

## RESPONSES OF PROMINENT ARABS TOWARDS ZIONIST ASPIRATIONS AND COLONIZATION PRIOR TO 1908

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Modern Jewish immigration and colonization of Palestine started in the eighth decade of the 19th century. Though it took some time until the Arabs started to formulate their opposition towards these activities. At the turn of the century, with the formulation of the Zionist political programme, some Arabs started to voice their opposition in various forms. They were increasingly well informed about Zionist goals and aware of the implications of their policies. However several structural barriers prevented anti-Zionism from becoming a broader movement.

**Key words:** anti-Zionism, colonization, land purchases, Jewish immigration, Arab reactions

The reconstruction of the opinions, positions and actions of anti-Zionist Arabs in the period before the Young Turk Revolution is a difficult task. It is not possible to draft a complete and coherent picture of this period of more than a quarter of a century (1882-1908). This picture can be only sketched from shreds and fragments represented by articles in newspapers and journals from that time, reports written by European consuls, personal correspondence or other contemporary documents. Not only was there but a limited number of newspapers and magazines published in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, but most of them were issued outside Greater Syria (in Egypt, where the hand of the regime of Abdülhamit II<sup>1</sup> could not reach). In addition, the press circulation rates were very low and the censorship was strong. As a result, a

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic transcription - ʿAbdalḥamīd II.

writer's ideas had a very limited chance of reaching a wider audience. Moreover, most of the people who were in contact with the Jewish settlers were illiterate peasants who could not leave written traces of their views and feelings towards the incoming Jewish immigrants. These can be only rarely found and extracted from sources left by Arab and Jewish intellectuals. In spite of this, several personalities have left us records of the objections they raised against Jewish immigration, land purchases and political Zionism and its goals. The opinions and reactions of the most important ones of them are the subject of this paper.

### **Muḥammad Ṭāhir Efendi ibn Muṣṭafā al-Ḥusaynī (1842 – 1908)**

The case of Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī is a good example of the stable position enjoyed by prominent families in Levant in general and in Jerusalem in particular. He was born into the notable al-Ḥusaynī family, in which the position of Muftī of Jerusalem was *de facto* hereditary. His father Muṣṭafā held this post since the 1840s. The office then passed to Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī in 1865 and he held it for more than four decades until his death. He was then replaced by his son Kāmil and when he passed away in 1921, the position of the Muftī was taken over by his more famous brother al-Ḥājj Amīn al-Ḥusaynī.<sup>2</sup>

The standing of al-Ḥusaynī family was temporarily weakened during the reforms (at-Tanzīmāt al-<sup>u</sup>thmānīya) instituted in 1839. During the reign of Abdülhamit II, they once again became the most influential family in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> More than a third of the mayors of Jerusalem in the years 1877-1914 were members of the al-Ḥusaynī family.<sup>4</sup>

Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī deserves to be mentioned first, since he was one of most vocal opponents of Jewish immigration and land purchases. It would appear that he was the first person of influence living in Palestine who actively and on a long-term basis fought against both. Various authors agree that his anti-Zionist activities extend back to the time when Zionism was still

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<sup>2</sup> °Ādil Mannā°: *A°lām Filasṭīn fī awākhir al-°ahd al-°uthmānī, 1800-1918*. Beirut: Mu°assasat ad-dirāsāt al-filasṭīniya 1995, pp. 122, 131.

<sup>3</sup> °Ādil Mannā°: *A°lām Filasṭīn ...*, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> Schölch, Alexander: *Palästina im Umbruch 1856-1882: Untersuchungen zur wirtschaftlichen und sozio-politischen Entwicklung*, Stuttgart : Wiesbaden: Steiner-Verlag, 1986, p. 233.

making its baby steps. Since the 1880s, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī followed the progress of Jewish immigrants in his home-town and its vicinity. At the same time, the Muftī assumed an active stance in his opposition to Zionism.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence of his activities in the first half of the 1890s is preserved in several documents of the German consulate in Jerusalem. In a letter dated March 15th, 1893, “J. Frutiger & Co.” were complaining to the German consul von Tischendorf about the Jerusalem Governor and the “Commission for Sale”, which was chaired by Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī. They were both blocking the sale of properties to the Jews, even though the ban on land sales to Jews had been abolished some time ago. The Muftī was pretending that the ban, according to the new regulations, was still effective. He was using delaying tactics and hampering not only land sales to foreign Jews, but to Ottoman Jews as well. In doing so, he was trying to complicate the sales as much as possible.<sup>6</sup> The German consul was apparently unable to cope with the situation and on May 12th, 1893 he appealed to the German ambassador in Constantinople. He complained about the conduct of the Governor of Jerusalem Ibrahim Hakki Paşa and mentioned his “long conversations with the local Muftī, one of the leading representatives of the fanatic faction among the local Mohammedans”.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of these debates was to make an effort to prompt Muslims to send “petitions in order to preserve a comprehensive ban on sale [of land to Jews] ...”<sup>8</sup>

Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī accomplished his greatest achievement in the late 19th century, when his efforts to place restrictions on Jewish immigration were crowned with success. “In 1897 he chaired a local committee set up by the authorities which was called to investigate the requests for [land] transfers in the

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<sup>5</sup> Ḥādil Mannāʿ: *Aʿlām Filasṭīn ...*, p. 122; Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1976, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> J. Frutiger & Co – Dr. von Tischendorf, Jerusalem (15.3. 1893) In: Eliav, Mordechai: *Die Juden Palästinas in der deutschen Politik: Dokumente aus dem Archiv des deutschen Konsulats in Jerusalem, 1842-1914*. Tel-Aviv University: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1973, pp. 218 – 220.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from von Tischendorf to the German Ambassador in Constantinople: A XXII/18 H.E. In: Eliav, Mordechai: *Die Juden Palästinas in der deutschen Politik ...*, pp. 221 – 222.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

Mutaşarrifiya<sup>9</sup> of Jerusalem.”<sup>10</sup> Because of the measures taken by this committee, the land sales to Jews in the Mutaşarrifiya of Jerusalem were put on hold for several years.<sup>11</sup>

In the same year, yet another commission began its operation in Jerusalem. Its task was to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the restrictions on the entry of Jewish immigrants to Palestine and present it to the Administrative Council, which it did two years later. The commission put forward two proposals suggesting “that either the authorities invest more resources in tightening up the restrictions or, alternatively, Jews be allowed to settle in Palestine - provided that they become Ottoman subjects”.<sup>12</sup> At that point, the negative attitude of the Muftī of Jerusalem towards the Zionist immigration became evident again. During the deliberations of the Administrative Council, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī “proposed that the new arrivals be terrorized prior to the expulsion of all foreign Jews established in Palestine since 1891”.<sup>13</sup> Neither the Administrative Council, nor the Mutaşarrif of Jerusalem Mehmet Tewfiq Paşa agreed with his recommendations and the Mutaşarrif seconded the proposal of the commission.<sup>14</sup>

Another reference to the Muftī in this context appears in 1901. At that time, Albert Antébi attempted to ensure Narcisse Leven’s<sup>15</sup> application for a concession on land purchases in Jerusalem’s Mutaşarrifiya was approved. Thanks to this concession, the Jewish Colonization Association had previously obtained the right to purchase land in the Qaḏā’<sup>16</sup> of Tiberias. During the debates on this issue in the Administrative Council in May 1901, “the Qaḏi and the Mufti were very violent”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mutaşarrifiya (sanjaq, liwā’) – administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire. The case of Mutaşarrifiya of Jerusalem was different from the others. In spite of its name and smaller size it had enjoyed the status of a province (wilāya) since 1874.

<sup>10</sup> Abdalwahhāb al-Kayālī: *Tārīkh Filasṭīn al-ḥadīth*. Amman: Dār al-Fāris li an-nashr wa at-tawzī’, 1999, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Mandel: Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Narcisse Leven was the President of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA); *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Qaḏā’ (pl. Aqḏiya) – administrative district in the Ottoman Empire. Mutaşarrifiya was composed of several Aqḏiya.

<sup>17</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, pp. 22, 42.

Even though the information about the activities of the Muftī of Jerusalem is fragmentary, it is possible to deduce some main characteristics of the anti-Zionist activities of Muḥammad Tāhir al-Husaynī, which began as early as the 1880s and gradually grew in intensity. In 1897, when the first Zionist Congress held its session in Basel, Muḥammad Tāhir al-Husaynī achieved his most notable victory by managing to stop land sales to Jews. With the rise of the political Zionism, Muftī's sentiments towards Zionism and its representatives grew more hostile.

Many Arab intellectuals took an active interest in Zionism in this early period and they had accurate information about the movement. The impetus was the increased Jewish immigration and land acquisitions. The first to react were those segments of the society for which the immigrants presented an immediate threat – first peasants, then artisans and merchants. Those were the groups whose livelihood was threatened by the growing immigration and colonization. After the creation of political Zionism, however, the Arab intelligentsia started to realize more and more the threat posed by the Zionist Movement. It is not an accident that from the time the first Zionist Congress was convened, the number of Arab reactions to Zionism began to grow.

#### **Yūsuf Ḍiyā'addīn Paşa al-Khālidī (1842 – 1906)<sup>18</sup>**

Yūsuf Ḍiyā'addīn was a member of the al-Khālidī family. It was a prominent Jerusalem family whose members, as was the case with the al-Ḥusaynī family, held important positions at that time, especially in the judiciary branch of the government. Yūsuf Ḍiyā'addīn was the first one of his family to obtain not only a traditional education, but also a modern education of the Western type. He decided to pursue it in spite of the disapproval of his father. The most important reason for that was that he realized that education was the keystone of European superiority. Yūsuf al-Khālidī held many significant positions – among others, he was a three-time Mayor of Jerusalem (Ra'īs al-Baladīya). In 1877-1878 he was very active in the Ottoman Parliament (Majlis al-Mab'ūthān) as the only

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<sup>18</sup> Biography of Yūsuf al-Khālidī can be found in: ʿĀdil Mannāʿ: *A'lām Filasṭīn ...*, pp. 146 – 151; Schölch, Alexander: *Palästina im Umbruch 1856-1882: Untersuchungen zur wirtschaftlichen und sozio-politischen Entwicklung*, Stuttgart: Wiesbaden: Steiner-Verlag, 1986, pp. 225 – 236; Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 63 – 88. In brief also: Khayraddīn az-Ziraklī: *al-A'lām*. al-Juz' at-tāsiʿ, aṭ-Ṭabʿa ath-thālitha, pp. 310 – 311.

deputy from Jerusalem. He held liberal views and came to be one of the most outspoken critics of Abdülhamit's autocracy.<sup>19</sup>

He pursued his studies in various places – at traditional schools in Jerusalem and at modern institutions in Malta and Constantinople. He returned home after the death of his father and founded a state school (*madrassa rushdiyya*)<sup>20</sup> in Jerusalem. Shortly thereafter, he received a better offer and at a very young age, he became the President of the Municipality in Jerusalem and he held this post in 1868 through 1873. His sponsor was Mehmet Reşid Paşa, the Governor of the province of Syria who later became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Ambassador to Vienna. Yūsuf Diyā'addīn visited the capital of Austro-Hungarian Empire twice, and he taught there Arabic and Ottoman Turkish.<sup>21</sup>

In 1877 Yūsuf al-Khālidi was elected to the Ottoman Parliament. He received eight votes of the Administrative Council of Jerusalem, while his rival, ʿUmar Fahmī al-Ḥusaynī, only received four.<sup>22</sup> His short parliamentary tenure was the peak of his career. He proved to be an eloquent speaker, an ardent advocate of the constitutional system and an opponent of autocracy. Because of his intense criticism, he became undesirable for the Sultan Abdülhamit II and after the dissolution of Parliament and abrogation of the Constitution he was forced to leave the capital. He was reportedly regarded as one of the most dangerous deputies. Although he later held various high posts (President of the Municipality of Jerusalem, qā'immaqām at diverse places) and in 1893 he became a Paşa, his reputation and standing were never the same.<sup>23</sup>

From the time of his first visit to Vienna (1875), there is evidence of his interest in the Jewish community in Palestine. At that time, the London-based

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<sup>19</sup> ʿĀdil Mannāʿ: *Aʿlām Filasṭīn ...*, pp. 146, 152; Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, pp. 68 – 73.

<sup>20</sup> By an 1869 law, a five-level school system was introduced in the Ottoman Empire. The lowest level was represented by three-year *al-madrassa al-awwalīya* and equally three-year *al-madrassa al-ibtidāʿīya (ar-rushdiyya)*. Then followed *al-madrassa at-tānawīya al-mutawassīṭa (ʿdādiyya)* and *al-madrassa at-tānawīya al-ʿāliya (sultānīya)*. The highest level constituted *al-madrassa al-ʿulyā*. In 1908 the school system was reorganized into three levels. Khayrīya Qāsimīya: *Rūḥī al-Khālidi, 1864-1913*. Muʿassasat al-jamʿīya al-ʿilmīya al-filasṭīnīya, 1996, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> ʿĀdil Mannāʿ: *Aʿlām Filasṭīn ...*, p. 146; Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, pp. 71 – 73.

<sup>22</sup> ʿĀdil Mannāʿ: *Aʿlām Filasṭīn ...*, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, pp. 72 – 73.

*The Jewish Chronicle* published two responses by Yūsuf al-Khālidī, in which he dealt with Jews living in Jerusalem, with their situation and the possibilities for improving it.<sup>24</sup>

Yūsuf al-Khālidī had some knowledge of Hebrew. He probably learned it for two reasons. On the one hand, it was “his interest in what we would today call comparative religion”, on the other hand his endeavour “to follow the activities of the Zionist Movement”. He therefore kept in touch with notable Zionists.<sup>25</sup>

The first Zionist Congress and the following Congresses were a very strong impulse for Arab journalists and intellectuals to start thinking about the Zionist Movement. Yūsuf Ḍiyā’addīn was among the first Arab intellectuals who responded to the formation of political Zionism. He did so on March 1st, 1899 in the form of a letter to the Chief Rabbi of France Zadok Kahn. In this letter, he showed deep empathy, a strong sense of humanism and considerable foresight. It can also be viewed as an expression of active interest in current events and the future of his homeland.

In theory, Zionism is an absolutely natural and just idea on how to solve the Jewish question. Yet it is impossible to overlook the actual reality, which must be taken into account. Palestine is an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and today it is inhabited by non-Jews. This country is held in esteem by more than three hundred ninety million Christians and three hundred million Muslims. By what right do the Jews want it for themselves? Jewish money will not be able to buy Palestine. **The only way to take it is by force using cannons and warships.**<sup>26</sup> Turks and Arabs in general sympathize with Jews. But some of them were affected by the fever of hatred for Jews, as it happened to the most advanced of the civilized nations. Also the Christian Arabs, especially the Catholic and Orthodox, hate Jews very much. Even if Herzl obtained the approval of the Sultan Abdülhamit II for the Zionist plan, he should not think that a day will come when Zionists will become masters of this country.<sup>27</sup>

Yūsuf Ḍiyā’addīn adds the advice that Zionists should look for another place to establish their own state:

It is therefore necessary, to ensure the safety of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire, that the Zionist Movement, in the geographic sense of the word, stops.... Good Lord, the world is vast enough, there are still uninhabited countries where one

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<sup>24</sup> cĀdil Mannāc: *A’lām Filasṭīn ...*, p. 147.

<sup>25</sup> Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Yūsuf Ḍiyā’addīn al-Khālidī to Zadok Khahn, quoted according to: cĀdil Mannāc: *A’lām Filasṭīn ...*, pp. 149 – 150.

could settle millions of poor Jews who may perhaps become happy there and one day constitute a nation. That would perhaps be the best, the most rational solution to the Jewish question. But in the name of God, let Palestine be left in peace.<sup>28</sup>

This document clearly shows that in 1899, Yūsuf al-Khālīdī was already well aware of the final objective of Zionism which was the establishment of a Jewish state and he was conscious of the resulting threat to the local Arab population in Palestine. His belief that it was impossible to purchase the whole of Palestine is particularly noteworthy, since it was proven by future events. After almost seven decades of intensive colonization activities and land purchases, when the State of Israel was proclaimed, only six or seven per cent of the total area of Palestine were in Jewish hands.<sup>29</sup> It also proved true that the only way to take possession of this region was through military means.

Zadok Kahn passed this letter to the leader of the Zionist Movement Theodor Herzl who was quick to reply. His letter is dated on March 19th, 1899, less than three weeks after Yūsuf al-Khālīdī's plea.<sup>30</sup>

Herzl begins his reply with complimentary phrases and positive comments on the Ottoman Empire:

... Let me tell you first of all that the feelings of friendship which you express for the Jewish people inspire in me the deepest appreciation. The Jews have been, are and will be the best friends of Turkey since the day when Sultan Selim opened his Empire to the persecuted Jews of Spain.<sup>31</sup>

In the following paragraphs Herzl enumerates specific benefits of Zionism for the Ottoman Empire:

And this friendship consists not only of words - it is ready to be transferred into acts and to aid the Moslems.

The Zionist idea, of which I am the humble servant, has no hostile tendency toward the Ottoman Government, but quite to the contrary this movement is

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from Yūsuf Ḍiyā'addīn al-Khālīdī to Zadok Khahn, quoted according to: Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> Khalidī, Walid: *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971, p. LXV; Pappé, Ilan: The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine. In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Autumn, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> For the complete text of the letter, translated from French into English, see: Khalidī, Walid: *From Haven to Conquest ...*, pp. 91 – 93.

<sup>31</sup> The Letter from Theodor Herzl to Yūsuf Ḍiyā'addīn al-Khālīdī, quoted according to: Khalidī, Walid: *From Haven to Conquest ...*, p. 91.



concerned with opening up new resources for the Ottoman Empire. In allowing immigration to a number of Jews bringing their intelligence, their financial acumen and their means of enterprise to the country, no one can doubt that the well-being of the entire country would be the happy result. It is necessary to understand this, and make it known to everybody.<sup>32</sup>

Subsequently, the leader of the Zionist Movement emphasizes the peaceful character of the Zionist Movement. "... the Jews have no belligerent Power behind them, neither are they themselves of a warlike nature. They are a completely peaceful element, and very content if they are left in peace. Therefore, there is absolutely nothing to fear from their immigration".<sup>33</sup>

Herzl devotes the next lines to the "Holy Places", which belong to all faiths and nations. "But no one thinks of ever touching those".<sup>34</sup>

In the next paragraph Herzl openly and knowingly misleads his partner in communication. His diaries and the proposed agreement with the Ottoman Empire, for which he was trying to secure the consent of the Sultan, contain goals and objectives incompatible with his statements in the letter to the Palestinian scholar. It is beyond any doubt that only those opinions which he confided to his diary and those he hoped to implement after the agreement with the Sultan were honest and sincere. Those presented in the letter to Yūsuf al-Khālīdī were only a smokescreen which was meant to calm and soothe him while Herzl played for time to put his plans in motion.

You see another difficulty, Excellency, in the existence of the non-Jewish population in Palestine. But who would think of sending them away?<sup>35</sup> It is their well-being, their individual wealth which we will increase by bringing in our own. Do you think that an Arab who owns land or a house in Palestine worth three or four thousand francs will be very angry to see it rise five and ten times in value perhaps in a few months? Moreover, that will necessarily happen with the arrival of the Jews. That is what the indigenous population must realize, that they will gain excellent brothers as the Sultan will gain faithful and good subjects who will make this province flourish—this province which is their historic homeland.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 91 – 92.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>35</sup> The answer to this question is simple. It was Herzl, who more than once remarked on the necessity of the transfer of the local population out of Palestine. We place a couple of relevant quotations from documents written by Theodore Herzl under the text of the letter.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

Herzl was trying to show that the interests of Zionism and the Ottoman Empire were mutually compatible. “When one looks at the situation in this light, which is the *true* one, one must be the friend of Zionism when one is the friend of Turkey”.<sup>37</sup>

In the final part of the letter he explains that the Zionist Movement has other alternatives to Palestine. It depends on Sultan Abdülhamit II what stand he takes on its proposals. Herzl expects that his attitude will be positive.

If he will not accept it, we will search and, believe me, we will find elsewhere what we need.

But then Turkey will have lost its last chance to regulate its finances and to recover its economic vigour.<sup>38</sup>

It is interesting to compare the content of this letter with Herzl’s genuine positions and intentions. They can be found in his diaries as early as 1895, as well as in his well-known book *Der Judenstaat*,<sup>39</sup> but also in an almost forgotten document, which he planned to submit to the Ottoman Sultan in 1902. Since this approach occurs consistently in Herzl’s writings at the time before and after he wrote the letter quoted above, it is difficult to argue that his response to Yūsuf al-Khālidī was meant honestly.

In his diary, in the entry under June 12th, 1895, Herzl wrote:

When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the land that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us.

We shall try to **spirit the penniless population across the border** by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while **denying it any employment in our own country.**

The property owners will come over to our side. Both **the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.**

Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us something far more than they are worth.

**But we are not going to sell them anything back.**<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Emphasis in the original; *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92 – 93.

<sup>39</sup> Herzl, Theodor: *Der Judenstaat*. Wien: 1896.

<sup>40</sup> Emphasis added in the whole quotation; Masalha, Nur: *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. Washington D.C.: Insitute for Palestine Studies, 2001, p. 9.

There is another significant document, which sheds light on Zionist plans with Palestine and the methods which they intended to employ. It is a proposal of a contract “between the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the Ottoman government concerning the ‘privileges, rights, liabilities, and duties of the Jewish-Ottoman Land Company (JOLC) for the settlement of Palestine and Syria.’”<sup>41</sup> It was drafted by Theodor Herzl with the help of Arminius Vámbéry, most likely in the months following his audience with the Sultan in the middle of May 1901. American-Palestinian historian Walīd al-Khālidī believes that “... the draft charter may be considered as an extended ‘internal’ gloss on the publicly announced program. Thus if the Basle Program shows the tip of the Zionist iceberg at the turn of the century, the JOLC draft comprises its bulk”.<sup>42</sup>

One part of the proposed agreement, which is relevant in this context, deals with the solution of the problem of the native population. The third article of the draft contains this text:

The right to exchange economic enclaves of its territory, with the exception of the holy places or places already designated to worship. The owners shall receive plots of equal size and quality procured by it [the JOLC] in other provinces and territories of the Ottoman Empire. It will not only compensate these owners for the cost of resettlement from its own funds, but it will also grant modest loans for the building of necessary housing and the acquisition of the necessary equipment. These loans are to be repaid in equal installments over several years, and the new plots can be used as collateral [for the loans].<sup>43</sup>

Both texts unequivocally show what the policy of the Jewish autonomous entity towards Palestinian Arabs was supposed to be like. The goal was not to achieve a peaceful coexistence with them, but their forced transfer to neighbouring countries.

To Herzl, the best way to acquire Palestine was a conquest by force and he recorded this conviction in several places in his diaries. Since at that time, the Zionist Movement was not strong enough, he counted on the help of one of the Great Powers.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Khalidi, Walid: The Jewish-Ottoman Land Company: Herzl’s Blueprint for the Colonization of Palestine. In: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter, 1993), p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44 – 45.

<sup>44</sup> Leonhard, L.M.C. Van Der Hoeven: Shlomo and David, Palestine, 1907. In: Khalidi, Walid: *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971, p. 118.

## Emir Amīn Arslān

Emir Amīn Arslān was born into the prominent Druze Arslān family which resided in the Lebanese al-Gharb region where they took the place of the Buḥtur family after their extermination in 1633. All family members were entitled to use the title of Emir (Amīr in Arabic).<sup>45</sup>

In 1901, the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) succeeded in obtaining estates the size of more than thirty thousand dūnums<sup>46</sup> around the town of Tiberias in Northern Palestine.<sup>47</sup> The total size of land which JCA acquired in this area at the turn of the century was about seventy km<sup>2</sup>. Most of the land was sold by the wealthy Sursuq family.<sup>48</sup> When the JCA attempted to “remove the peasants who cultivated the land so far” from the land, the local inhabitants opposed these moves.<sup>49</sup>

These events that followed were described by Chaim Kalvarisky, an employee of JCA:<sup>50</sup>

Mr Ossovetsky, who acted as agent, and the landlords paid no regard to the fate of these tenants, and insisted on their eviction, as the land had already been bought and paid for. This led to a conflict between the tenants and Ossovetsky. The Vali (Governor) backed Ossovetsky, while the Kaimakam (District Officer) of Tiberias,

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<sup>45</sup> Salibi, Kamal S.: *The Modern History of Lebanon*. Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 2004, pp. 8 – 9.

<sup>46</sup> One Syrian dūnum equals about 1,000 square meters.

<sup>47</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> The Sursuq family bought in 1872 230,000 dūnums of very fertile land in the Marj ibn ʿĀmir Plain from the State at a very low price. The annual yield of this extensive estate in 1886 equaled its purchase price – 20,000 Turkish Pounds.<sup>48</sup> The Sursuqs were later gradually selling this immense property to the Zionists. They definitely got rid of it in the first half of the 1920s.

<sup>49</sup> Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, pp. 102 – 103.

<sup>50</sup> All author base their portrayal of these events and the role which was played by Emir Amīn Arslān on the account of Kalvarisky. Kalvarisky, Chaim Margalit: ha-Yaḥasim ben ha-yehudim veba-ʿaravim lifne ha-milhama. In: *She'ifotenu*, vol. ii (1931), pp. 50 – 55; Barbour, Nevill: *Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy*. Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969, pp. 116 – 117. Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, pp. 22 – 23; Khayrīya Qāsimīya: *an-Nashāʾ aṣ-ṣahyūnī fī ash-sharq al-ʿarabī wa ṣadāhu, 1908 – 1918*. Beirut: Munazzamat at-taḥrīr al-filasṭīnīya, Markaz al-abḥāth, 1973, p. 33; Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, pp. 103 – 104.

Emir Amin Arslan, sided with the tenants. Ossovetsky was shot at; troops were brought and many tenants were arrested and taken to prison.... It was then that, for the first time, I came in contact with Arab nationalism. Rashid Bey, the Vali, who was a Turk, cared very little whether the Tiberias District was inhabited by Arabs or Jews, and was thus prepared to order the eviction of the tenants. But Emir Amin (Arslan), the Kaimakam of Tiberias, who was an Arab Druze, not only insisted on the payment of compensation to the evicted Arabs, but also, as I was later informed, resisted the de-Arabization of the district. ... Under the Sultan Abdul Hamid the population was so terrorized that no one dared proclaim his Arab nationalism. After the fall of Abdul Hamid and the proclamation of the Constitution matters took a new turn ... and the Arabs began to fight in the Turkish Parliament for their nationalist aspirations. They looked upon Zionism as an enemy that was trying to invade districts which they considered purely Arab.<sup>51</sup>

In 1904, five Jewish settlements – “Sejera, Kfar Tavor, Yavniel Menehamia, and Bet Gan” – had already been established on the purchased lands. In the following years, other settlements were added.<sup>52</sup>

Rashid Khalidi emphasizes the nationalist undertone of these events:

Thus in a situation where an Ottoman government, that was beginning to be seen as Turkish-dominated, forced Arab peasants to accept the sale and transfer of their land to Zionist colonists, it was of some significance that the Arab *qa'immaqam* of the Tiberias district, Amir Amin Arslan, should oppose the transaction on nationalist grounds.<sup>53</sup>

By contrast, the Governor of Beirut, Ruşdi Bey, who was a Turk, had no objections to the sale – after all, it was perfectly all right from the legal point of view.

According to Kalvarisky's account, even after implementation of the *Vali's* orders, Arslan continued to “resist the de-Arabization of the district”; he perhaps also gave discreet encouragement to the small bands of peasants angry at the loss of their land who afterwards harassed the new settlers. For the time being there was little else he could do besides insisting that compensation be paid to the evicted tenants, whose will to resist had been broken by the Ottoman government's repression on behalf of the JCA. Within a few years, such aggrieved *fellahin*, who had found their former Arab landlords, the Ottoman state, and the new Jewish settlers backed by influential and affluent settlement bodies like the JCA, all ranged against them, were to find public advocates for their mute resistance.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Kalvarisky, Chaim Margalit: ha-Yahasim ben ha-yehudim vaha-<sup>c</sup>aravim lifne ha-milhama. In: *She'ifotemu*, vol. ii (1931), pp. 50 – 55. Quoted according to: Barbour, Nevill: *Nisi Dominus ...*, pp. 116 – 117.

<sup>52</sup> Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, p. 103.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103 – 104.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

It is likely that Emir Amīn Arslān was elected to the Ottoman Parliament in 1909 due to his previous nationalist and especially anti-Zionist activities.<sup>55</sup>

### Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865 – 1935)<sup>56</sup>

This prominent Islamic thinker and reformer was born in the village of al-Qalmūn, near Tripoli in present-day Lebanon. He started his studies at a *kuttāb*<sup>57</sup> and then continued his studies at a state school and at the ‘National Islamic School’ founded by Ḥusayn al-Jisr in Tripoli. He became a follower of Jamāladdīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh whose ideas were a profound influence on him. In 1897 he moved to Egypt and soon started to publish the journal *al-Manār* (The Lighthouse). He was involved in extensive activities. He is author of several books (for instance biography of Muḥammad ʿAbduh). He established Dār ad-dāʿwa wa al-irshād, a seminary which trained “Muslim missionaries and spiritual directors”.<sup>58</sup> He was politically active before the First World War in the Ottoman Party of Administrative Decentralization. The closest one to him from the four Sunni Legal schools was the Ḥanbalī madhhab and he later became a supporter of Wahhābism. His main objective was the creation of a modernized and unified Islamic law.<sup>59</sup>

To us, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā’s attitudes to Zionism and his related journalistic and political activities are of primary interest. Through his medium, *al-Manār*, he occasionally presented his opinions on the Zionist Movement. His articles were not purely informative, but they included advice and recommendations on how to deal with the Movement. They were mobilizing in nature, calling for activism, progress and emphasizing the importance of education.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>56</sup> For more information about his life and ideas, see: Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 222 – 244.

<sup>57</sup> A Qur’anic or primary school.

<sup>58</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, p. 227.

<sup>59</sup> *al-Munjid fī al-aʿlām*. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1998, p. 264; Muslih, Muhammad Y.: *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*. New York; Guildford, Surrey: Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 74; Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, pp. 224 – 239.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā focused his attention on the Zionist Movement for the first time in two extensive articles published in *al-Manār* in 1898 and 1902. The main goal of these articles was to alert Arabs to the threat posed by the Zionists' interest in Palestine and to incite them to act.<sup>60</sup>

His first article – the 1898 *Khabar wa i'tibār (Affair and Reflections)* – consists of three parts. In the first part, Riḍā prints a quote from a letter written by a reader in Frankfurt am Main published in the magazine *al-Muqtaṭaf* (1898, Volume XXII, Issue 4).<sup>61</sup> The letter at first addresses the birth of the Zionist Movement in Europe. It goes on to mention that European newspapers write about its objective to transfer oppressed Jews from Eastern Europe in Palestine, which would result in considerable economic progress. The reader wants to know if the Arab press pays any attention to the Zionist Movement. He also inquires about the opinions of the editors of *al-Muqtaṭaf* on the Movement and the possibility of implementation of its goals.<sup>62</sup>

In the second part, the author cites the response of Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr, the editors of *al-Muqtaṭaf*. They are skeptical about the possibility of relocation of large numbers of Jews to Palestine. They emphasize the orientation of Jews to commerce and crafts. According to Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr, the Jews had managed to virtually take control of these economic sectors in Palestine and it was possible that they would be able to gradually monopolize them completely. The authors suggest that in their current home countries, Jews do not devote themselves to agriculture and they do not expect them to do so in Palestine. Land purchases in Palestine and Jewish immigration are complicated and would be much easier to implement the Zionist project in Argentina. Furthermore, they assume that the situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe will soon improve. It is therefore very unlikely, conclude the editors, that the Zionists could succeed in their efforts. On the other hand, they do not discount this possibility entirely as they remind the reader elsewhere that “for rich people, nothing is impossible”.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: *Khabar wa i'tibār*. In: *al-Manār*. 9.4. 1898, al-mujallad (Volume) I, al-juz' (Issue) 6, pp. 105 – 108; Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: *Ḥayāt umma ba'da mawtiḥā*. In: *al-Manār*. 26.1. 1902, al-mujallad IV, al-juz' 21, pp. 801 – 809.

<sup>61</sup> This literary-scientific monthly had been published in Egypt since 1876 and its editors were two Lebanese Christians Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf a Fāris Nimr. *al-Munjid ...*, pp. 345, 577.

<sup>62</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: *al-Manār*. 1898, pp. 105 – 106.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106 – 107.

Finally, in the third part, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā lays out his views and explains them in three points. He does not agree with the conclusions of Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr, which is obvious from the closing part of the first point. “... Yes, it is likely that Jews will choose Palestine, because she is their holy land and she is the object of [their] hopes. But the safety and repose [which Jews enjoy in the Ottoman Empire] are preconditions”.<sup>64</sup>

The third point is very important and often quoted. Its importance is underlined by the author’s decision to repeat it four years later when he again and in an unmodified form inserted this passage into his larger article on the Zionist Movement. He describes how Jews were mobilizing in spite of the unfavourable conditions in the Diaspora and how they help and financially support each other. “The distance between their countries did not prevent them from continuing in these thoughts and in cooperating by dirham and dinār with the help of which every hope can be materialized and on which every effort depends ...”<sup>65</sup>

The article concludes with an appeal to all Arabs<sup>66</sup> to wake up and take action:

You who indulge in idleness, raise your heads and open your eyes. Look at what other peoples and nations do. Do you surrender to what is being told about you in the world? Are you content to see that newspapers of every country are writing that the poor of the weakest people [the Jews], whom all governments are expelling from their countries, master so much knowledge and understanding of civilization methods that they are able to take possession of your country, colonize it and turn its masters into laborers and its wealthy into poor? .... Think about this question [about Zionism], and make it the subject of your debates to determine whether it is just or unjust, sincere or insincere. Then [contemplate] whether it is clear to you that you have neglected the rights of your homeland and service to your people and your community. Examine and contemplate, consider and consult,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> We decided to use the term Arabs, because Arabs constituted the overwhelming majority of inhabitants of Palestine and adjacent regions. It was them, who Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā was addressing, though the author does not use the term Arabs. Neither in this period, nor later did he belong to the supporters of Arab nationalism. He considered Arabs to be a part of a greater unit – the Islamic Umma – but he knew that union of the entire Muslim world was not possible. Therefore, in spite of his objections to the Ottoman Empire, he accepted it as a “caliphate of necessity”. Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, pp. 229, 239 – 242.



talk and discuss this matter. It is more worthy thereof than fabrication of deficiencies ... and ascribing them to the innocent.<sup>67</sup>

It is a very impressive appeal. It may be perceived as Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's warning about things which will come to pass if the Arabs fail to rise from their slumber. They will cease to be masters of Palestine, they will loose it and the native inhabitants will become paupers dominated by foreigners in their own country. The author does not yet mention the ultimate Zionist goal, a Jewish state, he only does so in an article in 1902. But the idea of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine is present in this article in an implicit way.

Muḥammada Rashīd Riḍā returned to the subject of Zionism after less than four years. In a lengthy article entitled *The Life of a Nation after its Death*, he proceeds in a similar way as in the previous one. Once again he offers his readers several relevant documents; he cites a part of a speech by Theodor Herzl and a declaration of the Alexandria branch of the World Zionist Organization. He adds to it his own opinions, positions and appeals. It is evident, that by now he has become more familiar with Zionism than in 1898 and his opinions are much more refined.<sup>68</sup>

At the beginning the author quotes from the Koran: "Have they not travelled about in the land so as to have hearts to understand with and ears to hear with? For it is not the eyes which are blind but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts".<sup>69</sup> This Āya was carefully chosen and the whole article expresses this sentiment. It refers to unconcealed statements and actions of representatives of the Zionist Movement and Arab passivity vis a vis these events.<sup>70</sup>

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā emphasizes that Arabic proverbs about Jews are outdated and no longer valid. The situation has changed and Jews are not today the weakest ones, quite the opposite. They have everything a strong nation needs – solidarity, good education, financial background – with one exception: their own state. "No, they do not lack anything in order to become the strongest nation on the face of the Earth, except for a territory of their own and they seek

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>68</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: Ḥayāt umma ba'da mawtiḥā. In: *al-Manār*. 26.1. 1902, al-mujallad IV, al-juz' 21, pp. 801 – 809.

<sup>69</sup> Sūrat al-Ḥajj (Chapter of the Pilgrimage), āya 45. Translated according to – Bell, Richard: *The Qur'ān: Translated, with a Critical re-Arrangement of the Surahs..* Vol. I. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark: 1960, p. 322.

<sup>70</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: *al-Manār*. 1902, p. 801.

it in a natural way". At the same time, he draws attention to the fact that Arabs are still in a better position than Jews. Even though European Powers occupy large parts of the Middle East, there are still countries there that are governed by indigenous rulers.<sup>71</sup>

The next passage documents that Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā closely watched the Zionist Movement and took notice of changes in its declared positions:

The Jews have many national organizations – nations can be only successful through organizations. We heard about the Zionist Organization for the first time about five years ago. It is a political organization whose goal is to take possession of the Holy Land to make it the place of their kingdom and the seat of their ruler. ... At first, it did not show its demand for a realm, but pretended that it desired to transfer poor Jewish emigrants and refugees to Palestine to revive her and to live in safety under the rule of the Sultan. It seems that now it is confident in its strength and [therefore] it no longer needs to pretend.<sup>72</sup>

On the next four pages, the author lets Zionists speak in their own words to show how open they are about their goals. First he quotes an address by Theodor Herzl, whom he mistakes for Israel Zangwill. In this speech, Herzl describes the future Jewish state in Palestine and its government in lofty manner and he expects that at the end of the second millennium, two million Jews will live there: "The people of Israel (*sha'b Isrā'īl*) will be the lighthouse on the Mount Zion and will be an example to all nations ...". Also the statement of the Alexandria branch of the World Zionist Organization speaks forthright about the Jewish state already in the beginning: "Brothers, our people (*sha'banā*) will not abandon their hope for a state and has not and will not cease their efforts no matter what hardship will stand in our way ..."<sup>73</sup>

At the end of the article Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā reiterates the third point from four years earlier and adds new advices. He criticizes the rulers of Muslim countries, but does not call for their overthrow, because only the foreigners would benefit from it. In his opinion, Arabs must take their destiny into their own hands, they should not rely on the government and "try to acquire useful knowledge, large fortunes and good education". This is the way to create a "real community" (*umma ḥaqīqīya*).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 802 – 803.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 803.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 803 – 807.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 808 – 809.

The author also points out that Jews could be an example to Arabs in various regards. He appreciates their solidarity and the strong feeling of community, their willingness to contribute to the common cause and their focus on modern education. He also underlines their prowess in financial matters and their overall ascent. He hopes that his countrymen will take the same course. By now he openly speaks, and supports it by extensive quotations, about the ultimate Zionist goal – which is the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

### **Najīb ʿĀzūrī (d. 1916)<sup>75</sup>**

Najīb ʿĀzūrī was a Maronite Christian born in the territory of present-day Lebanon. He received his education at French and Ottoman state schools. Before he left for Cairo and then Paris, he worked in the Ottoman state administration in Jerusalem. Circumstances related to his emigration in May 1904 are not clear. Neville Mandel gives intrigues and subsequent fear of punishment at the hands of the Mutaṣarrif as main reasons for Najīb ʿĀzūrī's exile. Najīb ʿĀzūrī is said to have resorted to behind-the-scenes machinations after he failed in his efforts to obtain the positions he had desired. He applied for the position of “secretary and interpreter” to the Mutaṣarrif Kâzim Bey and afterwards he endeavoured to obtain a license for the operation of a tobacco company in Jaffa.<sup>76</sup> After he left his post he was sentenced to death, because desertion of an official post was at that time considered in the Ottoman Empire as treason.<sup>77</sup>

After his arrival in Cairo, he wrote a pamphlet against the Mutaṣarrif Kâzim Bey in which he accused him of bribery and subservience to Albert Antébi.<sup>78</sup> The same year, he left for Paris and established the *Ligue de la Patrie arabe* there.<sup>79</sup> Albert Hourani draws attention to the fact that “the name clearly echoes

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<sup>75</sup> For more details about Najīb ʿĀzūrī see: Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, pp. 277 – 279; Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, pp. 49 – 52; Khayrīya Qāsimīya: *an-Nashāt aṣ-ṣahyūnī fī ash-sharq al-ʿarabī wa ṣadāhu ...*, pp. 37 – 38; Muslih, Muhammad Y.: *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, pp. 76 – 78.

<sup>76</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 49.

<sup>77</sup> Khalidi, Rashid: *Palestinian Identity ...*, p. 74.

<sup>78</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 49.

<sup>79</sup> The main activity of *Ligue de la Patrie arabe* was publishing of manifests in French and Arabic. Two of them bore the title “The Arab Countries to the Arabs”.

the [name] of the anti-Dreyfusard *Ligue de la Patrie française*".<sup>80</sup> In the years 1907-1908, he "published a short lived monthly, *L'Indépendance arabe*".<sup>81</sup>

Najīb °Āzūrī is the author of a book (*Le Réveil de la nation Arabe*, later translated into Arabic as *Yaḳẓat al-umma al-°arabīya*) published in Paris in 1905.<sup>82</sup> He also planned to write another book on the Jewish question, *Péril juif universel - Révélations et études politiques*, because "those who had dealt with the Jewish question until then had not taken its universal character sufficiently into account".<sup>83</sup>

He was strongly anti-Turkish and the whole book is permeated with this feeling. He believed that the Turks impeded the Arabs' cultural progress and that the Arabs surpassed them in all things, even in the art of war. Only thanks to Arab soldiers were Turks able to achieve victory in the wars they led. He considered the Ottoman Empire to be beyond reform. The only solution for him was independence for all the nations of the Empire.<sup>84</sup>

In his book, 'Azuri openly advocates the secession of the Arabs from the Ottoman Empire. Such a doctrine was the first open demand for the complete detachment of the Arab provinces. From the perspective of 'Azuri, the Ottomans were barbarous oppressors who inflicted much suffering on the Arabs.<sup>85</sup>

Against this background, 'Azuri stated that the Arabs, with their national feelings now revived, will form an empire comprising Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and the Arabian Peninsula. Within these boundaries, 'Azuri wanted to see the emergence of an Arab nation under the protection of a European power...<sup>86</sup>

He personally favoured France.<sup>87</sup> England would also be acceptable. On the other hand, Najīb °Āzūrī was literally afraid of Russia and looked negatively upon German intentions in the Middle East as well.<sup>88</sup> He did not differentiate between Arab Christians and Muslims, to him, all of them formed a united Arab nation. But he did not consider Egyptians and other North African Arabs to be a

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<sup>80</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, p. 277.

<sup>81</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, p. 278; °Abdalwahhāb al-Kayālī: *Tārīkh Filasṭīn al-ḥadīth*, p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, p. 278.

<sup>83</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 51.

<sup>84</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, p. 278.

<sup>85</sup> Muslih, Muhammad Y.: *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, p. 76.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>88</sup> Hourani, Albert: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age ...*, p. 279.

part of it. "...ʿAzuri tried to create the impression, by means of articles and periodicals, that an Arab movement was underway in the Ottoman Empire".<sup>89</sup> But all Powers addressed by Najīb ʿĀzūrī refused his proposals.

Najīb ʿĀzūrī is significant because in his book *Le Réveil de la nation Arabe*, he deals with Zionism in a way no one had done before him – from the point of view of secular Arab nationalism.<sup>90</sup> Well known is "his prediction that the Zionist movement was destined to enter into a conflict with Arab nationalism".<sup>91</sup> He was near prescient when he wrote:

Two important phenomena, similar in nature and yet opposed to each other, which have not yet attracted the attention of anybody, are now manifesting themselves in Asiatic Turkey, namely the awakening of the Arab nation and the concealed effort of the Jews to reestablish the ancient monarchy of Israel on a grand scale. These two movements are destined to a continuous struggle, until one of the two prevails over the other. On the final outcome of this struggle between these two peoples, representing two opposing principles, will depend the destiny of the entire world.<sup>92</sup>

Najīb ʿĀzūrī's arguments were not always based on facts. For example, he grossly overstated the number of Jews and reduced the number of Arabs living in Palestine in 1905 when he wrote that 200,000 Jews and similar number of Arabs live there.<sup>93</sup> In reality, at that time, Jews constituted less than 10% of the population of Palestine.

Another of his conclusions can be described as eerily familiar, especially when read in the early 21st century:

Drawing on the Bible, ʿAzuri also tried to prove that the Jews never occupied all of Palestine. He maintained in his book that they controlled only the West Bank of the Jordan and the range of mountains stretching from Hebron to al-Hawla. As a result of that, ʿAzuri goes on to say, the Hebrew kingdom was destroyed. To avoid repeating the same error, the Jews planned to conquer the national frontier of Palestine, which to them comprised Mount Hermon and its water resources in the north, Sinai and Suez Canal in the south, the Arabian Desert in the east, and the Mediterranean in the west. Once the Jews conquer these strategically located territories, they would hold on to Palestine and protect their new kingdom against destruction.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Muslih, Muhammad Y.: *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, p. 77.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>92</sup> Najīb ʿĀzūrī: *Yaqẓat al-umma al-ʿarabīya*. Quoted according to: Muslih, Muhammad Y.: *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, pp. 77 – 78.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Najīb ʿĀzūrī's book is not only a proof of his anti-Zionist feelings, but also of his anti-Semitism of the European type and provenience. Anti-Semitism was virtually absent in the works and ideas of his Arab contemporaries. He may have been indoctrinated with anti-Semitism during his studies in France where he was a witness to the Dreyfuss affair.<sup>95</sup>

Mandel believes that Europeans working in Levant at the turn of the century infected Arabs with modern anti-Semitism. He singles out the Jesuits, but also mentions Christian missionaries of other denominations, teachers, officers at consulates, clerks working for foreign banks and alike.<sup>96</sup>

In this context, one cannot help but point out the connection between Najīb ʿĀzūrī's anti-Turkish and anti-Zionist sentiments. He believed that the Ottoman Empire formed a barrier which had prevented the Arabs from mounting an effective resistance to Zionism. "It is possible that the direct impulse that led Najīb ʿĀzūrī to demand the severance of all ties to the Ottoman Empire was his conviction that it is impossible to ward off the Zionist threat within the frame of a state handcuffed by the restrictions of 'foreign Capitulations', of which the Jews were making full use".<sup>97</sup> He also pointed to other advantages which were on the side of the Zionists. Among others, the Zionists benefited from the notorious venality of Ottoman officials and from the lack of understanding of the situation in Palestine on the part of the foreign consuls.<sup>98</sup> It is not surprising that Najīb ʿĀzūrī reached such conclusions.

He had worked in Jerusalem at a time when two particularly corrupt Palace secretaries (Cavid Bey and Kâzim Bey) had governed the Mutasarrıflık. He had witnessed the ineffectiveness of the restrictions against Jewish immigrants and land purchases, and the opening of a Zionist bank in Jaffa (the APC),<sup>99</sup> which had gone on to establish branches in Jerusalem and Haifa. Possibly, in trying to carry out his official duties, he had been frustrated by the Jews' reliance on their consuls and the Capitulations.<sup>100</sup>

There were some other Arabs who voiced anti-Zionist opinions during this period. It is however very difficult to tell how many Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere maintained anti-Zionist attitudes. On the one hand, the lack of

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, pp. 52 – 54.

<sup>97</sup> ʿAbdalwahhâb al-Kayālî: *Tārīkh Filasṭīn al-ḥadīth*, p. 44.

<sup>98</sup> Mandel, Neville J.: *The Arabs and Zionism ...*, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> Anglo-Palestine Company.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 51 – 52.

freedom, the low number of newspapers and the recent foundation of political Zionism would speak for the low speed with which anti-Zionist thoughts spread. During the next six years, (1908-1914) the situation became much clearer, hundreds of anti-Zionist and also some pro-Zionist articles were written and published and a much larger number of educated Arabs took part in the debate. On the other hand, it is likely that the seeds of anti-Zionism were planted deeply during this time. Otherwise it would have been difficult to imagine such a strong reaction during the following period.

These five men portrayed in our study were the most outspoken and active opponents of Zionist aspirations in Palestine in the period before the Young Turk Revolution. Two of them died within this period of time, but were replaced by many others who took over the banner of anti-Zionism. Among them Shukri al-<sup>c</sup>Asalī, Najīb al-Khūrī Naṣṣār and Yūsuf Ḍiyā'addīn's nephew Muḥammad Rūḥī al-Khālīdī, to mention just some of them. These were momentous times and the example of these five men layed solid basis for those who succeeded them.