

PEASANTS AND POLITICS IN THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

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"Rural Change and Peasant Destitution: Contributing Causes to the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939"

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From 1931 onward, the daily press in Palestine predicted an ominous Palestinian Arab political future, attacking Arab leaders for inaction or ineptitude and recounting the economic plight of the peasantry almost daily. Anti-Zionist sentiment intensified among Arab Palestinians, whose antagonism against HMG broadened because of its policy reversal. Antipathy for Zionism and HMG was nurtured by fears generated by the dramatic increments of Jewish immigration and land acquisition. Palestinian anxiety about the future was exacerbated by HMG's public but unsuccessful six-year effort to resettle 1,200 Wadi Hawarith bedouin who had been displaced from their lands near Hadera because of Jewish land acquisition before the 1929 disturbances. By regularly reporting the futile efforts to save land for the Wadi Hawarith bedouin, the Palestine Arab press further fueled Arab aversion to British equivocation and Jewish settlement. In addition to the absentee landowner selling relatively large land areas to Zionists, there was also the small peasant proprietor selling small parcels with increasing frequency to Jewish buyers because of unbearable economic pressures. Both transactions added uncertainty to the contentious political environment. A sense of dispossession and displacement was real for Palestinians, who saw Zionism as continuous and relentless and the future as impermanent, even hopeless.

In October 1935 at the Jaffa port, a secret arms shipment for Jewish paramilitary forces was discovered, providing "demonstrable proof" to apprehensive Palestinians of Zionist intentions to dislodge them violently and physically. The next month, Arab leaders representing five political parties formally demanded that the British high commissioner establish a representative government in Palestine, prohibit land sales to Jews, and cease Jewish immigration. HMG responded to this request by offering to create a legislative council, a move Palestinian leaders criticized as a transparent scheme that failed to ensure majority Palestinian Arab rule free of either dominant British influence or Jewish involvement. Rather than deriving its authority from the majority Arab inhabitants, 75 percent of Palestine's population, the legislative council would have been a political instrument of the British high commissioner in Palestine and the Colonial Office in London. In March 1936, HMG recanted approval for this very limited form of self-government when the House of Commons publicly opposed implementing the proposal. No Palestinian self-governing institutions were established.

During the preceding fifty years, Zionists and Palestinian Arabs had struggled physically and emotionally to acquire or retain control of the same coveted land. Within this context, distinctive conditions prefaced the Arab general strike and revolt. The early 1930s witnessed an unprecedented increase in individual Arab fear about the collective future. For the first time, Arabs of all classes were alarmed by the reality of a Jewish National Home established with British assistance.¹ In 1920, 1921, 1929, and 1933, public Arab protest against Zionism had manifested itself in civil disorder. What distinguished the 1936-39 Arab general strike and revolt from the previous communal violence? It was the resolve and maintenance of the revolt's dependence on the active and intense participation of a segment of Palestine's rural population.² The earlier outbreaks had originated in urban areas and had even been partially instigated by urban notables. In contrast, the 1936-39 revolt originated and was sustained in rural Palestine, with urban political leaders seeking ways to influence uncontrollable bands of roaming peasants.

For the peasantry of Palestine the bleak political future generated despair that their leaders sincerely and carefully nurtured. But my thesis in this essay is that economic and social

factors also contributed significantly to the peasantry's individual motivation to participate in the Arab revolt and general strike. (1) A prolonged economic plight with multiple dimensions had afflicted Palestine's peasant population especially in the six years prior to the outbreak of the revolt and general strike.³ (2) A building anger among the peasantry within Arab villages was directed in general against urban landowning interests and in particular against the grain merchants, moneylenders, and landowners who had disadvantaged the peasantry for decades. (3) A penetrating dislike for Zionism had been fueled by increased physical displacement by Jewish immigration and land purchase. (4) A deep disenchantment had set in with HMG for its belated, meager, and unsuccessful efforts to rescue the peasantry from its economic cul de sac and for failure to sustain the peasant owner and tenant cultivator in agricultural occupations.

What provoked the writing of this essay was an unanticipated discovery of fairly uniform but independent assessments made by Palestinian, Zionist, and British sources acknowledging these problems. Although Zionist leadership tended to focus exclusively on preventing any obstruction to the development of the Jewish National Home, British officials and Palestinian Arab leaders recognized that severe rural economic decline, the peasantry's general disillusionment, and the impact of Jewish growth could blend to produce a volatile mixture of disturbance and bloodshed. In a political environment of anxiety and uncertainty, this combination exploded when approximately 5,000 Palestinian peasants participated in the revolt and general strike from 1936 to 1939.

Major Factors Influencing the Peasantry's Economic Condition: Administrative Reform, the Musha' System, and Indebtedness

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, administrative change in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire transformed the peasantry's relationship to land. Ottoman reforms were aimed at increasing the amount of regional taxes generated from land use, revenue to be collected locally and sent to the Ottoman treasury. These changes caused the peasantry to fear the levying of new or increased taxes on previously unregistered lands. Perhaps more important, they feared recruitment into the Ottoman army if their names appeared on tax rolls.

To avoid having their names placed on the tax/conscription rolls, some peasants asked notables to register their lands with the local governmental authorities. Peasants in perennial financial insolvency chose to pay off their creditors with land, trading accrued debts for the right to remain on the land that their families had been working for generations. Fear of government intrusion into their lives compelled peasant proprietors to rely increasingly but uncomfortably upon urban notables, who were by profession landowners, lawyers, local religious leaders, government officials, moneylenders, small entrepreneurs, and grain merchants.

More than half a century before the outbreak of World War I, these groups legally and informally amassed land areas that were peasant-owned, vacant, or previously vacated. In many villages of Palestine, former peasant proprietors evolved into a class of agricultural tenants or agricultural laborers. Because of growing indebtedness, peasants who had owned moderate amounts of land (perhaps 500 dunams or more) were regularly alienating lands to willing buyers. (A dunam was a quarter of an acre.) According to the 1931 census for Palestine, two-thirds of the Muslim Arab population of Palestine, or 465,000 earners and their dependents, relied upon ordinary cultivation or pasturing of flocks for their livelihood. Of the 115,913 earners, 50,552 were owner-proprietors; 29,077 were agricultural laborers; 12,638 were agricultural tenants; 15,419 raised flocks or grew fruit, flowers, and vegetables; 2,000 were orange growers; 43 were estate managers; and the remainder hunted, fished, or raised small animals.⁴

The bureaucratic reform of the Ottoman Empire ultimately concentrated more political and economic power in the hands of urban landowning interests at the expense of the rural peasantry.⁵ After World War I, urban landowning interests in Palestine maintained an economic and financial grip on the rural population. Like their counterparts in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, the peasantry in Palestine lived at a level of bare subsistence. The reasons for rural economic stagnation or decline were many, and none ultimately related to Ottoman or British governance or Zionist presence: poor soil quality, drought, intense or sporadic rains, a long or severe sirocco, not enough knowledge or use of intensive methods of cultivation, lack of access to means of irrigation and mechanized equipment, insufficient secondary roads between villages and towns for crop transport, irregular marketing arrangements, dumping of

Syrian and Egyptian wheat on the Palestine market, meager agricultural yields or complete crop failures, short-term rental agreements, insecurity in land tenure, and wide abuse and fraud in tax collections. The incentive to increase production was low, since a major portion of the agricultural yield inevitably ended up in the hands and pockets of others: the tax collector, moneylender, landlord, or other agricultural laborers who worked on either owner-occupied or tenanted land. In rare years of fair agricultural output, barely 20 percent of a cultivator's gross yield remained after others had taken their shares. Until the late 1920s, lease payments were usually in kind, from one-sixth to two-fifths of the gross yield. Rarely were lease agreements made for a period longer than one year, and usually they were made for only the winter or summer cultivating season, or for both seasons. Agricultural tenants were regularly moved from field to field by their landowners or estate managers, usually corresponding directly to the two- or three-year crop rotations of Palestinian agriculture. Short-term lease agreements contributed to a wide-spread sense of personal insecurity and almost total reliance upon those who controlled land use and its distributions.

Two additional factors significantly contributed to tying the peasantry to perennial financial struggles: ceaseless indebtedness and a debilitating system of land use. Perhaps no single factor limited the economic development of the Palestinian peasant more than the *musha'* system of landownership and land tenure.⁸ Its use throughout Palestine impeded agricultural output, retarded agricultural development, enhanced peasant indebtedness, led to rural insolvency, and generated village apathy and desolations. By contributing to the atomization of Palestinian society into village units, the *musha'* system also hampered the development of Palestinian national integration and identity, an effect especially evident in the lower lying valley and coastal regions that had both the highest potential for agricultural improvement and the greatest appeal for Jewish land purchase (after the acquisition of large landed estates). In 1933 it was estimated that between 46 and 63 percent of the country's 8,252,900 cultivable dunams were under some form of *musha'* use.¹⁰

The central concept of the *musha'* system was collective ownership or cultivation of common land that was periodically redistributed among various clans, families, or individuals. Repartition of the land was designed to ensure a measure of fairness in the quality and quantity of apportionment. In order to maintain the integrity of a land area, redistribution ensured that ownership or use would involve a whole village group rather than individuals or people outside the village.

Periodic reparceling had many eroding effects. (1) It militated against a peasant's willingness to spend time, effort, or money in improving a plot that would only become someone else's within one, two, or five years. (2) Redistribution meant that a peasant rarely left an area fallow, which would have prevented or at least limited depletion of soil nutrients. (3) Parcels or shares allotted to peasants were not always contiguous, causing inefficient use of time. (4) *Musha'*-held shares were not individually registered in the land records, so that loans that required a title deed as collateral could not be made for more than half of the cultivable land in Palestine. This forced *musha'* shareholders to rely on the usurious rates charged by money-lenders. (5) The size of the overall *musha'*-held or *musha'*-owned areas did not change, but the populations who participated in redistribution did. Therefore, the number of people expected to sustain themselves within a *musha'* area increased while their land area per capita decreased. Over several generations, populations grew due to increased health care and decreased infant mortality. A specific area of *musha'* village lands that had once sustained several dozen people had to sustain several hundred people generations later. (6) Since not all of the lands within a *musha'* area were of uniform quality, the peasants who tended to prevail were those stronger, more powerful, and socially connected to the person who oversaw the distribution process. As a result, village and clan harmony was regularly and repeatedly strained during and after the repartition procedure. Quarreling and fighting frequently developed at the time when the areas, shares, or parcels were allotted.¹¹ Finally, (7) collective ownership of *musha'* shares proved illusory. Local indebtedness forced many peasants to "give" personal, family, or clan shares to interests outside the village. Over time, especially in the Ottoman period, landowners and moneylenders acquired participatory rights in the redistribution process. It was estimated that as early as 1923 more than 75 percent of *musha'*-held lands were owned not by peasants themselves but by individuals who lived in the towns.¹² Eventually, the combination of a deteriorating rural economy with the introduction of Jewish immigrant capital saw both urban landowning interests and Jewish purchasers acquire portions or entire *musha'* villages.

The Palestinian peasant's perennial indebtedness was a pervasive burden. In 1930 British sources estimated that the volume of the individual peasant's indebtedness represented the full value of his annual income from crops and agricultural stock—in other words, his temporary wealth. It was not uncommon in Palestine for the peasant to pay interest rates of 30-60 percent over periods ranging from three months to a year. 13 In early 1930, an official in the Palestine Commissioner of Lands Department recounted in general terms the depth and constancy of the peasant's debt. "The fellah has normally no capital which is an inevitable cause of failure in any farming community, as the farmer is unable to withstand his lean years or profit by his fat ones. The fellah is furthermore bound to dispose of his crop as soon as it is harvested, or sooner at a time when prices are at their lowest in order to pay his debts to government, etc. The fellah buys his seed, on the other hand, when prices are at their highest and he is thus unable to benefit by the normal yield. It seems that the Arab farmer in Palestine pays his bills in arrears and sells his crop in advance and until such time as this can be remedied, success [in provision of credit facilities] cannot be hoped for." 14

Requisite sums to alleviate peasant indebtedness were not allocated on the administrative level. Ottoman authorities did not offer loans through their agricultural bank, nor did the British provide funds from Palestine revenues, even when HMG enjoyed large surplus revenues in Palestine, as in the early 1930s. The Palestine administration's claim in the mid-1930s that it helped reduce peasant indebtedness by at least 60 percent cannot be substantiated. By 1930 the rural earner population of Palestine exceeded 100,000, and total rural indebtedness was estimated at £2 million for less than a quarter of the total rural population. 15 From 1930 through March 1936, the eve of the 1936 general strike and revolt, the British provided only £169,214 in agricultural loans, less than 5 percent of what had been needed in 1930 alone to offset rural indebtedness. 16

In Palestine, the peasant's indebted condition was further aggravated by the seepage of a monetary economy into the rural barter sector: payment for rent, taxes, and supplies was traditionally made in terms of the yield produced. From 1931 through 1936, the money supply in Palestine increased sharply because of Jewish immigration, Jewish land purchase, additional tourism, accelerated building activity, and growth of the citrus industry. As cash became the measure of economic value, the peasantry's barter-oriented economy was gradually supplanted by the assignment of monetary values to goods and services. As the peasants' need for cash increased, they relied more on the landlord, grain merchant, and moneylender, a financial dependency that forced them deeper into debt and caused them to relinquish ownership, tenancy, or *musha'* participation rights in exchange for cash and possibly relief from accumulated indebtedness.

By the early 1930s, the peasantry found itself increasingly unable to convert its crop value into money. The most common medium of exchange in rural areas, wheat yields, was in exceedingly short supply. Wheat production accounted for 40 to 50 percent of the winter income from all Arab farms. Thus, when domestic wheat production and prices fell precipitously (see table 8.1), 17 many peasants could not pay their debts. As Syrian wheat dumped on the Palestinian market in the late 1920s and early 1930s drove down the price of Palestinian-produced wheat, creditors refused to accept wheat as debt repayment and insisted instead upon cash or land as a cash equivalent.

Peasant Attitudes and Relationships with Landowning Interests

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social classes in Palestine and throughout Arab regions in the fertile Crescent were sharply divided. 18 Peasant proprietors, agricultural tenants, and per them laborers were usually bound legally and economically to the urban elite. The control of urban landowning interests over Palestinian peasants survived the shift from the Ottoman to British administrations. These Arab landowners who did not work the land physically and for whom possession of land had only a distant meaning numbered perhaps only several hundred. For this group, landed property was an investments means to ensure access to capital, maintain a certain lifestyle, retain social prestige, and sustain political influence. Those who saw land as a tradable commodity did not possess the sense of deep attachment to it held by peasants dependent for their livelihood on tilling the soil and grazing herds.

When land changed owners between Arabs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Palestine, peasant farmers or tenants who had occupied the land for long periods often left

unwillingly and sometimes expressed themselves violently against their new landlords.¹⁹ More often, they stayed on the same land they had always worked, changing only the intermediary to whom they paid rent and taxes. Palestinian notables with landowning interests felt little or no obligation to ameliorate the peasants' economic condition. Landowning classes offered minimal guidance about how to achieve better yields, but landlords or moneylenders expressed little interest in improving the standard of living of their tenants or of other agricultural workers. For some members of the landowning class, to alleviate or amend the peasants situation would have altered their own social status, especially the convenient and informal political relationships developed with HMG in governing Palestine.

Although peasant classes throughout Palestine suffered similar deprivations imposed by urban landowning and lending interests, they formed no sense of class consciousness against these urban notables. Rather, each village developed a separate but similar antipathy for the locally connected money lender, grain merchant, or urban notable. There is evidence, however, that some peasants during the Mandate, though not politically empowered, clearly articulated to HMG their desire to reduce their indebtedness, unemployment, and dependence upon moneylenders. At a farmers' economic conference in November 1929, peasants proposed establishing an agricultural bank, increasing road communications between villages and markets, and improving sanitary conditions and local educational facilities.²⁰ Though HMG claimed otherwise, it did little to enhance the peasantry's economic condition.

Moneylenders and others external to the village community in Palestine practiced an oppressive control on the rural population that created negative feelings, overt animosity, and sustained sporadic local disputes between the peasantry and various landowning interests. Commenting on the social distance between the notable-effendi class and the peasantry, Herbert Samuel, Palestine's first high commissioner, noted in 1920 "a real antagonism between them." In 1923 Sydney Moody, who served in Palestine and in the British Colonial Office, wrote that "the mass of people whose interest is to agree with Government are afraid to speak. A village is at best a personal union and at worst a personal disunion." In October 1935 a Palestinian intellectual, Afif I. Tannous, commented that "the fellah until recently has been the subject of oppression, neglect, and ill treatment by his own countrymen, and the old political regime. The feudal system played havoc in his life, the effendi class looked down upon him, and the old Turkish regime was too corrupt to be concerned with such a vital problem."²¹ Among the many hundreds of cases adjudicated in the Tulkarm sub-district under the Protection of Cultivators Ordinance of 1933, dozens were brought by Arab landowners convinced that their lifestyles could not be maintained if agricultural tenants continued to work their lands in ways that made so little money.²² Arab landowners rarely offered tenants land for grazing or agricultural use in order not to encumber it as a potential land sale to a Jewish buyer; instead, they sought special permission from British officials to evict their Arab tenants in order to sell their land. Typical of some landowners with tenanted peasants was Abdul Latif Tabawi, who served in the Education Department of the Palestine administration. He claimed that he had to maintain a higher standard of living than did the tenants and that he should not be expected to suffer merely to provide a tenant with a means of living. The Nablus district officer working in the British administration, Hilmi Husseini, granted Tabawi the right to evict his tenants.²³

Tension between urban landowning interests and the rural peasantry necessitated the development of intermediaries. Nonresident Palestinian Arabs with landowning interests employed land managers or local village officials to collect rent, taxes, and crop yields. Involvement of these intermediaries put them in highly perilous positions when the level of village discontent increased. When quantities of village lands were offered to Jewish buyers or Arab and Jewish land brokers, village mukhtars often used their prominent leverage and power within a village community for their own material benefit. They acted as intermediaries in land sales, had land registered in their names, or gave testimony in boundary disputes within a village, between villagers and urban notables, or between Jewish purchasers and villagers. In addition, local confidence in a mukhtar was hurt by the reality that his salary (until 1934) was based on a percentage of the taxes he collected from the villagers. The local mukhtar was thus not uniformly admired, and, by the outbreak of the 1936 general strike, the British government conceded in the Peel Report that "the authority of [village] elders suffered increased diminution."²⁴

Before the April 1936 general strike, the peasantry's rural environment was undergoing rapid changes: Arab, Jewish, and British intrusions in village life, cash and capital requirements replacing a barter economy, and village harmony deteriorating because of the disintegration of the *musha'* system and the avarice of some village mukhtars. As the social fabric of Arab villages slowly unraveled, in the 1920s a number of important members of the Palestinian Arab political establishment publicly protested Zionism and privately sold land to immigrating Zionists and Jewish land purchasing institutions.²⁵ Some peasants displaced by these land sales found temporary work in the urban areas of the Palestine coastal plain, burgeoning with the influx of Jewish capital. Others migrated eastward to the more sparse cultivable land of the hill regions, where physical distance from the developing Jewish National Home made many peasants feel more secure. From 1929 through 1936, sustaining existence in the villages had proved difficult. As early as 1931, one-quarter of the rural population of 108,000 earners indicated that they needed a secondary income to maintain their standard of life. The relevance of this number is that, of these 27,000 earners, almost 25,000 found their subsidiary income in a nonagricultural activity such as grocery vending, semiskilled labor, or work in the urban building industries.²⁶ A significant portion of the Arab village population in Palestine thus needed to augment its income by working outside the village, sometimes in Jewish citrus groves and settlements and frequently outside the rural economy.

Obviously, the pace and quantity of Jewish immigration and land purchase influenced both Zionism's achievements and the level of the peasantry's feeling against Zionism and Britain, which was seen as the imperial collaborator in establishing a Jewish National Home. Especially after 1930, Zionism was viewed as a danger to their demographic and geographic existence. Without enlarging the overall area of cultivation in Palestine, from 1922 to 1931 the Jewish population increased by 108 percent and the general population by 27 percent; during the same period, Jewish ownership of registered land increased by almost 50 percent. In the 1930s, while the general population increased by 69 percent, the Jewish population increased by more than 250 percent, mostly before the strike broke out in April 1936. The Jewish population of Palestine grew from 11 percent of the population in 1922 to just over 30 percent two decades later.²⁷ By 1930, British official reports, Zionist experts, and Arab politicians concurred: a limited amount of cultivable land with existing or potential economic value was available to a population increasing rapidly through immigration and propagation. In January 1930, well-known Zionist land expert Arthur Ruppin acknowledged that an investigation into the amount of cultivable area in Palestine would show that little land was either unused or unoccupied.²⁸

During the 1930s, the average land area available to the peasant proprietor and his family steadily decreased. In 1930, official British reports considered 130 dunams necessary for the peasant proprietor to support himself and his family on "average" land throughout Palestine. Because of meager cultivable areas and poorer soil qualities, especially in the central range running from the Galilee in the north through Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron in the south, larger areas of land would have been necessary in some regions to sustain a family, yet in 1931, the Census for Palestine estimated that in the central range a necessary subsistence area for a peasant proprietor was 88 dunams. By the middle of 1935, Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund officials estimated that each Arab family in these hill districts could count on only 45-56 dunams for its use. While the situation varied from village to village, in the central range the cultivable land available per family had thus declined rapidly since 1930. In January 1936 the Palestine administration considered introducing a law to require the peasant proprietor to retain a minimum portion of his lands for the subsistence of himself and his family, expressing grave concern that without such legislation (which ultimately was not introduced), "the result would be further disturbances in Palestine and probably a good deal of bloodshed." Peasants from these areas in the central range, particularly near Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nablus, participated in the various phases of the 1936-39 general strike and revolt.²⁹

In the 1920s, most Jewish land purchase involved large estates bought from large landowners. Negotiations for these sales were relatively simple and private, and Jewish buyers could avoid the stigma attached to displacing Arab tenants by leaving that to the discretion of the Arab seller. However, in the 1930s, Jews bought more land from small proprietors, either directly or through intermediaries. Most significantly, more Arab vendors were involved in the land sale process over a longer period of time. Since Jewish buyers still wanted to acquire blocks of land free of Arab occupation at the time of legal transfer, more intermediaries such

as mukhtars, moneylenders, and grain merchants plied their trade. Land disputes between Arab peasants and Zionist settlers increased, and the Arab political leadership in general was indicted for its ineptitude and nonaction in the face of prolific Zionist development.³⁰

Palestinian Arabs of all classes were despondent about their future as a people. The Palestinian newspaper, al-Hayat, noted in September 1930 that "an Arab village shall tomorrow be a Jewish one. Where is the [Supreme] Moslem Council? Where is the Arab Executive?"³¹ Regardless of political leaning, virtually every newspaper in Palestine throughout the early 1930s repeatedly acknowledged and fretted about the fate of the Palestinian Arab peasant in light of the Jewish presence and Zionist growth. One article noted in 1931, "We are selling our lands to Jews without any remorse. Land brokers are busy day and night with their odious trade without feeling any shame. In the meantime the nation is busy sending protests. Where are we going? One looks at the quantity of Arab lands transferred daily to Jewish hands, [one] realizes that we are bound to go away from this country. But where? Shall we move to Egypt, Hijaz, or Syria? How could we live there, since we would have sold the lands of our fathers and ancestors to our enemies? Nobody could show us mercy or pity, were we to go away from our country, because we would have lost her with our own hands."³²

Palestine's rural atmosphere was dominated by frequent local disputes over control and use of sparse land areas available for grazing and cultivation. Not just between grazers or cultivators and landowners, but between villages and between clans within a village, these disputes were prompted by a variety of causes: land encroachment for grazing or cultivation purposes, conflicts over water use, quarrels over crops handled at the threshing floor. They were manifested in uprooted trees, trampled crops, selectively looted personal possessions, wounded and stolen cattle and plow animals and, occasionally, people maimed and stabbed. Village disharmony was particularly recurrent and sufficiently dangerous for nonresident Arab landlords to hire local village mukhtars, land brokers, and intermediaries to collect their rent and taxes.

In the several years before the outbreak of the Arab revolt and general strike, Palestine's rural environment was increasingly susceptible to frequent, numerous, intense, violent land disputes. From early 1930 through 1936 the press regularly reported the plight of the 1,200 bedouin at Wadi Hawarith, whose pending eviction sustained a high level of anxiety among the Palestinians. Unlike the 1920s, the mid-1930s witnessed more land transactions and eviction proceedings, which in turn created greater apprehension about the present and fear about the future.

Beginning in the early 1930s, major protracted land disputes between Palestinian peasants and Zionist settlers either occurred initially or resurfaced as unresolved conflicts at Wadi Hawarith (Tulkarin), Shatta (Beisan), Yajur (Haifa), Hartieh (Haifa), Wadi Ara (Haifa), Um Khalid (Tulkarm), Infiat (Haifa), Damireh (north of Hadera), Damun (Acre), and Ein Harod (Beisan). These conflicts involved issues of eviction, trespass, squatting, boundary disputes, ownership, taxation payments, cultivation and grazing rights, Arab tenancy privileges, Jewish right to plow lands, and the use of "state lands." These conflicts and most other land disputes occurred where the local economies were among the worst during the 1930s and where Jewish land purchases had focused after the August 1929 disturbances; here the Arab peasant bands were recruited during the 1936-39 general strike and revolt.

HMG's Failed Effort to Keep the Peasantry Tied to Land

With their rural economy collapsing around them, the peasantry looked toward the British administration for economic assistance. Already, many in the Palestinian Arab political elite (mukhtars, tribal shaykhs, urban notables and village leaders) had either ignored or failed to answer their needs. Particularly after the 1929 disturbances, the British decided to implement a policy aimed at preventing the peasantry from becoming landless while allowing Jewish immigration and land purchase to continue, for the revenue that Jewish development brought to British tax coffers was necessary to maintain HMG's strategic presence in Palestine. Furthermore, restricting Zionist land sales would have angered the Arab landowning establishment, despite demands by some Palestinian politicians that Jewish land purchases be halted in order to end Zionist development. The British became convinced, however, that peasant displacement from land would create a restless and unemployed population that would ultimately become a source of unrest, violence, and political instability. This situation

would, in turn, require HMG's dispatch of additional troops to Palestine, a costly exercise that obviously needed to be avoided.

HMG thus introduced a series of limited bureaucratic and legislative measures aimed at keeping the peasantry tied in one way or another to their lands. It was a trilateral effort: restructuring fragmented holdings into larger parcels, legislating means to leash the peasants to land or at least to delay their eviction from it, and trying to reduce the peasants' indebtedness. Bureaucratically intrusive, HMG efforts exacerbated village disharmony because they were only partial and temporary aids. HMG's promises of economic relief through large financial expenditures remained unfulfilled. Nonetheless, a general unrealistic expectation grew among the peasantry that HMG would protect them against Zionism and those social and economic forces arrayed coincidentally against them. But HMG could not control a plummeting rural economy. In terms of political will or available manpower, HMG did not want or was incapable of ameliorating the peasantry's indebtedness through surplus tax revenue. Concurrently, HMG fully rejected the notion of ending the development of the Jewish National Home. HMG's efforts only added disillusionment to the charged political environment.

In 1927 and 1928, the process of "land settlement" was initiated to survey land and adjudicate land rights, thereby increasing agricultural output and augmenting rural tax revenue. Land settlement was designed to amalgamate small land fragments into larger parcels and to replace the *musha'* system with individual tenure or ownership of land. Land settlement proceeded almost exclusively in the coastal and valley regions of Palestine, adjacent to areas where Jews had purchased lands. Therefore, the wrong perception was easily sustained that the land settlement process of adjudicating legal land rights was ultimately aimed at preparing the "best land" for acquisition or use by the Jewish National Home. 33

In addition to initiating the land settlement process, the Palestine administration responded directly to the means already used by Arab sellers and Jewish buyers in transferring land occupied or owned by peasants. The June 1931 Law of Execution (Amendment) Ordinance was designed to prevent the eviction of tenants through satisfaction of a mortgage debt. Arab vendors would take a mortgage on a parcel of land for a short period of time and intentionally fail to pay the mortgagee. The lender would then ask the court for financial relief by ordering the mortgagor to sell his land in satisfaction of the debt created by the short-term mortgage. This method of selling land to Jews through a court-ordered transaction was favored by Arabs: the vendor could blame the British administration for forcing the unwanted sale and would also not be liable to compensate agricultural tenants occupying the mortgaged land. But the ordinance filled this loophole in tenants' legal protection by stipulating that land sold in execution of a judgment debt was to be sold subject to, and with the benefit of, any lease or tenancy agreement.³⁴

Another piece of legislation, the Protection of Cultivators Ordinance of 1929, was extended, amended in 1931, thoroughly revised in 1933, and amended again in 1936 in an effort to ensure that a tenant receive land, not money, as compensation for leaving a particular land area. But in spite of the 1933 ordinance, compensation in land was circumvented: Jewish purchasers were paying substantial compensatory amounts to willing tenants and other seasonal agricultural laborers to quit their lands in advance of a sale. Although these ordinances and their amendments did restrain some of the circumventions employed by vendors and purchasers, they were not sufficient to deter Jewish land purchase or Palestinian Arab land sales. By 1941 these ordinances for tenants' protection were considered to be among "the most contentious pieces of legislation on the statute books for Palestine."³⁵

The 1932 Land Disputes Possession Ordinance was another legislative attempt to keep Arabs on land. In response to increased civil and criminal trespass, this ordinance empowered a British official to issue a stay of eviction when trespass was likely to cause a breach of the peace. In many cases the holder of title deeds (a potential Arab seller or recent Jewish buyer), reluctant to bring public and obviously embarrassing eviction proceedings, wanted the Palestine administration to put the land in his or her possession by executive action. ³⁶ If those in current possession of the land could demonstrate that they were in past possession of the disputed lands, then the British administrator could confirm the occupants in possession until eviction proceedings were effected through the courts.³⁷ Jewish purchasers complained that the Palestinian peasant believed that, if he seized land purchased by Jews, he could somehow manage to keep it; or, failing to keep it, he could at least blackmail the Jewish purchaser for payment to vacate the land, perhaps even after a former proprietor or tenant had

already received been paid by the Jewish purchaser to vacate it a first time. Although the Land Disputes Possession Ordinance was aimed at reducing breaches of the peace, it encouraged contentiousness and trespass.

In a highly publicized and unsuccessful effort to return peasants to rural occupations, the Palestine administration instituted a landless Arab resettlement process in 1931. For a variety of reasons, the very public landless Arab inquiry succeeded neither in identifying landless Arabs or in resettling them: insufficient funds to buy lands for resettlement, a narrow definition of "landless Arab," Arab landowners who not want to encumber their prerogative to sell leased land, and unwillingness of the "landless" to be resettled far from their traditional lands. BY 1937 only 74 of the 900 Arabs classified as "landless" were resettled on alternative lands in Palestine. HMG gave so much overt publicity to the resettlement of "landless" Arabs that many Palestinians believed land would be provided to them by the Palestine administration. When the Palestine administration ruled that the majority of the 3,000 submitted cases were invalid, there was strong disappointment among peasants. Many had believed that, even though lands had passed out of their ownership or use, the British would confiscate them from the Zionists and return them. These unrealistic expectations were never met.³⁸

Noble but unsuccessful efforts were made to liberate the peasant from payment of usurious interest rates, to reduce his indebtedness in general, and to have him retain more of his yield. To the administration's credit, it remitted the tithe to the peasant in the early 1930s and reformed taxation categories for his benefit; but the administration provided only meager capital amounts for crop loans, seed loans, and long-term credit assistance. An Agricultural Mortgage Bank and contemplated financial cooperative were either not formed or were capitalized with too little money to act as an alternative to moneylenders. Among these efforts was the 1931 Imprisonment for Debt Ordinance, which allowed a debtor to pay off his indebtedness in installments after he had proved his inability to satisfy his liability in one amount. This ordinance was aimed at preventing further satisfaction of indebtedness through the sale of land. Another such effort, the 1934 Usurious Loans Ordinance, was intended to reduce interest charges imposed by moneylenders. But by the provisions of this ordinance, the court ruled that sufficient evidence was needed to label rates usurious. Inevitably the debtor gave sworn but unsupported testimony, whereas the moneylender provided documentation. Testimony under oath was not enough to satisfy the court in rendering a decision against a moneylender who had written evidence.³⁹

While trying to improve the land regime, HMG generated profound disillusionment through its well-intentioned efforts. Failure to assist the peasantry's plight fostered the widespread impression that HMG supported only Zionism. A Palestine Arab newspaper editorial noted in early 1932, "If government intended to help the people, it would have not shelved the recommendations of the Commissions of Inquiry [Shaw Report and Hope-Simpson Report] which gave a deplorable account of the distressing conditions of the fellaheen. All this willful negligence drives the people to suspect every act or scheme which the government signifies to carry out ... and its biased attitude toward the Zionists."⁴⁰

HMG's intervention in the land regime forced British administration officials to arbitrate and intervene between communities. This change to an action-oriented policy generated three significant consequences. First, it evolved into a committed, paternalistic defense by HMG of the Arab population in general, with the ultimate imposition of Jewish land transfer and immigration prohibitions through the May 1939 white paper. The consensus of British policy was that "the Arab landowner had to be protected against himself and the Arab tenant protected against land sale-motivations of the Arab landowner."⁴¹

A second result of the Palestine administration's steady intervention in the land sphere was the exacerbation of existing disputes in Arab villages. By establishing new laws and bureaucratic procedures, the Palestine administration official became the ultimate arbitrator on matters such as trespass, imprisonment for debt forfeiture, agricultural tenancy claims, and boundary disputes. When these laws and procedures were implemented in the early 1930s, British officials who perhaps personally sided with the plight of the Palestinian peasant generally ruled against peasants' claims for tenancy privileges for lack of written proof of a rental or tax record. HMG's earlier promises of assistance to the peasantry then rang hollow, insincere, and characteristic of a governmental policy interested only in furthering Zionist development. Rural Arab attitudes toward HMG grew increasingly unfriendly.

In a third result of additional British support for the peasantry, the Zionist leadership increased internal coordination among its sometimes disputatious organizations and their directorates. Jewish Agency officials demonstrated that they were not responsible for creating an Arab landless class. On the other hand, whenever possible, Zionists privately tried to dilute the contents or delay the implementation of HMG ordinances intended to tie the peasantry to the land. The more overt British policy in the land sphere renewed the Zionists' drive to create a Jewish National Home.

Conclusions

Numerous unrelated factors deferred another outbreak of communal violence until 1936. HMG created a false sense of hope that it would assist the rural population by extricating it from financial misery and by halting development of the Jewish National Home, adopting a series of procedures and laws to keep the peasant on land and creating administrative processes that resulted in the postponement of evictions or court judgments against the peasantry. When the process of Jewish land purchase involved acquiring smaller parcels from more buyers, land sales negotiations were prolonged and the peasantry's physical displacement was delayed. The time from initial contractual agreements to possession by the new Jewish owner could be three to five years. On legally purchased Jewish land, Arab tenants remained until the land was transferred in the land registry offices; sometimes they stayed until physically evicted. In most rural areas of Palestine, sustenance for the peasantry reached sufficiently low levels in 1931 and 1932 that municipal councils in Beisan, Nablus, and Hebron distributed free flour for bread. In 1933 and 1934, peasants and tribesmen south of Jerusalem, in the plateau west of Nablus, in the Jordan Valley, and east of the Jenin-Tiberias road were despondent because of heavy stock losses, unexpected cold weather, lack of pasture, and a succession of bad harvests. In 1935, wheat and barley were again distributed by British officials to meet the peasants' needs.⁴² There were four consecutive years of inadequate and flawed seeds for coming agricultural seasons. Despite the full or partial remission in the tithe each year from 1931 through 1935, the peasantry remained generally impoverished. Many could not pay back their outstanding debts. Government public works projects helped to absorb Arabs displaced because of either economic woes or Jewish land purchase.

In 1935, British officials in Palestine concurred with High Commissioner Wauchope that rural destitution was linked to the potential for communal violence. Prior to the outbreak of the general strike the situation was bleak: "An air of poverty and depression pervades most Arab villages. The fellah bears a heavy load of debts which robs him of most of his earnings and deprives him of the capital required for the amelioration of his land or the improvement of his crops. Any additional effort made merely increases the usurer's share in the produce but does not benefit the cultivator himself to any great extent.... Extortion and maladministration extending over many generations have had their inevitable effect. The combination of these factors have reduced the fellaheen to a state of overwhelming poverty."⁴³

The British high commissioner realized that the land dispossession process would continue to create a "universal depression among Arabs, particularly in the hill districts." HMG had a foreboding that "with a disconcerted population there [was] always liability to disturbance and a sense of injury now directed against the British Government." The most senior Zionist officials associated with land purchases and Jewish settlement in Palestine—Menachem Ussishkin, Moshe Shertok, Arthur Ruppin, and Abraham Granovsky—agreed at a meeting in February 1936 that land disputes had reached unparalleled frequency and proportions in part because there was no "empty" land to purchase. Haj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem and the head of the Supreme Muslim Council in Palestine, injected into the already charged political environment Islamic religious symbols as motivational platforms to fuel political activism against the Jews and against land sales. In Palestine in 1934, a fetwa issued against land sales to Jews said that selling land was "a grave sin" and that whoever sold land "necessarily commits infidelity and apostasy" as well as "treason." People engaged in land brokerage and land sales were not to be accorded Muslim burial privileges.⁴⁴

From April 1936 through early 1939, the general strike evolved into a peasant rebellion against British rule, Zionist development, and landowning interests. There was the muffled fear of unfulfilled political aspirations. Equally important, the general strike and revolt were also a class and inter-communal struggle, for the peasantry rebelled against the urban elites and often against their local village leaders. In commenting on the violence perpetrated in the 1936-39 general strike and revolt, W. F. Abboushi noted that there was "an unleashing of rural anger

against urban timidity. The worst casualties were among city dwellers who had government affiliations, such as Arab policemen, civil servants, and mayors. But there were also casualties among members of the wealthy big families.”⁴⁵

The armed bands that composed the backbone of the rebellion were recruited almost entirely from the peasant classes. Roving and mobile gangs attacked Jewish settlements and British institutions. From the standpoint of the urban hierarchy, the duration and scope of the general strike and revolt were unanticipated and, at least initially, unmanageable. Urban notables, grain merchants, landowners, and moneylenders who had exerted tight rein over village life three or four decades earlier had lost considerable control over portions of the countryside in Palestine by the mid-1930s. Within the rural setting, the revolt revealed vicious struggles between peasant bands just as traditional leaders were assassinated for collaborating with either the British or the Zionists. In 1938 campaigns of murder, sabotage, gang warfare, and terrorism seriously impaired economic life in the country.⁴⁶ Mukhtars were killed, landowners attacked, British officials assassinated, old village scores settled, Zionist immigrants murdered, and land brokers intimidated. These manifestations of violence were profoundly different in intent and intensity from the periodic minor land disputes that occurred during harvest time or that resulted from trespassing.

Acts of violence and intimidation by the rural bands caused many prominent Arabs to leave Palestine. The voluntary departures, the assassinations, and expulsions of the urban political elite left the Palestinian Arab community virtually leaderless. As a result of the general strike and revolt, the Arab Palestinian national movement was shown to be vulnerable to the influence and political control of neighboring Arab states. Some traditional sources of authority, like the local shaykh and mukhtar, were by this time politically or socially inconsequential or thoroughly discredited, leaving villagers "unprotected" against British governmental intervention and growing Jewish domination.⁴⁷ Divisiveness between village bands added to the fragmentation of Palestinian Arab society.

Embedded in the general strike and revolt were a variety of disparate components, including racial, religious, anti-colonial, anti-Zionist, and familial factors, as well as peasant destitution and rural change. Village populations were angry, jealous, and fearful of the Jewish immigrants; they were frustrated with the inability or unwillingness of their urban and local leaders or the British to assist them in any substantive fashion. High Commissioner Wauchope believed that the unrest from 1936 to 1939, while certainly containing a distinctly political component, had economic destitution as its core.⁴⁸

Repeatedly, HMG and the Palestine administration found themselves unable to validate their public promises of assistance to the peasantry. British officials were naturally but unfairly viewed as totally prejudiced umpires "controlled" by the Zionists, who themselves had taken control of land that the peasant and his ancestors had once fanned. The peasant could not compete against these inhospitable forces. He could not manage the emerging monetary economy.

Palestinian rural communal bonds wilted under the dual stresses of external intrusion and internal village degeneration. The decline of the musha' system and the decrease in authority of the mukhtar and even the moneylender left the peasantry adrift, landless, destitute, and dependent on British paternalism. From 1936 to 1939, the Palestinian peasantry expressed its anger and frustration in part against all those it considered responsible for creating, maintaining, and reinforcing an oppressive and irreparable rural environment. The general strike and revolt saw Palestinian Arab society go into a collective convulsion from which it would emerge with its only unanimity its hostility to Zionism and an emerging Palestinian Arab national feeling.

At the conclusion of the revolt, Great Britain formalized its position as paternalistic protector of the Arab population in Palestine with the passage of the May 1939 white paper. By the end of the 1930s, overwhelming rural changes and destitution engulfed the Palestinian peasantry and left rural Palestine irresolute, leaderless, and incapable of competing with Zionism's relentless distrust forward into the 1940s.

Notes

1. See Great Britain Command Papers, Palestine, Palestine Royal Commission Report

(hereafter Peel Report), cmd. 5479 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937); W. F. Abboushi, "The Road to Rebellion: Arab Palestine in the 1930s," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 1977): 23-46; Yehuda Bauer, "The Arab Revolt of 1936," *New Outlook*, pt. 1 (July/August 1966): 49-57, Pt. 2 (September 1966): 21-28; Toni Bowden, "The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936-1939," *Middle Eastern Studies* (May 1975):147-74; Zvi el-Peleg, "The 1936-1939 Disturbances: Riot or Rebellion?" *The Wiener Library Bulletin* (1978): 40-51; Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestine Arab National Movement, 1929-1939* (London: Cass, 1977), 109-273; and Theodore R. Swedenburg, "Memories of Revolt: The 1936-39 Rebellion and the Struggle for the Palestinian National Past" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1988), 110.

2. See Abboushi, "The Road to Rebellion," 42; Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, Fellaheem Bamered Ha'aravi Beeretz Yisrael [Fellaheen in the Arab Revolt in Eretz Yisrael (Palestine)] (Tel Aviv University, Shiloah Institute, 1978); Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, "The Bands in the Palestinian Arab Revolt, 1936-1939: Structure and Organization," *Asian and African Studies* (1981): 229-47; Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrah 1936-1939 fi Filastin," *Shu'un Filastiniyyah* (1972): 45-77; and Subhi Yasin, *Al-Thawrah al-'Arabiyyah al-Kubra fi Filastin [The Great Arab Revolt in Palestine]* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab, 1967 .)

3. See Sarah Graham Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus, 1920-1948," in *Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Roger Owen (Oxford: At the University Press, 1982), 88-176; Ylana Miller, *Government and Society in Rural Palestine 1920-1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Roger Owen, "Economic Development in Mandatory Palestine, 1918-1948," in *The Palestinian Economy*, ed. George T. Abed (London: Routledge, 1988), 13-36; and Kenneth W. Stein, "Palestine's Rural Economy, 1917-1939," *Studies in Zionism* (Spring 1987): 25-49.

4. Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 20-21.

5. For an exceedingly informative history describing the development of large private estates and tenant-landlord relationships in nineteenth-century Palestine, see Leon Schulman, *Ziir Tiirkischen Agrarfrage Paldstina und die Fellachenwirtschaft* (Weimar, 1916), esp. 44-57. On Syria and Iraq, see Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 8-10, 60-63; Abdul Latif Tabawi, *A Modern History of Syria* (London: St. Martin's, 1969); and Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 83-152.

6. Government of Palestine, *Report by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies in Palestine on Developments During the Years 1921-1937* (Jerusalem: Government Printing Press, 1938), 10-11.

7. Government of Palestine, *Report of a Committee on the Economic Conditions of Agriculturalists in Palestine and Fiscal Measures of Government in Relation Thereto* (hereafter Johnson-Crosbie Report) (Jerusalem: Government Printing Press, 1930); and Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine*, 26-28.

8. Schulman, *Ziir Tiirkischen Agrarfrage Paldstina*, 65; Ernest Dowson, *Preliminary Study of Land Tenure in Palestine* (1924), Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), box 357 1 /file 1; Government of Palestine, *Report by Mr. C. F. Strickland of the Indian Civil Service on the Possibility of Introducing a System of Agricultural Cooperation in Palestine* (Jerusalem: Government Printing Press, 1930), 11; Arthur Ruppin, *Syrien als Wirtschaftsgebiet* (Berlin: Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee Verlag, 1917), 31.

9. Gad Frumkin, *Derech Shofat Beyerushalaim [The Path of a Judge in Jerusalem]* (Tel Aviv: Dvir Company Ltd., 1954) 305.

10. Letter from High Commissioner Sir Arthur Wauchope to Secretary of State for the Colonies Phillip Cunliffe-Lister, April 15, 1933, Colonial Office (hereafter CO) record group 733/box 230/file 17429, Pt. 1.

11. Ernest Dowson, *Progress on Land Reform, 1923-1930*, 27-28, CO 733/221/97169; www.PDFonFly.com

Report on the State of the Ghor Mudawarra Demarcation Commission, March 19, 1932, ISA, Box 3548/file 1; Albert Abramson, former Commissioner of Lands in Palestine, "An Aspect of Village Life in Palestine," Palestine Post, July 6, 1937.

12. Letter from Hilmi Husseini, Inspector of Lands, Northern District to Director of Lands, July 14, 1923, ISA, box 3317/file 6.

13. Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission Memoranda Prepared by the Government of Palestine, memo no. 13, "Rural Indebtedness" (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 41-43.

14. Maurice C. Bennett, Land Officer, Office of the Commissioner of Lands, Memorandum on the Village Congress Of 1929, February 3, 1930, ISA, M 3380/file 2.

15. Ibid.; Great Britain, Palestine Royal Commission Memoranda Prepared by the Government of Palestine, memo no. 14, "Measures Taken to Provide Agricultural Credit" (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 45-48.

16. Ibid.

17. See Sa'id B. Himadeh, ed., Economic Organization of Palestine (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1938), 125.

18. See Albert Hourani, Syria and Lebanon (Oxford: At the University Press, 1945), 86-87; Philip S. Khoury, Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920 (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1983), 27, 28, 94; Stephen Longrigg, Iraq, 1900 to 1950 (Oxford: At the University Press, 1968), 30-31; Taysir N. Nashif, The Palestine Arab and Jewish Political Leaderships (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1979), 1-58; and Alfred Bonne, State and Economics in the Middle East (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 117-38. See also Paul J. Kiat, "Musha Holdings and Land Fragmentation in Syria," Middle East Economic Papers (1958): 12-23; David Ben-Gurion, Remarks before the Palestine Royal Commission, Notes of Evidence, January 7, 1937, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), record group S25/file 4642.

19. See Schulman, Ziir Tiirkischen Agrarfrage Palastina, 47.

20. Salim al-Tabir, Village Congress Proposals, November 14, 1929, ISA, box M3380/file 2.

21. Letter from Herbert Samuel to Lord Curzon, April 2, 1920, Herbert Samuel Archives, ISA; note by Sydney Moody, Political Report for January 1923, minute sheet, February 23, 1923, CO 733/42/8933; Afif I. Tannous, "The Arab Village Conununity," Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institute (1943), 236.

22. For an example of cases brought before administrative review in the Tulkarm subdistrict that shed light on the social gap between landlord and tenants, see ISA, box 3384/files TR/41/33, TR/204/33 and TR/441/33, and dozens of others.

23. See letter from Abdul Latif Tabawi to Assistant District Commissioner Nablus, November 16, 1934, in the case of Abdul Latif Tabawi vs. Tenants Kamil Amrur, Abdul Fatiah Amrur, and Abdul Hafiz Amrur, ISA, box M 3922/file TR/ 114/33.

24. On danger to mukhtus, see notes by A. T. O. Lees, Palestine Land Settlement Officer, October 10, 1937, CO 733/329/75072/11; letter from High Commissioner Sir Harold MacMichael to Lord Moyne, Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 10, 1941, CO 733/447/76117. For examples of mukhtars seeking personal enrichment in village land matters, see Al-Jami'ah at-Arabiyyah, April 22, 1931; Gaza Settlement Officer to Commissioner of Lands, June 17, 1938, ISA, box LS 274/file 4/fOliO 33; "Land Speculation," ISA, box 2637/file G536. See also Miller, Government and Society in Rural Palestine, 56-62; and Gabriel Baer, "The Office and Functions of the Village Mukhtar, " in Palestinian Society and Politics, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 103-23. On mukhtar salaries, see letter from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, December 7, 1933, CO 733/244/17270. PeelReport, 345.

25. 'Adb al-Wahhab al-Kayyali, ed., *Wathi'iq al-Muqawama al-Filastiniyyah al-Arabiyyah didd al-lhtiu al-Baratani wa al-Sahyuniyyah, 1918-1939* [Documents of Palestinian Arab Resistance against British and Zionist Occupation, 1918-1939 (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1968), document #142, January 14, 1934, 357-58. See also Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine*, 65-79, 228-39.
26. Government of Palestine, *Census for Palestine, 1931* (Alexandria: Whitehead Morfis Limited, 1933), 1:291.
27. *Census for Palestine, 1931* (Alexandria: Whitehead Morris Limited, 1933), 2:10-11; Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine*, appendix 2, "Absolute Increase of Registered Jewish Land Purchase Excluding Government Concessions, 1882-1945," 226-27; Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, *A Survey of Palestine* (Palestine: Government Printer, 1946), 1:141; Esco Foundation for Palestine, *Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1947), 1:497.
28. Letter from Arthur Ruppin to Chaim Weizmann, January 30, 1930, CZA, Z4/3450. See also findings from Government of Palestine, Commission on the Disturbances of August 1929 (hereafter Shaw Report), cmd. 3530 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930); and Government of Palestine, *Report on Immigration, Land Seutement, and Development* (hereafter Hope-Simpson Report), cmd. 3686 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930).
29. On the decline in land, see Johnson-Crosbie Report, 22; Hope-Simpson Report, 64; *Census for Palestine, 1931* 1:22; The Jewish Agency, *Land Policy in Palestine* (1936), CZA S25/6916; Joseph Weitz, *Yomani [My Diary]* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Masada Publishing House, 1965), 1:119. On the proposed law, see Memorandum on points likely to be raised with the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Arab Depulation from Palestine (January 1936), CO 733/297/75156, pt. 1. On the peasants in the revolt, see League of Nations, *Permanent Mandates Commission Minutes*, 25th session, May 31, 1934, 14, 27th session, June 2, 1935, 39. See also Abboushi, "The Road to Rebellion," 40-46; Arnon-Ohanna, "The Bands in the Palestinian Arab Revolt," 229-33.
30. See Kenneth W. Stein, "The Jewish National Fund: Land Purchase Methods and Priorities, 1924-1939," *MiddleEasternStudies* (April 1984):190-205. For statistics on the increased number of smaller sales in the early 1930s, see the British administration monthly land sale statistics in Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine*, 181.
31. *Al-Hayat* (Jerusalem), September 8, 1930.
32. *Al-Ikdam*, January 19, 1931.
33. See *Land Settlement Ordinance, 1928*, *Official Gazette*, January 26, 1928. On the "best land" concept, see Government of Palestine, *Department of Surveys Report for Years 1940-46*, CO 814/40.
34. *Official Gazette*, June 16, 1931, 471.
35. "Report of the Committee on State Domain on the Proposal to Exempt State Domain from the Provisions of the Cultivators (Protection) Ordinance," enclosure in a letter from Sir Harold MacMichael, High Comniissioner for Palestine, to Lord Moyne, Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 28, 1941, CO 733/447176117.
36. Note on *Land Disputes Possession Ordinance, 1931*, CO 733/209/87343.
37. Michael F. J. McDonnell, *Law Reports of Palestine, 1920-1933*, High Court no. 92 of 1932, 2:860-64.
38. Extract from *Annual Report of the Palestine Government for 1933*, CO 733/278/75156, pt. 1, folio 75; letter from Lewis Andrews to Chaim Arlosoroff, head of the Jewish Agency, March 4, 1933, CZA, S25/7622. For a full discussion of the landless Arab inquiry see Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine*, 146-68. On peasants' disappointment, see *Al-Jdmi'ah al-Islamiyyah*, September 2, 1932.

39. Government of Palestine, *The Banking Situation in Palestine* (London: Westminster Bank Limited, 1936), 80.
40. Merat al-Shark, February 3, 1932. For some of the many cases in the Palestine Arab press showing the belief that the British intended to change aspects of the land regime in order to assist Zionist growth, see Al-Carmel, January 27, 1932; Al-jami'ah al-'Arabiyyah, October 10, 1934, June 17, 1935; Filastin, February 2, 1935; Al-Liwa, February 12, 1936.
41. Minutes by J. E. Shuckburgh, Colonial Office official, January 14, 1940, CO 733/425/75872/2.
42. See remarks under "Land Regime" in Report(s) by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations and the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year(s) 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938, colonial nos. 59, 75, 82, 94, 104, 112, 129, 146, and 166 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office). See also Stein, "Palestine's Rural Economy," 40-43; and Al-Jami'ah al-'Arabiyyah, March 4, 1934.
43. Government of Palestine, Report by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies on Developments During the Years 1921-1937 (Jerusalem, 1938), 10-11.
44. On HMG's forebodings, see letters from Wauchope to Cunliffe-Lister, February 11, December 7, 1935, CO 733/278/75156. On the Zionist meeting, see Protocol of a Joint Meeting between the Jewish Agency Executive, the Jewish National Fund, and the Palestine Land Development Company, February 19, 1936, CZA S25/6538. On Islamic religious activity, see Criminal Investigation Department Reports, August 30, October 7, 1933, Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/file 16926, and December 19, 1933, FO 371/17878; Al-Jami'ah al-'Arabiyyah, September 16, 1932; and Al-Difa', November 5, 1934. See also Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leyden: Brill, 1987), 242-47.
45. Abboushi, "The Road to Rebellion," 42-44.
46. Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, *A Survey of Palestine* (Palestine, 1946), 1:44. See Stein, "Palestine's Rural Economy," 44-46.
47. This conclusion is arrived at independently by Miller, *Government and Society in Rural Palestine*, 88.
48. Letter from Wauchope to Secretary of State, December 29, 1936, CO 733/297175156, Pt. 5.