

immigration and land acquisition by them. Furthermore, members of the (Ottoman) ruling *Committee for Union and Progress*, with branches in Palestine, endeavoured to exercise inter-party pressure to draw the attention of the ruling junta to 'the danger which menaces the country and the peasants from Jewish immigration'.⁸

The Forms and Forums of Arab Opposition to Zionism

By the end of 1909 sustained vocal opposition to Zionist immigration had become the order of the day. The mounting Palestinian opposition was promoted and adequately expressed by the only Arabic newspapers in Palestine *al-Asma'ī* and *al-Karmal*. The editor of the latter paper played a leading role in publicising the Zionist threat to Palestine and the Palestinians. Najib al-Khuri Nassar, a native of Tiberias, had worked with the Jewish Colonisation Association as an agent and thus was able to speak with authority on the aims and the means of Jewish colonisation in Palestine. He founded *al-Karmal* (1909) with the express purpose of writing against the Yishuv in Palestine as that the Arabs would not continue to sell land to the Jews.⁹ Complaints from Jews about articles which had appeared in *al-Karmal* resulted in its temporary suspension in the early summer and again in the winter of 1909.

The notables found in the new Ottoman Parliament an opportunity to articulate Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism and Jewish immigration. At the beginning of June 1909, Hafez Bey al-Sa'id, the deputy from Jaffa, submitted a question to the Chamber, asking what Zionism implied and if the national movement of the Jews was compatible with the interests of the Empire. He also demanded that the port of Jaffa be closed to Jewish immigrants.¹⁰ Though the forum was modern, the old role of the notable as an intermediary between the ruler and the ruled persisted.

Towards the end of the year there was a note of exasperation in the air. In October, *al-Ahram* sent a correspondent to Palestine to report on the local situation. 'The Palestinians are concerned about the Zionist Movement; constant immigration creates fear and anxiety for the country is now almost in the hands of foreigners.'¹¹ Furthermore, the reporter recorded that the Palestinians accused the Zionist Movement in Palestine of seeking to establish an independent kingdom, and asserted that some rich Jews had undertaken to pay sums of money to the Ottoman Government so that the Ottoman Jews in Palestine would be spared military service and could devote all their efforts towards colonisation, at a time when Muslims and Christians had no alternative

but to undergo the hated military service.

Amidst resentment and suspicion of Governmental collusion, a significant development took place in the same year; opposition to Zionism and Jewish settlement began to assume an organisational form. In October 1909, Albert Antebi observed that a group was being formed among the local population to prevent sales of land to Jews.¹²

In addition to the familiar platforms of protest — newspaper articles, telegrams and delegations — to the various levels of authority, the year 1910 witnessed the emergence of a call for an Arab boycott of Jewish goods and businesses in retaliation for Zionist boycott of Arab labour and shops.

In May 1910, the Arab press attacked the Sursuq family for their intention to sell the villages of Fulah and 'Afulah to the Jews. The inhabitants of Nazareth and Haifa despatched two telegrams to the Central Government protesting against Jewish land purchases and accusing the Zionists of seeking to deprive the local population of its land.¹³ *Al-Karmal* warned against mortgaging any land with the Anglo-Palestine Company because of its Zionist identity. In the middle of May, a group of Arab deputies demanded an assurance from Tala' Bey that Jews would not be permitted to take possession of the local population's lands and that mass Jewish immigration would not be tolerated.¹⁴

Protestations to the Ottoman authorities were not in vain. When an official of the British Embassy in Constantinople spoke to Tala' Bey about the renewed land restrictions, he was told that they were 'the outcome of complaints of the local inhabitants who feared a foreign Jewish invasion'.¹⁵

By the summer of 1910, several influential Arabic newspapers in Damascus (*al-Muqtabas*) and in Beirut (*al-Mufid*, *al-Ha'iqqa*, and *al-Ra'i al-'Am*) were won over to the campaign against the sale of Arab lands to Jewish settlers and became part of the anti-Zionist press campaign. In some cases Najib Nassar's efforts were instrumental in drawing the attention of the editors to the Zionist danger.¹⁶

During debates in Parliament the Palestinian deputies urged the Government to take action against Jewish immigration and land purchases and were energetically promoting and propagating the notion of the incompatibility between Ottoman interests and Zionist aims in Palestine. 'During March and April Dr. Jacobson reported from Constantinople that the Arab deputies, especially Ruhi Bey al-Khalidi, were conducting a campaign for new legislation against Jewish immigration into Palestine.'¹⁷