

This nascent nationalist feeling did not express itself in any particular form of anti-Jewishness. While civil strife and tension between the various religious sects were not infrequent, in his first report on the state of the Jews in Palestine (1839) Vice-Consul Young informed Viscount Palmerston that the Jews were being permitted to live 'in the Mussulman Quarter' and

...were a Jew here to fly for safety, he would ask it sooner in a Mussulman's house than in that of a Christian.<sup>19</sup>

In 1853 the British Ambassador in Constantinople reported that 'a Jew was admitted to the meetings of the Mejlis (Council) of Jerusalem' four years earlier.<sup>20</sup>

### The Shape of Things to Come

However, with the advent of Jewish agricultural settlements inspired by Zionist ideas of a national return to Zion, a definite change in the character of the Jew in Palestine occurred. The new immigrants were no longer old pious Jews coming to Palestine to pray and die, but rather determined young Jews coming to live and establish a Jewish nation of their own. The new Jewish settlers found reliable backing and support in Baron Edmond de Rothschild; and from 1896, Baron de Hirsch's *Jewish Colonisation Association* began to interest itself in Jewish settlement in Palestine.

The net increase in the Jewish population of Palestine between 1880 and 1910 amounted to 55,000. Almost from the beginning the new settlers caused friction and offended the local population, 'because they were ignorant of Arabic and of Arab ways. For example, the Jews, unfamiliar with the custom of *Masha* regarded the incursions of Arab shepherds with their flocks as trespass and expelled them forcibly etc.'<sup>21</sup>

Some of the wealthy landowners were willing to sell land to the new immigrants at profitable prices. However, 'the eviction of the peasants from the land caused serious clashes.'<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that in some instances lands were sold by the government to the Jews because the peasants were unable to pay their taxes, and on other occasions the peasants fell victims to usurers who in turn sold the lands to the Jewish immigrants.<sup>23</sup> It was not surprising, under those circumstances, that the evicted Arab peasants should, as early as 1886, attack the newly established Jewish colonies in protest against having their villages taken away from them.<sup>24</sup> The apprehensions of the peasants were shared by

the small predominantly Christian, class of tradesmen and professionals who feared the threat of economic competition which was to follow.

The friction between the peasants and the Jewish colonists, among other things, might have prodded the authorities towards imposing restrictions on Jewish immigration. In March 1887, the British Consul in Jerusalem reported that, 'for some time past the local Turkish authorities have been inhibiting foreign Jews from coming to reside in Jerusalem, or in Palestine generally.'<sup>25</sup> In 1890, the Arab notables of Jerusalem protested to Constantinople against Rashad Pasha, the *Mutasarrif* of Jerusalem, for his leanings towards the Jews. The protest was followed, on 24 June 1891, by a petition 'organised by the Muslim notables in Jerusalem to the Grand Vezir that Russian Jews should be prohibited from entering Palestine and from acquiring land there.'<sup>26</sup> We shall see later that this first protest spelled out the two cardinal demands which all ensuing protests against Jewish immigration and colonisation reiterated; namely, the prohibition of Jewish immigration and land purchase in Palestine.

The conflict over evicting Arab peasants from newly bought Arab lands continued during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Mandel described the pattern of reactions among the rural population of Palestine towards the new colonies as being one of 'initial resentment, suppressed or open hostility, giving way in time to resignation and outward reconciliation.'<sup>27</sup> In 1895, after talks with Palestinian Arab merchants, Najib al-Hajj, the editor of *Abu-al-Hol* of Cairo accused the Jewish colonists of expropriating the Arabs' means of livelihood.

Both Rashad Pasha, the Ottoman *Mutasarrif*, and the educated Palestinians were quick to perceive that the Zionists sought to establish a Jewish State in Palestine. Yusuf al-Khalidi viewed the Zionist movement with grave concern: he recognised the existence of a Jewish problem in Europe... but he also foresaw that a Jewish state could not be established in Palestine without hostilities and bloodshed because of Arab opposition.<sup>28</sup>

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Muhammad Taker al-Husseini, fought Jewish immigration and agricultural settlement, and in 1897, he presided over a commission which scrutinised applications for transfer of land in the *Mutasarrifiyya* and so effectively stopped all purchases by Jews for the next few years.<sup>29</sup> In 1900 there was a campaign of protest by means of signed petitions against Jewish purchases of land.<sup>30</sup>