
by

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the multifaceted nature of Jewish politics in the British Empire during the rise of anticolonial national and transnational political movements. Though Jews in all modern empires grappled variously with imperial policies and burgeoning nationalisms, Jews in the British Empire after 1917 faced the unique situation of living under the power that controlled Palestine, the territory at the heart of Jewish political, cultural, and religious aspirations both in and beyond the empire. This project investigates how Jewish elites from three imperial sites—Mandate Palestine, India, and South Africa—understood the changing and potentially conflicting relationships between British imperialism, Zionism, and anticolonial (trans)nationalisms. The project asks how these forces shaped Jewish loyalties, feelings of national belonging, and visions of political futures. It argues that a consideration of the many possible fates of the British Empire—spanning from the persistence of imperial rule to the triumph of anticolonial political movements—was central to the ways both Zionists and non-Zionists imagined Jewish political futures in the interwar period. This negotiation of any number of potential outcomes produced a range of political behaviors, strategies, practices, and vocabularies that upon first glance seem paradoxical. This project shows that these ostensible contradictions and incongruities were in fact all part of a broad, shared horizon of uncertainty—uncertainty over Jewish national futures and uncertainty over British imperial futures amidst the rise of anticolonial nationalisms.

By closely examining the lives of Jewish elites in the empire, this project uncovers how modern Jewish politics took shape not only in formal political venues but also—and even more so—in quotidian practices, convivial spaces, and affective ties. It
reveals how Zionist and non-Zionist Jews in the interwar period imagined Jewish political futures as both interdependent on and in opposition to British imperialism, and as part of broader modern narratives both of empire and colonization, and of national deliverance and self-determination. The first study to consider Jewish politics in a multi-site British imperial context, *Jewish Political Lives in the British Empire* yields important new insight into modern Jewish history, British imperial history, and the history of Israel/Palestine.
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Introduction

In March 1909, Norman Bentwich (1883-1971) provoked an uproar among the upper echelons of Anglo-Jewish society. The young barrister, who more than a decade later would become the first attorney general of Mandate Palestine, had recently visited the country for the first time. Upon his return, he gave an interview to a reporter from the *Jewish Chronicle* in which he discussed his work in establishing a new Zionist society for Jewish students at the University of London. A graduate of Cambridge, which already had a Zionist society, Norman had spent the previous two years in London pursuing, as he put it, an “embarrassment of causes.” He prepared for the bar; he helped to establish a Jewish settlement house in the East End modeled on Toynbee Hall; and he became one of the “self-constituted disciples” of Ahad Ha’am, the father of cultural Zionism who had settled in London in 1907 as an agent of the Wissotzky Tea company. Norman’s trip to Palestine inspired him to take on a more active leadership role in London’s burgeoning Zionist scene.2

The new University Zionist Society, Norman told the reporter, had almost been given another name. “A great many people dislike the term ‘Zionist’ either because of their opposition to the English Zionist Federation, or because they think that it tends to narrow the conception unduly,” he explained.3 The “London University Jewish Nationalist Society” was proposed as an alternative name. “But then it was pointed out that there was a certain danger in using the word ‘Nationalist,’ inasmuch as this would

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1 The University of Oxford and the University of Leeds also already had Zionist societies.
3 Norman Bentwich refers here to Anglo-Jewish opposition to Jewish nationalism, broadly construed, and to debates within Jewish nationalist circles over whether efforts should focus on Palestine (Zionism) or another site (Territorialism).
suggest to non-Jews that the adherents of our cause regard themselves as a nation apart from the English people,” Norman continued. “And is that not so?” probed the interviewer. Norman responded that such an impression was “wrong and mischievous” and could further tempt the “outside world” to think that British Jews were “not prepared to exercise fully their rights and duties as English citizens.”

Indeed, accusations of dual loyalties had dogged the modern Anglo-Jewish community since its seventeenth-century inception.

Norman explained that British Zionists would work to develop a “Jewish national centre” in Palestine that would serve as a refuge not for themselves, but for Jews living in other reaches of the globe who did not already enjoy a “free life” in their own countries. “This center, though it would have its own laws, language and culture, would not, in my view, for a long time, be an independent political state, nor would it contain many English Jews,” Norman clarified. The work then of British Zionists would be to “foster the historic consciousness among themselves and the people, and to give what help they can to the Jewish institutions which are fast growing up in Palestine.” This perspective, which saw Palestine as a spiritual and cultural center that would inspire Jewish national regeneration around the world, reflected the influence of Ahad Ha’am on Norman’s Zionism. So, too, did Norman’s insistence that Zionism did not mean the negation of the diaspora. He reassured the interviewer that British Zionists would continue to “feel in the fullest measure a pride in their English citizenship, and like their non-Jewish fellows take a deep interest in English political questions.”

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4 “Zionism at the Universities: Interview for the Jewish Chronicle with Mr. Norman Bentwich, M.A.,” Jewish Chronicle, March 26, 1909, p. 22.
5 Ibid.
However, when the interviewer continued to press the question of whether British Zionists could in fact “completely identify themselves with the English nation,” Norman relented, admitting that he and his fellows Zionists “feel that, as Jews, this is not possible.” He then deviated dramatically from the longstanding Anglo-Jewish argument that Jews differed from their English countrymen only in religion—the argument that had secured the community safe haven in England and ultimately full civic and political rights:

[Jews] cannot be as entirely English in thought as the man who is born of English parents and descended from ancestors who have mingled their blood with other Englishmen for generations. Jews must always have a feeling of sympathy and brotherhood with the Jewish people in all other parts of the world, and must always, in some degree, remain socially separate, if they are to continue loyal to their religion. There is no use disguising this fact. To me it seems impossible to separate religion from nationality in Judaism, without destroying both. The Jewish religion is, and must ever remain, national…It is not fair to apply the same reasoning to Jews as to other people and to say that it is only a religious creed which distinguishes Jews from non-Jews, because the religious community of Jews is also a national community.6

Norman’s statement set off fury and panic among the established Anglo-Jewish elite. In a rebuttal letter published in the Jewish Chronicle, 25 prominent members of the community “emphatically” objected to Norman’s assertion that Jews could never be “entirely English in thought.” The signatories warned that such claims would call into question the level of “patriotism among English Jews” and that English non-Jews would begin to doubt the “future ability of men trained in these views to ‘exercise fully their rights and duties as English citizens.’”7 The affair not only reflected the fractious,

7 “Zionism at the Universities,” Jewish Chronicle, April 9, 1909, p. 6.
contentious nature of Jewish politics in Britain, but highlighted the difficulty of navigating enduring Jewish concerns about social and political security amidst the rise of modern nationalism—the very word itself controversial. What bearing did Jewish nationalism, and more specifically Zionism, have on the question of Jewish national belonging in Britain? How would it affect Jewish involvement in broader civic and political culture? What impact would it have on Jewish relationships to non-Jewish neighbors? And how would Jewish nationalism shape Jewish political futures in Britain? Less than a decade later, the stakes of these questions would become significantly more complicated, and the geographic sweep of their significance, extraordinarily greater.

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The story at hand begins amidst a world war, when the divergent histories of Jewish politics and British imperialism converged powerfully for the first time. On November 2, 1917, just two days after the British Empire’s Egyptian Expeditionary Forces broke through Ottoman lines in Beersheba ending a six-month stalemate in southern Palestine, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration. Conveyed in a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to the Anglo-Jewish leader Walter Rothschild, the short statement expressed Britain’s intention to help facilitate the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. The following

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month, British troops—including Norman Bentwich who had been commissioned as an officer in the Camel Transport Corps—took Jerusalem. After two years of military administration in Palestine, the Ottoman Empire vanquished, Allied powers assigned to Britain a League of Nations Class A mandate for Palestine. Designed as a provisional legal measure to guide former Ottoman territories towards eventual independence, the mandate brought Palestine—and Jewish national aspirations along with it—into the British imperial fold. The British Empire not only came to encompass a new, burgeoning Jewish population in the wake of World War I, but as the administrator of a potential Jewish national home in Palestine, Britain also assumed a pivotal role in determining Jewish political futures both in and beyond the empire. Jews across the British Empire thus found themselves in a unique position. They alone were forced to confront the question of Jewish political futures while living in the empire that now had a mandate over Palestine, the territory at the center of Jewish political, cultural, and religious aspirations. To complicate the picture further, the development of Jewish nationalism occurred against the backdrop of the growth of general anticolonial and nationalist ferment across the British Empire. In the same moment that Zionism was expanding and maturing as a movement, so, too, were Pan-Arabism, the pan-Islamic Khilafat movement, Afrikaner nationalism, and Swaraj, the movement for Indian self-rule. Just a week after the Twelfth Zionist Congress convened in Carlsbad, Czechoslovakia in September 1921, Gandhi made the historic decision to divest of his cap and vest and to don only the loincloth that would come to symbolize India’s struggle against British colonial rule. Jews across the British Empire arrived at an unprecedented crossroads, a concatenation of events that forced them to rethink their identities as Jews, Zionists, locals, and British
imperial subjects. The controversial questions that Norman’s 1909 interview raised were now imbued with new dimension and complexity.

My project examines how Jewish elites and leaders from three imperial sites—Mandate Palestine, India, and South Africa—understood and experienced the changing and potentially conflicting relationships between British imperialism, Zionism, and anticolonial national and transnational political movements during the interwar period. The project asks how these forces shaped Jewish political loyalties, feelings of national belonging, and visions of political futures against the backdrop of a fast-shifting and profoundly plastic political landscape. I argue that the British Empire and the consideration and negotiation of its many possible fates—spanning from the persistence of imperial rule to the triumph of anticolonial political movements—were at the center of the interwar Jewish political imagination. Jews in Palestine, India, and South Africa imagined Jewish political futures that would take shape within the context of an enduring British Empire. They imagined that Palestine might join the ranks of the British Commonwealth of Nations as an autonomous dominion, such as Australia, South Africa, and Canada. These Jewish elites also viewed Britain and the British Empire as wellsprings of cultural and political ideals and ideas, as models and inspiration for Jewish political life—particularly in Palestine. But those same Jewish elites and leaders in Palestine, India, and South Africa also envisioned Jewish political futures that would break from the British Empire. They anticipated the potential victory of anticolonial nationalisms across the empire and worked to build ties with the leaders of those movements, including Muslim and Hindu nationalists in India. This negotiation of any number of potential outcomes produced a range of political behaviors, strategies,
practices, and vocabularies that upon first glance seem paradoxical. Leaders of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Calcutta forcefully asserted their European cultural identity in their dealings with colonial authorities, but at the same time remained deeply embedded in local elite Indian and Jewish worlds. Chaim Arlosoroff, a prominent Labor Zionist leader in interwar Palestine, became a steadfast proponent of the Zionist-British partnership, and though he eventually abandoned his dedication to the alliance, he remained entrenched in British social circles in Palestine and developed a close friendship with the British High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope. In South Africa, a small group of both Zionist and non-Zionist Jews who had befriended Gandhi during his time in the country became the chief mediators between the Zionist movement and Indian nationalism in the 1930s. And while these South African Jews supported Indian independence, they also defended Zionist ties with the British Empire.

This project shows that these ostensible contradictions and incongruities were in fact all part of a broad, shared horizon of uncertainty—uncertainty over Jewish national futures, varied and malleable as those visions were, and uncertainty over British imperial futures amidst the rise of anticolonial nationalisms. My conception of politics represents a departure from the way historians typically approach the question of Jewish politics. Most traditionally, Jewish historians have examined Jewish relationships to a political idea or movement—for instance, Jewish involvement in radical leftist politics or Jewish engagement with Revisionist Zionism. More recently, historians have taken a cultural-historical approach, examining Jewish relationships to a public or civic identity promoted by a state or empire. My project offers a third approach: the politics in this case were not

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9 I use this term to refer to Jews who, while not emphatically anti-Zionist (completely opposed to Zionism), did not consider themselves to be supporters of the Zionist movement.
the expression of a fixed ideology or the result of synthesis or acculturation with a non-Jewish society. Rather I reconstruct a “politics of uncertainty”—a politics of trying to envision and negotiate any number of undetermined futures that could produce drastically different consequences for the Jewish community.

The three geographic sites which frame this project were distinct interwar imperial spaces. Palestine, as a League of Nations Class A mandate, was governed by Britain by international sanction, with the intention that the local population would eventually take over the country’s administration. India, the cornerstone of the British Empire, was administered by direct Crown rule. South Africa, in contrast, functioned as a self-governing, autonomous dominion. The Jewish elites who lived in these three locales were equally distinct. This project examines four different groups of them: British Jews in Palestine, including mandatory officials and their families; Zionist leaders in Palestine, specifically members of the Jewish Agency, the country’s official representative Zionist leadership body; Baghdadi Jewish elites in India, immensely wealthy from their participation in global trade and commerce, who directed Jewish communal life in Calcutta and Bombay; and Jewish cultural and communal elites from South Africa, particularly those who developed friendships with Gandhi during his long tenure (from 1893-1914) in the country. These individuals were very different types of Jews and indeed very different types of elites, reflecting the diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, cultural and religious practices, politics, professional pursuits, and socio-economic statuses among the heterogeneous Jewish communities living throughout the empire. Critically, they espoused a broad range of attitudes towards Zionism, a movement that contained many distinct and sometimes opposing visions. Some Jewish elites in the
British Empire identified as cultural Zionists, feeling that Palestine should be a center for
cultural, spiritual, and psychical regeneration that would benefit—and not negate—the
worldwide Jewish diaspora. Others supported political Zionism, seeing national
development in Palestine as the solution to the increasingly untenable state of Jewish life
in Europe. Political Zionists in the British Empire identified with a range of Zionist
parties and wings, including the Labor, General, and Revisionist branches of the
movement. Both among and within these Zionist parties, Jews in the British Empire—
especially in Palestine and South Africa—hotly debated what type of government should
eventually be adopted in Palestine and what role both Palestinian Arabs and the British
should play in that future polity. In contrast, though many Jews in India ultimately came
to support Zionism, they never divided into competing political parties. Instead, for many
Baghdadi Jews, religious and romantic attachment to the Land of Israel inspired their
commitment. Finally, other Jews in the British Empire did not identify as Zionist at all.

Despite their varied backgrounds, these Jewish elites shared common attributes.
They all served as intermediaries between their Jewish communities and British and local
authorities, while simultaneously confronting Jewish nationalist ideas. Many of them also
personally knew each other—they corresponded about issues facing the Jewish
community, studied in the same schools and universities, spent time as neighbors in
London, and even married each other. More abstractly, these Jewish elites were all linked
by a common consideration of Jewish political futures in an empire in flux, amidst
imperial retrenchment and rising anticolonial sentiment. Despite their diverse
backgrounds, their varied relationships to the British metropole, and—most
significantly—their wide-ranging attitudes towards Zionism—these elites all ended up
confronting Jewish political futures against this shared horizon of uncertainty and change. And remarkably Zionists and non-Zionists alike all ended up thinking about and navigating the same set of issues: namely the entanglement of Jewish, British imperial, and anticolonial national politics. The Jewish political imagination and political experience were, for these Jewish elites in Palestine, India, and South Africa, completely bound up in questions of the British Empire and its many undetermined, possible fates.

As they navigated these many potential outcomes, Jews in the British Empire grappled with the state as an ideal. Cultural Zionists, Political Zionists, and non-Zionists promoted numerous and shifting visions of Jewish political futures for Palestine that variously embraced, rejected, and tabled the political model of the state. And yet many of these British imperial Jews—though they had vastly different political commitments and ideas about the state—collectively assumed that Palestine would become a British dominion. Norman Bentwich, for instance, saw the dominion idea as a model for Palestine that could accommodate both Jewish and Arab cultural autonomy without separate political sovereignty. Chaim Arlosoroff, in contrast, found dominion appealing because it would afford the Yishuv\textsuperscript{10} critical elements of state-like power. The dominion idea, then, became a receptacle of both non-statist and statist visions; commitments to imperial belonging, Jewish-Arab rapprochement, and Jewish national independence were all vectored through it.

My approach to analyzing Jewish politics in the British Empire is twofold. First, the project assesses the intellectual-historical question of how Jewish elites actively thought about and approached the changing relationships between Zionism, British

\textsuperscript{10} The “Yishuv” refers to the Jewish community in Palestine before the founding of the state of Israel.
imperialism, and local anticolonial nationalisms. How did Jews frame their political
loyalties vis-à-vis the imperial state? How did they reconcile Zionism with other
nationalisms? Second, the project examines the socio-cultural question of how quotidian
practices, convivial spaces, and affective ties served as sites of political formation and
expression for Jewish elites in the empire. How did the friendships they formed, the
parties they attended, and the civic and cultural activities in which they participated shape
and reflect their politics? This dual intellectual-historical and socio-cultural approach is
useful for understanding politics in any setting. It can reveal, for instance, how politics
broke down along gendered lines. But the payoff to this analysis is especially high in
imperial contexts where structures of power and racial hierarchies were created and
maintained just as much through social ties and daily practices as they were through laws.
In these settings, where one lived, what one wore, what one read, how one ate, and which
clubs one frequented mattered—and they all mattered politically.¹¹ For this reason, this
project is not a story of public versus private, reason versus affect, or theory versus
practice. These are false dichotomies. In spaces where private and quotidian practices
were political acts and affective ties carried political significance, it does not make sense

¹¹ Scholars of British colonialism and British India, in particular, have pioneered the work of looking
beyond official spaces and contexts in order to understand politics. See Antoinette Burton, Dwelling in the
Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 2003), and Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). My approach to politics here is also indebted to Leonore
Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850
(London: Routledge, 2002), particularly for the way they conceive of the so-called public and private
spheres as deeply imbricated. My understanding of the role of convivial spaces and affective ties in shaping
Baghdadi politics—and their gendered implications—has been influenced by Davidoff and Hall’s
arguments that middle-class men’s power and success in public often depended on the support of female
and familial networks established in domestic, private spaces. On the public and private spheres in the
Yishuv, see Deborah Bernstein, “Daughters of the Nation: Between the Public and Private Spheres in Pre-
to dwell on these contrasts. All were sites of political formation and none represent a truer, more authentic expression of politics.

This project is the first study to consider Jewish politics in a multi-site, British imperial context. It yields critical new insight into modern Jewish history, British imperial history, and the history of Israel/Palestine, as well as the histories of Zionism and nationalism. My research builds upon and contributes to a growing literature that explores the experiences of Jews in modern imperial contexts. It is part of a scholarly effort to expand the Jewish historiographic geographical imagination that has been limited by the Eurocentric tropes of modern Jewish history, especially emancipation, secularization, acculturation, assimilation, and antisemitism. More specifically, modern Jewish historiography and British imperial historiography are two fields that, despite important historical overlap, have only recently begun to engage one another. British

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imperial historians have largely avoided Jewish topics, perhaps in part out of a fear of reproducing associations between Jewish finance and imperialism made by some late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century critics of empire such as J.A. Hobson. Likewise, Jewish historians, even Anglo-Jewish historians, have previously mostly ignored the British Empire.¹³ Beyond the British Empire, recent excellent work on Jews in the Ottoman and French empires has expanded our understanding of the modern Jewish experience and furthered the development of important theoretical foundations for assessing the relationship between Jews and empire. Yet much of this scholarship has focused on the ways that Jews experienced colonialism specifically outside the context of Israel, Palestine, or Zionism.¹⁴

This project builds on, as well as challenges, several major trends in the field of Israel Studies and the historiography of Zionism. First, as I have explained, one of my central concerns is to reveal how Jewish and Zionist politics took shape not only in formal political venues but also—and even more so—in everyday practices, convivial spaces, and affective ties. In this sense, my work is part of a larger historiographic trend—what Assaf Likhovski has called “post-post-Zionism”—that focuses on investigating everyday life in the Yishuv and Israel, and moves away from broader political narratives, especially ones centered around conflict.¹⁵ My work in contrast,

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¹³ Feldman, “Jews and the British Empire,” 70–89, esp. 70. Todd Endelman has pointed out a similar absence of Jews as historical actors in metropolitan British history: “Unaccustomed to viewing minorities as historical actors in the British context, committed to the tolerant, assimilative powers of English culture, and above all, wishing to avoid the appearance of being too concerned with Jews (and thus open to charges of intolerance), historians of Britain are content to ignore or minimize the Jewish presence in their work.” Todd Endelman, The Jews of Britain, 1656–2000 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 6.

¹⁴ Stein, “Protected Persons,” 84. Also, Stein, Extraterritorial Dreams; Cohen, Becoming Ottomans; Stein, Saharan Jews; Joshua Schreier, Arabs of the Jewish Faith.

though it is focused on the quotidian, is chiefly concerned with how quotidian experiences affected broader political realities, particularly the relationship between the Yishuv and the British Empire.

This project also builds on a growing body of literature in Israel Studies that has begun to challenge the teleology of national independence—that is, the longstanding tendency in the historiography to assume that all Zionist activity before 1948 was specifically geared towards the establishment of an independent nation-state. The challenge to this telos has produced two major results. The first is a growing body of scholarship that recovers the ways that British imperialism textured Jewish life in mandate Palestine and in Israel.16 Much of this work, however, has stressed the unilinear influence of British imperialism on Jewish life, rendering the ways that Jewish elites and leaders actively thought about Britain and its empire unexamined.17

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The second, broader result of pushing back against this telos has been the recovery of the many non-statist political visions that were integral to the Zionist movement in the interwar period, including binationalism, autonomism, and federalism (and various combinations thereof). This scholarship has revealed the complexity and capaciousness of the interwar Zionist political imagination and has shed light on the many “roads not taken” by the Zionist movement. While the case of dominion status—widely assumed by Jews in the British Empire to be the preferred choice for Palestine—represents yet another path that never came to be, it differs substantially from binationalism, autonomism, and federalism. Though dominion status appealed to some Jews in the British Empire because it created space for cultural autonomy while abjuring political sovereignty, the idea interested some Zionists in Palestine precisely because it would give the Yishuv state-like power. Dominions in the British Commonwealth of Nations (such as New Zealand and Canada) had the power to control immigration, direct land development, and secure bank loans—all imperatives for the Yishuv. For this reason, the dominion idea reveals far more than other “non-statist” political options about the state that came to be in 1948.

Finally, while I investigate the complex imbrication of Zionism and British imperialism, my work moves beyond older debates about Zionism as colonialism, as well

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as more recent work framing Zionists as agents of British colonialism. My project, in contrast, uncovers how interwar Zionists imagined Jewish political futures as both interdependent on and in opposition to British imperialism; as part of broader modern narratives both of empire and colonization, and of national deliverance and self-determination.

The first chapter of this project examines the experiences of Helen Bentwich, a social worker, and her husband Norman Bentwich, the Anglo-Jewish attorney general of Mandate Palestine, as they negotiated their identities as Britons, colonial actors, Jews, and Zionists in interwar Jerusalem. Over the course of more than a decade in Palestine (1919-1930), Helen came to find herself more at home with new Jewish friends than in British circles. A committed feminist and socialist and a resolute non-Zionist, Helen’s attitudes towards Zionists and the Zionist movement—initially so hostile—also shifted. Resentful of British colonial standards of femininity and increasingly disturbed by rising antisemitism among the British in Palestine, Helen came to empathize (though never fully identify) with Jewish nationalism and found herself working on behalf of Jewish-led organizations in Palestine, particularly in the realm of social welfare efforts. In contrast to his wife, Norman arrived in Palestine already an ardent Zionist. This chapter shows how his support for binational, autonomist Zionism was informed by his British Labour ideals and British conceptions of nationhood. As Norman built ties with binationalists in Palestine, particularly with intellectuals and academics centered around the Hebrew University, he was forced to disentangle his role as a British mandatory official with his visions of Jewish political futures. Drawing on a vast collection of personal

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correspondence and memoirs, this chapter both synthesizes and challenges the historiography of elite British sociability in the empire and the growing body of work on the diversity of interwar Jewish nationalist expression. Through its examination of the marriage of Helen and Norman Bentwich—a companionate and egalitarian partnership—the chapter explores the complex convergence of interwar Zionist and non-Zionist visions of Jewish political futures in the context of the British Empire.

The second chapter recovers the British horizons of Zionist politics by examining the ways that Zionist leaders in Palestine thought about the “British Question”—that is, Zionism’s relationship to Britain and the role that relationship would play in the future of the Yishuv. The chapter focuses on the Labor Zionist leader Chaim Arlosoroff, whose extensive political writings and daily work on behalf of the Zionist Organization capture the myriad ways interwar Zionists thought about the British Question. Arlosoroff felt that the ideals and lessons derived from British culture and history represented worthy models for the Yishuv, and he pioneered efforts to make knowledge of the British Empire accessible to a Hebrew-reading public. He also believed that long-term cooperation and understanding between the Yishuv and Britain were critical to realizing Zionist aspirations. Most significantly, he thought seriously about possible future political formations for Palestine that would take shape within the framework of the British Empire, including the prospect of dominion status. By examining Arlosoroff’s own grappling with non-statist and statist Zionist futures—with the dominion idea encompassing elements of each—this chapter shows that the British Empire in fact remained at the center of both disparate political visions.
The third chapter shows that at the nadir of Zionist fortunes in the early 1930s, a profound uncertainty about the viability of the Yishuv compelled figures including Chaim Arlosoroff, Norman Bentwich, and Gershon Agronsky to disentangle their visions of Zionist and British futures in distinct ways. The question of Jewish immigration and land development provoked bitter debate; Zionists had lost faith in Britain’s commitment to the terms of the Balfour Declaration; Jewish-Arab relations appeared equally bleak; and, most significantly, the rise of Nazism in Germany meant that Palestine might soon need to accommodate thousands of Jewish refugees and face the potential of another global conflict. Arlosoroff, whose transformation was the most radical, argued that Zionism’s only hope for survival might be to overthrow British mandatory authorities and establish a minority government by force in Palestine. Long a champion of the Zionist-British partnership, Arlosoroff now questioned the fundamental tenability of Zionist futures in the British Empire. Norman Bentwich was forced to abandon his work on behalf of mandatory authorities; he could no longer be both a British official and a Zionist. Amidst the rise of Pan-Islamist movements, Gershon Agronsky, a journalist working for the Jewish Agency, decided that rather than turning to British imperial powers, Zionists should build ties with moderate Muslim activists in India. The chapter frames the impulse to divorce Zionist and British futures against the actual social landscape of Jerusalem at the time, a space in which Zionist and British elites continued to dine together, attend parties and performances, and develop close, communicative friendships.

Leaving the setting of Mandate Palestine, the fourth chapter moves to British India, exploring how Baghdadi Jewish elites navigated the potentially conflicting pulls of
British imperialism, Indian nationalism, and Zionism. Focusing on the lives of Rachel and David Ezra, a Baghdadi Jewish couple from Calcutta, the chapter examines two disparate sites of political formation: first, a memorial campaign led by David Ezra to have his Baghdadi community classified as European in the Bengali electorate; and second, the quotidian practices and affective ties that shaped the Ezras’ embeddedness in elite Indian and Jewish cultures. In this second space, the Ezras expressed a tentative hopefulness about the prospect of Indian self-rule and continued to support Zionism, even as British attitudes toward Jewish nationalism were becoming increasingly hostile. The two sites of political formation which are examined in this chapter each generated distinct political vocabularies, categories, and concerns. The chapter argues, however, that both sites were informed by a single political horizon: a growing uncertainty about Jewish futures in India amidst the rise of Indian nationalism and the changing terms of British imperial rule.

The final chapter journeys across the empire, beginning in South Africa and moving to Britain, Palestine, and India. As Zionist leaders in Palestine and Britain became increasingly convinced in the 1930s that imperial and anticolonial politics in India mattered a great deal to Jewish futures in Palestine, South African Zionists emerged as uniquely capable of navigating this issue. During his time in South Africa from 1893-1914, Gandhi developed close relationships with a number of South African Jews, particularly Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak. Both Kallenbach—who became a Zionist—and Henry Polak—who remained a committed non-Zionist—endeavored to convince Gandhi to support the development of the Jewish national home and worked to establish connections between Zionist and Indian leaders. Although they held different
opinions on Zionism and possessed distinct relationships to the Jewish community, both Kallenbach and Polak understood Jewish political fates to be bound up in Indian ones. More broadly, this chapter shows how Zionists saw transnational and trans-imperial relationships as crucial to the future of the Zionist movement and how the British Empire persisted in shaping Zionist geopolitical thought on the eve of world war. Indeed, the empire and its legacy would continue to shape Jewish politics into the age of partition and beyond.
Chapter 1

Wanderers Between Two Worlds

In late 1923, after nearly five years in Jerusalem, Helen Bentwich (1892-1972) identified a remarkable change in herself. She had been born into one of the most prominent Jewish families in Britain, but had decided in her youth to reject the “distasteful” and inegalitarian religious orthodoxy of her father, in favor of atheism and socialism.\(^{20}\) In 1915, Helen married Norman Bentwich, then a law lecturer at the University of Cairo and soon after a commissioned officer in the British Army. Helen joined Norman in Egypt until 1916, when his post in the Camel Transport Corps took him farther from Cairo, into the Sinai. Helen returned to Britain where she worked as a factory foreman at Woolwich Arsenal in south east London, until she was fired for trying to organize a women’s trade union. She then joined the Women’s Land Army, serving as a welfare officer and riding across southern England to site visits on an unruly motorbike.\(^{21}\) In 1919, Helen left Britain to join her husband in Palestine where he had been appointed Director of Public Prosecutions with the British military administration and would later go on to serve as attorney general under the mandate. She arrived determined to put her socialist ideals and training as a social worker to practical use, confident that cross-cultural cooperation—particularly among women—could help alleviate some of Palestine’s pressing social welfare issues. Living through World War I


had convinced her of the destructiveness of ethno-nationalism, and she disliked the attitude and demeanor of the Zionists she initially encountered. She perceived them as brusque, intransigent, and infuriatingly un-English, an assessment shared by many British officials in Palestine. Despite her husband Norman’s longstanding commitment to Zionism, Helen Bentwich was resolutely not a Zionist.

Less than five years later, Helen realized that many of her opinions—about the feasibility of intercommunal collaboration, about Zionists, and about her place in the British colonial scene which she experienced as increasingly antisemitic—had changed. In October 1923, she wrote:

I find I have got much more sympathy with, & desire for friendship towards, the Jewish people here than before. It’s largely, too, due to their attitude towards me. Formerly, it was Hebrew or nothing; now they are all prepared to talk to me in English, or apologize if they can’t…they want to learn English & meet the English people. When we first came here, the Jews were exclusive & kept to themselves—now it’s the English that do that, & are narrow & bigoted, & the Jews are liberal & progressive. They are, too, the persecuted & downtrodden here in every way, & I feel I like to champion them in the same way as I would Labour at home. They are the most interesting people here; it’s a real joy to talk to men like Rutenberg or Joshua Gordon or Dr. Magnes or Ben Zvi—or Fred [Kisch] & Nurock & Sacher—instead of the ordinary British official & his inanities.22

This circle of friends, with whom Helen had come to find an unanticipated kinship, felt far more familiar to her husband Norman. Born in northwest London into a

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22 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 26, 1923, The Women’s Library at the London School of Economics (hereafter WL), 7HBE/2/7. The individuals Helen Bentwich names include: Pinhas Rutenberg (1879-1942), the Russian engineer and Zionist who established the Palestine Electric Company; Joshua Gordon (1889-1941), a Labor Zionist and senior official in the Jewish Agency; Judah Magnes (1877-1948), the American Reform rabbi, pacifist, advocate of binationalism, and one of the founders of the Hebrew University; Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (1884-1963), the leading Labor Zionist who later served as President of Israel; Frederick Kisch (1888-1943), the Anglo-Jewish first head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, who married Helen’s cousin Ruth Franklin; Max Nurock (1893-1978), an Irish-born Jew who worked for the Zionist Commission, as Herbert Samuel’s private secretary, and later as Israel’s ambassador to Australia—not to be confused with Mordechai “Max” Nurock (1879-1962), the Latvian-born Religious Zionist; and Harry Sacher (1881-1971), a friend from Norman’s youth and the legal advisor to the Palestine Executive who later served as director of the British department store Marks & Spencer.
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religiously observant family, Norman grew up around a circle of Jewish intellectuals, friends of his father Herbert Bentwich who included Solomon Schechter, Israel Zangwill, Moses Gaster, and Lucien Wolf. Herbert, who also practiced law, became an ardent supporter of Zionism in the 1890s and helped to establish the Chovevei Zion movement in England. He imparted this passion to his children; seven of the 11 Bentwich siblings eventually settled in Palestine, including Norman’s sister Rosalind “Nita” Lange, who built a large, castle-like estate with her husband Michael Lange in Zichron Ya’akov in 1912. In addition to Zionism, early defining commitments for Norman included the law, Labour politics, and social work. He spent two summers while in university at the famous settlement house Toynbee Hall, and after being called to the bar as a lawyer in 1906, he and several friends established a Jewish settlement branch in Whitechapel. Though the effort was short-lived, Norman credited his time with the settlement movement for pushing his political leanings “steadily away from the Liberal Party to more radical views.” He and some of his fellow settlement workers, including Leon Simon and Harry Sacher, became disciples of Ahad Ha’am, who had settled in London in 1907.

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26 See Steven J. Zipperstein, Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), esp. 277-315. The scholar Israel Friedlander, married to Norman Bentwich’s sister Lilian, was also a “devoted disciple” of Ahad Ha’am, and translated his Hebrew essays into German. Lilian Bentwich Friedlander, translated some of those into English. Israel Friedlander was murdered by Red cavalry units in Ukraine in 1920 while on a relief mission for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Bentwich, My 77 Years, 22.
Norman’s growing affinity for Labour politics and the influence of Ahad Ha’am were key factors in the maturation of his Zionism, marked by a commitment to the revival of Jewish culture and a rejection “of the demand of each nationality for political sovereignty.” He believed that Zionism should be animated by an “international” and “œcumenical” spirit. A friendship with Judah Magnes, whom he had first met in 1909 while visiting Solomon Schechter in New York, brought Norman further into the circles of Zionist Jews who supported binational and autonomist programs. During his time as attorney general, Norman developed close ties to the binationalist group Brit Shalom, dedicated to Jewish-Arab cooperation, and later became involved in the binationalist political party Ihud. Even into the 1930s and 1940s, when binational and autonomist schemes were attacked as anti-Zionist, Norman argued that “cultural and social autonomy, rather than separate sovereignty, [was] coming to be recognized as the healthy expression of a national idea which can form part of a stable world-order.”

Over the course of Norman’s legal career in Palestine from 1918 to 1930, it became more and more challenging for him to embody simultaneously the roles of Zionist and British official. Arriving in Palestine in December 1917, on the heels of General Allenby, Norman served first as director of public prosecutions under the British military administration. After the transition to a civilian administration in 1920, he was named legal secretary, a post which became attorney general following the official enactment of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1923. Norman remarked that at the beginning of the civilian administration, “in those days of determined hopefulness, the

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28 Bentwich, *Wanderer Between Two Worlds*, 349.
British Government was willing to appoint to senior positions several British Jews.”

But throughout the 1920s, Norman faced increasingly vicious criticism from the Jews, Arabs, and British alike, fielding accusations of disloyalty, betrayal, and partiality from all sides. While on leave in England in late 1930, Norman experienced mounting pressure from the Colonial Office to resign as attorney general; refusing, he was “retired” in 1931. For a year, the Bentwiches resumed civilian life in London. Norman took up barrister’s chambers, while Helen became involved in local and national Labour politics. In early 1932, an offer for Norman to join the faculty at the Hebrew University would allow the couple to return part-time to Jerusalem. With the rise of Nazism, both Helen and Norman became involved in Jewish refugee work. Norman served as director of the League of Nation’s Commission on Jewish Refugees from Germany; Helen organized the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany and was instrumental in planning the Kindertransport.

Norman, an ardent Anglo-Jewish Zionist and the attorney general of Mandate Palestine, makes an obvious choice of focus for a project examining the centrality of the British Empire to the interwar Jewish political imagination. As we shall see in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 3, Norman was forced to disentangle his role as a British mandatory official with his visions of Jewish political futures, all the while basing those visions on British Commonwealth models of nationhood. But it is Helen—a non-Zionist—who in fact emerges as the heart of this chapter. Helen’s long, vivid, and expressive letters home to her mother, which she wrote regularly over the course of

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29 Bentwich, My 77 Years, 67.
nearly 12 years in Jerusalem, provide a window into the tensions she and Norman experienced in Palestine as they negotiated their relationship to the Zionist movement and navigated their identities as Jews, Britons, and colonial actors. While Norman wrote in his memoirs about the challenges of “wandering between worlds,” Helen’s letters go beyond abstraction, detailing the ways that everyday life—friendships, daily routines, meetings, committees, lunches, teas, clubs, and recreational sports—shaped this journey. In this companionate and egalitarian (as well as childless) marriage, Helen prided herself on being a modern, educated, and politically active woman.31 She was a keen observer of British mandatory society in Palestine and an impassioned critic of British colonial standards of femininity. Through Helen’s voice, we are able to recover the textured, daily aspect of her and Norman’s shared experience as Anglo-Jews in Palestine confronting Jewish national ideals amidst a shifting British imperial landscape. Helen’s letters, written from daughter to mother, exude a quality of intimacy and read like an on-going, animated conversation. At the same time, there is little doubt that Helen hoped that her letters—which emphasized her political convictions, her frustrations with the norms of 1920s femininity, and (eventually) her exasperation over British antisemitism in Palestine—would reflect a sense of her own exceptionality for posterity. She and Norman later included many excerpts from the letters in their co-authored memoir, Mandate Memories.32

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31 In this respect, the Bentwiches resembled another Labour marriage—that of Sidney and Beatice Webb. Both (though Sidney in particularly) would earn the resentment of the Zionist movement following the issuing of the Passfield White Paper in 1930. For more on the Webbs, see Lisanne Radice, Beatrice and Sidney Webb: Fabian Socialists (London: Macmillan, 1984).

Helen’s lively and insightful letters reveal how gender transformed the ways she—as a colonial wife, social worker, and supporter of Labour—experienced British and Jewish, as well as Arab society in Palestine. Her mutually constitutive commitments to gender equality, socialism and the Labour Party, and social work—which shaped her time in Palestine—developed at a young age. In her memoir, Helen recalls being a “troublesome child” who “resented the differences made” between her three brothers and herself. She daydreamed about being a boy and when reprimanded for disobedience, would retort, “I’d be all right if I were a boy.” Helen’s older sister Alice Franklin (1885-1964), an active feminist and suffragette, served during Helen’s youth as honorary secretary of the Utopians, led by H.G. Wells. Helen, then an “untidy schoolgirl,” would “creep in at the back, unnoticed,” to watch the meetings, instead of doing her homework. At fourteen, she declared herself a socialist, too, and grew self-conscious of bringing friends home to such “unnecessary opulence.”

Helen’s brother Hugh Franklin (1889-1962), a militant suffragist active in the Women’s Social and Political Union, served stints in prison for attacking Winston Churchill in 1910, for throwing stones at Churchill’s house in 1911, and for setting fire to a railway carriage in 1912. Along with his wife Elsie Duval, Hugh undertook hunger strikes in prison and was subjected to force-feeding. The couple—with Hugh dressed as a woman—escaped to continental Europe in order to avoid further arrest before World War I. Helen’s early forays into social work and community volunteering were directed by her sister Alice, who set Helen up as a Girl Guides leader at a school next door to Toynbee Hall. Helen later enrolled at

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33 Bentwich, If I Forget Thee, 3.
34 Hugh Franklin attacked Churchill following the latter’s violent crackdown on suffragettes on Black Friday.
35 Bentwich, If I Forget Thee, 10-11.
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Bedford College in a four-term course in social hygiene and subsequently worked at the West Central Jewish Girls’ Club in Soho, founded by her cousin Lily Montagu.\textsuperscript{36} Helen felt “deeply shocked” by prostitution in Soho, an issue she would encounter again in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{37} At the beginning of the war, before marrying Norman and joining him in Cairo, Helen continued working for the West Central Club, teaching and performing home visits. In a letter to Norman, Helen wrote that in “Relief Work” in London, “the resultant mixture of old-fashioned charity and an attempt at socialism is really comic.” At the West Central Club, about 1,000 girls, who otherwise would have been unemployed, did garment work and received Trades Board wages. The club was forbidden from taking private orders and had “to take any girls the Labour Exchange” sent. “That is all Socialism,” Helen explained. But middle- and upper-class women also volunteered, occupying positions that could easily have been filled by “out-of-work professionals,” and did work in “cosy little suburban groups” that should have been done in the urban workrooms.\textsuperscript{38} This convergence of old-fashioned charity and socialism was in fact integral to Helen’s own Labour politics. While Helen was troubled by class inequality and was at times self-conscious of her family’s wealth, she was chiefly concerned with


\textsuperscript{37} Bentwich, \textit{If I Forget Thee}, 8-9.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 30-32. For more on Helen Bentwich’s work in education and social work before and after her time in Palestine, see Jane Martin, “Beyond Suffrage: Feminism, Education and the Politics of Class in the Inter-War Years,” \textit{British Journal of Sociology of Education} 29, no. 4, (2008): 411-423.
bringing efficient, modern administration to the work of managing vulnerable populations and organizing women, rather than the end of capital.\footnote{39 In this sense, her politics align with the Fabians, though she never identified explicitly as one.}

Norman’s own writings indicate that he agreed with Helen on many issues of women’s equality. He was adamant, for instance, on gender equality in Jewish ritual and prayer, and he also encouraged his wife in her political activism (which progressed in earnest after the couple’s return to Britain in 1930). Norman acknowledged that during the 1920s, Helen had been permitted to be only a “passive socialist, restrained by [his] official trammels.”\footnote{40 Bentwich, \textit{Wanderer Between Two Worlds}, 203.} Not insignificantly, Norman married Helen knowing she supported her brother Hugh Franklin (1889-1962), whose militant activism caused tremendous embarrassment to Helen’s parents and resulted in detectives being posted outside their home.

Helen’s record of her time in Jerusalem does not merely fill in the picture or provide a more detailed, multidimensional, nuanced lens into her shared story with Norman, however. Born into a family that included Herbert Samuel, the Zionist first high commissioner of Palestine, and Edwin Samuel Montagu, the anti-Zionist secretary of state for India, Helen traveled along the interstices of Anglo-Jewish attitudes towards Jewish nationalism. Traversing non-Zionist, anti-Zionist, Labor Zionist, Cultural Zionist, and Binationalist Zionist circles, her experience was emblematic of the tight, interconnected, and contentious nature of Jewish nationalist politics in Britain. During her time in Palestine, Helen came to find herself more at home in Jewish circles than in British circles. And despite continuing to identify as a non-Zionist, she grew to empathize with Zionism (particularly the binationalist Zionism of her husband) and support Zionist...
efforts, especially in the realm of social welfare efforts. This personal background and journey—which Helen did not share with Norman—stands as testament to the complex convergence of interwar Zionist and non-Zionist visions of Jewish political futures, especially in the space of the British Empire where Jews with diverse political convictions confronted the same horizon of uncertainty amidst the rise of anticolonial nationalisms.

This chapter builds on recent work highlighting the multiplicity of Jewish nationalist expression, both within and beyond Zionism. While Jewish historiography has previously treated Zionism as the chief expression of Jewish nationalism during the first half of the twentieth century, scholars have recently shown that the Jewish encounter with modern nationalist ideas in fact gave life to a diverse range of robust visions of non-statist Jewish political futures including diaspora nationalism and autonomism.\(^41\) Furthermore, Jewish historians have examined non-statist, universalist movements within Zionism, particularly the binationalist Brit Shalom group.\(^42\) While these accounts have generally treated binationalist Zionism as exceptional within the broader Zionist movement, Dimitry Shumsky has argued that the autonomist idea—in the Palestine context, that Jews and Arabs would each have autonomy under one broader political


unit—was actually central to Zionist political thought in the interwar period. Along their journey, the Bentwiches became important participants in, and astute observers of, Zionist circles that did not consider the “state” to be the primary goal of Zionism, or that even shunned the statist ideal altogether. Whereas scholars have previously stressed the Central European origins of non-statist and binationalist Zionism, the Bentwiches represent an entirely different path to these politics, forged out of British Labour ideals and British Commonwealth conceptions of nationhood. Their visions of Jewish political futures were incubated in a space where the warring parties of Herzl and Ahad Ha’am, encapsulating the divide between political and cultural Zionism, in fact found common followers, where single families—like Helen’s—embodied the spectrum of Jewish nationalist sentiment; and where ties to British Labour made for strange Zionist bedfellows. Studying the Bentwiches’ connection to Zionism—and its British geneses—helps to reverse the Jewish historiographical trend that treats Britain as unimportant to Jewish political and intellectual development. As this chapter and larger project show, Britain—its history, culture, language, gender dynamics, and politics—in fact played a critical role in the ways that Zionists imagined Jewish political futures. Beyond its British and non-statist features, the Bentwiches’ relationship to Zionism—and

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44 Norman Bentwich cites both Herzl and Ahad Ha’am as critical figures in bringing him closer to Zionism.

45 On this last point, after the Bentwiches returned to England in 1930, Helen helped introduce the Revisionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky to some leaders in the Labour Party. Both Jabotinsky and the Bentwiches shared an admiration for and friendship with Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, a Labour MP who proposed that Palestine become a British dominion. For more on this scheme, see Chapter 2.

indeed their marriage itself—evidences the complex connections and convergence between non-Zionist and Zionist visions of Jewish political futures.

Social Work and Social Worlds

When Helen Bentwich reached Jerusalem in late January 1919—one of the first British wives to join her husband—she immediately began investigating what pressing social welfare issues she might address. The war had disrupted the networks of economic support on which civilians in Palestine relied. Forced expulsions by the Ottomans had left civilian populations from Gaza, Jaffa, and Tel Aviv scattered and living in squalor. Hunger and disease were rampant across the country. By the time General Allenby marched on foot into Jerusalem in December 1917, the city had been living in desperate conditions for four years. Following the conquest, Ronald Storrs, the military governor of Jerusalem, organized food distribution and rationing, and groups including the Syrian Relief Fund, the American Zionist Organization, and the American Red Cross helped supply further aid which eased the immediate humanitarian crisis. When Helen arrived just over a year later in January 1919, she was pleased to note that Jerusalem appeared on the track towards modernization, with “motor cars & lorries tearing through the streets day & night; clean & decent bazaars inside the walls; and law & order everywhere.”

Only a year earlier, there had not been a single private car in the city.

Despite these improvements, there was no shortage of urgent welfare needs. Soon after her arrival, Helen set up a meeting with Annie Landau, the Anglo-Jewish

48 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 27, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
headmistresses of the Evelina de Rothschild School in Jerusalem, in order to discuss where Landau thought Helen might be most useful. Landau, whom Helen had first met in 1914, was regarded as a fixture of Jerusalem life. “Miss Landau is the one feature of Jerusalem that has undergone no change,” Helen wrote to her mother. Landau had come to Jerusalem in 1899 to take a teaching position at the Anglo-Jewish Association’s Evelina de Rothschild School, the city’s first school for girls, and had been appointed its headmistress the following year. The school accepted both Ashkenazi and Sephardi students of diverse economic backgrounds and offered a modern curriculum taught in Hebrew and English, to the disapproval of both Orthodox Jews (who opposed the secular curriculum) and secular Zionists (who wanted only Hebrew instruction). “Domestic science” was also included in the curriculum, preparing pupils for employment as practical nurses after graduation. Exiled in Alexandria during the war, Landau had returned to Jerusalem in February 1918—the first foreign woman allowed to reenter the city—determined to reopen the school she had been forced to shutter the previous year. Many of the students who had attended the school on scholarship were left unsupervised; some were forced to live on the streets. Landau came back armed with several tons of food and clothing—donations from the school’s benefactors Jack Mosseri and Sir Elly Kadoorie. With the help of Ronald Storrs, Landau reopened her school three months after her return, reenrolling 500 girls. At the ceremony marking the occasion, Storrs was

51 Ibid., 46.
52 Jack Mosseri (1884-1934), born to a wealthy Egyptian Jewish family, was an early supporter of political Zionism, a rare position among the Egyptian Jewish elite. He and Norman Bentwich had been close friends during the latter’s time in Cairo. Elly Kadoorie (1867-1944), born to a Baghdadi Jewish family in India, worked for David Sassoon & Co. in Shanghai. He later became an active philanthropist, funding educational initiatives in the Middle East and Asia. He died in a Japanese prison camp in Shanghai during World War II.
given an English poem written by the students which paid thanks to Britain’s wartime sacrifices. It included the verses, “We love our land of Palestine/And England we love too,/The land that’s fighting hard to make/A home for every Jew.”\textsuperscript{53} At the event, where he witnessed the students’ impressive knowledge of English, Storrs became convinced that graduates of Landau’s school would make excellent clerks at the offices of the military government, known as the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA). Landau began offering a course on shorthand to prepare her students for the work. It was the beginning of a long partnership between Landau and British authorities that moved beyond the professional into the convivial; as we will see, her parties became a locus of elite Jerusalem life during the interwar period.

Landau, an Englishwoman committed to girls’ education and protection who had ties to the OETA, made an obvious first contact for Helen in Jerusalem. At their meeting, which lasted “2 hours nearly” as Landau “poured forth conversation,” Helen learned that “a Rescue home…[was] badly needed for the bad girls in Jerusalem to be sent to.”\textsuperscript{54} Hunger, homelessness, and the thousands of occupying British troops stationed in Jerusalem meant that prostitution had become a major concern in the city.\textsuperscript{55} In 1919, there were approximately 500 prostitutes in Jerusalem, the majority of whom were

\textsuperscript{53} Quoted in Schor, \textit{The Best School in Jerusalem}, 84.
\textsuperscript{54} Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 27, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
Jewish.\textsuperscript{56} Though feminist efforts led by Josephine Butler successfully repealed the Contagious Diseases Acts in the British metropole in 1886, legalized regulated prostitution was still permitted in other reaches of the empire. British authorities were confident that the policing of women’s bodies would both accommodate soldiers’ needs and control the spread of venereal disease.\textsuperscript{57} In Jerusalem, Major General Alfred, the head of OETA, identified the neighborhood of Nahalat Shiv’a and the Milner Houses in Mea Shearim, both near the Evelina de Rothschild School, as regulated sites for prostitution. Jewish responses to the situation varied; some ultra-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem vehemently denied the very existence of Jewish prostitutes, while Chaim Weizmann and other Zionist leaders recognized the need to deal with the issue.\textsuperscript{58}

Mirroring nineteenth-century efforts by nonconformist middle-class English women to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, elite Jerusalem women from different communities came together to form the Social Service Association (also known as the Welfare Society) aimed at putting an end to legalized prostitution, as well as alleviating the causes. The effort was spearheaded by Salmah Salameh, an Orthodox Christian


\textsuperscript{58} See Shilo, “Women as Victims of War.” Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) was the leader of the Zionist movement during the interwar period, serving as president of the Zionist Organization from 1921-1931 and again from 1935-1946. Born near Pinsk, Weizmann moved to Britain in 1904 to join the faculty of the chemistry department at the University of Manchester. During World War I, he developed a process that used bacterial fermentation to make acetone, a substance that was essential in the production of explosive propellants. The invention, which played a significant role in the war effort, placed him in touch with important British politicians.
Palestinian Arab; Marianne Hoofien, a Dutch Jew married to the director of the Anglo-Palestine Bank; and Bertha Spafford Vester, leader of the American Colony.\textsuperscript{59}

Helen soon joined the group, and while she was emboldened by the cross-cultural cooperation, she initially felt frustrated at what she perceived to be the group’s lack of concrete action. Efforts had been stymied by lack of funding; Helen had approached the Zionist Commission only to be told there was no money to spare. “So there’s nothing to do but talk & talk & talk,” she reported. At a meeting of the Social Service Association in June 1919 hosted by Janet MacInnes, the wife of the Jerusalem Anglican Bishop, Helen observed that “females from all sects & communities in Jerusalem” were present to discuss the rescue home and plans to file a request with the OETA to “stop licensing bad houses.”\textsuperscript{60} But “as usual here, it was mostly talk,” she wrote, adding, “I didn’t do any, because nearly all the talk was done by Jewish women, & I wanted to show that one, at least, could keep quiet.” When Janet MacInnes went on leave to England, Helen took over her work. She reported to her mother in July 1919 that “We are hoping to open a rescue home quite soon—undenominational, but all run kosher, with an English or American head.” Instead of seeking substantial funding from a sponsoring organizing, the Social Service Association switched tactics, “trying to collect funds from the population…asking for a minimum of [two shillings] a month from everyone.”\textsuperscript{61} Finally, the rescue home was opened in the fall of 1920, with Helen in the role of chair of the Association. The home also included a large garden, where Helen eagerly put her

\textsuperscript{59} The American Colony was founded in 1881 by members of a Christian utopian society from Chicago.
\textsuperscript{60} Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, June 3, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
\textsuperscript{61} Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, July 15, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
wartime Land Army experience to practical use (though she experienced the frustration of plants “growing down instead of up” during periods of drought).\(^6\)

Helen’s social work activities in Palestine represented both a manifestation of her British Labour values and practices learned in the metropole and a contravention of expected British colonial standards of femininity. Returning to many of her wartime pursuits in Palestine (specifically farming and social work), she also once again donned more masculine clothing. During the war, Helen had traveled around the country sporting rain slacks, a waterproof cape, and a sou’wester hat; in Palestine—despite her mother’s chiding—she resolved to wear breeches, which she found best suited for “gardening and long walks.”\(^6\) Helen’s work in Palestine made her feel that she was not “just existing as a useless female,” as she once put it in a 1914 letter to Norman.\(^6\) Just as Norman had understood his involvement in the settlement movement to be the critical factor in his political conversion to Labour, Helen, too, saw her social work activities as manifestations of her commitment to British Labour and women’s rights. Yet the female networks that Helen encountered through her social work in Palestine were ones that had largely been established before British rule, including Christian missionaries, the wives of businessmen working for Zionist enterprises like the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and urban Arab elites. Helen was notable among the wives of British officials in Palestine for participating in efforts that moved her beyond the spheres of domesticity and leisure.\(^6\)

Historians of the British Empire, particularly British India, have argued that British

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\(^6\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 12, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
\(^6\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, December 5, 1924, WL 7HBE/2/8. Lucy Adlington, *Great War Fashion: Tales from the History Wardrobe* (Stroud: The History Press), 213.
\(^6\) Helen Bentwich, *If I Forget Thee*, 31.
\(^6\) Abigail Jacobson challenges the dichotomy between Ottoman and British rule that has shaped scholarship on Jerusalem, showing that social and political alliances that bridged ethnic and religious divides often persisted between the two. Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*. 
women’s domestic roles, as keepers of their home in charge of a cast of native servants, were viewed as critical to maintaining and reproducing colonial power. Furthermore, the average memsahib (white woman in India) not only did not participate in social work, but also had little knowledge of, or was expressly unsympathetic towards, contemporary women’s political movements. Helen found the societal expectations imposed on her as the wife of a British official to be trying. “It is rotten that just because you marry your whole atmosphere has to get bounded by a house & domestics. They monopolize one’s life & interests,” she complained in a letter to her mother. “I find I have no drawing-room conversation,” she reported in another missive, “so I entertain my guests chiefly with what it feels like to be a factory-hand, & the easiest way of hoeing turnips.” After begging her mother to send her a “manual on social etiquette,” she eventually felt that she could “manage most of the ladylike business.” “But afternoon-tea at home with callers beats me,” she wrote. “I always retreat into the kitchen to see if the water is boiling.”

Helen’s social work activities also reflected her elite Anglo-Jewish upbringing. “There was a strong tradition in the Anglo-Jewish community that members of the wealthier families should devote some of their time to helping those who were less fortunate,” she wrote in her memoir. These efforts, which saw wealthy Jews from west and northwest London volunteer in the East End of the city, were replicated by Jews in other reaches of the empire, though on a significantly smaller scale. Wealthy Baghdadi

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68 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, June 3, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
69 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, February 6, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
70 Glynn, Tidings from Zion, 21; Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 28, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
71 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 28, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
72 Bentwich, If I Forget Thee, 8.
Jews in Calcutta and Bombay, for instance, helped to settle and provide for Ashkenazi Jewish refugees who began to arrive in India in the 1930s. These charitable practices were pursued in part to alleviate the embarrassing presence of poor, unassimilated Jews. But as we have seen, British Labourites like Helen and Norman considered volunteering in the East End to be important social work with political underpinnings. These metropolitan Anglo-Jewish efforts developed in tandem with Zionist discourses about the westernizing power of hygiene. Helen’s early social work in Jerusalem, which relied on similar discourses around hygiene and modernity, took place in a window of time when British power was still being solidified in Palestine; when elite networks established before the British conquest still had considerable agency; and when the development of Jewish and Arab nationalisms had not yet precluded cross-cultural cooperation. Later, British mandate authorities’ unwillingness to invest in these welfare initiatives and their inclination to delegate work to independent agencies, meant that Zionist and Arab social welfare infrastructures would become increasingly bifurcated and insular.

Helen’s experiences with Zionists during her first few years in Jerusalem confirmed many of her negative preconceived attitudes. Soon after her arrival, she paid a visit to the Zionist Commission with the hope of speaking with Dr. David Eder about welfare schemes. A British psychoanalyst from a well-to-do Anglo-Jewish family and a cousin of Israel Zangwill, Eder had been appointed by Weizmann to the newly-formed Zionist Commission the previous year. Norman considered him an “old friend” from his

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youth. Any expectation of speaking with a familiar like-minded countryman about the welfare of girls was dashed when Helen learned that Eder was away in London. Instead, she was confronted with a Zionist official whose bedraggled state and lack of English-language skills likely immediately elicited her disdain. “I had a long talk with a hairy old man called Kahn through an interpreter,” she wrote to her mother, “he saying I must learn Hebrew first, & me saying that the lives of babies & the souls of girls were more important, & that I meant to get going on that right away.” Helen found Zionists’ insistence on using Hebrew—which she did not speak—to be a significant frustration. When her social work with girls commenced, she wrote to her mother, “I know I should talk to the girls in Hebrew, but I don’t seem to be able to learn any. What with having learnt an Ashkenazi pronunciation before, & some Arabic since, I can’t get hold of this Hebrew here at all. So—prepare for a shock—I find I get on quite nicely in Yiddish.”

Helen saw the insistence on Hebrew as reflective of what she considered to be broader Zionist political intransigence, disorganization, and self-defeating behavior—the very opposite of the modern, streamlined welfare management on which she considered herself an expert. She found the Zionist Commission to be 

the worst run organization with the most unsuitable personnel it has ever been my lot to strike. They have no records of relief, no proper investigators, no proper division of the city, no correlation between the departments of giving relief to orphans, men, girls, widows, or medical, & so there is absolute chaos, & much wasting of money.

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74 Bentwich, *Wanderer Between Two Worlds*, 95.
75 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 27, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
76 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, March 3, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3. Helen likely managed in Yiddish because of German lessons at school, and because of her experience working in the East End of London. Modern Hebrew uses a pronunciation based on Sephardi rather than Ashkenazi Hebrew. Helen’s mother would have been shocked about her daughter’s ability to speak Yiddish because it was the language of the unassimilated, impoverished Jewish immigrant population of the East End—and most certainly not the language of the Anglicized and wealthy established Jewish community.
77 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, February 6, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.
When the Bentwiches attended a concert given by the OETA in March 1919, Helen reported on “the usual ‘incident’ without which nothing [in] Jerusalem is able to take place.” At the end of the concert, the British in attendance expected the orchestra to play “God Save the King,” and so rose from their seats in anticipation. When the song ended up being the Zionist anthem “Hatikvah,” General Money ordered his men to sit down. “Of course, Britishers only stand up for ‘God Save the King,’” wrote Helen, “or else they’d be always on their feet what with Ireland, Judea, Yugoslavia, & [Czechoslovakia] & all these other self-determined nations.”\(^7\) Annie Landau, who was seated next to a group of British officers “sat down automatically with them” though “entirely by accident.”\(^8\) Marianne Hoofien, one of the founding members of the Social Service Association, and other Zionists “were so incensed” by this (unintentional) slight, that they “decided to boycott” Landau’s upcoming party.\(^9\)

Helen lamented that “nothing can be done here without politics,” referring to the contentiousness developing between competing Jewish and Arab nationalist claims. Her “aim & object in life [was] to keep out” of politics, Helen wrote to her mother, but she found her work continually thwarted by political disagreements.\(^1\) During a period of drought, when Helen tried to find suitable employment for Jerusalem girls in a sector besides gardening, she decided to rule out factory work because it was “so hard to get a Jew & Moslem & Christian to work side by side.” After meeting with C.R. Ashbee, the English designer and Jerusalem civic planner, to discuss post-drought garden plans, Helen bemoaned the challenges of social work in Palestine:

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\(^7\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, March 20, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.  
\(^8\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, March 22, 1919, WL 7HBE 2/3.  
\(^9\) Ibid.
I’m keen to take part, but since then politics & other difficulties have thrust themselves in so I may have to back out...I’ll dig & plant for them, with pleasure, if it can only be done on a simple, straightforward footing but it’s awfully hard to do anything here, & I think, as an official’s wife, I’d have done best to have kept absolutely clear of everything, & not attempted any work. The others have done that, & it seems the wisest course. I’d like to hand it all over to someone but there is nobody handy.\textsuperscript{82}

The frustration Helen experienced over dealing with competing nationalist politics during her first year in Palestine was soon eclipsed by the major upheavals and changes of 1920: the fallout from the Nebi Musa riots and the announcement of the British Mandate for Palestine in April; the arrival of Helen’s uncle Herbert Samuel as high commissioner at the end of June; the beginning of the civilian administration in Palestine, replacing the military one, in July; and Helen’s ever increasing awareness of antisemitism among the British in Palestine. The Bentwiches had spent the first four months of 1920 on leave in England, away from Palestine during the Nebi Musa riots. On the first day of the riots, Ze’ev Jabotinsky and Pinhas Rutenberg had approached Ronald Storrs to demand that Jewish defense forces be allowed into the Old City to protect Jewish homes and shops from Arab rioters.\textsuperscript{83} Storrs learned at the time that both men were armed. The following day, as the riots continued, British authorities searched Weizmann’s home and the Zionist Commission; two days later, on the final day of the

\textsuperscript{82} Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 12, 1919, WL 4HBE 2/3.

riots, authorities found a small weapons cache in Jabotinsky’s residence. Nineteen members of the Haganah, the fledgling Jewish paramilitary force, were arrested, as was Jabotinsky. In a typical British conflation of Zionism and Bolshevism, a subsequent military inquiry accused Jabotinsky, whose Zionism was anything but socialist, of stirring up insidious Bolshevist passion. Jabotinsky initially received 15 years of penal servitude; the 19 Haganah members were each sentenced to three years. After a public backlash in Palestine and Britain, the sentences were reduced to one year for Jabotinsky and six months for the other men.84 Helen and Norman returned to Palestine at the end of April 1920. They arrived on the very day the assignment of the mandate to Britain was announced at the San Remo Conference, as Jewish anger towards the British flared, spurred on by a deep sense of betrayal for what had transpired during and after the riots.

Helen criticized the British response to the riots, particularly the lessening of prison sentences, and compared the whole situation to Ireland. “One day Jabotinsky…gets 15 years imprisonment for having arms, & many others 3 years each—& today we hear he’s gone down to 1 year, & the others 6 months—& all will probably be commuted,” she wrote. “It’s undignified of the British to get the wind up in this way—but it’s Ireland over again, only too plainly. ‘We are not ruled by murderers, but only by their friends,’” she concluded, quoting Kipling’s poem “Cleared!”85 The poem was written in response to the Parnell Commission (1888-1889), the judicial inquiry into whether the Irish MP Charles Stewart Parnell was guilty of condoning the assassination of two British officials in Dublin (known as the Phoenix Park Murders). When evidence against Parnell was determined to have been forged, he was acquitted of the more serious charges—a

84 Herbert Samuel would commute all the sentences once he took office.
85 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 30, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
decision Kipling protested in his poem and which Helen implicitly compared to the lessening of Jabotinsky’s sentence.\(^{86}\) Helen’s dislike of Zionists in Palestine certainly colored her assessment of the riots, though she also did not object to the use of military force more broadly. Of her service during the war, Helen wrote that while she was a socialist, she was “never a pacifist.”\(^{87}\) Furthermore, her criticism of weak-willed British imperial policy and even her outright championing of Kipling was hardly anathema to Labour supporters in England, many of whom had condoned the British response to the Easter Rising in Ireland four years earlier and had failed to see the struggle as an anti-imperialist one.

Helen felt increasingly concerned that the volunteer commitments that had occupied her time before her leave in England, hindered as they often were by disagreement and inaction, were not truly making a contribution to Palestine. “I am very tired of all the charity work,” she told her mother. “It’s not a real life for a wife—only for the men who are actually doing things. Petticoat influence…is not much my line, is it? I hate not being something myself—only being it as Norman’s wife. In England one is not like that, but it’s always that here,” she wrote.\(^{88}\) Helen was pleased at the arrival of her aunt and uncle Beatrice and Herbert Samuel in the summer of 1920 and hoped that Herbert would use his position as high commissioner to encourage women to work together on important issues. “If he gives us women a status—not social, but public & national—apart from our husbands, we will bless him for evermore,” she wrote to her mother. “After all, you’re not ‘Arthur Franklin’s wife’ in Aylesbury, are you? I’m always


\(^{87}\) Bentwich, *If I Forget Thee*, 9.

\(^{88}\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, July 5, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
‘Col. Bentwich’s wife’ here.” With the beginning of the civilian administration in July 1920, Norman went from “Col. Bentwich” to “plain Mr Bentwich” when he was appointed legal secretary. With the realization that they would remain in Palestine for the foreseeable future, Helen redoubled her efforts to organize women. The influx of British administrators and their wives created a more robust social scene in Palestine, giving rise to clubs and societies that resembled associational life elsewhere in the empire.

That summer, Helen helped to found one such club—the Jerusalem Ladies’ Club, of which she served as chair. Though she objected to the name—“I hate being branded a lady,” she wrote—she was hopeful that the club might serve as a space where women of different cultural backgrounds (though of similar social standing) could come together. “It’ll make all the difference to the women to have something in common,” she wrote, “& after I’ve given them a few home truths at the next meeting, the lions & the lambs, I am sure, will never get up from lying together.” The “usual difficulty over languages” presented itself, but Helen reported that “we’ve decided to be officially tri-lingual.” The club’s newspaper, the New Jerusalem, was published in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. The membership demographic resembled that of the Social Service Association—an assortment of Jews, missionaries, and various other Europeans and Americans, with Arab

89 Ibid.
90 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, July 9, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
92 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 6, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
93 Uncomfortable or unpleasant facts.
94 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, August 30, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
95 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 6, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
women harder to attract. Helen noted that only “one Moslem lady” but “lots of Jewish ones” came to a lunch she hosted in November 1920. Over the next year, she became frustrated by growing complaints from the European and British contingent that the club was becoming “too Jewish”:

Mrs. Garstang is my latest effort as an enemy. She resigns the Club Committee under the plea that criticisms are made that the club is ‘too Jewish’, & so she wishes to give up her position of responsibility on the Committee. Cat! It’s all because I was elected chairman & she wasn’t last year. We are too Jewish because we had a Hebrew lecture (they forgot about the Moslem one too) & because so many Jewish people & not ‘British’ ones come to them. There are such a lot of English people one can’t meet on equal terms now, because of their antisemitism.

Antisemitism among the British, what Helen referred to as “pureblind bigotry,” became increasingly apparent to her in this period; it was often in these new social spaces such as the Ladies’ Club that anti-Jewish bias became most apparent. Helen complained to her mother that “most of [the British] are so very outspokenly anti-Jewish now, that it makes it rather difficult…The things they say are too absurd…They can’t believe that what they think isn’t the right thing for English people to think.”

In December 1920, Helen returned her focus to social work when she proposed forming a “Council of 8”—a committee of eight democratically-elected Jerusalem women tasked with advising the British Administration on welfare issues and acting as “an intermediary & progressive body, between the government & charities.” To Helen’s delight, the idea received the support of Beatrice and Herbert Samuel. The first

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96 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, November 16, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
97 Mrs. Garstang was married to John Garstang (1876-1956), head of the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem (1919-1926), and director of the Mandate’s Department of Antiquities (1920-1926).
98 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, June 26, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.
99 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, May 9, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
100 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 14, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.
101 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, December 14, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
meeting was held in January 1921. Women from “all organizations over Palestine” were asked to participate. Helen reported that the “usual language question” inspired a lively meeting, with her Aunt Beatrice in the chair who “weathered it well.”\footnote{Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 14, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.} In addition to Beatrice, Marianne Hoofien, Henrietta Szold and Sofie Berger (later Mohl), an American who worked with the Red Cross and with Szold at Hadassah, were the Jewish women elected to the Council.\footnote{Henrietta Szold (1860-1945), born in Baltimore, founded Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, in 1912. Hadassah, with Szold at the helm, led the charge in establishing a healthcare system in Mandate Palestine.} The others included Effie Newton, a missionary from Haifa who had been in Palestine since the Ottoman period and whom Norman called “incurably anti-Jewish”; Bertha Vester of the American Colony; Janet MacInnes, the wife of the Anglican Bishop; and Jane Hope Grierson, a Scottish missionary and teacher at the Tabeetha School in Jaffa.\footnote{Bentwich and Bentwich, Mandate Memories, 65.} Helen was pleased with the parity of election results—“Most fortunately 4 of each”—but found her appointment as honorary secretary “rather a stiffer job than [she] bargained for.”\footnote{Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 14, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.} At a later date, two Arab women—one Muslim and one Christian—were elected to the council. The issue of languages continued to cause conflict even when a tri-lingual policy of English, Arabic, and Hebrew was observed. For instance, Helen created a letterhead for the group with the “National Council of Women of Palestine” written in the three languages where the Hebrew translation used “Eretz Yisrael” (“The Land of Israel”) instead of Palestine. “Immediately there was a violent outcry from Miss Newton, who threatened to resign,” Helen recounted. Beatrice suggested that only English be used on the letterhead as most correspondence would be sent abroad, upon which the other women—“with some demur from the Jewish
members”—agreed. The group picked the issue of prison reform to tackle first. They also concerned themselves more broadly with the issue of women’s status in Palestine, and were consulted by the British Administration over relevant laws. Helen reported that reaching a consensus among women with such different cultural backgrounds was challenging. Fixing the age of consent, for example, proved contentious.106

For Helen, the year following the beginning of the civilian administration in July 1920 was filled both with new efforts to organize women, and with an increasing awareness of the challenges of intercommunal work and of growing antisemitism among the British. She resented the gossip she found was becoming ever more endemic to elite life in Palestine, particularly in the tight-knit British community. “Any unusual remark one makes is repeated everywhere & comes back on every side,” she told her mother.107 Though she cursed the fact that “nothing can be done here without politics” when she first arrived to Palestine, Helen came to resent the difficulty of discussing her political commitments with the British.108 Talk often veered into antisemitic territory, and the conflation of Bolshevism and Zionism was a well-worn theme. “Never to say what you think of politics, or you’ll be called a Bolshevik; hardly ever to mention a good book or poem without being called an ‘intellectual’ or ‘highbrow’; never to rag109 or you are called unconventional & undignified,” she vented in a letter.110 The year was also marred by personal loss for the Bentwiches. In July 1920, while on a relief mission for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Norman’s brother-in-law Israel

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106 Bentwich and Bentwich, Mandate Memories, 65-66.
107 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, August 20, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
108 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, August 20, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
109 To joke around in a boisterous way.
110 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, August 20, 1920, WL 7HBE 2/4.
Friedlander and Rabbi Bernard Cantor were murdered in western Ukraine by Red cavalry units, who mistook them for Polish officers.\textsuperscript{111} Norman’s widowed sister Lilian and her six children would move to Palestine two years later, following another tragedy—the death of Norman’s sister Nita Lange—to take over Nita’s estate in Zichron Ya’akov. But the year had occasion for celebration, too—an engagement and a marriage. In October 1920, Norman’s sister Thelma, who had recently moved to Palestine, announced her engagement to Eleazar Yellin, the oldest son of education pioneer David Yellin, one of the first prominent figures of the “Old Yishuv” to announce his support of Zionism.\textsuperscript{112} In December, Edwin Samuel, Herbert and Beatrice Samuel’s son and Helen’s cousin, married Hadassah Grasovsky. The bride, who was raised in Jaffa, was born into a prominent Zionist family that had come to Palestine in 1887 during the First Aliyah. Her father Yehuda Grasovsky (later Gur), an early advocate of Hebrew alongside Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, had worked with David Yellin to compile Hebrew dictionaries. Edwin Samuel had come to Palestine before his father, serving as the liaison between the British army and the Zionist Commission.\textsuperscript{113} Thelma’s engagement and Edwin’s marriage served to embed the Bentwiches further into Yishuv society, into a tight-knit social circle of Palestine’s Zionist elite, in a period when they were feeling increasingly ostracized and frustrated by British antisemitism.

In May 1921, while Helen’s parents Caroline and Arthur Franklin were on a visit to Palestine, riots erupted in Jaffa. A May Day procession of Jewish communists

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\textsuperscript{112} For more on Thelma Bentwich Yellin, see Margery Bentwich, \textit{Thelma Yellin: Pioneer Musician} (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1964).
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marching from Jaffa to Tel Aviv clashed with a separate group of Labor Zionist Ahdut ha-Avodah supporters. Police fired into the air to try to stop the fight, causing nearby Arabs to think the Jews were firing at them. Riots ensued in Jaffa over the next three days, focused particularly in the mixed Jewish and Arab quarter of Manshiyya. Later the unrest spread to surrounding moshavot (rural Jewish settlements), where Jews responded to Arab attacks with armed resistance. Eleazar Yellin’s colleague was killed in Petah Tikvah. After a week of violence, casualties were listed at 47 Jews and 48 Arabs killed, and 146 Jews, and 73 Arabs wounded—far exceeding the fatalities and injuries during the Nebi Musa riots the previous spring. The majority of the Arab casualties resulted from clashes with British police.

In the immediate wake of the riots, Norman traveled back and forth between Jerusalem and Jaffa, and his efforts to try to restore order—as well as his character in general—were subjected to virulent attacks in both the Arab and Jewish presses. “I believe the only point on which the Jews & Arabs agree is that neither of them wants Norman here—a good tribute to his impartiality!” Helen wrote. “The Arabs say of course he favours the Jews, & the Jews say they expect him to but he doesn’t! It’s all rather black otherwise,” she concluded. The next week Helen wrote, “The Arab press is starting to go for Norman very strongly, calling him a ‘Militant Zionist’. Poor Norman being a militant anything!” Helen reported to her mother, who had by then returned to

114 Ahdut ha-Avodah was a labor Zionist party founded in 1919 by David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, and Berl Katzenelson. See Joseph Shapiro, Ahdut ha-’Avodah ha-historit (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975); Yosef Gorny, Ahdut ha-’Avodah, 1919-1930: ha-yesodot ha-ra’ayonim ve-shitah ha-medinit (Tel Aviv: Tel University Press, 1973);
116 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, May 13, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.
117 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, May 21, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.
England, that Thomas Haycraft, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Palestine, had been appointed to head up a commission of inquiry to investigate the unrest. In its findings, the Haycraft Commission identified Arabs as the primary “aggressors” during the violence. But it maintained that “Bolshevik” Jewish provocation and Zionist arrogance, as well as Arab economic and political upset over continued Jewish immigration to Palestine (Jews made up around 10 percent of the population at the time), represented important factors in the unrest.

Helen’s response to the 1921 riots represents a remarkable departure from her assessment of the Nebi Musa unrest of the previous year. In 1920, she had accused Britain of a weak-willed response to the riots when they had lessened the sentences of Jabotinsky and other Haganah men, comparing the affair to Ireland and invoking Kipling’s poem “Cleared!” A year later, she was angered over what she considered to be an inane British obsession with rooting out Jewish Bolshevism and expressed understanding and sympathy with the need for Jewish armed defense. “The worst thing we have to contend against is the ‘military mind’, which is following the scent of Bolshevism to the exclusion of everything else, & who arrest the most respectable Jews & threaten to hang them for just having fire-arms in self-defense,” she wrote.

The British response to the riots put mandatory authorities in “rare agreement” with Arab leaders, who likewise identified Jewish Bolshevism and the threat of Jewish immigration to Palestine as key grievances. British officials in the aftermath of the riots aimed to deescalate the situation. Herbert Samuel temporarily suspended Jewish

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118 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, May 13, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.
119 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, May 21, 1921, WL 7HBE 2/4.
120 Krämer, *A History of Palestine*, 211.
immigration and gave a speech the month after the riots in which he argued that future 
Jewish immigration to Palestine needed to be determined based on the economic 
absorptive capacity of the entire country. Arab unemployment, in other words, needed to 
be a central factor in determining the number of Jews who would be permitted into 
Palestine. In his speech, Samuel also tried to assure Arabs that the British had “never 
consented and will never consent to such a policy” that would take Muslim and Christian 
holy sites away in an effort to build a Jewish national home in Palestine. 121 Arabs, as well 
as Zionists, responded negatively to the speech. The Arabic newspaper Filastin published 
a critique that argued that Samuel had not given any true assurances that the terms of the 
Balfour Declaration would protect Palestine’s Arabs. An openly Zionist high 
commissioner, the article argued, would never defend Arab interests in the country. A 
War Office memo to the Colonial Office at the time expressed concern that the Arabs 
were demanding the resignations of both Herbert Samuel and Norman Bentwich, the two 
highest ranking Jews in the mandatory government. 122 Zionists, for their part, felt that 
Samuel’s new policy position represented a betrayal of the Balfour Declaration. The 
ensuing Churchill White Paper (issued in June 1922) maintained Britain’s commitment to 
helping to foster the establishment of a Jewish national home Palestine, but made the 
principle of absorptive capacity, which Samuel had articulated in his speech, an official 
policy of the Palestine government.

Angered by the British response to the 1921 riots in Jaffa, dismayed by their 
obsession with Bolshevism, and frustrated with the challenges of intercommunal work,

121 Quoted in Sahar Huneidi, A Broken Trust: Sir Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians, 1920-1925 
122 Ibid., 132-133.
Helen found herself in the summer of 1922 hoping that the League of Nations would delay official confirmation of Britain’s mandate for Palestine. “If it goes through, [we] will have to stay to see things straight—if it doesn’t, we will probably get home in a few weeks. That would be very nice,” she told her mother. “Whenever the atmosphere gets at high pressure like this, & lots of bad feeling is rife, I feel ill & miserable…It’s worse for us than for anyone else here—Norman is the scapegoat of so much,” she lamented.\footnote{Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, July 16, 1922, WL 7HBE/2/6.}

Helen’s wish was not to be. The League confirmed Britain’s mandate for Palestine on July 24, 1922, and the Bentwiches accepted that their tenure in Palestine would continue for the foreseeable future.

“A Rabbi & A Regular Indian Army Soldier”: Finding a Home in Palestine

Helen entered the autumn of 1922 acutely aware of her unusual status in Palestine, an isolating feeling that she was not fully part of British society by virtue of her Jewishness; nor was she truly comfortable in Yishuv society, her Englishness, non-Zionism, and inability to speak Hebrew setting her apart. For Norman, this shared reality meant that he continued to face mounting criticism from multiple fronts. “One of the trials of official life in Palestine, particularly for a Jew in office,” he wrote, “was to be all the time watching one’s step…I was a special target because of my Zionist history.” Norman expected attacks against him in the Arab newspapers, but found denunciation “more difficult to bear” when it came from Jewish circles. “A part of the Jewish people, both within and without Palestine,” he wrote, “failed…to reconcile themselves to the essential position of Sir Herbert Samuel and of any Jew in the Administration, that they
were officials of the British Government and must maintain administrative uprightness and hold the balance fairly between Jewish and Arab claims...The honourable position inevitably was to displease both communities.\textsuperscript{124}

The arrival in Palestine of Frederick Kisch and Judah Magnes, both in November 1922, transformed the Bentwiches social landscape, and provided them with a fledging cohort of like-minded Jewish friends—Jews who played critical roles in the development of the Yishuv, but who had personal backgrounds, Anglo cultural orientations, and visions of Jewish political futures that have often been framed by historians as outside of the Yishuv mainstream.\textsuperscript{125} Over the next several years, as we shall see, Helen’s attitudes towards Zionism shifted and warmed, while Norman found a circle of intellectually-minded Zionists committed to binationalism and Jewish-Arab rapprochement, where his own distinct ideas about Jewish national futures found expression.

Frederick Kisch (1888-1943) was born to Anglo-Jewish parents in Darjeeling, India where his father, the colonial civil servant Herman Kisch, was Postmaster-General of Bengal. Kisch’s family eventually returned to England where he attended Clifton College and the Royal Military Academy. In 1909, he joined the Royal Engineers and was posted back to India where he put his childhood knowledge of Hindustani to practical use. During World War I, Kisch served in France and the Middle East and later was a member of the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. In 1921, he

\textsuperscript{124} Bentwich, \textit{Wanderer Between Two Worlds}, 129.
\textsuperscript{125} For instance, relatively little has been written on Frederick Kisch, the first head of the Political Department in Jerusalem, while the subsequent two heads, Chaim Arlosoroff and Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) are both central figures in the historiography of the Yishuv and Zionism. The literature on Brit Shalom, the binationalist movement closely associated with Judah Magnes, has generally framed binationalism as an exceptional position within the Zionist movement. See for instance, Pianko, \textit{Zionism and the Roads Not Taken}; Myers, \textit{Between Jew & Arab}; Ratzabi, \textit{Between Zionism and Judaism}. Dimitry Shumsky more recently has challenged this “exceptional” interpretation. Shumsky, “Brith Shalom’s uniqueness reconsidered.”
received a telegram from Weizmann, whom he had only met once years earlier, asking him to represent the Zionist Organization in Jerusalem. “The invitation came to me out of a clear blue sky,” he remembered.\textsuperscript{126} Around the same time, as his work in Paris drew to a close, Kisch was denied entry to Staff College, a qualification necessary to reach higher ranks in the British Army. In light of this professional setback, he contemplated joining the newly formed League of Nations, a position with the Suez Canal Company, or a job in civil engineering. Ultimately however, he agreed to Weizmann’s proposal. According to Kisch, the Zionist leader pressed upon me the point of view that the Zionist Organization had no one available who could negotiate with high British officials in Palestine on equal terms, while he also explained the urgent need of systematic efforts towards reconciliation with the Arabs, a task which greatly appealed to me, having regard to my many associations with India where I was born and where I had passed the early years of my military service.\textsuperscript{127}

Kisch arrived in Palestine in late November 1922 to take up his post as head of the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem, as well as head of its Political Department—a position which made him chief liaison between the Yishuv and British mandatory authorities.\textsuperscript{128} “Fred Kisch turned up yesterday,” reported Helen. “He has come out to run the Zionist Executive, & is a great asset. I think we’ll like him very much. He’ll go down well with the English people, being regular Army, & knowing India & the War Office things,” she predicted.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{126} Frederick Kisch, \textit{Palestine Diary} (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 18.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. It is likely Kisch’s reference to his “many associations in India” referred to Muslim friends and allies there.
\textsuperscript{128} Norman Bentwich wrote the only biography of Kisch. Norman Bentwich, \textit{Brigadier Frederick Kisch: Soldier and Zionist} (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1966).
\textsuperscript{129} Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, November 26, 1922, WL 7HBE/2/6.
Helen’s approval of the Zionist movement grew under Kisch’s leadership. “It’s a good thing to have an ex-military man at the head of Zionist affairs…It does make their shows punctual & well-organized,” she quipped. Zionism became a movement that felt increasingly less foreign to Helen. She began identifying common cause between her own Labour ideals and those of Zionism—shared connections that were obvious for many Labor Zionists. For instance, in the summer of 1923, Helen began devising a plan to establish an English kibbutz, proposing the idea to Kisch of

an English group to work on the land, or any other job, financed by the Zionist Organization…& recruited here in England. If they said there was an opening for so many men to do some sort of work & so many girls to look after them, & they must each have certain qualifications, it would be a great publicity catch, I believe, as people would think of Palestine as something actually relieving our labour market, & removing those ‘undesirable’ aliens. And it would prevent all this talk of only Bolshevist Jews going there.\footnote{Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, July 2, 1923, WL 7HBE/2/7.}

Helen’s idea reflected her growing admiration for Zionist models of labor in Palestine. Furthermore, the scheme showed that Helen was envisioning British Jewry within the broader Zionist fold, something that many Anglo-Jewish elites and she herself previously had been hesitant to do. The idea was also a departure from Helen’s previous work—both in England and in Palestine—that focused primarily on women and girls. Here, in line with the kibbutz movement in Palestine, Helen imagined Jewish men and women from Britain working together.

Judah Magnes (1877-1948), the American rabbi and outspoken pacifist during World War I, also moved to Jerusalem with his wife Beatrice and three sons in November 1922. Born in San Francisco, Magnes received his rabbinical ordination from the Hebrew Union College, the Reform rabbinical seminary in Cincinnati, and afterwards pursued
doctoral work in Semitics and philosophy in Germany. While in Berlin, Magnes became an ardent Zionist and, like Norman, was greatly influenced by the ideas of Ahad Ha’am. Ahad Ha’am’s Zionist vision, which imagined Palestine as a spiritual and cultural center of Jewish life, resonated for Magnes, who was concerned with reconciling Jewish nationalism with universalist ideals. Upon his return to America, Magnes settled in New York and helped to found the American Jewish Committee. He also established the New York Kehillah, the organization which represented and unified the city’s rapidly multiplying Jewish synagogues, communal institutions, and other organizations. During the war, Magnes became a leading pacifist activist and served as the first chairman of the People’s Council of America for Democracy and Peace. When Britain issued the Balfour Declaration, Magnes warned fellow Zionists that the success of Jewish life in Palestine depended upon mutual understanding and cooperation with the Arabs.131

The Bentwiches quickly became close friends with Magnes, who shared their commitment to universalism and opposition to ethno-nationalism. The two families had weekly Friday lunches together, and Norman and Magnes launched a plan to establish a new Reform congregation in Jerusalem. “I’ve lunched with the Magneses & had a long talk about the new congregation on Western lines he & Norman mean to get up, & attended a meeting between them & some very orthodox young men who are English & American but don’t believe in the equality of the sexes which Norman & Magnes insist on,” Helen wrote to her mother.132 Despite Helen’s early commitment to atheism, she

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132 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 5, 1923, WL 7HBE 2/7.
found herself regularly—and not unhappily—attending Shabbat morning religious services led by Norman and Magnes.

Proposing English kibbutz schemes and attending religious services represented a remarkable change for Helen, a fact that did not escape her. “I find that…partly as a reaction against the unfair & pro-Arab partiality of all the British officials & Army here; & mostly as a result of getting so bored with the English people, & partly also perhaps Fred [Kisch]’s influence—anyways, I find I have got much more sympathy with, & desire for friendship towards, the Jewish people here than before,” she wrote.\(^{133}\) This coalescing circle of friends and family—Kisch, Judah and Beatrice Magnes, Edwin and Hadassah Samuel, and Thelma and David Yellin—provided the Bentwiches with a small but meaningful group of confidants in Palestine, with whom the challenges of balancing both Jewish and British identities could recede—if only temporarily. “All the English Christians are so awfully nice in not telling us what they really feel about Jews; & all Jewish non-English are so nice in not telling us all they feel about the English,” Helen explained to her mother. “But one knows so well what it is, & that it’s there—on both sides. Often it is only with the English Jews, like Fred, that we can feel really at ease,” she wrote.\(^{134}\)

Helen began an annual tradition of hosting a “Jewish” Christmas party for the group. “They were a little sniffy about Xmas at first,” she noted with regards to their inaugural holiday together in 1923. “It had to be all very ordinary, & no special food or decoration,” she explained. But the night progressed to more serious revelry, with Mrs. Magnes first suggesting a balloon game where everything got “terribly rowdy & excited,”

\(^{133}\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 26, 1923, WL 7HBE/2/7.  
\(^{134}\) Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 12, 1924, WL 7HBE/2/8.
followed by a round of dancing the Virginia reel, and ending with Judah Magnes teaching everyone to play poker. “We sat in a ring on the floor & played for matches till midnight, being instructed by a Rabbi & the head of the Zionist Executive,” Helen told her mother, referring to Magnes and Kisch. Thinking of both, she wrote, “It’s upsetting all my preconceived notions that the two nicest men here should be a Rabbi & a Regular Indian Army soldier.”

The following Christmas ensued in similar fashion; Helen recorded that “Dr. Magnes was the rowdiest, with Norman a close second.”

It was during the relatively peaceful tenue of Lord Plumer as high commissioner from 1925-1928 (appointed under Stanley Baldwin’s Conservative government) that Norman’s Zionist vision fully matured, his ideas about Jewish nationhood based on British dominion models and his commitment to Jewish-Arab cooperation finding expression in the binationalist program supported by Judah Magnes and members of Brit Shalom. In his role as attorney general, Norman pushed for commercial reform that he believed would advance a modern, progressive, pro-development agenda in line with Labour principles; help the Zionist cause; and protect Jewish-Arab relations. Norman’s economic reforms represented a program distinct from the Histadrut’s “determined policy” that “Jewish public bodies…employ only Jewish workers.” He thought this strategy, which he called “economic apartheid,” was one of the “causes of resentment between Arabs and Jews.”

135 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 1, 1924, WL 7HBE/2/8.
137 The Histadrut, the General Organization of Workers in the Land of Israel, was founded in 1920 to represent the interest of Jewish workers in Palestine. The policy of only employing Jewish workers was known as ‘avodah ivrit (“Hebrew labor”), as well as kibush ha-avodah (“conquest of labor”).
138 Bentwich and Bentwich, Mandate Memories, 53.
British genesis. He was introduced to Ahad Ha’am’s conception of Jewish national culture in London; his progressive, universalist principles, a critical factor in his Zionism, were nurtured in the settlement movement in Britain; and his ideas about autonomist nationhood were based directly on British dominion models, which had given “a place for the realization of national ideals independent of political sovereignty.” The Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Canadian, South African, and Australian nationalities were, “like the Hebrew, essentially cultural,” according to Norman. His cultural conception of nationhood—based on a shared “traditional heritage, a language, literature, and aspirations for the future”—also critically depended on a “physical home.” “The lack of the home had been hitherto the tragic weakness of the Jew,” he argued.\(^{139}\) Palestine, then, would become for the Jews what Scotland was for the Scottish. While Norman saw these British “nations” as useful models for a Jewish nation without political sovereignty, other Zionists would invoke these British dominion models precisely because of the autonomy they afforded (even without complete independence). As we shall see in the next chapter, Chaim Arlosoroff looked toward Australia and South Africa, after the inauguration of the British Commonwealth of Nations in 1926, as model nations that had achieved political autonomy but still benefited from being part of a larger empire.

Norman arrived, then, to binationalism by a notably different route than most of Brit Shalom’s leaders, including Hugo Bergmann (1883-1975) and Hans Kohn (1891-1871) who came out of a particular Central European cultural milieu (though Norman shared many of their fundamental conclusions). Founded in 1925, Brit Shalom opposed the creation of an independent Jewish state, and instead supported the idea of a binational

\(^{139}\) Norman Bentwich, *Wanderer Between Two Worlds*, 34.
state in which Jews and Arabs would receive equal representation. Other important members included Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Ernst Simon, and Robert Weltsch. While neither Norman nor Magnes ever officially joined as members of Brit Shalom (both because of their professional positions), the two men openly supported the group’s aims and are often identified in the historiography as members. Both also later helped to establish the binationalist party Ihud in the 1940s.140

The Hebrew University, founded in 1925, became the center of binationalist activity in Palestine, with several of Brit Shalom’s members serving on the faculty.141 Magnes was appointed Chancellor, while Norman served as Vice-Chancellor and Treasurer. While the university (and Brit Shalom) would become the focus of increased controversy in the 1930s, as we will see in Chapter 3, its early years succeeded in bringing together an impressive cross section of Palestinian society. At the opening ceremony in April 1925, Helen noted that “All the English, & quite a number of non-Jewish Palestinians were there, including a number of Bedouin sheikhs from Beisan.”142 At a Jewish Studies reception given by Magnes and Norman the following December, Helen observed delightedly that Jewish students with different levels of religious observance were able to come together in the university setting—evidence, in her eyes, of modern progress for the Yishuv. It was “a very nice show,” she wrote, “where bearded & hatted orthodox men & short-haired, short-sleeved, short-skirted girls, all met on equal terms, as students.”143 On a short trip to Cyprus in 1928, Helen contrasted her circle of

142 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 10, 1925, WL 7HBE/2/8.
143 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, December 12, 1925, WL 7HBE/2/8.
friends at the Hebrew University with the colonial service members she met on the island. “I don’t think any of them ever read a book, or think seriously of anything beyond qualifying for a pension,” she wrote, “and though our Palestine officials may be as bad…we have our Jewish & Continental intelligentsia as a refuge.”

**Riots and Relief Work**

That sense of refuge was shattered on August 23, 1929. While Norman and Helen were on leave in England, a long-simmering conflict between Muslims and Jews over access to the Western Wall erupted in riots. Arab attacks on Jewish communities spread from Jerusalem across the country over the next several days. The majority of victims were Jewish members of the “Old Yishuv,” the community of (mostly non-Zionist) Jews who had lived in Palestine before the advent of Zionist immigration. The Jewish communities in Hebron and Safed, in particular, suffered significant loss of life and extensive property damage. A serious internal refugee situation developed as Jews from affected areas fled their homes. British authorities, who had maintained limited military and police power in Palestine since 1926, struggled to quell the unprecedented violence. Many British Jewish subjects in Palestine, including Norman’s younger brother Joseph, demanded that they be allowed to arm themselves. Chief Secretary Harry Luke, serving as acting high commissioner at the time, forbade it.

The Bentwiches made plans to return to Palestine as soon as they heard reports of the unrest. Upon arriving in early September, Helen approached Dr. Chaim Yaski, the director of the Hadassah Medical Organization, to ask if she could help organize relief work. Yaski welcomed Helen’s assistance, and placed her, as well as Sophie Berger Mohl

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144 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, April 24, 1928, WL 7HBE/2/10.
(one of the Jewish women elected to the “Council of 8”), on his organizing committee. Helen and the committee agreed that, as much as possible, Hadassah funds should be preserved for later reconstruction work, and that the Government should be responsible (at least financially) for immediate relief. “At present the Government only feed about 400 people from Hebron here in Jerusalem, & the Safed people,” wrote Helen, “but there are 2000 here, in various schools and lodgings, from unsafe places.” She wanted mandatory authorities to identify to which villages displaced Jews could safely return, so that those who were not able to go back could be provided with adequate food and shelter. “There’s fear of an epidemic if it goes on in this crude way,” she reported. Helen went with the request to British authorities, likening it to “[holding] a pistol” to their heads. “We said they must ensure safety for the people to return to their homes…or else they must be prepared to feed everyone who had left their homes in fear,” she recalled. Much to her surprise, authorities conceded to the committee’s request: funds to feed 2,500 in Jerusalem, 1,500 in Tel Aviv, 2,000 in Haifa, and 2,000 in Safed.

Helen helped to organize volunteers across the country, calling on a network of Jews with ties to Britain. In Haifa, efforts were led by Marie Hyamson, wife of Albert Hyamson, the director of the mandate’s Immigration Department. Selene Millstein, a clerical officer for mandatory authorities, and her staff were “lent” to the Hadassah committee for a week, and assisted families in Jerusalem who needed food and

145 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, September 7, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11.
146 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, September 14, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11. Later letters make clear that far great numbers actually required food and shelter.
147 Like Norman Bentwich, Albert Hyamson (1875-1954) was one of the few Jews working for Mandatory authorities in Palestine. Hyamson shared Norman’s commitment to a binational future for Palestine. He later authored *Palestine: A Policy*, in which he articulated his binationalist vision. Albert Montefiore Hyamson, *Palestine: A Policy* (London: Methuen, 1942).
housing. Cyril Henriques, the Anglo-Jewish engineer who the following year would be appointed Vice President of the Jewish National Fund, was visiting Palestine at the time and proved an “invaluable” help with relief work, according to Helen. Helen implored her mother to show “such people as you may meet who pooh-pooh the seriousness of the riots here” her letters, which contained descriptions of the carnage and destruction. “I went round the hospitals & saw some of the wounded. All the children have fractured skulls, if nothing worse. One woman had her child killed on her lap & her fingers cut off,” she wrote. When Helen went to Safed in late September to survey the wreckage, a representative of the government traveling with her “declared that the only thing he had ever seen at all comparable was Ypres.”

In October 1929, relief work was taken over by the Palestine Zionist Executive. According to Helen, the entire effort became more about including all the different Zionist parties—with only male representatives—rather than efficient relief work. “Fred [Kisch] ‘took charge’ in a rather overbearing way, without a word of thanks to us, or even telling us he was taking charge. He appointed a relief & reconstruction committee—without a woman on it!” Helen told her mother. “It has all got so ‘political’ since Fred took it on, with rabbis & labour people & agudath & everyone represented on the committee, & not a soul who understands relief work,” she bemoaned. Helen’s frustration with Kisch—who, granted, was a close personal friend—and with the Zionist Executive more broadly, was reminiscent of the exasperation she felt towards the Zionists

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149 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, September 14, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11.
150 Ibid.
151 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, September 21, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11.
152 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 5, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11. Agudath refers to World Agudath Israel, the non-Zionist Orthodox organization founded in 1912.
soon after arriving in Jerusalem. Yet the way Helen approached relief work in her efforts with Hadassah in the month before the Executive took charge was also emblematic of the tremendous change she had undergone over the course of the previous decade. In earlier social work schemes, Helen had labored to bring together women from different communities, believing that cross-cultural collaboration was critical to solving Palestine’s welfare ills. The British Labour values that had animated Helen’s social work from the start continued to inspire her involvement in welfare matters, but by 1929, she had abandoned any pretense of intercommunal work. Joining up with Hadassah and calling on Anglo-Jewish contacts around the country to contribute to the relief effort, Helen found that Jewish-organized social work had become the space in which she could enact her Labour commitments. Though she remained critical of the Zionist Executive’s disorganized and all-male management of relief work, Helen’s own participation in social work through a Jewish organization and her reliance on Jewish networks meant that her approach had aligned in a significant way with the Zionist presumption that education, health, and welfare services would be separated by community.¹⁵³

Helen’s attitude towards the British authorities in Palestine, shaped by years of experiencing antisemitism and by increasing dismay over their governance, had arrived at outright shame and disapproval. Following the 1929 riots, Helen was “left with no respect for the English Government here.” “You can’t realize what it feels like to be so ashamed of one’s country as one feels here,” she wrote.¹⁵⁴ Without referencing the first time she had invoked the poem in 1920, Helen told her mother that she had recently read Kipling’s “Cleared!” which “seems an excellent prophecy.” She had once drawn

¹⁵⁴ Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 5, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11.
similarities between the “undignified” British handling of Irish nationalists and Zionists, criticizing their lenient sentencing of both. In 1929, in a remarkable inversion, she interpreted “Cleared!” as a parallel for the way the upcoming British Shaw Commission would assuredly not hold accountable the British mandatory authorities, who had failed to stop the riots. “I very much fear that one or two minor officials will be scarified,” she wrote, “& the rest ‘cleared.’”

The 1929 riots have been marked by historians as a major moment of reckoning in the history of Zionism and Palestine. The upheavals solidified mainstream Labor Zionists’ statist goals and commitment to a defensive ethos. For the Brit Shalom leader Hans Kohn, his assessment of Zionism’s path—away from any hope of reconciliation with the Arabs in the wake of the riots—caused him to cut ties with the Zionist movement and even eventually to leave Brit Shalom. For the Bentwiches, however, 1929 only served to reinforce their particular vision of Zionism, which fused British Labour ideals and conceptions of nationhood with a commitment to Jewish cultural development. Increasingly excluded from British circles in Palestine, but still fundamentally opposed to statist claims of political sovereignty, Helen and Norman found themselves entrenched more deeply in a community of likeminded Jews who maintained hope for a binationalist future for Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

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155 Ibid.
Chapter 2

Zionists and the British Question

Late in the evening on August 18, 1929, just days before the riots in Palestine erupted, Chaim Arlosoroff sat alone in his rented room in a London boarding house and began a letter to his wife Sima.158 “It is Sunday, the Library is closed, and I am lonely,” he wrote, thinking he would fight his solitude with a note detailing what he had witnessed earlier that evening.159 After more than a year and a half of travels across North America and Europe at Chaim Weizmann’s behest, the young Labor Zionist leader was in London for a few weeks—an interlude between the Sixteenth Zionist Congress in Zurich which Arlosoroff had attended the previous month and a meeting of the Zionist Actions Committee planned for early September in Geneva.160 On days when the British Museum

158 The marriage, in 1927, was the second for both Sima Rubin Arlosoroff (1901-1976) and Chaim Arlosoroff (1899-1933). Arlosoroff had a daughter, Shulamit (1919-1997), with his first wife Gerda Goldberg (1898-1986). Sima had a daughter, Nava (1925-2005), with her first husband Moshe Moisei Balosher. Arlosoroff raised Nava after he married Sima. Arlosoroff and Sima also had a son, Shaul. For more on Arlosoroff, see Shai Horev, Ideolog u-medina ‘i: hashkafat ‘olamo u-mekomo ha-ideologi shel Hayim Arlozorov be-misgeret ha-manhigut ha-ideologi shel Tenu’at ha-‘Avodah (Haifa: Duhifat, 2015); Shlomo Avineri, Arlosoroff (Grove Weidenfeld, New York: 1989); Yosef Gorny, et al., Hayim Arlozorov, yovel shanim ahare (Tel Aviv: Yad Tabenkin, 1985); Simha Kling, “Chaim Arlozorov,” in Fields of Offering: Studies in Honor of Raphael Patai, ed. Victor D. Sanua (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1983), 243-263; Miriam Getter, Hayim Arlozorov: Biografiah politit (Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Tel Aviv: 1977); Yosef Shapiro, Hayim Arlozorov (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975); Eliyahu Bilizki, Hayim Arlozorov (Tel Aviv: Tarbut V’hinukh, 1966); Margot Klausner, Sufat Sivan: parashah aharonah be-haye Hayim Arlozorov (Tel Aviv: Sifre Gadish, 1956).
159 Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, August 18, 1929, CZA A44/11. Arlosoroff wrote to Sima regularly and openly about his political work during his many travels on behalf of the Zionist movement during the second half of the 1920s. In this sense, she was a receptacle of his political ideas. However, it is challenging from a historian’s perspective (especially methodologically) to frame their marriage as a political partnership akin to the Bentwiches. The majority of Sima’s letters to her husband did not survive, nor did any diaries or other personal papers (with the exception of some letters following Chaim Arlosoroff’s murder in 1933, which are held together with his personal papers at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem).
160 The meeting in Geneva never happened. After the August 1929 riots, the Zionist Actions Committee meeting was moved up and transferred to London.
was open, Arlosoroff squeezed in as much research as he could on a project of personal interest—a planned biography of Julius Vogel, the London-born Jewish politician and author who served as premier of New Zealand during the 1870s.\(^{161}\) The previous day, Arlosoroff sat in the museum’s reading room, listening to “the faint rustling of a thousand sheets of paper, books, manuscripts, magazines, [and] writing-pads” and felt in awe of the hallowed space. “Here so many of the very great have sat and worked,” he reflected. “Marx on his ‘Kapital’, Kropotkin on his ‘Mutual Aid’, Eduard Bernstein on his ‘History of the English Revolution’. And here I am sitting now and digging myself into the life of a strange country, a strange man and a fascinating period of colonization.”\(^{162}\) Arlosoroff, who sported heavy, round horn-rimmed glasses, generally donned a wool suit, and was wont to smoke a pipe, appeared more sartorially suited for life in British academia than politics in Palestine.\(^{163}\)

But earlier on that lonesome Sunday, to distract himself from the absence of wife and work, Arlosoroff wandered over to Hyde Park to Speakers’ Corner and observed a sight he found most remarkable. In his letter to Sima, Arlosoroff recounted:

> I cannot but respect and admire what should of right be called a national institution of the English. Once more I have been standing and listening to their community singing, out in the open, it was already dark and the ground was wet. I looked into the serious almost solemn faces of the motley crowd, that had gathered to sing, middle-aged women, churchgoers and young lads, apparently

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\(^{162}\) Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, August 17, 1929, CZA A44/11.

\(^{163}\) In her novel *Black Roses*, which is set in 1933 Berlin and features a fictionalized Arlosoroff, Jane Thynne provides a vivid description of his physical appearance: “Arlosoroff was a tall, densely-packed man with tight curly hair the texture of wire wool…He had a hard, knuckly brow, bulbous nose, and a protruding lower jaw. His forehead was heavily scored with lines and his face was bunched as a fist. Not even his mother could call him good-looking.” Jane Thynne, *Black Roses* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 413. In Amos Oz’s *The Hill of Evil Council*, one character comments that another—dressed in an evening suit—looks “the spit and image” of Arlosoroff. Amos Oz, *The Hill of Evil Council*, translated by Nicholas de Lange (Orlando: Harcourt, 1976), 31.
newcomers to London from the counties who had found in Hyde Park the lost atmosphere of their parish church, schoolboys and lower middle class gentleman with derbies and umbrellas, singing and singing.\textsuperscript{164}

As Arlosoroff continued his walk through the park, he came to a platform with a sign for the “National Secular Society.” A ruddy faced gentleman with a monocle and moustache stood upon it proclaiming the fraud of Christianity and all religion: “There was never a man Jesus Christ alive,” he declared, continuing, “There is not the slightest evidence for the existence of God. Do not waste your time on such foolish things.” The crowd around him—about two hundred people—listened “attentively, not interrupting him, [and] not hooting.” Arlosoroff found this noteworthy, particularly since he assumed that some of the hymn-singers from nearby must have been among the listeners, who were all, as he put it, respectfully “lending their ears to argument.” Farther on, Arlosoroff came to the Open Socialist platform. A seasoned socialist himself, he was rather unimpressed with the banality of this speaker, an “exceptionally weak one,” by his account who was reciting the “old song” “‘Capitalism restricts production’ and so on.” But all these vignettes taken together—what he identified and admired as “a national institution of the English”—made a significant impression on Arlosoroff. “I cannot get away from the idea,” he wrote, “that very much of national psychology is revealed here, in the singing as well as the listening, in the argument as well as the silence.”\textsuperscript{165}

Arlosoroff’s ideas and writings, as well as his daily work on behalf of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, capture the myriad ways Zionists in Palestine in the interwar period thought about the “British Question”—that is, the relationship between the Yishuv and the British Empire. Indeed, of all the prominent Zionist leaders of the

\textsuperscript{164} Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, August 18, 1929, CZA A44/11.

\textsuperscript{165} Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, August 18, 1929, CZA A44/11.
time, Arlosoroff thought most widely about this relationship and the role it could play in the future of the Yishuv. As his 1929 dispatches from London attest, Arlosoroff respected British political and civic culture and admired the unique place Britain held in the histories of socialism and colonial expansion. He felt that the ideals and lessons derived from British culture and history represented worthy models for the Yishuv, and he pioneered efforts to make knowledge of the British Empire accessible to a Hebrew-reading public. More broadly, he believed that long-term cooperation and understanding between the Yishuv and Britain were critical to realizing the Zionist dream. Quite apart from feelings of admiration or affinity, Arlosoroff could also approach the question of Yishuv-British relations with clinical, sociological scrutiny. He soberly assessed the complex and contentious nature of the Jewish-British relationship in Palestine, identifying causes of tension and recommending remedies for the future. He also carefully considered different political options for Palestine, contemplating non-statist federative and dominion possibilities that would take shape within the framework of the British Empire.

Arlosoroff was not alone among Zionist leaders in thinking about non-statist futures for Palestine. Nevertheless, historians of Zionism have, until recently, maintained a teleological tendency that assumes the primary goal of the Zionist movement before 1948 was to form an independent nation-state. In fact, as Arie Dubnov and Dimitry Shumsky have shown, the idea that Palestine would become a state was far from mainstream. Rather, imagined political futures that have previously been thought of as

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166 Shumsky, “Brith Shalom’s uniqueness reconsidered, esp. 340; Arie Dubnov, “‘Ha-medinah she-ba-derekh’ o ha-imperiah makeh shenit?: imperializem federativi ve-le’umiut yehudit be-ikbot milhemet ha-olam ha-rishonah,” Yisrael 24 (2016): 5-36; Dubnov and Harif, “Zionism: Roads not Taken on the Journey to the Jewish State.”
anomalous historical curiosities, including autonomism, federalism, binationalism, and
dominion status (and various combinations and syntheses of these ideas), actually
represented important early interwar tenets across the Zionist political spectrum. This
was especially true within Labor Zionism where leaders including David Ben-Gurion,
Berl Katznelson, and Shlomo Kaplansky articulated a range of federative and binational
visions for Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s that sought to stabilize and improve Jewish-
Arab relations. Revisionists, too, considered non-statist options. Jabotinsky trumpeted the
Seventh Dominion Scheme, an effort to make Palestine part of the British
Commonwealth of Nations—an idea, as we will see, that Arlosoroff also examined.

Yet Arlosoroff never completely eschewed the state—or more aptly, the
sovereignty it afforded—as a compelling concept. In his confidential June 30, 1932 letter
to Chaim Weizmann (discussed in Chapter 3), Arlosoroff suggested that a Jewish
revolution that would overthrow mandatory authorities and establish a Jewish state by
force, despite an Arab majority, might eventually be the Yishuv’s only option for
survival. Even in times, both before and in the year after his famous 1932 missive,
when Arlosoroff espoused more moderate views towards British mandatory authorities,
he maintained an appreciation of state-like apparatuses as levers of power that could

167 For more on binationalism, see Susan Lee Hattis, The Bi-National Idea in Zionism during Mandatory Times (Haifa: Shikmona Publishing, 1970); Ratzabi, Between Zionism and Judaism; Myers, Between Jew & Arab; Adi Gordon, ed., ‘Berit shalom’ ve-ha-Tziyonut ha-du-le ’umit: ’ha-Shel’elah ha-’Aravit’ ke-
effect real control—particularly over issues critical to the Zionist movement such as immigration, land development, and securing bank loans. This conception of state and state-like power was one of the central factors that shaped Arlosoroff’s determination to promote cooperation between the Jews and British in Palestine. While the Jews of Palestine had built an impressive, self-governing society, Arlosoroff feared that they risked locking themselves out of future political formations by refusing to participate actively in the mandatory government.\(^{169}\) Furthermore, a central appeal of the dominion idea was precisely that it would afford the Yishuv levers of state-like power.\(^{170}\) Thus, just as Arlosoroff’s rich understanding of non-statist politics pushed him to consider the benefits of belonging to the British Empire, his appreciation of the state apparatus prompted him—more often than not—to insist on the importance of protecting and improving Yishuv-British relations.

Arlosoroff is a singular figure in Yishuv history not because other Zionists did not engage with the “British question”—for certainly, they did—but because no other contemporary Zionist leader thought so comprehensively and penetratingly about the subject.\(^{171}\) Unique in scope and depth of consideration, encompassing both admiration

\(^{169}\) See, for instance, Arlosoroff’s speech at a Mapai meeting in Tel Aviv in January 1933. Chaim Arlosoroff, “Mediniyut mamlakhit—be-terem medinah,” in Am, hevrath, u-medinah, ed. Ascher Maniv (Tel Aviv: Yad Tabenkin, 1984), 119-129.

\(^{170}\) Arie Dubnov discusses how the idea of dominion for both Zionist and Indian political leaders was “the definitive federal-imperialist formula: full citizenship and self-rule without full independence…Breaking away from the multinational empire was certainly not the preferred tactic in this unprecedented political climate.” Dubnov, “Notes on the Zionist passage to India,” 196.

and dispassionate analysis, Arlosoroff’s ideas and their development serve as a springboard for understanding more broadly how the Yishuv navigated its relationship to the imperial power that held the mandate for Palestine. This chapter traces the path of Arlosoroff’s diverse ideas about Britain: Britain as a civic and political model for the Yishuv; as an international center of both imperial and labor development; as the mandatory authority with an imperfect, human workforce; as the leader of a Commonwealth of Nations which could one day include the Jewish national home; and as the political power at the center of his own evaluation of non-statist ideals and the appeal of state sovereignty. Weaving these ideas into broader debates and discourses—of which Arlosoroff was a key participant—this chapter reframes the relationship between Zionism and Britain, and between the Yishuv and the British Empire. Beginning with Arlosoroff’s early years in Palestine as a member of the Zionist Actions Committee, the chapter concludes in 1931 on the eve of Arlosoroff’s appointment as head of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department (see Chapter 3). In this capacity, Arlosoroff served as the chief liaison between the Yishuv and British mandatory authorities. He held the position from 1931 until his murder on a beach in Tel Aviv in 1933, leaving a nation reeling and wondering who Arlosoroff might have become and what might have been had he lived.\footnote{For more on the subsequent investigations and trial, see The Arlosoroff Murder Trial: Speeches and Relevant Documents (Jerusalem: Hassolel Partnership, 1934). Shabtai Teveth’s 1982 book Retzah Arlozorov reignited Israeli public interest in the crime. See Shabtai Teveth, Retzah Arlozorov (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1982).}
Early Years

Arlosoroff was born in 1899 in the city of Romny in Ukraine. His father Saul, the son of a rabbi and Talmudic scholar, worked in the wheat and lumber industries and provided a comfortable middle-class life for his family. Russian was spoken at home—Arlosoroff went by the name “Vitaly” as a young child—and both parents also knew German. In October 1905, amidst the mass social and political upheavals of the 1905 Russian Revolution, Jewish communities across the Russian Empire were attacked in a wave of pogroms.\(^\text{173}\) The day after Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, violence erupted in Romny, lasting two days.\(^\text{174}\) Eight Jews were killed and dozens were injured; the city’s two synagogues, the Jewish schools, and Jewish-owned shops burned; and many Jewish homes—including the Arlosoroffs’—were attacked. In the wake of the violence, the then six-year-old Arlosoroff and his family fled Romny, living first in a small East Prussian border town before finally settling in Königsberg in 1912. Arlosoroff, who assumed the German name “Viktor,” enrolled in a Gymnasium where he excelled in his studies, as well as in athletics. At home, he received private tutoring in Hebrew and Jewish subjects.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Arlosoroff family—as Russian passport holders and thus enemy aliens—faced potential deportation. The family relocated to Berlin, however, where they were allowed to remain. Yet Saul Arlosoroff did not stay in Germany for long. The war had disrupted his business, and in an attempt to recover some


of his assets, he returned to Russia. The young Arlosoroff would never see his father again. Blocked from returning to Germany because of the war, Saul Arlosoroff ultimately contracted cholera and died in June 1918, five months before the armistice. During the war years, Arlosoroff continued his Gymnasium studies, enthusiastically embracing the culture of his adopted country. Deeply grateful for the refuge Germany had provided his family and enamored of the writings of Goethe, Kant and Schiller, Arlosoroff tried at the beginning of the war to enlist in the German army—an honor he was, as a Russian subject, denied. Shlomo Avineri argues that it was the psychological dislocation and tragedy of the war that pushed Arlosoroff, like many in his generation, towards the socialist and universalist ideals that would henceforth shape his political thinking. What is more, it was during the war that Arlosoroff began to think seriously about the predicaments of modern Jewish life—particularly in wartime—and to believe deeply in the promise of Zionism. He became a disciple of Martin Buber, who was then living in Berlin. The philosopher acquainted the young Arlosoroff with the writings of Gustav Landauer, the social anarchist influenced by Kropotkin whose agrarian communitarianism inspired the kibbutz movement. Buber also introduced Arlosoroff to the ideas of A.D. Gordon, the founder of Hapoel Hatzair in Palestine. This non-Marxist, moderate socialist Zionist group became a focus of Arlosoroff’s life in Germany.

While at the University of Berlin, where he studied economics, Arlosoroff served as one

175 Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), who served on the council of the short-lived Bavarian Socialist Republic, was murdered by a mob of counterrevolutionary soldiers in 1919. For more on Landauer, see Paul Mendes-Flohr and Anya Mali, eds., Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH: 2015). 176 For more on Hapoel Hatzair in Germany, see Hagit Lavsky, Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996); Baruch Ben-Avram, “Ha-Po’el Ha-Tza’ir ha-Germani—parashah shel kevutzat intelektualim 1917-1929,” Ha-Tziyounot 7 (1981): 80-85. For more on Hapoel Hatzair generally, see Meir Chazan, Metinut: ha-gishah ha-metunah be-ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir u-ve-Mapai, 1905–1945 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009); Yosef Shapiro, Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir: ha-ra ‘ayon ve-hama’aseh (Tel Aviv: Ayanot, 1966).
of the central leaders of Hapoel Hatzair and edited its German-language mouthpiece *Die Arbeit*; he would remain a member of the party until its merger with Ahdut ha-Avodah, another labor Zionist party, to form Mapai in 1930. Hapoel Hatzair recognized an enduring capitalism and rejected class warfare, differentiating it from other left-wing Zionist parties including Ahdut ha-Avodah. It was committed to manual labor, particularly agricultural work, as a means of Jewish political, national, and spiritual rejuvenation. Many of the individuals who joined Hapoel Hatzair in Germany were influenced by Max Weber, Werner Sombart, and other members of the *Verein für Socialpolitik*, particularly their idea that state involvement in the economy would stimulate growth.¹⁷⁷ In a broader socialist climate that often rejected the state as an ideal, this moderate influence made German Labor Zionists far more amenable to the notion of state power—a fact that would have significant bearing on Arlosoroff’s politics later in Palestine.

During his studies, Arlosoroff published his first treatise *Der jüdische Volkssozialismus* (1919), a critique of Marxist attitudes towards nationalism that advocated a synthesis between class consciousness and national consciousness. He also penned an essay in 1921 on Peter Kropotkin’s social anarchism, a concept which Arlosoroff understood to be fundamental to his own emerging vision of a non-statist, libertarian, socialist society—in contrast to Marx’s socialist state—which he hoped could manifest itself in the Yishuv through the kibbutz.¹⁷⁸ But when Arlosoroff traveled to Palestine for the first time that same year, his most affecting experience turned out not to

be socialist farming, but rather urban unrest. He had decided to spend the Passover holiday in Jaffa with Yosef Aharonovitch (1877-1937), a leader of Hapoel Hatzair and editor of its Hebrew-language paper in Palestine. The day after the holiday ended, on May 1, 1921, riots erupted in Jaffa. Arlosoroff stood in armed defense of the Jewish neighborhood of Neve Shalom in northern Jaffa, which was besieged by Arab rioters until British forces intervened and evacuated the community. Comparing the Jaffa riots to Eastern European pogroms became a widespread trend within Zionist circles. Arlosoroff’s host Aharonovitch saw the 1921 riots as a continuation of the bloodthirst and savage plunder that had marked the outbreaks of violence against Eastern European Jews, and not as evidence of an emerging, coherent political movement. Arlosoroff, however, who had witnessed both, objected to the analogy. Instead, the experience instilled in Arlosoroff the importance of taking emerging Palestinian Arab nationalism seriously. He acknowledged—what many of his Zionist peers argued—that no Arab nationalist movement existed in Palestine in the way that nationalist movements existed in Poland or Italy, or in other parts of the British Empire like Egypt and India. In those countries, developing capitalist economies, diminishing social divides, and increasing educational opportunities—none of which existed in Palestine—provided the preconditions of classical nationalism. But after witnessing the Jaffa riots, Arlosoroff felt that this empirical observation was largely beside the point, likening it to a doctor who denies that his patient, “wallowing in the heat of fever,” is ill because the microbes from the patient’s blood look unlike anything he has previously seen under a microscope. Arlosoroff also believed that the concomitant impulse to blame British authorities—as

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many labor Zionists including Aharonovitch, and Ahdut ha-Avodah members Ben-Gurion and Katznelson did—also missed the crux of the problem at hand. In an essay he authored after the riots, Arlosoroff argued that Zionists must understand that the “Arab question” was a political one—not a “sociological, economic-historical-ethnographic, or moral” one. They needed to recognize the existence of an Arab national movement, even if that movement’s genesis seemed exceptional, and abandon “strong hand” policies which relied on British might for security. Ultimately, Arlosoroff asserted, Zionists and Arabs must pursue a hard-won path towards “mutual understanding,” an effort that would be made possible through the robust support of British authorities—efforts already evidenced through the work of High Commissioner Herbert Samuel.\footnote{Arlosoroff, “Meora‘ot Mai,” Kitve Hayim Arlozorov, vol. 1, 5-11.}

This essay reflected Arlosoroff’s insistence in the wake of the riots that Hapoel Hatzair move away from the policy of Hebrew labor (“‘avodah ‘ivrit”), which encouraged the hiring of Jewish rather than Arab workers, and instead promote long-lasting understanding between the two communities in Palestine. That understanding would be based not on neighborly cooperation or mutual economic interest, but on a carefully negotiated political agreement (the nature and structure of which were yet to be determined, but certainly autonomist and federative governments were options). Furthermore, Arlosoroff questioned the Zionist movement’s insistence on establishing a “Jewish majority,” or at least its insistence on bombarding Arabs with the slogan “ten times a day.”\footnote{Arlosoroff, “Ne‘um ba-ve’idah ha-Tziyonit ha-shenatit be-Karlsbad,” Kitve Hayim Arlozorov, vol. 6, 36.} Arlosoroff’s stance—his recognition of Arab nationalism; his refusal to blame the British for the riots nor rely on them to enforce policy through military power; his challenge to Zionist conventional wisdom and policy—set him apart from Jabotinsky
and the Revisionists, Ahdut ha-Avodah, and even members of his own political party Hapoel Hatzair. Indeed, in response to Arlosoroff’s essay, Aharonovitch issued his own statement in which he argued that no Palestinian Arab nationalist movement existed in the formal sense, a position which he fervently maintained even after the riots of 1929.\textsuperscript{182} Arlosoroff’s thoughts on the use of force and his ideas about a Jewish majority and Hebrew labor shifted over the course of his short lifetime. But as we shall see, his conviction that Arabs would necessarily be part of any political future in Palestine and that the British would play a key role in the development of that polity remained largely constant.

After his eventful and formative trip to Palestine, Arlosoroff returned to Berlin and to his studies, completing his doctoral dissertation on Marx’s theory of class war in 1923. Though offered a university assistantship by Werner Sombart (who had been his doctoral advisor), Arlosoroff declined—his ambitions and heart lay elsewhere. That same year, at the Thirteenth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad, Arlosoroff was elected to the Zionist Actions Committee, the body responsible for managing Zionist affairs between congresses. A year later, Arlosoroff moved to Palestine with his first wife Gerda and their young daughter Shulamit.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{182} Chazan, “The Dispute between Aharonovitch and Arlosoroff,” 987-990.
\textsuperscript{183} Chaim and Gerda Arlosoroff divorced soon after they arrived in Palestine. Gerda then married Tzvi Luft and had another son and daughter. Though she—like Arlosoroff—pursued a doctorate in economics in Germany, she did not complete her degree and instead worked as a journalist in Palestine. She served as a correspondent for the German-language Zionist newspaper \textit{Jüdische Rundschau} from 1924-1938. After the founding of the state of Israel, Gerda wrote for the \textit{Jerusalem Post} and the \textit{Economist}. See Luise Hirsch, \textit{From the Shtetl to the Lecture Hall: Jewish Women and Cultural Exchange} (Lanham: University Press of America, 2013), 249.
Thinking Outside the State: A New International Politics and the Possibilities of Empire

When Arlosoroff arrived on the scene in Palestine in 1924—this time to stay—he already had a reputation as the wunderkind of the Zionist movement. At only 25 years of age, he was more than a decade younger than the majority of Zionist leaders at the time. He was recognized as a forceful orator, noted not for his rhetorical style or ostentation, but because of his dynamic arguments and impressive depth and breadth of knowledge. Indeed, Arlosoroff was perhaps the only prominent Labor Zionist leader who could have been considered a European intellectual of the highest quality—with a doctorate—who produced original, sophisticated theoretical writings. Within two years, he had established himself as a central leader of Labor Zionism, appointed and elected to leadership positions of Hapoel Hatzair, the Histadrut, the Assembly of Representatives (Asefat ha-Nivharim, the forerunner of the Israeli Knesset), and the Va‘ad Le’umi (the Jewish National Council and executive of the Assembly). In 1926, the Va‘ad Le’umi selected Arlosoroff to participate in a delegation to represent the Yishuv at the Ninth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, scheduled for June in Geneva. The delegation, which also included Meir Dizengoff, the mayor of Tel Aviv, and B. Z. Uziel, the city’s Sephardic Chief Rabbi, would not have official status in Geneva, barring it from closed meetings. The Permanent Mandates Commission recognized only one official representation from each mandate: the mandatory government.

184 For instance, while Arlosoroff was born in 1899, David Ben-Gurion was born in 1886, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi in 1884, Berl Katzenelson in 1887, and Yosef Sprinzak in 1885. The Revisionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky was born nearly two decades earlier in 1880.
185 For more on the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, see Pedersen, The Guardians.
Although the three men left a relatively peaceful Palestine—the country had not seen any significant unrest since the riots in 1921—the international scene on which they descended was anything but serene. The Permanent Mandates Commission had experienced a significant crisis of legitimacy over France’s response to the broad-based anticolonial uprising in Mandatory Syria and Lebanon. The brutality of the French aerial bombings of Damascus in October 1925, which killed more than 1,400 civilians including women and children, left many in the international community convinced of the indefensibility and inhumanity of French rule in the Levant. Moreover, the League had ostensibly put the French mandate in place in order to guide the residents of Syria and Lebanon towards political self-determination—not to crush a nationalist movement vying for independent government. In short, the French mandate began to seem much more like occupation than custodianship. British leaders worried that supporting the legitimacy of French mandatory authority at the expense of Syrian nationalism could engender resentment and anger among Muslims in Britain’s own empire. But disrupting the balance of power in the Middle East could be equally if not more disastrous. One failed mandate could cause the rest to topple like dominoes.186

In the end, the latter concerns won out. At the Eighth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission, a special meeting held in Rome in late March and early February 1926 to discuss the situation in Syria and Lebanon, international representatives resolved to uphold the legitimacy of the French mandate. They determined that the essential role of the Permanent Mandates Commission was to “cooperate” with mandatory authorities, not manage them. Syrian nationalists would find the swiftest path towards self-

186 Ibid., 146-155
determination by cooperating with the French. This decision was in essence an affirmation by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the limitations of its own power; the mandatory authority itself—in this case, France—ultimately had control. Supporters of Syrian nationalism, humanitarians, and some strict interpreters of the mandates system alike condemned the decision, considering it a failure of the new international order. Two months after the meeting in Rome and a month before the Ninth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission was set to open in Geneva, any hope that the recently installed French High Commissioner Henry de Jouvenel would adopt a more measured and less militaristic approach to the uprising was dashed. The French resumed aerial bombings in May, resulting yet again in catastrophic loss of civilian life. In response, a Syrian delegation—which like the Yishuv’s delegation had no official status at the Permanent Mandates Commission—planned to issue a petition at the meeting.\(^{187}\)

Arlosoroff thus set off for Geneva in a moment when the international imbroglio of competing political interests—between Britain and France, between European nations and the League, between public opinion and governments, and between emerging national movements and mandatory powers—had been thrown into stark relief. The League’s ineffectiveness in managing the mandatory authorities it had created was

especially apparent to Arlosoroff. In an essay entitled “Wall of Glass,” which he published in advance of his trip to Switzerland, he noted that Stanley Baldwin’s Conservative government in Britain—which had ousted the Labour government led by Ramsay MacDonald in 1924—“defended at all costs” the local power of its colonial administrations, including mandatory ones. Arlosoroff believed that Baldwin’s government was unlikely to abide by League intervention in its affairs; indeed, the League had proven powerless to stop not only the recent French aerial bombings of Syria, but in 1920 had “given England full freedom of action in Mesopotamia”\footnote{Arlosoroff, “Homah shel zekhukhit,” Kitve Hayim Arlozorov, vol. 1, 34-35. The title of the essay, “Wall of Glass,” is possibly a reference to Jabotinsky’s 1923 essay “The Iron Wall,” which discussed Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine.}—action that included indiscriminately dropping 97 tons of bombs and firing 183,861 rounds of ammunition in an effort to stop the Iraqi revolt against British rule.\footnote{James Vernon, The Cambridge History of Britain: Modern Britain, 1750 to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 260.}

Given this record, Arlosoroff felt that his delegation could hardly expect to address the Yishuv’s grievances—for instance, over issues of land settlement, the use of public works funds, and police service—by going to Geneva to create a “tactical basis for a war against the British administration.”\footnote{Arlosoroff, “Homah shel zekhukhit,” 36.} In other words, there would be no solution in readying a lawsuit against the British mandatory government or in asking the League to intervene. Those efforts would undermine public opinion of Zionism, and when they almost assuredly failed, they would leave the Yishuv even further surrendered to the “arbitrariness of the local bureaucracy.”\footnote{Ibid., 38} Instead, though it would make clear the Yishuv’s grievances with the British administration, the delegation would do so with
“coolness and patience.” Any political action would be moderate and measured, and would not follow the tactic—as Zionists had often done previously—of leading with final demands and starting negotiations with ultimatums.

Arlosoroff, Dizengoff, and Uziel reached Geneva on May 31, 1926. On the train ride to the city, Arlosoroff found a copy of the Times which included news of his delegation’s expedition with the disheartening headline “Palestine Jews’ Complaints.” In his diary, Arlosoroff lamented that the Zionists had “been signed and sealed as a people who had come to complain,” not as “an ally participating with equal rights in a joint enterprise.” The delegation’s arrival proved no more encouraging. No one came to greet their train, so the three men made their own way to the hotel through pouring rain. Accommodations had been booked at the Hotel England, partly “for patriotic reasons,” Arlosoroff wrote jokingly in his diary, but also because it suited the delegation’s character (or more likely, its modest budget). Their fellow guests—“hardly a single Englishman” in sight—included representatives to the Mandates Commission from Portugal and Greece, as well as a fascist group attending the League of Nation’s International Labour Conference. On its first night in town, the Yishuv delegation received a visitor who warned Arlosoroff ominously, “What do you want? The League of Nations is England!” The encounter, which Arlosoroff conceded contained a “core of truth,” further reinforced for him that the Permanent Mandates Commission would likely

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192 Ibid., 33.
193 “Palestine Jews’ Complaints,” Times, May 29, 1926, 11. Coincidentally, the author of the article was Gershon Agronsky, the Times correspondent in Palestine, whom Arlosoroff would later befriend.
195 Arlosoroff also attended the International Labour Conference, which met each summer in Geneva.
have no more power in effecting policy change in Palestine than it had in Syria and Lebanon.

Before he arrived in Geneva, Arlosoroff had thought about the situation in Syria and Lebanon mostly within the context of international mandatory politics, as part of his assessment of the League’s power and effectiveness. But attending the Ninth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission alongside the delegation from Syria inspired Arlosoroff to reconsider the conflict more broadly and to question the nature of French-Zionist relations and the price of imperialism. After Jouvenel publicly denounced the Syrian delegation at the opening meeting of the Commission, the delegation’s representatives published a manifesto stating their objection to French activities in Syria and Lebanon. “The letter has aroused many thoughts in my mind,” wrote Arlosoroff upon reading it. Days before Jouvenel arrived in Geneva, he had appeared on stage with Chaim Weizmann at the Palais du Trocadéro in Paris at a large Zionist rally.196 Arlosoroff struggled to understand how Zionists could accept Jouvenel’s support after he had been responsible for ordering—“not a fortnight before”—the aerial bombardments which had killed non-combatant women and children. “To stand at this moment, in times of national distress in Syria and tyrannical rule by the French, openly alongside this imperialism—is it not too high a price for the affection for Zionism?” asked Arlosoroff.197

Arlosoroff’s critique of violent French imperialism and his sense of the moral and ethical dilemma of accepting Jouvenel’s support for Zionism, without any allusions to a British parallel, may well have reflected disconnection or hypocrisy. He had previously

acknowledged before the Geneva trip that Britain had done in Iraq what France was
doing in Syria. While he did not yet support Zionist-British cooperation as emphatically
as he would even a year later, Arlosoroff already understood in 1926 that the Yishuv
could not afford to antagonize the British and would have to work together to achieve
constructive political change. In other words, he knew that to criticize the practices of
French imperialism—as opposed to British imperialism—held far fewer dangers to
Zionism. But in his failure to hold Britain to the same moral standards as France,
Arlosoroff was not alone.\footnote{Helen Bentwich, for instance, criticized the French for being “so aggressive with their subject peoples, & pig-headed about suppressing papers & speeches etc.” early in the conflict in August 1925, even while recognizing that the French had employed tactics quite similar to those used by the British in Iraq in 1920. Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, August 8, 1925, WL 7HBE/2/8.} As France carpet bombed Damascus, memory of when
Britain had done the same in Iraq faded, eclipsed by the successful negotiation of the
Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (1922) which scrapped the Mesopotamia mandate plan and set up
British ally Faisal as king. Members of the international community held up this path as a
potential model for the French in Syria and Lebanon. Britain had become no less than an
exemplary mandatory power with a lesson for France.\footnote{Pedersen, The Guardians, 149.} Arlosoroff’s increasing
inclination that the Yishuv should depend on the British was further bolstered by his
dawning comprehension not only of the League’s administrative feebleness but of its
precarious moral authority. If the first wave of French bombings in Damascus reflected
an organizational failure of the League, its ultimate refusal to address the continued
violence represented a dire moral failure.

The Yishuv delegation spent the rest of the trip meeting privately with members
of the Mandates Commission and with other League of Nations officials. Arlosoroff

\footnotetext{198}{Helen Bentwich, for instance, criticized the French for being “so aggressive with their subject peoples, & pig-headed about suppressing papers & speeches etc.” early in the conflict in August 1925, even while recognizing that the French had employed tactics quite similar to those used by the British in Iraq in 1920. Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, August 8, 1925, WL 7HBE/2/8.}
\footnotetext{199}{Pedersen, The Guardians, 149.}
wrote that his most successful meeting had been with Commission member Harold Atheling Grimshaw (1880-1929), a former lecturer at the London School of Economics and head of the diplomatic wing of the International Labour Organization. Grimshaw discussed questions about labor in Palestine with Arlosoroff for an entire evening, and also shared stories from his own work, which was dedicated to rooting out modern slavery. Arlosoroff found it a “comfort and a good sign” that the Zionist movement had found favor in a man like Grimshaw; he resolved to seek out like-minded British allies like him in the future. The Yishuv delegation also submitted an official memorandum on behalf of the *Va‘ad Le‘umi*. The documented reflected Arlosoroff’s vision for the delegation to Geneva—to express constructive criticism of the mandatory government, to demand realistic solutions, and to make clear the desire for a better partnership with Britain. The results of the Permanent Mandates Commission’s official discussion on Palestine—held on June 22 and 23 behind closed doors—proved satisfactory. The Commission had requested the mandatory government “take steps to provide land for Jewish colonization,” and that it “substantially increase…the subvention of the Jewish schools.” Arlosoroff likely understood that the Commission’s request was only just that; Zionists would have to turn to Britain in order to make concrete political progress.

On June 24, 1926, Arlosoroff, Dizengoff, and Uziel received word from Weizmann that an audience with the Colonial Office in Britain had been arranged. Before departing Geneva for London, the delegation cabled the *Va‘ad Le‘umi* in Jerusalem: “Our

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201 Giveon Cornfield with Max Seligman, *Zion Liberated: Jewish Nation Building Under the British Mandate in Palestine* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2013), 44.
work is at an end, we hope for good results. We are proceeding to London on the 27th inst.”

The Seventh Dominion

In November 1926, while Arlosoroff was on a tour across America on behalf of the Zionist Organization, another international meeting convened in London. Leaders from Australia, Canada, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa—the British Empire’s six dominions—met at Westminster for the Seventh Imperial Conference. Leaders from India, a potential future dominion, also attended. At the conclusion of the conference, after the fate of the dominions and their status within the British Empire had been discussed, another Balfour Declaration was issued. Named as its predecessor was for Arthur Balfour, this 1926 declaration affirmed that the dominions were “autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”

The creation of a Commonwealth of Nations—neither bound by a single constitution, nor inferior to the metropole—opened up a new avenue of political possibility for Palestine, one that would have a dramatic effect on the ways that Chaim

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203 For more on Arlosoroff’s trips to America, see Michael Brown, “A Tale of Two Bad Trips: Chaim Arlosoroff in America,” in Between History and Literature: Studies in Honor of Isaac Barzilay/Ben historyah le-sifrut: sefer yovel le-Yitzhak Barzilay, ed. Stanley Nash (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1997), 7-35.
Arlosoroff, and others, imagined potential futures for the Jewish national home. Before the Balfour Declaration of 1926, Arlosoroff believed that positive Jewish-British relations in Palestine were imperative, but he remained focused on securing a broad international coalition in support of Zionism and viewed the League of Nations as the obvious locus of that effort. After the inauguration of the British Commonwealth, Arlosoroff became increasingly focused on Britain and the possibilities that its imperial network might hold for Palestine. He threw himself in earnest into the study of British colonial history, he became dedicated to sharing that knowledge and understanding with a Hebrew-reading public, and he thought seriously about the prospect of dominion status for Palestine.

The idea of making Palestine into a British dominion was first proposed by Col. Josiah C. Wedgwood, a British Labour politician and fervent imperialist who was touring Palestine with his wife Florence when the Seventh Imperial Conference convened in London.205 The couple met Norman and Helen Bentwich in Jerusalem, and Helen found the Colonel “very nice” but a “bit pugnacious.”206 He had a reputation for impassioned advocacy of Zionism, a sympathy that stemmed from a distinctly English Protestant evangelical zeal and from his personal friendships and experiences with Jews. Wedgwood first encountered Chaim Weizmann in December 1914 at a working breakfast given by David Lloyd George, and was impressed with the Zionist leader’s message.207

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206 As for Florence Wedgwood, Helen remarked (with her trademark humor) that the Colonel’s wife seemed “rather the sort one associates with Liberty tea-gowns & indeterminate greens & browns.” Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 30, 1926, WL 7HBE/2/4.
During the Gallipoli Campaign, in which Wedgwood was injured in the service of the Royal Navy, he met and developed great respect for the Jewish volunteers of the Zion Mule Corps, led by Joseph Trumpeldor. After Wedgwood returned home to Britain from his 1926 visit to Palestine, he published an essay in the *Palestine Bulletin* outlining his idea for the country to join the newly inaugurated six-member British Commonwealth. While the Commonwealth nations (with the exception of Ireland) originated as British crown colonies with substantial European settler populations, their inhabitants were not exclusively of English extraction. “We have in Lower Canada a French partner; in Ireland a reluctant Irish partner; in South Africa a Dutch partner; and in India, Ceylon and Burma we expect and hope to have some day quite non-European partners in that new Union into which the Imperial Conference of 1926 has converted the Empire,” wrote Wedgwood. Jews, he argued, would also make valuable members of this Commonwealth enterprise. As the “Clapham Junction of the Commonwealth,” Palestine represented a strategic imperial holding. The Jews there would be of “real political and economic service to the Empire,” Wedgwood argued. And while many perhaps thought of Jews as foreign, they were in fact quite similar to the English. Both were inclined to lend money and take risks, both had a “passion for wandering over the earth,” both detested working for a master, and both had a preference—albeit a “lamentable” one—for the Old Testament’s doctrine of “hit him first and hit him hard,” rather than the pacifism of the New Testament. As part of the British Commonwealth, Jews in Palestine

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209 Clapham Junction is a major rail hub in south west London.
would benefit from the protection of a powerful empire, a valuable security in light of Mussolini and the “Roman fasces.” And critically, reasoned Wedgwood, “protection [was] no longer humiliation” since the 1926 Balfour Declaration. Jews could now enjoy the safety of being part of an empire “without destroying independence or self-respect.” Just as Arlosoroff had weighed the differences between a Zionist alliance with Britain compared to one with the League of Nations, Wedgwood also recognized this choice and warned his fellow countrymen that they would be wise not to drive the Jews into the arms of the League. “Plain realists” should recognize, he argued, “that moral as well as commercial advantages may well repay and balance the risks of protecting Palestine.”

In February 1928, Wedgwood published an expanded version of his essay as a small book entitled *The Seventh Dominion.*

According to Frederick Kisch, Wedgwood’s fervent advocacy bordered on the problematic. In a private letter to Chaim Weizmann, Kisch wrote that “Wedgwood has had his innings with the Secretary of State” and told him that most of the Government officials in Palestine are Egyptianised loafers and that they have done nothing to Anglicise the country!” Kisch acknowledged that Wedgwood’s combined passions for British imperialism, Labour politics, and Zionism held extraordinary value, but “such accusations…can only embitter the officials here who latterly have really been behaving


212 Leo Amery (1873-1955) served as secretary of state for the colonies from 1924-1929 in Stanley Baldwin’s government and was a key drafter of the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Amery’s mother Elisabeth Johanna Saphir had come from a Hungarian Jewish family.
rather well.” The positive attitudes of British clerks could be attributed to the guiding influence of High Commissioner Herbert Plumer, who “always recognises the duty of the Government to help us in our aims as much as possible, subject only to the Government acting rightly by the Arab population,” wrote Kisch. “Fear of Arab criticism does not enter his mind as it always did with [High Commissioner Herbert] Samuel,” he noted, “but merely the question of whether he himself is acting rightly in regard to the second part of the Balfour Declaration as well as the first.”

At the end of July 1928, Plumer concluded his term as high commissioner, and John Chancellor, the Governor of Southern Rhodesia, was appointed to replace him. He would not, however, take up the post until December. In the interim, Harry Luke, the former assistant governor of Jerusalem and most recently the colonial secretary of Sierra Leone, was appointed acting high commissioner. Even with the economic recession experienced by the Yishuv in 1926, Plumer’s tenure had been regarded by the Jewish community as one of peace and fairness in Palestine, with no major outbreak of violence. David Ben-Gurion believed Plumer had been a “first class” high commissioner. “I do not mean that he always did what we asked him to do, though his relations with us were very good,” Ben-Gurion recalled, “but he was a firm and wise governor.”

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hand, was remembered in Palestine for his participation in the Haycraft Commission in the wake of the 1921 Jaffa riots.\(^\text{216}\) The Commission, which blamed “Bolshevik” Jews for inciting the unrest, had driven Helen Bentwich (previously keen to criticize Zionists in Palestine) into a fury against the British “military mind,” which justified the arrest of even the “most respectable Jews” simply for self-defense, all in an obsessed effort to root out Jewish Bolshevism. Arlosoroff, though he had not been arrested, had stood—armed—in defense of a Jewish neighborhood in Jaffa during the unrest.

In October 1928, against this backdrop of a changing guard, Arlosoroff wrote his second major consideration of the British question in Palestine. Entitled “The British Administration and the National Home,” the piece appeared in Hebrew in *Hapoel Hatzair*. Though he would pen a lengthy response to Wedgwood’s dominion scheme a year later, Arlosoroff first made reference to the idea of the “Seventh Dominion” in this 1928 essay. Understanding the British and addressing any of their negative attitudes towards Jews and Zionism was, he reasoned, “much more a way to the Seventh Dominion than all the decisions about a Jewish state.”\(^\text{217}\) The essay argued that promoting positive Zionist-British relations was imperative and would remain so indefinitely. “The partnership of the Jews and the British in Palestine is not limited in advance, as one might think, to a few years or even to the present generation alone,” wrote Arlosoroff. “I think—and to tell the truth I will say it—that this partnership is more than temporary.”\(^\text{218}\)

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\(^\text{216}\) Rumors circulated among the English elite that the Eton and Oxford educated Luke, born Harry Lukach to a Hungarian-American father and a Polish-Catholic mother, was in fact half-Jewish. Tom Segev disputes this claim. See Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 311.


\(^\text{218}\) Ibid., 72.
While reading an issue of the London weekly the *Near East and India*,
Arlosoroff recounted, he had come across the following maxim which he felt perfectly
encapsulated the problem of Jewish-British relations in Palestine: “The Arab in the Land
of Israel effortlessly and without much difficulty secures the understanding and affection
of the English, while at the same time, the Jew seems to the Englishman to be a mystical
creature, irksome and unclear—precisely as he was perceived by the Roman official
eighteen centuries ago.”\(^{219}\) This image of the enigmatic, intractable Jew, muddying
established British colonial order, echoes themes from Arlosoroff’s 1926 essay “Wall of
Glass”; however, in “The British Administration and the National Home,” Arlosoroff
offered not the general prescriptions for moderation and cooperation that he had in 1926,
but a detailed, sociological typology of British clerks in Palestine and concrete
recommendations for addressing their biases. Arlosoroff argued that understanding and
promoting positive relations with British clerks by dispelling the image of the
troublesome Jew—particularly among the rank and file of the mandatory government—
was critical to the success of Zionism. The Yishuv had learned, as the English had long
known, that an administration was just as important as a constitution. At times an
administration even willingly contravened a constitution. Moreover, according to
Arlosoroff, “the administrative nature of the country might be affected much more
strongly by choosing postmen and police officers than by choosing a high commissioner
or an attorney general.” In other words, having Zionists like Herbert Samuel and Norman
Bentwich in high places was well and good, but it would not define the character and
attitude of a government administration.\(^{220}\)

\(^{219}\) Ibid., 71.
\(^{220}\) Ibid., 72.
Arlosoroff outlined three major types of British clerks in Palestine, explaining each group’s attitude towards Jews and Zionism. The first included about 10 percent of the British bureaucracy, mostly high officials with positive attitudes towards Zionism, some of whom arrived in Palestine already as bearers of those “ideas and ideals” and others who reached them while serving in the mandatory government. “This does not mean, of course, that they start talking or acting like they were members of the Zionist General Council,” wrote Arlosoroff. In fact, these individuals, as stalwart imperialists, generally protected “the prestige of administrative justice,” sometimes at the expense of the Jews. Arlosoroff included Wyndham Deedes; Brigadier General Gilbert Clayton; High Commissioner Plumer; and Major J.E.F. Campbell, the district commissioner of the southern region of Palestine, in this group.221

The second type of clerk resembled the first in their high level of education and culture; but these administrators were unfriendly towards Jews and Zionism, in part due to a Christian religious fear of Jewish control over holy sites. “More than they oppose the Jews,” however, wrote Arlosoroff, “they tend to the side of the Arabs.” The English had a long, storied practice of celebrating the national cultures of other countries. For instance, “in no other poetry is there a sense of closeness and understanding of Italy as in English lyrics,” Arlosoroff claimed.222 In a convergence of orientalism and liberalism, this tradition had, in turn, shaped an English instinct to defend other nationalist movements and to criticize British imperialism. “No natural-born Egyptian attacked British rule in

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221 Ibid., 72-73. Wyndham Deedes (1883-1956), who became a close friend of Helen and Norman Bentwich, served as chief secretary to High Commissioner Herbert Samuel from 1920-1922. Brigadier General Gilbert Clayton (1875-1929), replaced Deedes as chief secretary, serving until 1925. James Edward Francis Campbell (1879-1953) received praise from Frederick Kisch, Edwin Samuel, and Norman Bentwich for fairmindedness. See Bentwich, England in Palestine, 240; Kisch, Palestine Diary, 134; Samuel, A Lifetime in Jerusalem, 82.

222 Arlosoroff, “Ha-pekidut ha-britit ve-ha-bayit ha-le’umi,” 71.
Egypt like Wilfrid Scawen Blunt,” observed Arlosoroff, and “in the first ranks of the fighters for the national freedom of Indians to this day, we find Annie Besant and Gandhi’s English advisors.” This impulse explained how a “pro-Arab idealistic movement” had developed among British officials. Such idealists included Gertrude Bell, St John Philby, Percy Cox, and Palestine’s own Ernest Richmond, the assistant civil secretary and later director of antiquities for the Mandate Government. Helen Bentwich, who considered Richmond a friend when he first arrived in Palestine, noted that by 1922 he had become more partisan towards the Arabs. An event honoring the King’s birthday (the birthday itself had fallen on a Saturday), had been moved to a Monday out of deference to the Jews. According to Helen, many Muslims refused to take part as a result. “So the mufti & his friends sulked, including Richmond who absented himself from everything too…Oh, how I loathe all this squabbling & discord here,” she lamented.

The final group included the majority of British clerks in Palestine: individuals among the middling and lower ranks who staffed the police and the postal service, engineers in the Department of Public Works, and clerks in the Land and Health Departments. “We must take into account that under the conditions of the Land of Israel, all these officials have great importance,” argued Arlosoroff. For instance, a post office

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223 Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) was a British poet, critic of imperialism, and supporter of Egyptian nationalism. Annie Besant (1847-1933) was a British-born socialist and women’s rights activists who was a member of the Indian National Congress and founded the Indian Home Rule movement in 1916. 224 Ibid., 72. Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) was a British writer, traveler, and colonial administrator who was instrumental in the establishment the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq; St John Philby (1885-1960) was a British Arabist and colonial official who served as head of the Secret Service in Palestine from 1921-1924; Percy Cox (1864-1937) was one of the leading figures in British colonial administration in the interwar period and served as high commissioner of Iraq from 1920-1923; Ernest Richmond (1874-1955), before his tenure in Palestine, worked as an architect for the British army in Egypt. 225 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, June 6, 1922, WL 7HBE 2/6.
director could decide whether Hebrew would be used in practice; a police officer could prevent Jews from visiting certain holy sites; an engineer from Public Works could decide how many Jewish workers he would hire; and a British judge could decide who was to blame for unrest. Arlosoroff cited the prosecutions of the Jaffa riots of 1921 as a specific example of British justice meted out to the detriment of the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{226}

Upon arrival in Palestine, these clerks held no particular feeling towards Jews. “The Jewish question throughout the world preoccupies them like last year’s snow,” wrote Arlosoroff. While the Jewish press had a tendency to condemn the British in Palestine for endemic antisemitism (Arlosoroff believed the fact that no administrator escaped accusation was proof of the preposterousness of the blanket charge), the majority of British clerks formed opinions of the locals in Palestine much in the way they did in any other colonial outpost:

…it is impossible to say that they are strongly influenced by antisemitism, and herein lies the main point of the question. Many of these officials come to Palestine, as they do to Iraq, Rhodesia, or to some other country. At the start of their arrival, out of a lack of knowledge of local conditions, they are neutral and groping in the dark in the hope that they will finally find their way…\textsuperscript{227}

Eventually many British clerks found their way to pro-Arab sympathies. Certainly antisemitism existed to an extent within the British administration—and that made the problem “more complex”—but it did not, to Arlosoroff’s mind, explain the widespread tendency for the bulk of British clerks to support and identify ultimately with the Arabs. Instead, the young Zionist offered an explanation that evidenced his growing awareness and consideration of British imperial history. The majority of these clerks, like their

\textsuperscript{226} Arlosoroff, “Ha-pekidut ha-britit ve-ha-bayit ha-le’umi,” 74.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 75.
Roman counterparts 1,800 years before, gained administrative experience in other British colonies before coming to Palestine. Those who served in Iraq, Sudan, and Egypt learned Arabic and became familiar with Arab cultures. Had Palestine only been inhabited by Arabs (and perhaps the occasional European tourist), these clerks would have been content. Jews, however, represented a “perversion undermining the existing routine” of colonial administration.\(^\text{228}\) They seemed “inorganic, complex, mystical and unusual” to the British. Why would Jews have left their developed countries to live in a provincial backwater like Palestine?\(^\text{229}\) Arlosoroff imagined a situation in which a British engineer with the Department of Public Works had to deal with Jewish laborers. A motley crew of former students, tailors, and shoemakers who only recently learned how to build buildings and roads, these Jewish workers—and their sense of sublime purpose—would stupefy their boss. “They say, that at the base of a historic process, they came to this country and became construction workers,” the British engineer would muse, befuddled. “So what do I have to do with historic processes?!\(^\text{230}\)

Arabs on the other hand, fell into familiar imperial categories for the British, argued Arlosoroff. From images of primitive simplicity to exotic romanticism, Arabs in Palestine satisfied a British orientalist fantasy. Narrow alleyways, the muezzin’s call to prayer, and bustling marketplaces recalled *One Thousand and One Nights* and Kipling’s poetry (never mind, quipped Arlosoroff, that “after a more thorough examination,” garage owners in Ramle and shopkeepers in Jaffa were in reality no more exotic than their counterparts in Britain).\(^\text{231}\) “And into this idyll,” wrote Arlosoroff, “Jews introduced

\(^{228}\) Ibid., 75-76.
\(^{229}\) Ibid., 77.
\(^{230}\) Ibid., 76.
\(^{231}\) Ibid., 78.
dissonance and incompatibility.” Even Jews’ particular brand of Europeanness, wrapped up as it was in the “worry and restlessness” of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, felt confusing and unidentifiable to the British. Jews were neither British enough nor Arab enough; neither part of the civilized metropole, nor part of the mysterious, wild landscape of the Middle East. “The pendulum from the beginning swings to one side. And not to our side,” concluded Arlosoroff. 232

So what was to be done? Arlosoroff maintained that neither the Jews nor the British would change their natures, and that the contradictions in those clashing temperaments produced powerful disagreements. “Our aim in the Land of Israel demands from us that we abstain as much as possible from these arguments,” urged Arlosoroff. A parliament—despite Zionist objections that it would place them in an official minority position—would have at least given Jews in Palestine a direct point of mediation with the British. Instead, the people of Palestine found themselves governed by an “autocratic colonial bureaucracy.” To counter this, argued Arlosoroff, Jews needed to create an English language newspaper of “high cultural and presentation value” that, in place of a parliament, would represent Jewish opinion to the British. 233

Arlosoroff then made his boldest assertion: this publication, as policy, would insist that Zionist-British cooperation was not a temporary aim, but rather “a political aim that defines the nature of our national existence,” both in the present and in a planned future when Jews would be the majority in Palestine. In other words, a partnership between the Yishuv and the British was not a means to an end, not a way to an independent state, but a fundamental and enduring ideal of the Jewish national home in

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232 Ibid., 79.
233 Ibid., 79-80.
Palestine. “The good, idealistic Jewish national home must be open to the English,” Arlosoroff concluded. Cooperation across cultures would prove difficult—indeed even within the Jewish community, diverse backgrounds often provoked tenacious disagreement. But Arlosoroff believed that striving for positive Zionist-British relations was the only way forward. “We need to get to know each other,” he implored, reasoning that “it is only in the wake of understanding that affection will come.” And that intentional, cultivated understanding—more so than any dramatic political pronouncements from on high—was decidedly a surer way to a Seventh Dominion.234

While Arlosoroff felt that the prospect of dominion status could only be broached after many intermediate steps, others were willing to move more quickly towards political ends. Of all the major Zionist leaders at the time, Ze’ev Jabotinsky took up the idea of dominion most enthusiastically, viewing it as a streamlined path towards Jewish self-determination.235 Upon learning of Wedgwood’s scheme in 1927, the Revisionist leader wrote to the British MP to learn more about his ideas. “Of course the country should be governed from London for quite a long period yet,” Jabotinsky began in his letter. Like Arlosoroff, Jabotinsky understood that further development in Palestine—chiefly substantial Jewish immigration that would place Jews in the majority—needed to occur before new political configurations, including dominion status, could be enacted. Any current attempt at representative government—a fixture of dominion countries—would be to the detriment of Jews in Palestine given the demographic imbalance.

234 Ibid., 80-81.
However, Jabotinsky—unlike Arlosoroff, as we shall see—favored immediate action, legislated from the metropole, that would put Palestine on the road toward dominion status. He told Wedgwood that he would not “shrink from something like direct annexation, fixing the status of the country forever as part of the British Commonwealth, now a [Crown Colony] and in the end a Dominion.”\(^{236}\) Wedgwood’s unbridled criticism of the mandatory government in Palestine also appealed to Jabotinsky who maintained his admiration for Britain and its metropolitan government, but felt that British authorities in Palestine were ruining any prospect of constructive Zionist-British cooperation.\(^{237}\)

The idea of dominion status also received attention in the Yishuv beyond the upper echelons of its leadership, particularly during the summer and fall of 1928, when Plumer’s departure as high commissioner opened wide the prospect of change. In August 1928, the publisher and bookseller Yechezkel Steimatzky informed Jabotinsky that he had sold 200 copies of Wedgwood’s book in his Jerusalem and Jaffa shops—a “colossal” success, in his opinion. Moreover, the popularity of the book meant “a lot in a country where just the intelligentsia hardly know any English.” Steimatzky thought a Hebrew translation of *The Seventh Dominion* would “be a little avalanche.” Jabotinsky even offered to write a new introduction for the Hebrew-language edition, but no translation was ever produced.\(^{238}\) The scheme also received coverage in the Palestine press, particularly the English-language *Palestine Bulletin* and the right-leaning *Doar Hayom*.

\(^{236}\) Ze’ev Jabotinsky to Josiah Wedgwood, October 15, 1927, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel (hereafter JII), A1/2/17.

\(^{237}\) Rose, “The Seventh Dominion,” 403. Rose argues that criticism of the mandatory government coupled with faith in the goodwill of the metropolitan government “represented the foremost view within the Zionist movement” in the late 1920s before the August 1929 riots.

\(^{238}\) Ze’ev Jabotinsky to Josiah Wedgwood, August 21, 1928, JII, A1/2/18/2.
(whose editorship was taken over by Jabotinsky in December 1928). The Bulletin reproduced the preface of *The Seventh Dominion* for its readers; covered speeches given by Wedgwood in Berlin at a Poale Zion conference and at a meeting of Revisionist leaders; and published a scathing critique of the dominion scheme written by the British politician and academic Ernest Bennett. Peretz Dagan, the assistant editor of *Doar Hayom*, wrote favorably about the dominion scheme in his column “Parshat ha-Yom,” arguing that one benefit would be increased Jewish immigration. Rather than impeding immigration as the mandatory government had, he reasoned, the new dominion government would encourage immigration, just as the dominion governments of New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and South Africa had. Local meetings in Palestine were also held to discuss the idea. For instance, *Davar* reported that Klivnov and Finkelstein gave talks on the Seventh Dominion scheme to an audience in Haifa, where debate ensued.

Amidst this summer buzz, Jabotinsky, who was on holiday in the French Pyrenees, wrote a letter to Wedgwood. In the note, he imagined what might be possible if the Revisionists were to sweep elections at the upcoming Sixteenth Zionist Congress and

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241 This refers almost certainly to the General Zionist Ya’akov Klivnov, who settled in Haifa after making *aliyah* in 1921, and the lawyer Ze’ev Finkelstein (later Shoham) who had previously worked for the immigration department of the Zionist Executive in London before moving with his family to Haifa, also in 1921. Finkelstein’s wife was the agronomist Tzila Feinberg, a classmate of Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) at Herzliya Hebrew High School. Her brother, Avshalom Feinberg, had been a leader of the Jewish spy network Nili during World War I.
a “Seventh Dominion League”—that is, a society promoting the dominion idea for Palestine—were to be formed:

If [the election] succeeds, and if by that time there is, in England and elsewhere, a “S.D. League” established under your leadership, it will give you and the rest of our close friends an element of actual everyday influence in Palestine. To speak pictorially (it may be permitted during vacations, when one writes surrounded by Pyrenees—or Staffordshire—scenery) any political gesture of your hand in London could then be repeated in five cities and fifty colonies of the Holy Land, and then in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, Riga, Bucharest—a little later I’ll answer for New York too. But even apart from pictorial language, I feel confident that in a years [sic] time the League can become a noticeable force in British Middle East politics.

The Seventh Dominion scheme initially received support from other Revisionist Zionists. The Third Revisionist World Conference held in Vienna in December 1928 voted that “no contradiction” existed between the goals of a Jewish national home in Palestine and dominion status in the British Commonwealth. Two months later, on February 26, 1929, Wedgwood officially inaugurated the Seventh Dominion League at Central Hall Westminster, with himself as chair. In May of that year, Jabotinsky accepted the chair of the league chapter established in Jerusalem.

Between the establishment of the London and Jerusalem league chapters, Arlosoroff finally issued his own direct response to Wedgwood’s plan, which he published in the New Palestine in April 1929. The article reflected Arlosoroff’s

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243 Ze’ev Jabotinsky to Josiah Wedgwood, August 21, 1928, JII, A1/2/18/2.
244 Schechtman, Fighter and Prophet, 109.
245 Chaim Arlosoroff, “The Ninth Dominion: Shall Palestine Become an Integral Part of the British Empire?” The New Palestine, April 5, 1929, 291-293 and 308-309. A Hebrew translation of the article was published in Arlosoroff’s collected writings. Arlosoroff, “Ha-dominiyon ha-tesi’i,” Kitve Hayim Arlozorov, vol. 1, 85-97. Arlosoroff called the essay “The Ninth Dominion,” rather than the “seventh,” because he believed that India and British East Africa would become dominions before Palestine. Arlosoroff’s previous two essays dealing with the issue of Zionist-British relations (“Wall of Glass” and “The British Administration and the National Home”) had both been published in Hebrew in Hapoel Hatzair. “The Ninth Dominion,” on the other hand, was published in English in the New Palestine, the official organ of the Zionist Organization of America. Arlosoroff was in America, on another extended trip, at the time of the article’s publication. See Brown, “A Tale of Two Bad Trips: Chaim Arlosoroff in America.”
Weizmannian insistence on slow, gradual development. Though Wedgwood’s book contained compelling arguments, Arlosoroff felt that the entire proposal was “somewhat precipitate.” Any discussion of Palestine’s political future or Zionism’s ultimate aims was premature and would be to the detriment of the movement. The viability of different political proposals was entirely contingent on “the actual balance of political power in Palestine.” At present, Jews constituted roughly only 15 percent of the total population (with Palestinian Arabs making up the vast majority). Given this reality, the Yishuv needed to focus on the day-to-day work of building up its society and economy and had to resist the inclination to fantasize about the “forty-ninth and fiftieth” steps towards its goal, rather than the immediate tasks at hand. “The Jew, and for that matter the Zionist,” wrote Arlosoroff, “thinks too much of the Jewish State and too little of the average annual yield of his cow which may help him establish a profitable dairy, and, progressively, systematic immigration, and, ultimately the Jewish State.”

His concerns with regards to timing established, Arlosoroff moved to the central question of his article: Were Zionist aspirations and dominion status fundamentally compatible, potentially in a “far-off future” scenario? “It is my opinion,” declared Arlosoroff, “that from the point of view of Zionist ideals, the Seventh Dominion scheme does not offer the slightest contradiction.” The political aim of Zionism—to achieve the right of national self-determination for the Jewish people within the boundaries of Palestine—allowed for a broad range of possible constitutional forms, he argued. And while it was too early to know what specific form that would eventually be, a dominion was certainly just as plausible as a Soviet republic or even “a monarchy under

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Ussishkin’s dynasty,” he suggested in jest. But in seriousness, continued Arlosoroff, more than being simply one of many potential constitutional options equal in merit, dominion status in fact boasted several “conclusive arguments in its favor.”

Arlosoroff proceeded to outline a series of arguments in favor of dominion which he based on a careful assessment of the economic and political conditions in Palestine. His “not at all sentimental” analysis (in contrast to the Anglophile Jews who favored close relations to Britain based on “purely psychological factors, like gratitude or sympathy”) first explored the nature of modern economic development. No longer confined to the borders of “limited national states,” successful modern economies instead flourished in larger supranational networks. Commonwealth and “imperial combines” such as the United States, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union were “much better equipped to meet the requirements of our economic age,” wrote Arlosoroff. States such as France, Germany, and Italy “though basking in the sun of sovereignty,” suffered economically for their independence as they faced growing trustification, increasingly cumbersome economic legislation, and the mess of coordinating tariff and trade agreements. Smaller independent nations like Poland and the Baltic states made the reality of modern economies “a thousand times more obvious.”

Palestine, a small country and not “one too richly endowed with monopolies of any kind,” had always been part of a larger Levantine economic system. But treaties signed in the wake of World War I had disrupted those longstanding economic ties, cutting off the fertile Hauran plateau from British Palestine and blocking access to the

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247 Menachem Ussishkin (1863-1941) was president of the Jewish National Fund.
249 Ibid., 293.
trade ports of Jaffa and Haifa for the rest of the region. Writing against the backdrop of the growth of Arab nationalisms, Arlosoroff envisioned that over the course of the next few decades, independent Arab states would begin to emerge around Palestine and would likely form economic alliances or a federation. “Palestine will then be a self-sufficient and secluded unit, in the economic sense, even less than at present,” he noted. While Arlosoroff, like other Zionists including Ben-Gurion and Katzenelson, thought seriously about the possibility of federation, he feared that a broader economic federation of Arab states represented a bleak option in comparison to the prospect of official ties with “one of the outside powers of the supra-national type.” Membership in the British Commonwealth, “one of the most advanced and highly developed political organisms, commanding a modern system of production and transportation and wide markets,” would afford Palestine more economic opportunities and would counter-act the “naturally gravitating” inclination of the country’s Palestinian Arabs towards other Arab states.

When presented with the choice between “independence within the field of gravitation of an Arab federation” versus “Dominion status within the British Empire,” Arlosoroff argued that “the answer, from our standpoint…can hardly be doubted.” Canada, with strong economic ties to its southern neighbor and a French-Canadian population resistant towards the dominion’s “British allegiance,” represented a close parallel to Palestine’s situation.250 Though Arlosoroff did not state so explicitly, he deftly implied with the Canadian comparison that Palestinian Arabs would become citizens of a Palestine

250 Ibid. The comparison was not a perfect parallel. By referencing Canada’s strong economic ties to its southern (English-speaking) neighbor, Arlosoroff likely intended to compare Anglo-Canadians and the United States, to Palestinian Arabs and surrounding Arab countries. But he also presumably referred to the French-Canadian population that was resistant to “British allegiance” as a parallel to Palestinian Arabs, not Jews.
dominion. Jabotinsky and Wedgwood, in contrast, repeatedly spoke of a Jewish
dominion, and did not address what would happen to the Arab population.

With regards to politics, Arlosoroff believed that dominion status would enlarge
Palestine’s political standing and sphere of influence far beyond what its size and
resources could permit independently. An aspiration for international influence did not
reflect outsized ambitions or naïve hopes, like “the foolish desire of a small boy to step
into his big uncle’s trousers.” Rather, argued Arlosoroff, building up the Yishuv’s
international standing was a political imperative of Zionism, “the logical conclusion of
our nationalism.” With greater influence came a better ability to safeguard international
peace—potentially preventing another conflict in which Jews had to face each other on
the battlefield. Dominion status could also invest Palestine with the diplomatic power to
advocate for Jewish political and civic interests across the diaspora.251

Despite Arlosoroff’s belief that any discussion of Palestine becoming a dominion
was at that time premature, the theoretical adoption of a dominion scheme would allow
for several developments favorable to the Zionist movement. As Peretz Dagan pointed
out in Doar Hayom and Jabotinsky also understood, once Palestine became a British
crown colony (an intermediate step on the way to dominion status), the new government
would establish a colonialization department. This body would undertake—on an
enlarged scale—the work of immigration and settlement, previously the sole
responsibility of the Palestine Zionist Executive. Arlosoroff believed that the dominion
plan, fundamentally different than a mandate, would also improve British attitudes
towards the Yishuv—ever his central concern. No longer “[sweating] for other people’s

251 Ibid., 293, 308.
interests…their own ends no less than those of the Jews,” British officials would help to establish a long-lasting dominion, rather than toil through the transient custodianship of a mandate. Finally, any discussion over the nature of parliamentary institutions and proper representation of Jews and Palestinian Arabs, “one of the most intricate, delicate and unsolvable issues,” would, at least in the interim, “be dropped from the agenda” once Palestine became a crown colony.²⁵²

Notwithstanding these hypothetical benefits, Arlosoroff believed the dominion scheme also had several drawbacks and weaknesses. Wedgwood had argued that his scheme, in order to succeed, needed the support of both Britain and the Jews. Arlosoroff had his doubts, despite the attention Wedgwood’s plan received in the British press, that Britain would actually take the idea of a Palestine dominion seriously—“as seriously as, say, the naval base in Singapore.”²⁵³ As to the second half of Wedgwood’s formula for success, Arlosoroff acknowledged that the scheme had already gained the support of Jabotinsky and the Revisionists. It “might succeed in winning us [Labor Zionists] over as well,” he suggested. Yet even if the Zionist Congress were to commit to the scheme, they could neither compel the population of Palestine to follow it nor force their decision to have any weight in international politics without Britain’s full support. “How, indeed, can people dispose of things which they do not, as yet, possess?” Arlosoroff asked.²⁵⁴

These obstacles aside, “there exists one argument, momentous and grave, which weighs heavily against the idea of Palestine gradually growing into a British Dominion,”

²⁵² Ibid., 308. Whereas British dominions enjoyed representative government, British crown colonies were ruled by a governor.
²⁵³ The British naval base in Singapore was the centerpiece of British interwar defense strategy, known as the Singapore strategy.
²⁵⁴ Ibid.
wrote Arlosoroff. The very nature of the Jewish diaspora, scattered across the globe, which made the idea of a British dominion with its concomitant international standing and influence so politically expedient, also made it potentially dangerous:

This scattered and split up nation—the House of Israel divided against itself—has undertaken to build a national center, a homeland for the people as a whole, a homeland for its national genius and civilization. As soon as Palestine accepts membership among the Dominions of the British Empire, this national homeland becomes part and parcel of one of the existing political spheres of interest. In a certain sense it becomes partisan, it sides with one of the powers.255

Any set of hypothetical antagonisms—a British-Russian conflict or even a British-American one—could burden millions of Jews with accusations of conflicting loyalties and allegiances. This represented a serious, hypothetical problem, conceded Arlosoroff, but avoiding “political spheres of interest” was likely impossible regardless of Palestine’s political future—the country did not exist in a geopolitical vacuum. “What is called ‘Pax Britannica’ may be not the worst guarantee for Palestine…the dominion program is, after all, the safest road,” concluded Arlosoroff.256

A measured and logical tone, divorced from sentimentality about Britain, pervades Arlosoroff’s discussion of the dominion scheme. While he concluded that a dominion might ultimately be “the safest road,” he did so with little to no praise for British civic and political culture or for British imperialism, the type of rhetoric characteristic of British Labour imperialists, including Wedgwood.257 Dominion was, by

255 Ibid., 309.
256 Ibid.
257 Furthermore, while Wedgwood’s arguments for why Palestine should become a British dominion addressed strategic and geopolitical factors, his central reasoning rested on conceptions of Jewish-British affinity. See Wedgwood, The Seventh Dominion, 2. For more on the relationship between British Labour and imperialism, see Partha Sarathi Gupta, Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964 (New Delhi: Sage, 2002); Billy Frank, Craig Horner, David Stewart, eds., The British Labour Movement and Imperialism (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010); David Russell, “‘The Jolly Old Empire’: Labour, the Commonwealth and Europe, 1945-51,” in Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe, ed. Alex May (London: Palgrave, 2001), 9-29.
its very nature, an encroachment of Jewish national autonomy—rather than a means to achieve it, as Jabotinsky saw it—but total independence had far more serious political and economic disadvantages. In Arlosoroff’s assessment, dominion was the best compromise among a series of compromised choices.

Arlosoroff was unique among his Labor Zionist peers for publicly considering the dominion scheme—even more so for offering it his tentative support. Despite Wedgwood’s Labour politics, most Labor Zionists refrained from commenting altogether on the question of dominion. Indeed, the scheme elicited unease from most Zionists who were not Revisionists. Kisch worried about the damaging effect of Wedgwood’s criticism of the mandatory government.258 Ben-Gurion, though he considered Wedgwood a great friend of Zionism, also felt that his enthusiastic machinations endangered Labor Zionism’s commitment to cautious development.259

While Jabotinsky’s hopes for the founding of a Seventh Dominion League were realized, his dream of a Revisionist takeover at the Sixteenth Zionist Congress was not to be. In late July and early August 1929, the Zionist Congress convened in Zurich, and far from a sweeping Revisionist success, delegates in fact—despite passionate Revisionist protestation—voted to include non-Zionists in the newly inaugurated Jewish Agency for Palestine (formerly the Palestine Zionist Executive).260 At the conclusion of the Congress, Arlosoroff left for London—the last stop on a long journey that had taken him across North America and Europe. He arrived determined to find out all he could about

258 Frederick Kisch to Chaim Weizmann, January 20, 1927, CZA A209/156.
259 Segev, One Palestine Complete, 337.
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Julius Vogel, New Zealand’s Jewish prime minister, and to deepen his knowledge about the history of British colonialism through research at the British Museum.

_In the Wake of the Riots_

Five days after Arlosoroff’s walk through Hyde Park, recounted at the opening of this chapter, riots broke out in Palestine. Like the Bentwiches, who were on leave in England at the time, Arlosoroff found himself forced to process news of the violence—which arrived piecemeal in devastating blows with the morning, afternoon, and evening papers—from thousands of miles away. On Saturday, August 24, 1929, the morning after the first day of rioting, Arlosoroff leisurely strolled to the British Museum, unaware of what had transpired in Palestine. He admired the charm of Bloomsbury, particularly the neighborhood’s beautiful enclosed squares, musing that the streets were reduced to “mere accessories” against the verdant luster of the gardens. But a morning newspaper quickly shattered his reverie. “I stood face to face with the calamity that occurred the day before in Jerusalem, and the consequences of which it is impossible to foresee even in this moment,” he related in a letter to his wife. The afternoon paper was a greater shock, with a sensational headline—“Warships to Palestine!”—and reports of extensive casualties. “The worst thing is nobody is nowhere [sic],” wrote Arlosoroff. Not a single member of the Zionist Executive was in Palestine—Isaiah Braude, the Executive’s bookkeeper, had been left in charge. High Commissioner Chancellor, too, was away. London, in that final stretch of August, was hardly any better. Louis Lipsky, the head of the Zionist Organization of America, had arrived in town the previous night, but when Arlosoroff saw him on Saturday, the American had no idea anything had happened. British officials
in London were also inaccessible. The Colonial Office had cleared out for the weekend and the under-secretary of state for the colonies was unreachable.\textsuperscript{261} Newspapers from Palestine had been suspended and telegrams censored. “God knows what is going on there,” worried Arlosoroff, “and what is it all about? And what good is it all? That damned Wailing Wall-issue is a complete deadlock, no way out, and it will cost us so much: blood, peace, nerves, good-will, prestige, constructive possibilities, relations so difficult to cement, confidence of the Jews.”\textsuperscript{262}

In the wake of the riots, leaders of the Yishuv believed they were facing down an unprecedented moment of rupture in Palestine. The violence had heralded a new reality of Palestinian Arab nationalism, shattering Zionist hopes of establishing a Jewish national home while the movement was still in its infancy. Some Labor Zionists initially hoped that the recently formed British Labour government, led once again by Ramsay MacDonald, would intervene, condemn Arab violence, and reiterate Britain’s commitment to the Jewish national home. But two investigative commissions and a white paper later, many Zionists felt that hope had been defeated. Zionist-British relations, it seemed, had undergone irreparable damage.\textsuperscript{263} Wedgwood’s scheme also suffered a crushing blow. Convinced the lofty goal of the Seventh Dominion League was now wishful thinking, its members disbanded.\textsuperscript{264}

\textsuperscript{261} The under-secretary of state for the colonies at the time was the Labour politician William Lunn (1872-1942).
\textsuperscript{262} Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, August 24, 1929, CZA A44/11.
\textsuperscript{263} Anita Shapira argues that while the 1929 riots were viewed by Zionists at the time (as well as by many historians in retrospect) as a massive turning point for Palestine, the historical view suggests otherwise. The 1930s in fact saw continued, stable development of the Yishuv, and the riots did not ultimately lead to major changes in British or Zionist policy. Shapira, \textit{Land and Power}, 173.
\textsuperscript{264} Norman Rose, “The Seventh Dominion,” 406.
Arlosoroff regarded the riots as a moment of reckoning and trauma that demanded a reevaluation of Zionist policy and tactics—chief among them a rededication to the idea of auto-emancipation and an understanding of Zionism as a movement for “self-liberation” that required state-like levers of power in order to achieve its aims. If Revisionists had created a “nationalism full of phraseology, possessed perhaps of power, but without means or possibility of implementing that power,” Zionists on the opposite side of the political spectrum had given life to something far more damaging. In an essay he published just days before the Shaw Commission arrived in Palestine in late October 1929, Arlosoroff argued that “the psychological influence of the extreme pacifist agitators, especially among certain groups of intellectuals, has resulted in the creation of a spirit of disbelief in our own powers, however limited they may be.” Zionism in 1929 had no time for the “defeating ideology” of Brit Shalom, which “virtually repudiates the theory of auto-emancipation,” he wrote. Indeed, no space even existed for the ideas of Ahad Ha’am. Rather, Zionists must realize, Arlosoroff insisted, that their movement was “based upon the principle of self-liberation.” All the spiritual and cultural development in the world could not mitigate the need for “continuous immigration, systematic colonization, self-defense and political organization.” Zionists needed to believe that they themselves could secure these aims and wield levers of state-like power. “A movement which is nurtured in a sense of powerlessness must inevitably go down in disappointment,” Arlosoroff concluded.

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265 The Shaw Commission, led by Sir Walter Shaw (1863-1937) who had served as a judge in various British colonial locales, was the first of two British groups tasked with investigating the August violence. The other three members of the commission included Labour MP Henry Snell (1865-1944), Conservative MP Henry Betterton (1872-1949), and Liberal MP Rhys Hopkin Morris (1888-1956).

But alongside these forceful political pronouncements, the riots prompted not disillusionment in the Zionist-British relationship but rather inspired Arlosoroff to redouble his commitment to understanding and improving the partnership. Over the next tumultuous two years, though he categorically condemned the actions of British mandatory authorities, Arlosoroff threw himself doggedly into cementing strong, productive Zionist-British ties, particularly between Labor Zionists and British Labourites. He also worked to make knowledge of Britain and its empire accessible to a Hebrew-reading public and continued his personal research on Julius Vogel and the history of British colonization. Thus, as Arlosoroff grew increasingly convinced that state-like power was critical to Zionist aims, he also intensified his dedication to the Zionist-British partnership. What is more, the ideas of state-like power and self-liberation on the one hand, and a commitment to a continued relationship with the British Empire on the other represented not disjointed, distinct lines of thought in Arlosoroff’s mind, but, as we shall see, intimately intertwined ones.

When Arlosoroff returned to Palestine in mid-September 1929, the Yishuv was still reeling from the riots. Helen Bentwich, who wrote that “everyone is a raw mass of nerves,” had just begun organizing relief efforts for Hadassah.²⁶⁷ Antagonism towards High Commissioner Chancellor, widely regarded not only as unsympathetic to Zionism but also as prone to antisemitism, was particularly acute. Facing accusations of his administration’s unpreparedness and partiality, Chancellor argued that while the majority of the violence had been carried out by Arabs, the cause of the unrest stemmed from

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²⁶⁷ Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, September 7, 1929, WL 7HBE/2/11.
Jewish immigration and land purchases. In the same October 1929 essay in which he articulated Zionism’s need for concrete power and commitment to self-liberation, Arlosoroff joined in the criticism of Chancellor’s administration. The old challenges in the Zionist-British relationship in Palestine persisted as they always had, explained Arlosoroff. British authorities, for instance, continued to be confounded by those Jewish “former students who talk in seventy tongues but have no experience in their trades.” But the relationship had reached a marked level of “retrogression” in the aftermath of the riots. Now a “bitter feeling of disappointment, desertion and betrayal” pervaded the Yishuv whose members believed British authorities employed a “daily routine of annulment defeating every constructive plan for the upbuilding of the National home in Palestine.” This sad state of affairs was all the more striking for the fact that “a deep loyalty, a feeling of honor for British culture and government” and a “love for the British flag” had developed among Jews in Palestine and around the world in the wake of World War I. In his jaunts through Hyde Park and his awestruck wonder in the hallowed halls of the British Museum, Arlosoroff undoubtedly experienced these affinities himself. But “the precious principles of justice and righteousness in administration inherent in the ‘Pax Britannica’ have been weakened,” he argued. “Jews have learned that there is one standard of Justice between ‘gentlemen’ and another between ‘gentlemen’ and those who are not ‘gentlemen.’”

Arlosoroff also recognized that the sorry state of Zionist-British relations reflected factors far removed from the minutiae of workaday realities in Palestine. For instance, while “the massacre of seminary students, the slaughter of old men and children, under

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268 Arlosoroff, Jews, Arabs and Great Britain, 34-35.
the British flag, made a powerful impression” on the British public, sympathy for Zionism had failed to follow, “perhaps because it is generally difficult in time of war to find sympathy for the Jew and his cause.” More broadly, an indifference—even antagonism—among Britons towards imperial activity had developed since the war, and had only sharpened after the onset of a worldwide economic crisis. “England is now beset with difficult economic problems, with a million and a quarter unemployed for years and coal mining districts in a state of paralysis,” he wrote. These financial hardships had empire-wide ramifications:

The people do not feel that the Dominions are making any special effort to come to their aid by opening the doors to immigrants and inaugurating broad colonization programs. The working class and its leaders are farther than ever from turning aside from the oppressive questions of the day and allowing themselves the luxury of dreaming about new conquests that would involve new expenditures. Here again it must be stressed that the political literature of England deals only incidentally with the actual ties that bind the Empire to Palestine; so that it appears that whatever England is doing is being done for the sake of the Jew.

Here, Arlosoroff presented a new understanding of dominion status, the political possibility for Palestine that he had cautiously endorsed only earlier that year. Then, he had thought a dominion could correct the unbalanced, custodial nature of the mandate. “The British administrators who, today, may grudgingly think they are called upon to sweat for other people’s interests, would realize that the bond existing between Palestine and the British Commonwealth is not of a temporary nature, and that their work furthers their own ends no less than those of the Jews,” Arlosoroff had written. Now, he

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269 Ibid., 37.
270 Ibid., 39.
observed, an enmity in Britain existed towards all the dominions for a perceived failure to uphold their end of the partnership.

Factors in other reaches of the British Empire—especially India—also shaped the Zionist-British relationship. “The British Empire today is the largest Moslem power in the world,” wrote Arlosoroff. “Its relation therefore with other Moslem lands is one of the chief problems of an empire which includes parts of India, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Persia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt and the Soudan, besides Palestine.” India—home to sixty million of the 110 million Muslims living under the British flag—sat at the epicenter of communication with “all the lands of Islam.” In the past, argued Arlosoroff, conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine had centered around “local economic and political” issues and had not been of tremendous concern to Muslims in other parts of the empire. “But as soon as religious motives are involved, as in the incident of the Wailing Wall, it becomes a political problem of the first magnitude from the viewpoint of the Empire,” he wrote. “In its action England has stressed this factor.”

British “action” also reeked of double standards, according to Arlosoroff. While he praised the immediate response of the British Labour government to the riots in Palestine (in contrast to that of the local mandatory administration), Arlosoroff argued that Labour’s broader imperial policy—principally disarmament and, most importantly, the introduction of self-government—had not been extended to Palestine. This was an era in which Britain ended the Egyptian protectorate; installed Faisal as king in Iraq and negotiated the country’s eventual entry into the League of Nations; “dared to announce”

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272 Arlosoroff, Jews, Arabs and Great Britain, 38.
273 As we will see, the notion of self-government for the colonies was in fact far from an agreed upon good in Labour circles.
that India might receive dominion status even before the conclusion of the Simon Commission\textsuperscript{274}; and worked to reduce armaments at the naval base in Singapore. “Amidst all this,” wrote Arlosoroff, “the policy of a ‘strong hand’ in Palestine, the method of governing without popular representation and the suppression of every movement among its inhabitants, seems a glaring contradiction.”\textsuperscript{275}

Arlosoroff continued this comparative line of critique in his response to the Shaw Commission, demonstrating his expanding knowledge of the British Empire. After investigating the August riots, the Shaw Commission upheld High Commissioner Chancellor’s opinion that Jewish land purchases and immigration were the root cause of the unrest. The investigation also cleared the British administration of any wrong doing. Helen Bentwich, “confident of [the Commission’s] entire futility,” had been right in her prediction that a British commission would fail to hold a British administration responsible.\textsuperscript{276} In his response, Arlosoroff noted that whereas the royal commissions tasked with public inquiry in Britain and the dominions were “usually composed of resident members of the local parliament who have an exact knowledge of their respective countries,” the Shaw Commission contained not a single resident of Palestine—Arab, Jew, or otherwise.\textsuperscript{277} He also criticized the commission’s idealization of pre-war economic practices in Palestine, specifically the example of Jewish-owned citrus farms employing Arab workers.\textsuperscript{278} Though the commission held this up as a model of

\textsuperscript{274} The Simon Commission (also known as the Indian Statutory Commission) was the group tasked with investigating constitutional reform in India. Led by Sir John Allsebrook Simon and including six other British MPs, the commission arrived in India in February 1928.

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{276} Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, October 5, 1929, WL 7HBE 2/11.


\textsuperscript{278} The citrus grower and writer Moshe Smilansky (1874-1953) provided testimony to the Shaw Commission. Smilansky was a chief critic from within the Zionist movement of the principle of Hebrew
cross-cultural cooperation between Jews and Arabs, Arlosoroff objected to the depiction. “What the Report calls ‘co-operation’ is actually a system of exploitation…of the mass of the population by a minority,” he wrote. After World War I, Hebrew labor—the employment of Jewish workers, even though Arab workers often represented cheaper labor—had become a central tenet within mainstream Labor Zionism. “The Shaw Commission seems not to have heard that a system of colonisation built upon the exploitation of a native population by an immigrant minority of European origin has been rejected by leading authorities on colonisation, on social as well as political grounds,” argued Arlosoroff, citing a recently published study on settlement and economic development in Australia. Unrest in 1921 and again in 1929, which swept cities like Petach Tikvah and Hebron where Jewish and Arab “co-operation” had been the pre-war norm, proved that the model was untenable.

In a 1927 essay published in *Hapoel Hatzair*, Arlosoroff had looked to another site in the British Empire—South Africa—as a parallel to the economic situation of Jews and Arabs in Palestine. Instead of stressing the issue of exploitation, as he would in 1929, Arlosoroff instead focused on the impact that a joint Jewish-Arab economic sector would have on Jewish wages and, in turn, the development of the Jewish national home. He prefaced his discussion with the caveat that he was not presenting South Africa as a political model for Palestine, but rather only wanted to “compare the polar points in the economies of both countries.” In terms of percentages of white European workers on the

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one hand, and non-European and native workers on the other, South Africa represented a close contemporary parallel to Palestine. Facing competition from Indians and Africans who worked for cheaper wages, supporters of the South African Labour Party and trade unions had successfully campaigned for the imposition of a color bar, which excluded non-whites from higher level positions and created two distinct (though interdependent) economic sectors. “It does not matter if we reject these politics,” Arlosoroff reasoned. Instead, he argued the main point was “to emphasize the economic motives and social relations that, justly or not, led to the adoption of the color bar law.” He explained that in the case of Palestine, European Jewish immigrants would only remain in the country if they were able to find decent wages. In a similar dynamic to South Africa, the competition of Arab labor in the context of a joint economy in Palestine would drive Jewish wages down, resulting in reverse immigration and the deterioration of the Yishuv.\(^{280}\) Joint organization (that is, a joint Jewish-Arab union) could not overcome the realities of an enduring capitalism. Thus the solution in Palestine, Arlosoroff argued, was to create two separate economies—by implication one for Jews featuring higher wages for skilled labor and another for Arabs with lower-wages for unskilled labor.\(^{281}\)

These positions on labor signified a departure for Arlosoroff. In the aftermath of 1921, he had criticized the policy of Hebrew labor because it proposed an economic solution to Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine, when Arlosoroff believed that the only

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\(^{280}\) Reverse immigration represented a significant challenge for the Yishuv. In 1927, 2,000 more Jews left Palestine than entered it.

solution was a political one. In 1927 and again in 1929, with a deepening awareness of colonization, colonialism, and the British Empire, Arlosoroff defended Hebrew labor on economic grounds by pointing to parallels in other reaches of the empire. Though Arlosoroff recognized Palestinian Arab nationalism to be a significant political force much earlier than his Labor Zionist peers, his assessment of the economic situation in Palestine after the recession of 1926 prompted him to support labor policies that fundamentally violated universalist Labour principles. Arlosoroff surely recognized the controversy into which he was wading by invoking South Africa and the color bar; his equivocating language of “justly or not” and his insistence on avoiding a political comparison indicate as much, though hardly constitute a condemnation of racist policies in South Africa. The 1927 essay was never translated and published in English, while the 1929 essay, which referenced only Australia—a far more palatable comparison for British Labour supporters than South Africa—subsequently appeared in English translation.

While Arlosoroff did not hesitate to criticize British policy in Palestine, the nature and content of his critique reflected just how immersed he had become in questions about Britain and its history, empire, politics, and culture. What is more, alongside this criticism—indeed, sometimes in the very same essay—Arlosoroff continued to insist on the utter importance of defending and improving Zionist-British relations, often at the expense of Jewish-Arab cooperation. In his 1929 essay published before the Shaw Commission, Arlosoroff concluded that “despite the difficult relations” and the “embittered feelings of disenchantment…there is no Zionist task today as important as the strengthening of our relations with England.” It was precisely because the relationship
Britain was so “complicated and involved” that Zionists needed to approach it as their “one chief task.” They needed “to elucidate it, to unravel the snarls, correct mistakes and overlook a great many things that may seem important now, but are nothing compared to the essential.” For Arlosoroff, that essential work included identifying a “common program of activity in the future”; organizing “methodological propaganda” in London to “strengthen our cause”; and finally, developing a plan for some type of representative legislative body. Such a body would hold the mandatory power “to public account every day”; otherwise the British, according to Arlosoroff, would “always follow the path of the least resistance” in their administration of Palestine.282 A year earlier, in his essay outlining a typology of British administrators in Palestine, Arlosoroff had suggested that a high-quality English language paper might function in place of a legislative body in representing Jewish opinion to the British.283 After the riots, successfully conveying the Jewish position no longer seemed enough; a truly effective Zionist-British partnership demanded British mandatory accountability.

Other Zionists maintained faith in Zionist-British relations up until the release of the Shaw Commission’s report in March 1930, but Arlosoroff is notable for insisting on the continued importance of the partnership and for working actively to cultivate it even amidst the height of the crisis: the publication of the Passfield White Paper in October 1930.284 For instance, after the January 1930 founding of Mapai (a merger between the

282 Arlosoroff, Jews, Arabs and Great Britain, 42.
283 Arlosoroff, “Ha-pekidut ha-Britit ve-ha-bayit ha-le’umi,” 80.
284 In the months leading up to the publishing of the Passfield White Paper, Zionists worked to secure the support of Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield) (1859-1947), who replaced Leo Amery (1873-1955) as colonial secretary two months before the 1929 riots, and maintained hope that the Labour Government would reaffirm British support for the Jewish national home. For instance, Dov Hoz (1894-1940), then the Poalei Zion and Histadrut emissary in London, urged fellow Zionists to trust Webb, a position he maintained into the spring of 1930. Hoz noted that Webb himself had made sure Labour’s 1917 platform had included a clause about the right of Jews to settled in Palestine. Weizmann, too, believed that Webb would affirm
Labor Zionist parties Ahdut ha-Avodah and Hapoel Hatzair), Arlosoroff focused particular attention on strengthening ties between his new party and the Labour party in Britain, whose shared politics presented an obvious opportunity to develop a “common program of activity.”\(^{285}\) The merger—in which Arlosoroff played a key role—signified the weakening of the divisions that had previously separated the two parties. Ahdut ha-Avodah had conceded to Hapoel Hatzair’s commitment to Hebrew over Yiddish, as well as its repudiation of class warfare. Arlosoroff understood that British Labour—a stronghold for reformist ideas that moved away from the notion of an impending revolution and recognized the reality of a potentially enduring capitalism—could be a critical beacon for the new moderate Mapai party as a participant in an international socialist effort. After the merger, Arlosoroff assumed the role of editor of the journal *Ahdut ha-Avodah* (which retained its title) and, in that capacity, reached out to a range of British Labour figures to invite them to author articles for the publication.\(^{286}\) “We are most anxious to keep the contacts between the Palestinian workingman and social and cultural developments abroad close and alive,” wrote Arlosoroff in a form letter to several Labour figures in April 1930, a month after the Shaw Commission’s report was published. “Whatever is going on in the British Commonwealth of Nations and, particularly, in the ranks of British Labour is…of special importance to us,” he continued. “We have, therefore, decided to assign a special section…to the problems of the British

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\(^{286}\) Those articles would be translated into Hebrew.
Empire from Labour’s point of view and to ask you to be kind enough and undertake to contribute to it,” he explained. Arlosoroff reached out to Labour figures who were already established allies of the Zionist cause, as well as to some individuals who would later become supportive. For instance, he wrote to Wedgwood and Joseph Kenworthy, another MP and champion of the Seventh Dominion Scheme.287 Three years earlier in New York, Arlosoroff had partnered with Kenworthy (along with Weizmann and Selig Brodetsky) to raise funds for the United Palestine Appeal.288 Arlosoroff also contacted Norman Angell, the British MP and writer who was a close friend of Weizmann; Susan Lawrence, one of the first women Labour MPs and later a supporter of Zionism289; the MP and philanthropist Charles Buxton who had been an early proponent of Zionism290; and Harold Laski, the Fabian leader and academic (and brother of Anglo-Jewish leader Neville Laski) who became more involved in Zionism in the wake of the 1930 Passfield White Paper.291

For Arlosoroff, providing these perspectives in Hebrew translation represented a key way to educate the Yishuv about British Labour and the empire. However, it was often challenging to convey back to the non-Hebrew reading authors the impact of their

287 Originally a member of the Liberal Party, Joseph Kenworthy (1886-1953) joined the Labour Party in 1926 after David Lloyd George assumed the head of the Liberal Party. Kenworthy succeeded his father as Lord Strabolgi in 1934. In the 1940s, Kenworthy worked to revive the dominion idea through the Jewish Dominion of Palestine League, for which he served as chairman.
289 Susan Lawrence (1871-1947), who visited Palestine in 1935 and was particularly impressed by the socialist societies created on the kibbutzim, went on to become a supporter of Zionism. At the Labour Party Conference in Edinburgh the following year, Lawrence met with Berl Katznelson, who observed that her “humanist” Labour politics had fallen out of fashion in a political party increasingly committed to “extreme radicalism.” Quoted in Anita Shapira, Berl: The Biography of a Socialist Zionist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 260.
articles. After mailing G.T. Garratt\textsuperscript{292} a copy of the issue in which his article “The Indian Imbroglio” had appeared, Arlosoroff apologized for not translating the several interesting reader comments he had received in response to the piece. In reply, Garratt gave his “kind opinion of the journal.” Arlosoroff thanked him, conceding that his generous assessment had necessarily been limited to the journal’s appearance. “As to the contents,” wrote Arlosoroff, “you know the rendering of the phrase ‘It’s all Greek to me’ in French is: ‘C’est [de] l’hébreu pour moi!’”\textsuperscript{293} Garratt also prepared for Ahдут ha-Avodah an article entitled “The Labour Party and the Empire” and a piece on the first Round Table Conference, held in London from November 1930 to January 1931 to decide on future constitutional reforms for India.\textsuperscript{294}

Outside of his journal, Arlosoroff brought other work on British and British imperial topics to the attention of the Yishuv. In 1930, he published a Hebrew translation of Basil Williams’ 1928 book The British Empire, a short, readable volume which recounted a triumphalist story of imperial expansion with particular attention to economic development.\textsuperscript{295} The preface to the Hebrew edition explained that the book was a celebration of the imperial enterprise, written out of “a belief in the power of life and development which is still apparent in the British Empire,”\textsuperscript{296} The same year, Arlosoroff also published a review of The Dominions and the Colonial Offices (1926), written by the

\textsuperscript{292} G.T. Garratt was a Labour politician who had served as a colonial civil servant in India for 11 years. He would later co-author a history of British India with the missionary Edward Thompson. G.T. Garratt and Edward Thompson, Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India (London: Macmillan, 1934). Garratt was extremely critical of British histories of India that ignored the existence of Indian nationalism, a position which earned him the enmity of many conservative leaders in Britain. See Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, “A Brief Survey of Colonial Historiography in India,” in Different Types of History, ed. Bharati Ray (Delhi: Pearson, 2009).

\textsuperscript{293} Chaim Arlosoroff to G. T. Garratt, July 8, 1930, CZA A44/5/1.

\textsuperscript{294} Chaim Arlosoroff to G.T. Garratt, September 8, 1930, CZA A44/5/1.


\textsuperscript{296} Basil Williams, Ha-Imperiah ha-Brititi, trans. Chaim Arlosoroff (Tel Aviv: Hevra, 1930), n. pag.
former permanent under-secretary of state George Fiddes. Arlosoroff argued that Fiddes’ book, though one of many published on the topic of British imperialism, offered a unique and vivid insider’s view of the upper echelons of the Colonial Office. He recommended the text as a kind of guide, an “anatomy of the administration of the British Empire, with all its sections and branches,” that could shed light on a labyrinthine institution so often viewed by the public as one of those “mysterious forces of nature whose activity is shrouded in darkness.”

While immersing himself in writing about the British Empire and working to make that information available to the Yishuv, Arlosoroff continued to pursue a related project of personal interest: his planned biography of Julius Vogel. After his first research trip to London in August 1929 was cut short because of the riots in Palestine, Arlosoroff resolved to move ahead with his examination of the “life of a strange country, a strange man and a fascinating period of colonization.” Vogel was indeed an unusual historical figure—and one, Arlosoroff realized, who had been left remarkably unexamined and “underestimated by various New Zealand historians.”

Born in London in 1835 into a family of middle-class Ashkenazi Jews (originally from Holland), Vogel was raised in the home of his maternal grandfather, who ran a merchant firm in the City of London. Vogel was educated in Ramsgate (at the school promoted by Moses Montefiore) and later at the Royal School of Mines, where he studied chemistry and the material sciences. In

297 Sir George Vandeleur Fiddes (1858-1936) served a permanent under-secretary of state for the colonies from 1916-1921 in David Lloyd George’s government.
299 Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, August 17, 1929, London, CZA A44/11.
300 Chaim Arlosoroff to Alexander Astor, May 14, 1930, CZA A44/5/1.
301 The family firm, Isaac and Samuel, conducted business primarily in Latin America. Vogel’s maternal uncle Benjamin Isaac served as consul for the short-lived Granadine Confederation (comprising mainly present-day Colombia and Panama) and consul general for Guatemala. Dalziel, Julius Vogel, 12.
1852, he left England bound for Australia, joining the migration of young adventurers hoping to make their fortune in the goldfields of Victoria. There he worked as a newspaper editor and ran unsuccessfully for the Victorian Parliament. In 1861, he settled in Otago on the South Island of New Zealand where he wrote for a local paper and made his first successful foray into politics. After serving as a member of the New Zealand Parliament for ten years, Vogel was elected premier of the country in 1873. He held the post for two years and again in 1876, during which he spearheaded a major public works scheme. Vogel was also notable for supporting women’s suffrage (in 1893 New Zealand became the first country to give women the vote) and for penning New Zealand’s first science fiction novel, *Anno Domini 2000, or, Woman’s Destiny*. The novel imagined a future in which the British Empire had become an imperial federation, and women held the most prominent positions of power.

Arlosoroff, who planned to call his book *Sir Julius Vogel and the Colonization of New Zealand*, was particularly interested in the premier’s public works scheme. In a letter to a contact in Dunedin, Arlosoroff reported that his book would “be an economic analysis of the era of the Public Works Policy and its importance for the development of New Zealand, centering around Sir Julius’ personality and achievements.”

New Zealand in the 1870s had navigated many of the same challenges faced by the Yishuv in the interwar period. Vogel’s ambitious and controversial scheme, made possible by massive borrowing from Britain, promoted large-scale immigration and settlement and revolutionized New Zealand’s infrastructure, building up the country’s railways, roads, ports and telegraph lines (often through the acquisition of Māori land). Vogel’s

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302 Chaim Arlosoroff to Alexander Astor, May 14, 1930, CZA A44/5/1.
Jewishness and the role it played in his political career also intrigued Arlosoroff. Though Vogel married a non-Jewish woman from Dunedin, he never converted to Christianity, identified as a Jew his entire life, and was buried in a Jewish cemetery in London (in contrast to his contemporary Benjamin Disraeli). He also had been “exposed to many slanderous attacks on account of his being a Jew,” which Arlosoroff thought made it unlikely that “he should have ignored [his Jewish identity] altogether.”

Arlosoroff returned to London in November 1930 and continued research on Vogel in his spare time. “Today and to-morrow (Saturday) are my relatively free days,” he wrote to his wife. “I am spending them, of course, in the British Museum Reading Room, dipping back to Sir Julius Vogel’s life. It still interests me very much.”

Arlosoroff had been called back to London that November, once again at Weizmann’s behest, in order to participate in negotiations with the British government following the fallout of the Passfield White Paper. Issued the previous month, the white paper articulated a new British policy of dual obligation to both Jews and Arabs. It maintained the Shaw Report’s recommendation that Jewish land purchases should be curtailed and that further Jewish immigration should abide by a principle of absorptive economic capacity which took into account all of Palestine, not solely the Jewish economy. In effect, this meant that Arab unemployment constituted grounds for restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. The white paper also made clear that the recently restructured and enlarged Jewish Agency, which now included non-Zionists, held no political power in Palestine. Finally, the policy statement announced Britain’s intention to establish a representative legislative assembly in Palestine, which (because of

303 Chaim Arlosoroff to Alexander Astor, May 14, 1930, CZA A44/5/1.
304 Chaim Arlosoroff to Sima Arlosoroff, November 21, 1930, CZA A44/11.
the population makeup in Palestine) would necessarily contain an Arab majority.

Weizmann resigned as president of the Zionist Organization in protest over what he saw as the white paper’s fundamental betrayal of the Balfour Declaration and in recognition that his policy of Zionist-British cooperation was widely regarded as a failed one within Zionist circles. Zionists and legal experts alike argued that the policy laid out in the Passfield White Paper was in direct contravention of the terms of the mandate. The issuer of the white paper, Colonial Secretary Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield), faced backlash not only from Liberal and Conservative politicians, but from his own Labour colleagues. Fear, too, of rebuke from the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission loomed large over Whitehall. Consequently, the British government entered negotiations with Zionist leaders and ultimately issued a letter from Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald clarifying British policy towards Palestine. The MacDonald Letter, published on February 13, 1931, reaffirmed Britain’s commitment to Jewish immigration and land settlement in Palestine, in essence cancelling the policy of the Passfield White Paper.

The entire saga of the Passfield White Paper—the events leading up to it and the debates in its wake—unfolded as major questions regarding the future of the British Empire were being debated. While Arlosoroff and other Zionists participated in negotiations with British politicians in London, Indian and British leaders convened nearby for the first Round Table Conference to decide on constitutional reforms for India. How would Britain respond to demands for self-determination and self-rule in the empire? Would representative government be introduced? Might India and British crown colonies become dominions? The various threads of Arlosoroff’s political thought at this time—his increasingly forceful articulation of the Zionist need for state-like power; his
growing focus on questions of self-determination and representation in imperial settings; his fascination with the history of British colonization and his regard for it as a model for the Yishuv; and his continued dedication to the upbuilding of an international labor politics—took shape against this horizon of political uncertainty. Labour proponents and socialists across the British imperial world—including Arlosoroff—were forced to reconsider how their left-wing politics fit into an imperial world wrestling with the rise of nationalism. Arlosoroff looked towards the British Empire—its history, politics, and the possibilities it held for the future—as a means and model through which Jewish self-determination, continued Zionist settlement, and socialist ideals might all find expression.

But Arlosoroff did so while other left-wing thinkers struggled more and more with the entanglement of nationalism, colonization, and socialism—and while many increasingly insisted on their incompatibility.305 For instance, at the beginning of his tenure as colonial secretary, Sidney Webb expressed a measure of admiration for the Zionist movement, a sentiment based not on approval of Zionism’s national-political aims, but on its successful, efficient settlement efforts.306 This position of supporting constructive settlement was in keeping with Webb’s Fabian socialist ideology, formulated in his response to the Boer War three decades earlier.307 Then, he and other Fabians had understood that imperial expansion and the spread of socialism could work

305 Though his Zionist political convictions were very much the product of his youth in Germany, Arlosoroff was born in the multi-ethnic space of the Russian Empire where nationalism and socialism were synthesized by both Jewish and non-Jewish political actors. On the relationship between nationalism and socialism among Russian Jews, as manifested in their diverse and multitudinous cultural, political, and social projects, see Kenneth B. Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews*; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, & the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
307 George Bernard Shaw articulated this Fabian position, shared by Webb, in George Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society* (London: Grant Richards, 1900).
in tandem. But outside of this modicum of admiration, Webb objected to Labor Zionism for its efforts to combine socialism and nationalism—even as independence leaders from Trinidad to India used socialism as an ideological basis for their national struggle.\footnote{Gorny, The British Labour Movement and Zionism, 71. Elleke Boehmer notes that George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb opposed nationalism at home but did not object to imperial expansion in the name of socialism. Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 42.}

Most famously, Jawaharlal Nehru promoted Indian nationalism and vociferously criticized British colonial rule, positions which he understood to be inextricably linked to his socialist (indeed, Fabian socialist) politics.\footnote{Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) is perhaps the most famous independence leader who was also a follower of Fabian socialism, to which he was introduced during his time in London as a law student before World War I. A Times magazine article published in 1951 (and critical of Nehru’s politics) stated, “Beatrice and Sidney Webb, the godparents of Fabian Socialism, are in a truer sense his creators than Vishnu and Siva.” Harold Laski was, in fact, probably the English Fabian with the greatest influence on Nehru’s political thinking. Though Fabian socialism would come to be associated with the anticolonial movement by the 1940s, in the early 1930s, Webb’s socialist imperialism was still mainstream in Fabian circles. The Times article is quoted in Lawrence H. White, The Clash of Economic Ideas: The Great Policy Debates and Experiments of the Last Hundred Years (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 249. For more on Nehru’s socialist politics, see Sobhag Mathur, “Nehru: The Evolution of His Thought in the Pre-Independence Decades,” in Spectrum of Nehru’s Thought, ed. Sobhag Mathur and Shankar Goyal (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1994), 33-50.}

Examining the British imperial context of Arlosoroff’s political thinking also reveals something about Zionism’s complex relationship to the state. With the inauguration of the British Commonwealth of Nations in 1926, the idea of dominion offered a political option that fit squarely into neither a statist nor non-statist mold. It provided the economic and political advantages (and risks) of being part of a larger global network, but also came with many of the virtues of independence and self-determination: the ability to borrow loans, the power to control immigration, and the security of diplomatic standing. As we will see in the next chapter, after Arlosoroff was appointed head of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department in the summer of 1931 and spent his days actively managing the Zionist-British partnership, he continued to grapple
with Zionism’s relationship to state-like power—a question made all the more pressing with the rise of Nazism in Germany.
Chapter 3

A Politics of Uncertainty

In June 1932, despairing that the Zionist movement had reached a near hopeless crossroads, Chaim Arlosoroff sent his famous confidential letter to Chaim Weizmann. In it, he proposed that Zionism’s only hope might be to revolt—to overthrow British mandatory authorities and establish a minority government in Palestine by force. At the time he wrote the letter, Arlosoroff had spent nearly a year as head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, a position akin to foreign minister of the Zionist movement; one of his chief responsibilities was liaising with British authorities in Palestine. Over the course of that year, he had witnessed the nadir of Zionists fortunes. Immigration and land development had become intractable challenges. Zionists had lost faith in Britain’s commitment to the Jewish national home. Jewish-Arab relations seemed equally hopeless. And, most significantly, the Nazi climb to power in Germany meant that Palestine might soon need to accommodate thousands of Jewish refugees and face the prospect of another world war. This profound uncertainty about Zionist futures compelled Arlosoroff to defy central principles of labor politics and convinced him that the Zionist movement had to achieve state-power. This uncertainty also pushed Arlosoroff—long a steadfast champion of the Zionist-British partnership—to question the fundamental tenability of Zionist futures in the British Empire.

310 See Aviva Halamish, Be-merutz kaful neged ha-zman: mediniyyut ha-’aliyah ha-Tziyonit bi-shnot ha-shloshim (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2006).
This chapter traces how the uncertainty of the 1930s compelled Zionists, including Arlosoroff, Norman Bentwich, and Gershon Agronsky, the journalist in charge of public relations for the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, to disentangle their visions of Zionist and British futures in diverse ways. Norman, as we shall see, was forced to abandon his work on behalf of mandatory authorities; he could no longer be both a British official and a Zionist. Amidst the rise of Pan-Islamist movements including Khilafat, Gershon Agronsky decided that rather than turning to British imperial powers, Zionists should work to build ties with moderate Muslim leaders in India. The broad horizon of uncertainty did not produce one singular response, and the impulse to divorce Zionist futures from the British empire remained complicated by the realities on the ground in Palestine. As this chapter shows, Arlosoroff built ties with Jewish elites throughout the British Empire, participated in British-oriented social circles in Jerusalem, and developed a close, candid friendship with High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope—all while he grew increasingly frustrated with the broader state of Zionist-British relations. These divergent and even contradictory paths, however, all emerged out of a shared consideration of the broad range of possible futures of the British Empire, spanning from the persistence of imperial rule to the triumph of anticolonial independence movements. These visions reflect the politics of uncertainty—uncertainty over both Zionist and British imperial futures—that characterized the early 1930s.

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311 Gershon Agronsky (1894-1959), later Agron, was born in Ukraine and spent his childhood in Philadelphia. During World War I, he served in the Jewish Legion of the British Army in Palestine. After the war, Agronsky worked for the press office of the Jewish Agency and for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. In 1932, he founded and served as editor of the English language daily the Palestine Post (which later became the Jerusalem Post). He served as a mayor of Jerusalem from 1955 until his death. See Gershon Agron, Asir ha-ne’emanut (Jerusalem: M. Nyuman, 1964). For more on Agronsky’s work with the Palestine Post, see Erwin Frenkel, The Press and Politics in Israel: The Jerusalem Post from 1932 to the Present (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).
A year before Arlosoroff’s famous letter to Weizmann, the Zionist movement had been beset with upheaval. At the Seventeenth Zionist Congress in Basle in the summer of 1931—the first congress since the 1929 riots—Revisionists, the Mizrachi (Religious Zionists), and a contingent of American Zionists waged a bitter protest against Chaim Weizmann’s leadership. In a vote of 118 to 48, delegates determined not to reelect Weizmann and, in his place, chose the veteran Zionist and Hebrew journalist Nahum Sokolow as president. Fifteen years Weizmann’s senior, Sokolow had worked closely with the latter in London since World War I. Though Weizmann’s loss reflected endemic Zionist frustration with the ousted leader’s policy of British cooperation, the election results of the Seventeenth Congress far from heralded a new regime of Zionist-British antagonism. On the contrary, upon his election, Sokolow announced that Zionist-British cooperation would be an essential policy of the newly elected Zionist Executive. And on that new Executive now sat Arlosoroff, long the defender of Zionist-British cooperation. Congress had also appointed Arlosoroff to replace Frederick Kisch as head of the Political Department, a job in which he felt determined to uphold this “essential policy.”

The British government experienced its own tumult and turnover that summer. Unable to reach an agreement on austerity measures in the face of economic depression, the Labour Government dissolved. In its place, Labour, Conservative, and Liberal politicians formed a coalition National Government. Ramsay MacDonald remained prime minister, but the majority of cabinet ministers—including Webb—were replaced.312 The British administration in Palestine, too, experienced overhaul. Harry Luke, the chief secretary and acting high commissioner when the riots broke out, was transferred out of

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312 Labour politician J.H. Thomas (1874-1949) succeeded Sidney Webb as colonial secretary.
Palestine after Kisch and other Jewish Agency leaders fought for his removal. Of even greater significance, High Commissioner John Chancellor—whose assessment of the 1929 riots and reputation for antisemitism had earned him Zionist enmity—planned to step down in September, with Arthur Wauchope arriving in Jerusalem to replace him later that fall. From Whitehall in London to the Hill of Evil Counsel in Jerusalem, the British leadership that had overseen Palestine’s past two turbulent years was no more.

Norman Bentwich had observed this dramatic change of guard as an outsider. What the Bentwiches’ had thought would be a short leave in England in September 1930, had turned into a year-long purgatory for Norman. In talks with the Colonial Office, Norman was told that “feeling in Palestine ran so high that there would be outbreaks of violence” were he to resume his post. The government felt that a Jew (and a Zionist one at that) represented far too inflammatory an appointment in such tense times. Refusing to resign—stepping down would be tantamount to “admitting that no Jew could again hold high office under the British Mandate”—Norman reluctantly agreed to keep quiet about the whole situation until a resolution could be reached. “Occasional work” thrown his way by the Colonial Office was poor consolation. At long last, in late August, nearly a year after he had left Palestine, Norman received the final word from Sidney Webb: he would be officially retired.

The year 1931 became the first since 1916 during which Norman remained entirely away from Palestine. He longed for the “half anchored and half-hearted” peripatetic life that had kept him moving between his two worlds—Britain and

314 Bentwich and Bentwich, *Mandate Memories*, 146-147.
Palestine—for so long. The year had also been disheartening for reasons beyond the personal and professional. Unlike many Zionists, Norman felt that the wrongs spelled out in the Passfield White Paper had only been made worse by the policy acrobatics of the MacDonald letter, “the friction between Jews and Arabs…aggravated by the vacillating Government.”

Now he found himself, restless but rooted, in a new home on the edge of Hampstead Heath in London. While Helen became an active member of the British Labour Party, Norman returned to Lincoln’s Inn as a barrister and kept abreast of developments in Palestine by reading the local papers. An early September article in the *Palestine Bulletin*—an interview with Arlosoroff about his recent appointment to the Political Department—buoyed the lawyer’s spirits.

Norman decided to write to Arlosoroff to tell him “how admirable…and in form” he had found the interview, in which Arlosoroff had declared his commitment to Zionist-British cooperation. “I think that I agree with every word of it and certainly I share its spirit,” Norman wrote. “I sincerely hope that you will be able to bring about that understanding between the three sides of the triangle, so to say: in case I come back to Eretz Israel—as I hope I may do sometime—I shall do what I can to assist…My heart is always in the country and in some way I hope to serve it again,” he concluded.

On the ground in Palestine, Arlosoroff soon discovered that the practical work of cooperation and progress was far more challenging.

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Ibid., 203. Helen supported her brother Hugh Franklin’s unsuccessful bid for parliament in 1931 and ran unsuccessfully herself the following year. Beginning in 1934, she served on the education committee of the London County Council (LCC). She was elected as a member of the LCC in 1938, serving until her retirement in 1965.

Norman Bentwich to Chaim Arlosoroff, September 9, 1931, CZA A44/4. The “three sides of the triangle” refer to the Jews, Arabs, and British in Palestine.
Cooperation and Struggle: Arlosoroff’s Early Days at the Political Department

Roy G. B. Spicer was struggling to pronounce the name “Greenfelder.” The new Inspector-General of the Palestine Police was among the mandatory officials visited by Arlosoroff and Kisch during the latter’s final week of work in August 1931. Though he had previously written so much about the importance of protecting the Zionist-British partnership, Arlosoroff now witnessed firsthand the routine meetings, negotiations, and daily grind that went into maintaining the complex relationship. As he sat with the new police chief, Arlosoroff marveled that British, Jewish, and Arab societies existed side-by-side in Palestine but were separated by virtually “impenetrable partitions.” Spicer, whose son was sick, only knew an English physician in Jerusalem who had no expertise in childhood illness. “We took this opportunity to name Dr. Greenfelder,” recorded Arlosoroff in his diary. Spicer struck him as “a man of energy” who was dedicated to his work, but Arlosoroff somehow doubted the Englishman would take his son to see the Jewish pediatrician.318

While Spicer had otherwise made an “excellent impression,” Arlosoroff quickly realized just how much work lay ahead of him as he shadowed Kisch. Cultural differences, inexperience, commitment to the status quo, resentment, and prejudice all presented stumbling blocks to Zionist-British cooperation. Mark Young, for instance, who replaced Luke as chief secretary, acted with chilly reserve upon first meeting Arlosoroff, surveying him from head to toe while Kisch spoke. His cold scrutiny struck Arlosoroff as stereotypically English, reminiscent of an amusing book he had just read.

entitled *The English: Are They Human*. Arlosoroff’s meetings with High Commissioner Chancellor, set to leave Palestine in a matter of weeks, reminded him that bitter feelings on both sides ran deep. At their first encounter, after a “rather long speech” in which Chancellor lectured Arlosoroff and Kisch about the terms of the mandate, the conversation moved to the topic of intercommunal relations in Palestine. “He turned to us with a call to strive for rapprochement between the two parts of the population,” wrote Arlosoroff. Though “he knows the Jews blame him,” Chancellor found the accusations “baseless.” Echoing the Shaw Report, he emphasized—“as always”—that pre-war Jewish colonies were better models for coexistence with the Arabs than present-day Zionist settlements. At a second meeting with the high commissioner, Arlosoroff made a formal declaration of his commitment to the Zionist-British partnership. “For the past eleven years,” he said, “I tried to promote a political strategy of cooperation and mutual trust with the mandatory government. Even in recent years, full of bitterness and misunderstanding, I did not change my opinion. I will act in this spirit when I defend the rights of the Jewish national home, even if I need to disagree with the government from time to time.” After discussing questions of land transfer and settlement policy in Palestine, Arlosoroff had the impression that Chancellor wanted “to appear…like a person who sympathized with our aspirations and dealt with them in fairness, but the anger and bitterness in his heart erupted every instant and rendered his good intentions

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320 Chancellor was referring to the pre-war Jewish economic practice of employing Arab workers in Jewish agricultural settlements (especially in the citrus industry). The Shaw Commission had held up this example as a model beneficial to Jewish-Arab relations, in contrast to the Labour Zionist tenet of employing only Jewish workers.
worthless.”  

When Arlosoroff again stressed Jewish “loyalty to the British Commonwealth,” Chancellor interrupted him, saying, “for the time being, it is still the British Empire.” Palestine, Chancellor made implicitly clear, was not a self-governing dominion.

Arlosoroff’s dispiriting, if predictable interactions with Chancellor did not deter him from his commitment to improving the Zionist-British relationship. On August 27, six days before Chancellor traveled to Haifa to sail from Palestine for the last time, Arlosoroff gave an extensive interview—the same one that Norman had read with such enthusiasm—in which he articulated his broad vision of partnership for the Yishuv and Britain. Arlosoroff began by acknowledging the “momentous change” in leadership that had taken place. “The man whose hand has gripped the political helm of the movement for thirteen years and steered Jewish statesmanship through a trackless world full of aversion and lack of understanding is, for the first time since the Balfour Declaration, not a member of the Executive,” he said of Weizmann. The British, too, had seen changes—a new high commissioner was set to arrive, and many other officials including Young and Spicer were fresh on the scene in Palestine. “There has therefore been a change of guard and in my opinion the hour has come for an attempt to open a new chapter and reconstruct relations which were destroyed in the storm and stress of the last few years,” Arlosoroff declared.

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322 Ibid., 18.
323 Ibid., 19.
325 “Outline of the Programme of the Jewish Agency.”
And as Arlosoroff acknowledged, his appointment represented something quite new for Zionist leadership. “The change from an officer of the British Army, whose Zionism was only discovered and developed in the course of his work on the Executive, to a man coming straight from the ranks of Palestine Labour, among whom he has grown up, is indeed abrupt,” he wrote, comparing himself to Kisch. Many other nations, including ones in Europe, had “long ago got used to the spokesmen of the Labour movement, of the working class, representing the interests of the nation as a whole at the forum of the outside world.” Though he recognized that it was “still hard in certain quarters to get used to the idea” of a Labor Zionist representing the entire Zionist movement, Arlosoroff maintained that he would work for all Jews in Palestine, regardless of background, profession, or political persuasion. “In the Zionist Organization we have no such thing as an oath of allegiance, but in my conscience I have taken an oath of allegiance to the movement as a whole, including all parties and factions, to guard the vital interests of Zionism and its endeavours in Palestine,” he declared. “Sephardim and Yemenites no less than Ashkenazim, manufacturers and artisans no less than labourers, may rest assured that I will do my best to guard these interests, solely according to the dictates of conviction and conscience, and not according to the instructions and discipline of any body other than the elected Executive,” he pledged.326

Arlosoroff argued that defending the Zionist-British partnership—working to improve it, regaining mutual trust, and promoting long-lasting ties—was key to his work of representing the Yishuv. “During the eleven years of my public activities in Palestine, cooperation with the British Government and relations of mutual confidence were

326 Ibid.
politically my foremost aspirations,” he said. “I will even go so far as to say that to my mind the tie which binds us and Palestine to Great Britain and the British is not merely a mechanical one,” he continued, “and is not solely dependent upon the articles of the Mandate and the advantages that can be [squeezed] out of them.” Here, Arlosoroff used a familiar political vocabulary, one which spoke of “loyalty and good-will” and upon which he had long depended to frame the ideal Zionist-British partnership. He emphasized mutual trust, allegiance, and long-lasting ties.327

But just as he had since the upheavals of the August 1929 riots, Arlosoroff also employed a second, distinct political vocabulary to frame the Yishuv’s place in the British Empire, one that invoked Jewish rights, liberty, and self-determination. “It is hardly necessary to add that such sentiments”—that is, loyalty, affinity, and trust—“cannot and must not prevent us from insisting upon our rights and the fulfilment of our aspirations,” he argued. Indeed, strong precedent already existed for this in other parts of the British Empire:

Even colonial countries with populations that were purely British by race and speech328 have known in their histories long periods of defending their rights against the Colonial Office, of misunderstanding, ill-feeling and bitterness on both sides, and have not given up their demands. It may even be said that in every land which the influence of British civilisation had reached there has awakened in the inhabitants this very desire to defend their rights and fearlessly to insist upon them.329

In this statement, Arlosoroff echoed leaders in other reaches of the British Empire who argued that European Enlightenment ideals, which the British considered central to their own political and civic culture, were denied to inhabitants outside the metropole. British

327 Ibid.
328 Arlosoroff refers here to white settler colonies, including Australia and New Zealand.
329 “Outline of the Programme of the Jewish Agency.”
dominions, from Canada to New Zealand, had already achieved formal recognition of their autonomy and equal status to Britain in the Balfour Declaration of 1926. Advocates of Indian self-rule now pointed to this contradiction in their critique of imperial rule.\^330

Arlosoroff maintained, however, that waging a struggle for rights and self-determination did not mean the end to the Zionist-British bond. “I should wish that we…while refusing to yield any vital interests…always conduct our struggle in the spirit of the intimate bond which binds us to the Mandatory Government and in the consciousness of the common task by which history has united us,” he declared. “The rights which we are defending are rights which were conferred upon the Jewish people after ages during which they had no rights at all in the family of nations,” he elaborated. Should those rights be threatened, Jews had “no alternative but a stubborn and indefatigable defensive.” But the struggle should be “only a dire necessity, not a programme…and not a goal to strive for,” Arlosoroff argued. “I shall not forget for one moment,” he continued, “that our primary political aim is not this struggle, but cooperation, that we must overcome the deadlock which we have reached, and we must emerge from our isolation, that we must acquire friends everywhere throughout the

\^330 While Arlosoroff and other contemporaries found arguments in favor of their own nations’ self-determination and independence in British political and Enlightenment thought, historians of empire more recently have elaborated on the directionality of this encounter. Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy explain that scholars have shown that colonial modernities were multiple and constructed by both colonizer and colonized: “we observe that modernity in its various guises proved to be immensely attractive to both colonisers and colonized. Although rationality, self-discipline, representative government, social order, scientific practices, secular education, and fears of cultural, racial and bodily degeneracy were crucial markers of distinction for those who did the colonizing, these markers of modernity were also important for those who were colonized.” Dipesh Chakrabarty has shown that colonial modernity was “constituted and reformulated in varied ways through colonial contacts,” while Harry Harootunian has argued that “non-European societies, most notably in Asia, experienced ‘alternate modernities.’” Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy, eds., Decentering Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006), 2-3.
world, and above all among those in the whose hands the administration of Palestine is placed.”

Arlosoroff soon learned that achieving cooperation and acquiring friends turned out to be far more difficult than making a platitudinous speech to the press. His days were a whirlwind of meetings with British officials, foreign dignitaries and diplomats, and local Jewish and Arab leaders. Discussions about immigration, the Yishuv’s tenuous budget, education, employment, health services, and the impending World Islamic Congress, set to be held in Jerusalem that December, often proved contentious and frustrating. In a reply to Norman Bentwich, thanking him for reaching out after reading the press interview, Arlosoroff bemoaned the general unwillingness of British officials to collaborate and compromise with him. “I feel only in very rare cases a readiness to give more than the unavoidable minimum of cooperation. Your retirement from the service of the Palestine Government is of course a severe blow to me,” he wrote. There remained in Palestine not a “single soul” who was Jewish among the senior British officials with whom Arlosoroff could work. Ten years earlier—what “sounds like a legend today,” Arlosoroff wrote—the posts of high commissioner, director of customs, and chief immigration officer, in addition to attorney general, had all been held by Jews.

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331 “Outline of the Programme of the Jewish Agency.”
332 Max Nurock (1893-1978), Herbert Samuel’s private secretary and the Bentwiches’ close friend who had been appointed assistant chief secretary of the Palestine government, was out of the country when Arlosoroff began his tenure as head of the Political Department. Edwin Samuel (1898-1978) spent 1931-1932 at Columbia University on a Commonwealth Fund fellowship studying the American administration in the Philippines, or as he put it, an “effort to be imperial by a non-imperial Power.” Samuel, *A Lifetime in Jerusalem*, 121.
333 Chaim Arlosoroff to Norman Bentwich, September 28, 1931, CZA A255/650. Albert Montefiore Hyamson served as Chief Immigration Officer from 1921-1934, but was out of the country at the beginning of Arlosoroff’s tenure as Political Department head. John Bernard Barron served as director of revenue and customs until 1924.
Arlosoroff also loathed the pomp, formality, and obsequious performance often required of his new post. For example, when Faisal of Iraq visited Palestine in late September 1931 to pay respects at his father’s grave, Arlosoroff joined a coterie of leaders—"the usual crowd of dignitaries, clerks, clergy, and consuls"—to welcome the king as he disembarked his train in Jerusalem. Arlosoroff had been obliged to travel to the station on foot because it was the Jewish Sabbath (though he was not an observant Jew) and noted in his diary that he felt as if he were back in the “days of Pontius Pilate”—presumably a darkly humorous reference to the Via Dolorosa, the path Jesus walked to his crucifixion. At the station, Sydney Moody, the acting chief secretary of the Palestine government, remarked to Arlosoroff that “standing in the station and waiting for the train was a popular pastime in Jerusalem, but it was a very boring pastime.” Arlosoroff thought Moody “really hit the nail on the head” in his depiction of a custom that served mostly as spectacle rather than practical diplomacy. “This kind of official ceremony makes me really disgusted,” he wrote.334

Jerusalem represented a completely new social terrain for Arlosoroff, who had called Tel Aviv home since he immigrated to Palestine in 1924. Tel Aviv, the first modern Jewish city, offered an urbane milieu on the shores of the Mediterranean—coffee houses, beach promenades, theater, a burgeoning Jewish literary scene, and a thriving urban Jewish secular culture.335 Founded in 1909, Tel Aviv was built to provide Jewish residents with a clean, middle-class, European-style alternative to the neighboring and predominately Arab Jaffa, where the “dirt and the trachoma and the lack of light” would

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334 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 57-58.
335 For more on daily life and culture in mandate-era Tel Aviv, see Anat Helman, Young Tel Aviv: A Tale of Two Cities (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010). On the history of Tel Aviv, see Yaacov Shavit and Gideon Biger, Ha-historiyah shel Tel-Aviv (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002).
inhibit the realization of Jewish modernity and progress.\footnote{Quoted in Maoz Azaryahu, \textit{Tel Aviv: Mythography of a City} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 58. For more on the ways that Tel Aviv was envisioned and constructed in opposition to Jaffa, see Mark LeVine, \textit{Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).} Arlosoroff relished his final days in Tel Aviv in early September, finding the loaded crates and packed suitcases in his apartment “a sad site.”\footnote{Arlosoroff, \textit{Yoman Yerushalayim}, 46.} Jerusalem, like Jaffa, lacked the airy European modernity of Tel Aviv. The city was dusty and grimy, many of its streets were serpentine and unsuited for modern methods of transportation, and its diverse population—Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, ultra-Orthodox Jews, Armenians, secular Zionists, and British officials, among others—lived in close, and often tense, proximity. A conversation with a Reuters reporter convinced Arlosoroff what a waste it was that Jerusalem’s cultural diversity had not been employed to better use. The reporter lamented that Jerusalem boasted not a single decent club; the few tennis courts that existed, in his assessment, were not very good. “I told him seriously that the problem of the clubs was very interesting to me,” Arlosoroff recorded in his diary. “The capital really needs a place where educated Englishmen, Jews, and Arabs can meet in a social atmosphere,” he wrote.\footnote{Ibid., 16-17.}

But despite this dearth of modern, urban amenities and official meeting spaces, Arlosoroff soon discovered a world of convivial gatherings—concerts, private dinners, luncheons, and parties—that brought together a range of Jerusalem elites in settings that fostered genuine interaction rather than sheer spectacle. His impression during his meeting with Spicer in August—that Jewish, Arab, and British societies existed side by side but with “impenetrable partitions” between them—shifted as his move from Tel Aviv and his position as head of the Political Department allowed him to enter a new
social scene in Jerusalem, one that had been very familiar to the Bentwiches.\footnote{Ibid., 8.} For instance, on October 8, Arlosoroff and his wife Sima went to a small lunch at Government House, along with Judah and Beatrice Magnes and some British officials from Jerusalem. Later that month, Arlosoroff attended a concert given by the Jerusalem Music Society which had been founded by Norman’s sister, the cellist Thelma Yellin. The concerts were generally patronized by a mix of Jewish elites, British mandatory officials, American and European missionaries, and the occasional Arab elite. Arlosoroff understood the significance of these informal gatherings to his professional work of building ties between the Yishuv and the rest of Palestine. “In my opinion,” he wrote of the concert, “this is part of the work of my department.”\footnote{Ibid., 86.}

At their social gatherings, Jerusalem elites often discussed political developments in metropolitan Britain with keen interest and excitement. At a celebration at the Czech consul honoring the anniversary of the country’s independence, Arlosoroff found the guests—Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, among them—abuzz with gossip from the recent general election in Britain. Though Ramsay MacDonald remained prime minister with the victory of the National Government, Labour suffered devastating losses in parliament. “It seems to me that the English, as a general rule, take great pleasure in the crushing defeat of the Labour party,” Arlosoroff observed. “On the other hand, their healthy political instinct almost immediately gives rise to the fear that there will be insufficient power to restrain the government when the opposition in parliament is so weak,” he quipped. Amidst the political chatter, Arlosoroff had a brief chance to meet the mufti when Ruhi Abdel Hadi, assistant secretary of the
Palestine government, introduced the two men. “We exchanged a few polite words,” wrote Arlosoroff in his diary.  

Arlosoroff was surely thinking anxiously about the prospect of the upcoming World Islamic Congress during his encounter with the mufti. Along with Shaukat Ali (1873-1938), the Indian Muslim leader of the Khilafat Movement, al-Husseini had called for an international conference of Muslims to convene in Jerusalem. Though political rivals of the mufti suspected that the congress was designed to boost the mufti’s bid for caliph, the professed purpose of the gathering was to discuss the possibility of founding a Muslim university in Jerusalem. Many Zionists worried that the mufti, already an outspoken opponent of Zionism, would use the congress to foment resistance against the Yishuv’s continued development. Some Arab Christians feared that the mufti’s emphasis on Jerusalem as a Muslim city—likely to be strengthened should a Muslim university be established—could also threaten their security and position in Palestine where they were already a minority. The newspaper 

Mir’at al-Sharq (“Mirror of the East”), for instance, which was founded by an Arab Christian from Ramallah, had voiced opposition to the congress. In his talks with Acting High Commissioner Young, Arlosoroff inquired repeatedly as to whether the government would permit the congress to proceed. At one meeting, Arlosoroff told Young that even in Egypt, it was widely assumed that the mufti

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341 Ibid., 91. Ruhi Abdel Hadi (1885-1954) was born in Jenin and studied law in Istanbul before World War I. During the British mandate period, he held various posts in the Palestine government, including assistant district officer of Jerusalem, assistant secretary of the government, and senior assistant secretary of the government.
342 The congress was also referred to as the “Pan-Islamic Conference.”
343 Amin al-Husseini, a member of the Husseini clan, counted the Nashashibi clan (whose scion, Raghib al-Nashashibi (1881-1951), served as mayor of Jerusalem from 1920-1934) among his chief political rivals. The caliphate had been abolished in March 1924 as part of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk’s reforms. Hussein ibn Ali al-Hashimi (1853/54-1931), the leader of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire and King of the Hejaz from 1916-1924, immediately proclaimed himself caliph. However, his contested reign ended the following year when he was forced into exile by the Saudis. The position had been unoccupied since.
would turn the congress into a platform to protest Britain and the League of Nations. “I added,” wrote Arlosoroff, “that perhaps His Majesty’s Government will find it acceptable to use its influence on Shaukat Ali, who participated in London in the Round Table [Conference], in a plot to delay or cancel the plan.” Young replied simply that he took “interest” in the idea, which Arlosoroff found “a rather poor contribution to political discussion.” At another meeting with Young, Arlosoroff voiced concern that the congress could be used to “exploit the question of the Western Wall to incite Jews.” He told Young again that it would be useful to know the government’s firm position on the matter. Chancellor had previously expressed concern that the mufti was becoming too powerful among Palestinian Arabs—was Young not troubled by this development? In response, Young stated that “the government did not intend to prohibit the congress from convening in Jerusalem.” With regards to the mufti, Young thought it unwise for government policy to be shaped by “concerns about a single person.”

Arlosoroff feared that the unwillingness of mandatory authorities to intervene in the program of the World Islamic Congress reflected a broader political calculation about the future of Pan-Islamic politics in the British Empire. On September 26, Gershon Agronsky organized a small tea where Arlosoroff discussed his ideas on the matter with

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344 There was intense opposition in Egypt to the mufti’s plan to build a Muslim university in Jerusalem which could potentially unseat Al-Azhar University in Cairo from its position as the intellectual, religious, and cultural center of the Muslim Arab world.
345 Shaukat Ali had attended the Second Round Table Conferences in London. His brother Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878-1931), another leader of the Khilafat Movement, had attended the first Round Table Conference as a Muslim delegate, even though the Indian National Congress had boycotted the meeting.
347 The dispute between Jews and Muslims over access to the Western Wall had been a key factor in the escalation of violence during the August 1929 riots. The mufti had convened an international conference to discuss protecting the wall and had alleged that Jews intended to take over the al-Aqsa Mosque in the months leading up to the riots. Segev, *One Palestine Complete*, 306-307.
348 Arlosoroff, *Yoman Yerushalayim*, 56.
Herbert Danby. An Anglican priest who served as canon of St. George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem, Danby also worked as a Times correspondent in Palestine.\footnote{After his tenure in Jerusalem, Herbert Danby (1889-1953) returned to Britain in 1936 to serve as Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford.} “Here before us, it seems,” Arlosoroff told Danby, “is part of a British political plan in the Middle East that intends to transfer the center of gravity of Islam to a country where British rule is strong.” The partnership between Al-Husseini and Ali presented the possibility that Pan-Islamists would focus their efforts increasingly on Jerusalem as the international center of Islam. Arlosoroff reasoned that the British felt it was safer to let a caliphate be reestablished in Jerusalem than somewhere outside the bounds of the empire, or even in a place—such as India—where anticolonial movements represented a robust threat to British imperial hegemony. Danby doubted that these “political motivations”—“that is, a British plan to exploit pan-Islamic aims to benefit British policy in the Middle East”—existed in the first place. “He said that ‘our little friends’ (so he calls the Arabs) want to pull the strings that set big levers in motion, but that they will never succeed,” reported Arlosoroff in his diary. He found Danby’s analysis of the situation to be “uncomplicated and naïve.” “I do not accept this sort of interpretation,” he wrote, “just as I do not accept the ‘satanic’ interpretations of British policy, which amuses…many of our people, the Jews.”\footnote{Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 58-59. By “satanic policy,” Arlosoroff refers to the notion in some Zionist circles that British policy in Palestine was uniformly and intentionally anti-Zionist.}

Gershon Agronsky, who often hosted cross-cultural gatherings at his home in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Rehavia, had thought more than perhaps any other Zionist about the ways Muslim political futures—especially in India—might shape relations on the ground in Palestine. After a trip to India on behalf of the Jewish Agency in the spring
of 1930, Agronsky reported that “it would be the better part of wisdom for the Zionist Organization to consider without delay what measures can be taken that Zionism may turn its face, so to speak, to the East.” Like Arlosoroff, Agronsky felt that Palestine was part of a broader imperial dynamic; British imperial interests in India, for example, might shape British policy in Palestine. While Arlosoroff focused his attention on appealing to British authorities in his efforts to defend Zionist interests within this imperial dynamic, Agronsky identified a very different ally. He surmised that among the three potentially conflicting groups in India—Muslims, Hindus, and the British—many might assume the latter two to be obvious allies for the Zionists. On the one hand, an alliance with Hindu nationalists might stop the movement from adopting an anti-Zionist stance. On the other hand, an alliance with the British might prevent the further reversal of commitments laid out in the Balfour Declaration, which could be made in an effort to appease Muslim Indians and gain their support against Hindu nationalism. Agronsky proposed a third option: he determined that, instead of forging ties with the British or with Hindu nationalists in India, the Zionist movement would be wisest to build alliances with moderate Muslim Indians.

Meyer Nissim (1882-1959), a prominent Baghdadi Jew who in 1929 had served a term as president of the Bombay Municipal Council (a position equivalent to mayor of the city), helped put Agronsky in touch with various local Muslim Indian leaders. A meeting with the young barrister C.M. Chagla, who would go on to serve as Chief Justice of Bombay from 1948-1958 convinced Agronsky of the importance of moderate Muslim Indian leaders.

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352 Meyer Nissim had also served as general manager of David Sassoon and Company.
allies. Chagla, then only 29 years old, was an “influential youth leader,” according to Agronsky, as well as a disciple of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the future founder of Pakistan. Jinnah, who in 1930 still believed in the possibility of a Muslim-Hindu alliance, had resigned from the Indian National Congress in 1920 largely in disagreement over Gandhi's alliance with the Khilafat movement, which Jinnah thought gave a political voice to religious zealotry. Chagla also opposed Khilafat, as well as Pan-Islamism more broadly. “A Hindu of his town and his class is nearer to him than a Moslem of another province and another class,” wrote Agronsky of Chagla. “He believes in territorial evolution which would unite the Hindu and the Moslem.” Moreover, Chagla, and other young followers of Jinnah, were “not concerned with the problem of the Arabs of Palestine merely because they happen to be Moslem.” The young barrister and his friends, who were “Indians first and Moslems second,” could potentially “come to understand our problem,” Agronsky reasoned.353

While Agronsky advocated that Zionists begin looking eastward, Arlosoroff remained focused on the west. In early December 1931, days before the World Islamic Congress was set to open, Arlosoroff met again with Young to discuss the matter. “The whole conversation,” he reported, “was tense.” In the intervening months since Arlosoroff had last discussed the topic with Young, the organizers of the congress had narrowed their focus: they determined to minimize the issues of the caliphate and the Muslim university, but bring the question of religious rights at the Western Wall and the al-Aqsa Mosque to the forefront. Arlosoroff argued that the matter of religious access had already been settled by the League of Nations following the 1929 riots. The League’s

353 Ibid. For a comparison of Israel and Pakistan, see Faisal Devji, Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
report had stated that Muslims maintained ownership of the Western Wall, but that Jews had a right to pray there. Should not the Palestine Government insist on this as policy to the congress? Young responded that he doubted that the League’s report would be a topic of discussion at the congress. Arlosoroff countered that if Young were right, an even more dangerous situation lay before them. He reasoned that if the congress did not mean to challenge the League’s report, then the organizers intended to spread a much more alarming claim: that Jews wished to take over the entire Temple Mount. “This false propaganda has no trace of reality,” Arlosoroff insisted to Young, to which the former replied that he wished he could be as sure as Arlosoroff that “there is no basis whatsoever, on any Jewish side, for these allegations.” Citing Rabbi Kook’s statement to the Shaw Commission, Arlosoroff explained that religious desire for the restoration of the Temple was similar to longing for the messiah—in essence, a hope that was “beyond the realm of mortal action.” Young became embittered, accusing Arlosoroff of alleging that the British government, to save itself, wished to make the Jews the scapegoat of the congress. “I answered that I had not said that the government did so on purpose,” Arlosoroff replied. But intentions aside, he leveled at Young, “all I see are the results, which are perfectly clear.”

After his contentious meeting and its “dramatic climax,” Arlosoroff spent a more relaxed evening at the home of Arthur Ruppin where he had a chance to socialize with a small gathering of Jews (both Zionist and non-Zionist), British officials, and their families. Maurice Hexter, who had joined the Jewish Agency as a non-Zionist, was in

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354 Ibid., 127-130.
355 Arthur Ruppin (1876-1943), who had helped to found Brit Shalom, ultimately became disillusioned with the binationalist idea by late 1931 and decided that the only political solution was a Jewish state. For more
attendance, along with his family, as was Shalom (Solomon) Horowitz, the Anglo-Jewish Zionist and law partner of Harry Sacher. On the British side, Ruppin invited three officials from the Development Department: Lewis French, the department’s director; Geoffrey Charles Kitching, the deputy director; and Dawson Shepherd, an irrigation officer. “At dinner I spoke most of the time with Shepherd, to see what he was doing,” reported Arlosoroff in his diary. “He revealed great interest in the fate of the young people from Mea Shearim. He said that for an outsider it was hard to believe that the members of the Old Yishuv and our people in the agricultural settlements were children of the one nation,” wrote Arlosoroff. He found Shepherd remarkably comprehending of the complexities of Jewish life in Palestine, especially given that his work as an irrigation officer was “mainly practical and matter-of-fact.”

After dinner, Arlosoroff, Hexter, and Kitching had a “very interesting conversation” on the political challenges facing Palestine, including the current impasse at which Arlosoroff found himself in his relations with the government. Kitching wanted to know the reasons why Zionists “could not entrust [their] fate without reservation to His Majesty’s Government.” Though he did not record the details of the conversation, Arlosoroff noted that he and Hexter agreed with Kitching on “several things.” At the end of their discussion, Kitching expressed a geopolitical assessment of the situation, one which Arlosoroff had previously voiced often: “Great Britain is the world’s leading

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356 One the oldest Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem, Mea Shearim was populated primarily by ultra-Orthodox Jews from the Old Yishuv.

Muslim power,” he said, “and whether you like it or not, it must consider Muslim feelings.”

The way Arlosoroff navigated the prospect of the World Islamic Congress reflected several key aspects of his evolving politics—particularly his understanding of the relationship between the British Empire, Palestinian Arab politics, and Zionist ideas about the state—during the first few months of his tenure as head of the Political Department. First, he remained attuned to broader imperial realities, trends, and considerations. In the aftermath of the 1929 riots, Arlosoroff wrote that British policy in Palestine had been affected by concerns about Muslim opinion, particularly in India. Arlosoroff employed a similar line of thought in his interpretation of British action—or rather, inaction—on the matter of the World Islamic Congress. Second, though this interpretation demonstrated Arlosoroff’s intellectual immersion in British imperial political questions (a position that he understood to be a necessity because Britain was the imperial power with a stake in Jewish national futures), it did not reflect submissive loyalty or lack of critical engagement. On the contrary, just as he had pledged in his interview with the Palestine press, Arlosoroff expressed disagreement with British policy and tactics that he considered to be detrimental to Jewish “rights and the fulfilment of our aspirations.” Finally, Arlosoroff viewed Pan-Islamism, a transnational political movement that used religion rather than nationality to mobilize support, as a much greater threat to Zionism than a locally-focused Palestinian Arab nationalism. In short, he

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358 Ibid., 131.
359 Arlosoroff, Jews, Arabs and Great Britain, 38.
360 “Outline of the Programme of the Jewish Agency.”
could not conceive of a political future in Palestine that could accommodate both Pan-Islamism and Zionism.

Though he insisted on a political solution that accounted for the reality of both Jewish and Palestinian Arab nationalist aspirations, Arlosoroff found binational and autonomist futures problematic (in contrast to many Labor Zionists, as well as Norman Bentwich). At the time of the 1929 riots, Arlosoroff argued that a binational parliament in which Jews and Arabs had equal representation virtually guaranteed political deadlock, while autonomism, which was designed to protect minorities, would only perpetuate Jewish minority status in Palestine. Arlosoroff instead proposed a political model with regional councils and a national legislative council made up of eleven Arabs, six Jews, and representatives of the mandatory government. This scheme, he argued, would prevent deadlock, and at the same time—as it was a temporary plan—would not enshrine Jewish minority status. Arlosoroff’s plan depended upon a Palestinian Arab political movement that would be willing not only to partner with the Jewish minority, but would also be satisfied to realize national aspirations within a local Palestinian context—not a transnational Pan-Islamic one.

Arlosoroff grew progressively frustrated with his official meetings with mandatory authorities, increasingly worried about religious incitement between Muslims and Jews, and ever more convinced that an immediate interim political solution needed to be reached immediately—the necessity of this final point becoming ever more apparent with developments in Germany. An interim program could give Jews in Palestine the

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levers of state-like power to address the Yishuv’s pressing needs: the ability to borrow bank loans, purchase land, and regulate immigration. At an evening spent with Arthur Ruppin and Hugo Bergmann at the home of David Werner Senator, Arlosoroff insisted on the importance of addressing immediate objectives in order to remedy the political impasse at which the Yishuv now found itself. 363 “We cannot conduct our political work on the basis of a sixty-year plan,” he implored. “We are in need of a realistic formulation of intermediate goals, which will have great political significance. These intermediate goals are like milestones in our progress towards our grand goal. In the meantime, these intermediate goals must be the focus of all our political thought and all our will,” he wrote. 364

The World Islamic Congress opened on December 7 and as Arlosoroff had feared, the delegates focused substantially on the Jewish threat to Islam in Palestine. Arlosoroff had hoped that the recently arrived high commissioner Arthur Wauchope (whom he had yet to meet personally) would grasp the “danger of fanning religious incitement” and would act to remove the topic of religious access at the Western Wall from the congress’ agenda. 365 But his efforts were to no avail. Though Arlosoroff heard that Wauchope was “not pleased with the whole thing,” the new high commissioner ultimately declined to intervene, and the congress went forth as planned. 366 Frustrated by his failure to change the course of events, Arlosoroff spent the evening away from Jerusalem, attending a

363 David Werner Senator (1896-1953) joined the Jewish Agency as a non-Zionist, serving on the Jerusalem Executive from 1930-1935. While Ruppin eventually abandoned the principles of Brit Shalom, Bergmann remained committed to the idea of binationalism.
364 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 122.
365 Ibid., 137.
366 Ibid., 136.
production of *Twelfth Night* by Habima Theater in Tel Aviv.\(^{367}\) Before the start of the performance, when the two national anthems were set to be played, Wauchope and some colleagues entered the theater and came to take their seats in the row in front of Arlosoroff. When the Zionist national anthem “Hatikvah” was played, the high commissioner and his companions sat, but then rose in deference during “God Save the King.”\(^{368}\) The mostly Jewish crowd at Habima that night bristled at the offense, and Arlosoroff worried that if Wauchope ever publicly repeated the faux pas, he would ensure Jewish resentment in Palestine. But Arlosoroff gave Wauchope the benefit of the doubt—perhaps the stakes had not been explained to him—and during the intermission, took the opportunity to chat with the high commissioner for the first time. “I got a chance to talk to him and tell him about the history of Habima,” reported Arlosoroff of the impromptu meeting. “Wauchope knew nothing about all this, and he showed great interest.”\(^{369}\)

Soon after their encounter at Habima, Wauchope invited Arlosoroff for a private lunch at Government House on December 14, 1931. The two discussed a range of topics—Jewish life in Soviet Russia, the difference between Jewish and English humor, and the parallels between the character of Falstaff from Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the persona of actor Charlie Chaplin. But they mostly avoided issues of politics and policy in Palestine. On Christmas Eve, Arlosoroff finally confronted Wauchope with a frank assessment of the impasse that had been reached between the

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368 More than a decade earlier, Annie Landau (the headmistress of the Evelina de Rothschild School for Girls) had found out the hard way what happened if one sat for “Hatikvah.” She took at seat (by accident) at the start of the anthem and Zionists rallied to boycott one of her upcoming parties.

369 Arlosoroff, *Yoman Yerushalayim*, 144-145.
Yishuv and British authorities. Arlosoroff intended to use the meeting to discuss a land issue in the northern town of Wadi al-Hawarith. The land had been sold by its Lebanese Maronite owner to the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in April 1929. After the sale, the Nablus District Court ordered the Arab tenant farmers living on the property to leave, which they refused to do and thereafter were removed by force by British authorities to an area north of the town. Jewish farmers moved in soon thereafter.\textsuperscript{370} But when heavy winter rains flooded the northern encampment in 1931, the Arab residents moved back to Wadi al-Hawarith. Though police tractors were brought in to try to remove their tents, some of the Arabs lay in front of the vehicles in protest, effecting a tense standstill. The JNF demanded authorities enforce the law, while several Palestinian newspapers, including \textit{Filastin}, began extensively covering the plight of the Arabs of Wadi al-Hawarith.\textsuperscript{371} British authorities equivocated.\textsuperscript{372}

Arlosoroff had planned to advocate on behalf of the JNF on the issue of Wadi al-Hawarith, as well as discuss some other matters regarding development policy and public works. “But when I came to the commissioner,” he reported later, “I spontaneously decided to abandon my entire agenda and began with a general and serious conversation

about our situation.” Wauchope began by assuring Arlosoroff that he understood his position on the land issue and would have Young draft a letter addressing the matter. Arlosoroff told the high commissioner that he would wait to see the letter, but wondered what good it or any other small policy development would do, so long as there was “no fundamental agreement on the broader problems of Palestine.” What he said next, reproduced here in full, was a soliloquy of political analysis laying bare the past, present, and future of a Zionist-British partnership on the cusp of ruin. Arlosoroff began by speaking of what had once been:

The situation between the British administration and world Jewry in general, and the Yishuv in Palestine in particular, is getting worse. Twelve years ago, Jews throughout the world clung to their loyalty for Great Britain. We are a scattered people between Vladivostok and San Francisco, between Stockholm and Cape Town. In our scattered state, we are weak, and consequently, we lack the proper weight of a people of sixteen million with our talents. But in our scattered state, we are also powerful, and wherever there are Jews, there has been a stronghold of faith in the justice of Britain and in its fairness. This vast well of loyalty is wasted. [Your] Excellency is entitled to say: What is the value of talking about the British Empire if the Jews no longer have the same level of trust in Great Britain that they did before?[373]

To this, the high commissioner interrupted Arlosoroff, declaring fervently, “it is of tremendous, tremendous value!” But Arlosoroff was undeterred by Wauchope’s insistence, and continued with an assessment of the current situation:

Your Excellency can say that Britain is so great and wonderful, but a stone that the builders loathe can still become a cornerstone. I have just received a letter from Dr. Weizmann, describing the difficult winter in Great Britain. The people are struggling with their backs up against the wall, trying to pull through and overcome the economic war like they’ve done on the battlefield. Dr. Weizmann is thinking of how to help them, and it’s possible he’ll be able to. But Dr. Weizmann had to go. He had to pay the price for his unshakable faith in a policy of an unreserved bond…I will continue to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Weizmann—as far as the general principles of our policy are concerned. Moreover, it is possible to say that I am Zionism’s last shot at this particular political path. But if I were called upon at this moment to report to the Zionist Congress, based on my

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373 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 157-158.
experience in these past five months, I would have to say, “I lost the game!” From the big things like the Muslim congress, to the minute details of administration—in almost everything I have encountered negative relations. I hardly see a ray of light…If this is what I am feeling—the bitterness of the common man is so much greater!^{374}

Wauchope assured Arlosoroff that he understood just how hard the Zionist leader had been working to improve the partnership. Wauchope had even written to the Colonial Office to say that he had found in Arlosoroff only “support and sympathy.” Arlosoroff, however, did not cease his impassioned speech, continuing with a bleak prediction of an uncertain future:

We have reached an impasse, and I do not ascribe importance to clarifying isolated incidents so long as we have not found a way to get out of and overcome this current impasse. [Your] Excellency may ask: What if we do not succeed in working out a joint plan of action? I admit I do not know. I do not know to where Palestine Jewry will turn if Zionist policy abandons its British orientation. I do not know to where the Jewish youth will look, who have clung to the great constructive idea of Zionism^{375} since its appearance on the stage. I do not know what the world would have been like had Zionism not appeared on the stage and focused so many, many Jewish youth across the globe around the constructive idea of building a Jewish national home. All this is now in jeopardy, and I see no hope in the current state of relations between the Jews and the administration. We must not forget that this is a vicious cycle. Disappointment on the one hand leads to disappointment on the other. And if this situation continues, it will be ever harder to unravel the mess.^{376}

Wauchope told Arlosoroff that he was “very disappointed” to hear this perspective. Did the Zionists not know that upon his appointment as high commissioner, Wauchope had declared his great respect for Jewish “hopes and aspirations” and that he had come to Palestine intending to help facilitate their realization? As far as the issue of Wadi al-Hawarith was concerned, did Arlosoroff wish for Wauchope to go against the recommendations of his advisors? “Could the police be ordered to remove these people

^{374} Ibid., 158.
^{375} The practical upbuilding of a Jewish society in Palestine.
^{376} Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 158-159.
from the ground?” he asked. Was it not true that “Jews were not interested in such conflicts and clashes”? Arlosoroff replied it was precisely so: peace was a political imperative for the Yishuv and mandatory authorities understood this. As a result, they depended on Jews not to stand up for themselves, counting on them eventually to “give up” their position, insisted Arlosoroff. He argued that the government should be capable of finding a place for “sixty or eighty families”—the Arabs of Wadi al-Hawarith—to live. Arlosoroff’s position reflected a serious contravention of labor political ideals over an issue—the dispossession of tenant farmers—that was receiving growing attention among labor circles around the world.377 As head of the Political Department, Arlosoroff was responsible for advocating on behalf of the JNF in the Wadi al-Hawarith dispute. He never acknowledged in his diary the contradiction between this position and central tenets of labor politics. Even so, his distancing from these ideals should be viewed in the context of his growing alienation from Britain. Arlosoroff had long viewed Britain as an international center of labor politics, and British Labour as a vital beacon for Labor Zionists in Palestine. In contrast to left-wing anticolonial leaders across the empire who insisted that the ideals of socialism and nationalism were incompatible with the aims of imperialism, Arlosoroff had previously seen these three concepts as fundamental components of his Zionist vision. Now, as he came to believe that Zionism urgently needed achieve state-like power—and that doing so within the framework of British imperialism seemed increasingly unlikely—Arlosoroff also retreated from some central principles of labor politics. In any event, the high commissioner agreed with Arlosoroff, concurring that the government indeed should be able to find a solution to the Wadi al-

377 In the American South, for instance, New Deal policies that restricted tenant farming were opposed by socialist and labor activists, culminating in the 1934 founding of the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union.
Hawarith problem. “I finished and said that I hoped for a thorough clarification at the earliest opportunity, and I wished his Excellency a merry Christmas,” reported Arlosoroff. And then he left.

As the year 1931 drew to a close, Arlosoroff found himself in a dramatically different political frame of mind than when he had first been appointed head of the political department. Frustrated with the state of Yishuv-British relations, Arlosoroff began to stress the necessity of Zionist political action that would happen independently—perhaps even in contravention—of its British mandatory context, a position he would articulate to full effect the following spring in his famous letter to Chaim Weizmann.

**Return to Jerusalem**

Meanwhile, back in London, Norman Bentwich reluctantly readjusted to the rhythms of metropolitan life. Though his work as a barrister kept him occupied, he longed to return to Palestine. “I felt bound to the country which had been my goal for twenty years,” he wrote. Helen Bentwich felt differently, however, and the prospect of returning to an environment plagued by strife that had been so hostile to her husband painted her. “I went to the doctor again, & she said I was still anemic. I imagine I am making myself ill because I so dislike the idea of going back to Palestine,” she told her mother. Helen’s now active involvement in the Labour Party also contributed to her

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379 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, January 25, 1932, WL 7HBE2/12.
desire to remain in Britain. “Her activity complicated the question of my return to Palestine in a private capacity,” wrote Norman.380

An offer made in early 1932 presented the couple with an option for compromise. Norman received an invitation from the Hebrew University to join the faculty as a professor of law in the newly established Chair of the International Law of Peace, a position created by his friend and chancellor of the university Judah Magnes. Norman accepted the offer with a caveat: “I should lecture and be resident during one only of the two terms of the year; and for the rest I should be free to study international relations wherever I pleased, and take part in international movements outside the country.” For nearly two decades thereafter, Norman and Helen Bentwich spent half the year in Jerusalem, and the other half in London. Helen, loath to be without purpose in Palestine, accepted a position as the Manchester Guardian’s correspondent in the country.

With his return to Jerusalem imminent after almost a year and a half away, Norman thought anxiously about the future of Jewish-Arab relations. He worried he would be unable to effect positive change in his new position as a law professor given that he had been unable to make great strides in an official capacity with the mandatory government. In Palestine, Norman feared he would be

‘wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born’; the Palestine of the administration which I had left, and the ideal Palestine in which Jews and Arabs would co-operate in peace. Jerusalem was the appropriate place, without a doubt, to lecture on the International Law of Peace; but to bring about peaceful international relations between its two nationalities was another story. I was reminded constantly of the Rabbinical maxim: ‘It is not the doctrine but the deed which is essential’; and an English counterpart: ‘Those who can, do, and those who cannot, teach.’381

380 Norman Bentwich, Wanderer Between Two Worlds, 203.
381 Norman Bentwich, Wanderer Between Two Worlds, 204. “Wandering between two world, one dead, the other powerless to be born” is taken from the poem “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888).
The Bentwiches reached a blustery and frigid Jerusalem in early February 1932 and settled into a home in Abu Tor, a neighborhood with a mix of Jewish, Arab, and British residents. Norman set out immediately to write his first lecture, but before he even delivered it, controversy erupted. “Our troubles have started, or rather, Norman’s,” Helen wrote to her mother. “He wants to give his lectures in English, as well as in Hebrew, feeling that International Lectures ought to help a larger audience than the Hebrew students. And the University people have the impudence to say he mustn’t,” she reported. Bitter disagreement over language in Jewish higher education in Palestine was hardly new. The famous “language wars,” waged at the German-sponsored Technion in Haifa, resulted in a victory for Hebrew over German as the language of instruction in 1914. Historians have generally pointed to this and to other early triumphs as evidence that proponents of Hebrew had successfully cemented their language’s dominance in the Yishuv by the end of World War I. In fact, as Liora Halperin has shown, Jewish multilingualism persisted into and beyond the mandate era, and while Hebrew’s dominance was “real and powerful,” its limits demonstrated how deeply the Yishuv and Zionist culture were bound up in “outside entities,” including Britain, the Arab world, and the non-Hebrew-speaking Jewish diaspora. The reality of multilingualism, however, did not change the preeminence of Hebrew in Zionist circles. Norman experienced fierce opposition to his proposal to deliver his lectures in both English and Hebrew, especially from Menachem Ussishkin, the president of the Jewish National Fund who had been an early champion of Hebrew and had helped to found the Hebrew

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382 Government House, now the headquarters of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, sits atop Abu Tor’s Jebel Deir Abu Tor, also known as the “Hill of Evil Counsel.”

383 Halperin, Babel in Zion, 10.
University. Helen believed that Norman would stand his ground and refuse reappointment were he not to get his way. “Much as I should like that, I think they are a rotten crowd to treat him like this,” she wrote, “and Magnes is, as I always knew, a weak, poor-spirited creature, who gives way to them—Ussishkin & Co.” Though she pilloried Magnes, about whom she had so often written affectionately, for capitulating to the Zionist establishment, Helen also pointed toward broader societal issues in the Yishuv. “It’s all so rotten, Jews against Jews all the time, as well as everyone else against them,” she wrote. “That’s why I so hated coming back and will, I know, find it so uncongenial. All this ‘separateness’ of the Jews is so discordant with modern life—just like ‘Buy British’ in England….All the people seem so uninterested in England or Geneva, or Shanghai, or anything except local affairs,” she lamented. 384

The lecture itself, which Norman ultimately agreed to deliver solely in Hebrew, proved much more disastrous than its controversial prelude. “I cannot think why such a calm, peaceable, easy-going person like Norman should always be such a pivot for disharmony wherever he goes,” Helen bemoaned following the incident. 385 A large crowd of roughly 600 people gathered at the university on Mount Scopus on February 10, 1932 to hear the lecture. Arlosoroff, who was among the attendees, first began to worry that something was amiss soon after he entered the hall. Someone informed him that earlier

384 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, February 6, 1932, WL 7HBE/2/12. The “Buy British” campaign, launched in September 1931 and supported by the National Government, worked to persuade British consumers to buy only goods produced in the British Isles or the Empire. Helen Bentwich and others on the left, were critical of the campaign’s protectionism. For more on the campaign, see Stephen Constantine, “The Buy British Campaign of 1931,” *European Journal of Marketing* (1987) 21, no. 4: 44-59. On the Buy British campaign and the tea industry, see Erika Rappaport, “Drink Empire Tea: Gender, Conservative Politics and Imperial Consumerism in Inter-war Britain,” in *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. Erika Rappaport, Mark J. Crowley and Sandra Trudgen Dawson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

385 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, February 11, 1932, WL 7HBE/2/12.
that morning, three different leaflets protesting the event had been circulated by various
campus organizations. “Dr. Magnes had not told us that something was ‘brewing,’” wrote
Arlosoroff, regretting that “it was already too late to do anything.”386 Bentwich began his
lecture, entitled “Jerusalem, City of Peace,” upon which someone in the crowd shouted,
“Preach peace to the Mufti!”387 A shower of stink bombs, boos, and protest leaflets
ensued.

“I heard the word Mufti, & thought it was another Arab going to shoot,” wrote
Helen, recalling a 1928 assassination attempt on Norman’s life. “When I found it was
only stink-bombs and not pistols, I was furious with Magnes, who, I gather had been
warned [about] having no check on the audience at all.”388 The rioters, it turned out, were
not Arabs but rather members of Brit HaBirionim, a clandestine, fascist wing of the
Revisionist movement led by Abba Ahimeir.389 Founded the previous year, Brit
HaBirionim espoused “Revisionist Maximalism” which rejected centrist and left-wing
Zionist ideas and instead fashioned themselves in the image of the Sicarii and advocated
for a corporatist state modeled on Mussolini’s fascist Italy.390 The group protested the

386 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 206.
387 “Disturbances at Hebrew University When Norman Bentwich Delivers First Lecture,” JTA, February 12,
1932.
388 Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, February 11, 1932, WL 7HBE/2/12.
389 Brit HaBirionim translates as “Alliance of Thugs.” When Arlosoroff was assassinated the following
year, Abba Ahimeir (1897-1962) was arrested and charged with inciting the murder. He had fiercely
opposed the Haavara (Transfer) Agreement, negotiated by Arlosoroff. Though he was cleared of the charge
before the trial began, Ahimeir remained in prison until 1935. For more on Ahimeir, see Joseph Bergamin,
Nedava, ed., Abba Ahimeir: ha-ish she-hitah et ha-zerem: li-demuto, le-torato, li-khetavav u-le-ma’avakav
(Tel Aviv: Hotza’at ha’amutah le-hafatzat toda’ah le’umit, 1987)
390 The Sicarii, known as such because they carried small daggers called sicae, were an extremist group of
Jewish Zealots who attacked Roman rulers and their allies in the 1st century CE. While Brit HaBirionim
drew inspiration from the Sicarii, Ehud Sprinzak argues that “Birionim’s ennoblement of the Jewish past
was neither halakhic nor historical. It was above all a mythological rediscovery of the glorious tales of the
nation, a romantic glorification of the old days of blood, soil, heroism, and conquest.” Ehud Sprinzak, The
British presence in Palestine, opposed any cooperation with the Arabs, and condemned the socialist Zionist leadership as British collaborators. Though Norman tried to resume his lecture amidst the tumult, the rioters continued shouting and throwing stink bombs. Eventually and only after trying to contain the situation themselves, university authorities called in British police, who arrested 12 of the protesters. The entire episode—from the university’s unpreparedness to the rioters’ politics and tactics—in-furiated Arlosoroff. “Anyone who did not see this spectacle with his own eyes would never know the extent of its disgrace and revulsion,” he wrote. “The English do not care; the Arabs will rejoice; people on the outside will see this as a regular university scandal and be done!” he declared. Like Helen, Arlosoroff felt that Magnes and university officials had grossly mismanaged the situation. The instant the university chancellor had gotten wind of potential unrest, Arlosoroff argued, he should have closed the lecture to the public and allowed only invited guests into the hall. The reluctance of university administrators to allow police onto the campus also incensed Arlosoroff. “As long as there are hooligans in the universities,” he wrote, “there will also be policemen!” He could not support the “ethics” of university leaders—whom he went so far as to call “antisemitic”—for treating the university as a “holy place,” all the while willfully ignoring the “crimes taking place” inside. While the brunt of his anger was directed at Magnes and the university, Arlosoroff also acknowledged that “the method of fighting controversial opinions with a pogrom is a terrible one.”

The incident threw into relief the increasingly divisive state of Yishuv politics—between left- and right-wing Zionists, between Revisionists and binationalists, and even

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391 While “birionim” can translate as “hooligans,” Arlosoroff used the word “huliganim” here.
392 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 206-207.
between binationalists and the mainstream Zionist establishment. Though the Yishuv in fact saw continued, stable development in the 1930s (and, despite Zionist fear, no grand reversal of British policy), its political and ideological rifts grew dramatically more contentious following the 1929 riots. Prompting disillusionment for some supporters of binationalism, including Hans Kohn, the riots inspired renewed determination for others who advocated for a rapprochement between Jews and Arabs. Judah Magnes, though he never officially joined the binationalist Brit Shalom, believed that the unrest demanded Jewish-Arab cooperation in social, political, and economic life. At the heart of the group was a coterie of intellectuals and university academics, including Hugo Bergmann, Gershon Scholem, and Martin Buber. “It had been obvious” to these individuals, Norman wrote, “that the principal political aim [of the Yishuv] should not be the maximum immigration but an understanding with the Arabs…There was no need for a Jewish majority in Palestine, which could not anyhow be the principal place of refuge for the Jewish mass.” Norman’s appointment had thus been protested by Revisionist students because of his association with and general support for this binationalist circle. The Revisionists objected, too, to Norman’s position on the university’s purpose and design. “I deprecated the formation of a Law School because it seemed undesirable that we should indulge in a multiplication of Jewish lawyers in the National Home; and I stood for the development of research as against teaching of undergraduates, particularly in professional subjects.” The Revisionists, in contrast, “demanded a normal university

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393 Gordon, “‘Nothing but a Disillusioned Love’? Hans Kohn’s Break with the Zionist Movement,” in Against the Grain, 117-142.
for the Jewish youth of Europe, to whom that boon was denied in their several countries.”

Writing in 1941, Norman conceded that “events were to justify them.”\textsuperscript{394}

Arlosoroff’s response reflected his own mounting frustration with the political situation in Palestine—not only the impasse he felt had been reached with the British, but also the threat he perceived coming from Brit Shalom and supporters of binationalism. In his writings in the aftermath of the 1929 riots, as discussed in Chapter 2, Arlosoroff argued that Brit Shalom had given rise to a politics far more nefarious than Revisionist Zionism. He wrote then that “the psychological influence of the extreme pacifist agitators, especially among certain groups of intellectuals, has resulted in the creation of a spirit of disbelief in our own powers, however limited they may be.”\textsuperscript{395} The balance of Arlosoroff’s moral outrage over the incident at the Hebrew University—the Revisionist protesters were “hooligans” but the Jewish university authorities were “antisemitic”—echoed this argument. This remarkable denunciation is all the more striking given that Arlosoroff had once so forcefully condemned his fellow-Zionists for leveling blanket charges of antisemitism against British officials.\textsuperscript{396} But his growing antagonism toward the binationalists also reflected a broader trend among Labor Zionist leaders following the 1929 riots. Though Berl Katznelson, for instance, had been friendly with many of the Brit Shalom intellectuals, after August 1929, he called them “uprooted people” without real connection to Jewish life. The newspaper \textit{Davar}, which Katznelson edited, also started to censor pieces written by Brit Shalom supporters.\textsuperscript{397}

\textsuperscript{394} Norman Bentwich, \textit{Wanderer Between Two Worlds}, 206-207.
\textsuperscript{396} See Arlosoroff, “Ha-pekidut ha-Britit ve-ha-bayit ha-le’umi.”
In the days following the upset, Arlosoroff reflected on what had transpired in very different ways depending on his audience. At a February 12 meeting with Wauchope, Arlosoroff maintained that nothing of great significance had happened, likely in an effort not to highlight internal Zionist dissension. “I said that of course it was regrettable,” he recorded in his diary, “but that its importance should not be overstated.” The following evening, at a relaxed and enjoyable party with student members of Mapai (many of whom likely attended Norman’s lecture), Arlosoroff had a different take. Far from seeing the incident as insignificant, Arlosoroff argued that a fundamental contradiction existed between Norman’s vision for the university and Labor Zionist aspirations for the country.\textsuperscript{398} That contradiction represented the disagreement not only between political Zionists and binationalists, but also between political Zionists and cultural Zionists. Norman’s position on the university was rooted in the cultural Zionist ideas of Ahad Ha’am who imagined Palestine as a cultural and spiritual, but not political center of the Jewish world. Norman’s vision was also founded on the concomitant assumption that Palestine would not become the demographic center of Jewish life. As a political Zionist, Arlosoroff understood his mission to be the political development of the Yishuv and an eventual Jewish majority in Palestine. The 1929 riots and his perception of the political stalemate that had been reached in the ensuing years, convinced Arlosoroff that the Yishuv needed state-like power and national institutions—such as full-fledged universities—to achieve its goals. With the threat of Nazism escalating in Europe, that need was ever more pressing.

\textsuperscript{398} Arlosoroff, \textit{Yoman Yerushalayim}, 216.
The Problem of Time

“I was genuinely sorry that in our last talk you gave me the impression of being—I won’t say discouraged, but sadly dissatisfied with the results of your work here during the past few months,” Wauchope conveyed in a letter to Arlosoroff soon after their turbulent meeting on Christmas Eve 1931. “I am sure you will remember Dr. Weizmann’s warning and not expect difficulties to be solved with undue haste by the Palestine Government,” he wrote, referring to Weizmann’s policy of measured, evolutionary Zionist development in Palestine. “I possess, alas, no magician’s wand,” admitted Wauchope. What he did offer to Arlosoroff was “true sympathy” for Zionist ideals and “a real determination” to further the development of the country. “Let us wish each other good fortune in that course during 1932,” Wauchope concluded.399

The high commissioner’s letter identified a key change in the Zionist political outlook in the 1930s. As Anita Shapira explains, the 1920s had largely been a decade of international stability, with British imperial rule secure. The Yishuv, likewise, had seen slow, steady development and—for most of the decade—peace. The stock market crash of 1929, however, had plunged the world into crisis. The ensuing rise of Nazism in Germany and other fascist movements across Europe, coupled with a growing sense of the tenuousness of the Zionist-British partnership in the wake of the 1929 riots, ultimately convinced many Zionists that evolutionary Zionism could no longer pave the way for the Jewish national home.400 The “time element,” then, became key to Zionist policy, as the need for preparing Palestine as a haven for the Jewish masses of Europe emerged as a

399 Arthur Wauchope to Chaim Arlosoroff, December 29, 1931, CZA S25/30-111.
pressing reality. “Undue haste,” as Wauchope put it, no longer represented a risky approach—it was now an existential imperative.\footnote{Shapira, Israel: A History, 80-81. See also, Anita Shapira, “Zionism in the Age of Revolution,” Modern Judaism 18, no. 3 (1998): 217-226; Shapira, Land and Power, 206-210.}

Arlosoroff, in his famous confidential letter to Chaim Weizmann in June 1932, became the first mainstream Zionist leader to propose a radical departure from the policy of evolutionary Zionism. As we shall see, Arlosoroff laid out several possibilities for the future of the Yishuv, ultimately concluding that a revolution overthrowing mandatory authorities and establishing Jewish minority rule by force could be Zionism’s only remaining option. Anita Shapira argues that there is “special significance” to the fact that Arlosoroff was the one to articulate such a fundamentally new position given that he had been the “architect of cooperation” between the Zionists and the British.\footnote{Ibid., 207.} Indeed, as the final section of this chapter shows, Arlosoroff traversed two seemingly contradictory political paths over the final year and a half of his life. In the first, he formulated a political vision for the Yishuv that, contrary to all his previous ideas about Zionist futures, would no longer take place within the framework of the British Empire. In the second, he developed a close personal friendship with High Commissioner Wauchope; he become thoroughly entrenched in elite (largely British) circles in Jerusalem; and he worked to build alliances with powerful Jews from across the British Empire.

In mid-February 1932, not long after Norman’s disastrous lecture at the Hebrew University, Arlosoroff had the opportunity to spend an afternoon with the high commissioner on a driving excursion across the coastal plain around Tel Aviv and Jaffa. Together with Sima and Wauchope’s sister who was visiting Palestine, the party toured
the suburbs of Givatayim and Ramat Gan, where Arlosoroff wished for the high commissioner to see “what Jewish families of the poorer petite bourgeoisie have achieved on only a few dunams of land, with a cow or two.” Wauchope “seemed very strongly impressed,” according to Arlosoroff, and “asked many questions, particularly about the antecedents of the people in the countries of their origin” where few had had experience working the land. “It is a point which I am constantly pressing upon him,” wrote Arlosoroff, “to see the people against the background of their past and to get a fair idea of the transformation which Palestine has already worked on the Jewish type.”

On the drive back to Jerusalem, Arlosoroff saw an opportunity to discuss frankly with Wauchope a topic about which he had lately thought a great deal: “the fundamentals of British policy in the Middle East and the wavering hyper-opportunist and hopelessly inadequate attitude of official circles.” Arlosoroff likely referred to the positions espoused by the previous government under Chancellor, as well as Young’s interim government, especially over issues such as the World Islamic Conference. He told Wauchope that “if no change would occur Palestine is bound, in the course of a relatively short period, to become just one link in the chain of Levantine States on the Eastern Mediterranean which in due course would be merged into some Confederation with a definitely Asiatic and anti-western origination.” Here, Arlosoroff echoed arguments he had earlier made in his 1929 essay “The Ninth Dominion.” At that time, however, Arlosoroff had argued that joining the British Commonwealth as a dominion would

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403 Chaim Arlosoroff diary notes, February 14, 1932, CZA A123/19. Wauchope’s sister Jane Mabel Hoare (1870-1933) at times served as host for her bachelor bother after her husband, the liberal politician Hugh Hoare (1854-1929) died. Upon meeting her, Helen Bentwich remarked that she was a “real ‘gentlewoman’ type, about 50, & very friendly & nice.” Helen Bentwich to Caroline Franklin, February 24, 1932, WL 7HBE/2/12.

404 Arlosoroff diary notes, February 14, 1932, CZA A123/19.
protect Palestine from the “naturally gravitating” inclination of the country’s Arabs towards other nearby Arab states.\footnote{Arlosoroff, “The Ninth Dominion,” 293.} Now, he warned Wauchope that the Yishuv might be the British Empire’s only bulwark against an anti-imperial, Levantine pull. Whereas that inclination was “perhaps inevitable” in places such as Iraq, which would soon be granted independence, the same was not true for Palestine where there was substantial Jewish settlement. Wauchope told Arlosoroff that “he generally agreed with this analysis.”\footnote{Arlosoroff diary notes, February 14, 1932, CZA A123/19.}

During a meeting with Wauchope the following month, Arlosoroff invoked another British imperial comparison—Canada—in a conversation about potential constitutional changes in Palestine, specifically around the idea of a representative legislative body. While he had previously proposed that Jews be placed in a \textit{temporary} minority position on a future legislative council (to prevent deadlock with the Arabs), here Arlosoroff completely abandoned the possibility of Jewish minority status. There remained two potential options then: either Jews and Arabs could receive equal representation, or Jews could be granted a status “not compatible with their numerical strength” because of their disproportionately large stake in Palestine’s economy. The first possibility, explained Arlosoroff, was based on binationalist visions for Palestine’s future in which “the equality of two national entities…together will constitute the state of Palestine.” One needed only look to Canada a century earlier, claimed Arlosoroff, to understand that this plan would fail. There, discontent over the Constitutional Act 1791, which attempted constitutional parity through the creation of Anglo-Protestant Upper Canada (Ontario) and French Catholic Lower Canada (Quebec), ultimately led to the 1837 Lower Canada Rebellion and the unification of the two provinces. “The regime
failed,” Arlosoroff told Wauchope, “because it granted responsible self-rule, and therefore reached a point of constant stagnation between the two parts.” The solution, then, was to give Jews, who “paid 40 percent of government revenues,” an outsized, potentially majority status on a future legislative council.407

The evolution of Arlosoroff’s political vision for Zionism found its most radical articulation in his June 1932 letter to Chaim Weizmann. By then, Arlosoroff could no longer foresee a future in which Jewish society provided a bulwark for British interests in the Middle East, or even one in which Jews received majority status on a legislative council organized by mandatory authorities. He could not envision these scenarios because he no longer could imagine a British future for the Yishuv. The startling and growing threat of Nazism in Germany, the seeming impossibility of productive Jewish-Arab relations, and the exasperating standstill of British policy in Palestine—despite his burgeoning working partnership with Wauchope—all convinced Arlosoroff that Zionists were running out of time. His letter to Weizmann, regarded as a masterpiece of political analysis and evidence of the despair that had consumed Zionist leadership in the summer of 1932, depicted a grim reality facing the Yishuv. The evolutionary approach to Zionism—Weizmann its chief architect and proponent—had now become an “impossible” method. Zionism needed to settle “hundreds of thousands of Jews…within a relatively brief period of time” in order not to “reproduce Diaspora conditions in Palestine.” But that prospect had become unfeasible. “I am forced to the conclusion that with the present methods and under the present regime,” he wrote, “there is hardly a possibility of working out a solution for this problem of large-scale immigration and

407 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 259-260.
settlement.” Had Arlosoroff envisioned another couple of decades of peace in the Middle East and around the globe, he would have been content, “without grumbling,” to continue on the evolutionary path. But “the political situation in the world remains so unsettled and the fermentation in the Middle East is growing at such a pace,” he reasoned, “that there is little hope for any such optimistic assumption.” Arlosoroff asked Weizmann, “Can there be a doubt in anybody’s mind that we are heading for a new great war?”

Taking into account this growing worldwide unrest and anticipating a future British-Arab alliance, Arlosoroff argued that the deteriorating social and economic position of European Jewry demanded an immediate reckoning, a solution to the “real issue.” He believed that four possible paths lay before the Zionist movement. The first was simply to “hold on” and hope for the best. This was “an extremely Jewish attitude,” wrote Arlosoroff, and “a specifically Jewish form of heroism,” but it was not, he believed, a Zionist attitude. Rather, surrendering to this holding pattern was tantamount to an abandonment of Zionist “political action.” The second path was to forsake the Zionist dream altogether and to admit that it could not “be turned into a reality.” Arlosoroff included members of Brit Shalom and the publishers of the Trotskyite newspaper Ha-Or among those who had already, in effect, decided on this course. They would ultimately “drift off to new shores”—be they pacifist or communist—“which have for them a stronger lure.” The third path was to establish Jewish national sovereignty within a territorially limited canton. “There is no doubt in my mind that there is a sound core to all these [cantonization] schemes,” wrote Arlosoroff. But the issue of Jerusalem,

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the challenge of limited territory, and the current fragmented configuration of Jewish settlement in Palestine all made this plan problematic.\textsuperscript{409}

The fourth path, the most radical and drastic, reflected the apotheosis of Arlosoroff’s ideas about state power. “The fourth possible conclusion would be,” he wrote, “that Zionism cannot, in the given circumstances, be turned into a reality without a transition period of the organized revolutionary rule of the Jewish minority.” This “nationalist minority government” would “usurp the state machinery, the administration and the military power in order to forestall the danger of [Zionists] being swamped by numbers and endangered by a rising.” Arlosoroff suggested a possibility here, in other words, in which the Zionists would overthrow British mandatory authorities and establish minority rule over Arabs in Palestine. He admitted to Weizmann that the plan “may at first sight appear impracticable, even more, fantastic” and that “it may seem to contradict the condition in which the British Mandate places us.” It may even seem “dangerously near” certain Revisionist ideas. “All I feel, and with overwhelming force,” Arlosoroff declared, “is that I should never accept the defeat of Zionism before an attempt was made which would be equal to the grim seriousness of our struggle for national life and to the sacredness of the trust which the Jewish people has laid in our hands.”\textsuperscript{410}

There is no reason to doubt the depth of Arlosoroff’s worry or the seriousness with which he proposed this final possibility to Weizmann in the summer of 1932.\textsuperscript{411} He

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\textsuperscript{409} Ibid., 235-236. \\
\textsuperscript{410} Ibid., 237. \\
\textsuperscript{411} Shlomo Avineri writes, “That Arlosoroff never proposed anything on these lines on any other occasion, nor tried this line of argument on any member or leader of his own party, clearly suggests that the ‘fourth option’ cannot be construed as a clear-cut policy choice.” Avineri, \textit{Arlosoroff}, 96. In fact, Arlosoroff sent a copy of the confidential letter to David Ben-Gurion with a note reading “Ben-Gurion, just for you...C.A.” Quoted in Anita Shapira, \textit{Ben-Gurion: Father of Modern Israel} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 91.
\end{flushright}
had long grappled with the importance of state power, and his propensity for realism rather than idealism meant that he took very seriously the rise of Nazism, the threat of world war, and any other “cruel contingency” the Zionist movement might face amidst such great uncertainty.\footnote{Arlosoroff, “The Future of Zionist Policy (1932),” 237.} And yet, the evolution—in fact, the climax—of Arlosoroff’s political thinking that led him to a place where he felt compelled to propose revolution, occurred while he was more deeply entrenched in Jerusalem’s elite (and British-oriented) social scene than ever before; while he pursued alliances with Jews from across the British Empire; and while he developed with Wauchope a professional and personal friendship marked by honesty and mutual respect.

After moving to Jerusalem, Arlosoroff became a part of the elite social scene that the Bentwiches had helped to build. After Norman and Helen returned to Jerusalem, the couple and Arlosoroff spent countless parties, concerts, and other heterosocial events together. And despite the growing chasm between Norman’s binationalist-inclined politics and Arlosoroff’s increasingly hostile attitude towards Brit Shalom, the two men, as well as Helen and often Sima, regularly dined together in small, intimate settings. These various gatherings, both large and small, generally included a mix of British authorities and Anglo-Jews, as well as Zionist leaders and local Arab elites. For example, in February 1932, Arlosoroff recorded in his diary that he had “dined with Judge Frumkin\footnote{Gad Frumkin (1887-1960), who was raised in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City, was the only Jewish jurist to serve of the Palestine Supreme Court. On Frumkin’s formative interactions with Arab neighbors in Ottoman Palestine, see Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Hebron* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), esp. 43-45.} together with the Bentwiches, and a few of the Arab judges (El Khalidi\footnote{Mustafa Al-Khalidi (1878-1944) was an Arab jurist and member of the Supreme Court who later served as mayor of Jerusalem until his death in 1944. Al-Khalidi approached Frumkin in 1936, following the Arab strike and revolt, to try to negotiate a Jewish-Arab accord. See Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy, Vol 2*, 35-40.},
Khayat\textsuperscript{415} and Jarralla\textsuperscript{416}).\textsuperscript{417} In March, Arlosoroff attended dinner at the Bentwiches, and was joined by Dr. Strathearn, a British ophthalmologist and Judge H. A. Webb, the government’s legal assessor for claims of displacement, as well as their wives.\textsuperscript{418} Annie Landau, the headmistress of the Evelina de Rothschild School for Girls and an early friend of Helen Bentwich whose home continued to serve as a center of elite sociability in Jerusalem, included Chaim and Sima Arlosoroff in several dinners and parties. In February 1932, Landau hosted a large party after Jascha Heifetz gave a concert, a rare underwhelming performance by the violin virtuoso that left “even a music enthusiast like” Wauchope (also in attendance) “unmoved,” according to Arlosoroff.\textsuperscript{419} In May and June 1932, Landau also invited the Arlosoroffs to dinners at her home. In May, the Arlosoroffs hosted a large reception at their Jerusalem home in honor of the Ukrainian Zionist leader Leo Motzkin. Guests included Norman Bentwich, Gershon Agronsky, Gad Frumkin, Max Nurock, and Arthur Ruppin. While Sima sometimes accompanied her husband to dinners and parties and occasionally functioned as hostess, Chaim Arlosoroff also attended many social functions alone and rarely documented Sima’s voice in his diary when he wrote about gatherings during which she had been present.

Just as Arlosoroff’s quotidian and convivial activities in Jerusalem were shaped by an elite British imperial sociability, his work as a Zionist leader was also shaped by the British imperial horizons of Palestine. While questioning the fundamental tenability of Zionist futures in the British Empire, Arlosoroff decided not to shun ties with Britain,

\textsuperscript{415} Francis Khayat, a member of Jerusalem’s Arab Christian community, served on the Supreme Court.
\textsuperscript{416} Ali Bey Jarallah, along with Gad Frumkin, had been one of only two lawyers in Jerusalem in 1917. Both he and Frumkin had studied law in Constantinople.
\textsuperscript{417} Chaim Arlosoroff diary notes, February 16, 1932, CZA A123/19. For more on legal history in Mandate Palestine, see, Likhovski, \textit{Law and Identity in Mandate Palestine}.
\textsuperscript{418} Arlosoroff, \textit{Yoman Yerushalayim}, 253.
\textsuperscript{419} Chaim Arlosoroff diary notes, February 22, 1932, CZA 123/19.
but rather resolved to build relationships with influential (and often wealthy) Jewish elites from Britain and the empire in the hope that their intervention could improve Zionism’s situation. For instance, he wrote to Wellesley Aron, the Anglo-Jewish founder of the Jewish youth movement Habonim, about ways to further social contact between Jewish Agency officials and British authorities in Palestine. “I write today in order to impress once more upon your mind the importance of this aspect of our work,” he told Aron. “I thought of establishing (unofficially) Citizens’ Committees in each of the cities and colonies where British officials and troops are stationed with the purpose of working up systematically relations between the Jewish population and the British.”

In the spring of 1932, Arlosoroff became acquainted with Lady Eva Mond Isaacs, the daughter of Anglo-Jewish industrialist and Liberal-turned-Conservative politician Alfred Mond and the daughter-in-law of Rufus Isaacs (Lord Reading), the former viceroy of India. Isaacs first traveled to Palestine in 1928, accompanying her father who was a close friend of Chaim Weizmann. Upon her return to England, Isaacs took up the study of Hebrew and became a dedicated and active Zionist. On her 1932 trip to Palestine, she developed a warm friendship with Arlosoroff. At one meeting in February—tea at the King David Hotel—Arlosoroff recorded in his diary that the two had had “a very pleasant talk on [his] favourite subject: British policy in the Middle East and the Jewish National Home.” Isaacs also told Arlosoroff that Wauchope had “commented very favorably” on his developing relationship with the young Zionist leader.

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420 Chaim Arlosoroff to Wellesley Aron, May 29, 1932, CZA S25/7753.
421 Eva Violet Mond Isaacs (1895-1973) was styled Lady Erleigh, and after 1935, the Marchioness of Reading. Isaacs’ mother, Violet Goetz was a devout Anglican of Huguenot ancestry. As an adult, after the death of her father in 1930, Isaacs converted to Judaism. She published an autobiography, Eva Isaacs, For the Record: The Memoirs of Eva, Marchioness of Reading (London: Hutchinson, 1973).
422 Chaim Arlosoroff diary notes, February 25, 1932, CZA 123/19.
Arlosoroff and Sima drove north to spend a Shabbat with Isaacs at the home that her late father had built on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. On Saturday afternoon, Arlosoroff had “a serious conversation” with Isaacs about the help her father-in-law Lord Reading might provide to the Zionist movement, especially in times of such profound political uncertainty. “I pointed to the problem of the constitutional changes that might arise in the near future,” Arlosoroff reported in his diary. “In this matter, he could give us invaluable assistance. We still do not know what the actual form of the question will be for us. In any event, this will be a fundamental political problem that has a far-reaching impact on the future of the country,” he wrote. Eva Isaacs “understood the object of [his] words and promised to help.” Arlosoroff found her to be “very attentive and devoted” to the Zionist cause and a “brave soldier of the movement.”

Arlosoroff’s friendship with Eva Isaacs led to other British imperial connections. For instance, she introduced him to Percival David, a Baghdadi Jewish financier from India, who was visiting Palestine. David, who over the course of his life amassed one of the most significant collections of Chinese ceramics and stamps, was quick to inform Arlosoroff that he was a “non-Zionist”—he opposed nationalism and instead supported cosmopolitanism. Arlosoroff had ideas about the utility of wealthy non-Zionists, who always seemed to want to endow a chair at the university, but not support the realization of a Jewish state. “The question is—what will we do with all these chairs, if we have no place to put them?” he quipped. But Eva Isaacs had suggested to David that he use his

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423 Arlosoroff, Yoman Yerushalayim, 246.
424 Percival David did indeed endow a chair at the Hebrew University the following year: the Sir Sassoon David Chair of Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in memory of his father. Ironically, the Indian Jewish newspaper the Jewish Advocate proudly held up the founding of the chair as evidence of Baghdadi Jewish engagement with Zionism. Joan G. Roland, The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998), 163.
money for a different purpose—to help develop Jewish-Arab relations. After discussing ideas, David settled on funding the planting of orchards for tribal leaders in the Transjordan, a scheme Arlosoroff hoped would help promote their positive attitude towards Zionism.\textsuperscript{425}

Arlosoroff’s most significant British friendship proved to be with Arthur Wauchope. Since he had impassionedly lectured Wauchope on the state of British-Zionist relations on Christmas Eve the previous year, Arlosoroff had developed a relationship with the high commissioner marked by mutual respect and a forthrightness that belied Wauchope’s high station. Wauchope who, unlike his predecessor Chancellor, was openly sympathetic to Zionism, treated Arlosoroff as a wise and experienced colleague whose partnership was integral to Britain’s mission in Palestine.

In May 1932, a month before Arlosoroff composed his famous letter to Weizmann, he and Wauchope exchanged a remarkable correspondence regarding Leon Pinsker’s \textit{Auto-Emancipation}.\textsuperscript{426} Published anonymously in German in 1882, \textit{Auto-Emancipation} argued that enlightenment, humanism, and Jewish emancipation could not solve the Jewish problem. Jews would continue to face antisemitism so long as they remained nationless aliens. The solution was a territorial Jewish nation, a place where upon their own soil Jews could promote “national self-respect and self-confidence.”\textsuperscript{427} \textit{Auto-Emancipation} is considered the earliest articulation of political Zionism. In May

\textsuperscript{425} Arlosoroff, \textit{Yoman Yerushalayim}, 237.
\textsuperscript{426} Leon Pinsker (1821-1891), a physician, was born in Russian Poland and initially supported Jewish emancipation, believing it would solve the Jewish condition in Europe. The Odessa Pogrom in 1871 and the wave of pogroms that began in 1881 convinced Pinsker that antisemitism would remain eradicable as long as Jews lacked a nation of their own. In 1884, he founded Hibbat Zion (Chovevei Zion), one of the forerunners of the modern Zionism movement.
1932, Arlosoroff found himself preparing a new edition of the short text which had gone out of print. He thought that Wauchope might find it instructive and illuminating and decided to send the high commissioner a copy of the English edition from the Hebrew University Library.\textsuperscript{428} “This year it will be just half a century since this little booklet appeared,” Arlosoroff told Wauchope. “In my view it remains to this day one of the most brilliant expositions of the Jewish problem which forms the background of our present-day activities and aspirations in Palestine…Besides, what with the wave of Hitlerism in Central Europe, the crash of the Jewish middleclass structure in the United States, the ‘Red’ assimilation in Soviet Russia, and many other gloomy facts of these days, it remains appallingly up-to-date,” he wrote.\textsuperscript{429} Arlosoroff hinted here at many of the same concerns about the graveness of the Jewish situation that later he expressed in the Weizmann letter.

Wauchope was “greatly obliged” for the loan of Auto-Emancipation, writing to Arlosoroff that “it is wonderful that so much could have been written fifty years ago, equally wonderful that so much could have been foreseen.” Wauchope then remarked on the text in more detail, assessing which of Pinsker’s recommendations had already been realized. “As to page 7,” he wrote to Arlosoroff, “I am sure you agree there is great self-respect and great self-confidence among Jews both in Palestine and England of today.” Wauchope believed that “a great and most successful step forward since the Balfour Declaration” had been taken. “How seldom in history, or in our own lives, do actualities [achieve] equal our high aspiration?” he wrote. “Affairs march so slowly and not quite as

\textsuperscript{429} Chaim Arlosoroff to Arthur Wauchope, May 13, 1932, CZA S25/30-78.
we wish,” recognized Wauchope, but he believed the Zionist movement was progressing in the spirit envisioned in *Auto-Emancipation*. “‘We must take the first step,’” he wrote, quoting Pinsker, “‘Our descendants must follow us in measured and not over-hasty time.’”

But Wauchope disagreed on one critical element of Pinsker’s assessment of the Jewish condition. Pinsker believed that antisemitism was ineradicable so long as Jews were not a nation among nations. “Since the Jew is nowhere at home, nowhere regarded as a native, he remains an alien everywhere,” he wrote. This condition was the root of antisemitism and legal, civic, and political emancipation could not solve the problem. “I am happy to think that I disagree altogether that certain of his bases stand true at any rate of English feeling today,” wrote Wauchope, “for instance…he says the prejudice against Jews is innate and ineradicable. I do not believe it to be innate: and where it exists today I believe it is less strong than fifty years ago certainly among educated people.” Hitlerism, argued Wauchope was not ineradicable—it was ephemeral. Wauchope closed his letter deferentially, writing “I am sure you will agree that I write in a spirit of friendliness and not controversy.”

Arlosoroff replied to Wauchope’s note with a long, substantive letter, in which he took issue with the high commissioner’s assessment of antisemitism; laid out in greater depth the seriousness of the worldwide Jewish condition; and explained that *time* had become a critical factor for Zionism. Regarding Wauchope’s opinion on the decline of antisemitism, Arlosoroff wrote, “I am compelled to say that your belief seems to me to be based upon what one might call an optical error.” Arlosoroff echoed Pinsker, explaining

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that “one root of this error is the current belief in human progress which may be well-justified in respect to external civilisation, social organization, legislation, standard of living and technical advancement, but is sadly ill-founded with regard to the deeper forces and instincts directing human life.” Pinsker believed that antisemitism was innate and ineradicable not because humans were “bad,” but because “the Jews remain an element fundamentally alien to the instincts of the people in the midst of whom they dwell,” clarified Arlosoroff. The only reason that antisemitism had not developed in Britain to the same extent that it had elsewhere was that turn-of-the-century immigration control there had kept the Jewish population “just short of that percentage beyond which there had never been a Jewish agglomeration in any country without producing in due course a high tide of anti-Jewish sentiment.”

Indeed the established Anglo-Jewish community had been acutely aware of this as the influx of Eastern European Jews into Britain began in the 1880s.

“The truth is that the anti-semitic movement of today is more powerful and incomparably better organised than it was fifty years ago,” Arlosoroff argued. Antisemitism today had scientific theory, extensive literature, and robust political parties “with millions of voters.” In contrast to Wauchope’s claim that antisemitism had decreased particularly among educated people, Arlosoroff maintained that “it is [precisely] the universities that form the hotbed of militant anti-Jewish movements, backed by professors and students alike.” Even in the United States—“fifty years ago a symbol of liberty”—social antisemitism meant that Jewish quotas had been implemented

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432 Chaim Arlosoroff to Arthur Wauchope, May 25, 1932, CZA S25/30-74, 75.
in many of the nation’s top universities. “Thus, on the whole,” wrote Arlosoroff, “I am afraid there is little reason for optimism.”

This bleak reality meant that time was not on Zionism’s side. Arlosoroff made clear to Wauchope the great limitations that the “factor ‘T’” now wielded over the Zionist movement:

There is no doubt in my mind that as you rightly say, in the course of this half century the first step forward towards the national future of the Jewish people has been successfully taken. All of us know that our work must grow organically and that our liberty cannot be achieved by miracles or sleight of hand. But, on the other hand, there is no getting away from the fact that the world around us is not standing still to wait for us, and that our undertaking, which is not going on in a vacuum but at a definite point in time and space, in history and geography, cannot leave the factor “T” out of its equation. The world is moving: Jewish economic positions upon which our efforts in Palestine were based are either being destroyed (as in Soviet Russia) or crumbling away (as in the United States). The countries of the Middle East are in a state of ferment. The young generation of Palestinian Arabs is being brought up on teachings of hatred against everything Jewish. There seems to be a historical limit for the possibility of Zionism. We can never lose the sense of the limit and it is that which sometimes accounts for our reaction if we find that our rate of progress is inadequate or that obstacles are placed in our way.

Arlosoroff, not surprisingly, stopped short of offering up the idea of revolution in his correspondence with Wauchope; perhaps, too, he had not yet reached the depth of worry that he would the following month. But both Arlosoroff’s May letter to Wauchope and his June missive to Weizmann conveyed the same fundamental message: Zionism now faced a “historical limit,” a true prospect of failure in the face of worldwide developments. It was in this one respect that Arlosoroff was compelled to disagree with Auto-Emancipation—Pinsker’s recommendation for “measured and not over-hasty” Jewish national development was no longer tenable. It was this conclusion that would

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433 Ibid.
434 Chaim Arlosoroff to Arthur Wauchope, May 25, 1932, CZA S25/30-74, 75.
push Arlosoroff to think seriously about Zionist futures that would no longer—perhaps could no longer—be bound up in the British Empire. And yet, at the same time, Arlosoroff had become entrenched in a world in Jerusalem—through his friendship with the high commissioner, his social circle, and his contacts with British imperial Jewish elites—that had been shaped by Palestine’s imperial horizons.

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Arlosoroff’s dire predictions turned out to be only half true: while Jewish futures in Europe grew increasingly bleak, Zionist fortunes in Palestine saw a dramatic reversal beginning in the fall of 1932 when Wauchope opened the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration, thus ushering in the massive Fifth Aliyah. Following Hitler’s rise to power, the year 1933 saw the single largest wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine under British rule—more than 37,000 individuals, mostly middle-class Germans. Fear that the Yishuv’s economy would not be able to accommodate such an influx proved unfounded. While the world struggled through an economic depression, the Jewish economy in Palestine soared.

Arlosoroff did not live to see the grand sweep of this success. In June 1933, he traveled to Germany to help negotiate the Haavara (Transfer) Agreement with the Nazi government. The arrangement allowed German Jews fleeing Nazi persecution to immigrate to Palestine and to bring a portion of their assets with them in the form of German goods. This transfer of assets, vehemently protested by Revisionist Zionists, violated the anti-Nazi boycott of 1933. Two days after returning home to Palestine,

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435 This refers to the fifth wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, generally considered to have lasted from 1932-1939.
Arlosoroff was murdered, shot pointblank, on a beach in Tel Aviv while taking a walk with Sima, who was unharmed. The murder remains unsolved.

Imagined futures that had once seemed almost guaranteed and unquestionably desirable changed dramatically in the early years of the 1930s. While Arlosoroff’s political thinking in the 1920s had been marked by faith in the Zionist-British partnership and by a confidence in the prospect of Palestine’s British imperial future, the 1930s saw the Zionist leader beleaguered by a politics of uncertainty. This uncertainty pushed him towards positions on political representation and the possession of capital that fell well outside accepted tenets of labor politics and social democratic ideals. And it compelled Arlosoroff to consider very seriously the possibility of Jewish futures in Palestine no longer taking place in the British Empire. As we will see in the next chapter on India, uncertainty shaped Jewish politics in other reaches of the empire, too, and compelled a range of political positions not easily reconcilable.
Chapter 4

Between Empire and Nation: Baghdadi Jews in British India

Thousands of miles away from Palestine, in the heart of the British Empire, August 1929 proved just as fateful for another Jewish community for an entirely different reason. In that month, David Ezra (1871–1947), the most prominent Baghdadi Jewish businessman in Calcutta and a member of the famed Sassoon family, spearheaded a memorial campaign to have members of his community categorized as European in the Bengali electorate. Signed by more than one hundred other elite Baghdadi Jews in Calcutta, the memorial argued that Baghdadi Jewish British subjects “living in the European style” in Bengal should be included in the European electorate based on a combination of their ethnic and racial background, European cultural practices, and unshakable loyalty to the British Empire. Ezra launched the memorial when the Government of India Act 1919—which had introduced new electoral laws and a bicameral legislative parliament (diarchy) to the British colony—was set to expire, ten years after its enactment. The 1919 reforms, considered by Indian nationalists to have fallen far short of Britain’s wartime pledge for expanded Indian self-government, had divided the Bengali electorate along communal lines into four distinct groups: European,

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436 The term “memorial,” as used by David Ezra and members of his community, refers to a written petition presented to a government or authority.
437 “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General of India in Council from the Members of the Jewish Community of Calcutta,” Aug. 1929, National Library of Israel (NLI), David Sassoon Archive (SA) arc. 4°1790, box 46C.
Anglo-Indian, Mohammedan, and non-Mohammedan. The Jewish community fell into the non-Mohammedan category, the largest electoral group, comprising mostly Hindus.\(^{439}\) By the summer of 1929, the seven British members of the Simon Commission, the group tasked with recommending new reforms for India, had returned to London after two extended trips to the subcontinent and were busy formulating plans for the next Government of India Act. The commission’s visits to India had incited mass protests, boycotts, and calls for radical change, highlighting the challenge of negotiating individual and communal status within an unstable British colonial legal framework in an imperial landscape giving way to a nationalist one.\(^{440}\)

While David Ezra continued to push for European electoral categorization, stressing his community’s “unswerving” commitment to British political interests, his wife Rachel Ezra (1877–1952) privately conveyed a tentative hopefulness about the prospect of Indian self-rule.\(^{441}\) “Just heard that Gandhi is sailing by this mail & he is on his way to Bombay…We hope that there may be satisfactory results from his visit,” she wrote in August 1931 in a letter to her nephew Solomon (Sulman) Sassoon.\(^{442}\) From Bombay, Gandhi would sail for London to participate in the Second Round Table Conference, where plans for legislative reform in India would be examined. When Gandhi had agreed to attend the second conference (he had boycotted the first), Rachel

\(^{439}\) Roland, *Jewish Communities of India*, 116.

\(^{440}\) Bill Schwartz has commented on the challenges faced both by British officials in creating and by historians in writing about a complex, constantly shifting imperial legal framework: “Statecraft of this sort caused trouble in the past. It also taxes the skills and diligence of historians in the present, requiring immersion in the labyrinthine minutiae of long-forgotten administrative and constitutional procedures which, even as they were designed, were largely superannuated.” Bill Schwartz, *The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 345.

\(^{441}\) “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General.”

\(^{442}\) Rachel Ezra to Solomon Sassoon, Aug. 26 (letter also dated Aug. 25), 1931, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 49.
told Solomon about a Baghdadi friend who was becoming involved in Indian nationalist politics and had an upcoming interview with the Indian leader. “Meyer David is taking a real interest in the Peace Movement & he is to have an interview with Gandhi tomorrow!!” she wrote. Both Rachel and David Ezra (even as he led the memorial campaign) cultivated affective and associational ties with a broad range of elites, including elite Hindus, Sikhs, and Parsis. They entertained each other at dinners and parties, joined the same social clubs, and served on the same institutional boards and civic committees. The Ezras’ Jewishness—marked by their role as leaders of their community in Calcutta, their ardent observance of Jewish religion, and their participation in Jewish cultural institutions—shaped their daily lives and affective ties even more profoundly than did their embeddedness in elite Indian culture. Rachel and David Ezra grew to be enthusiastic Zionists, traveling to Palestine, nurturing a deeply instilled romantic notion of the Land of Israel, and directing Zionist organizations in Calcutta. In these convivial, quotidian, and communal settings, both Indian and Jewish, a range of political behaviors took shape that differed dramatically from the pro-imperial politics laid out in the memorial campaign.

This chapter offers a new account of elite Baghdadi Jewish politics that takes seriously both the memorial campaign and the Ezras’ embeddedness in Indian and Jewish cultures and insists that elite Baghdadi politics in the late imperial period can better be understood in light of careful consideration of both. Previously, the claims made in the memorial campaign—chiefly that Baghdadi Jews were thoroughly European and unfailingly loyal to the British Empire—have shaped the way historians have understood

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443 Rachel Ezra to Solomon Sassoon, Mar. 19, 1931, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 49.
the nature of Baghdadi politics in India. In these accounts, Baghdadi Jews’ unquestionable allegiance to empire and their British-oriented European cultural practices distinguished them from other Jews and non-Europeans in India, who grappled (often publicly) with their identification as “Indian” and with the question of Indian nationalism. This chapter, in contrast, insists on an examination of both the memorial campaign and the Ezras’ relationships to Indian and Jewish cultures, but it does not argue that one constitutes a truer expression of the couple’s politics.

Rather, the memorial campaign and the Ezras’ embeddedness in Indian and Jewish cultures reflect two sides of an emerging late imperial elite Jewish politics shaped by a single political horizon: a growing uncertainty about Jewish futures in India amidst the intensification of Indian nationalist sentiment and the expectation that the terms of British imperial rule on the subcontinent would change. For the Ezras, as the stakes of nationalism and imperialism grew higher throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the memorial campaign and the quotidian, convivial spaces of the couple’s lives each generated distinctive, situational sets of political vocabularies, categories, and concerns. Uncertainty about Jewish political futures likewise compelled Chaim Arlosoroff—in a

mirror image of the Ezras—to challenge the fundamental tenability of the Jewish-British partnership while simultaneously maintaining close ties to elite British social circles in Palestine. Yet despite the differences in their political ideas and expressions, the Ezras and Arlosoroff both ended up navigating the same complex entanglement of Jewish, British imperial, and anticolonial politics.

The first part of this chapter investigates the saga of the memorial campaign led by David Ezra, turning in the second half to an exploration of how the Ezras’ daily lives and affective ties shaped their attitudes toward Indian nationalism and Zionism. Rachel Ezra, like her husband, was also a member of the wealthy Sassoon family. The family patriarch, David Sassoon (1792–1864), born in Baghdad, founded the merchant house Sassoon & Company in Bombay in 1832. Trading in cotton and silk, and monopolizing the legal opium trade between British India and China, Sassoon & Company branched out across East Asia, opening satellite offices in Canton, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Many Sassoon family members moved to Britain toward the end of the nineteenth century, following the transfer of company headquarters to London. Rachel Ezra, who had been born in Bombay, lived in London from 1901 until her marriage in 1912, when she joined her husband in Calcutta. Whereas the Sassoons had been the most prominent Baghdadi family in Bombay, the Ezras, who had made their fortune in trade

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445 Rachel Ezra was descended from David Sassoon through both parents—her mother Flora Sassoon (1859–1936) was the great-granddaughter of David Sassoon (through his first wife), and her father Solomon Sassoon (1841–94) was David Sassoon’s son with his second wife, Farha Hyeem. David Ezra (through his mother) was a great-grandson of David Sassoon and was also a first cousin of Flora Sassoon. Stanley Jackson, The Sassoons (New York: Dutton, 1968), provides a family tree. For more on the Sassoon family, see Cecil Roth, The Sassoon Dynasty (London: Robert Hale, 1941); Peter Stansky, The Worlds of Philip and Sybil (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and Eilat Negev and Yehuda Koren, The First Lady of Fleet Street (London: JR Books, 2011).

446 The Baghdadi community in India, and the Sassoons in particular, were highly endogamous. Cousin-marriage was commonplace and considered ideal because it kept the Sassoon & Company fortune concentrated in the family. See Roland, Jewish Communities of India, 19.
and real estate, became leaders of the community in Calcutta. The marriage of Rachel and David Ezra represented the coming together of India’s two most powerful Jewish families and solidified the establishment of the community’s seat in Calcutta, despite the larger Baghdadi community in Bombay.\textsuperscript{447} In this sense, the Ezras do not just provide a lens on elite Baghdadi Jewish politics in India; they were the torchbearers of those politics.

Like Helen and Norman Bentwich, the Ezras’ marriage (which was also childless) represented a powerful Jewish partnership. Born into immense wealth, neither Rachel nor David pursued professional passions as Norman and Helen did. However, like the Bentwiches, the Ezras both took on significant leadership roles in the Jewish and wider communities. In contrast to Helen, Rachel understood her leadership work not as the manifestation of deeply held political convictions, but rather as a central duty of her high societal and communal position. She also occupied and embraced the role of hostess far more comfortably and enthusiastically than Helen, who regularly bristled at this expected duty of a colonial wife. Yet Rachel Ezra, despite the claims of the memorial campaign, hardly behaved like a typical memsahib, a European wife in India. Just as Helen contravened expected norms of colonial femininity through her social work, so, too, did Rachel through her Jewish and Zionist leadership and her ideas about Indian nationalism.

\textit{The Memorial Campaign}

The Baghdadi Jewish community in India had made efforts to align itself publicly with Britain since the Indian Rebellion of 1857. At that time, the Sassoon family patriarch, David Sassoon, had pledged his community’s support for the British Empire.\textsuperscript{448}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{447} Musleah, \textit{On the Banks of the Ganga}, 352–53.
\item\textsuperscript{448} Roland, \textit{Jewish Communities of India}, 22.
\end{enumerate}
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He had been made a British subject in 1853, a status inherited by his descendants and granted to some other members of the Baghdadi community. The Baghdadi population increased steadily throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bolstered by continued immigration from Iraq. By the 1930s, the total number of Baghdadi Jews, concentrated primarily in Bombay and Calcutta, had reached roughly five thousand, a quarter of whom were British subjects.449

Until 1885, Baghdadi Jews in India had been categorized by British authorities as European, a classification applied in criminal and educational matters. The revocation of that status in 1885 inspired small-scale efforts to have Baghdadi schools and pupils reclassified as European but did not gravely concern the community.450 One Baghdadi Jew later reflected that, apart from education, the community’s reclassification, “limited in scope,” had a negligible impact and “did not create any invidious official distinction.”451 Baghdadi perception of the importance of official European classification—and indeed, its actual currency in British India—changed in the wake of World War I. In June 1919, against the backdrop of growing nationalist ferment, David Ezra sent a memorial on behalf of his community to the government of Bengal requesting exemption from the Indian Arms Act of 1878. The act, which prohibited Indians from bearing arms, made certain exceptions for non-Indian minority groups, including Europeans, Armenians, and Americans. Ezra argued that British subjects of the Baghdadi Jewish community in India constituted such a minority and deserved their own

449 Edward Judah, “Classification of the Jewish Sephardic Community of Bengal,” speech delivered at the Judean Club, Calcutta, Jan. 16, 1934, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 46c.
450 It is unclear precisely why the status was revoked in 1885. See Roland, Jewish Communities of India, 58–60.
451 Judah, “Classification of the Jewish Sephardic Community of Bengal.”
community exemption. They were loyal to the British Empire, practiced a European lifestyle, and were—because of their alleged Sephardi origins—just as racially entitled to the exemption as Armenians.\textsuperscript{452} In reality, although many Baghdadi Jews followed a Sephardi religious rite, they were not historically from Spain or Portugal.\textsuperscript{453} The Home Department rejected the request, citing an earlier decision to deny claims made on a racial basis.\textsuperscript{454}

Six months later, in December 1919, Britain’s Parliament passed the Government of India Act, introducing new measures of self-government and expanding the franchise among elites in India. The act mandated distinct electoral representation for different constituencies—including Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Indian Christians—reserving designated seats for them in the Indian legislature. However, Jews in India, Baghdadi or otherwise, neither qualified for any of the special constituencies nor constituted a population large enough to warrant its own. In the Bengal Presidency, including its capital of Calcutta, the franchise was divided into four electoral constituencies: European, Anglo-Indian, Mohammedan, and non-Mohammedan. The European group, though small in absolute size, wielded disproportionate influence in the legislature. This was by design—Bengal was the center of British business interests in India—and the result of the breakup and political fragmentation of the majority of the


\textsuperscript{453} Stein, “Protected Persons,” 87–88. The tenuousness of the assertion of Spanish and Portuguese heritage was acknowledged by Edward Judah, one of the Baghdadi memorialists, when he said in a public lecture in Calcutta in 1934 that “it is difficult for our community as a whole to prove Spanish descent as can be done by most Sephardic Jews in Europe.” Judah, “Classification of the Jewish Sephardic Community of Bengal.”

\textsuperscript{454} Roland, \textit{Jewish Communities of India}, 115.
population between Muslim and non-Muslim. Jews, barred by the parameters of the European, Anglo-Indian, and Mohammedan constituencies, were placed in the fourth, primarily Hindu, non-Mohammedan group.

In 1929, upon the expiration of the Government of India Act 1919, David Ezra launched another memorial campaign with a new line of argumentation that differed from his memorial 10 years earlier. Directed to the government of Bengal, the memorial argued that Baghdadi Jewish British subjects in Bengal, instead of being recognized as a special minority, should qualify as European in the electorate. Ezra and other elite Baghdadi Jews, whose power had previously derived from their wealth and importance to the British imperial economy, believed that their influence would wane if they remained in a Hindu-majority electoral constituency. That constituency would likely expand—along with Indian self-rule—with the next set of reforms. The memorial, cosigned by 114 other prominent Baghdadi Jews in Calcutta, asserted that “all natural born British subjects of the Jewish Community living in the European style and domiciled in Bengal” should be included in the European electorate. As the memorial ten years earlier had explained, the so-called Sephardi Jews of India—in other words, the Baghdadi Jews—

456 According to the Bengal electoral rules, a European was defined as “any person of European descent in the male line being a British subject and resident in British India, who either was born in or has a domicile in the British Isles, Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, or the Union of South Africa, or whose father was so born or has or had up to the date of the birth of the person in question such a domicile.” An Anglo-Indian was defined as anyone of “European descent in the male line who is not a European, or of mixed Asiatic and non-Asiatic descent, whose father, grandfather or more remote ancestor in the male line was born in the Continent of Europe, Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa or the United States of America, and who is not a European.” William Marris and James Wilford Garner, Civil Government for Indian Students (Calcutta: S.C. Sanial, 1921), 337–38; Roland, Jewish Communities of India, 54, 116.
457 Copies of the memorial were also sent to the members of the Simon Commission (Indian Statutory Commission) and to Rufus Isaacs, the Anglo-Jewish Liberal statesman and former viceroy and governor general of India.
458 “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General.”
were distinct from other “native” Jewish communities in the country, namely the Bene Israel, who resembled their Marathi neighbors in language, dress, and other quotidian practices. The Sephardi Baghdadi Jews, whose ancestors had “migrated during the Spanish Inquisition among other places to pre-war Asiatic Turkey,” according to the memorial, had roots in the Iberian Peninsula—that is, in Europe. The memorial thus distinguished between native and foreign Jews in India, emphasizing their historical, ethnic, and social differences. The document further specified that the request for European classification was for those in the Baghdadi community who were “natural born British subjects” and who had “been educated and live in the British style”—not the other segment of the Baghdadi community, which was “mostly foreign born, who with their families [had] retained their foreign habits and not yet adopted British standards of living.” In this way, the memorial relied on two different notions of a native-foreign dichotomy, hinging in one instance on ethnicity and place of origin and in the other on acculturation, social practices, and (implicitly) class. In other words, Baghdadi Jews who deserved to be included in the European electorate were originally foreign to India, with roots in Europe, but had lived in British India long enough to shed any social practices and customs adopted during their community’s very long tenure in Asiatic Turkey.

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459 The Marathi people, who speak the Marathi language, are an ethnic group from the western Indian state of Maharashtra.
460 “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General.” Note the mention of “pre-war Asiatic Turkey” (emphasis added). Baghdadi Jews who had not become British subjects before World War I were considered enemy aliens under the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919. With regard to the assertion of Sephardi identity, in addition to the link it established with Europe, Sephardi heritage also struck a significant chord in the British sociopolitical consciousness. Sephardi Jews had long distinguished themselves in western Europe in trade and business, and Britain’s most prominent Jews of the past century—Benjamin Disraeli and Moses Montefiore—had come from Sephardi families.
461 “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General.”
The memorial also invoked loyalty and economic utility arguments, long the twin justifications of Jewish tolerance, to bolster its case. The segment of the Baghdadi community living in Bengal in the “British style” had “always kept aloof from all political agitation in this country because of its unswerving loyalty to the British Crown, its keen appreciation of the blessings of an enlightened and liberal Government, and its respect for law and constituted authority.” Furthermore, Baghdadi Jews, though small in number, “[represented] considerable interests in Landholdings, Commerce, Trades and Professions in India.”

The memorialists argued that relegation to the non-Mohammedan electoral group put them at an unfair disadvantage, one that Jews in Britain and in other reaches of the empire did not suffer. Those Jews, though not necessarily European according to the definition used in India, were “subject to no Political, Communal or Social disabilities.” Many Jews—including Baghdadis—had settled in Britain, achieving prominent positions in society and even serving in Parliament. For instance, the Ezras’ cousin Philip Sassoon (1888–1939) had been elected as member of Parliament (MP) for Hythe in 1912, the youngest member of the House of Commons at the time. He later served as parliamentary private secretary for David Lloyd George and as undersecretary of state for air. Baghdadi Jews in India, in contrast, faced an “undeserved hardship” because “the franchise legally allowed to them [was] rendered sterile” by inclusion in the non-Mohammedan constituency. The Anglo-Indian electoral group was not an option for

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462 Ibid.
463 Ibid.
464 Stansky, Worlds of Philip and Sybil, 1. Philip Sassoon’s father, Edward Sassoon (1856–1912), had held the seat from 1899 until his death.
Baghdadi Jews by virtue of the “purity of [their] race.” For all these reasons, the memorialists concluded, they deserved to be included in the European electorate in Bengal and requested that the definition of European be amended to include “all natural born British subjects of the Jewish Community living in the European style and domiciled in Bengal.”

Though the memorial text itself made limited use of race as an argument (specifically to contrast Baghdadis’ pure race with the mixed-race status of Anglo-Indians), the memorial campaign subsequently expanded on the idea of race, employing contemporary ethnological notions of the “Jewish race” as a white race. In an August 1929 letter to Rufus Isaacs (Lord Reading), the former viceroy of India (1921–26) and the only Jew to serve in the position, David Ezra echoed the claims of the memorial by emphasizing the divergence of interests between Baghdadi Jews and the “mainly Swarajist” non-Mohammedan constituency. Whereas the memorial used Sephardi identification to make explicit claims of European origin, Ezra acknowledged in his letter to Isaacs that the Baghdadi community was not, in fact, of European descent and instead based his argument on race. “There is a strong feeling among the British section of the [Baghdadi] community,” he wrote, “that their members should be politically classified by Government on a Racial basis and that their Race entitles them to be attached to the ‘European’ group rather than the Indian despite the fact that their descent is not

466 “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General.”
467 Swarajist refers to Swaraj, the movement for Indian self-rule promoted by Gandhi. Unlike other Jewish politicians in Britain, including the Ezras’ relative Philip Sassoon, who tended to abstain from Jewish issues, Isaacs openly sympathized with Zionist causes (though more earnestly later on) and involved himself in development projects in Palestine. Though he had overseen the implementation of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (in the Government of India Act 1919), seen by many in Britain as an unwise introduction of self-rule to India, Isaacs clashed with Indian supporters of self-governance and civil disobedience. He ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Gandhi in 1922.
‘European.’” Ezra sent a similar statement at the same time to John Simon and the other members of the Indian Statutory Commission (which had by then returned to London), emphasizing the racial aspect of his claim.

This argument about race, which the memorial campaign maintained until its end in 1935, was tenable in large part because it was made in an imperial world attuned to racialism. The stratified electoral system implemented in the Government of India Act 1919 built upon a long history of racial thought that both reinforced communalism and casteism and differentiated between the white races of the metropole; the governed, nonwhite races of the empire; and the mixed-race population in between. However, an essential element of Ezra’s argument in his letter to Isaacs—privileging race over descent—ran against developing trends in British colonial discourse. Architects of the 1919 act had used the word descent, rather than race, in their descriptions of Europeans and Anglo-Indians. Indeed, Ezra’s previous memorial in 1919 had been rejected ostensibly because the British government wished to eschew racial thinking—or at least the overt use of race-based political categories. In contrast to the geographically less specific notion of race, descent produced a narrower, more easily definable category that could be tied to a specific place of origin. British preference for the softer category of descent only increased amidst the rise of Nazism in Germany (and fascism at home). The use of race as a political category by a Jewish community might seem anathema or at least ironic against the backdrop of the rise of National Socialism. Mitchell Hart has suggested that “rather than ask how Jews could have become involved in such unpalatable and potentially dangerous ideas…we might ask: What did Jews stand to gain

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468 David Ezra to Rufus Isaacs, Aug. 20, 1929, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 46c.
by engaging with racial thought? In the case of the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta, a racial argument may have seemed more defensible—if also more politically risky—than the tenuous argument about Sephardi descent, particularly when presented to Isaacs, the descendant of a long line of Sephardi Jews in Britain. But beyond race and descent, the memorial also divided the Baghdadi community itself based on social practices, arguing that only the segment living “in the British style” deserved European categorization. In other words, David Ezra and the memorialists understood that to be European in the British Empire required something both intrinsic and performative, both a lineage and a cultural grammar.

While Ezra awaited a response to the memorial, which was passed off from one department and government to the next, he encouraged the Baghdadi community in Bombay—larger than the one in Calcutta—to “actively participate in this matter” and submit their own memorial. In a September 1929 letter to a leader of the Bombay community, Ezra conceded that it was unfortunate that the memorial needed to distinguish between ostensibly foreign and British Baghdadi Jews; indeed, a larger portion of Baghdadi Jews in Bombay would have fallen into the former category. But, continued Ezra, “it is an accepted and established fact in the civilized world that the Jewish race is a white one,” and therefore “British Jews of pure descent have a right to be included by Government in their political classification of a European no matter where

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470 David Ezra to S. H. Haskell, Sept. 12, 1929, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 46C.
they were born.” Indeed, the European electorate “was obviously formed to represent the White races domiciled in India.”

Much to the chagrin of the Calcutta memorialists, the memorial eventually submitted by the Bombay community made no mention of race. Edward Judah, one of the Calcutta memorialists who had been working closely with Ezra on the campaign, explained in letters to Baghdadi leaders in Bombay that he regretted their lack of attention to the “very serious question of the racial classification” of Baghdadi Jews in India. “The Jewish Race being a white one, your community will, I feel sure not sacrifice our heritage by failing to take the necessary action in pressing this point on Government,” he wrote. Although Ezra had invoked race in his communication with Rufus Isaacs and the Simon Commission, he and Judah both made an explicit assertion of Baghdadi Jewish whiteness in their communication with the community in Bombay. Jael Silliman has argued that “most Baghdadi Jews had British colonial ideas about race and placed themselves in the upper echelons of the racial pyramid that structured social life in the colonies.” Here, however, Ezra and Judah represented their community as a racial group not simply alongside whites in India; rather, they argued that Baghdadi Jews and whites were one and the same. The ideas of whiteness and Jewishness never easily coexisted in British India. Philippa Levine has described how anxiety over Jewish prostitution in India—particularly when it involved Jews from Europe—blurred and destabilized the categories of European and white, through both the prostitutes’ Jewishness and their bending of proper femininity. As Arlosoroff had observed in the

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471 Ibid.
472 Edward Judah to Joseph Judah, Dec. 1929, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 46C.
Palestine context, the hybridity and liminality of Jews represented a challenge to British colonial order, which depended on tidy racial categories. Europeanness, as a British colonial category, was thus “never anything other than ambivalent…and always threatened.”  

The Calcutta memorialists’ vision of Jewish whiteness more aptly reflected an emerging paradigm from another part of the empire—South Africa. There, the politician Jan Smuts envisioned the British dominion as a “composite” nation for a diverse array of white races, including Jews.  

Edward Judah’s reprimand of the Bombay community’s neglect of the race issue went without response for more than four months. Finally, in May 1930, a representative from Bombay responded to Judah, proffering an entirely new position that deviated even more significantly from the Calcutta community’s scheme and from the memorial previously submitted by the Bombay Baghdadis. “I may say that we are [of the] opinion,” wrote the Bombay representative, “that it is not advantageous for our community to be classified along with the Europeans and that it will be better to seek separate representation as the minority community.”

This development posed a potentially grave problem for the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta—what would it mean for their case if their counterparts in Bombay did not want to be considered European? Rumors began to circulate that the Baghdadi Jews of Bombay planned to include the Bene Israel in their proposed minority constituency scheme, a move that would further undermine the Calcutta community’s racial claims. The rumor proved unfounded, but the Baghdadi community in Bombay maintained its position on forming its own minority constituency.

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476 Joseph Judah to Edward Judah, May 8, 1930, NLI, SA, arc. 4º1790, box 46C.
“We quite agree that our Community is ‘non-Indian’, but whether we are entitled to be included in the European group in the political constitution of India is another question,” wrote a Bombay representative. “Further if we are so included would it be advantageous to our members from the political standpoint? No member of our community is likely to be elected to any Legislative Council in India by a European Constituency.” Edward Judah maintained that he did not believe that Jews in India had the “requisite numerical strength” for their own constituency. The Calcutta community, he argued, had long allied itself with the Europeans and would not “stultify itself by abandoning its policy and rights.” Baghdadi Jews would be able to overcome any discrimination, typical of “any other civilized country,” that they faced in the European group. “I feel sure that the abandonment of [our] policy…would be giving up the substance for the shadow,” warned Judah.

However, the representatives of the communities in Calcutta and Bombay ultimately waged the debate over electoral categorization in vain. The memorials, from the perspective of British authorities, raised minor political concerns in comparison to the vast and controversial constitutional challenges facing British India. To address these issues and draft reforms, the British government held three Round Table Conferences in London. Conference participants included British statesmen, colonial officials, and representatives from British India and the princely states. In advance of the second conference in 1931, Gandhi had reached a compromise with the viceroy of India, Edward Wood (Lord Irwin), agreeing to suspend the civil disobedience movement in exchange

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477 Joseph Judah to Edward Judah, June 9, 1930, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 46C.
478 Edward Judah to Joseph Judah, May 15, 1930, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 46C.
479 Edward Judah to Joseph Judah, June 17, 1930, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 46C.
for the release of all Indian political prisoners. Gandhi would also attend the Second Round Table Conference as the representative of the Indian National Congress. In the face of these political changes, the Baghdadi memorials sat shelved at the India Office for several years. In May 1935, the British Parliament finally addressed the issue of Jewish electoral categorization in India, deciding that the preferential treatment of one minority group created a problematic precedent that opened up the possibility that other questionably European, ambiguously white communities (including Armenians, Syrians, and Parsis) would also have grounds to demand European electoral categorization. The Conservative MP William Ormsby-Gore, a steadfast supporter of Zionism and a friend of Chaim Weizmann, argued against the inclusion of the Baghdadis in the European electorate, citing policy in another reach of the British Empire:

All recent development has been to regard Jewry as one people still adhering to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their ancestors, and holding fast to the Mosaic law. We respect that faith and regard them as one. In Palestine we made no distinction in Jews, no matter where they come from, and therefore, I suggest that it would be unwise from the Jewish point of view and from the point of view of this Committee to accept the Amendment.480

Even after Parliament’s decision, Edward Judah continued to pursue the matter of Baghdadi electoral categorization through the India Office, which finally responded in June 1935. The definitions of European and Anglo-Indian had already been finalized and were based on descent rather than race. “The Secretary of State regrets that he finds it impossible to depart from the principles upon which these definitions are based to the extent of extending the definition of European to include persons who are not of European descent,” wrote an India Office representative.481 Baghdadi Jews would not be

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481 Vernon Dawson to Edward Judah, June 4, 1935, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 46c.
considered European. Judah made a final, desperate appeal to the House of Lords, but even those who had previously sympathized with his efforts thought the matter best abandoned. Rufus Isaacs confided to Judah that he feared a debate on Jewish race in Parliament might provoke antisemitism akin to its German incarnation.\textsuperscript{482} Isaacs had introduced an entirely new motivation for rejecting the memorial. When Parliament finally passed the Government of India Act 1935 in August of that year, the Baghdadi community found itself, as it had since the establishment of electoral categories in 1919, in the non-Mohammedan group.

\textit{Indian Futures}

While David Ezra and the Calcutta memorialists asserted their community’s thoroughly European and British cultural practices, the civic, social, and cultural life of Baghdadi Jewish British subjects in India in fact set them apart from the British in India. Many signatories of the memorial—particularly members of the wealthy Ezra and Sassoon families—were marked both by their ambiguous whiteness and Jewishness and by their incredible wealth. Elite status for many Britons differed between India and Britain. As historian Elizabeth Buettner puts it, “being a ‘somebody’ in the empire, but a ‘nobody’ in Britain” was far from unusual.\textsuperscript{483} Baghdadi Jews’ wealth may not have ensured their (or their community’s) whiteness or Europeanness, but it did position them in elite moneyed circles that orbited high above the worlds of many Britons, even the “somebodies,” the rank and file of the colonial community in India. Similarly, some

\textsuperscript{482} Edward Judah to Rachel and David Ezra, July 25, 1935, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 46c.
\textsuperscript{483} Elizabeth Buettner, “Riding the Elephant or Riding the Bus: Britons, India, and Elite Status in the Late Imperial Era,” in \textit{At the Top of Empire}, ed. Claire Laux, François-Joseph Ruggiu, and Pierre Singaravélo (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009), 219–35, esp. 220.
Baghdadi Jews may also have been better at translating elite status between empire and metropole. Many had family members in Britain or had spent time there themselves, embedded in an elite British society unreachable by the majority of the British in India (or indeed the majority in Britain). Rachel Ezra had spent the 11 years preceding her marriage in prewar London, part of the Sassoon family that had close ties with Edward VII. In the late nineteenth century, her uncles Albert, Arthur, and Reuben had spent weekends away at their Scottish shooting boxes, hunting with Edward, then Prince of Wales.  

Thus, though wealth and elite status may have afforded the leaders of the Baghdadi community a place at the viceroy’s table at dinner parties, it also set them apart from most Britons in India; so, too, did their ability to operate in elite social circles in Britain.

The civic and social lives of elite Baghdadi Jews in India in fact did not reflect a British model but more closely followed elite Indian patterns. In 1927, David Ezra was knighted by King George V. Fellow honorees from India that year included prominent Indian politicians and civic leaders. Ezra likewise held a number of leadership positions that were also occupied by Indian elites. He served as sheriff of Calcutta from 1925 to 1926, an honorary position appointed annually since 1774 to a prominent resident of the city. The position was held exclusively by British individuals until 1878, when Mancherjee Rustomjee (1816–91), an Indian Parsi who had previously served as the Iranian consul in Calcutta, was appointed.  

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484 For more on the relationship between the Sassoon family and the British royal family, see Jackson, The Sassoons, 67–122.
486 Though selected to represent Iran in India, Rustomjee was born in India and was a member of the Parsi community that had resided in India since the tenth century. For more on the Parsi community in India, see Mitra Sharafi, Law and Identity in Colonial South Asia: Parsi Legal Culture, 1772–1947 (Cambridge:
elites in India, including David Ezra’s father and brother, occupied the post. Ezra was also elected in 1935 as vice president and in 1938 as president of the Bengal Asiatic Society, founded in 1784 for the advancement of oriental research.\textsuperscript{487} Though initially founded and populated by British orientalists, Indian scholars and researchers later participated and served in leadership positions. In 1938, Ezra served as vice president of the King Emperor’s Anti-Tuberculosis Fund for India, jointly holding the position with other elite Indians.\textsuperscript{488}

An elite circle of Indian professionals, intellectuals, and philanthropists in Calcutta followed similar patterns of leadership. For instance, Sir Upendranath Brahmachari, an Indian doctor and medical researcher, served as president of the Bengal Asiatic Society from 1928 to 1929 and was knighted in 1934. Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee, a prominent Bengali industrialist, was knighted in 1911 and also served as sheriff of Calcutta in that same year.\textsuperscript{489} David Ezra and Mookerjee worked together to develop the Indian Academy of Fine Arts in 1933. The Ezras established friendships and alliances with elite Indians, mixing in cross-cultural social circles that included Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Armenians, and Britons, both civilians and colonial officials. “We dined with Sir Rajendra Nath and Lady Mookerjee,” recorded Rachel Ezra in her diary in 1926.\textsuperscript{490} At a meal with the industrialist and his wife, the Ezras met Victor Bulwer-Lytton, the governor of Bengal, and his wife, Pamela Chichele-Plowden. Rachel’s diaries

\textsuperscript{488} King Emperor’s Anti-Tuberculosis Fund for India to Rachel Ezra, Apr. 26, 1938, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 72.
\textsuperscript{490} Rachel Ezra, diary entry, Feb. 5, 1926, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 38.
also detail her organization of countless teas, lunches, and dinners that included prominent Indians among the attendees. Mrinalini Banerjee, the wife of prominent Brahmo mathematician Amiya Charan Banerjee; Mrs. J. C. Chatterji, whose husband directed the Kashmir Research Department and was a scholar of ancient Indian history; and Mrs. Percy Brown, whose husband was a specialist in medieval Indian architecture, all attended a women’s luncheon held by Rachel in March 1926.\textsuperscript{491} Though these women were defined both at the time and for posterity through their husbands, they played a central role in the formation of elite social circles through their homosocial and heterosocial activities. Among the guests at another event hosted by Rachel Ezra that same year were Jagatjit Singh, the Sikh maharaja of the princely state of Kapurthala, whose controversial marriage to Anita Delgrada, a Spanish dancer, was frowned upon by British colonial officials in India.\textsuperscript{492} Meyer David, the Ezras’ Baghdadi friend who would become involved in Indian nationalist politics, was also present. Though Meyer David (discussed in greater depth below) supported dominion status and other measures of increased self-government for India, other members of this elite social circle in Calcutta exhibited varied relationships to Indian nationalism. Many Indian elites derived their power and prestige from institutions and organizations initially established by the British in India, and they understood that their social position both depended on the maintenance of those structures and could be threatened by an expression of nationalist support. At the same time, their work developing important national, cultural, and civic institutions contributed to Indian nation building, but without an overtly nationalist agenda.

\footnote{Rachel Ezra, diary entry, Mar.10, 1924, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 20.}
\footnote{Barbara N. Ramusack, \textit{The Indian Princes and their States} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 136.}
The relaxed cross-cultural encounters among elites hosted by the Ezras and others in their social circle did not always replicate themselves more generally in elite British colonial society. Like other non-Europeans in India (including the elites), Baghdadi Jews were excluded from certain social settings. For example, in 1907, David Ezra was barred from the Bengal Club, a European gentlemen’s club open to whites only. The club’s members failed to realize that Ezra, who possessed vast real estate holdings in the city, owned the property on which the club stood. Excluded from the club, he proceeded to order the property vacated. When the club returned with an offer of membership, Ezra still refused to join but allowed the members to continue to rent his property. He then helped to found the Calcutta Club, which, though open to all races, only accepted wealthy social elites as members. In this manner, although Ezra and other non-British elites in India found themselves discriminated against based on race by certain segments of European society in India, they worked to structure a social space for themselves with the resources—wealth and status—they did possess. These elite Indian spaces, from which many of the colonial officials described by Buettner were excluded due to their lack of wealth, represent a deviation from the public image projected in the Calcutta memorial of a Baghdadi community thoroughly entrenched in European life in India. Furthermore, though David Ezra asserted the centrality of white racial status to Baghdadi Jewish identity in the memorial, his experience in social settings such as clubs was often more determined by his nonwhiteness, as well as by his exceptional wealth.

The Ezras’ affective ties and convivial interactions thus gave shape to a social and cultural scene that allowed for a more complex—even warmer—relationship to Indian

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493 Silliman, Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames, 75.
nationalism than the memorial depicted. When Rachel Ezra enthusiastically reported on Gandhi’s activities and developments in Indian nationalism in her letters to her nephew Solomon, she demonstrated an awareness and concern for social and political questions facing Indian society.\footnote{R. Ezra to Sassoon, Aug. 26, 1931, NLI, SA arc. 4°1790, box 49.} Days before the Second Round Table Conference was set to begin in September 1931, she again contacted Solomon. “I cannot describe to you what a great deal of unemployment there is in Calcutta now mostly among the Eurasians,” she wrote. “Sir Henry Gidney is returning to London to represent them again.”\footnote{Rachel Ezra to Solomon Sassoon, Sept. 2, 1931, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 49. Henry Gidney (1873–1942) was leader of the Anglo-Indian community in India. Gidney’s own complex relationship to Indian nationalism, as well as the complicated position of Anglo-Indians in an increasingly nationalist India, needs further exploration. See Alison Blunt, Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home (Malden: Wiley, 2005); Laura Bear, Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 205–6; and Noel P. Gist and Roy Dean Wright, Marginality and Identity: Anglo-Indians as a Racially Mixed Minority in India (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 18–19.}

The Ezras themselves, like many elite Indians, did not become public or active participants in Indian nationalism, but one of their close Baghdadi friends did. Meyer David, a member of a prominent Baghdadi family from Bombay, was notable among Baghdadi Jews in India for taking an active political interest in Indian independence. He promoted the idea of dominion status as a means for India to achieve self-governance.\footnote{Roland, Jewish Communities of India, 126.} In March 1931, as Rachel Ezra reported approvingly in a letter to her nephew, Meyer David met with Gandhi and discussed his idea to establish a Welfare of India League (also referred to as the Good Will Movement and the Progressive League). David later reported his plans in a letter to the Spectator. He proposed

the formation of a common platform of Europeans and Indians to promote good feeling and bring about a better understanding between them…It is worth noting that, unlike existing common platforms of Europeans and Indians, the one now
proposed has a definite political basis. I had the pleasure of a long talk with Mr. Gandhi during his recent stay in Bombay and discussed this matter with him.\footnote{Meyer I. David, “Points from Letters: A Good Will Movement in India,” \textit{Spectator}, Apr. 24, 1931, p. 18. The “definite political basis” moved beyond previous philanthropic and cultural “common platforms” between Europeans and Indians.}

Members of the league included Meyer Nissim, the former president of the Bombay Municipal Council who had helped Gershon Agronsky during his 1930 visit to India, and Albert Raymond, another prominent Baghdadi resident of Bombay; Dr. E. Moses, the only Bene Israel Jew to join the league; and prominent Indians, including Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Chunilal V. Mehta, and G. D. Birla, who the previous year had formed a committee within the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to promote swadeshi.\footnote{Roland, \textit{Jewish Communities of India}, 126; K. K. Chaudhari, “Modern Period,” \textit{Maharashtra State Gazetters: Greater Bombay District}, ed. K. K. Chaudhari, 3 vols. (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra, 1986), 1: 499. Swadeshi refers to the idea championed by Gandhi that India could achieve political independence by working toward economic self-sufficiency. Central components of the swadeshi movement included boycotting British goods and promoting domestic industry. For more on the subcommittee of the FICCI and elite Indian approaches to swadeshi more broadly, see David Lockwood, \textit{The Indian Bourgeoisie: A Political History of the Indian Capitalist Class in the Early Twentieth Century} (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), esp. chapter 6, 126-148.} The league played a critical role in negotiating a compromise after Gandhi was arrested in 1932 and began a hunger strike in protest of British authorities’ decision to award the Dalits (the “untouchable” castes) separate electoral representation. This compromise, known as the Poona Pact, removed separate electoral representation for the Dalits but provided them with special privileges within the general Hindu electorate.\footnote{Chaudhari, \textit{Maharashtra State Gazetters}, 499.}

Meyer David also addressed Dalit social welfare—considered by Gandhi to be critical in his vision of an independent India—in other contexts. In 1932, David proposed a scheme to start a scholarship fund for Dalit students. He envisioned that higher-caste Hindus would financially support Dalit students; the amount of 500 rupees could cover

The Ezras’ friendship with Meyer David, who worked openly on behalf of Indian nationalist causes, complicates the unequivocally negative disposition toward Indian nationalism put forth by David Ezra in the memorial campaign. The couple’s involvement in Indian cultural institutions and their friendships with elite Indians also point toward an aspect of their politics that differed significantly from the positions they showcased in their dealings with the imperial state. The Ezras’ negotiation of these disparate contexts compelled significantly different political vocabularies, attitudes, and behaviors. And yet their broad concern for Baghdadi Jewish political futures in an India grappling with the shifting terms of imperialism and the growth of nationalism animated their experience in both settings.
The centrality of Jewish culture, religion, and society to the experience of the Ezras and their broader community also stands in stark contrast to the thoroughly Europeanized image presented in the memorial campaign. The Ezras’ Jewishness—expressed through their role as leaders of their community, their devout religious observance, and their commitment to Jewish communal and cultural organizations—represented the most vital, salient force in their lives.

Rachel Ezra became involved in both Bengali and nationwide organizations by leading their Jewish branches or equivalents. Much like the Indian elites in her social circle who contributed to Indian nation building through the development of cultural and civic institutions, Rachel participated in aspects of Indian and Jewish nation building through her Jewishness. She directed Jewish branches of secular organizations, including the Council for Women and the Girl Guides Association. She also played a part in the development of autonomous Jewish organizations. She served as the first president of the Judean Club, a Calcutta Jewish community center founded in 1929. In addition to hosting weekly lectures, the club functioned as a social space for young Baghdadi Jews and held dances and parties. Another important aspect of the Ezras’ role as Jewish leaders was serving as their community’s liaisons to British authorities. It was often in these situations—for example when they dined with the viceroy and other colonial officials—that the Ezras seemingly appeared the most integrated into elite British colonial society. However, the Ezras were often the only Jews—sometimes, with the exception of a maharaja or two, the only non-Britons—to attend these official dinners, where they found

themselves invited as representatives of the Jewish community and as vastly wealthy imperial subjects. In this sense, while Norman and Helen Bentwiches found themselves increasingly pushed out of mandatory society in Palestine by virtue of their Jewishness, the Ezras were granted inclusion in the elite British colonial scene in India because of that same identity.

The Ezras’ home—invariably referred to as a mansion or palace—outdid many elite Indian residencies in its opulence and grandeur. The home’s location, at 3 Kyd Street in the mostly British White Town neighborhood in Calcutta, physically separated the Ezras from the majority of the Baghdadi community. Most other Baghdadis resided in Grey Town, the neighborhood sandwiched between White Town and the Indian-majority Black Town, a spatial and cultural nexus that Pradip Sinha has called “zones of interpenetration.” Grey Town, known for its immigrant and cosmopolitan communities, counted Baghdadi Jews, Portuguese, Armenians, Parsis, and Greeks among its residents.

Despite its British surroundings, Jewishness permeated the landscape of 3 Kyd Street. The Ezras’ home functioned as a central Jewish communal space, on par with the city’s three synagogues. The Ezras often hosted community religious services, weddings, and Jewish charitable events at their mansion and made available the property’s mikvah (Jewish ritual bath) for communal use. David Ezra, an animal lover and amateur

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506 E. Ezra, *Turning Back the Pages*, 242, 264. Ezra claims that by the 1930s, Baghdadi Jewish women in Calcutta had long since abandoned the practice of ritual immersion following menstruation. In addition to a rare conversion to Judaism, the Ezras’ mikvah was most likely used for *tevilat kelim*, the ritual purification of utensils for eating, and by brides and grooms before their wedding.
zoologist, had amassed India’s largest zoo on the mansion’s grounds. Elephants, tigers, lions, a tortoise “whose carapace must have born the weight, over the years, of hundreds of Jewish children,” and a flock of mynah birds that Ezra purportedly trained to sing “God Save the King” lived on the property. When Tel Aviv’s zoo was founded in 1939, Ezra contributed many animals, including tortoises, parrots, and black swans.

Though Rachel and David Ezra sometimes included Jewish friends at the dinner parties they hosted for Calcutta elites, the couple often organized separate meals or events comprising solely Jewish friends. These gatherings of Baghdadi Jews spanned both secular and Jewish activities. For instance, in May 1926, Rachel Ezra hosted Jewish friends, both men and women, for a mah-jongg party. Later that fall, she hosted Baghdadi community members for a celebration of the festival of Sukkot.

The Ezras, like previous generations of their family in India, expressed their Jewishness through their leadership in the community, their dedication to Jewish culture, and their practice of Jewish religion—all manifestations of an identity that differed greatly from the image of the Europeanized community of the memorial. Increasingly, during the interwar period, they also took on Jewish leadership roles that were transnational in focus. This aspect of their Jewish leadership—concerned with issues of Jewish nation building, the refugee crisis in Europe, and Zionism—connected them to an international diaspora and distinguished them both from previous generations of their own family and from local patterns of elite leadership in India. For instance, David Ezra

507 E. Ezra, Turning Back the Pages, 42.
510 Rachel Ezra, diary entry, May 15, 1926, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 38.
511 Rachel Ezra, diary entry, Sept. 22, 1926, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 38.
served as chairman of the Calcutta Committee for the World Jewish Congress (WJC), the international Jewish organization that first convened in 1936. Though not specifically Zionist, the WJC was dedicated to fostering a worldwide Jewish “national project,” uniting Jews across nation-state borders in the development of Jewish social and cultural life. David Ezra also headed the Jewish Relief Association, founded in response to the influx of Jewish refugees from Europe to India beginning in the 1930s. Most significantly, beginning in the 1910s, the Ezras encountered Zionism for the first time. Though their relationship to Jewish nationalism was not immediately enthusiastic, it grew to play a central role in their identity and affiliation as Jews. Zionism presented a potential conflict for Baghdadi Jews who wished to remain politically aloof, a trait that the memorial campaign argued was integral to Baghdadi character.

The geopolitical situation before World War I—specifically Ottoman control of Palestine—may also have contributed to the initial hesitancy of Baghdadi Jewish leaders like the Ezras to take up the call of Jewish nationalism. In the wake of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, but before the Balfour Declaration and the British conquest of Palestine, some European Zionist leaders had sought to use an Ottoman political-legal framework to build and sustain a Jewish national home. David Ben-Gurion in particular considered this while studying law at the University of Constantinople from 1911 to 1914. Moreover, some Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire did not conceive of their Zionism (marked foremost by a commitment to cultural Hebraism instead of the territorial and political aspirations of European Zionists) as contradictory to their

513 “Memorial to the Viceroy and Governor General.”
514 Shapira, Ben-Gurion, 31–36.
Ottomanism. Rather they saw the two as mutually beneficial.⁵¹⁵ Before 1917, Baghdadi Jews living under British control in India may have been hesitant to support a political movement with ties to the Ottoman Empire—where their families had originated—as it was becoming increasingly antagonistic to Britain. Rachel Ezra noted in her diary in 1913 that “the 2nd meeting of the Zionist question took place. [David] did not wish me to attend.”⁵¹⁶ It is unclear from the diary if Rachel Ezra, whose devout upbringing had imparted to her a strong religious longing for the Land of Israel, might have otherwise attended the meeting in Calcutta, were it not for her husband. In 1917, following the British conquest of Jerusalem, Rachel Ezra’s brother wrote to her saying, “We are extremely pleased to hear that the British have taken Jerusalem…May God establish our kingdom there according to our orthodox Jewish hope as we express it in all our prayers everyday.”⁵¹⁷

Attitudes toward (and indeed interest in) Zionism began to change toward the end of World War I, once Palestine came under British control. In April 1920, just weeks before the San Remo Conference assigned Britain the mandate for Palestine, David and Rachel Ezra made their first visit to the country, spending Passover in Jerusalem.⁵¹⁸ The next month, Baghdadi Jews in Bombay founded India’s first Zionist association.⁵¹⁹ Meyer Nissim, who was one of the wealthiest Jews in the city, contributed funds. Shortly

⁵¹⁶ Rachel Ezra, diary entry, Aug. 24, 1913, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 69.
⁵¹⁷ David Sassoon to Rachel Ezra, Dec. 12, 1917, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 40a.
⁵¹⁹ Roland, Jewish Communities of India, 151.
thereafter, a series of Zionist emissaries visited India. The first, Israel Cohen, then secretary of the Zionist Organization in London, arrived in the spring of 1921. His visit was part of a larger mission of inquiry to gauge the amenability of Jewish communities in the East to Zionism.

Despite these developments, Baghdadi Jewish reticence about Zionism persisted into the 1920s, particularly in Calcutta. When Israel Cohen visited the city, still without its own Zionist association, he was disappointed by the community’s reluctance to involve itself in Zionist politics. In preparation for a speech at the Magen David synagogue (led by David Ezra), Cohen conferred with leaders from the city’s other two synagogues. “One gentleman,” he later wrote, “agreed to be present only upon condition that my address was not followed by the establishment of a Zionist Society.”\footnote{520} Cohen’s speech was well attended but elicited donations far short of his expectations. The next day, he visited the Ezras’ home with the intention of gaining their support:

I was ushered up the stairs of a sumptuous mansion to a large room on the first floor, in which the Mincha prayer was being offered up by a number of men, some in Baghdadi costume, whilst through the open doorway of an adjoining apartment came a cacophonous chorus from an animated aviary—a score of parrots, parakeets and other birds doing their best to drown the Hebrew supplications.\footnote{521}

After the service, Rachel Ezra invited Cohen to stay for tea. She led him to a large back garden, where he noticed “some strange pets disporting themselves there,” including monkeys, storks, and peacocks, all looked after by “a staff of barefooted native servants.” Amidst “this unwonted distraction,” Cohen “related to [his] hosts some incidents of the suffering of the Jews in Eastern Europe and invoked their aid in the establishment of the

\footnote{520} Israel Cohen, \textit{The Journal of a Jewish Traveller} (London: John Lane, 1925), 233.
\footnote{521} Ibid., 234. \textit{Mincha} is the Jewish afternoon prayer service.
Jewish National Home.” Cohen did not subsequently record the rest of this meeting, but he did note that the wealthier members of the Baghdadi community (presumably including the Ezras) were mostly absent from the next lecture he gave at the Magen David synagogue. There, he made clear that he had come to India with “visions not merely of lakhs but of crores of rupees, but that so far [his] dreams had been denied fulfillment.” Cohen’s account of his trip is steeped in orientalist ideas about the East: he is poised to expect extravagant donations from wealthy Baghdadis yet unsurprised by their apathy; he is simultaneously amazed at the opulence and excess of their lifestyle, baffled by their eccentricity, and touched by their religious devotion. Still, despite his disappointment with fundraising, Cohen did inaugurate a Zionist association in Calcutta before his departure, and David Ezra was made president. Rachel Ezra succeeded her husband as president when he died in 1947.

As Zionist associations emerged in India, so too did their auxiliary institutions. In 1921, the Bombay Zionist Association founded its official organ, Zion’s Messenger, a large monthly newspaper edited by Florence E. Haskell, which ran until 1927. The newspaper reported on developments in Palestine, gave summaries of Zionist speeches, detailed visits of prominent (mostly British) individuals to Palestine, summarized Jewish news from other reaches of the British Empire, and relayed local Zionist developments—and setbacks. In October 1923, the paper reported that proposed Hebrew classes in Bombay were canceled due to lack of “sufficient support.” With regard to the Zionist

522 Ibid., 235.
523 100,000 rupees.
524 10,000,000 rupees.
Literary Committee, the paper noted that “there is nothing to say, somehow or other the Committee fell asleep and the Secretary literally faded away.”

Although the newspaper reported on Jewish religious holidays and quoted passages from the Torah, its focus was primarily political, addressing developments in Palestine and disagreements within and about Zionism. For instance, in January 1924, Zion’s Messenger joined the chorus of outrage at Israel Zangwill following his declaration that “political Zionism is dead” in a speech to the American Jewish Congress. “What he said is most unpalatable, so much so that he has created a storm of protest in the Jewish world of journalism,” read the report in Zion’s Messenger. “Mr. Zangwill’s observations have alienated several of his friends…Fortunately for us however, Mr. Zangwill had not spoken for the Jewish people, but to the Jewish people.”

As Zionist activity in India increased (albeit at something of a plodding pace) and took on an explicitly political tone, the Ezras’ involvement also grew. Their engagement paired a religious love of the Holy Land with an evolving concern about Jewish political and national development in Palestine. In April 1924, David and Rachel Ezra, along with Rachel’s brother, sister-in-law, and mother, traveled to Palestine for a second time, again for the Passover holiday. “I woke at 5 am to see the sunrise on Gaza. Our 1st sight of Eretz Israel! Thank God we have come here,” wrote Rachel Ezra in her diary. The next morning, Saturday, the Ezras attended Shabbat services in Jerusalem with Herbert

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528 Israel Zangwill (1864–1926), the Anglo-Jewish writer and founder of the Jewish Territorialist Organization, made the notorious speech at Carnegie Hall in New York City in October 1923.
Samuel, the high commissioner. Samuel was called up for the third aliyah, the blessing over the Torah. David Ezra was honored with the fourth aliyah. After services, Samuel accompanied the Ezras to their hotel for lunch, during which they listened to “some Zionist speeches.” On Sunday, Rachel attended tea with Samuel’s wife, Beatrice Franklin Samuel. The next day, both Ezras had tea with the high commissioner at Government House. Throughout the rest of their visit, the Ezras continued to spend time with the Samuels.

These activities—visiting with the openly Zionist high commissioner, attending synagogue, and listening to Zionist speeches—contradicted neither the Ezras’ Zionist commitments nor their loyalty to the British Empire. They understood their Zionism as working in conjunction with British imperialism. This political outlook reflected a time during the interwar period when Zionists envisioned a range of political futures for the Yishuv, including membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations as a dominion. Others imagined binational, federative, and autonomist state models. Assuming and even celebrating that the Yishuv might remain part of the British Empire was common among Jews living in the British Empire. As we saw in Chapter 2, this was also true for prominent Zionist leaders in Palestine in the 1920s, including Arlosoroff and Jabotinsky.

530 It is unclear if the Ezras and Herbert Samuel had previously met, but it is very likely that Rachel Ezra had known Samuel when she lived in Britain with her mother, brother, and sister following the death of her father. Flora Sassoon, Rachel Ezra’s mother, took over the leadership of David Sassoon & Company when her husband died. She was a noted Hebraist and supporter of scientific research who operated in the same social and familial network of elite British Jews as did Herbert Samuel.
531 Frederick Kisch, then head of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department, described the content of these Zionist speeches, which he said were mostly “personally addressed” to Herbert Samuel, in the following way: “We have criticized you, we shall criticize you again, but you are one of us and we want you to stay.” Kisch, Palestine Diary, 115.
532 Rachel Ezra, diary entry, Apr. 18–20, 1924, NLI, SA, arc. 4°1790, box 20.
And yet it was precisely in the 1930s, when Zionist leaders turned away from this possibility and became increasingly critical of Britain and its policies on Jewish immigration to Palestine, that Rachel and David Ezra redoubled their efforts on behalf of Zionism. In 1938, the Ezras supported the creation of a Calcutta branch of the Zionist youth movement Habonim, looking to the South African branch of the organization as a model. The new Calcutta branch connected Baghdadi Jews not only to South Africa, but to other parts of the British Empire, where Habonim groups had also already been established. Habonim’s Anglo-Jewish founder Wellesley Aron (with whom Arlosoroff had corresponded) modeled the youth group on the British scouting movement, which likely appealed to Rachel Ezra because of her involvement in Girl Guides. Wellesley had founded Habonim, Hebrew for “the builders,” in an attempt to counter Jewish assimilation in Britain. While the youth movement forged ties with kibbutzim in Palestine, its leadership across the empire and in North America differed over its primary goal—either to foster a Jewish national spirit and thus fight assimilation or to prepare members for life in Palestine. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s in India, Habonim served the former purpose. Baghdadi Jews in this period resembled their counterparts in South Africa and America in this respect, “[identifying] with the notion of return to Zion without regarding it as directly applicable to themselves,” as Gideon Shimoni puts it. The first case of Baghdadi immigration to Palestine from India did not occur until 1945. Zionist activity in India never achieved the institutional intensity it

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did in Europe or Palestine. Most notably, Zionists in India never divided into competing Zionist political parties. However, developments such as the founding of Habonim indicate that by the 1930s, participating in Zionism increasingly became about cultural and political activity and not solely about religious conviction for the Ezras. The duality of their commitment—both political and religious—set the Ezras apart from Labor and Revisionist Zionists, both of whom were secular. So, too, did their sustained vision of Zionism as compatible with British imperialism. The Ezras’ own conception of Zionism, then—in contrast to other elements of their Jewish identity, their embeddedness in elite Indian culture, and their attitude toward Indian nationalism—did not directly challenge the political claims of the memorial campaign. Still, their affiliation with Zionism was never without political risk; as British public opinion became increasingly antagonistic toward Jewish nationalism, the Ezras maintained their devotion.

Although the Ezras and other Baghdadi Jews did not see Zionism—insofar as it offered Jews a new physical home in Palestine—as pertinent to their own lives, they became increasingly aware after 1933 of the role it could play for the flood of refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. The influx of Ashkenazi refugees from Europe, many of whom hoped eventually to reach Palestine, introduced a new dynamic within the broader Jewish community in India. The refugees were mostly professionals—doctors, businessmen, teachers, technicians—and their families, who had fled to India from Europe. The issue of refugee absorption became a central preoccupation of Jews in India, particularly the small community of European Jews who had already trickled into the country before Hitler’s rise to power. They founded the Jewish Relief Association (JRA) in 1934 and appointed David Ezra as president, which bolstered the organization’s standing in India.
Soon, the Indian government began granting a visa to any European Jewish refugee sponsored by the JRA. Though Baghdadi Jews donated generously to the JRA, European Jews in India ran most of the organization’s operations. At the outbreak of the war, the Indian government had admitted approximately a thousand refugees, whom the JRA helped to settle throughout India. For the majority of refugees who were granted visas to India, electoral classification remained a nonissue. The Home Department of the Indian government determined that all refugees would remain aliens without franchise until they were made subjects. Many left India before attaining citizenship. Those who did remain and became citizens were allowed to join the European electorate (in contrast to Ormsby-Gore’s vision that all Jews would be categorized in the same way). The new presence of Ashkenazi Jews in India disrupted the established Jewish hierarchy that had previously privileged Baghddais. Some refugees considered themselves superior to India’s Jewish communities—Baghdadi, Cochini, and Bene Israel alike. \(^{537}\) Some formed friendships with elite Indians. \(^{538}\) Ultimately, however, the refugees’ presence in India had little effect on the social position of the Ezras and other elite Baghdadi Jews. \(^{539}\)

Though there is no evidence that the Ezras ever invoked explicit parallels between Jewish and Indian political futures, the two issues found common company in the couple’s home in 1941. In that year, a Hindu priest working as an envoy of Gandhi visited the Ezras at least twice. He was struck by the many refugees from Europe passing through the couple’s home—testimony, he believed, to the couple’s warmth, hospitality, and charitable nature. “Sir Ezra and his wife donate not only to the needs of Jews, but

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\(^{537}\) Roland, *Jewish Communities of India*, 178.

\(^{538}\) For more on Indian attitudes toward the refugees, see Egorova, *Jews and India*, 31–60.

\(^{539}\) Roland, *Jewish Communities of India*, 178.
their hand is also open to Indian institutions, and hospitals, convalescent homes, and schools are strengthened by their contributions in Calcutta and beyond.” David Ezra, he opined, should “serve as a model to the Indian people, and especially to the wealthy tycoons who spend their time having fun and wish to ignore the needs of the poor.” Rachel Ezra possessed “unequaled kindness.”

On one occasion, the Ezras threw a party in celebration of the festival of Sukkot and organized a meal to be held in their sukkah. According to the Hindu priest, the Ezras demonstrated cultural sensitivity to both their Hindu and their Ashkenazi guests, who included 40 refugees, many of whom wished ultimately to reach Palestine. Hindu guests were served their meals on fresh banana leaves in keeping with South Asian custom. Although the Ezras’ Indian servants attended to all the guests, “Lady Ezra went from table to table, concerned that [her guests] enjoyed all the delicacies and encouraged everyone with a word of comfort.”

David Ezra and the Jewish guests “wore handsome skullcaps and recited different prayers during the eating and drinking.”

On another occasion, the same envoy of Gandhi arrived at the Ezras’ home to find a group of refugees having a meal. “Suddenly,” he recounted, “I saw one of the Indian servants pulling a cow by its horns into the magnificent hall.” He continued:

I did not understand this bizarre manifestation and asked Sir Ezra what it was. He said with a smile that guests had come to him, the first group of refugees from Europe, and there were among them very devout ones who did not want to eat the cheese that was served to them, lest it was not kosher. Lady Rachel, recognizing the reason for their refusal, ordered an Indian servant to bring the cow from the

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541 According to Ezra Yehezkel-Shaked, one of the refugees included Max Hodorovski, who later changed his name to Menachem Savidor and went on to become the chairman of the Knesset. Yehezkel-Shaked, Jews, Opium and the Kimono, 179–80.
542 Ibid., 179.
544 Ibid.
dairy barn to prove to the refugees that the cheese was not bought in the market, but that it was homemade.\textsuperscript{545}

The motifs of these gatherings—a lavish meal served by a large cast of servants, the Jewish refugees hoping to reach Palestine, the Ezras’ attention to Hindu and Jewish dietary practices, the observance of Sukkot, the Jewish prayer, and Gandhi’s envoy observing it all—serve as an apt vignette of the Ezras’ entrenchment in both elite Indian and Jewish worlds, as well as their evolving relationships to Indian and Jewish national futures.

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By 1935, David Ezra had officially abandoned efforts to have the Baghdadi community categorized as European in the Bengali electorate. The exigencies of World War II, however, presented Baghdadi Jews with a new way to attain European classification. In 1939, Colonel C. Warren-Boulton\textsuperscript{546} formed a Jewish platoon as part of the Calcutta and Presidency Battalion of the Indian Auxiliary Force (AFI), an all-European and Anglo-Indian volunteer branch of the Indian Army. Baghdadi youths in Calcutta eagerly joined up. In 1940, however, Warren-Boulton’s superiors in the AFI ordered him to cease Jewish enrollment—after all, the AFI was reserved for Europeans and Anglo-Indians.\textsuperscript{547}

As he had more than a decade earlier, David Ezra mounted another campaign, this time to allow members of his community to serve in the AFI. Unlike the prolonged drama of the memorial, this effort was resolved quickly. Ezra and the AFI reached an

\textsuperscript{545}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{546}C. Warren-Boulton was a London-born officer in the Calcutta and Presidency Battalion of the Indian Auxiliary Force. He worked professionally as a machine-tool distributor in India and was an active member of the Calcutta Rotary Club.
\textsuperscript{547}Roland, \textit{Jewish Communities of India}, 216.
agreement: a Jewish soldier could enroll in the AFI if synagogue authorities—in other words, lay leaders including Ezra—vouched for the individual’s European descent.\footnote{Documentary proof of European descent could not be provided because it did not exist. A synagogue’s word, nevertheless, sufficed to satisfy the AFI; Roland, \textit{Jewish Communities of India}, 216.} As the war raged and it was in Britain’s interest to enroll as many Allied soldiers as possible, Baghdadi Jews finally achieved official European categorization, albeit without any electoral implications.

Between two great wars, the Ezras attempted to navigate the complex web of imperial politics, campaigning for inclusion in the European electorate. They insisted on their European identification through race, loyalty, utility, and cultural practice. They distanced themselves from Indian nationalism, declaring it incompatible with their identities as Jews and good imperial subjects. And yet, the Ezras’ associational ties—their friendships with Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, and other Jews, which took form in convivial spaces and through quotidian activities—reveal a very different type of politics. Shaped by a social embeddedness in elite Indian and Jewish worlds, this politics featured a tentatively hopeful attitude toward Indian nationalism and a deep commitment to Zionism, even as British attitudes toward Jewish nationalism and Zionist attitudes towards Britain were becoming increasingly hostile. As we have seen, these two sites of political formation—the official dealings with the imperial state on the one hand and the convivial spaces and affective ties of quotidian life on the other—served as structures that produced multiple, incongruous political attitudes and practices. Yet these distinct political outlooks were both shaped out of the same understanding of India’s future: namely that the terms of British imperial rule would change, and that Indian nationalism would become an increasingly powerful force on the world stage. As we will see in the
next chapter, Jewish leaders in South Africa, Palestine, and Britain shared this final view, and, in the 1930s, they resolved to build ties between the Zionist movement and leaders in India commanding the charge towards independence.
Chapter 5

Legacies of Empire and Imagining the Postcolonial: South African Jews, India, and the Future of Palestine

It was 1936 and Herman Kallenbach had not seen Gandhi in more than two decades. The pair had spent years as intimate companions during the Indian leader’s 21-year-long tenure in South Africa. Kallenbach, a Jewish architect and avid bodybuilder, had made Gandhi’s mission of satyagraha his own. Inspired by Tolstoyan ideals of bodily discipline including vegetarianism and sexual abstinence, Gandhi and Kallenbach (who remained a lifelong bachelor) twice lived together. From 1908-1909, they stayed in Kallenbach’s home in Johannesburg, known as the “Kraal,” which the architect had


designed himself\(^551\); the following year, the pair shared a tent on land owned by Kallenbach on Mountain View, a suburb of Johannesburg. When Gandhi left South Africa in 1914, bound for London with plans to return thereafter to India, Kallenbach accompanied him. But arriving in London days after Britain declared war on Germany, the two faced an untimely and unexpected separation. Though Kallenbach had lived in South Africa since 1896, he was German by nationality. He spent the next two years interned on the Isle of Man as an enemy alien, while Gandhi—along with Kallenbach’s luggage—journeyed on to India. After the war, Kallenbach returned to South Africa and resumed his architectural practice. Though they corresponded occasionally, Kallenbach and Gandhi had yet to reunite. Now, with a letter in hand from Moshe Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, Kallenbach faced the prospect of seeing his long lost “soul-friend” once again.\(^552\) “Upon the advice of some of our South African friends here I have decided to approach you with a...far-reaching request,” explained Shertok. “I realise how startling it must appear to a man in your position to be so suddenly faced with a proposal of breaking his ordinary business routine to go off to a distant country on an errand of which he may never have dreamt,” he wrote.\(^553\) The errand Shertok proposed for Kallenbach was a mission to India with the aim of winning Gandhi over to the Zionist movement. Shertok felt certain, as we will see, that Kallenbach was the only person capable of the undertaking.

\(^{551}\) The home was called the “Kraal,” the Afrikaans word that refers to a Nguni homestead, because Kallenbach had incorporated elements of African architecture into its design. Kraal literally means an enclosure for cattle. The Zulu term “umuzi” (“umzi” in Xhosa) more accurately refers to the entire homestead.

\(^{552}\) After Chaim Arlosoroff’s murder in June 1933, Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) was appointed to replace him as head of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department.

\(^{553}\) Moshe Sharett to Hermann Kallenbach, July 15, 1936, CZA S25/3239.
“In South Africa,” Gandhi once told a reporter, “I was surrounded by Jews.”

Two years after being called to the bar in London in 1891, Gandhi traveled to the Colony of Natal to work for Dada Abdulla and Sons, a Muslim Indian trading firm with branches in southern and east Africa. Intending to stay for only a year, Gandhi ultimately chose to remain in South Africa after his employment with Dada Abdulla had concluded in order to fight discrimination faced by Indians and to lead a campaign for their civil rights.

During Gandhi’s 21 years in the country, the majority of his closest European friends and allies were Jewish, among them several Tolstoyans and theosophists. Henry Polak (1882-1959), a British-born journalist and theosophist who, like Kallenbach, was influenced by the writings of Tolstoy, met Gandhi in a vegetarian restaurant in Johannesburg in 1904. Polak became an editor of Gandhi’s newspaper the Indian

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556 Theosophy, an esoteric religious movement that emerged in the late-nineteenth century and drew much of its philosophy from Hinduism, was—like the Tolstoyan movement—part of a cluster of new age spiritual movements. Gandhi drew inspiration from Tolstoy, and while he never considered himself to be a theosophist, he operated in theosophist circles as a law student in England.

Opinion and moved to the Phoenix Settlement in Natal, Gandhi’s commune. Credited with introducing Gandhi to John Ruskin’s Unto this Last, Polak also shared with the Indian leader excerpts from the writings of Max Nordau that had been published in the Jewish Chronicle (which he had delivered from London). Polak became Gandhi’s “right hand man” in South Africa. He was left in charge of Indian communal affairs when Gandhi traveled to Britain in 1906, and Polak himself also traveled twice to India on Gandhi’s behalf to lobby the government to end the flow of indentured laborers to South Africa. Both Polak and Kallenbach participated actively in Gandhi’s satyagraha campaign. In 1910, Kallenbach purchased a 1,100-acre farm—which he named Tolstoy Farm—outside of Johannesburg in order to provide a home for the families of imprisoned satyagrahis. In the wake of the satyagraha march of October 1913, Gandhi, Polak, and Kallenbach were all arrested and jailed. In addition to Kallenbach and Polak, other Jews in Gandhi’s circle in South Africa included Sonja Schlesin, who worked as his secretary; L.W. Ritch, another theosophist Jew who worked as a law clerk for Gandhi; and Morris and Ruth Alexander, leaders of the Cape Town Jewish community at whose home Gandhi stayed on his final night in South Africa.

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558 On Gandhi’s readings of Max Nordau, see Margaret Chatterjee, Studies in Modern Jewish and Hindu Thought (London: Macmillan, 1997), esp. 1-22.
559 General Jan Smuts agreed to release Gandhi, Polak, and Kallenbach in an effort to quell the protests and strikes. Subsequently, Gandhi and Smuts reached an agreement in 1914 that abolished a punitive tax on Indians in South Africa, recognized Hindu and Muslim marriages, eased immigration restrictions on Indians, and repealed the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act (the “Black Act”).
561 On Louis Walter Ritch (d. 1952), see Guha, Gandhi Before India, esp. 163; Shimoni, Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews, 11.
Beginning in the 1930s, as leaders of the Zionist movement in Palestine and Britain became increasingly convinced that imperial and anticolonial politics in India mattered significantly to the Yishuv, South African Jews—especially Kallenbach and Polak—emerged as uniquely equipped to navigate this issue. Their pre-war ties to Gandhi and the Indian community in South Africa and their broader consideration of Indian political questions came to play an important role in the development of interwar Zionist political strategy. They worked to facilitate meetings between Zionist and Indian leaders, traveled to India in an effort to win support for the Zionist movement, and continued to promote the Indian cause at home in South Africa and across the Indian diaspora.

It is perhaps an unlikely story that individuals such as Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak—a bodybuilder-architect and a theosophist newspaper editor, neither active members of the organized Jewish community—came to serve as ambassadors between Jewish nationalism and the most significant anticolonial independence movement of the interwar period. Indeed, the group of Jews who forged ties with Gandhi during his time in South Africa were an unusual cohort and by no means uniform in their political beliefs, religious practices, relationships to the South African and broader Jewish communities, or attitudes towards Zionism (though almost all were members of the liberal professions). They included anti-imperialists and pro-Commonwealth Unionists, observant and non-practicing Jews, and Zionists and non-Zionists. And despite their mutual conviction that Jews and Indians shared common challenges and aspirations, these South African Jews at times passionately disagreed over how those challenges should be tackled. They also

maintained a wide range of critical opinions about the record of the broader South African Jewish community when it came to matters of race and discrimination, particularly regarding Indians. Kallenbach and Polak, for instance, publicly butted heads in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1934 over the question of South African Jews’ treatment of South African Indians. Though Polak permanently left South Africa in 1916 out of concern over endemic racism, neither he nor Kallenbach spoke out publicly in support of the rights of black South Africans. Their silence mirrored Gandhi’s own refusal to include black Africans in the satyagraha campaign.

Despite their differences, Kallenbach—who by the 1930s had come to support Zionism—and Polak—who remained a non-Zionist—both came to the aid of the Zionist movement when its leaders resolved to pursue ties with Indian nationalists. Gideon Shimoni has noted that Gandhi’s lacking understanding of Judaism, influenced by “Christian-induced misrepresentation,” led to his repeated identification of Jews with “Old Testament” justice and later shaped his evaluation of Jewish responses to Nazism. This mindset was never corrected during Gandhi’s time in South Africa because the Jews closest to him were not “equipped authentically to interpret Judaism.” Rather Gandhi’s Jewish friends, Shimoni argues, were the embodiments of Isaac Deutscher’s “non-Jewish Jew.”

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566 Ibid., 12. See Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). This category was not applicable to all of the Jews who associated with Gandhi, especially those less intimate than Kallenbach and Polak. Morris Alexander, for instance, was a “Jewish Jew.”
complex relationship to Judaism and Jewishness, as Shimoni frames it, the fact that Gandhi’s Jewish associates had diverse and non-normative relationships to the Jewish community, Jewish religion, and Jewish nationalism also stands as testament to the complexity and capaciousness of interwar Zionism. In a period when the Zionist movement had to navigate the forces of imperialism and anticolonial nationalisms, Jews with diverse experiences and convictions—including non-Zionist ones—ended up confronting the same Jewish national questions.

While these Jews’ engagement with Zionism did not reflect the way the majority of South African Jews related to Jewish nationalism, there are certain important parallels, distinct to the South African context. By the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the vast majority of South African Jews—both the old Anglo establishment and newer immigrants from Lithuania and their descendants—had given their support for the Zionist movement. This distinguished South African Jews from other English-speaking diaspora communities (especially Britain and the United States) where the established elite generally provided the most vocal opposition to Jewish nationalism. Though most South African Jews adopted British cultural practices and norms, South Africa’s multi-racial and multi-national society encouraged the development of national identities

Alexander, though her second marriage to a non-Jew isolated her from the South African Jewish community, was certainly born into a family fully immersed in Judaism and the Jewish community.

567 On the history of South African Zionism, see Shimoni, Jews and Zionism.

568 The Jewish population in South Africa totaled 59,741 by 1918, 4.1% of the total white population. By 1936, the year Kallenbach received the letter from Shertok asking him to go to India, South Africa’s Jewish population had risen to 90,645, representing 4.5% of the white population. Allie A. Dubb, The Jewish Population of South Africa: The 1991 Sociodemographic Survey (Cape Town: Kaplan Center, University of Cape Town, 1994), 7.

569 For instance, the Conjoint Foreign Committee of British Jewry (formed by the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association) published an anti-Zionist letter in the Times in May 1917. See “The Future of the Jews,” Times, May 24, 1917, p. 5.
outside the framework of Britishness.\textsuperscript{570} The presence of Afrikaner nationalism made Jewish identification with Zionism—even Revisionist Zionism, the branch of the movement that became most critical of British rule in Palestine—more permissible. Jewish support for Indian political issues and Indian nationalism must also be understood within the context of South Africa’s racially and nationally segmented society.\textsuperscript{571} In short, South Africa functioned not only as an incubator for Jewish relationships to Indians, but also for Jewish relationships to national movements that offered everything from a supplemental identity to Britishness to a powerful critique of British imperialism.

This chapter explores how leaders of the Zionist movement came to view anticolonial politics in the British Empire as critically important to the future of the Yishuv. It charts the story of how a small group of South African Jews—by virtue of imperial legacies wrought out of indentured servitude, colonial economies, and racial and religious discrimination—became uniquely positioned to navigate this new political frontier. Weaving together the stories of Kallenbach and Polak, this chapter also examines the efforts of Immanuel Olsvanger (1888-1961) to build ties between the Zionist movement and leaders of Indian nationalism. A Polish-born scholar of Sanskrit who translated and published widely (including a Hebrew translation of the Bhagavad Gita and an original study of the shared influence of English, Afrikaans, and Yiddish on South African Jewish language patterns), Olsvanger arrived in South Africa six years after Gandhi left. He remained there from 1920 to 1928, working as a delegate of Keren Hayesod (the institution dedicated to raising funds for the Zionist movement) and as an

\textsuperscript{570} Shimoni, \textit{Jews and Zionism}, 27.
\textsuperscript{571} The reach and impact of South African nationalist politics extended to the British metropole. As a boy in London, Henry Polak developed early anti-British imperial convictions, influenced by his father’s work as an agent for a pro-Boer newspaper. Haggis, et al., \textit{Cosmopolitan Lives on the Cusp of Empire}, 39.
official in the South African Zionist Federation. While in South Africa, Olsvanger befriended Kallenbach and also met the Indian poet and political leader Sarojini Naidu during her 1924 visit to the country.\(^{572}\) When Olsvanger traveled to India in 1936 on behalf of the Zionist movement, Naidu would help to introduce him to other Indian political leaders.

**First Contact**

When Gandhi departed South Africa in 1914, with Hermann Kallenbach by his side, Henry Polak decided that he, too, would leave the country. He and his wife Millie—a Christian feminist whom he had first met in London—resolved to return permanently to Britain so that their children might not be raised in South Africa’s “atmosphere of race and colour prejudice.”\(^{573}\) Though he ended up remaining until 1916 at Gandhi’s behest, Polak eventually returned to London, where he founded the Indian Overseas Association, an organization dedicated to advocating for the rights of Indians across the diaspora.\(^{574}\) Polak felt that his Jewish identity demanded that he make the Indian cause his own. “I went to South Africa…and the more I became acquainted with the facts, the more I felt that I was facing, not a new problem, but one with which I was already unpleasantly familiar,” he told the *Jewish Chronicle* in a 1913 interview:

> “Indians must be segregated and reside in locations. They must not be allowed to own fixed property. They must be deprived of the political and municipal franchises. Their trading rights must be limited. They must be restrained within provincial boundaries. Their means of locomotion must be curtailed. They must


be forbidden to go to certain schools and higher education must be closed to them, as also careers in the Civil Service. Their methods of living are insanitary. Their competition is unfair. They underlive and undersell. They are a menace to the public welfare. They are an inferior race. They ought to be prevented from coming to South Africa, and those who are already in the country must be driven out by fair means or foul.” This and much more was the burden of the white population’s demand, to which effect had already been given, more or less, by statute and regulation. And I immediately realised that this was the Jewish problem all over again. Not a single argument that was advanced against Indians, but had already been urged against Jews in one or other European country. My sympathies have always been with the bottom dog, and I at once felt the need to throw all my energies into the struggle on behalf of the Indian community, for I felt that I was really fighting for the maintenance of Jewish rights and privileges and the preservation of our racial honour.

Polak noted that while a handful of other South African Jews shared his determination (he mentioned Kallenbach, Ritch, and Morris Alexander by name), the majority had, by his account, betrayed the ethical spirit of Judaism. “I had hoped to find Jews in South Africa solidly opposed to a persecution of British Indian subjects of the Crown,” he explained, “but I discovered, to my sorrow and shame, that, like so many others who have themselves recently emerged from suffering and persecution…many of them were amongst the most active of the persecutors.” Polak felt that to forget that the persecution of Indians could so easily turn into the persecution of Jews was a grave miscalculation; to fail to take a stand against racial persecution was “un-Jewish.” Ten years later, in a 1923 letter to the Jewish Chronicle, Polak reasserted this position, maintaining the parallels between Jewish and Indian persecution and lamenting the sorry record of South African Jews to stand up against the injustice. Mentioning Kallenbach, Ritch, and Alexander once again as exceptions, Polak contended that Jewish traders in the

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Transvaal, whose chief competitors were Indian, were particularly guilty of condoning anti-Indian measures.\textsuperscript{576}

Polak’s charges did not go unchallenged. Percy Cowen, secretary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, responded in the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} with a letter denying the “unfounded” accusations. “There may be a certain number of individual Jews sharing the views of one or other party in the present controversy over the Asiatic question,” he wrote, “but to say that South African Jews, or a section of them, are taking sides as a body in this matter is absolutely untrue.” As evidence, Cowen (like Polak) held up Morris Alexander, then MP and leader of the Board of Deputies Cape Town Committee, who “had always been indefatigable in his opposition” to anti-Indian discrimination.\textsuperscript{577}

Despite Polak’s record of fierce condemnation of South African Jewry and lack of involvement in Zionist politics, Selig Brodetsky, the head of the Political Department of the Zionist Organization in London, decided to ask him for help in the fall of 1931 when Gandhi was in Britain for the Second Round Table Conference. Born in Russia, Brodetsky had come to London with his family as a child. As a young man, he studied at Cambridge and was part of the same Zionist circle as Norman Bentwich.\textsuperscript{578} Later appointed a lecturer in mathematics at the University of Leeds, Brodetsky also served as head of the Political Department in London beginning in 1928, an arrangement he compared to working “two full-time jobs.”\textsuperscript{579} Like his counterpart Chaim Arlosoroff in

\textsuperscript{579} Brodetsky, \textit{Memoirs}, 121.
Jerusalem, Brodetsky had become concerned about the influence of Pan-Islamism. Both men worried that Shaukat Ali and Amin al-Husseini, the co-conveners of the upcoming World Islamic Congress set to open in Jerusalem in December, would aim to make Palestine into an international Islamic issue that might, in turn, sway British imperial policy. India, the heart of the British Empire and home to the largest Muslim population in the world, suddenly became very important to the Zionist movement. While Arlosoroff labored—without success—to convince British authorities in Palestine to halt the Congress, and Gershon Agronsky a year earlier had advocated building ties between Zionists and moderate Indian Muslims to stem the tide of Pan-Islamism, Brodetsky sought out a third option: meet with Gandhi himself.

The need to meet became even more pressing after October 2, when the *Jewish Chronicle* ran an interview with Gandhi in which the Indian leader articulated a controversial vision of “spiritual” Zionism. Gandhi began by reminding the interviewer that he had made very close Jewish friends in South Africa. While he admitted never to have made a “proper study of Jewish religion,” Gandhi had participated in certain Jewish customs in Johannesburg, including attending a Passover seder. “I heartily enjoyed, what do you call them now…?” Gandhi asked. “Matzos,” the interviewer replied, to which Gandhi returned, “Yes, matzos… I think matzos are very nice and crisp.” He had “great sympathy” towards Jews, he explained, first and foremost for “selfish motives” since he had so many Jewish friends. He also admired Jewish communal cohesion (to which, arguably, neither Kallenbach nor Polak actively contributed during Gandhi’s time in
South Africa). But then Gandhi explained his understanding of what Zionism should be—a purely spiritual movement detached from any concept of Jewish nationhood:

Zionism in its spiritual sense is a lofty aspiration...By spiritual sense I mean [Jews] should want to realise the Jerusalem that is within. Zionism meaning re-occupation of Palestine has no attraction for me. I can understand the longing of a Jew to return to Palestine, and he can do so if he can without the help of bayonets whether his own or those of Britan [sic]. In that event he would go to Palestine peacefully and in perfect friendliness with the Arabs. The real Zionism of which I have given you my meaning is the thing to strive for, long for and die for. Zion lies in one’s heart. It is the abode of God. The real Jerusalem is the spiritual Jerusalem. Thus he can realise Zionism in any part of the world.

Gandhi’s statement provoked outrage from Zionists on both sides of the Atlantic. His ideal of Zionism was wholly incompatible not only with political Zionism but also with Ahad Ha’amian spiritual and cultural Zionism which still depended on the physical space of Palestine. The Jewish Chronicle ran its own condemnation, which argued that—given his presence in Britain to advocate for the national rights of his people—Gandhi had tremendous nerve asserting that “we [Jews] must not think of our rehabilitation...on national lines.” In New York, at a dinner held by the Friends of Gandhi, the American Zionist rabbi Stephen Wise lamented Gandhi’s categorization of Jews’ return to Palestine as “re-occupation...with all of the sinister military meaning which ‘occupation and ‘re-occupation’ convey.” British bayonets had only appeared on the scene, maintained Wise, when “Arab bayonets perpetrated the massacre of August-September 1929.”

This controversy astir, Brodetsky asked Polak to arrange a meeting for him with Gandhi. Nahum Sokolow, head of the Zionist Organization since Weizmann’s ousting the

580 “Mr. Gandhi and the Jews,” Jewish Chronicle, October 2, 1931, p. 17.
582 “Mr. Gandhi’s Message,” Jewish Chronicle, October 2, 1931, p. 5.
previous year, would also attend. Around the time Brodetsky reached out to Polak, another reminder of the latter’s association with Gandhi again appeared in the Jewish press. Henry Polak’s wife Millie, a close confidant of Gandhi in her own right, had recently published a biography entitled *Mr. Gandhi: The Man*; it was reviewed in the *Jewish Chronicle* in the same edition as Gandhi’s controversial interview. “However strange or peculiar [Gandhi’s] philosophy may appear to the Western world, he truly represents the mind of the awakening East,” read the review. “Jews, with their special interest in Palestine, have a particular concern for the reconcilement of the Orient and the Occident,” it explained, continuing, “They will pray that India may be guided by her leaders and rulers along the path of peace, happiness, and progress.”

Polak arranged the meeting with the assistance of his sister Maud Polak who, after serving as Gandhi’s secretary during his 1909 trip to London, had once again been enlisted to aid him during the Round Table Conference. When Selig Brodetsky and Nahum Sokolow arrived at Gandhi’s offices in Knightsbridge on October 15, 1931, Maud welcomed them. They found Gandhi seated on the floor with two artists—a sculptor fashioning a bust and a young girl with pencil and pad in hand—busily capturing his likeness. Brodetsky noted in his report of the meeting that the room was warmed by both coal and electric fires, “owing presumably to the very draughty position occupied by the Mahatma.” After rising to greet his guests, Gandhi resumed his seat on the floor. Brodetsky and Sokolow, both ensconced in chairs, launched into a “brief account” of the

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585 After her initial contact with Gandhi in 1909, Maud Polak worked with L.W. Ritch, who had by then settled in London, on the South African British Indian Committee. She had wanted to return to South Africa with Gandhi in 1909, but did not visit the country until 1912, when she accompanied Gokhale on his trip there. For more on Maud Polak, see Guha, *Gandhi Before India*, esp. 330-331, 357-360.
achievements and goals of the Zionist movement and told Gandhi that they could understand well the “communal difficulties” facing India. “Similar troubles on a different scale existed in Palestine, where two civilisations were living side by side, each trying to develop in its own way,” Brodetsky explained. This parallel established, the two Zionist representatives turned to the topic at hand. “We stated that it was a matter of great concern to us that Palestine should be kept as peaceful as possible,” wrote Brodetsky. The efforts of Shaukat Ali “to draw Palestine into the ambit of the Indian Communal problems” might spell disaster for the Yishuv. They worried that Gandhi, who had first lent his support for Khilafat in 1920 in an effort to preserve a united India, might consent to make Palestine a political issue in his country. “We expressed the hope that we could rest assured that no attempt to bring the problem of Palestine into the discussions of the Round Table Conference…would meet with his approval.”

Brodetsky’s strategy of meeting directly with Gandhi appeared promising. Explaining that he already had some knowledge of the Zionist movement and sympathized with its aims (neither he nor the Zionist leaders made mention of his recent Jewish Chronicle interview), Gandhi pledged to Brodetsky and Sokolow that “so far as he was concerned, he would refuse to have anything to do with” pulling Palestine into Indian politics. Assurances provided, the three men turned to more innocuous conversation. Gandhi offered up that since he was living in the neighborhood of Bow, he often passed through London’s Jewish East End on his way home from Knightsbridge. He “had, indeed, found it convenient to get his food—mostly fruit—from a Jewish shop, where he found he could get it better and cheaper than elsewhere.”

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586 Selig Brodetsky, “Note of Interview with the Mahatma Gandhi,” October 15, 1931, CZA F38/1283.
587 Ibid.
The Anglo-Jewish press reported positively on Brodetsky and Sokolow’s work. “Delegates to the Indian Round Table Conference tell me that they have been very much impressed by the Zionist case submitted to them in recent conversations they have had with Mr. Sokolow and Dr. Brodetsky,” a reporter for the Jewish Chronicle related. “The Zionist leaders have,” he wrote, “…made a distinct impression on Dr. Gandhi whom they met recently.” For several years, little effort more was made by the Zionist movement to build on that impression.

**A Mission to the East**

While Polak never identified as a Zionist, Hermann Kallenbach began to sympathize with the movement as early as 1911 following a trip to Germany to visit his family. While in Konigsberg, he encountered a young Zionist named Louis Lewin who impressed upon him the similarities between the experiences of Zionist pioneers in the incipient kibbutz movement and the Indians who lived on Kallenbach’s Tolstoy Farm outside Johannesburg. Lewin, who immigrated to Palestine the following year, wrote to Kallenbach suggesting that he, too, should come “to see how to build a Homeland.” Kallenbach seems to have seriously considered the possibility, but Gandhi dissuaded him. “The remedy is not in Palestine,” Gandhi wrote. “You would go to Palestine and there (at the bottom of the idea) have an independent and simple life, such as you have come to appreciate. It won’t do. You have to see happiness in unhappiness and feel that life is made up of worldly miseries which rightly understood hammer us into shape,” he

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589 Louis Lewin to Hermann Kallenbach, October 27, 1912, quoted in Lev, Soulmates, 74.
insisted. After many months, Kallenbach finally responded to Lewin, laying out his personal vision for the Jewish homeland. “I do not want to contribute to [making] a modern state out of Palestine, with armies, ships, police, industries and an army of dissatisfied workers,” he wrote, maintaining that “to turn Palestine into another industrial State…is insanity.” Ultimately, Kallenbach declined Lewin’s invitation of immigration, writing that, while he had “been born as a Jew and will die as a Jew,” his character was neither yet firm enough nor his heart clear enough to be able to contribute rightfully to the Zionist cause. In response to Kallenbach’s letter, Lewin enlisted the help of Arthur Ruppin, then working for the Zionist Organization in Jaffa. Ruppin contacted Kallenbach to try to disabuse him of his utopian expectations, explaining that he had gone “to Palestine not because of ideal reasons, but because of sober consideration.”

Sober considerations were ultimately to transform Kallenbach’s ideas about Zionism. When Kallenbach finally returned to South Africa in 1920, the possibilities of Zionism had been transformed by the Balfour Declaration and the assignment of the Palestine mandate to Britain. For many South African Jews—indeed for Jews across the British Empire—the merging of British and Zionist political futures was cause for celebration and convinced many finally to support Jewish nationalism. Yet, it is implausible that Kallenbach, immersed as he was in critiques of empire and colonialism, saw the mandate as a boon to Zionism. Rather, it was the rise of antisemitism in Germany, where his family still resided, as well as the concomitant growth of

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592 Arthur Ruppin to Hermann Kallenbach, September 3, 1913, quoted in Lev, Soulmates, 79.
593 For instance, Rev. A. P. Bender, leader of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, refused to support Zionism until after the Balfour Declaration. He had felt that Jewish nationalism was an affront to British imperial loyalty. Shimoni, Jews and Zionism, 52.
antisemitism in South Africa, that prompted Kallenbach to become an active Zionist. In 1925, when Hitler published the first volume of *Mein Kampf* and the Nazi Party began gaining traction in Germany, Kallenbach joined the executive committee of Keren Hayesod. Far from the utopian vision Kallenbach had expressed more than a decade earlier, work for the Keren Hayesod focused chiefly on the mundane: raising money. It was through this growing Zionist involvement that Kallenbach met Immanuel Olsvanger, the Keren Hayesod delegate for South Africa who would play a central role in Zionist efforts to build ties with leaders of the Indian independence movement. Olsvanger was also the one to put forth Kallenbach’s name to Moshe Shertok.

When Kallenbach received Shertok’s letter on July 15, 1936 asking him to undertake a mission to India on behalf of the Zionist movement, the situation in Palestine had transformed dramatically. That April, after more than three years of substantial growth, development, and relative quiet and stability for the Yishuv, the Arab Revolt broke out. Though the revolt began much like the 1929 riots—with a swell in haphazard attacks against the Jewish community—random violence soon turned to organized protest against British mandatory authorities and the Yishuv. The Arab Higher Committee was established by the mufti, Amin Al-Husseini, and made formal political demands to the British: stop Jewish immigration and land purchases and implement representational government with a Palestinian Arab majority. The committee also called for a country-wide general strike, which lasted until October 1936. In May 1936, the British Government announced that it would form a commission—what became the Peel Commission.

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Commission—to investigate the unrest. Leaders of the Yishuv were faced not only with the undeniable reality of a mature, organized Palestinian national movement, but they also had to reckon with the broader international implications of the revolt across the British imperial and Islamic world. The All-India Muslim League proclaimed its support for the strikers in Palestine and warned that British policy in Palestine greatly angered Indian Muslims. The Muslim press in India—and even some Hindu newspapers—began providing intense coverage of developments in Palestine and forcefully condemned British mandatory policy and the Jewish national home.

Moshe Shertok, appointed head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency following Arlosoroff’s murder, decided that the Zionist movement could not afford to ignore these developments in India. As a student at the London School of Economics from 1921-1925, Shertok developed close ties with Harold Laski, who had been Nehru’s most important intellectual interlocutor throughout his time in Britain. During Shertok’s studies, he was introduced to Labour critiques of imperialism and studied alongside other elites from the empire who, after their education, returned to their home countries as anticolonial activists. Shertok understood well the power of the Indian independence movement—what it could mean for Zionism as an ally and what it could mean as a foe.

Shertok first turned to Immanuel Olsvanger, whose academic scholarship on Sanskrit, he reasoned, made him an ideal candidate to reach out to Indian leaders.

Olsvanger also had a proven record of cultivating cross-cultural relationships. He had spent 1935 in Palestine working on an “experiment” of “forming a mixed group of Jewish and Arab intellectuals for social intercourse and joint literary ventures.”\textsuperscript{597} The informal, relaxed setting of Olsvanger’s literary salon, intended ultimately to produce more positive political relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, recalls Arlosoroff’s idea for cross-cultural clubs “where educated Englishmen, Jews, and Arabs [could] meet in a social atmosphere.”\textsuperscript{598} Arlosoroff’s plan remained hypothetical, but Olsvanger’s scheme met with measured success. He founded a Jerusalem club, and solicited interest in opening a Haifa branch, but the entire project was postponed following the Arab Revolt.

Now, amidst the ongoing unrest and strike, Shertok requested that Olsvanger apply his skills—both interpersonal and scholarly—on a mission to India. Olsvanger agreed and asked Shertok: had he heard of Hermann Kallenbach?

Shertok had not and was thrilled to know that there existed a Jew who both had come to identify as a Zionist and had been such an intimate friend of Gandhi. He wrote at once to Kallenbach, laying out in an extensive letter his understanding of the current state of Yishuv-India relations. “The problem of establishing contacts with the Indian world and of gaining the sympathy and understanding for our work and aspiration among leaders of the Indian renaissance has long occupied our attention,” Shertok wrote, likely referring to the efforts of Agronsky and Brodetsky. “It is clear that our political future as of a nation returning to its home in Asia must ultimately depend in large measure on the amount of good-will and solidarity which we shall succeed in evolving on the part of the great Asiatic civilisations,” he continued. While Shertok at first framed Jewish affinities

\textsuperscript{597} Moshe Shertok diary, June 17, 1937, CZA A245/6.
\textsuperscript{598} Arlosoroff, \textit{Yoman Yerushalayim}, 16-17.
to India in terms of a shared “eastern” heritage—rather than a common British imperial reality—he acknowledged that challenges to the Zionist-Indian relationship stemmed from imperial dynamics. While certain Muslim Indian leaders had long shown hostility to Zionism and the Yishuv, viewing Jews in Palestine as colonial interlopers, Hindu Indians now, too, began to share this perspective. “The general tendency among Hindu politicians,” Shertok wrote, “appears to be to regard us Jews in Palestine as intruders coming from the west.” Reaching out to India thus had become “a matter of urgency.” Immediate action was needed to stop treacherous misconceptions before they had “hardened and gained currency.” Olsvanger, explained Shertok, was prepared to travel to India for two to three months in order to embark upon this mission, the sensitive nature of which required delicate and strategic handling. “What we have in mind is not any form of political campaign…but a very cautious and discreet method of procedure—mainly individual talks with people that matter,” he told Kallenbach. Olsvanger had Shertok’s complete confidence. Not only would he be able to present the “Zionist case on a high cultural level,” but—as evidenced through his partnerships with Palestinian Arabs—he could also “[endear] himself to persons with an oriental mentality” and had an extensive scholarly knowledge of Indian culture.  

But Kallenbach possessed something that Olsvanger did not: a personal relationship with Gandhi. For that reason, Shertok wished Kallenbach not only to participate in the mission with Olsvanger, but to lead it. He knew that this request might well seem like “an errand of which [Kallenbach] may never have dreamt.” But the situation was desperate:

599 Moshe Sharett to Hermann Kallenbach, July 15, 1936, CZA S25/3239.
Our movement is passing through dangerous times—it's whole future is now at stake—and one really feels justified in these circumstances to call upon others to make unusual sacrifices. South African Zionism as a whole and every one of its leaders individually have behind them a splendid record of Zionist service in terms of internal unity, discipline, devotion and financial exertion. But all these are ordinary ways of serving Zion. There are but few people whom circumstances have placed in a position enabling them to render service of an extraordinary character. I am advised and believe that you are at the present moment such a person. The fact that there are Indians in South Africa and that there are Jews there who at a certain time identified themselves so closely with the Indian cause was, historically speaking, a mere accident. But circumstances arise when such historical accidents assume deep import and may truly be regarded as the work of Providence…What you have no doubt regarded as a part of your purely private past…can now be of invaluable service to our national movement—it can, so to speak, be “nationalized”, and with eminently useful effect.600

While Polak had written publicly about the connections between his Jewish identity and his support for the Indian cause, Kallenbach had not explicitly articulated a connection between those two central aspects of his life. Now, more than just connecting the two, Shertok proposed “nationalizing” Kallenbach’s friendship to Gandhi. He would call upon that relationship in the service of the Zionist movement.

Ten days later, on the eve of his departure from South Africa for a business trip to London, Kallenbach replied to Shertok, agreeing to the mission. “Our people are going through most anxious times and none of us should refuse the call for service,” he wrote, confirming, “I am coming.” Kallenbach had not previously heard “that some Hindu leaders [were] favouring the political aspirations” of the Palestinian Arabs over the Jews in Palestine. “Doubtless the position justifies your anxiety and your action,” he told Shertok. Kallenbach also applauded the choice of his friend Olsvanger to help with the mission, writing, “I know him well and his keen interest for Eastern people and customs.”

As Kallenbach had pressing business in London, he instructed Shertok to allow

600 Ibid.
Olsvanger to go ahead to India. “When in London I shall remain in communication with Professor [Brodetsky],” Kallenbach wrote. After concluding his business, Kallenbach would travel first to Palestine and from there to India, where he planned to join Olsvanger in October 1936. Having never set foot in either country, Kallenbach was thus poised to make two long-awaited pilgrimages.

Obliged to undertake the beginning of the mission alone, Olsvanger embarked from Palestine, reaching Bombay on August 12, 1936. In accordance with Shertok’s plan, Olsvanger proceeded to meet with Indian political leaders to discuss the aim of Zionism and the development of the Yishuv. The first meeting Olsvanger documented in his diary of the trip, however, was not with a Hindu politician, but rather Meyer Nissim, one of the leaders of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Bombay. In addition to serving as president of the Bombay Municipal Council from 1929-1930 (equivalent to mayor of the city), Nissim was a member of Meyer David’s Welfare of India League, which supported Indian self-rule and promoted positive European-Indian relations. In 1930, Nissim had helped put Agronsky in touch with Muslim leaders during the latter’s trip to India. Then, Agronsky had noted that while Nissim had donated to Zionist causes since the early 1920s, he remained “aloof from the work-a-day Zionists.” Olsvanger now noted a similar pattern. Nissim, he observed “wants to be seen as a European. He knows everything about Palestine, has all the sympathies but doesn’t want to be involved with it officially…He is afraid that a closer cooperation between the Jews in India could lead to

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602 See Chapter 4.
them being declared non-European.” Of course, Nissim and all Baghdadi Jews in Bombay, just like their counterparts in Calcutta, had officially been placed in the ‘non-Mohammedan’ (Hindu majority) electoral category the previous year in the Government of India Act 1935. While Rachel and David Ezra in Calcutta had by the 1930s become open in their Zionist commitments, viewing them as problematic neither to their British imperial loyalties nor to their relationship to Indian nationalists, Nissim likely felt more concerned about how he would be perceived by the broader non-Jewish community in Bombay. His election as president of the Municipal Council had depended on securing the European vote, and his continued position membership on the council was repeatedly challenged by European candidates. The optics of Olsvanger’s visit—aimed at building ties between Zionists and Indian nationalists—likely concerned Nissim.

Olsvanger turned next to the poet and political leader Sarojini Naidu, whom he had first met in South Africa in 1924. Instrumental in founding the Women’s Indian Association, Naidu was the first Indian woman to serve as president of the Indian National Congress (Annie Besant was the first woman). A supporter of Gandhi who had been jailed with him after the Salt March and had participated with him in the Second Round Table Conference in London, Naidu offered to put Olsvanger in touch with India’s leading politicians. “Sairojini phones just now, at 8 p.m., that I should see her tomorrow to go together to [Nehru],” Olsvanger reported in his diary. “From the first moment on

604 Immanuel Olsvanger diary, August 19, 1936, translated from the German by Edelgaard David, in Yohanan ben David, Indo Judaic Studies: Some Papers (New Delhi: Northern Book Center, 2002), 17. The diary is held at the Central Zionist Archives, CZA S25/3583.
605 Roland, Jewish Communities of India, 125.
she treated me as her friend and felt obliged to show me all the hospitality possible,” he wrote. Naidu had long-established ties to the Jewish community in India and an interest in Jewish history and culture. In 1916, she delivered a well-attended and well-received lecture at the Bene Israel Friends’ Society in Bombay. Examining the contributions and achievements of the Jewish people throughout history, Naidu extolled the works of Spinoza and Heine, and lauded the Jewish community for their pride in their nationality and commitment to religion in the face of persecution (no one in attendance seemed to point out the unintended irony of the two chosen heroes—one shunned for heresy, the other a convert to Christianity). Naidu’s admiration for Jewish culture inspired her warm attitude towards Zionism. When Olsvanger explained the goal of his trip to India, he reported that Naidu “thought it as something self-evident.” “Well, of course, I don’t see why the Jews should not colonise Palestine,” she responded.

While some of Olsvanger’s subsequent contacts—both Hindu and Muslim—expressed open attitudes towards Zionism, his discussions with India’s two most prominent politicians—Nehru and Gandhi—proved far less promising. Olsvanger first met Jawaharlal Nehru on August 20, 1936 at the Bombay home of Nehru’s youngest sister Krishna Hutheesing and her husband Gunottam Hutheesing, who came from a prominent Jain family from Ahmedabad. Olsvanger noted that the home, a mansion on Bombay’s upscale Carmichael Road, was a “rich house, just as [Nehru] is very rich.”

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609 Immanuel Olsvanger diary, August 19, 1936, 18. When Naidu visited South Africa in 1924, she caused an upset in the Jewish community by arguing that Jews had a “duty to display no racial arrogance or superiority towards Indians in South Africa just because they happened to be classed as Europeans.” Naidu argued that Jews were “in reality of Asiatic descent.” This conception of Jews in fact likely contributed to her approval of Jewish settlement in Palestine. “Sarojini Naidu and the Jews,” *Cape Argus*, March 3, 1924, in clippings in the Morris Alexander Papers, University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections, BC 160, List I C, Box 36, Folder 12.
Naidu, who arranged the meeting, was also present. “He doesn’t know anything about Zionism. Has seen Palestine once as he flew over the country,” Olsvanger reported on Nehru. “Maintains, though, to know Zionism and its connection with the ‘affairs of the world’ very well,” he wrote. By “affairs of the world,” explained Olsvanger, Nehru meant British imperialism.

Henry Polak, who happened to be in India during Olsvanger’s visit, told Olsvanger that he believed members of the Indian National Congress, including Nehru, opposed Zionism not because of their concern for Hindu-Muslim unity but because of “ignorance of the problem.” Olsvanger wrote that while Polak “wasn’t a Zionist…he would be ready to be in contact with London and Jerusalem and to do everything here that we should feel is correct and possible.” Polak’s contacts in London, Olsvanger noted, included Norman Bentwich and Selig Brodetsky, mainstays of British Zionism. Olsvanger commented that whereas Polak’s influence in India had once been substantial, it had waned in recent years as Indian public opinion grew increasingly wary of the European “so-called ‘friends of India.’” As we shall see, while Polak and Gandhi remained close, they increasingly disagreed in the 1930s over Gandhi’s program of non-cooperation with the British, especially in light of Hitler’s rise to power.

Olsvanger finally met with Gandhi, who had been sick when he first arrived, on September 19, 1936. Throughout his diary (both before and after meeting Gandhi), Olsvanger refers to Gandhi only as “laemmel,” Yiddish for “little lamb” but with a connotation of weakness and naïveté. Olsvanger’s plain dislike for the Indian leader is

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610 Olsvanger makes no mention of Polak’s role in connecting Brodetsky and Sokolow with Gandhi in 1931.
611 Immanuel Olsvanger diary, September 13, 1936, 27.
apparent throughout his diary in which he recounts damaging (and dubious) tales about Gandhi’s hypocrisy. Their first meeting seemed only to confirm these preconceived opinions for Olsvanger. Mahadev Desai, Gandhi’s secretary, met Olsvanger at the Wardha Railway Station, and the two traveled by car—“which I had to pay for,” Olsvanger noted—to nearby Sevagram, Gandhi’s ashram. There, still weak and recovering from his illness, Gandhi sat on his bed, surrounded by 15 of his disciples. “I got a place at the edge of the bed,” wrote Olsvanger. “I talked to him for about 20 minutes. I disliked the whole environment…I told the Rebbe everything in detail. The Rebbe was silent and the students listened,” he wrote with derision. Gandhi reported that he had been delighted to receive a cable from Kallenbach about his upcoming trip to India. Olsvanger told Gandhi that Kallenbach had become very involved in Zionism in South Africa. “I know!” responded Gandhi, “but then he has so many poor relatives.” Olsvanger was exasperated. “That’s how he understands Zionism,” he wrote in his diary. The aspect of national and cultural reconstruction integral to the Zionist movement was lost on Gandhi, Olsvanger felt. Instead, the Indian leader viewed Jewish nationalism solely as a materialist movement. Shimoni notes that it is possible Gandhi did not mean anything “derisive” by his statement, but was instead commenting on the financial devastation faced by Kallenbach’s family in Germany following the Nazis’ rise to power. In any event, Olsvanger decided to pursue the topic with Gandhi no further until Kallenbach arrived.

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Olsvang met again with Nehru on September 22, 1936, this time at the Nehru family home in Allahabad. “Nehru’s only argument—Imperialism,” wrote Olsvang in sum of the leader’s worldview. “Nehru said he was opposed to any imperialism whether British or Hitlerite,” reported Olsvang, who countered that “in Palestine one says that Hitler supports the Arabs.” According to the Zionist emissary, Nehru responded that “We have sympathy for the national movement of the Arabs in Palestine because this movement opposes British imperialism. Our sympathies cannot be diminished by the fact that the nationalist Arab movement coincides with Hitler’s interests.” Olsvang wondered why the Arab nationalist movement lost nothing in Nehru’s esteem for this association. “You could say with the same justification: we are sympathetic to the nationalist movement of the Jews and that this movement coincides with the interests of England doesn’t change our sympathy,” he put to Nehru. Olsvang though that Nehru seemed “a bit embarrassed” at this feat of reasoning. “I understand the Jewish problem,” Nehru offered, “but it can only be solved when in the big fight between Fascism and Socialism, the latter succeeds.” To this, Olsvang responded:

Fight between Fascism and Socialism? In your eyes, is Hitler fighting on the side of Socialism? This fight could last for generations and we should wait patiently till then. You know whom I feel like here as a representative of the Jews? You tell me: ‘Dear friend, you are very nice but you have to die. I’m very sorry about it, but I can’t help it. Drink your cup of tea and be so kind as to die."

615 On ties between Palestinian Arab nationalists and the Nazi party in the interwar period, see Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
616 Immanuel Olsvang diary, September 22, 1936, 34.
The absurdity of Olsvanger’s remark had the intended effect. Nehru laughed and declared emphatically, “Naturally we condemn the riots and atrocities!” He continued with a re-framing of the conflict in Palestine:

We are trying at present to explain to the Muslims here that the fight in [Palestine] is not one between Jews and Arabs, but between both and British Imperialism; and that they should not protest against Jews but against the British Government which hinders the development of peaceful relations.  

While Olsvanger left buoyed, feeling that progress with Nehru had been made, his good spirits were dashed the following day when he read a morning paper. On September 18, four days before Olsvanger’s meeting with Nehru, the All-India Muslim League had declared that September 27 would be observed as “Palestine Day” in solidarity with the Palestinian Arab national struggle. The morning press on September 23 included a statement from Nehru in support of Palestine Day, appealing to all of India to join in the observance. Olsvanger sent Nehru a letter demanding to know how he could issue such a statement—without any mention of the Jewish national struggle—in the wake of their meeting. Olsvanger went so far as to accuse Nehru of “siding with the enemies of freedom” in Palestine. In a letter of response, Nehru clarified that the statement had in fact been made the day before their discussion. Even so, he felt that neither man was “likely to convert each other completely” to his point of view. “With all deference to you my knowledge of the world situation is not insignificant,” wrote Nehru, referring once again to British imperialism. “I hold that it is impossible to understand any problem, whether that of India or Palestine, without reference to that larger situation and I hold that the Arab movement is essentially a nationalist movement,” he explained, continuing:

It astonishes me for you to tell me that I am siding with the enemies of freedom in Palestine… I mentioned the large additions to British troops that are being sent to

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617 Ibid.
Palestine. I suppose, according to you, these British troops are the friends of freedom in Palestine. I hold differently. As I dictate this letter my office is being searched by a crowd of police men under the orders of the local magistrate. This is a gentle reminder to me of how imperialism functions in this country. I cannot tolerate this imperialism in India or Palestine and the question I ask every one is whether he stands for this imperialism or against it.618

Olsvanger could not convince Nehru of his position because the two, as Nehru put it, approached the “question” of British imperialism from “different view-points.” For Olsvanger, British imperialism, which he neither outwardly praised nor condemned, represented the only moral option when the alternative was Nazism. His argument, then, rested on a vision of Jewish and Arab nationalism (or rather, certain leaders of Arab nationalism, particularly the mufti) as a struggle between good and evil. Other Zionists at the time, however, made their claims to Indian leaders using different reasoning. For instance, Elias M. Epstein, the British-born editor of the English language weekly the *Palestine Review*, made an appeal in broader humanist terms and denied the connection between Zionism and British imperialism.619 In a letter written on Palestine Day in India to Yusuf Meherally, the secretary of the Socialist Party of the Indian National Congress, Epstein argued that:

> The Jews are in Palestine not [on] behalf or because of British interests, but because they see in the creation of a Jewish National Home in this land, the only means of perpetuating their existence as an entity, and at the same time contributing their share to the progress of mankind, as every nation has the right to do. I think therefore it is rather inconsistent to extend your sympathy to people who may be hostile to the Jewish National Home, because the Mandate of the League of Nations endorsing the Zionist movement has been handed to Great Britain. You may be critical of British imperialism, but that is no reason for

618 Jawaharlal Nehru to Immanuel Olsvanger, September 25, 1936, CZA S25/3583.
619 Elias M. Epstein (sometimes referred to Eliahu M. Epstein) (1895-1958) was born in Liverpool, was founding editor of the *Palestine Weekly*, and worked for the Jewish National Fund in Jerusalem. He should not be confused with Eliahu Epstein (later Elath) (1903-1990), born in Snovsk (present-day Ukraine), who headed the Middle East section of the Jewish Agency from 1934-1945, and later served as the first Israeli ambassador to the United States. This Epstein was also involved in Yishuv-India relations, and served as the chief Palestine contact of A.E. Shohet, the Jewish Agency representative in India.
withholding your support of a struggling race, still a minority in Palestine, the ideals of which are in the interests of mankind.\textsuperscript{620}

Epstein’s appeal, even were it to have been effective, came too late. The Indian National Congress observed Palestine Day on September 27. Demonstrations, including a mass meeting in Allahabad, were held across the country. At the Allahabad demonstration, Nehru gave a speech in which he insisted that the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine was not a religious one, but rather a struggle between imperialism and a national movement fighting for freedom.\textsuperscript{621}

Though Kallenbach had intended to join Olsvanger in India in October, work continued to delay him in London. In November, Olsvanger left India on his own, returning to Palestine days before the Peel Commission arrived to begin its investigation.

\textit{Homecomings}

Shertok, who maintained contact with Olsvanger throughout his time in India, was anything but otherwise unoccupied in Palestine. The Arab Revolt continued unabated through the summer of 1936 until additional British troops, deployed beginning in August, succeeded in quelling the unrest by the fall. Shertok, as chief liaison between the Yishuv and British authorities, worked with High Commissioner Wauchope to organize Jewish mobile defense units that cooperated with the British police and military.\textsuperscript{622} With

\textsuperscript{620} Elias M. Epstein to Yusuf Meherally, September 27, 1936, CZA S25/3239.

\textsuperscript{621} Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{Eighteen Months in India, 1936-37, Being Further Essays and Writings} (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1938), 132-139.

\textsuperscript{622} These units included the Jewish Settlement Police, the Jewish Supernumerary Police, and the joint British-Jewish Special Night Squads, commanded by the Christian Zionist British military officer Orde Wingate (1903-1944). These units were sourced from the Haganah, the Jewish paramilitary organization founded after the Jaffa riots in 1921. While British authorities continued neither to recognize nor sanction the Haganah, their cooperation with these Jewish units—an “informal legitimation”—represented a significant political achievement for leaders of the Yishuv. Sheffer, \textit{Moshe Sharett}, 81. See also, Uri Ben-Eliezer, \textit{The Making of Israeli Militarism} (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1998), esp. 1-50.
the revolt contained and the general strike called off by the Arab Higher Committee in October, the British government made final plans for the Peel Commission’s arrival in Palestine. Weizmann, Shertok, Ben-Gurion, and other Zionist officials testified before the commission in late November and, along with Arab leaders (who formally boycotted the commission), adamantly opposed the notion of cantonization for Palestine, a plan supported by the Colonial Office. Facing this deadlock, members of the Peel Commission began privately discussing the idea of partition—that is, dividing Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Palestinian Arab. When Zionist leadership learned of the partition scheme in February 1937, they were bitterly divided over the prospect. Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Shertok ultimately came to support the partition idea, while other Zionists—most notably Berl Katznelson on the left and Jabotinsky on the right—opposed it. While the Zionist Organization officially rejected the Peel Commission’s formal recommendation of partition during the Twentieth Zionist Congress in Zurich in August 1937, delegates also endorsed a “dual formula” approach: Zionist officials would publicly reject the terms of the partition, while working behind the scenes to ensure that the best plan possible for the Yishuv would be secured were partition to be implemented.

In mid-February 1937, Shertok traveled to London to discuss partition plans with British officials, campaigning for sufficient land to accommodate continued immigration and development and for actual independence for the partitioned Jewish state. While successfully negotiating with the British at this time became imperative for the Zionist

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623 Chaim Weizmann was reelected as president of the Zionist Organization at the Nineteenth Zionist Congress in 1935 following the death of Nahum Sokolow.
624 Sheffer, Moshe Sharet, 83-87.
movement, the prospect of independence made forging ties with other nations vying for autonomy all the more important. The sweeping success of the Indian National Congress in the Indian Provincial elections, held in January and February of that year, further evidenced the force of the Indian independence movement. Thus, even though Olsanger’s mission had ended without promising developments, and talks over the partition plan consumed the Zionist leadership, Shertok resolved that it was still critical to send Kallenbach to India.

On March 11, 1937, Shertok, Kallenbach, and Olsanger all convened in London over lunch at the Royal Automotive Club to discuss Kallenbach’s upcoming trip. Kallenbach told Shertok that receiving his initial letter in July the previous year had “thrilled” him, giving him “deep gratification and arousing his excitement.” While Olsanger had left India feeling that Nehru’s influence had far overtaken that of Gandhi, Kallenbach “was certain that Gandhi was still the real leader” and that another trip was therefore still worthwhile for the Zionist movement. The three men determined that Kallenbach would first travel to Palestine for “training” in advance of his mission to India. “He is particularly interested in kibbutz life, which in his opinion may influence Gandhi more than anything else,” Shertok noted in his diary.625

Not surprisingly, the kibbutz movement made a deep impression on Kallenbach during his 1937 trip to Palestine, reminding him of his days with Gandhi on Tolstoy Farm. Shertok and his wife Tzipora also toured Kallenbach around Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. So moved by what he saw, Kallenbach wrote in a letter to his family that “we need to give everything to Palestine: money, work, propaganda. Learn Hebrew. I am also

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learning.” After signing his letter “Hermann,” Kallenbach crossed it out, and wrote his Hebrew name “Chaim” in its place. In a note to Shertok, Kallenbach wrote that “the days [he] spent [in Palestine] are not to be forgotten.”

Sailing from Port Said, Kallenbach reached India on May 20, 1937, finding it a “vast, strange, and so exceptional interesting country.” Gandhi’s son Ramdas met Kallenbach in Bombay and delivered a letter from his father. “So after much waiting you have at last come,” it read, “Welcome. Unless you have anything to do in Bombay, come by the first train.” Gandhi was staying at the home of his secretary Mahadev Desai in Tithal, a coastal village north of Bombay. Arriving at the house in the early morning hours as Gandhi and his disciples were in morning prayer, Kallenbach and Desai silently took a seat on the floor to wait. When the prayers had concluded, Kallenbach rose (with a “little difficulty having lost the habit”) to be embraced by Gandhi. “Your hair has turned gray like mine,” the Indian leader said to his long-lost friend. Kallenbach was then 66 years of age; Gandhi, a year older.

“I felt and still feel—the 23 years of separation non-existent,” reported Kallenbach to Shertok regarding his reunion with Gandhi. “Just as in South Africa we eat together and sleep next to each other,” he continued. Days began at 4:00 A.M., followed by morning prayer and a walk to the sea. Evenings mirrored mornings, with another walk to the coast and prayer. Nights were spent on the floor with blankets. Two vegetarian meals were taken each day. Kallenbach felt that India was an entirely different world than the West. Perhaps, he suggested in a letter to Shertok, the problem between Jews and

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626 Quoted in Lev, Soulmates, 123.
627 Hermann Kallenbach to Moshe Shertok, June 1, 1937, ben David, Indo Judaic Studies, 64.
628 Hermann Kallenbach to Pekez, July 8, 1937, quoted in Lev, Soulmates, 124.
Arabs in Palestine was that Jews had “so fully associated themselves” with the West, they could no longer identify with “eastern habits and culture.” The solution, then, was for Jews in Palestine to return to an original, authentic, “eastern” way of life. This observation recalled Shertok’s July 1936 letter to Kallenbach, in which he framed the Yishuv as a “nation returning to its home in Asia.”

Against the backdrop of this rediscovered daily rhythm, Kallenbach worked to gain Gandhi’s support for the Zionist movement. Olsvanger had given up on winning Gandhi over to Zionism when the latter had expressed his understanding that Kallenbach’s Zionist convictions stemmed from having impoverished relatives. Now Kallenbach worked to illuminate for Gandhi the spiritual dimensions of the Zionist movement, while still emphasizing the critical aspect of the physical land of Palestine. He even intimated his desire to immigrate to Palestine, which Gandhi supported. In a note detailing his thoughts on Kallenbach’s potential future life in Palestine, Gandhi prescribed “all-around simplicity.” He suggested daily spiritual readings, including the Bhagavad Gita, as well as vigorous study of Zionist literature. He recommended a diet of vegetables, fruits, and dairy; early rising; and “walks covering 10 miles daily” whenever possible. Gandhi desired that Kallenbach reproduce in Palestine the way of life to which Gandhi had first committed in South Africa and now continued in India.

When Kallenbach left India in late July, Gandhi furnished him with a short, single-page statement on Zionism in which he articulated a different vision from his 1931

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interview given to the *Jewish Chronicle*. Then, Gandhi had disparaged the entire Zionist endeavor in Palestine, arguing that true Zionism was “in one’s heart” and could be realized anywhere in the world.632 Now, he recognized the theoretical possibility of a righteous and spiritual Zionism that entailed Jewish settlement in Palestine, but he objected to the means by which he saw that development occurring. “The introduction of the Jew in Palestine under the protection of British or other arms is wholly inconsistent with spirituality,” Gandhi wrote. “Neither the mandate nor the Balfour Declaration can therefore be used in support of sustaining Jewish immigration into Palestine in the teeth of Arab opposition,” he continued. While Gandhi granted that “no exception can possibly be taken to the natural desire of the Jews to found a home in Palestine,” he argued that any Jewish settlement must “wait for its fulfilment till Arab opinion is ripe for it” and thereafter “depend upon the goodwill of the Arab population.”633 When Gandhi read the Peel Commission report, published in July, he reiterated his position in a letter to Kallenbach. “I am more than ever convinced that the only proper and dignified solution is the one I have suggested, now more so than before,” he wrote, continuing, “My solution admits of no half measures. If the Jews will rely wholly on the Arab goodwill, they must once [and] for all renounce British protection. I wonder if they will adopt the heroic remedy.”634 Gandhi told Kallenbach that he would be willing to mediate talks between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine, so long as the British were not involved. Neither Gandhi’s statement, nor his offer to mediate, were to be made public

632 “Mr. Gandhi and the Jews,” *Jewish Chronicle*, October 2, 1931, p. 17.
633 Statement Given by Mahatma Gandhi to Mr. Kallenbach on Zionism in July 1937, CZA S25/3587.
Kallenbach, who was deeply impressed by the achievements of the kibbutz movement, nevertheless came to be an active supporter of Zionism because of the rise of antisemitism. He appreciated the practical and urgent role that Palestine played as a refuge for German Jews fleeing Nazi rule who had found the doors of the United States, Canada, Britain, and South Africa closed. Kallenbach does not seem to have pressed this point to Gandhi. When Kallenbach requested that a monograph on Zionism be prepared for Gandhi by the Political Department, the ensuing text focused primarily on the “spiritual background” of Zionism, as well as on the achievements of Jewish settlement work in Palestine and the benefits it offered to the Arab population (further evidenced by the increase in Arab immigration into Palestine from neighboring countries). A small section (three pages out of 25) examined “the position of the Jews in the Diaspora,” covering the development of Jewish life in Europe since the French Revolution and citing Leon Pinsker’s *Auto-Emancipation*. According to Pinsker, while Jews in the diaspora had retained a “spiritual nationality,” that identity had not given them “the status of a nation in the eyes of the other nations.” Instead, this spiritual nationality was “the very cause of their hatred for us as a people,” because “men are always terrified by a disembodied spirit, a soul wandering about with no physical covering.”

The physical Palestine, then, was needed to alleviate the “intensity of Jewish suffering in the Diaspora.” Only a few short lines in the monograph addressed the present situation in Germany. Hence,

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636 Monograph on Zionism prepared for Mohandas Gandhi, CZA S25/3587.
neither Kallenbach nor the Political Department placed primary emphasis on the threat of Nazism in their efforts to win Gandhi’s support for Zionism. They relied instead on underscoring the spiritual component of Zionist work in Palestine and argued that that development had brought positive change for all the land’s inhabitants.

Upon his departure from India in July 1937, Kallenbach promised Gandhi he would return that December. But work and family obligations forced him to delay his trip for more than a year. In the interim, relations between the Yishuv and India would reach a new low.

**Confrontation**

When Kallenbach did not return to India in December 1937, Gandhi was filled with the “deepest disappointment” for his friend’s “wholly unexpected” absence. During their prolonged separation, Kallenbach urged Gandhi to make a public statement in support of Zionism, but Gandhi remained silent. Meanwhile, the situations in Palestine and Europe became increasingly dire. In Palestine, following the failure of the Peel Commission to reach a workable solution to the conflict, the Arab Revolt recommenced in the fall of 1937 when Arab gunman assassinated Lewis Yelland Andrews, the British district commissioner for the Galilee. The high commissioner, newly invested with the power to outlaw and disband organizations considered to be contributing to the insurrection, deposed the mufti as president of the Supreme Muslim Council and disbanded the Arab Higher Committee. At the same time, part of the Irgun, the Revisionist paramilitary group, officially rejected the policy of *havlagah* (restraint) observed by the Haganah and began staging attacks against Palestinian Arabs. In Europe,
Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, and, with the Munich Agreement of September, took the Sudetenland, the areas of Czechoslovakia populated by ethnic Germans. The year 1938 also brought a new wave of anti-Jewish legislation, following the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. For two days, beginning on November 9, Jewish communities were brutalized across Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland. Rioters destroyed hundreds of synagogues, thousands of businesses, and murdered approximately 100 Jews. The viciousness and scale of the destruction unprecedented, Kristallnacht marked a turning point in the persecution of Jews in Nazi Europe.

Ten days after the violence, Gandhi finally broke his silence with a wide-ranging statement on Palestine and the situation in Europe, published in his newspaper *Harijan*. His words stunned the Zionist movement and Jews around the world. “It is not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question,” he prefaced. “My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became life long companions,” he shared. His Jewish bona fides established, Gandhi declared that his sympathies nevertheless would not “blind [him] to the requirements of justice.” “The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me,” he wrote, continuing:

Why should [the Jews] not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood? Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.638

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637 Gandhi made the statement on November 20, 1938 in Segaon, a village in Madhya Pradesh; it was published in Harijan on November 26, 1938.
Gandhi’s depiction of the “proud Arabs” was coupled with his decree that “according to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance.” And while he wished Arabs had rejected violence, Gandhi argued that the Jews, “who claim to be the chosen race,” could “[vindicate] their position on earth”—both in Germany and Palestine—by choosing non-violence. Moreover, instead of building a national home in Palestine, “the nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred,” wrote Gandhi. “The Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French,” he reasoned. As he had in his 1931 interview with the Jewish Chronicle, Gandhi also reiterated his belief that “the Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in [Jews’] hearts.” Gandhi’s argument about Palestine, then, rested on three principles. First, he maintained that Palestine belonged solely to the Arabs. Entertaining the idea of partition for Palestine would open up the same possibility for India, which he fundamentally opposed. Second, Gandhi insisted that the true concept of the Land of Israel in Judaism was, in fact, not a physical land at all. And finally, he argued that Jewish distinctiveness stemmed from religious—not national—identity. The idea of a distinctive nationality, the pretense of which fueled the desire for the Jewish national home, placed diaspora Jews in peril. Gandhi wondered, “If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a double home where they can remain at will?” He argued that “this cry for the National Home affords a colourable justification for the

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639 Ibid.
640 Shimoni, Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews, 40.
German expulsion of the Jews.” With that, Gandhi turned to the situation of the Jews in Nazi Europe.

Writing that “the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history,” Gandhi conceded that if ever there were a justifiable war, it would be one against Germany. “Germany is showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy or weakness masquerading as humanitarianism,” he wrote, likening Nazism to an unbridled, unshrouded imperialism.

“But I do not believe in any war,” explained Gandhi. Thus, he would not entertain the “pros and cons” of the idea. Without war as an option—and without Palestine as a refuge—Jews had one path left if they were to “preserve their self-respect, and not feel helpless or forlorn”:

If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood here I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German may, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest are bound to follow my example...The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in the general massacre of the Jews...But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that [God] had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For the God-fearing, death has no terror. 642

Though he had initially stated that Jewish persecution in Germany was unparalleled in history, Gandhi now offered an “exact parallel” in the example of Indians in South Africa. “There the Indians occupied precisely the same place that the Jews occupy in Germany,” he wrote. “The Indians, a mere handful, resorted to satyagraha without any backing from the world outside...World opinion and the Indian Government

641 Gandhi, “The Jews.”
642 Ibid.
came to their aid after eight years of fighting,” he explained. Jews, Gandhi reasoned, who have “organised world opinion behind them,” were even better positioned to launch their own satyagraha campaign in Germany. “And what has today become a degrading manhunt,” he wrote, “can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women.” Gandhi felt sure that this demonstration would “convert” non-Jewish Germans “to an appreciation of human dignity.” And for that, Gandhi argued, Jews “will have rendered service to fellow Germans and proved their title to be the real German as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire.”

The following month Gandhi reiterated his position in a talk delivered to Christian missionaries in Tambaram in southern India. He criticized Jews for not being “truly non-violent” because they “called down upon the Germans the curses of mankind, and…wanted America and England to fight Germany on their behalf.” Gandhi claimed that “if even one Jew acted [with non-violence], he would salve his self-respect and leave an example which, if it became infectious, would save the whole of Jewry and leave a rich heritage to mankind besides.” Jewish leaders were astounded and appalled by Gandhi’s statements, which received widespread attention in the Indian and Arab presses. In Palestine, former members of Brit Shalom, many of whom deeply admired Gandhi, were particularly devastated by the Indian leader’s words. In January 1939, the same intellectual circle, including Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Hugo Bergman, and Ernst Simon, reconvened as Ha-‘Ol, a group dedicated to discussing ethical questions facing the Jewish world, especially the matter of Jewish-Arab

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643 Ibid.
relations.\textsuperscript{645} Magnes and Buber each wrote letters in response to Gandhi, and published them together as a Ha-`Ol pamphlet.\textsuperscript{646} They wrote from a place of respect and esteem for Gandhi, deciding to reach out only after introspection. “I have been very slow in writing this…to you,” explained Buber in his letter. “Day and night I took myself to task, searching whether I had not in any one point overstepped the measure of self-preservation allotted and even prescribed by God to a human community, and whether I had not fallen into the grievous error of collective egoism,” he continued.\textsuperscript{647} Magnes wrote, “Your statement is a challenge, particularly to those of us who have imagined ourselves your disciples.”\textsuperscript{648}

Buber and Magnes both objected to the “exact parallel” Gandhi drew between the Jewish condition in Europe and that of the Indians in South Africa. Buber argued that in the wake of Kristallnacht and the subsequent mass arrests and internment of Jews in concentration camps, the persecution could not be compared. Furthermore, the nature of the Jewish and Indian diasporas differed fundamentally. “It is obvious that when you think back to your time in South Africa it is a matter of course for you that then as now you always had this great Mother India,” wrote Buber. “That fact was and still is so taken for granted that apparently you are entirely unaware of the fundamental differences existing between nations having such a mother (it need not necessarily be such a great Mother, it may be a tiny motherkin, but yet a mother, a mother’s bosom and a mother’s heart) and a nation that is orphaned,” he continued. To Gandhi’s assertion that Jews

\textsuperscript{645} Literally “the yoke,” but translated as “the Bond” by the group. For more on Ha-`Ol, see Kotzin, \textit{Judah L. Magnes}, 277-279.
\textsuperscript{646} “The Bond,” \textit{Two Letters to Gandhi from Martin Buber and J. L. Magnes} (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1939).
\textsuperscript{647} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{648} Ibid., 23.
needed to “accustom themselves to the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world” where they lived so long as they looked to Palestine as their homeland, Buber posed a rhetorical question to the Indian leader. “Did you also say to the Indians in South Africa that if India is their home, they must accustom themselves to the idea of being compelled to return to India?” he asked.649

Buber and Magnes also maintained that satyagraha in South Africa had been applied in such a way that would prove impossible in Germany at present. “The word ‘Satyagraha’ signifies testimony,” wrote Buber. “Testimony without acknowledgment, ineffective, unobserved martyrdom, a martyrdom cast to the winds—that is the fate of innumerable Jews in Germany,” he explained.650 “It is usually in the dead of the night they are spirited away,” Magnes wrote. “It makes not even a ripple on the surface of German life,” he declared, continuing:

Contrast this with a single hunger strike in an American or English prison, and the public commotion that this arouses. Contrast this with one of your fasts, or with your salt march to the sea, or a visit to the Viceroy, when the whole world is permitted to hang upon your words and be witness to your acts. Has not this been possible largely because, despite all the excesses of its imperialism, England is after all a democracy with a Parliament and a considerable measure of free speech? I wonder if even you would find the way to public opinion in totalitarian Germany, where life is snuffed out like a candle, and no one sees or knows that the light is out.651

Magnes, though long a committed pacifist, struggled in particular with Gandhi’s prescription for non-cooperation and his refusal to address the “pros and cons” of war. In his biography of Magnes, Norman Bentwich wrote that “hitherto [Magnes] had counted himself a disciple of Gandhi; but his faith in the principle of non-violence was strained to

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649 Ibid., 5-6.
650 Ibid., 5
651 Ibid., 25.
the breaking point when the Jews of Germany and Austria were the helpless victims of Nazi brutality.”652 Magnes implored Gandhi to consider what it would mean to participate—or not to participate—in talks with Germany to allow Jewish refugees to leave the country. “If one does not subscribe, no Jews will be able to escape from this prison of torture called Germany,” he wrote. But “on the other hand, “if one does subscribe one will be cooperating with that Government, and be dealing in Jewish flesh and blood.” Invoking the Jewish principle of pikuh nefesh (saving a life), Magnes asked Gandhi: “Not to save a living soul? And yet to cooperate with the powers of evil and darkness? Have you an answer?”653

Magnes also asked Gandhi to rescind his refusal to consider the “pros and cons” of a war against Nazi Germany. “My pacifism, as I imagine the pacifism of many others, is passing through a pitiless crisis,” he wrote.654 If Britain, America, or France were “dragged into a war with Hitler bestiality” what should he do? “I know I would pray with all my heart for the defeat of the Hitler inhumanity; and am I then to stand aside and let others do the fighting?” he asked.655 Choosing a side on which to fight was a “choice of evils—a choice between the capitalism, the imperialism, the militarism of the Western democracies, and between the Hitler religion.” But could Gandhi doubt which was “the lesser [evil] of these two?” Magnes maintained that while there was no such thing as a “righteous” war, there was such a thing as “necessary war”—”not for something good, but, because no other choice is left us,” he wrote.656

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652 Bentwich, *For Zion’s Sake*, 112.
654 Ibid., 30.
655 Ibid., 30-31.
656 Ibid., 32-33.
Finally, Buber and Magnes challenged Gandhi on his characterization of the Jewish-British relationship in Palestine and on his insistence that Palestine “belonged” solely to the Arabs. “We began to settle in the land anew, 35 years before the ‘shadow of the British gun’ was cast upon it,” wrote Buber. “We did not seek out this shadow; it appeared and remained here to guard British interests and not ours,” he continued. It was wrong, maintained Buber, for Gandhi to condemn Jews for allowing “British bayonets to defend them against the bomb-throwers,” but to mention only as an afterthought that he wished “the Arabs had chosen the way of non-violence.” As far as ownership of the land, Buber and Magnes cited Palestine’s long history of conquest—including by the Arabs. “The Jews, who became a people in Palestine and whose great classic, the basis of whose life, the Bible, was produced there, have never throughout all the centuries forgotten the land and ceased to yearn for it,” wrote Magnes, concluding, “that is a unique fact of no mean importance.” This point aside, Magnes, as well as Buber, maintained that peace between Jews and Arabs was vitally important to them and had been a central aim of their work. “By a genuine peace we inferred and still infer that both peoples should together develop the Land without the one imposing his will on the other,” Buber wrote of his work with Brit Shalom. “We considered and still consider it our duty to understand and to honour the claim which is opposed to ours and to endeavor to reconcile both claims,” he affirmed. Magnes explained how the policy of havlagah, much like satyagraha, had been practiced by most members of the Yishuv during the past years of unrest. He now asked Gandhi to help the Jews in Palestine “to convert the Arab

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657 Ibid., 19.
658 Ibid., 18-19.
659 Ibid., 36.
660 Ibid., 12.
heart”; to win a lasting peace. Alas, Buber and Magnes’ letters likely never reached Gandhi. No response was issued in Harijan (as was often his practice), nor did Gandhi ever acknowledge the letters to Kallenbach. It is possible that Pyarelal Nayyar, one of Gandhi’s secretaries, intercepted them; he later admitted to keeping some materials on Zionism from reaching the Indian leader.

Other Jewish leaders, however, succeeded in engaging Gandhi. A.E. Shohet, the Jewish Agency representative in Bombay and a member of the Baghdadi Jewish community, published a rebuke in the Jewish Advocate in December 1938, in which he presented many of the same criticisms that Buber and Magnes would raise. To compare Indians in South Africa to Jews in Germany was to ignore “inexorable facts,” Shohet claimed, citing the intensity of the violence in Germany and the differences between the Indian and Jewish diasporas and their respective homelands. “But it is when he takes up the question of Palestine that Mahatma Gandhi is stone-blind to the truth and reality of the situation,” Shohet wrote. “[He] takes up the Jewish paradox and flings it in our face as though it were of our own making,” Shohet continued. He accused Gandhi of unfair bias. “Why does [Gandhi] call upon Jews to adopt ‘the nobler course’ and ‘vindicate their position on earth,’” he wrote. Why did he “judge [Jews] by a skyey, spiritual standard when he [judged] Arabs by the ‘accepted’ cannons [sic]?” Shohet argued that Gandhi’s “pre-occupation with Britain” unfairly colored his assessment of the Jewish situation. “We would urge him to shed away all prejudices and look at the Jewish

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661 Ibid., 37-38.
662 Shimoni, Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews, 47.
663 Kumaraswamy, Squaring the Circle, 152.
664 The successor of Zion's Messenger (1921-1924), the Jewish Advocate was the organ of the Bombay Zionist Association, published from 1931-1953.
665 Sky-like or ethereal.
question in light of the Jewish achievements in Palestine and the needs and agonies of the Jewish people,” he wrote.666

While Gandhi did not reply to Shohet in the pages of *Harijan*, Shohet was able to meet with Gandhi twice in 1939 with the help of Kallenbach, who determined he could no longer delay his return to India in the wake of Gandhi’s statement. Kallenbach departed from South Africa just weeks before the London Conference (1939), called to examine the end of the mandate and to determine Palestine’s fate, was set to open. In a cable sent to Gandhi before his departure, Kallenbach implored his old friend to “appeal this conference not to debar my people from their only remaining permanent refuge home.”667 Soon after he arrived, Kallenbach contracted malaria and found himself confined to bed for most of the trip. While he was too ill to attend himself, he arranged a meeting between Shohet and Gandhi in February. Shohet reiterated the points of his *Jewish Advocate* article, but left feeling sure that the Jews could “not expect anything from Gandhi at all.” In a report to the Political Department in Jerusalem, Shohet wrote that Gandhi “views the Palestinian question as a purely Moslem question. He is susceptible to the Moslem propaganda here. The Mandatory in his eyes is the same imperialistic power that pulls all the strings here; it is suspect.” Holding fast to this assessment, Gandhi nevertheless suggested that Shohet and other Zionist representatives continue to maintain contact and provide him with reading materials. “For my part,” wrote Shohet, “I am going to treat very seriously his suggestion.”668

668 A.E. Shohet to Eliahu Epstein, March 7, 1939, CZA S25/3587.
The Political Department, too, took the suggestion seriously and decided to send Joseph Nedivi, the Tel Aviv municipal clerk who had planned to visit the Jewish community in Bombay, to join Shohet for another meeting with Gandhi. Kallenbach arranged the meeting for March 21, 1938, and this time was well enough to attend. Speaking “enthusiastically and eloquently” according to Shohet, Nedivi chose to insist forthrightly on the need for Jewish self-defense in Palestine, rather than stress the ways that Jews had long embraced non-violence. “Mr. Nedivi said that he might agree to be thrown into the Mediterranean himself to test the efficacy of non-violence with the Arabs,” wrote Shohet in a letter to the Political Department, “but he could not allow this to happen to his daughter.” Gandhi replied that Nedivi did not need to respond to the arguments of the Harijan article. “What was written was done and finished,” Gandhi said, asking what he could “do more and in what way he could help.” Nedivi responded that he wanted Gandhi’s help to “bring Indian public opinion” to the side of the Yishuv. Shohet added to the plea:

We are an Eastern people…and we want to return to our ancient home in the East. India constitutes one-fifth of mankind and being [an] Eastern nation we need its opinion and its sympathy in our favour.

Gandhi responded that “he knew what [Shohet] was suggesting, but…it would not serve any useful purpose to us if he were to condemn the way in which propaganda was curried on among the Muslims of India.” Gandhi’s reply confirmed for Shohet his initial impression—that the internal unity of India between Hindus and Muslims mattered first and foremost to Gandhi and that he would approach the Palestine question with that consideration.

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669 A.E. Shohet to Eliahu Epstein, March 24, 1939, CZA S25/3586.
670 Ibid.
Despite Kallenbach’s intervention, Gandhi continued to hold fast to his November statement in Harijan. Ultimately, it was Henry Polak who finally elicited a reconsideration from the Indian leader. Polak’s work with the Indian Overseas Association in London, dedicated to lobbying on behalf of Indian interests in the diaspora, often demanded close contact and cooperation with the British government. While some in the Colonial and Indian offices viewed Polak as a “persistent agitator,” others considered him to be a “trusted advisor.”\(^{671}\) Indeed, Polak served on the imperial advisory committee of the British Labour Party during the 1920s and 1930s.\(^{672}\) These experiences made him increasingly critical of Gandhi’s tactics, particularly his policy of non-cooperation.\(^{673}\) When he read Gandhi’s claim that Jews were not “truly non-violent” because “they called down upon the Germans the curses of mankind, and…wanted America and England to fight Germany on their behalf,” Polak felt compelled to write to his friend. “I can hardly doubt that you have been misreported, for there is nothing that could possibly justify such a statement,” he wrote, “but as the paragraph much distressed me, I should be glad to receive from you a word of reassurance.”\(^{674}\) In a response in Harijan entitled “No Apology,” Gandhi affirmed the veracity of his statement and pointed to Kallenbach’s feeling about the Nazis as evidence:

> I happen to have a Jewish friend living with me. He has an intellectual belief in non-violence. But he says he cannot pray for Hitler. He is so full of anger over the German atrocities that he cannot speak of them with restraint. I do not quarrel with him over his anger. He wants to be non-violent, but the sufferings of fellow Jews are too much for him to bear. What is true of him is true of thousands of Jews who have no thought even of “loving the enemy”. With them as with millions “revenge is sweet, to forgive is divine.”\(^{675}\)

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672 Gupta, Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 118, 225, 227.
673 Shimoni, Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews, 54.
675 Ibid.
The response infuriated Polak, who countered, “You shock me…to use a favourite expression of your own, I asked for bread, and you have given me a stone.”

He challenged Gandhi to corroborate his claim about Jewish demands for vengeance, or else retract it. Polak sent Kallenbach a copy of the letter, explaining he felt justified in his rebuke of Gandhi since Polak himself had so openly and fiercely criticized the Jewish community when he believed it to have been complicit in injustice.

Gandhi took Polak’s impassioned challenge seriously and instructed his secretaries Pyarelal and Mahadev Desai to “produce support” for his claim. “It is not always an easy task to find support for impressions one carries when speaking or writing,” Gandhi noted. Meanwhile, he received similar rebukes from Herbert Samuel and Philip Hartog. Hartog wrote that he agreed with Polak and Samuel. He had seen hundreds of German Jewish refugees since 1933 and had “never heard one of them express publicly or privately the desire for a war of vengeance against Germany.” Such a war, explained Hartog, would “bring further misery to the hundreds of thousands of Jews still in Germany as well as untold suffering to millions of other innocent men and women.” After “[great] diligence,” Pyarelal and Mahadev’s search failed; they were unable “to lay hand on any conclusive writing.” In an official retraction published in Harijan on May 27, 1939, Gandhi wrote, “I cannot lay my hands on anything on the strength of which I made the challenged observation…I must withdraw it without any reservation. I only hope that my observation has not harmed any single Jew. I know that I

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676 Quoted in Shimoni, Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews, 55.
677 Ibid.
678 Philip Hartog (1964-1947) was an educationalist and supporter of Zionism who was instrumental in the founding of the School of Oriental Studies.
incurred the wrath of many German friends for what I said in all good faith.” Far from a statement of support for the Jewish National Home, the retraction nevertheless disavowed a central aspect of Gandhi’s thought which his Jewish critics found particularly insidious and cruel: that Jewish non-violence in the face of German brutality could somehow serve as atonement for collective Jewish sin—for the sin committed against Germany by seeking out another homeland, and for the sin committed against the Arabs by forging ties with the British Empire.

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On May 23, four days before Gandhi issued his retraction, Britain published the 1939 White Paper. At the London Conference that spring, British officials had met separately with Jewish and Arab delegations (the latter had refused to participate in talks with the Jewish group) to discuss the future of the Palestine mandate. The Arab delegation demanded an independent Arab state and the cessation of Jewish immigration and land sales. At the end of the conference, Britain decided to recognize most of the Arab demands. In the ensuing White Paper policy statement, the British government curtailed land sales to Jews and significantly limited Jewish immigration, capping it at 75,000 over five years. Subsequent immigration would require Arab consent. The White Paper also ruled that after a transitional period of 10 years, Palestine would become an independent state. On the eve of the Holocaust, Britain had closed Palestine’s doors to Jews fleeing Nazi Europe. The response from the Yishuv was one of unprecedented outrage towards the British, dwarfing the sense of betrayal felt after the White Paper of 1933. Yet, with Britain’s declaration of war against Germany three months later, there

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680 The London Conference is also known as the St James’s Palace Round Table Conference.
was never a question as to which side Jews would support. Ben-Gurion famously said, “We shall fight the war against Hitler as if there were no White Paper, and we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war.”\(^{681}\)

The Zionist movement’s overtures to India in the 1930s presented variously as the strategic geopolitics of an emerging nation; as a people reconnecting to the eastern world of their genesis; and as two nations, poised to emerge from the shackles of imperialism, building new connections founded on that shared history. And yet, with unrest in Palestine and a world war on the horizon, it was through these encounters with India that leaders and representatives of the Yishuv were forced to articulate—and even defend—their ties to Britain and British imperialism. The 1920s saw the efflorescence of Zionist engagement with Britain—and its culture, history, and politics—shaped largely out of the assumption that Britain’s connection to Palestine would be an enduring one. In contrast, the 1930s saw the transformation of Zionist ideas about empire. Zionists no longer assumed that the empire would prevail in the face of ever more powerful anticolonial political movements. While the Zionist movement had always understood itself to be a movement for national liberation, in the wake of British handling of the 1929 riots, Zionists increasingly framed British mandatory policy as directly opposing Jewish national aspirations. It was in this context that leaders of the Yishuv determined that healthy ties with India would prove essential to the future of the Jewish national home. South African Jews emerged as uniquely qualified to serve as the mediators and advocates of this new relationship. Kallenbach and Polak—one a converted Zionist and the other a resolved non-Zionist—were both immersed in critiques of colonialism and

believed in the promise of national independence. Yet it was through their interventions, and through the meetings and connections they facilitated, that the Zionist movement was forced to reckon with its relationship to Britain and ultimately—in the face of Nazism and impending war—to defend its alliance with the British Empire.
Conclusion

“The world we live in is being continually made afresh; and for each of us to become continually something different is the inescapable condition of existence in time,” Norman Bentwich wrote in 1941, reflecting back over the course of his life.682 He had sat at the feet of Ahad Ha’am; he had marched into Jerusalem on the heels of Allenby in 1917; he had been a central figure in the first decade of the mandatory government in Palestine; and he had returned as a civilian to see the blossoming of the Hebrew University, alongside the growing internal fractiousness of the Zionist movement. In the years leading up to the war, Norman served as director of the League of Nation’s Commission on Jewish Refugees from Germany. In 1938, when many countries had already closed their doors, he traveled across the British Empire, to Australia, eastern and southern Africa, and South Asia in an effort to persuade local authorities to provide refuge to Jews fleeing Europe. “It has been the lot of my generation to live in an age of transition, when events have been in the saddle,” he wrote, continuing:

As a young man I saw visions. In middle-age I dream dreams. After the war it will be a first task to remould shattered Jewry in a shattered world. I do not expect to see the new heaven and the new earth realized. But if I survive, I shall be, as I have been, a Jew errant, wandering between two worlds…683

Norman wandered between many worlds—between Zionist and non-Zionist, between British and Jewish, between colonial official and civilian, between war and peace, and between empire and nation. This abundance of worlds and the struggles Norman experienced as he navigated their shifting frontiers were a sign of the times. The interwar period was an age of coalescing and unraveling, of borders rewritten and contested, of the

682 Bentwich, *Wanderer Between Two Worlds*, 344.
683 Ibid., 352.
throes and pangs of an old order giving way to new terrain. What Norman perhaps failed to see through his wanderings was how often his many “worlds” overlapped and intertwined in unexpected ways. His Zionist vision was deeply informed by British Commonwealth models of nationhood and by his British Labour ideals. His marriage to Helen—a non-Zionist who nevertheless came to feel at home among Zionists in Palestine—was itself a conjoining of different worlds.

As Jews across the British Empire traversed the pulls of British imperialism, anticolonial nationalisms, and Zionism, they, too, navigated overlapping worlds in flux. They imagined Jewish political futures rooted in an enduring British Empire. They regarded British history, politics, and culture as models for the Yishuv. They even hoped that Palestine might become a dominion in the British Commonwealth of Nations. But they also gazed towards national horizons, contemplating the potential triumph of anticolonial independence movements and fostering ties with the torchbearers of those politics. This consideration of the many possible fates of the British Empire produced varied and entangled worlds and worldviews—diverse political attitudes, strategies, and relationships that, as we have seen, at times appeared paradoxical and contradictory.

Throughout the 1920s, Chaim Arlosoroff passionately advocated for close, productive Jewish-British ties in Palestine and thought seriously about the prospect of Palestine joining the British Commonwealth as a dominion. Yet it was precisely Arlosoroff’s appreciation of state-like power—and what it would afford the Zionist movement—that led him to support the idea of dominion status. In other words, Arlosoroff understood that long-lasting imperial ties on the one hand, and national self-determination (within the framework of the commonwealth) on the other, might be mutually achievable for the
By the early 1930s, however, as progress in the Yishuv had reached a dire standstill, Arlosoroff became convinced that the Jewish-British partnership had grown untenable. Still, it was amidst the crystallization of this conviction that Arlosoroff became most entrenched in elite British social circles in Jerusalem and formed a warm, open friendship with the British high commissioner Arthur Wauchope. In India, Rachel and David Ezra asserted the Baghdadi Jewish community’s European cultural identity and insisted on their steadfast loyalty to the British Empire in their dealings with the imperial state. But their Jewish identity—their religious practice, communal leadership, and dedication to Zionism—in fact remained the most salient force in their lives. They also forged relationships with elite Indians, contributed to Indian nation-building projects, and expressed tentative hopefulness about the prospect of Indian self-rule. Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak, through their relationship with Gandhi and their connection to Indians in South Africa, emerged as uniquely capable of guiding Zionist efforts to establish ties with Indian nationalists in the 1930s. While Kallenbach had come to support Zionism after witnessing the rise of antisemitism in Europe and South Africa, Polak remained a steadfast non-Zionist. And though both men were immersed in critiques of colonialism and supported Indian independence, the rise of Nazism in Europe compelled them to rethink—and even to defend—Jewish relationships to British imperialism. These seeming contradictions were all shaped out of a single, broad horizon of uncertainty over Jewish political futures—futures that since 1917 had become bound up in the fate of an empire grappling with increasingly powerful anticolonial movements vying for independence.
Though Jews in all modern empires grappled variously with imperial policies and burgeoning nationalisms, Jews in the British Empire after 1917 faced the unique situation of living under the power that controlled the territory at the heart of Jewish political, cultural, and religious aspirations both in and beyond the empire. This reality shaped how British imperial Jews with diverse opinions on Jewish political questions thought about and engaged with the Zionist movement. Both Zionists in Palestine and non-Zionist Jews across the empire ended up confronting the entanglements of Jewish, British, and anticolonial politics. They ended up agreeing on the challenges facing Jews in Palestine as nationalisms near and far staked their claims against British imperialism—and they at times even tackled those challenges in the same way. Non-Zionists such as Helen Bentwich—initially so hostile towards the Zionist movement—and Henry Polak—a vocal critic of the South African Jewish community—both found themselves working on behalf of Zionist causes, throwing in their lot with a movement with which they never truly identified.

In recovering the sheer vastness of the interwar Jewish political imagination and in reconstructing the diverse and complex visions Jews had of their own political futures, historians have explored the countless paths not taken, the failed schemes, the dashed hopes, the unrealized dreams—the entire firmament of what could have been. It is true that Palestine never became a British dominion. However, far from illuminating something that simply never came to pass, an examination of the dominion scheme—particularly Arlosoroff’s consideration of it—in fact reveals the central concerns about governing and sustaining a modern state that carried the Zionist movement through to the founding of Israel in 1948.
While the dominion scheme appealed to Zionists concerned with state-power, it also attracted those pursuing non-statist ideals. In a parallel to the Zionist and non-Zionist visions that converged in the British Empire amidst the upheavals of the interwar period, Jews with statist and non-statist visions for Palestine (and vastly different Zionist politics) found agreement around the idea of dominion. From Norman Bentwich, who supported binationalism and Jewish-Arab cooperation and rejected the notion of separate political sovereignty for each community; to Arlosoroff whose moderate Labor Zionist politics became increasingly focused on achieving state-like power for the Yishuv; to the right-wing Revisionist Jabotinsky who saw in Britain an international power that could impose a Jewish-majority state—all regarded dominion as potentially the best option for Palestine. Uncertainty, then, as Jews navigated and negotiated the many possible fates of empire, made for strange bedfellows.

Investigating Jewish politics in the British Empire and through the lens of uncertainty forces us to rethink many of the organizing categories and tropes of modern Jewish history—and not only those of Zionist and non-Zionist (or statist and non-statist Zionist visions). This is a story in which Eastern European Jews, Middle Eastern Jews, and Western European Jewish elites were all central players. It is a story that reframes the geographic space of the modern Jewish experience, pushing the more familiar triangulation of America, Europe, and Palestine/Israel towards southern and eastern vistas. It is a story that locates politics not only in official, public spaces, but in convivial settings, in quotidian activities, personal friendships, and gender and family structures. It would be impossible to recover the capaciousness, the contradictions, and the complexities of the Jewish relationship to the British Empire without seriously examining
Helen Bentwich’s social work schemes and much loathed tea parties; Chaim Arlosoroff’s engagement with British imperial history and literature and his relationship with Arthur Wauchope; Norman Bentwich’s activities around the Hebrew University; Rachel and David Ezras’ dinner parties; and Herman Kallenbach’s intimate friendship with Gandhi. Finally, this is a story in which the modern narratives of empire and colonization, and national deliverance and self-determination, lack a straightforward binary and oppositional character, and instead were deeply imbricated.

The British Empire—its possibilities and limitations, and its lineages and legacies—continued to shape the Jewish political imagination beyond the interwar period. In 1947 after receiving an invitation from Sarojini Naidu, a 10-member delegation from the Yishuv including Hugo Bergmann and Immanuel Olsvanger, traveled to New Delhi to participate in the Asian Relations Conference. Convened by Nehru to bring together the leaders of anticolonial independence movements across Asia, the conference examined the status of nationality, the problem of racial discrimination, and the challenges of transitioning from a colonial economy to a national one. The intertwined stories of India in 1947 and Palestine in 1948—of one British partition plan implemented and the other failed—demand further exploration as part of the broader historical narrative examined in this project. The trajectory of Jews’ visions of their own political futures during the preceding war years and in the period immediately following the founding of the state of Israel likewise require further examination in the context of the British imperial and postcolonial world. Facing a stark new reality after the Holocaust, Jews across the diaspora were forced to rebuild Jewish life in the wake of utter

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684 Norman Bentwich was supposed to participate in the Yishuv delegation but cancelled his plans when Helen became ill. See Bentwich, My 77 Years, 216-217.
destruction. Jews in the British Empire confronted this unprecedented terrain as the fate of the empire was at long last revealed—as a new nationalist political regime took power in South Africa and imposed apartheid; as the partition of British India created two independent dominions; and as the Yishuv declared its independence as the state of Israel. With some imperial fates resolved, uncertain futures nevertheless prevailed.
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Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford
 Schocken Institute
University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections
Women’s Library, London School of Economics

II. Newspapers and Periodicals

*Cape Argus*
*Davar*
*Doar Hayom*
*Hapoel Hatzair*
*Harijan*
*Ha-Tzofeh*
*Hed Ha-Mizrach*
*Jewish Advocate*
*Jewish Chronicle*
*Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*
*Manchester Guardian*
*Sentinel*
*Spectator*
*The New Palestine*
*The Palestine Bulletin*
*Times*
*Zion’s Messenger*

III. Personal Writings, Memoirs, Other Published Sources


Ahad Ha’am. “Pinsker and Political Zionism,” *Zionist Pamphlets,* 2nd series, trans. Leon


Inter-Imperial Relations Committee. *Imperial Conference 1926: Report, Proceedings and Memoranda.* November 1926.


Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th series (1909–81), vol. 301.


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Briggs, Asa and Anne McCartney. *Toynbee Hall: The First Hundred Years*. London:


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Eyal, Eya. *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli*


Gorny, Yosef. Ahдут ha-‘Avodah, 1919-1930: ha-yesodot ha-‘ra’ayonim ve-ha-shitah ha-
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_____.*Hayim Arlozorov*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975.


Shavit, Yaacov and Gideon Biger. *Ha-historiyah shel Tel-Aviv*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002.


———. “Modern Jewries and the Imperial Imagination.” *AJS Perspectives* (Fall 2005): 14–16.


ELIZABETH E. IMBER  
Curriculum Vitae

Born: December 13, 1986, Boston, MA

EDUCATION

**Johns Hopkins University**, Baltimore, MD

- **2013-present**  
  Ph.D. Candidate, History  
  Advisors: Kenneth B. Moss and Judith R. Walkowitz

- **2013**  
  M.A., History  
  Fields: Modern Jewish History (Kenneth Moss), Modern British History (Judith Walkowitz), the History of European Empires (Todd Shepard), and the History of Palestine, the Yishuv, and Israel (Liora Halperin)

**Brandeis University**, Waltham, MA

- **2010**  
  M.A., Near Eastern & Judaic Studies  
  Advisor: Antony Polonsky

- **2009**  
  B.A., Near Eastern & Judaic Studies and Sociology  
  *Magna cum laude* with Highest Honors in Near Eastern & Judaic Studies  
  Advisor: Jonathan Sarna

**University of Edinburgh**, Scotland

- **Spring 2008**  
  Visiting Student

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

**The College of Idaho**, Caldwell, ID

- **August 2018-**  
  Assistant Professor of History and the Howard Berger-Ray Neilsen Endowed Chair of Judaic Studies

PUBLICATIONS

“*A Late Imperial Elite Jewish Politics: Baghdadi Jews in British India and the Political Horizons of Empire and Nation,*” *Jewish Social Studies* 23, no. 2 (February 2018): 48-85.

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- **2017-2018**  
  Association for Jewish Studies Dissertation Completion Fellowship

- **2017-2018**  
  Butler Write Up Fellowship, Johns Hopkins
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<td>2016</td>
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<td>Posen Society of Fellows, Inaugural Class, Posen Foundation</td>
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<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF), Social Science Research Council</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Islamic Studies Language Training Grant, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Johns Hopkins</td>
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<td>2011-2016</td>
<td>Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Jewish Studies Graduate Student Fellowship, Johns Hopkins</td>
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<td>2011-2017</td>
<td>Graduate Fellowship, Department of History, Johns Hopkins</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Post-Graduate Fellowship, Jewish Women’s Archive, Brookline, MA</td>
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**AWARDS AND HONORS**

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<td>2009</td>
<td>Elsie Witt Award in Jewish Studies, Brandeis University</td>
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**CONFERENCES AND INVITED TALKS**

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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>“Zionists and the British Question,” Taub Center for Israel Studies, New York University, February 16, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“Jewish Elites and the “British Question” in Mandate Palestine,” <em>The Yishuv in Empire: New Work on Jews and the British Empire in Mandate Palestine</em>, Association for Jewish Studies (AJS), Boston, Massachusetts, December 13-15 (also panel organizer)</td>
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DIGITAL HUMANITIES AND PUBLIC HISTORY

Contributor to *This Week in History* and *Jewish Women, Amplified* blog, Jewish Women’s Archive, jwa.org (2010-2011)

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Spring 2016  Instructor, “Jews and the British Empire” (also designed the course)
Spring 2015  Teaching Assistant, “Modern Jewish History,” Professor Kenneth Moss, Johns Hopkins
Spring 2013  Teaching Assistant, “Occidental Civilization: Modern Europe,” Professor Kenneth Moss, Johns Hopkins
Fall 2012    Teaching Assistant, “Why Putin? The Rise and Fall of Democracy in Russia,” Professor Nikolay Koposov, Johns Hopkins

OTHER TEACHING

2016-2018  English as a Second Language Volunteer Tutor, Esperanza Center, Baltimore, MD
2014-2015  Tutor, The Writing Center, Johns Hopkins

LANGUAGES

Hebrew, French (reading), Arabic (basic reading)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Association for Jewish Studies (AJS)
North American Conference on British Studies (NACBS)
American Historical Association (AHA)
Association for Israel Studies (AIS)