance, “like a [people] without a shadow,” ghosts, which others perpetually found irritating and threatening. In the modern world this gut abhorrence was compounded by the Jews’ emergence from the ghetto as natural economic and professional competitors to the Christians.

The Jew could not save himself individually, only collectively. No one else, neither God nor gentile, would save him; salvation could be achieved only through exodus and concentration in a homeland, in a collective effort of will, through “autoemancipation,” the re-creation of the Jewish nation, living on its own soil, in a country of its own. That country must gradually be purchased and settled; eventually the Jews would achieve nationhood and gentile recognition. Only there could Jews at last achieve equality with and independence of the gentiles.

Pinsker did not point to Palestine as the necessary haven. Indeed, he seemed to suggest that the Land of Israel was not really suitable for settlement. Rather, he looked vaguely to some stretch of North America that could be turned into a Jewish homeland.

## HIBBAT ZION AND THE BILUIM

The pogroms had a dramatic, vital impact on East European Jewry, even before Pinsker explained their deep historical meaning and offered his solution. Many, at first in a slow trickle, then in a veritable flood tide, reacted with their feet. Unorganized, undirected, the Jews of the Pale of Settlement began to emigrate. It was a sporadic, instinctive response to oppression and violence and the threat of more to come. There was no organized communal response and no way to organize one. But all, or at least most, seemed to understand what history was telling them: Jewish life in Russia was no longer tenable.

Russian Jewry began to make tracks primarily toward the United States; by 1914 approximately 2.5 million were to reach the shores of America. Tens of thousands headed for South America and the British dominions, primarily Canada, South Africa, and Australia. Hundreds of thousands more settled in

the cities and towns of central and Western Europe. An infinitely smaller number, more or less simultaneously and initially without coordination, responded to events by setting up in the cities and towns of the Pale and Poland clandestine societies of Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), with the aim of emigrating to Palestine or supporting such emigration. Only a very small minority of Eastern Europe's Jews turned to Zionism, and only a fraction of these actually headed for the Holy Land; this was to remain the situation for decades thereafter.

The dozens of Hovevei Zion groups loosely confederated into what in 1887 was defined as the Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion) movement. *Auto-Emancipation* had provided them with their ideological charter. Indeed, Pinsker himself was rapidly propelled into the leadership. The movement was far from consensual. Almost all the local leaders opposed the impulse to emigrate immediately to Palestine, and few wealthy Jews were prepared to finance what was regarded as a wild venture. Hibbat Zion's fund-raising for settlement in Zion proved almost insignificant. Only from ten to thirty thousand Jews ever participated in the societies, and they managed to raise, altogether, about fifty thousand rubles (about five thousand pounds sterling) a year—a sum thought sufficient to cover the settlement in Palestine of perhaps fifteen families. But rather than fully equipping a dozen or so families with all that they would need, the societies preferred to send out “first aid” in small sums to the various settlements established in Palestine during the 1880s and 1890s—here helping the settlers to purchase a cow, there to fix a roof, elsewhere to buy a small tract of land. Between 1883 and 1899, the Hibbat Zion societies, of which there were several hundred around the Pale, Poland, and Western Europe, managed to raise only some eighty-seven thousand pounds sterling (compare this, say, to the contributions to various Zionist enterprises and charities in Palestine by the French magnate Baron Edmond James de Rothschild [1845–1934] during the same period, amounting to 1.6 million pounds sterling).<sup>27</sup>

One of the societies, set up by students in St. Petersburg, stated that “every son of Israel who admits that there is no salvation for Israel unless they establish a government of their own in the Land of Israel can be considered a member.” A group that originated in Kharkov, called the Bilu, which was to leave an enormous stamp on the Zionist enterprise during the following half century, declared in its founding manifesto: “[The Jews have been] sleeping and dreaming the false dream of assimilation. . . . Now, thank God, thou art awakened. . . . The pogroms have awakened thee. . . . We want . . . a home in our country . . . it is ours as registered in the archives of history. . . .” The manifesto vaguely suggested that the Jewish settlers might “help our brother Ishmael [i.e., the Arabs] in his time of need.” It also stated that the Biluim aimed to establish in Palestine “a state within a larger [Ottoman] state.” A later charter of the association, from 1884, spoke of the need for all male members of Bilu to learn the use of firearms (“very necessary for those inhabiting coun-

tries of the East”).<sup>28</sup> Fourteen Biluim set out on June 30, 1882, bent at once on “self-redemption” and on national renaissance, through settlement and physical labor in the Land of Israel. Although only fifty or sixty Biluim were to reach Palestine by the end of 1884, they were showing the way. Indeed, they succeeded in establishing at the heart of Zionism what one historian called the “mystique of the pioneer.”<sup>29</sup> In July 1882 the first Biluim began working in Palestine as agricultural laborers. In 1884 they set up their own settlement, Gedera, next to the Arab village of Qatra (often, new Zionist settlements retained an approximation of the Arabic name of their sites, much as many Arab place names were derivatives of original Biblical Hebrew names).

Groups of Hovevei Zion began arriving in Palestine in spring 1882. That year the movement established several agricultural settlements, including Rishon Le-Zion, Rosh Pina, and Zikhron Ya'akov, and reestablished Petach Tikva, which had been founded by Jews from Jerusalem in 1878 but then abandoned. A second bout of settlement activity took place around 1890. By 1891 the eight “New Yishuv” settlements had a combined population of less than 2,500.<sup>30</sup> Hovevei Zion's activities came to be known as “practical” Zionism—that is, realization of the dream by day-to-day, dunam-by-dunam<sup>31</sup> settlement of Palestine.

The pioneering enterprise required a great deal of courage and fortitude, and resulted in not a little despair. One of the *olim* (“those who ascend,” or immigrants to Palestine) in 1885 aptly described the settlers' travails:

Nothing frightened them, nothing stopped them, neither the barrenness of the country, nor the wildness of the Arabs . . . nor ignorance of the local language and customs. . . . Nobody knows of all the hardships, sickness, and wretchedness they underwent. No observer from afar can feel what it is like to be without a drop of water for days, to lie for months in cramped tents visited by all sorts of reptiles, or understand what our wives, children, and mothers go through when the Arabs attack us. . . . No one looking at a completed building realizes the sacrifice put into it.<sup>32</sup>

All in all, the movement succeeded in dispatching to Zion in the so-called First Aliyah (“ascension,” or wave of immigration to Palestine), between 1881 and 1903, twenty to thirty thousand people, many of whom eventually returned to Russia or headed for the West. They set up nearly two dozen settlements. And, helped by major Western Jewish philanthropists, the movement managed to purchase, by 1890, about 100,000 dunams of Palestine land, and about 200,000 by 1900.<sup>33</sup>

Most of the settlements were fairly quickly overtaken by financial difficulties. But Rothschild, an ardent Zionist, was persuaded to provide assistance, and he carried the new settlements (except Gedera) and others set up later in

the 1880s and 1890s until they became more or less self-supporting or found alternative funding.

Having launched the Jewish settlement of Palestine, however, Hovevei Zion failed to arouse, mobilize, and launch world Jewry, or even the mass of Eastern European Jewry, toward the shores of the Holy Land. By the mid-1890s the various societies of Hibbat Zion were in decline. Most eventually joined the Zionist Organization, established by Theodor Herzl toward the end of the decade.

## POLITICAL (OR DIPLOMATIC) ZIONISM

In the early 1890s Zionism was an ideology waiting for a leader. Planting the odd settlement in godforsaken corners of Palestine was all very well, but would this trigger mass Jewish immigration or bring about the establishment of a nation-state? Would this solve the “Jewish problem” in Europe?

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) in effect invented Zionism as a true political movement and as an international force.<sup>34</sup> In many respects Herzl was an unlikely candidate for the role thrust upon him by history. Before assuming the mantle of leadership, he knew next to nothing about the travails and life of Eastern European Jewry. Born to a prosperous, emancipated Budapest family, he was fluent in German and French but lacked Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian; he was a secular, cosmopolitan intellectual, a doctor of law, and a minor playwright. He earned his living as the Paris correspondent of the Austrian daily *Neue Freie Presse*. Yet, within a few years, this quintessentially Western man was to lead a mass movement composed mainly of religious or observant Eastern European Jews.

What catalyzed Herzl’s conversion to Zionism was the Dreyfus affair. In 1894–95 Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jewish officer, was wrongfully convicted of treason and confined to Devil’s Island. The trial triggered a wave of anti-Semitism in the cradle and bastion of Western European liberal democracy. Herzl became obsessed with the need to solve the Jewish problem, and, at one point, even toyed with the idea that he was the Messiah, contrasting himself in his diary with Shabbetai Tzvi, a false messiah of the seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> He set out his analysis of the situation in a prophetic, programmatic thirty-thousand-word pamphlet, *Der Judenstaat* (translatable as *The Jews’ State* or *The Jewish State*), subtitled “An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question,” which appeared in 1896. If France—the home of emancipation, progress, and universalist socialism—could be swept up in an anti-Semitic maelstrom, with Parisian crowds chanting “*À mort les Juifs!*,” where could

Jews be safe—except in their own land? Assimilation would not solve the problem because the gentile world would not allow it, as *l’affaire Dreyfus* so clearly proved. The case was a watershed for many Central and Western European Jews, much as the pogroms of 1881–82 had been for Eastern Europeans.

Herzl regarded Zionism’s triumph as inevitable, not only because life in Europe was ever more untenable for the Jews, but also because it was in Europe’s interest to be rid of the Jews and relieved of anti-Semitism: The European political establishments would eventually be persuaded to promote Zionism. Herzl recognized that anti-Semitism could be harnessed to his own—Zionist—purposes.

Herzl envisioned that settlement in Palestine, and the establishment of a state, would give rise to a “new Jew”—“a wondrous breed of Jews. . . . The Maccabees will rise again.”<sup>36</sup> A central aspiration of Zionist ideology was the attainment of honor and respect in place of the shame and contempt that were the hallmarks of Jewish life in the Diaspora, especially in the Czarist empire. Respect was to be attained by the refashioning of the Jew into something akin to a gentile—aggressive, assertive, straight-backed. “Muscular Judaism,” in the phrase coined by Max Nordau (1849–1923), later Herzl’s deputy at the head of the Zionist movement, was seen as both a means and a goal. Jews, with traditionally well-developed “mental muscles” but physically short and weak, were now also to develop their bodies. Jewish communities across Central and Eastern Europe began to invest resources in physical culture. In 1900 in Berlin a group of Jews set up a sports association called Bar-Kochba, after the Judean leader of the second revolt against Rome in A.D. 132–35.<sup>37</sup> The theme of the assertive “new” Jew was to reverberate through Zionist literature around the turn of the century, and would affect the behavior of the colonists who reached the Promised Land.

In public, Herzl made no explicit reference to the fate of the indigenous Arab population of Palestine, but he was aware of its existence and the problem it represented. In 1899 he wrote to the Arab notable Yusuf Zia al-Khalidi of Jerusalem that Zionism did not pose a threat of displacement for the Arab inhabitants of Palestine; rather, the arrival of the industrious, talented, well-funded Jews would materially benefit them.<sup>38</sup> He adopted a similar line in his utopian novel *Altneuland* (Old-New Land) published in 1902 and set in the Palestine of 1923. The Jews had brought only progress and prosperity to the country’s natives, and this was the basis of comity and cooperation. Arabs could become equal citizens in the Jewish commonwealth. In 1903 Herzl reportedly opposed the purchase of the lands of Fula in the Jezreel Valley from the Sursuq family of Beirut, arguing that “poor Arab [tenant] farmers should not be driven off their land.”<sup>39</sup>

But in private Herzl sang a different tune—one of displacement and transfer of Arabs, albeit with full financial compensation. In 1895 he wrote in his diary: “We must expropriate gently. . . . We shall try to spirit the penniless

population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our country. . . . Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly."<sup>40</sup>

In his 1901 draft charter for a "Jewish-Ottoman Land Corporation," Herzl proposed that the state have the authority to move native populations from one place to another. But he never openly spoke of the need to transfer Palestine's Arabs to pave the way for Zionism; and, as a good liberal, he envisioned the propertied Arabs staying and supporting the Jewish state, living under a regime of exemplary tolerance.<sup>41</sup>

To turn vision into reality required money. Even before fashioning an organization to realize his vision, Herzl began vigorously to seek funds. In mid-1895 he tried to rope in a major Jewish banker, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, to back a Jewish state; subsequently he turned to the Rothschilds. He was unsuccessful with both, as he was with most of the leaders of Western Europe's Jewish communities—though one of the Rothschilds was at the time busy funding a number of settlements in Palestine. Baron Edmond may have feared for the position of French Jewry if a noisy Jewish nationalist movement got under way, but his rebuff to Herzl was delivered in other, strictly "Palestinian" terms: "A mass migration of Jews would arouse the enmity of the Bedouin, the mistrust of the Turkish authorities, the jealousy of the Christian colonies and pilgrims, and would undoubtedly lead to the suppression of the established settlements."<sup>42</sup>

The leaders of British and French Jewry feared that Herzl's loud public advocacy of Jewish nationalist aspirations would undermine their communities' standing and might reinforce Ottoman antagonism toward the ongoing small-scale Zionist enterprise in Palestine. Eastern Europe's Hovevei Zion circles and leaders also, at least initially, reacted to Herzl with extreme wariness: Such a volume of Zionist noise might prove counterproductive. Moreover, Herzl was an outsider, and aloof, and seemed to be dismissing all that Hovevei Zion had accomplished in Palestine. He rejected their piecemeal approach to Zionist realization and, in effect, was supplanting their leadership of the movement.

Eventually, however, the Zionist societies were persuaded that there was no credible alternative, no program better than Herzl's, and no leader better than the journalist from Budapest. Reluctantly they decided to play ball. Unlike the leaders of Western Jewry, prominent Eastern European Jews agreed to attend the First Zionist Congress, the forum chosen by Herzl for launching the movement to realize his goals, after his failure to mobilize the Western magnates.

The Zionist Organization, which was to serve as the movement's core and motor, was founded, under Herzl's orchestration, at the congress convened in Basel on August 29, 1897. It was attended by 200 to 250 delegates from twenty-four countries, with representatives of the Hovevei Zion societies pre-

dominating. There were speeches, debates, and arguments, anger and exultation, before the formula of a "home" (or "homestead"—*Heimstätte*) for the Jewish people in Palestine was adopted as the goal of Zionism. The final phrasing was arrived at only after bitter quarrels. But in the end, under Herzl's guidance, the delegates decided to avoid the term "Jewish state" so as not to antagonize the Turks, the Russians, and other gentiles.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Congress, on September 3, 1897, Herzl wrote in his diary: "Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in a word . . . it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State. . . . Perhaps in five years, and certainly in 50, everyone will know it."<sup>43</sup> In fact, fifty-one years were to pass until the fulfillment of his dream.

Many of the ideas upon which Herzl based his "political Zionism" and the Zionist Organization were to be found in the writings of the largely ignored forerunners—Kalischer, Alkalai, and Hess—rather than in the praxis of Hovevei Zion. Like these predecessors, Herzl wanted to establish a giant philanthropic "Jewish national fund" for the purchase of land (which would then be state-owned) and the underwriting of large-scale settlement; and, like them, he proposed to achieve both settlement and statehood through an alliance with one or more of the Great Powers—Turkey or Germany—or a "charter" by which one of the powers would grant or lease Palestine to the Jews. Herzl believed that, given world political realities, only thus could a Jewish commonwealth be established. In his view such a state was in the Great Powers' interest, as it would form "an outpost of civilization against barbarism"; enable them to be rid of the Jews within their borders; and, at the same time, offer a useful way of exploiting Jewish power (or potential power), wealth, and skills.

Herzl's assumptions were echoed by some of Europe's leaders. Kaiser Wilhelm II wrote in 1898 that perhaps "the tribe of Shem would be directed [once embarked on the Zionist road] to worthier goals than the exploitation of Christians." True, the Jews had "killed our Savior." But, given "the tremendous power represented by international Jewish capital in all its dangerousness," it would be well were the Jews to look upon Germany as their pro-Zionist protector.<sup>44</sup>

Without Great Power support the Jews would not succeed, through sporadic immigration, in pushing out the Ottoman rulers or establishing a state. Indeed, such unauthorized activity, which angered the Ottomans, might well prove counterproductive. "What is achieved by transporting a few thousand Jews to another country? Either they come to grief at once, or, if they prosper, their prosperity gives rise to anti-Semitism. . . . [It] is bound to end badly," Herzl once wrote<sup>45</sup>—though he eventually came grudgingly to support the settlement in Palestine of those Zionists under whose feet the Russian soil was burning and who could not wait for an international charter.

With a ragtag power base and a minuscule treasury, Herzl set about knocking

on the doors of presidents and kings to obtain the coveted "charter." The initial and chief object of his diplomacy was the power that physically controlled Palestine. The Ottomans had to be persuaded that a Jewish commonwealth would be to their benefit. The advent of "the financially strong and diligent people of Israel" would bring "undreamt-of prosperity" to the Empire, and the "millions [channeled] into Turkish money-bags" would cure the Sick Man of Europe—this was how Kaiser Wilhelm II put it in a letter to a relative.<sup>46</sup>

Alternatively, if the Turks could not be induced to grant the Jews a charter, perhaps one or more of the Western Powers—Germany or Britain—could be persuaded to back them and either to force a Jewish state upon the reluctant Ottomans or themselves to engineer its establishment. This was to be Herzl's political-diplomatic strategy during the following decade, in the course of which he met, among other potentates, the king of Italy, Pope Pius X, Kaiser Wilhelm himself (twice, in 1898), and the sultan of Turkey, Abdülhamid II (1901). But all the shuttling to and fro, all the meetings and attempted meetings with the world's high and mighty, were to no avail.

The Turks would not budge; in Constantinople—which Herzl came to call that "den of Ali Baba and the 40 thieves"<sup>47</sup>—he encountered only hostility, frustration, delay, and lies. At least initially there had been some encouragement from the Kaiser. But Wilhelm, keen on an alliance with the Turks, saw no reason to go out of his way to offend the Sublime Porte. The pope, various Frenchmen, and the Italians all similarly proved of no use.

Herzl switched his attention to Britain: "England the mighty, England the free, the England that looks out over all the seas, will understand . . . our endeavours." And, indeed, it was England that, at last, in August 1903 offered something concrete—a patch of East Africa (the "Uganda offer")—while denying a coveted stretch of the Sinai Peninsula around Al-'Arīsh, vigorously sought by the Zionists, attracted by its proximity to Palestine.<sup>48</sup> The proposal sparked a major controversy within the movement, ultimately splitting it into two factions: a "territorialist" minority, who favored (against the backdrop of renewed pogroms in Russia) accepting any territory anywhere for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth and haven, and the "Zionists of Zion," who would accept nothing but Palestine. Crucially, the Russians themselves, led by the young Chaim Weizmann, rejected "Uganda." Herzl, who wavered and then sided with the "Zionists of Zion," died in mid-controversy, on July 3, 1904, and was buried in Vienna. (His remains were symbolically reinterred in Jerusalem in August 1949, a year after the establishment of the State of Israel.) In July 1905 the Seventh Zionist Congress formally rejected "Uganda," and many of the territorialists left the movement. Palestine, and only Palestine, was now the goal. In short order Britain's African offer was withdrawn, never to resurface.

The Zionist movement, which grew rapidly in the years after Basel, received a major boost in 1903–6 from a second wave of Russian pogroms far

more vicious than those of the 1880s. The new assaults were a by-product of the grievances and turmoil surrounding the Revolution of 1905, as the Czarist regime tried to thwart the revolutionaries by diverting popular attention and anger from the monarchy to the Jews. A particularly severe jolt was administered by the first pogrom, in Kishinev, on Passover (April 19–20) 1903, when the mobs slaughtered forty-nine people, injured and mutilated hundreds more, and destroyed approximately fifteen hundred Jewish homes and shops.<sup>49</sup> The assaults intensified in 1905, against the backdrop of the Russo-Japanese War and accusations that the Jews were fomenting revolution. The most severe outbreaks—in part organized by government officials and the secret police—occurred in November following the Czar's promise of civil liberties and the establishment of a parliament (*duma*). There were hundreds of pogroms, in Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania, leaving altogether about eight hundred Jewish dead; in the worst, in Odessa, about three hundred people died and thousands were wounded. (A third wave of pogroms, during 1917–21, concurrent with the Russian Revolution and the civil wars and mostly carried out by White Russian forces, claimed perhaps as many as sixty thousand lives.)

The pogroms of 1903–06 were a major precipitant of the Second Aliyah, the next wave of Jewish emigration to Palestine. The first pogrom was a turning point: Before, it seemed, Jews accepted slaughter as their fate; after Kishinev they rebelled. No longer would they accept death, beatings, rape, and pillage without resistance. Among a growing militant minority, the rage that had built up over decades, indeed centuries, exploded. Impotence would be replaced by action. Jews would no longer rely on king, baron, or policeman for protection; these had persuasively demonstrated their indifference or malevolence, and could not be trusted. Jews had to protect themselves and their own; at the very least they had to defend or assert their honor and go down fighting.

The single most effective spokesman for Jewish outrage, the man who persuaded the intelligentsia of the need for action, was the poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik. In his epic poem, *In the City of Slaughter*, he described Kishinev after the pogrom, God's indifference, and the Jews going off like sheep to the slaughter. Sarcastically, the poet referred to the victims as "descendants of the Maccabees."

The new wave of immigration to Palestine, even more than the one before it, was an expression of revolt against the helplessness and humiliation of Diaspora life. Some of those who came in the Second Aliyah were veterans of the self-defense groups that had formed inside Russia in the wake of Kishinev. Self-defense was to be a major pillar of their ideology in Palestine. Many of the new *olim* instantly translated their Russian experiences into Palestinian coinage: Arab was equated with gentile, Arab marauding with pogrom, local antagonism and territorial feuding with anti-Semitism. They discerned in their new surroundings, behind every bush, under every tree, the shadow of the

Russian persecutor they had left behind; collectively they were haunted by their awful past. Eventually the Arabs—and they themselves—would pay the price.

## THE RISE OF ARAB AND PALESTINIAN-ARAB NATIONALISM

### THE HARBINGERS

Zionism emerged about a quarter of a century earlier than Arab nationalism, a head start in political consciousness and organization that proved vital to the Jews' success and to the Palestinian Arabs' failure during the following decades of conflict. There were, during the nineteenth century, centers of disaffection with Ottoman rule in Arab provinces. But the Arabs shared an abiding millennium-old loyalty to the encompassing Islamic polity, buttressed by a vague awareness that the European powers were ready to pounce should the empire falter.

Nevertheless, by the late 1870s a handful of Arabs were urging at least a measure of separation from the empire. Earlier, groups had formed in Damascus and Beirut whose purpose, paradoxically influenced by European currents of thought and American missionaries, was the promotion of Arab culture. The Society of Arts and Sciences was founded in 1847, and the Syrian Scientific Society in 1857. The dominant figures were the Lebanese Christian writers and educators Nasif Yaziji (1800–71) and Butrus al-Bustani (1819–83). Separatist impulses and disillusionment with the empire were particularly strong among Lebanese Christians, and grew as a consequence of the Muslim-Druze massacre of Maronites in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860.

Bustani preached a Syrian consciousness and patriotism that transcended religious-ethnic origins. He regarded the area of present-day Lebanon and Syria as one country (*bilad suriyya*) and wrote that “Syria is our fatherland (*watan*) and the population of Syria, whatever their creed, community, racial origin or groups are the sons of our fatherland.”<sup>50</sup> Separatist impulses also existed in Syria proper. In 1858 the British consul in Aleppo, J. H. Skene, reported that the “Mussulman population of Northern Syria harbors hopes of a separation from the Ottoman Empire and the formation of a new Arabian State under the sovereignty of the Shereefs of Mecca.”<sup>51</sup>

The years 1876–78 saw a severe crisis in the empire. There were three sultans within eighteen months, the last of whom, Abdülhamid II (1842–1918),

who ruled until 1909, promulgated a new constitution at the end of 1876. The first parliament was convened in March 1877. The delegates included dozens of Arabs, for whom this was the first taste of national-level politics. The following month Russia declared war on Constantinople. Thousands of Arab conscripts from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine died in the war, which ended in Ottoman defeat in March 1878, a month after Abdülhamid dissolved parliament and suspended the new constitution. The casualties stoked Arab hostility toward Constantinople. In 1878 Muslim, Maronite, and Druze leaders from Syria and Lebanon met with the exiled Algerian rebel leader ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza’iri, who lived in Damascus, and considered proclaiming an independent Arab republic with him at its head.<sup>52</sup> But al-Jaza’iri opposed complete independence, and the Ottoman authorities got wind of the movement, exiled some leaders, and imposed restrictions on others.<sup>53</sup>

A number of insubstantial secret or camouflaged nationalist societies emerged during 1878–81. Posters appeared sporadically on walls in Damascus, Beirut, Sidon, and Tripoli denouncing Ottoman tyranny and the abolition of the constitution, and calling for an Arab revolt and Syrian-Lebanese unity and autonomy.<sup>54</sup> But the poster campaign quickly died down, to be succeeded by a generation of silence, though covert reverberations of discontent continued. In 1883 a Western traveler, Denis de Rivoyre, reported: “Everywhere [there is] hatred of the Turks. An Arab movement, newly-risen, is looming in the distance; and a race hitherto downtrodden will presently claim its due place in the destinies of Islam.”<sup>55</sup>

But the cause of Arab nationalism—never more than the plaything of a thin layer of intellectuals—abated into quiescence with the passing of the crisis that had attended the start of Abdülhamid’s reign and his heavy-handed stifling of parliament, the press, and all opposition. The later years of his reign also saw a return to Islamic orthodoxy, with greater subsidies for religious institutions, which helped blunt the edge of disaffection among Arab notables.<sup>56</sup>

Arab nationalism revived in the first decade of the 1900s. Its main spokesmen, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854–1902), Rashid Rida (1865–1935), and Najib Azouri (1873?–1916), were apparently unaware of the stirrings of 1877–81 and never mentioned them in their writings. Kawakibi, an Aleppo-born intellectual, is today seen as the main herald of modern, secular pan-Arabism. His two books, *Umm al Qura* (The mother of villages, meaning Mecca; c. 1903) and *Taba’i al Istibdad* (The nature of tyranny; c. 1901), assailed Ottoman despotism and called for pan-Islamic unity and revival. He lamented the weakness of the Islamic world and enumerated eighty-six causes for its inferiority, including fatalism, religious rifts, intolerance, the ban on freedom of speech, injustice and inequality, uncritical acceptance of the written word, hostility toward the sciences, inefficient use of time, and neglect of

women's education.<sup>57</sup> Though he spoke of Arabia as the heartland of an Arabism uncorrupted by Ottoman values, his message was not really nationalist in the nineteenth-century European sense.<sup>58</sup>

Rida, born near Tripoli, Lebanon, lived most of his life in Egypt, where in 1898 he founded and edited *al-Manar*, a daily newspaper that promoted pan-Islamism and Islamic revival, and, later, Arab nationalism. In 1907 he was among the founders of the Society of the Ottoman Council, which sought to reform the empire, unite its nationalities, and convert the despotism of Abdülhamid into a constitutional government.<sup>59</sup> But in the face of the Young Turks' "Turkification" policies Rida was gradually converted to pure Arab nationalism, and he founded the secret Society of the Arab Association, whose purpose was to unify the Arab provinces and to counter the Young Turks' Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which he defined as an "enemy of the Arabs and of Islam." He was prominent in the pre-World War I autonomy-seeking Arab Decentralization Party and in 1915, from Cairo, helped the British establish links with the Hashemites in the Hejaz.<sup>60</sup> In 1920 he served as president of the First Syrian-Arab Congress in Damascus.

Azouri, a Maronite Christian, served as assistant governor of the Jerusalem District between 1898 and 1904, when he fell out with his superiors and fled to Cairo. After publishing articles attacking Ottoman corruption, he was sentenced to death in absentia by a Constantinople court. Moving to Paris, he founded the *Ligue de la Patrie Arabe*, which in December 1904 and January 1905 published two manifestos denouncing Ottoman oppression and calling for an independent Arab state stretching from the Euphrates to the Suez Canal.<sup>61</sup> Later in 1905 Azouri published *Le Réveil de la Nation Arabe dans l'Asie Turque* (The Awakening of the Arab Nation in Turkish Asia). The first public advocate of a secular Arab nationalism, he wrote:

A great pacific change is on the eve of occurring in Turkey. The Arabs, whom the Turks tyrannized, have become conscious of their national, historical, and racial homogeneity, and wish to detach themselves from the worm-eaten Ottoman trunk in order to form themselves into an independent State. This new Arab Empire will extend to its natural frontiers, from the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates to the Isthmus of Suez, from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Oman.<sup>62</sup>

He hoped that France (and perhaps Britain) would assist an Arab rebellion and the establishment of a national state, and probably at times received clandestine French government funding. In 1908 the French chargé d'affaires in Cairo (to which Azouri had by then returned) reported that Azouri had "offered his services to the various diplomatic delegations and most adroitly attempted to exploit his relations with each of them to carry out intrigues." Repeatedly during 1912-14 he asked the Italians and the French to provide

him with 100,000 rifles with two hundred bullets apiece and funds to launch a revolt.<sup>63</sup> Nothing came of this.

## THE YOUNG TURKS' REVOLUTION AND THE RISE OF ARAB NATIONALISM

The Arab national movement emerged onto the stage of history—although it was not to attain center stage until the Twenties and Thirties—in the wake of the July 1908 revolution of the Young Turks' Movement, which reintroduced the 1876 constitution, freedom of the press, and the Ottoman parliament. In the Arab world, according to a British resident of Syria, there was "universal rejoicing. Muslims were seen embracing Christians and Jews, and inviting one another to receptions and feasts. The pent-up feelings of the populace everywhere burst forth in loud hurrahs in the public streets. Syria has never seen such rejoicing. The Golden Age seemed to be dawning."<sup>64</sup> There were festive rallies and mass meetings in Beirut, Damascus, Haifa, and Jerusalem, though in Palestine the *a'yan*—linked by tradition and financial benefit to the Hamidian regime—were far from enthusiastic.<sup>65</sup>

Some nationalists feared that the revolution, with its promise of liberalization, might erode the incentive and impetus for Arab liberation and independence.<sup>66</sup> But the Golden Age failed to dawn. Certainly, the 260-man parliament duly reconvened in Constantinople in December, with sixty Arab and 140 Turkish delegates, though the Arabs believed that they were more numerous, by a ratio of 3:2, in the empire than the Turks.<sup>67</sup> (Estimates of the Turkish-Arab ratio in the population vary radically, from 7.5:10.5 million to 12.5:5.3.) Altogether the parliament had 214 Muslims, forty-two Christians, and four Jews. Arab hopes for equality and autonomy were soon dashed. The Young Turks appeared as keen as Abdülhamid to maintain the empire's integrity and to ensure Turkish dominance. A process of Turkification was set in motion: Many Arab officials were replaced by Turks; and Turkish, promoted as the only language of government and the courts, was made compulsory in all schools.<sup>68</sup> An anti-Arab atmosphere suffused the regime. Indeed, leading CUP members in private correspondence wrote derogatorily of the Arabs, one calling them "the dogs of the Turkish nation."<sup>69</sup> The revolution in Constantinople provoked a counterwave of Arab nationalist feeling and paved the way for its organized political expression by allowing a relatively free press and the establishment of political groups. The governor of Jerusalem, 'Ali Akram Bey, warned that local notables would exploit the new freedom for anti-Ottoman purposes: "The promulgation of the constitution and its



implementation slowly began to awaken feelings of independence among the Arabs. Though this idea remains for the time being secret and covert, to judge by all that is happening here, [in] the press and other manifestations, one can feel that the tendencies of the populace in all of [Greater] Syria are heading that way."<sup>70</sup>

Among the more important Arab nationalist or autonomy-inclined parties to emerge after the revolution were the Ottoman Party for Administrative Decentralization, founded in Cairo at the end of 1912 and known as the Decentralization Party; and the secret Society of the Young Arab Nation, founded in Paris on November 14, 1909, known as al-Fatat.<sup>71</sup> The former—founded by Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian émigrés, both Muslim and Christian, against the backdrop of Ottoman defeat in the Balkan Wars and the loss of Libya to Italy—established secret branches in Damascus, Beirut, Nablus, and Jaffa, and sought the subdivision of the empire into autonomous entities along national-ethnic lines. In part it was motivated by the empire's increasing weakness and a fear that its Arab provinces might be taken over by European powers. The political platform declared: "The best sort of regime is constitutional and the best sort of constitutional regime is decentralized." At the start of World War I the party halfheartedly tried to foment anti-Ottoman rebellions in Lebanon and the Persian Gulf, without success.<sup>72</sup>

The creation of al-Fatat was triggered by a street incident in Istanbul four days after the promulgation of the Young Turks' constitution. Two Arab students, Ahmad Qadri of Damascus and 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi of Nablus, heard a Turkish officer denouncing "Arab traitors" who had supported the *ancien régime*. Why wasn't he also denouncing the many Turks who had supported Abdülhamid? the two Arabs asked. An argument ensued and the students concluded that the Arabs needed a secret society like that of the Young Turks to obtain equal rights within the empire. What emerged was al-Fatat.<sup>73</sup> Two of its founding members, 'Abd al-Hadi and Rafiq al-Tamimi (also of Nablus), were to play prominent parts in the Palestinian Arab national movement. All were of Greater Syrian origin, and all were Muslims. The society initially aimed at preserving the "natural rights" of the Arab nation rather than Arab independence, Arab-Turkish equality within the empire rather than secession. But by 1913 leading members were defining its platform as "the liberation of the Arab nation."<sup>74</sup>

In June 1913 the reformist societies organized the First Arab Congress in Paris. The idea was to publicize Arab grievances in the West and apply indirect pressure on the Turks to agree to reform. Twenty-three delegates—eleven Muslims, eleven Christians, and one Jew—and about 150 observers met in the auditorium of the French Geographical Society and called not for separation but for "political rights" for the Arabs; "decentralized administration" in the Arab provinces; "foreign [non-Ottoman] advisers" for an autonomous

Lebanon; and Arabic to be used—alongside Turkish—in the Ottoman parliament and as an official language in the Arab provinces.

The congress caught the Turks at a particularly difficult moment: The empire had lost Libya to Italy (1912), had just lost the First Balkan War to the Greek-Bulgarian-Serbian-Montenegrin coalition (Treaty of London, May 30, 1913), and was fighting off a renewed challenge in the Balkans (the Second Balkan War would begin on June 29). The grand vizier, Mahmud Shawkat, had been assassinated a week before the congress began. To no avail, Constantinople had attempted to pressure France to cancel the congress. It then mounted an unsuccessful campaign of propaganda and intimidation against the prospective delegates.<sup>75</sup> Constantinople decided to stymie the Arab challenge through appeasement. Senior Ottoman officials traveled to Paris in July and hammered out a compromise with the delegates: "recognition" of Arab rights and the need for reforms; service by Arab soldiers near home; Arabic to be the language of instruction in schools in the Arab districts; and more Arab senior officials in the Constantinople bureaucracies. But these provisions were never put into effect.<sup>76</sup> "A piece of chicanery" was how the first historian of the Arab awakening described the Turkish promises.<sup>77</sup>

The empire lost almost all its remaining European domains in 1912–13. World War I was to deprive it of its Arab lands and, indeed, whittle away its realm until only the bare Turkish rump remained. Moved by hostility toward Russia, and a belief that Germany would win the war—or, alternatively, that if the Allies won, they would in any case carve up the empire among themselves—the Young Turks in November 1914 plunged into the fray on the Central Powers' side. Most of the empire's Arab subjects remained loyal. Al-Fatat, which a year before had been preaching something close to Arab secession, closed ranks with fellow Muslims. It still aimed for the "liberation and independence" of the Arab provinces, but its Supreme Committee in Damascus ruled: ". . . in the event of European designs appearing to materialize, the society shall be bound to work on the side of Turkey in order to resist foreign penetration of whatever kind or form."<sup>78</sup>

A small number of Arabs, mostly Christian, secretly strove for an Allied victory. In Beirut, Maronite notables approached the British and French consuls general to assist a local uprising with troops and funds. But the British and French—their armies heavily committed in Flanders, and unable to help—cautioned against rash action.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, the British set about elsewhere fomenting and assisting revolt in the Ottoman rear; the Hejaz, in Arabia, not Lebanon, was to be the focus of British interest. Clandestine contacts between the British and the Hashemite emir of Mecca, Sharif Hussein, and his son, the emir Abdullah, had begun even before the declaration of war. The Sharifians, for their part, established covert contacts with nationalists in Damascus and Beirut. During the following two years the negotiations inched

forward, with the Arabs demanding, and the British accepting, the principle of Arab independence in at least part of the crumbling empire. On June 10, 1916, the revolt broke out in Mecca, backed by British and French arms, subsidies, and advisers (of whom the most prominent was to be T. E. Lawrence, "Lawrence of Arabia"). The revolt was seen by the British as mortally subverting Ottoman efforts to turn the war in the East into an anti-Christian *jihad* (Islamic holy war) and as a complement to an Allied military thrust from Egypt up the Mediterranean coast toward Turkey.

From the beginning of the war, the Turks had feared a revolt and fifth-column activities by Arab nationalists in Damascus and Beirut. At first they tried to conquer Egypt; failing in this, they tried to ward off British counter-thrusts toward Palestine and Syria. In 1915–16 Jamal Pasha, commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army and military governor of the Greater Syria region, instituted a reign of terror in which dozens of Arab nationalists were publicly hanged in Damascus and Beirut and hundreds were arrested. Thousands more Palestinian Arabs (as well as Jews) were deported inland, away from the centers of subversion and from likely axes of Allied invasion (and all this even before any concrete anti-Ottoman subversion had taken place). Additional thousands died of disease and starvation, in part as a result of the Ottoman military requisitioning of crops. These events naturally served to intensify Arab nationalist and separatist aspirations. The Turks gradually came to be seen as a vicious (and increasingly weakened) enemy.

The two strands of Arab discontent, the active one backed by Britain in Arabia and the dormant one in Syria and Lebanon, in a sense came together in September–October 1918, as the Arabian rebels, acting as the right flank of Gen. Edmund Allenby's advancing army in Palestine, swept northward through Transjordan and occupied Damascus. There they and their nationalist "hosts" established a Syrian Arab state, with Emir Faisal, Sharif Hussein's son, as ruler, with a cohort of Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Iraqi advisers.

Jerusalem had fallen to Allenby in December 1917; Beirut, on October 8, 1918—a week after the Arabs entered Damascus. The Ottoman Empire was no more. In the lands south of Turkey there emerged over the years, under French and British tutelage, the states of the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan (from 1948 Jordan), and Iraq. And there emerged the problem of Palestine, where, under the umbrella of the British Mandate, two national movements, Arab and Jewish, vied for dominance and, eventually, statehood.

Faisal's brief rule in Damascus was accompanied by hectic political activity, which marked the effective emergence of modern Arab nationalism. In 1919 Faisal's supporters set up the Arab Independence Party, al-Istiqlal, aiming at pan-Arab unity and independence. A succession of large nationalist assemblies, known as the Syrian-Arab Congresses, were convened in Damas-

cus that year and in 1920. They upheld Faisal's territorial claims and advocated his self-proclamation as king of Greater Syria, encompassing Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Meanwhile, to preempt or stave off Damascus hegemony, Iraqi "nationalists" invited Faisal's brother, Abdullah, to become king of Iraq. In Lebanon a coterie of Christians advocated Lebanese nationhood. And political realities in Transjordan and Palestine quickly subverted the dream of Arab political union. The idea of one large, unitary state or federation evaporated, like a puddle of water in the desert, though during the following decades the motif of Arab unity or pan-Arabism was periodically to bedevil and entrance Arab politics, but to no lasting result.

Complementing and to a great degree overshadowing the centrifugal pull of these national movements, France and Britain were largely to determine the geopolitical character and future of the Middle East over the following two or three decades. Their secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 had carved up the Arab lands of the soon-to-be-dissected empire in line with traditional, prewar spheres of influence and economic, political, military, and cultural interests. Iraq and, ultimately, Palestine were left to the British. Transjordan, severed from the Palestine Mandate, was declared a separate entity, ruled by Abdullah under British tutelage. In 1920 Faisal was removed by the French from Damascus and reinstalled in Baghdad as a British-protected sovereign. France assumed the mandate over Syria and Lebanon, which were almost from the first administratively separated. National movements and identities soon congealed in each of the mandated territories, each pressing for statehood in its own area, despite the common bonds of language, culture, and history.

It is difficult to categorize the Arab societies and political groupings that emerged before World War I according to Western definitions. Were they nationalist? Of the twenty-odd groups described and analyzed by Israeli historian Eliezer Tauber, only five included the word "Arab" in their names.<sup>80</sup> Most did not aspire to secession, independence, or statehood. They wanted equal rights—cultural, economic, social, and occasionally political—and, perhaps, autonomy. Even the First Arab Congress of 1913 did not aim for secession or statehood. But if nationalism did not figure in these early organizations, some form of "local patriotism"—focusing on Lebanon, Syria, or Iraq—did. Apart from Lebanon, revolt and complete secession were preached only after the outbreak of World War I, when the giant conflagration unleashed apocalyptic expectations. It was only at the start of 1915, when al-Fatat combined with the al-Ahd group formed in 1913 by Arab officers in the Ottoman army, that they called (in the "Damascus Protocol") for Arab independence. Tauber broadly categorizes the clubs, societies, and movements of this period under the headings "Arabism," "Lebanonism," "Syrianism," and "Iraqism," but does not designate any of them "nationalist." The emergence of full-fledged nationalism, he argues, had to wait until World War I and its aftermath. And it was members of these prewar societies, especially al-Ahd and al-Fatat, who emerged after

the war as the leaders of the separate, particularist nationalisms of Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.<sup>81</sup>

It was at this time, too, that a distinct Palestinian local patriotism or proto-nationalism began to emerge. This tendency or orientation—it hardly qualified as a movement—gradually groped its way forward, largely in reaction to the burgeoning Zionist presence. But in part it was also the product of other political, economic, religious, and social developments and realities, dating from the mid-nineteenth century. During the centuries of Ottoman rule, Palestine had not been a single or separate administrative unit. But in the 1880s, as we have seen, the Levantine provinces were reorganized, with most of southern Palestine—including Jerusalem, Jaffa, Lydda, Gaza, Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jericho—transformed into a separate governorate, answerable directly to Constantinople, not to the provincial governors in Syria or Beirut. Thus, the core of the Holy Land had become a distinct administrative and, in some respects, “political” entity. In 1910 the Ottomans established a court of appeals in Jerusalem, which served both the governorate of Jerusalem and the *sanjak* of Nablus (roughly, Samaria) to the north. In the military sphere, too, there was close cooperation, if not unity of command, between the two administrative units.

Perhaps even more important to the development of a distinct “Palestinian” identity were common religious structures, observances, and festivities, both Christian and Muslim. For the Christians, Palestine was a single conceptual entity, the Holy Land. Hence the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Latin patriarchate of Jerusalem, and the Anglican bishopric of Jerusalem were responsible for the whole of Palestine (and Transjordan). Among the Muslims the Nabi Musa festivities, dating from the twelfth-century days of Saladin and celebrating the birth of Moses, each year brought together, at the site near Jericho traditionally accepted as his grave, thousands of pilgrims from the various parts of Palestine.<sup>82</sup> The growing sense of a distinct community was expressed and reinforced by the appearance in Jaffa in 1911 of a daily newspaper named *Filastin*. And in the decade before World War I the term “Palestine”—not used in any political or administrative sense for centuries by the Ottoman Empire—came into common usage among educated Palestinian Arabs. The following two decades would witness the emergence of a full-fledged, separate Palestinian-Arab national movement.<sup>83</sup>

The first quasi-political Palestinian nationalist organizations can be traced to the last months of World War I. In November 1918, veteran Jaffa notables established a local “Muslim-Christian Association” (MCA). Similar MCAs, later all loosely connected, were established—often with clandestine help from British officers—in the following months in other towns. The MCAs, while not defining themselves as political organizations, articulated local political thinking and aspirations, generally espousing self-rule and opposing Zionism, and expressed themselves in posters and petitions to the British

administration. Christians were disproportionately represented, perhaps because they were better educated and more advanced politically, perhaps because they felt a greater need to collaborate with others.<sup>84</sup> (In 1931 literacy among Muslims was about 14 percent, compared with 58 percent among Christians.<sup>85</sup>)

An important step on the road to a full-fledged Palestinian political identity was the founding at the end of the war, by younger members of the *a'yan*, of two societies: al-Muntada al-Adabi (the literary club) and al-Nadi al-Arabi (the Arab club). Al-Muntada was led by Jamil al-Husseini, Fakhri al-Nashashibi, Mahmud 'Aziz al-Khalidi, and Hasan Sidqi al-Dajani. Dominated by the Nashashibi family, it promoted Arabic language and culture and Muslim values, and was infused with pan-Arab sentiment, advocating an independent, united Syria-Palestine. Al-Nadi, founded at the end of the war in Damascus as an offshoot of al-Fatat, had similar goals. It was dominated by the Husseini clan (primarily Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini) and by young Nabulsi, including Dr. Hafiz Kan'an. Al-Nadi issued a newspaper, founded in Jerusalem in September 1919, entitled, significantly, *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria), edited by Muhammad Hassan al-Budayri and 'Arif al-Arif. Its anti-Zionism was reflected in a play staged in January 1920 by its Nablus branch. In *The Ruin of Palestine*, a Zionist maiden seduces two Arabs and steals their money and land. The play ends with the suicide of the two men, shouting: “The country is ruined, the Jews have robbed us of our land and honor.”<sup>86</sup> Al-Muntada and al-Nadi apparently had secret auxiliaries—called Jam'iyyat al-Ikha' wal 'Afaf (association of brotherhood and purity) and al-Fida'iyya (the self-sacrificers), which planned acts of violence against Jews and those who sold them land—but these do not seem ever to have been active.<sup>87</sup>

A handful of Palestinian nationalists had always shied away from pan-Syrian sentiments, preferring a separate national entity. But until 1920 the majority looked to the emergence of an independent Greater Syria, of which Palestine was just the southwestern corner. Indeed, the very idea of Arab sovereignty was linked in their minds to Syria. But events in Palestine and Syria in April–July 1920 abruptly changed this orientation. During this four-month period Palestinian-Arab nationalism can be said to have emerged as a distinct movement, albeit, at this time, the province of a very restricted elite.

The events that resulted in this change began when Arab disturbances around Palestine gave vent to anti-Zionist impulses and to a desire to cast off British rule and unite with Faisal's Syria. In early March, a band of Damascus-affiliated Arabs attacked the Jewish settlement of Tel Hai at the northern tip of Palestine. A second attack, on April 24, by several thousand Bedouin from Syria and the Beisan Valley against a British encampment at Samakh, on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee, was actively organized in Damascus and seems to have been intended as the trigger to a wider revolt. The defeat of that

attack, like the general crushing of the disturbances by the British, reaffirmed Palestine's complete physical and political separation from Syria. The collapse of Faisal's regime in July and the return home of the "national" contingents that helped prop up the Hashemites in Damascus—mainly Palestinians and Iraqis—confirmed the unreality of the "Syrian" option for Palestine's Arabs and persuaded the *a'yan* that they must go their own way toward independence. Little help could be expected from Faisal, now in exile, and from Syria's Arabs, now under French occupation.

This radical shift can be traced in the successive postwar Palestinian congresses. The first, which met in Jerusalem in January 1919, had voted for unity with Syria. "We see Palestine as part of Arab Syria," it resolved, "[and it should not] be separated from the independent Syrian Arab government."<sup>88</sup> A so-called Second Congress never actually took place. The third, meeting in Haifa in December 1920, called upon the British to establish a "native government" and representative assembly. It made no mention of "Southern Syria" and dropped the demand for unity of Palestine and Syria.<sup>89</sup> The Fourth Congress, meeting in Jerusalem in May 1921, spoke of "the Arab people of Palestine" with no mention of southern Syria<sup>90</sup>— though subsequent congresses generally paid lip service to the idea of Arab unity.<sup>91</sup>

By the end of 1920 "the regional division between Syria and Palestine was complete. The idea of a unified Arab nation gave way to new political divisions along Palestinian and Syrian as well as Iraqi lines."<sup>92</sup> Alongside Syrians, Iraqis, and Egyptians, a Palestinian people was emerging. By 1923 Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who two years later founded the right-wing Revisionist branch of Zionism, was to write:

They look upon Palestine with the same instinctive love and true fervor that any Aztec looked upon Mexico or any Sioux looked upon his prairie. Palestine will remain for the Palestinians not a borderland, but their birthplace, the center and basis of their own national existence.<sup>93</sup>

T W O

## THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFLICT: JEWS AND ARABS IN PALESTINE, 1881–1914

**W**ho can challenge the rights of the Jews in Palestine? Good Lord, historically it is really your country," wrote Jerusalem Muslim dignitary Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi to Zadok Kahn, chief rabbi of France, on March 1, 1899. In theory the Zionist idea was "completely natural, fine and just." But in practice reality had to be considered—the recognized sanctity of the Holy Land to hundreds of millions of Christians and Muslims. The Jews could only acquire Palestine by war. "It is necessary, therefore, for the peace of the Jews in [the Ottoman Empire] that the Zionist Movement . . . stop. . . Good Lord, the world is vast enough, there are still uninhabited countries where one could settle millions of poor Jews who may perhaps become happy there and one day constitute a nation. . . . In the name of God, let Palestine be left in peace."

This letter was passed to Herzl, who responded on March 19. He ignored Khalidi's prognosis that Zionism would spark Arab opposition and asserted that the Jews, far from displacing the Arab population, would bring to Palestine only material benefit.<sup>1</sup>

Khalidi had before his eyes the creeping dispossession that began when the first Jewish colonists, with their backers abroad, bought tract after tract of land. In some areas the land was uninhabited and untilled; in others purchase led to the immediate eviction of Arab tenant farmers, many of whose families had themselves once been the proprietors. The fear of territorial displacement and dispossession was to be the chief motor of Arab antagonism to Zionism down to 1948 (and indeed after 1967 as well).

By the outbreak of World War I in 1914, there were probably about sixty thousand Jews in the country,<sup>2</sup> though traditional Zionist historiography puts the figures as high as fifty thousand in 1897<sup>3</sup> and eighty-five thousand in 1914.<sup>4</sup>

Zionist land purchases and settlement in 1880–1900 focused on the coastal