

Fears and Apprehensions

In the same year, A. Antebi, of the Jewish Colonial Association (a non-Zionist institution) reported:

The Zionists had made the Muslim population ill-disposed to all progress accomplished by the Jews. A year and a half later, illiterate Muslim peasants asked him, 'Is it time that the Jews wish to retake this country?' and in early 1902 the ill-will had spread to the Administrative Council, the law courts and government officials many of whom especially at lower levels were drawn from the local population.³¹

Religious sentiments were an additional ground of resentment:

Muslim sentiments in Jerusalem were reflected in the following statement made in 1903 by a young (and; it is reported not very fanatical) Arab: 'We shall pour everything to the last drop of our blood rather than see our Haram Sharif fall into the hands of non-Muslims.'³²

It is also worth noting that local government officials, Christians and educated Muslims, were interested in reading Zionist literature, and some of them even read *Ha-Po'el Ha-Za'ir*. This explains the presence of a state of alarm among the Arab population of Palestine following the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905, which resolved that Zionist efforts must be directed entirely towards Palestine.

The Palestinians were not entirely alone in conceiving the implications of Jewish immigration and agricultural settlement in Palestine. Rashid Rida, one of the most prominent Islamic reformists and editor of the influential *Al-Manar*, recognised that the Jews were seeking national sovereignty in Palestine.³³ In his book, *Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe* (Paris, 1905), Najib, Azoury warned that Zionists and Arab nationalist aspirations would come into conflict. Because Azoury called for Arab independence, copies of his manifesto had to be smuggled into Palestine; as a result of which several Arab notables in Jaffa, Gaza and Ramla were imprisoned by the Ottoman authorities.³⁴

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, an important event took place that was destined to have a most dramatic impact on the fate of Palestine. Organised Zionism was born at the First Zionist Congress, 1897, where the formulation of the Zionist Programme and the establishment of the Zionist Organisation were achieved. The Zionist

Programme, alias the Basle Programme,³⁵ declared that 'the aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by law', to be achieved by systematically promoting the settlement in Palestine of Jewish agriculturalists, artisans and craftsmen, in addition to strengthening the Jewish national consciousness through Zionist Federations all over the world. After creating the Zionist Organisation, its founder, Theodor Herzl,³⁶ proceeded to create the instruments of systematic colonisation. Herzl had his misgivings about the haphazard colonisation of Palestine supported by wealthy Jews as a mixed philanthropic nationalistic venture. For him, it did not prove to be the right way for the fulfilment of Zionist aims. The chosen instruments for this colonisation scheme were *The Jewish Colonial Trust* (1898), *The Colonisation Commission* (1898), *The Jewish National Fund* (1901) and *The Palestine Land Development Company* (1908).³⁷ With the arrival in Palestine of the second *aliya* (1904-1907), a more determined, better organised and ideologically committed attitude prevailed. The attitudes between the first and second *aliya* colonists differed in a number of aspects, of which the most important constituted their attitude towards the Arab population of Palestine. An outstanding leader of the second *aliya*, David Green (Ben-Gurion),³⁸ spoke about the state of Jewish affairs at the time of his arrival in 1906:

Among the early disappointments was the spectacle of Jews of the first *aliya*, now living as *effendis*, drawing their income from groves and fields worked by hired workmen or from occupation of the kind imposed on our people by their exile. It was clear to me that we could never achieve national rehabilitation that way.³⁹

According to Ben-Gurion the aims and achievements of the second *aliya* were radically different from those of the first *aliya*: 'Pioneer *aliya* gave birth to a Jewish community radically unlike all others, independent in economy, culture and speech, able to defend itself.'⁴⁰

Here we find the prototype, as it were, of the embryo of the contemplated Zionist state: exclusively Jewish, motivated by Zionist ideals and almost completely insulated. The key Zionist concept in this context was *Kibush Avodah* (Conquest of Labour). In *Ben-Gurion Looks Back*, the Zionist veteran explained this concept, and the fight it entailed against Jewish landowners who preferred Arab labourers to inexperienced Jewish hands, and the dismissal of Circassian guards with the resulting emergence of the organisation of watchmen called the *Hashomer*, the forerunner of the *Haganah*.⁴¹