

A Cycle of State-Building:  
The Process of Growth in the *Yishuv* During the Fifth *Aliyah*

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## Table of Contents

<b>A Note on Terminology .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>A Cycle of State-Building: The Fifth Aliyah .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The First Cycle, 1929-1932 .....</b>	<b>10</b>
— Immigration: The Resumption of <i>Aliyah</i> — .....	10
— The Arab Response: The Riots of 1929 — .....	14
— The British Response: Assessment of the “Disturbances” — .....	18
— The <i>Yishuv</i> Response: Investment in Self — .....	24
<b>The Second Cycle, 1933-1939 .....</b>	<b>31</b>
— Immigration: The <i>Yekkes</i> Flee Nazi Germany — .....	31
— The British Response: Partition? — .....	39
— The <i>Yishuv</i> Response: <i>Af-Al-Pi</i> — .....	43
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Glossary of Foreign Terms.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>End Notes.....</b>	<b>62</b>

**A Note on Terminology**

Language surrounding this topic is highly contested, with each label associated with one political opinion or another. In an attempt to work around this, I use the terms British Mandatory Palestine, Mandatory Palestine, Palestine, and *Eretz Israel* interchangeably to refer to the territory overseen by the British Government from 1920 until 1948. In some cases, I use the term “*Eretz Israel*” to denote that the perspective that I am describing is that of the *Yishuv*, “Palestine” to denote the Arab perspective, and “Mandatory Palestine” to denote the British. However, all labeling, including that of the different ethnic/national/religious groups involved in this paper, is intended to reflect as clearly as possible what the groups were known as in this decade, and have no other significance as far as this paper is concerned.

### **A Cycle of State-Building: The Fifth Aliyah**

On August 31, 1939, the Palestine Post's "Local News in Brief" reported on the progress of municipal elections in Petach Tikva, Bat Yam, and Bnei Brak. It mentioned how the Public Works Department was awarded a contract to build a highway connecting several Jewish towns.<sup>i</sup> The start of the school year was discussed as well, since the 16,500 children returning to school in Tel Aviv<sup>ii</sup> marked an 8% increase in enrollment from the previous year. This small window into the Jewish settlement in British Mandatory Palestine, better known as the *Yishuv*, reflects a greater milestone that the political entity had reached on the eve of World War II: the status as a proto-state on the verge of independence. In 1939, the *Yishuv* had grown to a population almost half a million strong,<sup>iii</sup> equipped with a full-time defense force, a burgeoning industrial economy, and diplomatic ties with powers abroad ranging from the League of Nations to the United States.

But just ten years earlier, the *Yishuv* was still making its way out of a devastating recession that saw more Jews actually leave Palestine than stay. Agriculture supported the community more than any other industry, and the standard of living was markedly lower than many of the places from which immigrants were coming. The *Yishuv* in 1929 looked more like a scrappy experiment that few imagined would eventually lead to the establishment of an independent state. So, what about this decade made it a time of the fastest and most meaningful development in pre-state Israel?

The period of Jewish immigration to British Mandatory Palestine from 1929-1939, better remembered as the Fifth *Aliyah*, transformed the *Yishuv* from a rudimentary political unit into a proto-state ready for independence. A perfect storm of converging external factors informing internal operations created a feedback cycle that enabled this dramatic development. This cycle begins with Jewish immigration fed by the growing attractiveness of life in the *Yishuv* compared

to the Diaspora. This growth then informs Arab opposition, British policy, and finally Zionist state-building endeavors that further immigration efforts and start the cycle all over again. The complete cycle occurs twice in the period of the Fifth *Aliyah*, intensifying in its second iteration. This paper seeks to explore this pattern as a major cause of development and eventual independence of the Jewish proto-state.

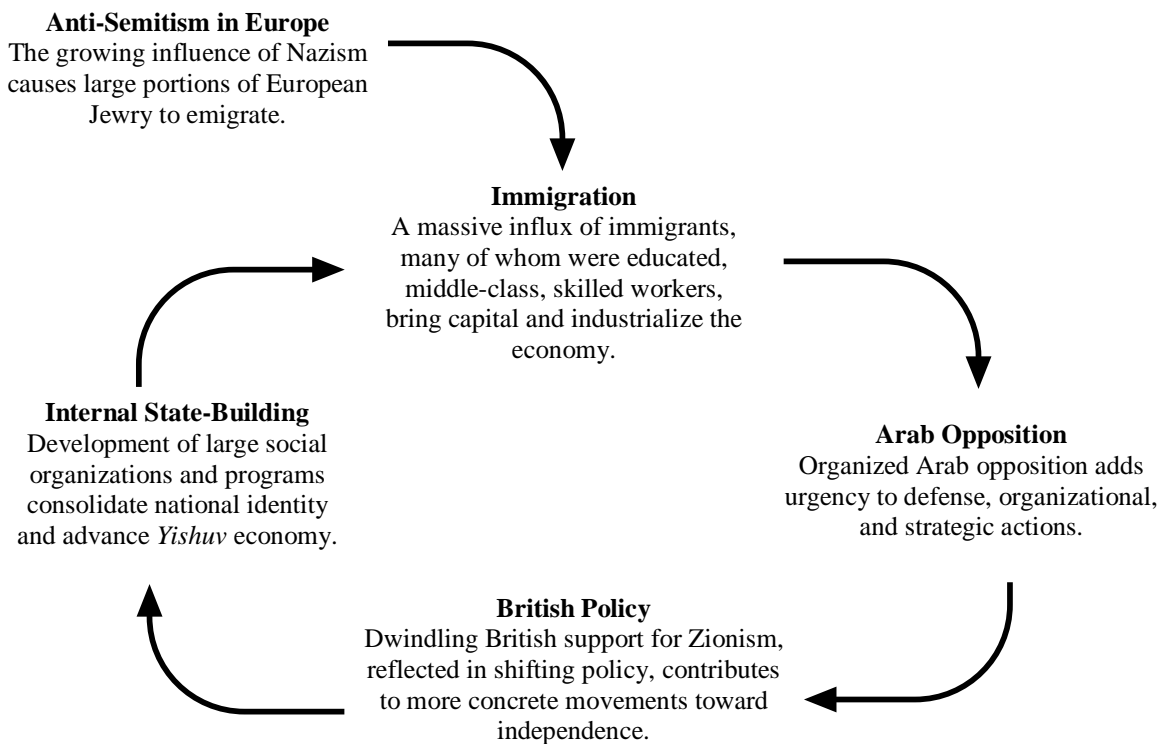


Figure 1 The Cycle of State-Building in the Fifth Aliyah.

The cycle begins with alarmed caused by growing anti-Semitism in Europe, when large numbers of world Jewry begin to understand that a Jewish homeland is no longer a pleasant pipe dream, but rather critical to ensuring the future security of the Jewish people. This widespread fear and uncertainty manifests itself in the massive wave of immigration known as the Fifth *Aliyah*. This *Aliyah* introduces a highly-educated, economically successful, and skilled labor force that has traditionally been more assimilated into non-Jewish society than the Russian and

Polish immigrants of earlier *Aliyot*. These industrious immigrants, mostly from Germany, bring much-needed capital and industry to the *Yishuv*, helping to diversify *Yishuv* economic activity beyond traditional agriculture. They also legitimize the need for a Jewish state as a refuge for world Jewry, and play a significant role in establishing a Jewish majority in Mandatory Palestine.

But these first glimpses at success and growth are met with increasingly organized and widespread opposition from the competing movement of Arab Nationalism. Successes of neighboring Arab movements, as well as feelings of betrayal by the British fuel frustration and organization. As Arab Nationalism grows alongside Zionism, the two movements increasingly butt heads, usually in the form of violent riots prompted by Arab leadership. These outbreaks of violence, and subsequent British inability or unwillingness to properly secure Jewish residents of Mandatory Palestine, cause the *Yishuv* to expand and develop its defense capabilities independently of British security forces.

Increased tension between Zionism and Arab Nationalism then places the British in a cumbersome situation in which outdated, unclear, and oftentimes contradictory promises, combined with current threats, necessitate dramatic changes in Mandate policy. Though white papers, commissions, and letters coming out of the Mandate tend to flip-flop during this decade, a general trend of dwindling sympathy toward the Zionist cause motivates the *Yishuv* to shift independence efforts into full gear.

These efforts take four main forms. Firstly, increased organization of leadership helps solidify and unify Jewish national identity through political means. Secondly, economic advancements and investment in new industries contribute to the wealth of the *Yishuv* and make it a better place to live. The development of massive social and defense organizations that act as *de facto* government institutions constitutes the third form of state-building efforts. Lastly, to

complete the cycle, progress seen in the *Yishuv* further adds to its perception by world Jewry as a legitimate political unit, and strategy developed by Zionist leadership emphasizes the important role of continued immigration in the development and eventual establishment of a sovereign Jewish state. This push augments *aliyah* efforts worldwide, thus putting the cycle into motion again and even magnifying it.

Understanding this cycle and the massive change it brought about rests upon a baseline understanding of where the *Yishuv* stood in 1929 versus where it stood in 1939. By 1929, Political Zionism had existed for almost half a century, its inception marked by the First *Aliyah* to Ottoman Palestine in 1881.<sup>iv</sup> During these forty-seven years, the Jewish population of Palestine grew by over 132,000 individuals,<sup>v</sup> and the number of Jewish settlements in Palestine rose from about ten to over one hundred and ten.<sup>vi</sup>

Mass emigration from Tsarist Russia fueled this growth in the wake of devastating pogroms in the Pale of Settlement in the nineteenth century. This influx of refugees was complemented by immigration of sections of other Eastern European Jewish communities that did not fit into the assimilationist/ultra-orthodox dichotomy<sup>vii</sup> that had emerged in the wake of Jewish Emancipation in Europe. In 1881, Dr. Yehuda Leib Pinsker's pamphlet *Auto-Emancipation* attempted to solve this crisis in Jewish security and identity by calling upon the Jewish people to establish a national homeland in which Jews "would not live as guests, but as masters."<sup>viii</sup>

Quickly, the idea of establishing a sovereign Jewish state gained support and leadership, most notably from Theodor Herzl who, in 1896, published *Der Judenstaat*, envisioning a Jewish state in Ottoman Palestine in light of the Dreyfus Affair of 1894. In 1897, Herzl formed the First

Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, which then established the World Zionist Organization (WZO), the body that would lead the Zionist movement to statehood five decades later.<sup>ix</sup>

From here, *aliyah* grew steadily, experiencing four major waves before 1929. This early Zionist settlement was characterized largely by agricultural settlement and socialist political activity, most notably in the development of *kibbutzim*, or collective agricultural settlements. *Kibbutzim* were small communities of up to a few hundred individuals who collectively owned the assets of the *kibbutz*. Each *kibbutz* supported itself with an agricultural trade, ranging from livestock to citrus. *Kibbutzim* were also strategic from a security perspective, as they were intentionally established in peripheral areas of the *Yishuv* to act as volunteer defense outposts in the event of an attack from neighboring countries.<sup>x</sup> The focus on establishing these strategic subsistence and defense outposts by organizations like the WZO meant that by 1929, the *Yishuv*'s economy was mostly based in agriculture and was too primitive to be able to provide a standard of living beyond the most basic level.

The Fourth *Aliyah* of 1924-1928, however, did see the beginnings of light industry and a middle class in the *Yishuv*, earning the nickname “the shopkeepers’ *Aliyah*.”<sup>xi</sup> But the sudden crash of the Polish zloty and a devastating earthquake in Palestine in 1927<sup>xii</sup> quickly brought whatever seeds of development existed during the Fourth *Aliyah* to a screeching halt. Recession hit Mandatory Palestine as a whole and the *Yishuv* in particular from 1927-1929. Unemployment in 1927 swelled to over ten times the unemployment rate of 1925,<sup>xiii</sup> and total revenue of Mandatory Palestine dropped by almost 30% within one year.<sup>xiv</sup> This depression even caused the Jewish population to shrink by about two tenths of a percentage.<sup>xv</sup> This was attributed to more *olim* (new immigrants) leaving Palestine and returning to their home countries than *olim* coming and staying for good.

But in the wake of this localized economic crisis, growth and development during the Fifth *Aliyah* transformed the *Yishuv* into a substantive and productive political unit. The Jewish population in Mandatory Palestine grew by 185% during the Fifth *Aliyah*, starting at just over 150,000 in 1929 and approaching almost half a million in 1939.<sup>xvi</sup> Despite evident fluctuations during the decade, this growth far outpaced that of any other national or religious group in Mandatory Palestine, including Christians, Muslims, Druze, Bedouins, Arabs, and Britons [*see* Fig. 2]. In contrast to the Jewish population increasing almost three-fold, the non-Jewish population of Mandatory Palestine grew by only 30% in the decade beginning in 1929.<sup>xvii</sup> Similarly, showing not just excessive relative growth but dominant absolute growth as well, the Jewish population added the largest number of individuals to its population out of any other group during this time, despite being just a quarter of the size of Muslim community, the largest religious group in Mandatory Palestine in 1929 [*see* Fig. 3].<sup>xviii</sup> Within just ten years, the tiny minority that Jews made up in Mandatory Palestine was well on its way to creating a complete sea change in the demography of Palestine.

With a newfound influx of human capital, the *Yishuv*'s fledgling industrial economy now had the manpower and capital it needed to recover from the recession of 1927. In 1933 and 1934 alone, an estimated £16 million were brought into the *Yishuv* via private imports.<sup>xix</sup> This paved the way for the development of private industry as a valid complement<sup>xx</sup> to the agricultural production that had already been established in the *Yishuv* and heavily subsidized by public funds. Soon after immigrants' private capital entered the *Yishuv*, previous resistance to investment of public funds in industry and private business diminished, and public support for the development of an industrial economy grew. This was fueled in part by the growing consensus that agriculture alone would not be able to fuel the *Yishuv*'s growing economy nor



provide for its booming population.<sup>xxi</sup> Between 1930 and 1937, total investment in Jewish industry rose by almost nine million Palestine Pounds (P£), from P£2,095,000 in 1930 to P£11,064,000 in 1937.<sup>xxii</sup> These investments marked the inception of industries such as chemicals, stone and cement, diamonds, and mineral mining,<sup>xxiii</sup> which ultimately catapulted the quality of life in the *Yishuv* from rudimentary and rural subsistence to an attractive cosmopolitan prospect to Jews worldwide [*see* Figs. 4 & 5].

By 1939, the *Yishuv* was aching for independence and possessed the vast majority of the tools it needed to get there, specifically in regard to demography, wealth, leadership, defense, and organization. Just ten years earlier, however, its future was entirely uncertain. In order to understand exactly how the *Yishuv* arrived at this position in 1939, the two iterations of the state-building cycle must be examined.

## The First Cycle, 1929-1932

### — Immigration: The Resumption of *Aliyah* —

In the wake of the economic crisis in 1927, recovery efforts slowly reinstated the positive trend of *aliyah*. Having experienced a net loss of several hundred emigrants between 1926 and 1927, the *Yishuv* managed to grow by a modest two thousand individuals between 1927 and 1928, and by an additional five thousand individuals the next year.<sup>xxiv</sup> At this point, though, most of these immigrants were still coming from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Romania,<sup>xxv</sup> and were still recovering from the devaluation of the currencies of those regions.<sup>xxvi</sup> These individuals were coming to Mandatory Palestine in search of freedom from religious persecution taking place in Eastern Europe in the form of pogroms, forced segregation, and lack of economic opportunity. *Aliyah* from Eastern Europe had paused during the recession of 1927, and the uptick seen immediately afterward at the beginning of the Fifth *Aliyah* can be seen as the resumption of this Eastern European *aliyah*.

Though imports and unemployment were at dismal levels during the recession of 1927, industry in Palestine had managed to maintain modest net growth during the downturn, enabling it to continue developing after the crisis. The total value of exports from Palestine rose from £1,308,333 in 1926 to £1,889,759 in 1927, and the amount of land owned by Jews grew by about 80,000 *dunums* in the three years between 1925 and 1928.<sup>xxvii</sup> This slow but steady growth, though too minor to significantly dampen the blow to the *Yishuv*'s economy in 1927, proved to be enough to keep development on track and the legitimacy of the *Yishuv*'s economic future on the table.

This was exemplified by increased support for the Zionist cause from Jews in the Diaspora, most notably in the United States. Much of American Jewry had previously been

ambivalent or even wary about the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine, but by the late 1920's their support shifted to be in favor of the Zionist cause. This was facilitated largely by the restructuring of the Jewish Agency in 1929, which required the body to have an equal number of non-Zionist representatives on the Jewish Agency Executive as Zionist representatives.<sup>xxviii</sup> Most of these non-Zionists were American Jewish leaders who had previously felt alienated by the Zionist movement.<sup>xxix</sup> As a result of the incorporation of American non-Zionist Jews into the Jewish Agency Executive, Palestine began to feel more familiar and more a part of the American Jewish experience. An article on American public opinion on Palestine written in the October 1929 edition of *The Menorah Journal* quite matter-of-factly sums up the phenomenon of diminishing opposition to Zionism among American Jews: “By means of the Jewish Agency, hostile anti-Zionist Jews had already been transformed into mild and docile non-Zionists.”<sup>xxx</sup>

This shift in opinion encouraged previously unengaged American Jews to begin rallying around the Zionist cause. American *aliyah* to Palestine grew by 65% from 1929 to 1930,<sup>xxxi</sup> reflecting greater support for the ideology. Most, if not all, Americans that made *aliyah* during this period did so to show their support for Zionism, rather than to seek a better quality of life like their Eastern European counterparts.

An example of an American who gave up a comfortable life in the United States in exchange for a role in building the Jewish homeland was Nathan D. Kaplan, a businessman native to Chicago who moved to Mandatory Palestine with his wife and two children in 1927. A 1928 profile of Kaplan in *The New Palestine* reflects the changing opinion of American Jewry regarding Zionism in the late 1920's. Kaplan states that he “thoroughly disagreed with the original program of the American Zion Commonwealth,” but upon seeing how the *Yishuv*

managed to hold on during the economic crisis of 1927, he began to see “the inherent soundness of the Jewish National Homeland.”<sup>xxxii</sup> Kaplan represents the common moral position that many American Jews took, citing Palestine as necessary for the future of Jewish security and Americans’ roles in that future as critical. And though the reception of the expansion of the Jewish Agency to include non-Zionists was certainly rocky within the *Yishuv*, Kaplan was sure to dispel these concerns in his interview, stating that “All the Jews of Palestine are rejoicing...Practically no one in Palestine is opposed to the extension of the Jewish Agency.” The profile also emphasizes vast economic opportunity in the *Yishuv*, painting Kaplan as a savvy businessman providing sound counsel to his American Jewish brethren back home. He urges them to invest in the *Yishuv*, even citing the threat of non-Jewish competition to appeal to the reader’s emotion: “I have not the slightest doubt that if the Jews fail to seize this opportunity to take a share in these great undertakings, plenty of non-Jewish financial interests will be found eager to take a foothold in Palestine.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Kaplan’s statements are clearly meant to garner American Jewish support for the *Yishuv*, even if that support still defined itself as non-Zionist. This kind of outreach was part of a larger phenomenon of what was dubbed ‘Practical Zionism,’ which largely followed the motto of ‘take what you can get.’ Leaders of the Practical Zionist camp like David Ben Gurion, who would go on to Chair the Jewish Agency Executive in 1934,<sup>xxxiv</sup> felt that even if newly instated non-Zionist representation in the Jewish Agency did not immediately contribute to *aliyah* or Zionist youth movements in the Diaspora, it was still a strategic economic and political partnership that would give the Jewish Agency more legitimate authority amongst world Jewry and thus further the organization’s aspiration of statehood. Kaplan hints at this seemingly ill-conceived partnership

being forged to serve Zionist interests, stating that “Palestine [was] expecting greatly increased activity as a result of the new partnership between Zionists and non-Zionists.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

Across the Atlantic, Zionism was similarly controversial amongst the German Jewish population. As rising numbers of Eastern European Jews, or *Ostjuden*, fled persecution and migrated to Germany, support for Zionism was bolstered by the evident need for Jewish sovereignty. Conversely, segments of these same populations opposed Zionism based on the belief that assimilation into modern Germany was the only way to success and freedom.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The native German Jewish population was similarly divided. German Jewish assimilationists believed that Zionism fed into the anti-Semitic trope that “Jews were an unassimilable and potentially disloyal foreign body within the German nation,”<sup>xxxvii</sup> and opposed furthering the ideology. German Zionists, however, were enamored with the romanticism of Zionism and motivated by its urgency — in Eastern Europe. Acknowledging the relative comfort and level of integration by Jews into German society, German Zionists developed Spiritual Zionism, which “rationalized a continued Jewish existence in Germany”<sup>xxxviii</sup> based on creating a Jewish state to act as a spiritual center for the Diaspora and a refuge for persecuted Jews from outside of Germany.

Consequently, German *aliyah* was historically very limited in similar fashion to American *aliyah*. Immigration from Germany did, however, see a slight increase in the early years of the Fifth *Aliyah*, prompted by the rising threat of the Nazi movement and Hitler’s subsequent amassing of power. Up from just six *olim* in 1928, 43 Germans immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1929, and another 47 came the next year.<sup>xxxix</sup> These numbers remained relatively low, however, as long as Hitler was not in the Chancellorship. By 1932, still only 152 German Jews made *aliyah*,<sup>xl</sup> illustrating the generally passive attitude and disbelief that German

Jewry was at threat of extinction. Though German Jewish opinion wholeheartedly condemned the Nazi movement, the Zionist Federation of Germany (ZVfD) was still releasing statements that failed to mention *aliyah* to Palestine and focused instead on continued work on German Jewish rights as late as September 1932.<sup>xli</sup>

All in all, total *aliyah* from all Diaspora territories in 1929 was nearly five times greater than the year prior, indicating recovery from the recession of 1927. Immigration from Eastern Europe had resumed, and attitudes in the United States were shifting to favor greater private investment and ideological *aliyah* by relatively wealthy American Jews. Though German *aliyah* was lower than hindsight would recommend, it was steadily growing. By 1929, the population of the *Yishuv* had reached over 155,000 Jews. Though still just 16.3% of the total population of Mandatory Palestine, the *Yishuv*'s modest growth in 1929 did not go unnoticed by Palestine's other populations.

— The Arab Response: The Riots of 1929 —

Palestine's Arab population and accompanying Palestinian Arab Nationalist movement had been relatively quiet since the economy had started to falter in 1925. There were no official demonstrations against *aliyah*, no official appeals for autonomy, and no convention of the Palestine Arab Congress from 1925 until 1928.<sup>xlii</sup> The British government attributed this quiet to the lack of Jewish immigration and the perception that the *Yishuv* was nearing economic collapse, stating in the Peel Commission Report of 1937 that "the main cause[s] of Arab quiescence [were] the sharp decline in the fortunes of the National Home" and the net loss of Jews in Palestine.<sup>xliii</sup> Looking at demographics of these years, the Arabs' fear of losing their majority as a result of Jewish immigration was certainly allayed at this time. High *aliyah* rates in 1925 that put the Arab majority on guard for losing their demographic advantage had completely

collapsed within just a year, thus reassuring Palestine's Arabs that they would hold onto majority control of Palestine for the time being.

Therefore, when *aliyah* picked up again in 1929, Arab fears of losing control of Palestine were reawakened with new fervor. Tensions that had previously been of a strictly political and secular nature in the decade before gained a religious element when on August 23, 1929, Arab riots, known as the *al-Buraq* Uprising or the 1929 Massacres by Arabs and Jews, respectively, broke out in Jerusalem.<sup>xliv</sup> The anger fueling these riots had been building since the previous year's *Yom Kippur*, or Jewish day of atonement, in September of 1928. Erection of a dividing screen in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem for Jewish prayer purposes was heavily opposed by the Muslim community, which claimed that the construction was against British policy to maintain the status quo at the holy sites of the Western Wall and adjacent Temple Mount in Jerusalem.<sup>xlv</sup> The Supreme Muslim Council responded to this with their statement that "the Jews' aim is to take possession of the Mosque of al-Aqsa gradually, on the pretense that it is the Temple, by starting with the Western Wall of this place."<sup>xlvi</sup> These remarks were followed by Jewish protest of Muslim construction on the Temple Mount that overlooked the Western Wall.<sup>xlvii</sup>

These tensions continued to rise throughout 1929, augmented by the resumption of Jewish immigration. They came to a head in August when, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, a Jewish man was killed by a Muslim opponent at a large Zionist demonstration at the Western Wall.<sup>xlviii</sup> This demonstration was held on the holiday of *Tisha B'Av*,<sup>xlix</sup> a fast day in which Jewish people commemorate the destructions of both holy Temples in Jerusalem in 587 BCE and 70 CE. Gathering at the Western Wall for lamentations is a common practice, as the Western Wall is the only remaining relic of the Temple that the holiday commemorates. Zionist demonstration at this

gathering was anticipated<sup>l</sup> on the holiday in response to the recent construction on and around the Temple Mount that allowed Muslim worshippers to overlook the Jewish prayer area at the Western Wall below.<sup>li</sup> A counter-demonstration to this gathering was held by Muslim worshippers at the Western Wall the next day, and turned ugly when written prayers placed by Jews in the Wall's cracks were removed and burned.<sup>lii</sup>

One week later, on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, violent riots targeted at the Jewish population in Jerusalem broke out after weekly prayers on the Temple Mount. It was rumored that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin Al-Husseini delivered the sermon that sparked this violence, though this was never confirmed.<sup>liii</sup> Nine Jews and three Arabs were killed and 110 more wounded in the first night alone.<sup>liv</sup> After only two days of riots, 30 Jews and 17 Arabs had been killed, with “upward of 200 wounded on each side.”<sup>lv</sup> A state of emergency was declared as the British brought in troops from Egypt and Malta, and American Jews appealed to the U.S. government to send in American warships.<sup>lvi</sup>

Panic quickly overcame the whole of Palestine as the violence spread first to the cities of Hebron, Tsfat, and Tiberias. Ironically, the religious communities that made up the cities that were first targeted were non-Zionist and thus had refused protection from the *Hagana*,<sup>lvii</sup> the Zionist defense militia of the *Yishuv*. This meant the religious cities of Jerusalem, Tsfat, and Hebron were disproportionately devastated by the riots, with 133 Jews killed by the end of the riots, 60 of whom were massacred in Hebron alone.<sup>lviii</sup> Eight American citizens were among the dead in Hebron, and another fourteen among the wounded, sparking international outrage at the violence.<sup>lix</sup>

The riots then continued in the more secular, Zionist cities of Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jaffa. Jews that fled the violence in the mixed city of Jaffa ended up mostly in neighboring Tel Aviv, a



quickly-growing metropolis that had been established only twenty years earlier, by Jews and essentially exclusively for Jews. Also ironically, the violence that erupted against the Jewish community in Jaffa only served to deepen the separation of Arab and Jewish populations and advance the centralization of Jewish society in Jewish-majority towns and cities.

Beyond the major cities in Mandatory Palestine, the Riots of 1929 reached over one hundred smaller Jewish settlements, vastly overextending the capabilities of any British or Zionist security forces. The violence continued for the better part of a week, culminating in a threat of 2,000 Arab militants to cross the Jordan River toward Jerusalem.<sup>lx</sup> British troops managed to silence this threat with their campaign to quash Arab strongholds in Jerusalem and elsewhere on August 29, 1929, effectively ending the riots.<sup>lxi</sup>

In a September 5th interview, Secretary of the Arab Executive Auni Abd-el-Hadi Sij shed light on the motivations behind the August 1929 riots. At this time, the Arab Executive was the most legitimate body of leadership within the Palestinian Arab Nationalist movement and was headed by Musa Kazim Al-Husseini.<sup>lxii</sup> Expressing the Arab Executive's mission to end Zionist activity in Palestine entirely and its belief that "Palestine must again form a part of the Arab Empire of [the Arabs'] dreams," Secretary Abd-el-Hadi revealed his organizations' objective to punish British authorities with continued rioting should their support for Zionist activity and authority over Arab Palestine continue.<sup>lxiii</sup> In the interview, Abd-el-Hadi clearly lays out the specific issues the Arab Executive has with Zionist activity of 1929, stating, "We...are certain that the latest uprising will put an end to Jewish immigration and discourage Jewish capital from coming into the country."<sup>lxiv</sup> Abd-el-Hadi then goes on to threaten another round of riots should the British not put a stop to *aliyah* and the influx of Jewish capital.

The relationship between Arab violence and Jewish immigration cannot be made clearer than in this interview with the Arab Executive's Secretary. It further placed the British in the extremely precarious position of having the power to stop these riots, but only through meeting the Arab Executive's demands. But meeting these demands, even if in the interest of stopping violence against Jews in Palestine, would only serve to dismantle the *Yishuv* as it existed. Here lay the crux of Britain's predicament during its mandate over Palestine.

— The British Response: Assessment of the “Disturbances” —

Seeking to explain the causes of the 1929 Riots and prescribe future action to mitigate the threat of more riots, the British government in Palestine initiated three investigative commissions that culminated in the release of the Passfield White Paper in 1930. When completed, the three commissions were unanimous in their assessment of the cause of Arab violence: “fear that the Jews would undertake massive immigration and would drive them off land they had lived and worked on for twelve centuries.”<sup>lxv</sup>

The first commission, led by Sir Walter Shaw and commonly known as the Shaw Commission, was initiated on September 3, 1929,<sup>lxvi</sup> just four days after the rioting began to quiet down. Shaw's assessment of the “The Disturbances of 1929”<sup>lxvii</sup> attributed Arab violence toward the *Yishuv* to mass Jewish immigration and the threat it posed to the future of Arab Nationalism and the Arab way of life in Palestine. It recommended that the British Government firstly define the extent to which the rights of non-Jews are to be protected under the Mandate and secondly that Jewish immigration be limited “with the object of preventing a repetition of the excessive immigration of 1925 and 1926.”<sup>lxviii</sup> The Shaw Commission also encouraged development of Palestine's economy and best usage of its limited land resources.<sup>lxix</sup> This

recommendation implied greater emphasis on the Arab population of Palestine, and reflected the common sentiment amongst Arabs that Jewish land purchases were growing unchecked, forcing Arab peasant populations out of areas within Palestine.<sup>lxx</sup>

Concern over land acquisition was part of the more generalized anxiety felt amongst Palestine's Arabs that the growing Jewish population was "not only a menace to their livelihood but a possible overlord of the future."<sup>lxxi</sup> To the Arabs, the concerning difference in growth of the Jewish versus Arab communities was characterized by the *Yishuv*'s economic and political gains toward statehood and compounded by the lack thereof of Palestinian Arab Nationalists. Arab National aspirations in Palestine were seen as even more unsuccessful when compared with other Arab Nationalist movements elsewhere in the Middle East like Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, that were, at the time, making steady gains toward independence.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Overall, the Shaw Commission attributed the Riots of 1929 to this unrest within the Arab population, but only when said unrest was qualified as a result of an excess of Jewish immigration and national growth. The apparent favor that the Arabs were dealt in the conclusions of the Shaw Commission was seen by many, especially in the Zionist camp, as capitulation to Arab demands at the cost of Jewish interests and promises. Even the Peel Commission of 1937 recognized years later that "the Shaw Report was not unsatisfactory to the Arabs."<sup>lxxiii</sup> This apparent interest in appeasing Arab Nationalist interests was a way to restore calm in Mandatory Palestine, which was ultimately Britain's first priority. Even if it meant increased opposition from the Zionists, that was preferable to continued violent opposition from the Arabs.

This choice had to be made by the British government in 1929 because it was at the beginning of a twenty-year struggle to justify its continued hold on the Mandate. Maintaining

operations in Palestine was a very costly undertaking for Britain, which during its Mandate prioritized establishing large numbers of public programs and services at its own expense.<sup>lxxiv</sup> And despite the massive population and export growth, the balance of payments was “always against Palestine and, year by year...increasingly so.”<sup>lxxv</sup> This meant that by 1947 when the British were on the brink of pulling out of Palestine, it was on them to settle the £57,618,000 trade deficit.<sup>lxxvi</sup> So in 1929, when Britain was suddenly called upon to pay for troops and other security reinforcements in response to the riots, the British taxpayer began to question the benefits of such an expensive endeavor.

By late Fall of 1929, when the Great Slump was shifting into full gear in London, the average Briton could not help but ask himself whether his tax dollars were best spent on sending troops thousands of miles away to break up a fight of ancient hatreds. Awareness of this reality among the British public is evidenced in a New York Times article from September 4, 1929, in which two popular British newspapers, the Rothermere and the Beaverbrook, are cited as “demanding insistently that Britain should get out of Palestine...which [is] a burden to the British taxpayer.”<sup>lxxvii</sup> The lack of return on Palestine was starting to be seen by the British public, and meant that Britain had to act quickly to keep things quiet in the Mandate.

A prime example of Britain trying to balance its justification of the Mandate can be found in the Shaw Commission itself. One of the Commission’s major findings about the 1929 Riots was that “the outbreak neither was nor was intended to be a revolt against British authority in Palestine.”<sup>lxxviii</sup> This allegation, however, is directly refuted by the earlier cited interview with the Arab Executive’s Secretary Auni Abd-el-Hadi Sij, in which he states, “Our sole criticism is against the London authorities.” Abd-el-Hadi goes on, quiet directly expressing the Arab Executive’s problem with British authority in Palestine: “Should we find out in the near

future...that notwithstanding these hopes of ours the present crisis is not strong enough to destroy the Jewish homeland movement, we shall not hesitate to bring about a strong well-organized fifth Arab revolt which would cause the British Empire more trouble than Abd-el-Krim's warfare did to France and Spain together."<sup>lxxxix</sup> These remarks on behalf of the Arab Executive directly contradict the Shaw Commission's assertion that British authority is unquestioned in Palestine. Even if the Arab Executive's statements were similarly politically motivated and thus partly falsified or exaggerated, they still served to break down the legitimacy of Britain's claim that their authority remained absolute in Palestine in 1929.

The League of Nations, from which Britain's authority over the Mandate was given, was similarly displeased with the Shaw Commission. In the League of Nations Mandates Commission report released on August 25, 1930, Britain was blamed for "napping"<sup>lxxx</sup> when it came to anticipating a security issue in Palestine. The Shaw Commission's pardoning of Britain was deemed as unsupported and dishonest.

In response to the shortcomings of the Shaw Commission, a second commission led by Sir John Hope Simpson was ordered in 1930<sup>lxxxi</sup> to further explore the issues of immigration, land purchases, settlement, demography, and economy.<sup>lxxxii</sup> The Hope Simpson Commission spent less time analyzing the Riots of 1929 and focused much more greatly on diplomatic recommendations for alteration to British policy regarding the issues of immigration, land purchases, settlement, demography, and economy.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Still, its recommendations supported the same conclusion of the Shaw Commission that Jewish immigration and economic growth in the *Yishuv* was to blame for the Riots of 1929. It specifically cited the Arab population's frustration with the stagnation of their economy compared to that of the *Yishuv*, stating that "it is widely

believed and commonly alleged among the Arabs that unemployment among them is due to Jewish immigration and the competition of Jewish labour.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

The Commission concluded with recommendations to limit Jewish immigration, which included placing British immigration officials in foreign towns from which Jews most commonly emigrated and deporting Jews who had arrived in Palestine illegally or as “pseudo-travelers.”<sup>lxxxv</sup> The conclusions of the Commission also noted that mitigating Arab unemployment would ease tensions in Palestine, but the recommendations to do so still came at the expense of Jewish immigrants. Hope Simpson similarly stated in the report, “If there are Arab workmen unemployed it is not right that Jewish workmen from foreign countries should be imported to fill existing vacant posts.”<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Provisions like this were sure to hamper economic advancement for new immigrants to the *Yishuv*, and thus were extremely controversial.

The Wailing Wall Commission, initiated in July of 1930, focused entirely on Muslim and Jewish religious claims to the Western Wall area. Similarly to the Hope Simpson and Shaw Commissions before it, the Wailing Wall Commission found that Zionist activity was to blame for the Riots of 1929.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Citing an increase in Jewish activity at the Western Wall as a natural effect of a growing population and British support of Zionism, the Muslim counsel to the Commission stated that, “It is the Balfour Declaration, reiterated in the Terms of the Mandate, that has been the cause of the discussion which finally brought bloodshed over Palestine and incited the Jews to urge claims which they had never thought of before.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

Statements like this in the Wailing Wall, Hope Simpson, and Shaw Commissions were what fueled the resulting piece of British policy issued on October 1, 1930. The White Paper, issued by Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Passfield, outlined several significant changes to British policy regarding Mandatory Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish national home.

Firstly, it pleaded for both national groups in Mandatory Palestine to recognize Britain's authority in the Mandate and to cooperate fully to ensure maximum progress.<sup>lxxxix</sup> Once again Britain showed its insecurity regarding its authority in Palestine through this stipulation in the White Paper. The other and more dramatic assertion the White Paper makes is that Jewish immigration, though necessary to the establishment of a Jewish national home, would henceforth be limited to the "economic capacity of the country."<sup>xc</sup> This capacity would be determined not just by Jewish demand for labor, but also by Arab unemployment.<sup>xc1</sup> This effectively linked the Jewish and Arab economies in a way they had not been before, and would severely limit Jewish immigration if Arab unemployment was not promptly solved. The White Paper did acknowledge the difficulties of determining the exact level of the "economic capacity" of Palestine, and for this reason even halted all *aliyah* for the six months following the issuance of the White Paper.<sup>xcii</sup> The White Paper's limitations on *aliyah* meant that Jewish growth was now directly dependent on the Arab population, and that the Jewish economy could not advance on its own without working alongside its Arab counterpart. While this may seem like a stroke of diplomatic genius by the British, the *Yishuv* was devastated.

Lord Passfield even attempted to justify what was essentially a total shutdown of *Yishuv* development by framing it as in the *Yishuv*'s interests, causing even greater bewilderment. In the White Paper, he states, "So long as widespread suspicion exists, . . . amongst the Arab population, that the economic depression, under which they undoubtedly suffer at present, is largely due to excessive Jewish immigration, and so long as some grounds exist upon which this suspicion may be plausibly represented to be well founded, there can be little hope of any improvement in the mutual relations of the two races."<sup>xciii</sup> Here Passfield states the imperative for improved relations as a change in Jewish immigration, despite alluding to Arab economic suffering as a perhaps

even more direct cause. This section of the White Paper was considered a lame attempt to placate Zionists worldwide and convince them that halting development would increase security. But even if it was true that a halt in *aliyah* could quiet Arab opposition for the time being, temporary paralysis of *aliyah* was considered a death sentence by the *Yishuv* for its increasingly realistic chance at establishing a state in Palestine. Due to this, Zionists worldwide unilaterally rejected the Passfield White Paper.

— The *Yishuv* Response: Investment in Self —

The favor that the Shaw, Hope Simpson, and Wailing Wall Commissions showed, in addition to the Passfield White Paper, toward the Arabs was seen by the Zionists as completely incongruent with Britain's commitments to the Jewish people as laid out in the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate. The restriction on immigration would suffocate the lifeblood of the *Yishuv*'s growth, and the use by the Shaw Commission of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate as justification for this was seen as "tantamount to a stultification of its purpose and intent."<sup>xciv</sup>

It was so unacceptable to then-President of the WZO Chaim Weizmann that he even resigned from his position, stating that Passfield went "a long way towards denying the rights and sterilizing the hopes of the Jewish people in regard to the national home."<sup>xcv</sup> Immediately after his resignation, Weizmann spearheaded a diplomatic effort to get the Passfield White Paper retracted by British Government. Relying on Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's opponents, Weizmann gained the public support of British notables such as Josiah Wedgewood, David Lloyd George, Jan C. Smuts, and even MacDonald's son, Malcolm.<sup>xcvi</sup>



These leaders in the British world published several damning opinions on the White Paper, urging Prime Minister MacDonald to adjust his policy. A letter in the October 23<sup>rd</sup> London Times to the Prime Minister from Lord Stanley Baldwin, Sir Austen Chamberlain, and L. S. Amery boldly asserted that with the White Paper, Britain had “abandoned” its own policy of fair treatment to both Arab and Jewish parties, and that it was “ignoring” the good-natured requests of Weizmann for the British to call a roundtable between Arab and Jewish leadership.<sup>xcvii</sup> A similar letter in the London Times by former Lord High Chancellor of England Hailsham and Lord John Simon accused Britain of a “grave charge of breach of faith and disregard of its international obligations.”<sup>xcviii</sup> General Smuts’ cablegram to the Prime Minister even cited some of Britain’s original reasoning for issuing the Balfour Declaration to begin with: fostering Jewish support for the war effort in 1917. Smuts implored MacDonald to make good on Britain’s promise to the Jews, and to rightfully pay back the debt they owe by continuing to facilitate the development of a Jewish homeland.<sup>xcix</sup>

This four-month-long diplomatic effort by Weizmann<sup>c</sup> and the Jewish Agency to place political pressure on Prime Minister MacDonald was ultimately successful, and ended with a public letter from MacDonald addressed to Weizmann. The MacDonald letter of February 13, 1931, effectively reversed all actions of the Passfield White Paper and revoked the criticisms therein of Jewish activity and agencies in the *Yishuv*. Addressing the disfavor given to the Jewish Agency specifically in the White Paper, MacDonald asserts that “the Jewish Agency [has] all along given willing co-operation in carrying out the policy of the Mandate, and that the constructive work done by the Jewish people in Palestine has had beneficial effects on the development and well-being of the country as a whole.”<sup>ci</sup> This attitude, and later statements in the letter that allege Britain’s “desire to give every encouragement”<sup>cii</sup> to Jewish organizations

could not have been farther from the tone of Passfield's White Paper. The letter even asserted that "the obligations to facilitate Jewish immigration and to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land, remains a positive obligation of the Mandate,"<sup>ciii</sup> effectively cancelling the heavy immigration restrictions imposed by the White Paper.

The MacDonald letter was a dramatic reversal of the previous briskness toward the *Yishuv* that had come out of London since the Riots of 1929. It was hailed as a massive success by world Jewry, and further motivated the *Yishuv* to get on with development now that immigration restrictions were lifted.<sup>civ</sup> Furthermore, it represented an impressive diplomatic feat by Weizmann, who had successfully lobbied and pressured British officials on behalf of Jewish national interests. Though he had procured such important actions as the Balfour Declaration over a decade earlier, the MacDonald Letter was such a dramatic and all-encompassing reversal of very recently-issued British policy. The high political cost to MacDonald of flip-flopping in such an obvious way represented the influence Weizmann, and by extension the *Yishuv*, had over him.

But even though Weizmann was so successful in overturning the Passfield White Paper, his use of "gradualist" diplomacy caused other members of the WZO to grow weary of this slow and seemingly passive approach.<sup>cv</sup> These members, which were largely of the more right-wing Revisionist camp, favored taking a hard-handed approach to anti-Zionist action, such as severing ties with Britain over the White Paper. Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky's appeal to institute his "Endziel" resolution sought to define the goals of the WZO as establishing a Jewish majority in Palestine in anticipation of the creation of a future Jewish state.<sup>cvi</sup> At the time, this was highly controversial and considered far-fetched and antagonist toward Arabs by many, including Weizmann. Though this was eventually rejected by the WZO<sup>cvi</sup> for fear of creating controversy

in the wake of the Passfield White Paper and the victory of the MacDonald Letter, it illustrated a festering frustration with the slowness with which establishment of a Jewish state was operating. Jabotinsky's Endziel resolution expressed the common sentiment within the *Yishuv* and Zionist circles that sovereignty could not wait, and that real action had to be taken in the *Yishuv* to guarantee this sovereignty.

Similar to the WZO's ultimate rejection of the controversial Endziel Plan, the *Yishuv*'s generalized response to British flip-flopping in regard to its support in the early 1930's was characterized not by an agenda of non-recognition or refusal, but by a more practical agenda of internal action, growth, and change, informed by the acknowledgement that cooperation with Great Britain was crucial to Zionism's survival. When all was said and done with the rollercoaster of British policy following the 1929 Riots, and when the *Yishuv* could only hope for the best when it came to future British and Arab action, "realistically, the Zionists could only turn inward and concentrate on building up their own infrastructure to withstand future Arab assaults and to guard against possible repudiation of promises by the British government."<sup>cviii</sup> Thus, the early 1930's saw great development in the *Yishuv*, characterized by both defense and economic advances.

Reflecting on the *Hagana*'s failure to respond sufficiently to the 1929 Riots, and the widespread exasperation regarding British police forces' ability to similarly protect Jews, the *Yishuv* demanded increased defense capabilities. This prompted a complete restructuring<sup>cix</sup> of the *Hagana*, which had previously been disjointed, disorganized, and incapable of mitigating serious, widespread threats to security. A high command structure and regional units were established to streamline *Hagana* operations, leadership, decision-making, and jurisdictional boundaries.<sup>cx</sup>

But despite a new structure, the *Hagana*'s strict policy of defense-only operations angered members of the Revisionist camp who felt that preemptive offensive attacks were necessary in the wake of such devastating violence on the Jewish people. An offshoot of the *Hagana*, dubbed the *Hagana Leumi* (National Defense) was led by Abraham Tehomi under the auspices of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism.<sup>cxv</sup> This new paramilitary organization, which eventually became better known as the *Irgun Tzva'i Leumi* or *Etzel* (National Military Organization), favored offensive action as well as creating a non-partisan military organization that was not associated with socialist political organizations like the *Histadrut* and *Mapai* like the *Hagana* was.<sup>cxii</sup> The *Etzel* would go on to carry out some of the more infamous operations of Jewish paramilitary organizations such as the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946.<sup>cxiii</sup> It was also critical in the establishment of the *Herut* political party that would serve in Israel's first parliament in 1948.<sup>cxiv</sup>

The rise of the *Etzel* in opposition to the *Hagana* similarly aided in the motivation to establish the *Mapai*, which was created from the merging of the WZO's two largest labor parties in 1930. This merger gave Labor Zionists a much stronger hold on power in the WZO,<sup>cxv</sup> thus enabling them to oppose Revisionist political activity and effectively control the Jewish Agency Executive. Under the leadership of David Ben Gurion, the *Mapai* proceeded to absorb the duties of control of the *Hagana*,<sup>cxvi</sup> further legitimizing the group as the *Yishuv*'s primary defense force.

The rise of oppositional parties within mainstream Zionist activity reflected its growth among world Jewry and increased acceptance therein. While still functioning externally as a monolithic movement, the Zionist community was beginning to form what would eventually turn into two of the largest political parties in Israel's first parliament upon its establishment in 1948.

The *Mapai* and *Herut* would even later go on to serve, respectively, as the historical precedents to today's Labor and Likud parties.

In conjunction with defense improvements, the *Yishuv* took advantage of lowered Arab political activity and relaxed British allowances in the early 1930's by investing heavily in its national industry. One of the major bodies for doing so was the Jewish Agency, which in 1930 aided in the establishment of the Palestine Potash Company. Now known as Dead Sea Works, it exploited the wealth of mineral resources of the Dead Sea would go on to be a major source of income for the *Yishuv* and later Israel's economy.<sup>cxvii</sup>

The Jewish Agency also participated in efforts to establish credit funds for Jewish industry that otherwise had difficulty securing credit. The credit made available to *Yishuv* industrial entrepreneurs helped them "renew their equipment, produce new types of goods, overcome the period of adaptation and experiment, and to support undertakings concentrating on the manufacture of export goods."<sup>cxviii</sup> With this initial financial safety net the Jewish Agency was able to offer, *Yishuv* industry could begin growing. Overall, the Jewish Agency invested almost one million Palestine Pounds in *Yishuv* industrial activities between the years 1922 and 1947.<sup>cxix</sup>

The Jewish Agency's investments were paying off in the early 1930's. Most notably, its founding investment of P£100,000 in the Palestine Electric Corporation was key in enabling the company to build the famous Naharayim Hydro-Electric Dam in 1932. Built by Russian *oleh* Pinchas Rutenberg over the intersection of the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers, Naharayim provided much-needed energy to the burgeoning industry in Mandatory Palestine.<sup>cxx</sup> Soon after in 1933, the Haifa deep-water port was opened with aid from the British Government,<sup>cxxi</sup> and would go on to replace Tel Aviv as the major immigration absorption center, receiving over 117,000 *olim*

from the years 1932 to 1939.<sup>cxxii</sup> Today, the port serves as a major import and export center of the Middle East.

Growth of manufacturing in urban centers like Tel Aviv was also vastly apparent, with the opening of small factories for the production of various goods such as “bricks, furniture, machinery, pocketbooks, shirts, shoes, syrups, candy, dresses, knitted goods, silks, textiles, and a host of other necessities of daily life.”<sup>cxxiii</sup> Citrus exports mainly from the Jaffa and Tel Aviv area were similarly booming.<sup>cxxiv</sup> In Haifa, the Nesher Cement Factory was established by French Jewish immigrants and the Shemen Factory worked to export olive oil and soap products.<sup>cxxv</sup> Nearby in Akko, the Nur Matchstick Factory was alleged to have a near monopoly on matchbook production in Mandatory Palestine.<sup>cxxvi</sup> Quite remarkably, in fact, an entire porcelain tooth factory was transplanted from Philadelphia to Tel Aviv and managed to export almost the entirety of its production.<sup>cxxvii</sup> This instance points toward the large role wealthy American Zionists had in aiding the establishment of these individual plants. As described in a June 1933 article in the New York Times, “everywhere, from Dan to Beersheba, building, planting and manufacturing [were] proceeding at a swift pace.”<sup>cxxviii</sup>

In 1932, things were looking up for the *Yishuv*. Though this period started with a rocky recovery from the recession when resumed immigration was met with the Riots of 1929, it ended with significant developments in Zionist diplomatic efforts, defense capabilities, political organization, and economic prosperity. In just under four years, the first state-building cycle of the Fifth *Aliyah* had been completed. Population growth led to Arab resistance, which precipitated rash action by the British, thus furthering Zionist diplomatic, defense, political, and economic development. Ultimately, by the end of 1932, the *Yishuv* was operating much more

like a legitimate political unit than it had been just three years earlier at the start of the Fifth *Aliyah*.

### **The Second Cycle, 1933-1939**

#### — Immigration: The *Yekkes* Flee Nazi Germany —

Hitler's inauguration to the Chancellorship of Germany on January 30, 1933 serves as a dramatic marker of the start of the second iteration of the cycle of state-building in the *Yishuv*. Less than six weeks later, the Nazi Party obtained 43.9% of the vote in Reichstag elections,<sup>cxxix</sup> and just over 18 months after his rise to the Chancellorship, Hitler was executing a massive consolidation of power as the Führer of Germany.<sup>cxxx</sup> This rapid rise to power deeply concerned the Jewish community both in Mandatory Palestine and in the Diaspora. Though the genocide that Hitler and his Nazi government would eventually commit seemed far off and unrealistic to the world's Jews in 1933,<sup>cxxxi</sup> the importance of a national home as a refuge was growing.

Zionist leadership's chosen response to new reality of German Jews was to push for increased *aliyah* to the greatest possible extent. In 1933, the Jewish Agency pushed Britain to allow for increased immigration to Mandatory Palestine beyond what was already sanctioned. Though this request ultimately was not granted, the majority of immigration permits in 1933 were given to Germans, many of whom had undergone agricultural *hachshara* training in preparation for immigration to Palestine.<sup>cxxxii</sup> Campaigns to convince German Jews to make *aliyah* were similarly pushed. Several British Government officials including David Lloyd George, Herbert Samuel, J. C. Smuts, and Cyrus Adler signed a letter in 1933 along with Chaim Weizmann on behalf of the Jewish Agency encouraging German Jews to find a "permanent home" in Palestine and fundraising for their ability to do so.<sup>cxxxiii</sup> This kind of lobbying of the

British government by *Yishuv* leadership was another major focus of easing immigration restrictions from Germany. In the two years after Hitler became Chancellor, 60% of all official conversations between the Jewish Agency Executive and the High Commissioner for Palestine regarded *aliyah*.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> Further efforts by the Jewish Agency to facilitate German *aliyah* in 1933 included the establishment of a department solely for the handling of German immigrants and increased financial support for said immigrants in the form of land purchases and work training.<sup>cxxxv</sup> Weizmann and Arthur Ruppin were put in charge of this German Department<sup>cxxxvi</sup> and worked to keep concern for German Jews at the forefront of Zionist discourse in 1933.

At the Eighteenth Zionist Congress of the same year, Ruppin called for the absorption of 200,000 German Jews to Palestine.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Though this was far from suggesting complete evacuation, Ruppin was not alone in his belief that it was most wise to get as many German Jews out as early as possible. Nahum Sokolow, who was President of the WZO at the time, also gave a speech imploring the Congress to “hurry to articulate, in an urgent way, a large-scale aid program, for there is no end to the suffering of our brethren in Germany.”<sup>cxxxviii</sup> By the end of the Congress, two resolutions had passed. The first implored the British, the League of Nations, and “the entire civilized world”<sup>cxxxix</sup> to help facilitate increased *aliyah* from Germany. The second resolution aimed to unite world Jewry both politically and financially behind the cause of a “rescue program” for German Jews.<sup>cxl</sup> The focus on German rescue *aliyah* that dominated the conversation at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress reflected the newfound urgency felt within world Jewry sparked by Hitler’s seizure of power, and helped to put into practice over 17 different initiatives for the absorption of German Jews by the end of 1933.

Despite the unanimous attitude that facilitation of German *aliyah* was the top priority of the Jewish Agency, a proposal to work with the Nazi government to promote *aliyah* was by far



the most controversial initiative discussed at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress of 1933. The *Ha'Avarah* (Transfer) Agreement, negotiated between the Third Reich and the Palestine Trust and Transfer Company (PALTREU) permitted between 20,000 to 50,000<sup>cxli</sup> German Jews to immigrate to Palestine and to transfer their monetary assets to the *Yishuv* via a convoluted mechanism that simultaneously benefitted German export industry.<sup>cxlii</sup> This transfer of assets operated by enabling German Jewish émigrés to deposit their capital into blocked German accounts that then issued certificates to be directly redeemed for German exports by the émigrés. Business owners in the *Yishuv* could also purchase German machinery, technology, and other goods from these blocked accounts.<sup>cxliii</sup> The German Jewish émigrés were then entitled to a reimbursement from these business owners, though the delivery of these assets was not guaranteed.<sup>cxliv</sup> Still, any change to the allowances by Nazi Germany for asset transfers to Palestine was an improvement, as before the enactment of the *Ha'Avarah* Agreement, Jews emigrating from Germany were only permitted to take 50 Reichsmarks' worth of coins to their destination.<sup>cxlv</sup>

But economic dealings with the Nazis threatened to delegitimize “Jewry’s united front” as expressed by the anti-Nazi boycott enacted in the early 1930’s.<sup>cxlvi</sup> The *Ha'Avarah* Agreement was also seen by its Jewish opponents, most of whom were associated with either the *Mapai* party or non-Zionist circles, as aiding in the Nazi’s morally wrong desire to rid Germany of its Jewish population.<sup>cxlvii</sup> The Agreement’s status as a private endeavor, however, and its support among wealthy German Jews,<sup>cxlviii</sup> enabled it to get off the ground in 1933.

The commonly-held belief that “without the agreement, most German Jews would simply stay put, hoping to weather the storm,”<sup>cxlix</sup> was enough to convince Zionist leaders that the German Jewish community was too much of an asset to the *Yishuv* for a moral sacrifice not to be

made to facilitate their absorption into Palestine. Among world Jewry, the *yekkes*, as German Jews were nicknamed, were known to be better assimilated into modern society, more economically successful, and more educated. The term *yekke* came from the German word for “jacket,” referencing the proper, “formal appearance”<sup>cl</sup> that these immigrants were known for.

A perfect example of the German *yekke* coming to Palestine with wealth formerly unknown to the *Yishuv* can be seen in the classic 1964 film “Sallach Shabati” starring “Fiddler on the Roof” actor Chaim Topol. In the film, Sallach, a poor Yemini immigrant, answers a lost dog advertisement placed by a wealthy German immigrant, Dr. Kurtz, in the hopes of receiving the cash reward. Sallach comically brings a stray dog to Dr. Kurtz’s glitzy apartment in a wealthy suburb of Tel Aviv, hoping to convince him and his posh wife that the mutt is in fact their white poodle, Puzzi. The *yekke* Kurtzes are confused by Sallach’s low-class behavior but remain naively kind and accommodating to him, offering fruit juice instead of liquor in an amusing showing of their polite-society behavior.<sup>cli</sup> This brief scene is a fantastic illustration of the economic divide between German *yekkim* and the comparatively basic living situation that greeted them upon their arrival to Palestine in the 1930’s.

In a speech at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress, Arthur Ruppin touched on the potential that German Jewry could bring to Palestine: “There are in Germany about 8,000 doctors, about 4,000 lawyers and about 2,000 dentists, thousands of engineers, teachers, apothecaries, journalists, actors.”<sup>clii</sup> Though extraordinarily controversial, the *Ha’Avarah* Agreement’s effectiveness in bringing in the vast numbers of middle-class, educated German Jews fleeing the Third Reich undeniably brought an influx of skilled, industrial labor that *Yishuv* knew would be hugely positive addition to their growing economy. Similar transfer of asset agreements were reached with Czechoslovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania during the mid-1930’s.<sup>cliii</sup> Each varied in the

amount of capital that immigrants could bring with them to Palestine, but the general pattern reflected the consensus that these kinds of agreements were ultimately beneficial to the *Yishuv*, even if they played into Nazi goals of ridding Europe of its Jewry.

Ratcheting up *aliyah* efforts into full gear at the inception of the Third Reich with initiatives like the *Ha'Avarah* Agreement, full exploitation of British-sanctioned immigration, and even illegal immigration, the *Yishuv*'s population absolutely exploded in the mid-1930's. In 1933 alone, *aliyah* more than tripled, to 30,327 up from 9,553 in 1932.<sup>cliv</sup> By 1935, the Nineteenth Zionist Congress elected to absorb *Ha'Avarah*, Ltd. under its official auspices and heard David Ben Gurion speak of bringing a million Jews to *Eretz Israel*.<sup>clv</sup> Total German immigration from 1932 to 1939 reached almost 36,000 individuals.<sup>clvi</sup> The skilled nature of these immigrants was reflected in the rise in industry- and commerce-sponsored immigrants and contrasting fall in unskilled and agriculture-sponsored immigrants after 1932.<sup>clvii</sup> Overall, population growth in the *Yishuv* from 1933 to the end of the Fifth *Aliyah* in 1939 totaled over 250,000 individuals, more than doubling the population size of 1932.<sup>clviii</sup>

— The Arab Response: The Revolt of 1936-1939 —

Arab oppositional activity between 1929 and 1936 was comparatively quiet and internal to the Riots of 1929. In direct response to the uptick in *aliyah* in 1933, minor riots in Haifa, Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Nablus took place but were mostly directed against the British.<sup>clix</sup> Soon after in 1934, five newly-formed Arab political parties submitted a memorandum to the High Commissioner of the Mandate calling for the formation of a democratic government in Palestine, the “immediate cessation” of *aliyah*, and the halting of Jewish purchases of Arab land.<sup>clx</sup> These demands were eventually not met, but a brief attempt and ultimate failure by the British to

establish a democratically-elected Legislative Council composed of Arabs, Jews, and Britons left the Arab community of Palestine feeling especially dejected and hopeless by 1935.<sup>clxi</sup> Similar to in 1929, the successes of other Arab Nationalist movements in Egypt and Syria in the mid-1930's inspired action amongst Palestine's Arabs. Looking specifically to the Egyptian riots of 1935 that led to an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the Syrian strike of 1936 that resulted in French action toward ending their Mandate,<sup>clxii</sup> Palestinian Arabs would spend the next three years giving all they had in the hopes of changing the trajectory of British Mandate and the *Yishuv*.

The murder of three Jews on April 15, 1936, and the murder of two Arabs the next day<sup>clxiii</sup> put into motion the chaos that would consume Palestine for the next three years. According to the British Commission charged with assessing the damage of the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, "it lasted far longer; it extended more completely throughout the whole country; and it was much more efficiently organized"<sup>clxiv</sup> than past actions. Within one week of the original murders, the five Arab political parties initiated a general strike.<sup>clxv</sup> Four days later the Arab Higher Committee was formed with Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini as its President, calling for continuation of the strike until Arab demands were met.<sup>clxvi</sup> These demands were the same as those laid out in the memorandum to the High Commissioner the year before, though now requested a representative council rather than a democratic government.<sup>clxvii</sup> This was interpreted as demanding departure from British policy that promised a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, and instead favoring the establishment of an Arab state.

In May and June of 1936, the strike intensified as the last Arabs to hold out were either "won over or intimidated"<sup>clxviii</sup> by the Arab Higher Committee to fold into the action. Violence, including destruction of critical infrastructure, was carried out in conjunction with the strike. Railway lines, train cars, telephone wires, roads, oil pipelines,<sup>clxix</sup> and even a bridge were either

attacked or destroyed.<sup>clxx</sup> “Intermittent local demonstrations” against Jews included assaults and stone-throwing attacks, as well as the vandalizing and demolition of Jewish property and crops.<sup>clxxi</sup> Most significantly, though, was the start of organized attacks by groups of Arabs, some even coming from Syria or Iraq, on British security forces.<sup>clxxii</sup> This marked the beginning of an effort much more organized than in years past of the Arabs to markedly change the status quo in Palestine.

The strike of Arab labor in Jewish industry, however, “turned out to be a fiasco”<sup>clxxiii</sup> that actually ended up homogenizing the Jewish economy even further. Arab workers that went on strike were simply replaced by Jewish workers, only exacerbating the unemployment gap between the two groups. In the case of the Arab-operated Jaffa Port that became largely defunct during the strike, Jewish importers simply built a new port in north Tel Aviv,<sup>clxxiv</sup> helping to develop Tel Aviv’s northern neighborhood in a way it had not been before. Having taken most of its toll on the Arab economy instead of the relatively detached Jewish economy, the Arab strike lost its steam by October<sup>clxxv</sup> of the same year, just six months later.

The failure of the strike, however, did not put a stop to the violence directed toward the Jews and Jewish property. Led in ideology by Hajj Amin al-Husseini and in combat by Syrian Arab Nationalist Fawzi al-Kaukji,<sup>clxxvi</sup> the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 was unique in its never-before-seen use of international diplomacy by Palestinian Arabs within the greater Arab world.<sup>clxxvii</sup> Involvement of the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, and Yemen, as well as many civilian supporters from Syria<sup>clxxviii</sup> in the Arab Revolt gave it the political strength to continue on for three years. By the time the Revolt was quashed in 1939, thousands of Arabs, Jews, and Britons had lost their lives, with thousands more injured. Damage to property was also largely apparent, though difficult to measure and always accompanied by bias. To give a general

idea of the extent of the damage, though, a 1937 Jewish Agency estimate of damage to Jewish property was detailed as the loss of “80,000 citrus trees, 62,000 other fruit trees, 64,000 forest trees, and 16,500 dunums of crops” in addition to industrial and commercial damage.<sup>clxxxix</sup> In total, the cost of these damages was valued at £250,000.<sup>clxxx</sup> Though exact estimates of the casualties are similarly unavailable and individual estimates also carry their own political biases, the general consensus is that between 400 and 500 Jews and about 5,000 Arabs were killed between 1936 and 1939.<sup>clxxxi</sup> A portion of these Arabs killed during the Revolt were murdered by Jewish assailants, but the vast majority were killed by British forces during combat.<sup>clxxxii</sup> Needless to say, by 1939 the Arab population of Palestine was exhausted, with very little to show for their efforts save for an even more heightened distrust between Palestine’s two populations.

Despite its ultimate failure, the increased organization of the Arab Revolt from its inception made it much more effective in garnering concern from the British than past uprisings. Early in the Revolt’s existence, in June of 1936, 137 Arab leaders in Palestine signed and submitted a memorandum to the High Commissioner, detailing the causes and demands of the strike and rebellion as they were unfolding. The “underlying cause of the present discontent,” the memorandum stated, was “animated by a profound sense of injustice done to [the Arab population],”<sup>clxxxiii</sup> namely the lack of fulfillment of promises to the Arab world and the alleged partiality shown to the Zionists and their immigration agendas. Quite dramatically, the memorandum dismissed British attempts to quell the rebellion by force, stating that “the only way in which it can be removed is by removing the causes which have brought it about.”<sup>clxxxiv</sup> It went on to threaten continued violence should the British government not put an end to Jewish immigration: “The choice between an immediate return to normal conditions and an indefinite continuation of the present disorders and bloodshed depends not on a matter of policy or

principle, but solely on a matter of provisional regulation, namely that of whether or not immigration is to be stopped.”<sup>clxxxv</sup> The memorandum concluded by asserting that the “Government is in itself in part to blame for the state of mind which has brought about the violence.”<sup>clxxxvi</sup> Such an accusation placed the British Mandate in a very difficult position, further compounded by the release only a few weeks later of another memorandum submitted by Palestine’s *Shari’a* courts that reaffirmed the Arabs’ previously stated demands but in much harsher language that included the threat of “revenge of God the Almighty.”<sup>clxxxvii</sup> Such upsetting remarks directed toward the British government compelled it to act in some way to try to mitigate both the violence toward the *Yishuv* and the “despair”<sup>clxxxviii</sup> amongst the Arab community causing said violence.

— The British Response: Partition? —

While the Arab Revolt ravaged Palestine, Britain scrambled to keep the situation from dwindling into full on war. Three major policy actions were released in response to and in an attempt to quiet the Revolt, the first of which was the Palestine Royal Commission led by Lord William Peel. The Peel Commission was launched on May 18, 1936 to “investigate causes of unrest and alleged grievances either of Arabs or of Jews.”<sup>clxxxix</sup> By its submission to the British Parliament in July of 1937, the Peel Commission had concluded that “the situation in Palestine [had] reached a deadlock.”<sup>cxc</sup> After almost two decades of vain attempts to “hold the balance between Jews and Arabs,”<sup>cxc</sup> Britain was quite hopeless about the ability of the Mandate, let alone any other political arrangement, to quell the hatred between these two national groups.

The Peel Commission’s pessimism regarding the Mandate reflected dwindling support for the Mandate in mainland Britain. Concerns about the burden on the British taxpayer that had

arisen back in 1929 were now well-founded in the aftermath of both the Great Depression and the costly suppression of the Arab Revolt that had fallen on British bank accounts. Before 1936, Mandatory Palestine had “never been a burden on the British Exchequer,” having always “made good out of the accumulated surplus” even during the Depression.<sup>cxcii</sup> But once the Arab Revolt hit, revenue in 1936 only accounted for 75% of Palestine’s expenditure, and “henceforth there was every year an appreciable gap which, despite continually rising revenue, the British taxpayer had to fill.”<sup>cxciiii</sup> Maintaining the delicate balance of control over Palestine was for the first time proving too costly for Britain to continue.

The Peel Commission estimated the total cost to Britain of the first year of the Arab Revolt from 1936-1937 to be more than £1.5 million. Of this, £1,186,000 was spent on supplying troops, £144,000 on the exceeded budgets of police and prisons, and £35,000 on the repair of damaged infrastructure. Revenue losses were loosely estimated at £900,000 for the same year, and £750,000 for the next. The estimated direct cost to British taxpayers was valued at £3.5 million. These figures, the Peel Commission noted, did not even take into account the losses incurred by the Arab and Jewish communities.<sup>cxciiv</sup> The cost to Britain was enough to kick-start a campaign to get Britain out of Palestine, let alone the vulnerability of British troops caught in the middle of a foreign conflict. By the end of September 1936, 20,000 British troops were stationed in Palestine, and martial law had been declared by the High Commissioner.<sup>cxcv</sup> An opinion piece in London’s *Saturday Review* from October 1936, summed up the general attitude toward the Mandate at the time, claiming it was only “bringing discredit to the British reputation,”<sup>cxcvi</sup> and thus should be dismantled.

The Peel Commission took heed to the growingly dismal view of what the Mandate could accomplish in Palestine and proposed a “radical”<sup>cxcvii</sup> solution: partition. The partition plan of



1937 proposed the separation of Mandatory Palestine into three self-governing territories: a sovereign Jewish state in the northwest of the Mandate, a British-governed enclave stretching from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and a sovereign Arab state united with Trans-Jordan in the remaining territory of the Mandate.<sup>cxviii</sup> The security of these three political entities would be guaranteed by a treaty system guaranteeing protections for minorities in each entity and establishing sustainable military conventions.<sup>cxix</sup> Regarding Jewish immigration, the Peel Commission's plan for partition would forbid any *aliyah* to the future Arab state and continue to limit *aliyah* to the Jewish state based on "economic absorptive capacity."<sup>cc</sup> Until partition could be implemented, the Commission ruled, *aliyah* was to be capped at 12,000 annually so as to delay the establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine [see Fig. 6].<sup>cci</sup>

But just like the Mandate it sought to end, the Partition Plan of 1937 only sowed divisions between Arab and Jewish communities even more. Arab rioting was ratcheted up with increased fervor and "uncompromising hostility."<sup>ccii</sup> Division within Zionist circles on whether to accept this first offer of statehood "threatened to tear the Zionist movement apart."<sup>cciii</sup> The Permanent Mandates Commission, therefore, recommended against immediate imposition of partition, and a new Commission, now led by Sir John Woodhead, was appointed in February of 1938.<sup>cciv</sup>

Following the precedent of flip-flopping that previous policy had established, the Woodhead Commission reversed the recommendation for partition, citing its impracticality and lack of logistical possibility. The proposed Jewish state, it found, would barely have a Jewish majority at less than 51% of the 600,000-person population.<sup>ccv</sup> The prospect of population transfers was similarly unworkable due to the lack of irrigable land in Palestine, the unwillingness of individuals to move, and the inability of Britain to compel them to do so.<sup>ccvi</sup>

Additionally, partition in any form would put the burden of paying off the Mandate's deficit directly on Britain. The Woodhead Commission estimated this at about £1.25 million per year in addition to the cost of defense.<sup>ccvii</sup> Ultimately, the members of the Commission could not come to an agreement on the variety of complex and impractical partition solutions put forward by the Commission.<sup>ccviii</sup>

In a last-ditch attempt to address this seemingly unsolvable problem, the British government under Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain called for a conference that would bring Arab and Jewish representatives together in London to hash out the conundrum of Palestine once and for all.<sup>ccix</sup> But the Arab delegation's policy of non-recognition of the Jewish Agency forced the British to actually hold two conferences, one with the Jewish Agency and the other with representatives of Palestine's Arabs as well as Egyptian, Iraqi, Saudi, and Yemini government officials.<sup>ccx</sup> After several weeks of talks brokered by the British, Jewish and Arab parties failed to reach any sort of agreement whatsoever.<sup>ccxi</sup> In a last statement of exasperation, the British government claimed that the lack of an agreement meant that "His Majesty's Government [was] free to formulate their own policy."<sup>ccxii</sup> The ultimate result of this conference was the White Paper released in May of 1939.

If the Peel and Woodhead Commissions had not already made clear Britain's desire to be done with the Palestine problem once and for all, the MacDonald White Paper made His Majesty's Government's intentions starkly plain. Within ten years, the White Paper stated, an "independent Palestine State" would be established no matter what and governed proportionately by Arabs and Jews in regard to the general population.<sup>ccxiii</sup> This was coupled with an immigration quota that was framed as a continuation of the precedent of limiting immigration to Palestine's "economic absorptive capacity."<sup>ccxiv</sup> The White Paper argued that even if a Jewish economy was

able to grow to accommodate the high levels of *aliyah* that had existed during the 1930's, Jewish immigration ultimately was to blame for the "serious setback to economic progress"<sup>ccxv</sup> that occurred during the Arab Revolt because of its role as the Revolt's main cause. Consequently, to promote peaceful growth of Palestine's economy, Jewish immigration was capped at 10,000 per year for the next five years, in addition to the admission of 25,000 refugees, most of whom were to be children and dependents.<sup>ccxvi</sup> The goal of this quota was to have the Jewish population constitute one third of Palestine's total population by the granting of its independence, but only, of course, "if economic absorptive capacity permit[ted]."<sup>ccxvii</sup> All *aliyah* after that was left up to the future Arab leadership.<sup>ccxviii</sup> The creation of this ultimate cap of 30% of Palestine's population by the time it was to become an independent entity essentially put an end to the possibility of British promises one day helping to establish a majority Jewish state. Though the White Paper claimed a "Jewish national home" would still exist as a minority population in a majority Arab state, any hopes for a fully independent, Jewish majority state granted by Britain were extinguished. To the *Yishuv*, this was unacceptable.

— The *Yishuv* Response: *Af-Al-Pi* —

The quotas placed on Jewish immigration by the Peel and Woodhead Commissions, and finally by the MacDonald White Paper of 1939, were met with an uproar from the *Yishuv* and a strong resolve not to conform to any of the restrictions set forth in these documents. All the while facing continued violence from the Arab Revolt, the *Yishuv* would spend 1936 to 1939 growing its population, advancing its ability to defend itself, and increasing its diplomatic ties abroad. Faced with the reality that Britain was no longer interested in establishing a Jewish state, the *Yishuv* would carry out these actions outside of the authority of the Mandate.

Despite strict immigration quotas, *aliyah* continued at the highest possible level, even if that meant acting outside of the law. The massive effort of the *Yishuv* to facilitate illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine in spite of British restrictions became known as *Aliyah Bet*, a ‘Plan B’ for immigration, so to speak. *Aliyah Bet* was unilaterally opposed by the Jewish Agency until the Partition Plan of 1937.<sup>ccxix</sup> Before this, the Jewish Agency felt its relationship with Britain was too valuable to be sullied by violating her provisions. But British policy from 1937 to 1939 made clear that positive relations with the British were not as crucial to Jewish survival as mass emigration from Nazi-threatened Europe. ‘Clandestine’ or ‘unauthorized’ immigration, as its facilitator preferred to call it, “became the proven way of rescuing Jews and of overcoming the barriers set up by the infamous White Paper.”<sup>ccxx</sup>

When this was becoming apparent even before the issuance of the White Paper in the last months of 1938, the *Hagana* established the *Mossad L’Aliyah Bet* (The Agency for Illegal Immigration) in order to help facilitate clandestine immigration to Palestine, mostly by boat.<sup>ccxxi</sup> Though the technically illegal organization was not officially under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, it was led by *Hagana* heavyweights Shaul Meirov, Eliyahu Golomb, and Berl Katznelson, all of whom had close ties to the Jewish Agency and the *Mapai*.<sup>ccxxii</sup> The Jewish Agency also contributed heavily to the *Mossad*’s funding, allegedly spending more than a quarter of its budget on the *Mossad* in 1939.<sup>ccxxiii</sup> During World War II, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT) would cover most of the *Mossad*’s expenses,<sup>ccxxiv</sup> however, reflecting an important shift of the *Yishuv* from allying with Britain to the United States.

*Aliyah Bet* efforts continued even after the Fifth *Aliyah*, during and after World War II, and up until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.<sup>ccxxv</sup> From 1936 until the end of the Fifth *Aliyah* and the start of the War in 1939, though, the estimated number of *ma’apilim* (illegal

immigrants) was at its highest at 15,071 individuals, 11,156 of whom arrived in 1939 alone.<sup>ccxxvi</sup> In total, almost one out of every five *olim* between 1936 and 1939 arrived illegally.<sup>ccxxvii</sup> This massive effort to continue building a Jewish national home in Palestine was truly diametrically opposed to British policy at the time. It exemplified the feeling in the *Yishuv* that a state was going to be built for Jews and by Jews in spite of both British policy and Nazi aggression. The sentiment fittingly served as the codename for the first secret sea transport of Jews in the spring of 1937, dubbed “*af-al-pi*,” or Hebrew for “in spite of.”<sup>ccxxviii</sup>

While the *Hagana* was busy aiding in the clandestine transfer of *ma’apilim*, it also had the constantly-growing task of protecting Jews in Palestine from the continued violence of the Arab Revolt. Though British security forces brought in reinforcements and increased expenditure throughout the revolt, Jewish communities in the periphery of the *Yishuv* remained vulnerable to attack. This meant that the *Hagana* and the Revisionist camp’s *Etzel* forces had to take responsibility for securing much of the Jewish population during this time. Unlike the *Etzel*, the *Hagana* held steadfast to its policy of *havlaga*, or self-restraint, up until 1939. This limited it to carrying out only defensive operations and direct reprisal attacks to “particularly unacceptable”<sup>ccxxix</sup> attacks on Jewish civilians. This policy, however, severely lessened the ability of the *Hagana* to properly prevent and mitigate active attacks on Jewish settlements.

But in 1936 the *Hagana* underwent another massive overhaul, similar to that of 1929, which “virtually transformed the *Hagana* from a minor militia into an underground army.”<sup>ccxxx</sup> This restructuring, named *Tochnit Avner* (The Avner Plan), oversaw the creation of a full-time force, significantly expanding the capabilities of the organization that had previously consisted only of part-time volunteer soldiers.<sup>ccxxxi</sup> The field companies and mobile units that were created under *Tochnit Avner* were recognized by the British under the auspices of an “*ad hoc* alliance

between British security forces...and the Hagana.”<sup>ccxxxii</sup> These units were legalized by the British as the Jewish Supernumerary Police or *Notarim*, and significantly expanded the *Hagana*’s stock of weaponry from fewer than 4,000 rifles to 8,000.<sup>ccxxxiii</sup> Over the course of three years, 22,000 Jews were recruited to the *Hagana* under *Tochnit Avner*.<sup>ccxxxiv</sup> By 1938, the *Hagana* had reached 50,000 members.<sup>ccxxxv</sup> In 1939, the supernumerary organization of the *Notarim* transitioned to proper military organization.<sup>ccxxxvi</sup> Recognized by the British due to British forces’ own inability to properly secure the Jewish population from Arab attacks, the *Hagana*’s development and legitimization proved crucial in expanding its kinetic capabilities while strengthening soldiers’ military know-how and authority through close contact with British military forces.

The newfound effectiveness of the *Hagana* was especially evident in the infamous Special Night Squads led by Charles Wingate at the end of the Arab Revolt. Wingate first came to Palestine in May 1938 as an eager British intelligence officer and quickly fell in love with the *Yishuv*’s relatable narrative of overcoming centuries of social rejection.<sup>ccxxxvii</sup> Dubbed “The Friend” (*HaYedid*) by the *Yishuv*, Wingate was instrumental in his development of the Special Night Squads, a division of the *Hagana* that proved extremely effective in quelling violent attacks by Arab groups that, by 1938, were most commonly undertaken at night.<sup>ccxxxviii</sup> The Special Night Squads implemented methods most commonly used by Arab forces in an attempt to beat them at their own game. These tactics included “offensive operations, mobility, and firepower”<sup>ccxxxix</sup> and were critical in stamping out the Arab Revolt in 1939. By the time Wingate’s Special Night Squads were disbanded in May 1939, the *Hagana* had transformed into “a virtual army almost ready to accept responsibility for the defense of the Jewish national home.”<sup>ccxli</sup> With what amounted to a military victory under their belts, the *Hagana* was prepared to establish itself as a professional force under the name *Palmach*, in 1941.<sup>ccxli</sup>

Despite the cooperation between British and *Yishuv* defense forces exhibited by Wingate's Special Night Squads, the MacDonald White Paper's release on May 17, 1939 turned the *Yishuv*'s relationship with Britain anything but rosy. In response to the MacDonald White Paper and the perceived end it brought to any hopes of a British-granted Jewish state, the Jewish Agency immediately commenced several initiatives to propel itself into a process of independence, separate from the Mandate system.

On the same day as the issuance of the White Paper, the Jewish Agency released a strongly-worded statement condemning the British action and vowing to “never accept the closing against them of the gates of Palestine, nor let their national home be converted into a ghetto.”<sup>ccxlii</sup> It labeled MacDonald's statement a “cruel blow” and “a surrender to Arab terrorism.”<sup>ccxlili</sup> Ultimately, this statement marked the end of the Jewish Agency's willingness to work with Britain to coordinate a plan for independence. By extension, it marked the beginning of organized Zionist independence efforts against the British.

Immediately following the issuance of its response to the White Paper, the Jewish Agency released its new strategy of “noncooperation” regarding the British.<sup>ccxliv</sup> In this time of crisis, historically opposed factions within the *Yishuv* united under the new strategy. An editorial in the newspaper *Ha'Aretz* commanded the *Yishuv* to “assemble like a wall”<sup>ccxlv</sup> in opposition. On May 20, the *Hagana* and *Etzel* came together for a brief moment of solidarity, conducting a census of all of the *Yishuv*'s military-aged men to be conscripted into the force.<sup>ccxli</sup> The next day, the JAE voted to establish three new Jewish settlements, to allocate more resources to the *Mossad L'Aliyah Bet*, and to increase diplomatic efforts abroad to get the MacDonald White Paper overturned.<sup>ccxlvii</sup> JAE Chairman David Ben Gurion even worked with the *Hagana* and various youth groups to create a plan for military operations against the British should the

MacDonald White Paper not be rescinded.<sup>ccxlviii</sup> The plan was set to begin in September of 1939,<sup>ccxlix</sup> but would ultimately be interrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

Before military action appeared to be the only option left, however, WZO President Chaim Weizmann embarked on a diplomatic mission to have the White Paper overturned or at least discredited immediately after its release. This included further turning toward the United States and American Zionists for support,<sup>cccl</sup> which eventually led to President Roosevelt's delayed condemnation of the White Paper in 1944.<sup>cccli</sup> Back in 1939, though, and empowered by statements of condemnation of the White Paper from leaders like Lord Snell, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Herbert Stanley Morrison, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, and even Sir Winston Churchill, among many others, Weizmann submitted an appeal to the Permanent Mandates Commission against the White Paper just two weeks after its issuance.<sup>ccclii</sup> Weizmann only half-succeeded, though; he procured an examination of the White Paper by the League of Nations in June of 1939. This almost led to the launching of yet another Commission by the British,<sup>cccliii</sup> but war threatened to break out at any second, and a lack of action by September spelled the end of international concern with Palestine, at least until the end of the War. As the Nazis invaded Poland on September 1, the White Paper remained in place. The British would adhere to the White Paper throughout the War,<sup>cccliv</sup> with reversal or reevaluation deemed too much time and effort for a country at war with Nazi Germany.

### **Conclusion**

By September 1939, unsuccessful efforts to overturn the White Paper and the 'closing of the gates' to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi aggression ultimately marked the end of the Fifth *Aliyah*. Despite this dismal end to a turbulent decade and the onset of arguably the darkest time



for the Jewish people, the *Yishuv* was waiting in the wings, poised to launch full-throttle into the eventual seizure of its independence less than ten years later.

With internationally-known leadership, an active industrial economy, a full-time defense force, and immigration and state-building agendas operating officially outside of the law of the British Mandate, the *Yishuv* had come a long way from where it stood in economic and security uncertainty in 1929. Beginning with an uptick in immigration after the recession of 1927 and incoming Nazi threat, growth in the *Yishuv* set off the Riots of 1929. This opposition from Palestine's Arab population forced the British Government to release the Shaw, Wailing Wall, and Hope Simpson Commissions, followed by the Passfield White Paper effectively shutting down immigration and, by extension, development. From here, Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann's successful diplomatic campaign resulted in the MacDonald White Paper, and investment in *Yishuv* business pushed along. The start of the second cycle, marked by Hitler's rise to power in 1933, saw an even larger influx of immigrants, this time mostly German *yekkes* who helped take the economy another step further toward fully industrializing. In keeping with the cycle, Arab opposition took an even more devastating form during the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. An unsuccessful boycott served to separate Jewish and Arab economies even more, and absolutist rhetoric from Palestinian Arab leadership left the British totally uncertain of what to do next. The Peel and Woodhead Commissions preceded the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 that essentially shut down all hopes of the British Mandate one day granting a sovereign Jewish state. But by the time this policy was publicized, *Yishuv* leadership was already laying plans to continue its immigration, defense, and development efforts outside of the British Mandate system, marking a major step forward in its quest for independence.

But for now, Ben Gurion would famously announce that the *Yishuv* will “fight the war as if there was no White Paper, and the White Paper as if there was no war.”<sup>cclv</sup> *Aliyah Bet* efforts would continue throughout the War, but fail to reach sufficient levels. Legal immigration remained capped by the White Paper. Any official Zionist activity would be directed at saving as much of European Jewry as possible, and development of the *Yishuv* would be put on hold. The hope and readiness for independence, though, never faded, and the *Yishuv* remained ready, prepared to do everything necessary to ensure its final independence.

## Glossary of Foreign Terms

### *Af-Al-Pi* —

Literally, ‘in spite of;’ this phrase characterized the *Aliyah Bet* movement as immigration taking place in spite of British quotas

### *Al-Buraq* —

The name of the horse believed to have transported the Prophet Muhammad on his journey to Jerusalem from Mecca. A mosque commemorating this horse is located in very close proximity to the Western Wall, which is called *al-Buraq* in Arabic.

### *Aliyah* (pl. *aliyot*) —

Immigration by a Jewish person, usually a Zionist, to *Eretz Israel*; a wave of Jewish immigration to *Eretz Israel*

### *Dunum* —

The unit used to measure land in the Ottoman Empire, eventually standardized to mean 1000 square meters, or a tenth of a hectare.

### *Eretz Israel* —

The biblical territory promised to the Jews by God as stated in the Hebrew Bible; the Hebrew term for British Mandatory Palestine

### *Etzel* —

The Revisionist militia under direction of Ze’ev Jabotinsky that followed a more offensive approach to securing the *Yishuv*

### *Ha’Avarah* —

Literally, ‘transfer;’ the name of the agreement brokered between the *Yishuv* and Nazi Germany to secure the immigration of several thousand German Jews to *Eretz Israel*

### *Hachshara* —

Literally, ‘preparation;’ a program for Diaspora Jews to develop the skills they would need once making *aliyah* to *Eretz Israel*

### *Hagana* —

Hebrew for “defense.” The Jewish defense militia of the *Yishuv* associated with the *Mapai* party.

### *Havlaga* —

Literally, ‘restraint;’ the strictly defensive policy held by the *Hagana* that upset rival force *Etzel* when it failed to save Jewish lives

### *Kibbutz* —

A socialist agricultural settlement developed and popularized in early 1900’s *Yishuv*

### *Ma’apilim* —

Illegal Jewish immigrants to the *Yishuv*

### *Mapai* —

The largest political party within Labor Zionism, led by David Ben Gurion

### *Mossad L’Aliyah Bet* —

The Agency for Illegal Immigration established under the *Hagana*

### *Notarim* —

Jewish supernumery police conscribed by the British who would go on to develop the *Hagana* into a full-time force

### *Tochnit Avner* —

Literally, 'The Avner Plan;' a campaign of reorganization, development, and expansion of the *Hagana*'s capabilities in the late 1930's

*Oleh* (pl. *olim*) —

A new immigrant to *Eretz Israel*

*Ostjuden* —

Jews of Eastern European lands like Poland and the Pale of Settlement in Russia.

Literally, 'old Jews.'

*Yekke* —

A nickname given to the German new immigrant community of the Fifth *Aliyah*, known for their wealth and proper way of living

*Yishuv* —

The Jewish settlement in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948

*Yom Kippur* —

The yearly Jewish day of atonement

**List of Figures**

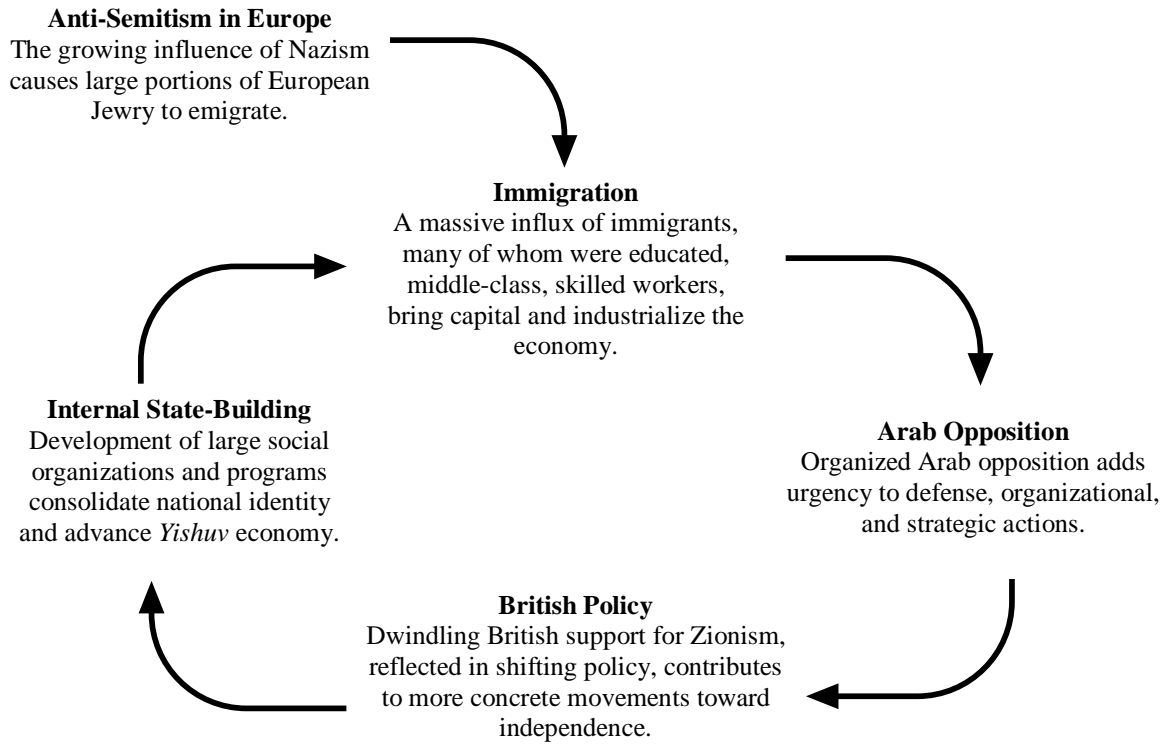


Figure 1 The Cycle of State-Building in the Fifth Aliyah

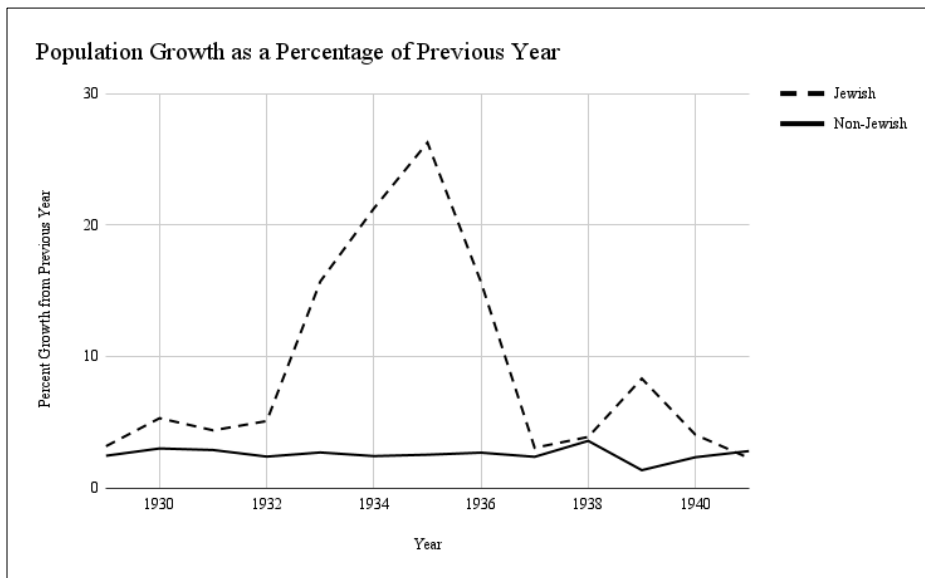


Figure 2 Population Growth in Palestine as a Percentage of Previous Year. Growth rate of the Jewish population remains consistently above non-Jewish population despite fluctuations. Data from Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 1947.

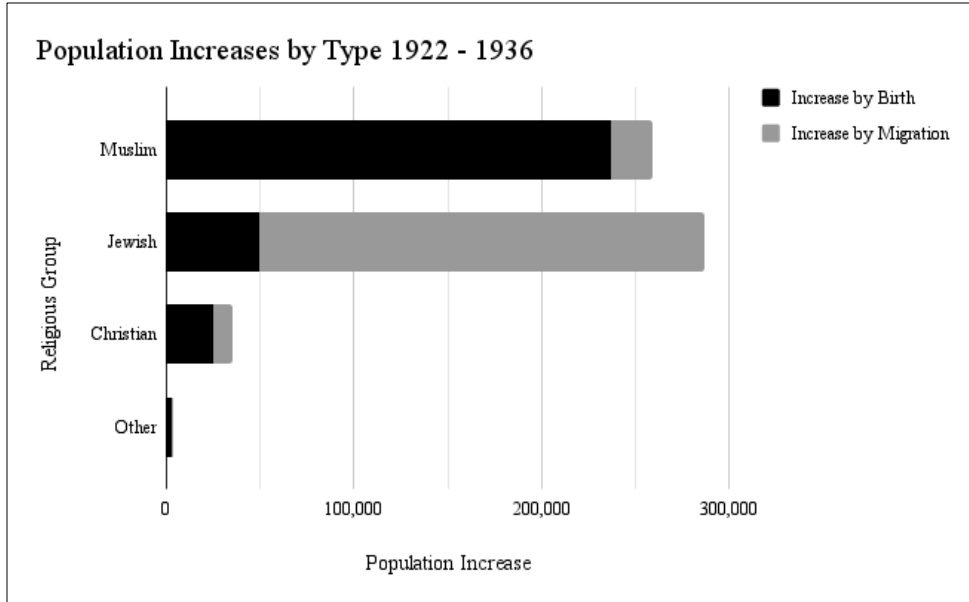


Figure 3 Population Increases by Type and Religion 1922-1936. Immigration was the driving force behind Jewish population growth. Data from Palestine Royal Commission, 1937.

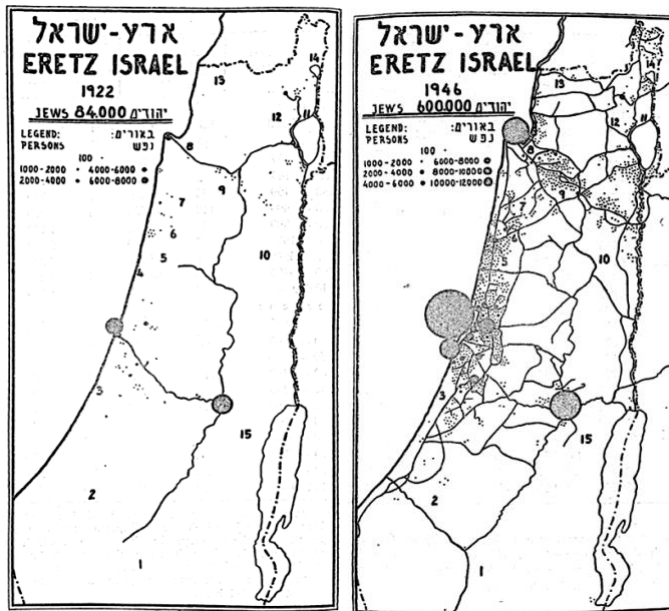


Figure 4 D. Gurevich, Ph.D., F.S.S., *Statistical Handbook of Jewish Palestine*, ed. A. Gertz, 1st Edition (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency for Palestine Department of Statistics, 1947), 44-45.

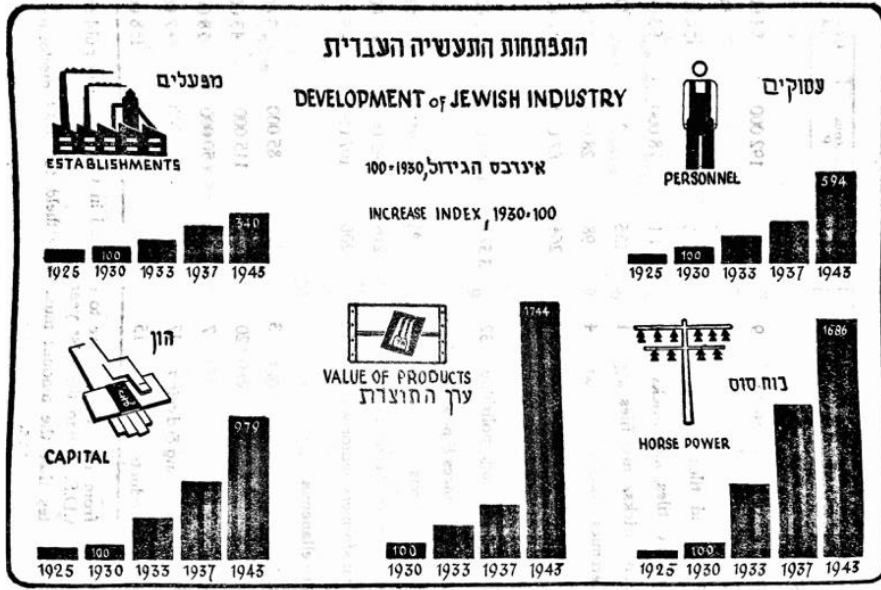


Figure 2 D. Gurevich, Ph.D., F.S.S., *Statistical Handbook of Jewish Palestine*, ed. A. Gertz, 1st Edition (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency for Palestine Department of Statistics, 1947), 216.

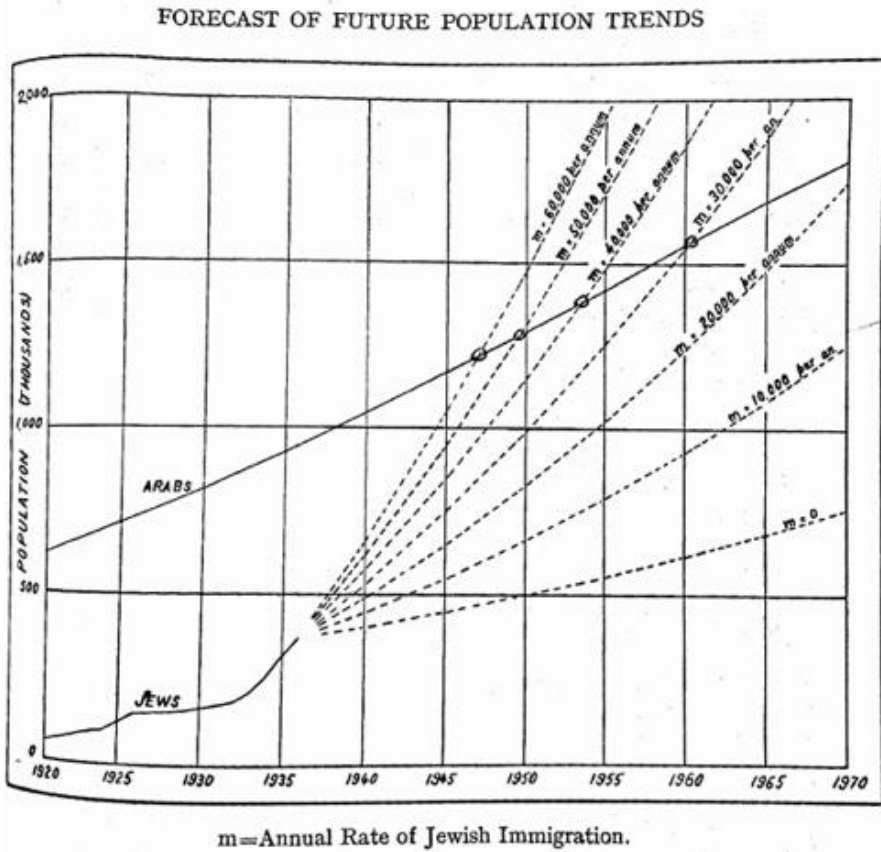


Figure 6 Forecast of Future Population Trends. Secretary of State for the Colonies. *Palestine Royal Commission Report*. 1st Edition. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937, 281.

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