

REAL UNIONS:  
ARAB LABOR UNIONS IN BRITISH PALESTINE, 1917-1947

by

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B.A., Bryn Mawr College, 1960

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History

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis argues that the Arab workers of Palestine under British rule, between 1917 and 1947, built labor unions that in structure and program were comparable to those in Western countries. It contends that massive underemployment was the greatest obstacle to Arab union development, and that Zionist initiatives and British policies were in large part responsible for that underemployment. The identification of underemployment as the unions' major problem is substantiated by clear evidence that as soon as World War II stimulated Arab industrial employment, between 1942 and 1945, two Arab labor federations began to enroll an appreciable proportion of the Arab industrial workforce. These organizations continued to develop until late 1947, when they disintegrated under the impact of political events.

Concentrating on the rapidly industrializing coastal cities of Jaffa and Haifa, the thesis examines and distinguishes the structure and operation of the two major federations, the Palestine Arab Workers Society and the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies with its successor, the Arab Workers Congress. It also examines the Jaffa Arab Labor Federation, which operated during the brief economic expansion of the mid-1930s. The weight of evidence indicates that the governance, strikes, alliances, international relations, and political advocacy of the Arab unions fell within the bounds of recognized Western union practice.

The thesis employs mainly English-language secondary sources. It also utilizes annual reports of the British government to the League of Nations in analyzing the relationship between Zionist immigration and Arab unemployment and in tracing strike activity. It draws on Trades Union Congress archives housed in the Modern Records Centre of the University of Warwick for Arab unionists' communications with British institutions and for British assessments of the unions and their leaders. Minutes of Arab participation in a seminal international labor congress come from the library of the Confédération Général du Travail in Paris.

The major contribution of this thesis is its reassessment of an institution whose supposed weakness has supported the notion that the Arabs of Palestine were "backward" in responding to Western institutions. Scholars have almost uniformly dismissed Arab workers as incapable of mastering the labor union form of organization, an established and effective response to conditions in the Western-style industries in which Arabs sought employment. They have generally presented Arab labor organizations as not "real unions" serving workers' interests but rather the puppets of political factions rooted in traditional loyalties. By juxtaposing sources not previously combined and by separating the material presented in both primary and secondary sources from the viewpoints of the authors, the thesis reinterprets the recorded events. Its conclusions suggest that Arab unions operated, and were at the time seen to operate, in ways comparable to union activity in Western countries.

### Dedication

To my husband, Jack O'Dell  
who somehow, through it all, remained happy  
that I was doing what I most wanted to do  
and helped me to work with a quiet mind

## Acknowledgments

Many people share responsibility for whatever is useful in this thesis. My senior supervisor, Prof. William Cleveland, relentlessly required me to do my best work; he also, however, made precisely the suggestions that would help me reach that standard of endeavor. Both kinds of help were indispensable. Prof. Mark Leier's interest in the topic and his perceptive comments, from the initial reading lists to the final editing, encouraged and guided me in applying concepts of labor history to the Arab unions.

Richard Temple, assistant archivist at the Modern Records Centre of the University of Warwick, searched through the files of the Trades Union Congress, kept in touch by e-mail, told me who these people were that signed the memos, and helped me get copies of the ones I needed. Throughout the research process, the staff of the Inter-library Loan Office at Simon Fraser exercised patience and persistence in hunting down the outlandish books and articles I asked them to find.

Whatever errors of fact or analysis this thesis contains are my own responsibility. I hope only that I will in time recognize and learn from them.



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## Introduction

### Special Unions -- or Special Capitalism?

In Palestine as in the rest of the world, the end of World War II brought hard times to workers; Palestinian Arabs, like workers elsewhere, reacted vigorously to their new situation. The prosperity of wartime production vanished, veterans swelled the workforce, and unemployment and a falling real wage roused workers to protest. Massive strikes from Bombay to Seattle to Lagos -- and in Palestine -- registered workers' frustration. In Palestine, more than fifteen thousand Arab and Jewish public employees, in both manual and white-collar jobs, held a week-long strike against the British administration in April 1946.<sup>1</sup> The issues -- wages, working conditions, and job security -- were the same as elsewhere. The organizers were both Arab and mixed unions.

In 1946, that is to say, Palestinian Arab workers and their unions were alive to the same postwar pressures and took up the same means of resistance as counterparts both in other colonized countries and in the United States. Yet, just two decades earlier, these workers were barely familiar with unions; a single decade earlier, their unions had been in disarray. This thesis will show that the union activities of Palestinian Arabs were common, not exceptional, responses to the kinds of economic and social situations in which they

were working and living.<sup>2</sup> Once Palestinian Arabs held jobs in which they confronted Western-style capitalist employers, they quickly identified the Western-style labor union as a suitable response.<sup>3</sup> Although abnormalities in their situation hampered and interrupted their efforts, they went on to form unions that operated well within the range of commonly accepted union activities and structures. The entire process took place within the three-decade span from 1917 to 1947. At the end of that final year, political events dispersed the Arab workers and radically altered their former workplaces. Palestine's Arab unions would become material for the nostalgia of exiles, but for a time they gave voice and power to thousands of wage earners.

### A Special Kind of Capitalism

Palestinian Arab workers formed their unions within concentric rings of economic relationships that defined the tasks and shaped the constituencies of those unions. Most broadly, the Arab workers followed an established pattern by developing unions in response to the conditions of capitalist enterprises. Unions have been consistently associated with capitalist industry: in other types of enterprise, workers have evolved various types of associations, but -- a range of labor historians agree -- they have not developed unions.<sup>4</sup> By the time capitalists established industrial enterprises in Palestine, workers in analogous workplaces elsewhere had invented a range of recognizable union struc-

tures and activities. When a mass of Arab workers found employment in capitalist enterprises, they found ready to hand a flexible organizational form through which they could protect themselves in the circumstances of that employment.

Arab workers functioned in a particular type of capitalist economy. Their country was, to most intents and purposes, a British colony. British troops in World War I marched into Palestine from Egypt, driving out the armies of the Ottoman Empire, of which Palestine had been a part. After the war, since French jealousy and Wilsonian high-mindedness made outright colonization impracticable, the British secured legitimation for continued occupation through a League of Nations mandate.<sup>5</sup> In controlling Palestine, they had reached two major strategic goals: securing a vital route between London and India and securing the access of Iraqi oil, which they controlled, to the Mediterranean. The British would remain in Palestine until it proved ungovernable, in 1948.

In some respects, the British occupation of Palestine put Arab workers in the same position as workers in any mandate or European colony, whether in the Middle East, Africa, or Asia. In Workers on the Nile, Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman describe this pattern as they set out the situation that faced workers in British Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Western-owned -- or at least Western-style -- enterprises there employed

Western managers, supervisors, and technicians, giving them more money and more respect than the mass of mostly unskilled indigenous workers. The colonized workers resented the unfairness of management and the frequent arrogance of their European fellow employees. They also, however, saw those employees form unions which could wrest better pay and working conditions from the employers. Those unions often furthered the interests of the expatriate European employees at the expense of the indigenous. Unions got results, but, in the hands of bigots, a union could harm fellow workers. Some colonized workers set out to form unions of their own.<sup>6</sup>

Colonial administrators often characterized unions of colonized workers as nationalist front organizations.<sup>7</sup> Colonized workers did often act on interests specific to their nation rather than those they shared with other workers of different nationality. Not surprisingly, they did not join co-workers in actions that would not benefit, and might harm, them. As Thomas Hodgkin has pointed out, they understood that their interests often necessarily differed from those of, for example, their fellow workers of the metropolitan country. Colonized workers would frequently "collaborate" with compatriot politicians of the employing class to further national interests.<sup>8</sup> In both lack of overriding international solidarity and cooperation with selected non-workers, however, they behaved no differently than their co-workers or their actual (as distinct from idealized) counterparts in Western Europe and North America.

Palestinian Arab workers under British rule at various times followed all these patterns of behavior common to workers in colonized economies. Their country could be even more narrowly defined, however, as a colony that was not merely administered, but -- like, for example, Kenya -- settled by Westerners. This special situation brought its own set of special conditions for indigenous workers, who had to deal with foreign co-workers and employers who were not just individual expatriates, but members of a local community that competed with their own for jobs and markets.

Among settler-colonies, finally, Palestine was unique. The settlers who colonized it were not those of the occupying power, Britain. They had a more independent base of economic and political support than ordinary settlers, because they represented an international community, the Zionist movement. To this community, embodied in the World Zionist Organization (WZO), the British government had made available the territory of Palestine. On 2 November 1917, even before British forces had completely occupied the country, the British government promulgated the Balfour Declaration, giving Britain's support to the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Taking up what would prove a most troublesome "dual obligation," the Declaration also pledged British protection for the civil and religious rights of the "non-Jewish" inhabitants of Palestine (who then constituted more than 92 percent of the population).<sup>9</sup>

The WZO acted vigorously on the Declaration, pursuing its still-unpublicized goal of actual statehood through determined advocacy of steadily increasing Jewish immigration quotas and a program of land purchase. By the time of the Balfour Declaration, the WZO and its branch in Palestine (soon to become the Jewish Agency) had chosen a strategy of attracting immigrants by offering a "European" pay scale. They did this partly by subsidizing Zionist enterprises, and partly through a symbiotic relationship with Zionist labor organizations -- an alliance, in the phrase of Israeli sociologist Michael Shalev, "between a settlement movement without settlers and a workers' movement without work."<sup>10</sup> The Zionist settlement movement aimed not to exploit indigenous workers, as many other settler groups did, but to replace them. Although this goal limited the colony's appeal to investors ("there is no cheap labour [at least for Jewish industry. . . ]"),<sup>11</sup> its benefit to the Zionist project was inestimable: "competition was done away with, along with exploitation, and a homogeneous Jewish economic sector was created."<sup>12</sup>

The centrality of labor to the settlement project gave Zionist labor leaders great power; they dominated the policies and the highest governing bodies of the yishuv throughout the period of British rule. Of prime importance was the Histadrut, a political and economic organization founded in 1920. In its capacity as a union federation, the Histadrut

pressed employers for "Jewish labor," the reservation of jobs (whether or not designated "skilled") for Jews, and at a European wage. The political functions and eventual economic weight of the Histadrut arguably made it, rather than the Arab unions, exceptional among labor organizations. Its power in its own influential community gave it broad impact on the employment opportunities of Arab workers as well.

In responding to their situation, Arab workers sought unions partly for a purpose common to colonized workers: defense against colonial capitalist employers and against the colonizing power. Because of the exceptional aspect of their circumstances, however, they also used their unions for defense against settlers determined to exclude them from the workplace and to build a state in their country.

### "Not Real Unions": The Verdict of Historiography

Many historians of Palestine have mentioned, and some have studied, the Arab unions. Published studies, including studies of Palestinian labor, have not examined the Arab unions in relation to the economic conditions that limited workers' ability to create and maintain them. A survey of some of the existing work will outline the dimensions of the topic that remain to be explored. The body of this thesis then makes a beginning of such an exploration.

Until roughly a decade ago, almost all historians of Palestine concentrated on political and diplomatic history,



ignoring social and economic issues. Scholars with this specialization typically mentioned Arab unions only to observe that they were primarily political rather than labor organizations and that they never became large or powerful. In his Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, Yehoshua Porath, for example, mentions Arab workers only as the intended or actual followers of political or terrorist leaders. Like many other historians of colonized peoples, he acknowledges workers (and peasants) only as a shadowy and rather menacing horde. Unintelligent and unsophisticated, Porath's Arab workers are continually vulnerable to the manipulations of class or national leaders who rouse them to violent, or at least counterproductive and uncivilized, upheaval.

Not all political historians of Palestine have limited themselves so severely. A quarter-century before Porath wrote, J.C. Hurewitz had already pointed out Palestinian Arabs' early founding of independent labor organizations. Despite its limited size, he asserted, by 1936 "the Palestine labor movement was relatively more advanced than in any of the near-by Arab countries except Lebanon."<sup>13</sup> Hurewitz gave a relatively precise account of the development of Arab unions. As paragraphs in a general history, however, his narratives were necessarily highly condensed.

During the 1970s, some historians began to examine the reasoning behind the Arabs' political positions and

strategies during the British period. Even these scholars, however, customarily mentioned workers' organizations as essentially political bodies, and weak ones at that. They attributed this mismatch of form and purpose to the small size and recent establishment of the working class relative to the great mass of Arab villagers and the tradition of loyalty to an elite: the Arab union was simply a new form for old patronage relationships. Ann Mosely Lesch, for example, has been no unsympathetic observer of the Palestinian Arabs' attempts to strengthen their society. In her Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939, she explained some of the difficulties the unions faced: "the labor societies were heavily politicized, and efforts to expand them in the 1930s were used by the various Arab political parties to increase their own bases of support, rather than to redress specific labor grievances.... Moreover, the workers were extremely difficult to organize because of their illiteracy and poverty."<sup>14</sup> Party influence is understandably the aspect of the unions that most strikes the political analyst. Other aspects, visible to workers, organizers, employers, and officials, do not, however, appear in this account (nor have illiteracy and poverty proven in all circumstances to be obstacles to union organizing).

Several factors may have led political historians to dismiss Arab unions. One is simply mechanical: some scholars, such as Porath and Lesch, limited their scope to the

period ending in 1939, and by 1939 the Arab unions that flourished in the early 1930s had been disbanded or dormant for several years. Given an assumption that union growth is normally more or less steady, the Arab union movement would seem to have failed. In addition, political historians concentrating on the Arab elite appear to have absorbed the elite view that the workers were merely manipulable and that the only Arab unions were the ones the elite set up. If their sources (which, presumably, dealt mainly with the affairs of the Arab elite) did not include reports of wage demands and strike settlements, this omission may have led to the assumption that Arab unions did not perform normal union functions.

An example of a political historian who does emphasize the "growth, activism, and independence" of "Arab labor" is Issa Khalaf.<sup>15</sup> Writing later than those mentioned above, and dealing with the period 1939 to 1948, Khalaf has analyzed the activities of labor leaders, along with professionals and entrepreneurs, as elements of the Arab population seeking to share nationalist power with the elite politicians.

Social historians have reinforced the established view of Arab unions as negligible. In Palestinians: The Making of a People, Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal noted "some progress" in organizing in the 1930s, but concluded: "Most of these labor activities did not amount to much." They mentioned eventual "significant union-organizing progress" in

the 1940s, which, however, "left the Arabs with one-tenth the Jewish union membership, for a population more than twice as large." For explanation, they, unlike the political historians, looked beyond the limitations of the workers or of Arab society to the instability of the job market: "Perhaps the labor scene was still too chaotic for any organization to do better. The working class remained a jumble...." By relating the significance of unions to their proportion of the total population (rather than of the industrial workforce), however, these authors chose a standard that undervalues the Arab unions' appeal to their potential members.<sup>16</sup>

The most detailed and thoughtful general treatment of Arab unions in Palestine remains Rachelle Leah Taqqu's 1977 dissertation, "Arab Labor in Mandatory Palestine." Taqqu traced the faltering, then confident, growth of Arab unions and Arab working-class consciousness up to Palestine's civil war of 1947-1948. The information she amassed is extremely valuable, but she did not examine the unions as labor organizations. Her concern was to show that Arab workers began to develop working-class consciousness just in time to muddle their allegiance to the elite leaders of their national movement in the crucial months before the civil war.

Taqqu took the Arab unions more seriously than most historians have done until recently. Like many scholars writing about colonized peoples, however, she apparently did not regard the indigenous unionists as responsible for the

decisions that guided their organizations. She devoted her analysis of Arab unions primarily to showing how the Histadrut and the British developed those unions. She did not acknowledge the initiative of the Arab workers themselves, take note of the economic circumstances that helped or hindered their union activities, or relate those activities to those of workers elsewhere. The theme running through her work is "the great distance between Arab experience and Jewish ideals."<sup>17</sup> For Taqqu, as for most other historians of Palestine, Arab unions, for reasons mostly outside their control, were weak and "not real unions."

With few exceptions, political and social historians alike may have shared several common assumptions about labor unions that disposed them to consider Arab unions atypically weak. Consciously or otherwise, they may have compared the Arab unions with two ideals of powerful unions: the Histadrut and the unions of Western countries. As a political and economic institution, the Histadrut was, in fact, hardly comparable to any union outside of the Soviet Union. Within a few years after its founding, it had, with the backing of Zionist organizations, established enterprises occupying such basic sectors of the economy as construction and shipping. Because it provided necessary services to the workers who were the substance of the yishuv, it was also the base of the leading Zionist political party. No union without outside subsidy could match its achievements.

Historians of Palestine may also have romanticized the unions of workers in the West, believing them stronger and more united than they were in actuality. They may consider typical the union able to close a whole industry by the united action of a body of workers almost entirely unionized. They may be seeking analogues to the heroic strikes that have become legendary in Western labor history. In fact, to achieve this status, a strike apparently requires not only a resolute and united workforce but a level of employer and government repression general in the United States, rare in Europe, and virtually unheard-of in Palestine.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the year-to-year features common to many twentieth-century unions -- the fits and starts of organizing, the vulnerability to economic depressions, the authoritarian executive committees and dissident revolts -- do not form part of the prevalent image of the strong union. Their occurrence among the Arab unions may have led some historians to consider these unions atypically weak because of precisely those points in which they most resembled their workaday Western counterparts.

A historian who has not applied inappropriate standards of comparison is Zachary Lockman, who had written extensively about Arab unions in Egypt before turning to Palestine. Lockman has examined Arab workers in relation to Jewish workers, the Histadrut, and Zionism. He has not turned his attention to the economic situations and employment trends

that affected the process of unionization among Arabs; nor have the Arab unions themselves been his primary concern.

Unlike previous studies, this thesis concentrates on the Arab unions as unions, rather than on outside relations such as workers' interchanges with Jewish counterparts or the unions' very limited role in Arab party politics. It introduces virtually no unfamiliar resources, such as union documents; few were available. Rather, by rearranging the accepted evidence on Arab unions (and pulling in some contextual material that has often been left aside), it presents a different image. In the Arab unions, where political scientists see fragmentation and sociologists see confusion, this thesis emphasizes the continuity and growth which also are undeniable. The thesis examines the Arab unions in the way unions in the West lay claim to be examined: as the products of workers' developing responses to the economic, and the political, conditions that shaped their working lives. Taking account of the effect of such organizing forces as the Arab elite, the Histadrut, the Arab Communists, and the British, it keeps in view the workers' continual choices about these organizers.

The thesis, especially the sections on the economy and on the activities of the Palestine Government's Labour Department and the unions themselves, relies heavily on documents from the British government and from institutional archives. In particular, the reports of the Colonial Office to

the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations provided detailed statistics about immigration, along with information of varying detail about strikes and about unemployment and the development of industry, commerce, infrastructure, and regulation. Not only the Colonial Office's social service files in the Public Record Office, but the archives of the Trades Union Congress, housed at the Modern Records Centre of the University of Warwick, have been extremely valuable. Information about the founding meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions comes from the archives of the Confédération Générale du Travail in Paris.

Concentrating on the major Arab union federations, the thesis presents two points in two different ways. First, the activities of Arab unions were generally those common to many unions. The body of the thesis introduces these activities as they are relevant to the economic and social conditions under examination; the closing sections briefly pull them together. The second point is that the Arab unions operated in political and economic circumstances which, unlike their activities, were only partly normal. Their situation was rendered exceptional in various ways by the presence of the Jewish National Home. Aspects of this point give this thesis its form. Chapter 1 examines the proposition that until 1942, forces that promoted unionization among Jewish workers helped retard development of unions among Arab workers. Chapter 2 offers evidence that until



1942, Arab workers were the only wholehearted advocates of Arab unionization, despite ambivalent outsiders' gestures towards organizing. Chapter 3 explores how, beginning in 1942, Arab workers benefited from a kind of economic situation and of organizing support that enabled them to develop strong, growing unions. It then places these unions in relation to common practice on several aspects of union operation. The conclusion points out some implications of the unions' circumstances and course of development.

## Chapter 1

### Arab Workers in a Divided Home, 1917-1942

The British conquest of 1917 turned the Palestinian economy in a new direction, changing the nature of work for tens of thousands of Arabs and creating conditions in which Arab unions were both needed and possible. Before World War I, most Palestinians were farmers living in small communities. British rule brought Palestine new, capitalist economic structures, including those of an aggressively developing Zionist settler colony. In the 1920s, Western firms established the first wave of large, mechanized industrial enterprises and Arabs began to move to the cities. The colonial administration itself quickly became a mass employer. An Arab industrial workforce began to form, and Arab workers began to feel the pressures of their unfamiliar economic surroundings. This chapter describes both their response -- an impetus to form labor unions -- and the workings of an economic force that for some twenty-five years, until 1942, severely limited their ability to act on that response.

### Building on the Foundations of Others

In responding to the new kinds of enterprises, the new industrial workforce could look to precedents in neighboring countries where such enterprises had already been established. At first many of Palestine's Arab industrial workers would have been former urban artisans.<sup>1</sup> They would have been

well-placed to hear news from up and down the coast, and that news would have included unions and strikes. Middle Eastern workers had begun union activities before World War I. Ottoman railroad, dock, and manufacturing workers in Anatolia conducted a wave of strikes after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, and some formed labor organizations.<sup>2</sup> Egyptian tram workers, too, struck before the war. Then, in 1919, strikes of tram, railroad, and other workers formed an important part of the Egyptian revolution.<sup>3</sup> News of the Ottoman labor actions may have reached Palestinian Arabs who were later to become industrial workers. News of the Egyptian unions and strikes certainly reached Palestinian Arabs working for the railroad. The British had conscripted Egyptians to work in Palestine during the war, and in the 1920s Egyptians were still working for Palestine Railways. Perhaps not coincidentally, workers in the Haifa railroad shops would be the first Palestinian Arabs to investigate forming a labor union.<sup>4</sup>

The situation of the Palestinian Arab workers of the British era resembled that of their earlier counterparts in several ways. Although neither the Ottoman Empire, nor Egypt, nor Palestine, was technically a European colony, indigenous wage workers in all three shared the characteristic circumstances of workers in colonized countries. Like the Palestinians, the Ottoman and Egyptian strikers had been employed mainly in large firms whose owners and executives were Europeans; the technical and supervisory personnel,

foreigners (or local Christians). The laborers in these enterprises were mainly Muslims, and Muslim workers were mainly limited to laborers' positions. With less access to schooling, especially in Western subjects, Muslim workers were less likely than their colleagues to be literate or to be familiar with European languages. They were thus less likely to be aware of European political or economic ideas, such as the concept of organized labor. Foreign workers -- often Greeks or Italians -- or Christian workers were generally the ones who set up labor unions, because they had belonged to or read about unions in Europe. They continued to control the new unions, negotiating contract clauses for their own benefit; some such unions actually excluded local or Muslim workers from membership. From this experience, local workers learned several lessons, common to colonial workers, about unions. Unions were effective; employers understood, even when they did not willingly tolerate, them; and, when run by foreigners or a local worker elite, they brought little or no benefit to the mass of workers.

Although the Palestinian Arab workers of the Haifa railroad yards probably knew of the union experience of their neighbors, they were not familiar with unions in their own country. The economy of Ottoman Palestine had offered no place for labor organizations. In the second half of the nineteenth century, granted, European merchants had increasingly built on earlier connections in Palestine. The country rapidly developed as a source of agricultural pro-

ducts -- olive oil soap, grain, olive oil, cotton, wine, and, increasingly, oranges -- but not as a shipping center or manufacturing site that would bring together a sizable workforce. Although the Palestinian ports were becoming busier, none was among the eleven most active Ottoman ports at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Ottoman local enterprise was hampered by a system of trading privileges (called "capitulations") that placed the Europeans beyond competition. Most wealthy Middle Easterners, including Palestinians, found investment in land and moneylending just as profitable as investment in industry, and far more secure.<sup>6</sup> Ottoman Arab Palestine had, therefore, no large manufacturing or shipping enterprises. Most Palestinians worked on their own family farms, and waged jobs were dispersed among small farms and urban workshops that generally employed no more than one or two hands.

Not only the small size but the cultural insulation of the workforces kept Palestinian Arab workers from the idea of forming unions. Most employers of the late Ottoman era were, like their employees, Arabs; even in the few workplaces with more than a dozen employees, notably the soap factories, any adjustments in the terms of employment were made through procedures established in the local culture.<sup>7</sup> Arabs also worked, however, in Jewish enterprises. Many of these were larger than most Arab enterprises, but they still did not have the mixed workforces that would have brought Arab workers into contact with the European concept of the

union. Employers were reluctant to hire the Jewish immigrants who arrived in waves after 1904; these were mostly socialists, mostly inexperienced in their new occupations, and unwilling to work for the same pay as Arabs.<sup>8</sup> In Jewish firms, Arabs' very attractions as employees ensured that they had little chance to encounter the concept of unions.

Once the British established their administration, known as the Government of Palestine, Arab employment patterns began to shift. Arab workers quickly came into the new, large workplaces where experienced unionists were among their co-workers. Notably, the Public Works Department employed a mainly Arab workforce of both men and women to construct a system of roads, railroads, and public buildings.<sup>9</sup> Soon the Department became the largest employer of Arab workers. Most of these, admittedly, remained isolated in the countryside. A growing number, however, went to Haifa and Jaffa to do construction or railroad work. Besides the government, private Arab and Jewish builders along the coastal plain required skilled artisans and laborers. The coastal cities also offered jobs with Arab or Jewish manufacturing enterprises and British or international corporations. By 1920, a stable, urban Arab industrial workforce had begun to form. From the first, most Arab workers were routinely directed into jobs classified as unskilled. Nevertheless, some of them -- especially the small proportion who were considered skilled -- met Italian, Greek, and, most numerous, Jewish co-workers familiar with unions. In this

setting, at the beginning of the 1920s, Arab workers in the largest workplace in British Palestine -- the Haifa railroad maintenance yards -- observed the union of their Jewish co-workers and began to look to unions as the way to defend their interests and improve their situation.

In the summer of 1921, the Arab railroad workers -- many of them skilled mechanics -- started moving towards unionization. They first asked their Jewish co-workers to admit them into their union, which was affiliated with the Histadrut. The Histadrut, however, hesitated to admit Arabs. The Arab railroad workers, for their part, had no intention of joining a Zionist political body, as the Histadrut clearly was; they sought a simple labor union. The leftist leaders of the Jewish railroad union attempted to convince the Histadrut to divide itself into a binational union and a Zionist political organization. They did not succeed. After a short period of tentative Arab membership during the winter of 1924-1925, the leaders of the Arab railroad workers left the Histadrut-affiliated union.<sup>10</sup>

In March 1925, the Arab railroad shop workers, now with nearly four years' experience in dealing with a union, founded the first Western-style Palestinian Arab labor organization, the Palestine Arab Workers' Society (PAWS). PAWS would always maintain its strongest base in the Haifa railroad shops. From the first, however, PAWS leaders plainly conceived of their organization as a nascent federation. Shortly after founding PAWS in Haifa, they established a

union presence -- and, for a time at least, their own authority -- in other Arab urban centers. PAWS set up its first branches in Jaffa and Jerusalem, where Arab workers were evidently ready to experiment with labor organization. During the next two decades, these branches and others would secede and reaffiliate, fragment and reorganize. Whatever the circumstances of these shifts, they indicate that unions were important to members and leaders. The unionists were intent on ensuring that their unions would represent their interests as they saw them. PAWS itself was to endure -- although in the late 1920s and late 1930s barely active -- for more than twenty years. Arab unions, once established, were to disappear only with Mandate Palestine.

### An Economy Designed to Succeed

The effect on Arab unions of the Zionist settler-colonial project went far beyond their first experience with the Histadrut railroad union. The Zionist proto-state, known to the international community as the Jewish National Home, was to alter every aspect of Palestinian Arabs' economic and social life, from job security to domestic arrangements. Most conspicuous was the impact on the hundreds of thousands of Arab farmers. Arab wage workers, although they represented a far smaller proportion of the population, felt the effects of Zionist settlement no less sharply.

The Jewish National Home had an economy of its own, one designed to succeed. Its development drew financial and



political support from Zionists around the world. Turning a profit was not the primary purpose of the great Zionist-backed enterprises, whether private, like the Palestine Electric Company, or communal, like the Histadrut's construction and shipping concerns. These companies had two other, more important functions. They filled in sectors of the developing national economy, and they provided jobs for Jewish immigrants. Undercapitalized and redundant small businesses begun by individual immigrants might, and did, go bankrupt. Undeniably, too, the economy of the Jewish National Home reflected periodic economic and political strains on its overseas supporters. Given the support of Zionist organizations, however, and backed by the widespread international commitment enforced by League of Nations oversight, the keystones of the Zionist economy could not fail.

This sheltered economic setting was the workplace of the settler-colonial Zionist workers. Their union federation, the Histadrut, was backed from its founding in 1920 by the established political dominance of Labor Zionism in the yishuv. The Histadrut had been chosen and funded to provide major industries in the economy. The workers' wages and working conditions were designed as beacons to draw immigrants from Europe. Like the economy of the Jewish National Home, the Zionist workers and their unions were sheltered from competition.

While the yishuv established its own economic, social, and political institutions, it still affected and was af-

fects by the Arab society that surrounded it. The extent of Zionist autonomy relative to economic interaction between the Arab and Jewish communities has provoked lengthy argument among historians.<sup>11</sup> Plainly visible, at a minimum, are the intercommunal relations of employer and employee, buyer and seller. Although these varied in form and extent with political and economic circumstance, they persisted throughout the British period.

Beyond these individual transactions, the economic course of the yishuv determined the shape and strength of the overall economy of Palestine under British rule. The impact of Zionist institutions on Arab workers, in particular, took three forms: creation of periods of nationwide prosperity and depression through fluctuations in immigration; direct and heavily subsidized competition with Arab employers for markets and with Arab workers for jobs; and Zionist-backed government regulations and practices that, while assisting Zionist firms and workers, harmed Arab businesses and discriminated against Arab workers. British immigration, employment, and tariff policies provided indispensable -- although not unlimited -- support to the Zionist drive to establish a large population, a well-paid workforce, and vital industries. One of the net effects of this triple impact was severe limitation, until the economic expansion of World War II, of Arab access to industrial jobs in large workplaces. The patterns of operation of the Jewish National Home thus limited the constituency for Arab unions.

The Effects of Immigration. The economy of British

Palestine responded very directly to both the numbers and the economic status of Zionist immigrants. In years when immigrants were numerous, industries providing basic necessities -- the construction industry in particular -- flourished, especially on the coastal plain. Arab builders made profits, Arab construction workers had jobs, and landlords raised rents. The cost of living rose for everybody. When a high proportion of immigrants brought capital and started enterprises, they created jobs, mostly for the existing Jewish population. Arabs seeking work in the government or in mixed or Jewish enterprises encountered less competition from unemployed Jewish workers. During years when total immigration was low, however, unemployment of both Arabs and Jews rose as demand for new housing and other necessities fell. Even in years when immigration was high, unemployment rose if too many immigrants brought only their need for work and too few brought capital.

In theory, unemployment -- disproportion between the number of immigrants and the number of available jobs -- should not have occurred. According to a policy set forth in 1922, the British were to authorize entry for only as many workers as were consonant with the country's "economic absorptive capacity." This system was flawed. British control over the number of actual immigrants was ineffective; the political considerations of London politicians often inflated the semi-annual projections of how many immigrants

the economy could absorb; and Arab unemployment was not considered in the calculation of the estimate. When unemployment among Jewish workers was high, both Zionist organizations and the British administration set up work projects or even relief payments, the British diverting funds from their already strained budget. Unemployed Arabs were assumed to be rural migrants and so to be able to turn to families, and perhaps return to farmland, in their home villages. The British in 1934 corrected what they considered an oversight by altering their definition of "unemployment" to exclude Arab farmers seeking work "in the agricultural dead season"; they would make no attempt to determine whether these people and their families could live without outside work.<sup>12</sup>

After mid-1935, the effects of other exceptionally powerful economic and political forces, along with the growing difficulty of Jewish escape from Europe, would reduce the relative impact of immigration on Palestine's economy. In the 1920s and early 1930s, however, the effects of immigration were evident and immediate. Tracing the broad interplay of immigration, capital import, and employment produces an outline of the ways immigration affected Arab workers and union formation. Immigrants with capital, pushed out by bad conditions in Poland, stimulated prosperity in 1924 and 1925. In two years, immigration quadrupled, probably in large part attracted by reports of high employment and returns on investment. A drop in the value of the Polish currency then cut capital imports. Unemployment increased,

prompting high emigration; in 1927 it exceeded immigration. The departure of disappointed job-seekers, in turn, lessened unemployment. Net immigration, at least of Jews, resumed the following year and continued to grow, despite the shock of the communal violence of August 1929. In the early 1930s, the pace of immigration became frantic as pressure on Jews in Europe increased. Between the beginning of 1932 and the end of 1936, the Jewish population of Palestine more than doubled and its proportion of the total population rose from 16 to 28 percent. The newcomers benefited the economy as both consumers and investors: many German Jews were still able to bring some capital with them. Employment and production developed quickly until the summer of 1935.<sup>13</sup>

By increasing the employment or unemployment of Arab workers, the rate and type of immigration to the Jewish National Home affected the formation and activity of Arab unions. Throughout the period of British rule, Arab workers formed unions in periods of economic expansion, when Arab industrial employment was growing.<sup>14</sup> The Haifa railroad workers founded PAWS during the prosperity of 1924 to 1926; several new unions, mostly of Jaffa crafts workers, appeared during the recovery of 1928; and union activity, particularly in Haifa and Jaffa, was vigorous during the economic growth of 1934 and 1935. Possibly the response was so direct simply because the Arab industrial workforce was initially too small to support unions, and unionization simply paralleled its fitful growth -- quite a different situation than

would obtain in an economy with a large pre-existing proletariat. Expansions of the Arab workforce were likely not only to give the workers themselves an impetus to unionize, but also to attract the attention of outside organizers to the potential of Arab workers as a constituency.

In the autumn of 1935, the good times ended, for the economy and for Arab workers and unions. For neither the first time nor the last, politics cut off Palestine's economic development. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia challenged British supremacy, precipitating a run on the banks; capitalists canceled projects; building virtually ceased; and unemployment rose. A three-year Arab revolt and the Axis closure of the Mediterranean prolonged the depression until British military requirements quickened production in 1942. As the Palestinian economy hibernated, so did Arab union activity. Unions in Jaffa and other cities disintegrated; of PAWS, only the founding branch in Haifa survived, dormant.

"Jewish Labor" and the "European Wage." Zionist immigration was only one of the aspects of the Jewish National Home that affected Arab workers and unions. Although sometimes disastrous, the impact of immigration was largely incidental -- a byproduct of its effect on the Palestinian economy as a whole. Central to Zionist strategy, in contrast, was the deliberate exclusion of Arab workers from jobs in order to offer these, at higher rates of pay, to immigrants. The Zionist goal of Jewish statehood in Palestine required increasing the Jewish proportion of the population:

immigration was vital. The likelihood of employment, external emergencies apart, was evidently the factor that most affected the level of immigration.<sup>15</sup> Zionist policy, therefore, emphasized providing an abundance of well-paid jobs. To this goal, Arab workers presented an obstacle. Because Arabs would work for less than European immigrants would accept, employers who based hiring decisions on normal considerations of profit would hire them in preference to others. Zionist organizations like the Histadrut therefore adopted the goal of "Jewish labor": the establishment or designation of enterprises, industries, and job categories closed to Arab workers.

The Zionist organizations employed varied strategies to secure "Jewish labor." They used nationalist ideology to shame Jewish employers who hired Arabs, and belligerent pickets to intimidate them. They approached the British administration with assertions that Jews had a right to a higher percentage of government jobs than their proportion in the population because they paid a higher proportion of taxes.<sup>16</sup> Both Jewish employers and British administrators resisted this pressure to a certain extent. Jewish workers never completely displaced Arabs from Jewish-owned enterprises, and British officials complained that they could not find enough Jewish applicants for allotted jobs.<sup>17</sup> The campaign nevertheless made steady progress, and Arab workers felt the effects.

"Jewish labor" was only one part of Zionist employment policy. A second aim was the "European wage": institutionalized wage inequity between Arabs and Jews doing the same work. Jewish labor and political organizations had set this distinction as a goal early in the mass settlement process. Waves of Jewish immigrants arriving between 1904 and the outbreak of World War I decided that they did not want to live like Arabs. An obvious solution was to organize Arabs to raise their wages. After considering the risks and benefits of organizing Arab workers, however, the Histadrut in the late 1920s chose, rather, to reduce competition from cheap Arab labor by insisting on higher compensation for Jewish workers. Part of this it secured by building workers' neighborhoods subsidized by the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization.<sup>18</sup> The rest it secured by demanding discriminatory pay scales for Jews.

Powerful though it already was, the Histadrut had no hope of enforcing such rates without the support of both government and private employers.<sup>19</sup> British officials acceded to the demand for a European wage for Jewish government employees, many of them laborers in the Public Works Department, with the strange and circular reasoning that Jews should have a higher income because they had a higher standard of living.<sup>20</sup> To give Arab workers equal pay would also, of course, have raised the government's total wage bill even further than did the "European wage" alone.



Despite government acquiescence, the drive for the "European wage" achieved only mixed results. Among workers classified as skilled, it succeeded only to a limited extent and in some occupations. In jobs considered unskilled, however, the wage of Jewish laborers was consistently higher than that of their Arab counterparts; not uncommonly, it was two to three times as high. By 1935, Histadrut leader David Ben-Gurion was able to point out:

Wherever we find two different standards of living prevailing among the workers, those living at the higher standard are forced to confine themselves to special branches of work. [Except in Palestine] we have not seen an example of an organised and better paid worker acquiring work that is done in the same place by unorganised cheaply-paid workers, and at the same time preserve his high standard of living and his social conquests.<sup>21</sup>

The Government of Palestine even diverted funds from its severely limited budget to help subsidize the "European wage" on public works projects. Zionist organizations consistently pressed for a higher percentage of the total wage bill, rather than of workers, on government projects. Contractors could then divide this among fewer employees. This practice, despite Zionist-subsidized attempts to provide Jewish workers with training and tools that could make them more productive, almost invariably raised production costs: productivity simply did not rise as much as pay did.<sup>22</sup> An Arab union leader told a government commission of inquiry in 1937 that the construction of the 25-kilometer Afula-Beisan

road, let to a Jewish contractor for L85,000, had originally been estimated by government engineers at L27,000.<sup>23</sup> The public budget thus subsidized the building of the Jewish National Home through the public payroll and through contracts, as it had through public works and relief payments.

Selective Tariff Protection. British tariff policies also contributed to the establishment of the Jewish National Home, by helping the Zionists establish the industries they needed to provide jobs and eventually to supply a Jewish state. Through the early 1920s, following its standard policy, the Colonial Office insisted that tariff schedules be designed to produce as much revenue as possible for the colonial administration. In 1924, however, the Zionist organizations began pressing the Government of Palestine and the Colonial Office for tariff policies that would help new Zionist manufacturing enterprises. They sought, and secured, regulations that would lower the cost of importing certain raw materials and raise the price of competing manufactured imports. These policies also helped the relatively few Arab employers using the same materials or manufacturing the same products as the Jewish entrepreneurs. More commonly, Arab manufacturers, workers, and consumers lost money. The tariff changes also reduced government revenue, costing the administration L50,000 in 1926 alone.<sup>24</sup>

The tariff increases raised Arabs' cost of living disproportionately; the decreases destroyed Arabs' jobs. Raising tariffs on manufactured imports raised prices for the

entire population, granted. Owing to inequity of pay scales, however, Arabs in general were less able to meet these increases than were Jews. The consequences of lowering import duties on raw materials were more complex. When Jewish flour mills secured a lowering of tariffs on imported wheat, or Jewish oil mills on sesame, the income of Palestinian Arab wheat and sesame farmers shrank. When Jewish soapmakers imported acid oil instead of using Palestinian olive oil, their production costs fell. The resultant heightening of competition drove out of business about half the major manufacturers of soap, which had been the greatest Arab export. Olive growers, who had normally sold half their crops to the soapmakers, lost a large part of their income. Arab soap and olive oil workers lost jobs, increasing the Arab unemployment rate.

The tariff concessions reached a peak in 1928. Only after the communal rioting of August 1929 did the government review the tariff policies in light of their effect on the majority population. In 1930 the most harmful policies were finally reversed, in the name of civil harmony.<sup>25</sup>

A Quarter-Century of Underemployment. The effects of the "Jewish labor," "European wage," and protective tariff policies on union building among Arabs were direct and chilling. Except in the peak years of the 1930s, destruction of Arab-sector jobs and exclusion from many Jewish- and British-sector jobs maintained a high level of Arab unemployment. For the first twenty-five years of British rule,

Arab workers lacked the base of widespread and long-term industrial employment on which to build enduring unions.

Both the numbers of Arab workers in large enterprises and their proportion in the population remained small; their opportunity for stable industrial experience, smaller. After a quarter-century of urbanization and industrialization, many urban Arab workers were employed in small workshops or as casual laborers; relatively few were railroad mechanics or refinery technicians, factory workers, or even full-time customs porters. Only in 1942, with immigration virtually cut off and production needs growing, would a steady demand for labor begin to expand the Arab industrial workforce. At that point, the development of Arab unions, halting until the prosperous mid-1930s and unattempted since then, would again become possible.

British policies were largely responsible for the limitations of Arabs' chances for industrial jobs. Granted, the process of industrial revolution in Palestine began only after the British invasion in 1917. The lack of industrialization resulted, broadly, from Ottoman policy and local practice and political events, influenced by the European market. Arabs' lack of industrial experience after twenty-five years of British occupation, on the other hand, resulted mainly from the colonial policies of the occupation authorities, influenced by the mandate to establish a Jewish National Home in Palestine and supplemented by the practices of those whose aim was the building of that home as a Jewish

state. The newness of industrial employment and of unions in themselves need not, as labor historian Stanley Greenberg has emphasized, have retarded Arab unionization in the early years of British rule: in the proper circumstances, workers will create industrial unions whether or not the union form is a part of their cultural tradition.<sup>26</sup> In Palestine, these circumstances -- specifically, stable industrial employment for numbers of Arab workers -- were lacking. From the beginning of the British occupation, Arabs wanted wage work: they needed the money. Only with the Allied production demands of World War II, however, did demand for Arab labor overcome the artificial barriers to mass employment of Arabs in industry. When this occurred, Arabs would build unions with startling swiftness.

## Chapter 2

### Inside Organizers, Outside Organizers, 1925-1936

By 1925, Arab workers in large industrial enterprises were becoming an attractive constituency for outside interest groups. Admittedly, at no time before World War II were industrial workers a large proportion of the Arab population. Even their potential number was unusually limited: a relatively high proportion of the population were children and old people, and women were less likely than men to work for wages. The proportion of Arabs who were industrial workers was, however, unmistakably growing. Concentrated in the economically and politically vital coastal strip and within modern industries, they could have an influence beyond their numbers. Arab workers' establishment of their own union, PAWS, in the spring of 1925 must have attracted more attention to them. Several interest groups took notice of the power that Arab industrial workers could exercise if they were organized.

During the next decade, for a variety of reasons, three groups of potential organizers -- the Palestine Communist Party, the Histadrut, and the Arab notables -- decided to bring unions to Arab workers. This chapter suggests some reasons why each of these groups attained the results it did, and why the Arab workers themselves had the greatest success.

### Ambivalence and Ambiguity: Two-Sided Organizers

At the middle and the end of the period between 1925 and 1935, when outside groups were attempting to organize Arab unions, two clusters of political events changed the course of Palestine's development and the lives of all Palestinians. In August 1929, Arabs rioted in Jerusalem and several other cities, killing dozens of Jews. British troops in turn killed many Arabs. The occasion of the outbreak was Arabs' apprehension about militant Jewish initiatives at a site holy to both Muslims and Jews. Beyond this immediate cause, the riots arose from, and stimulated, a redoubled Arab resistance to the growth of the Zionist presence, and a growing sense of national identity. After jailing hundreds of Arabs, the British began re-examining colonial policies in light of the newly-emphasized Arab attitudes. Zionist leaders, for their part, became less hopeful that they could establish their state without serious Arab resistance.<sup>1</sup>

Even more tremendous in their consequences were the events often termed collectively "the Revolt": a six-month Arab strike and boycott in 1936 followed by an armed insurrection from the fall of 1937 to early 1939. The Revolt signaled Arabs' outrage at intensified immigration and at a British plan to give part of Palestine to the immigrants. Bringing most of Palestine under Arab rule in the summer of 1938, it again strengthened British and Zionist appreciation of Arab determination. It also heightened the national con-

sciousness of the Arabs themselves, becoming an enduring standard of unity and national purpose.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of these wrenching political events, the Communists, the Histadrut, and the Arab notables made their attempts to mobilize the support of Arab workers. The three groups had several points in common. Each of them was ambivalent about the task. Each suffered clear drawbacks from the point of view of the workers themselves. Each attained limited success, ranging from moderate to imperceptible.

The Palestine Communist Party. For half a decade, the Palestine Communist Party suffered serious inherent obstacles to organizing Arab workers. Until 1929 overwhelmingly Jewish in both members and leaders, the party was, from the time of its admission to the Communist International (Comintern) in 1924, under orders to acquire Arab leaders and members or face expulsion. Party leaders, however, seem to have been divided. Jewish workers were more attractive prospects for membership. Not only were they more numerous than the Arab proletariat, but they were culturally familiar. The PCP leaders also were less interested in organizing separate unions than in infiltrating the Histadrut. This lack of interest, along with the PCP's commitment to internationalism, probably lay behind editorials in the party's paper, Haifa, discouraging Arabs from forming their own unions. A natural result was the constriction of organizing efforts.<sup>3</sup>



Two basic characteristics of the early PCP organizers handicapped them further. To most Arab workers, the commonly European-born PCP members would have appeared simply a part of the wave of immigrants flooding into their country. In addition, both Arab notables and the popular nationalist newspapers read in villages across Palestine presented Communism as an alien and disruptive creed. The PCP's development of some Arab leaders, partly by sending them to university in Moscow from 1925 on, began to change the situation. By the late 1920s, aided by its unambiguous support of Arab farmers in a 1924 land dispute and of the Arab cause in the aftermath of the riots of 1929, the PCP was able to recruit Arabs in some numbers.

The new, Arab Communists had a direct impact on union organizing. Many were industrial workers and, later, intellectuals interested in building a workers' movement. In union organizing and other projects, Arab Communists worked with other Arab intellectuals -- notably, with members of Istiqlal, a left-nationalist group that functioned as a political party from 1932 to 1934 and remained active in nationalist initiatives to the end of British rule. By the 1930s, Communists were among the most active and successful organizers of unions among the Arabs of Palestine (as they were elsewhere during the same period). The Communists did not try to establish a separate union federation, nor were the unions they helped to build explicitly Communist. Rather, Communists became the leaders of these unions, such as

the Jaffa Transport Society, as well as of existing unions, notably the independent Jaffa Arab Labor Federation.

The Histadrut. In organizing Arabs, the Histadrut, like the early PCP, was limited both by the extent of its commitment and by its ethnic and ideological identity. The leaders of this Zionist political and economic institution were deeply divided about the desirability of unionizing Arabs. Those who favored such an effort argued that a binational union would reduce the competition of "cheap Arab labor." At the same time, it would show the Arab population in general -- as well as the British and the world community -- that Zionist settlement was benefiting Arabs. It would also, countered other Histadrut officials, provide Arabs with organizational skills that they might turn to opposing Zionist colonization. This argument was to recur, with varying emphases and outcomes, until the Revolt made it irrelevant a decade later. The Histadrut meanwhile arrived at the formulation that it would itself constitute the Jewish segment of a hypothetical binational labor federation whose Arab component did not yet exist.

The Histadrut chose two means of cultivating relationships with Arab workers. In July 1925, soon after the Arab railroad workers left the Histadrut railroad union and formed PAWS, the Histadrut opened a "General Workers' Club" for Arab workers in Haifa. Offering literacy classes, sports, and cooperatives, the club by the late 1920s enrolled about a hundred members. In 1927, meanwhile, the Hista-

drut assigned an organizer to begin forming the Arab segment of the proposed binational federation, christening the new organization the Palestine Labor League. Retarded by the depression and interrupted by the 1929 riots, the PLL began organizing unions only in 1931. It opened its one branch of the 1930s in Jaffa in 1934.<sup>4</sup>

Arab workers sometimes responded to the PLL's overtures in order to secure the benefits and support it could offer. Their response was limited, however, by reluctance to support a leading Zionist organization.<sup>5</sup> Other factors -- on the economic level, the Histadrut's "Jewish labor" drive and, on the cultural level, the PLL's obvious assumption of a mission civilisatrice -- also would have made Arabs hesitate to commit themselves to it. Throughout the British occupation, then, Arab workers occasionally called on the PLL or other Histadrut unions for help. Often, however, they simultaneously turned to PAWS or some other Arab union.

The Arab notables. To prominent Arab politicians, the workers apparently represented a way to maintain support in factional rivalries, as well as in contention with the Zionists. Since the nineteenth century, urban notables had served groups of villages as patrons -- landlords, moneylenders, and protectors in face of central authority. Now villagers were moving from the mountain districts, where the notables' influence was strong, to the coast, where society was more fluid, and from the village to the city. Their ties to their villages remained strong; many lived in city neighborhoods

with former village neighbors or returned home frequently to visit or to work on family farms. On their return the migrants often brought back ideas which began to change village assumptions about, among other things, authority and loyalty. Given the dilution of villagers' allegiance, notables apparently looked for ways to retain their respective factions' levels of influence. They recognized the union as a form that could attract a new and dynamic constituency.

The notables' greatest handicap was that, like the Histadrut, they hesitated to develop responsibility or initiative among those outside their own group. Their political tactics for achieving national liberation rarely included even temporary mass mobilization, nor did their union initiatives show any greater interest in developing a potential for independent action. An organized citizenry would endanger their control once liberation was attained.

The notables conducted their major organizing efforts during a single year, 1934, in which two factions established political parties. Jamal Husayni, a leader in the dominant family faction, proclaimed himself head of a Jerusalem union that summer, shortly before his family launched their Palestine Arab Party. In the fall, the strongest rival faction, the Nashashibis, prepared to set up their National Defense Party. Fakhri Nashashibi took over a union in Jaffa, attracting workers through resistance to the "Jewish labor" drive. Nashashibi's chosen issue combined workers' concern about employment with the national interest, which he and

they shared, in confining Zionist expansion. Zionist pickets at the orange groves were demanding that the owners replace their Arab workers with Jews; Nashashibi organized counter picketing. After that highly visible campaign, however, he gave no further recorded attention to union activities.<sup>6</sup>

From the workers' point of view, the notables had two disadvantages as organizers. First, they lacked the power to defend workers against British or Zionist employers. In Palestine, as in many other colonies, the British delegated to indigenous leaders some authority over their own sector of the population -- but most large-scale industrial employment was outside the Arab sector. Within the Arab sector, the notables were burdened by a second disadvantage: their obvious class interests. Even those who were not themselves employers were likely to have relatives who were. Constricted by both their perceived interests and their situation, the notables made no extended effort to organize unions.

The three outside organizing groups of the 1920s and 1930s achieved results that were limited in extent, in duration, or in both. The limitations stemmed from their own reservations and from the drawbacks to workers inherent in their political or economic position. The Communists were unable to unionize groups of Arab workers as long as their own members and leaders were almost exclusively Jewish. The PCP overcame this disability when it recruited Arab workers; these became successful organizers. The Histadrut's PLL, although active to the end of the British period, never became

large. In 1945 it claimed 2,500 members; the following year, the Government of Palestine described it as "after the rise of an independent Arab trade union movement ... ceasing to have any effective influence."<sup>7</sup> As for the Arab notables, judging from results, they had greater differences with Arab workers than did either the Arab Communists or the PLL. No union that the notables initiated developed a history of activity as long as it remained in notable hands. The militant and growing unions of the 1920s and 1930s were those that Arab workers themselves organized.

### Starting a Union Tradition

By the mid-1920s, several conditions conducive to union organizing had arisen in Arabs' workplaces and in society. Low pay and bad working conditions made work life burdensome and survival challenging. Both the discrimination of managers and Zionist pressure for "Jewish labor" required organized defense. Outside groups urged workers to join unions. The activities of Jewish unionists demonstrated what a strong union could do, while the Haifa railroad workers with their own union, PAWS, provided an Arab example.

Beyond the big Haifa shops organized by PAWS, urban Arab workers, especially in the cosmopolitan coastal cities, began to try forming unions. In 1928, as the economy recovered from the extreme stagnation and unemployment of the previous two years, Jaffa and Haifa craftsmen in construction and some other skilled trades set up labor organiza-

tions. The Arab workers of Jaffa, in particular, founded a range of unions. Groups of 20 printers, 84 building laborers, 120 carpenters, and 140 carpenters specializing in the citrus industry -- each experimented with unionization. Most of the new unions, according to British officials, were seeking better working conditions, although within two years the British reported that Arab workers had another major goal in establishing unions: to locate jobs.<sup>8</sup>

The new unions of the late 1920s did not grow and become strong. Few survived for even a few years. By 1931, British officials noted the existence of only two "active" Arab unions in all of Palestine. Both were in Jaffa: the carpenters, whose membership had grown to 150, and the Orthodox Cooperative Labor Society, at 300. Each offered its members help in getting medical care and finding jobs. These exceptions aside, "the promise held out in 1930 of a development in the organization of Arab trade unions was not fulfilled," as the Colonial Office reported. "The activities of these unions dwindled and most of them became practically dormant."<sup>9</sup> Jaffa workers' strong impulse to experiment with a new form of organization remains no less significant than the fact that the earliest experiments did not create permanent institutions. Their mere establishment testifies to workers' awareness that they could defend their interests better by uniting than by cultivating their individual relations with their employer, and that they needed more than

mutual economic or social support to meet their new conditions of employment.

During the late 1920s, particularly during the economic recovery of 1928 to 1930, Arab workers experimented not only with unions, but with strikes. Even in the depression of 1927, 62 Jews and 37 Arabs at the Jewish-owned Nur Match Factory in Acre struck for better pay and sanitary conditions. They held out for five months, and they were partly successful.<sup>10</sup> The next year, 1928, eighty Arab men and thirty boys working in a cigarette factory struck successfully when their employer attempted to lengthen their hours of work. Strikes were still not common in Palestine; the British recorded only eleven that year, but Arab workers held or took part in four of these, a higher proportion than their share in the workforce would suggest.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the 1920s, a national labor conference indicated to what extent Arab workers had become sophisticated in the economic and political possibilities of the labor union. After the riots of August 1929 drew Arabs' attention to their common situation, a group of Arab Communist workers and PAWS set out to organize a national conference of Palestinian Arab workers. Preparatory meetings reportedly involved four to six thousand workers in a dozen cities and towns from Jerusalem to the coast. These workers may or may not have defined a union in the same way as their counterparts in Detroit or Alexandria or Tel Aviv. Their participation shows, however, that a mass of Arab wage earners appar-



ently believed that in union is strength, and they wanted to grasp that strength.<sup>12</sup>

The site and composition of the conference, held on 11 January 1930, reflected the structure of the Arab workforce at that point. The meeting took place in Haifa, Palestine's industrial center and the home base of PAWS. Most of the 61 delegates were workers elected from their workplaces: Haifa railroad workers; Jaffa craft workers -- bakers, painters, and masons; and construction workers. A handful were intellectuals; one was a village notable.<sup>13</sup> The organizers had made efforts to maintain the ties which until a dozen years before had identified Palestine as part of Ottoman Syria. Although Syria's French rulers had refused exit visas to the invited delegates, two Syrians who were already in Palestine represented their country's workers.

The Congress' discussions and decisions indicate the range of Arab unionists' political and union awareness at that point. Some delegates defended the interests of Arab employers on nationalist grounds. Despite arguments that a fourteen-hour work day would build up the "national economy," however, delegates approved Communist-backed resolutions calling for an eight-hour day, for pay equal to that of Jewish workers, for the right to strike, and for government hiring of Arab workers in proportion to their percentage in the population. Further resolutions outlined an ambitious program for a proposed national union federation.

Other Congress resolutions indicate that delegates recognized the national interests which they shared with Arab employers -- retaining Arab control over their country and remaining part of a wider Arab entity -- as well as their class interests in securing from Arab employers a fair wage and the eight-hour day. These political resolutions also indicate that participants took the normal leftist position, identifying their main adversary as the British colonial power, which, they pointed out, handed out concessions to foreigners, treated political prisoners as criminals, and steadfastly refused to institute either a minimum wage or a standard workday.<sup>14</sup>

The delegates' evident sophistication in political and union matters was to have few visible results. The idea of a strong national labor union federation had run ahead of both the will and the capacity of the Arab workforce. The vast majority of Arab wage workers were not in large capitalist enterprises where Western-style unions were the obvious response to the employers.

Although relatively few were in a position to join unions, Arab workers in a wide range of circumstances were accumulating new organizational experience. Artisans in small urban Arab workshops periodically made demands and went on strike. They also formed collective institutions to serve the purposes important to them. Most commonly, to secure mutual aid, they established cooperatives and friendly societies. Some local workers' organizations, like the

Arab Workers' Party which a Nablus notable founded in 1924, included employers or independent artisans as well as wage-earners. Some, like the Orthodox Cooperative Labor Society formed in Jaffa in 1924, specifically organized Christians.<sup>15</sup> All offered workers organizational experience that they could apply in unions when their work circumstances shifted.

The new workers. Not only established urban artisans but newly arrived rural migrants were setting up organizations to meet their own needs even while the industrial workers' unions of the early 1930s took hold and grew. The urban prosperity and rural want of the period 1932 through 1935 drew job-seekers to the coastal cities -- especially Haifa -- in even greater numbers than during the 1920s. In the countryside, land sales by landlords, usury, population growth, and bad crop years made it increasingly difficult for families to live from the land they cultivated or to be fully employed there. By 1930, only one farm family in five held enough land to support its members.<sup>16</sup> Many of the underemployed sought work locally as farm laborers or on the Public Works Department's road gangs. Still, thousands of farmers -- unemployed, seasonally unemployed, or underemployed -- left their villages in the inland hill country. Some simply moved to inland cities or sought work in the orchards and fields of the coastal plain. The most common destination, however, was the coastal cities.<sup>17</sup>

The coast was not hospitable to incoming country people. Many established urban workers were already competing for jobs with long hours and low pay. Destitute refugees from the Hauran, a drought-parched Syrian wheat-growing region, or from Trans-Jordan were willing to work for even less. The Histadrut was vigorously pursuing its "Jewish labor" campaign as the immigrant population doubled in the early 1930s. Some of the rural newcomers sought day labor jobs as, for example, porters at the Haifa customs sheds. The port authorities paid such "casual" laborers at a lower rate than their small corps of regularly employed porters. Other workers found day labor in the building trades. Some rural migrants took up petty street trading -- for example, in kerosene for stoves -- or services, like carrying merchandise for shopkeepers. High living costs compounded the problems of uncertain income. Finding no housing in the dilapidated workers' quarters of the cities, peasant job-seekers settled on the outskirts in shanties put together from flattened gasoline cans. In 1935, 11,160 people in Haifa were reportedly living in 2,473 such huts.<sup>18</sup>

In these difficult and unkind surroundings, the migrants and the destitute fashioned organizations to give them social and economic comfort. Those from the same village often organized hometown-based benevolent societies. Many held fast to the familiar practices of their religion. Masses of Haifa's Muslim poor attended the Istiqlal Mosque, which had recently opened in a new industrial area near the

railroad yards. The mosque's popular prayer leader, a Cairo-educated Lebanese intellectual, had fled to Palestine after resisting the French invasion of his country. This imam, 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, organized the most devout among his congregation not only for religious study but, in some cases, for training -- which would later be put to use -- in guerrilla tactics against an occupying power.<sup>19</sup>

Arab workers were approaching organization in ways that their differing situations suggested. Through their experiments with cooperatives, village societies, and religious and paramilitary groups, as well as unions, the new city-dwellers of the early 1930s became familiar with the process of organizing themselves.

The Jaffa Arab Labor Society. While many urban workers organized outside the workplace, some of the relatively few employed in large-scale industry were going on to establish strong, active unions. By the mid-1930s, militant Arab unions were operating in both Jaffa and Haifa. The history of the Jaffa Arab Labor Society shows how much a strong impetus to collective action, encouraged by dedicated organizers, can accomplish in the absence of either a tradition of Western-style unions or modern industries. Jaffa's one advantage as a base for unions was that it had begun growing and developing in the 1880s, two decades earlier than Haifa. Its workers in the building trades and the citrus industry had had a chance to develop a sense of identification with their work.

Jaffa in the early British period has been called "the economic and cultural nerve center of Arab Palestine."<sup>20</sup> It was a nerve center of the nascent Arab labor movement also. In 1922 the city had just quadrupled in size during a 40-year period. The cornerstones of its economy, and its largest employers, were the citrus orchards and the port, Palestine's most active until Haifa surpassed it in 1930. Between 1927 and 1934, imports through Jaffa multiplied by ten; by 1935, exports had multiplied by five.<sup>21</sup> The port and the citrus industry, along with the building trades, were the prime focus of Jaffa's labor movement.

In Jaffa's idiosyncratic economy, different groups, at different times, experimented with several forms of association, more or less well suited to their changing conditions of work. Jaffa was the base of the Orthodox Cooperative Labor Society, which served Orthodox Christian workers from 1924 into the 1930s. Jaffa's boatmen were indispensable to the port, which had no docks for seagoing vessels but depended on lighters to load and unload ships standing off a treacherous coast. In 1931 the owners and workers on the boats established a Lightermen's Society. Meanwhile, Jaffa building and other trades workers had founded many of the short-lived specialized trade unions of the late 1920s.

In the mid-1930s, when the economy was strong and outside organizers provided further impetus, Jaffa's Arab workers were able to build a strong union on these organizing foundations. The city's first general union had been a

PAWS branch, which seceded by 1929. This may have been the union that Fakhri Nashashibi reportedly took over in 1934 as the Jaffa Arab Labor Federation. In 1935 the Federation's head, originally appointed by Nashashibi, was a young Christian engineer named Michel Mitri. That summer, he in turn enlisted George Mansur, also a Christian and a former bakery worker and teacher, as the union's secretary. Mitri and Mansur were evidently gifted organizers. By 1937, the JALF had a registered membership of 4,700; according to Mansur, two thousand people commonly turned out to the union's public meetings.<sup>22</sup>

The JALF spent much of its energy defending the jobs of Arab workers. In a normal economy, job protection would be a natural but not always prominent part of union work. In Jaffa, Zionist unions gave it a distinctive emphasis. By attacking specifically Arab employment, they confounded nationality with job security. They thereby redefined what might have been a normal economic competition for employment as a national issue, not only for themselves, but for Arab workers. Their drive for "Jewish labor" in the orange groves and the building and building materials industries demanded much of the JALF's attention. At the same time, it may have helped the union by keeping Arab workers aware of their need for organized resistance.

On the organizational level, for a time in late 1934, the JALF faced the rivalry of the Histadrut's PLL. The League made an impressive beginning in this first branch

outside of Haifa, defending customs porters, leather workers, and textile workers, and organizing lighter workers (apparently disillusioned with their partnership with the boat owners). The PLL also opened a workers' club near the port. Its chosen pattern of operation, demonstrated in Haifa, would have been to get a contract for port employees and then add Jewish workers to an all-Arab workforce. In Jaffa in 1934 and 1935, however, the PLL faced -- and failed to resolve -- its essential dilemma: how is a union to attract workers from a group whose jobs its parent organization is trying to take away? True, the PLL was not organizing in the same factories and industries that the Histadrut "Jewish labor" pickets were harassing. As the picketing intensified, however, PLL members quietly fell away, and the Jaffa branch became inactive.

In response to the variety of assaults on its members and itself, the JALF mobilized a range of tactics that would be familiar to any responsible Western union official. Of these, counterpicketing was only the most conspicuous. When, in late 1934, the Jewish management of a quarry bowed to the request of the Tel Aviv Labor Council to lay off its workforce of some 430 Arabs and replace them with Jews, the JALF encouraged the workers to simply refuse to leave; after seventeen days, the management gave up its attempt. When the British broke precedent by giving a Jewish builder a contract to construct three schools in Arab neighborhoods, the JALF both picketed and lodged official protests until -- a



partial victory -- the British directed the contractor to employ as many Arabs as Jews. When, in December 1935, a thousand JALF members were unemployed, the Federation planned a march whose aims combined the immediate issue -- jobs for unemployed workers -- with a protest against the roots of that unemployment as the JALF saw them: "Jewish labor" picketing, attempted Judaization of port work, and the underlying concept of "economic absorptive capacity." The JALF leaders were making the connection, for their members and to the British, between the economic problem and its political context.<sup>23</sup>

In March 1936, Mitri called a planning meeting for a second labor congress, which was in some ways to resemble, in some ways to differ from, that of 1930. Delegates to the planning conference convened from eleven towns. The aim, as in 1930, was to establish a network of unions around the country.<sup>24</sup> Once again, leftists were prominent; this time, however, in the persons of Mitri (a socialist) and Mansur (a former Communist), they were among the leaders of the convening union. The most hopeful change was in the economy. Although it had entered a depression the preceding summer, it remained far more developed than it had been six years earlier, and many more Arabs had begun working for wages.

Although the conditions for union organizing had improved in the interim, the 1936 planning meeting produced no more results than the 1930 congress. Two events, one apparently personal, one clearly political, intervened before the

participants could achieve any lasting results. In the fall of 1936, Mitri was murdered. Most historians who have noted the killing have agreed that the motive was never shown to be political.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the murderer intended, however, the JALF lost its leading force at a time when it especially needed strong and intelligent direction. On 15 April 1936, shortly after the planning meeting and several months before Mitri's death, Arabs -- reportedly followers of the imam 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam -- held up a bus in the Galilee and killed two Jewish passengers. The next night, Jews near Tel-Aviv killed two Arab citrus workers. On 19 April, general disorder broke out in Jaffa; by 21 April committees in towns throughout Palestine had called the strike and boycott of Jewish businesses and customers that led to the Revolt. It would take the British three years to restore order.<sup>26</sup>

Jaffa suffered badly during the last half of the 1930s, partly, but not entirely, because of the disturbances. Its port never recovered from the opening of the port of Tel Aviv in the summer of 1936, evidently a response to Arab workers' closure of the port of Jaffa but also a known Zionist goal. A glut on the world market cut prices for the citrus exports on which Jaffa's economy rested. The city suffered physically as well. In June 1936, the British removed a stubborn source of support for the disorders -- and dispersed a concentration of workers -- by destroying a large portion of Jaffa's old city as well as an outlying "tin-town" of gasoline-can shanties.<sup>27</sup> The strike and

boycott, in themselves, harmed many of Jaffa's Arab workers and its Arab unions, which were not firmly enough established to keep up such demanding initiatives. Many employees who tried to return to work in Jewish concerns found their jobs permanently occupied by Jewish workers. In the depression which continued to hold the Palestinian economy until World War II, the JALF and other Jaffa Arab unions disappeared.

The union experience of Jaffa in the mid-1930s demonstrates that Arab workers there were eager to join unions and that Jaffa Arabs had developed skills both in union organizing and in using a range of generally accepted union tactics. They were in the spring of 1936 poised for a second effort at national organizing, which had a better chance of success than that of 1930. Political and personal events blocked this drive to broader organization, but did not destroy it. Jaffa unionists, still noted for their leftist outlook, were to take a leading role in the Palestinian Arab labor movements of the mid-1940s.

PAWS in Haifa. Haifa, unlike Jaffa, was a classic setting for union development. From the 1920s onward, the city attracted large, capitalist enterprises whose workforces included employees from backgrounds with union traditions. The British administration, Jewish immigrants and organizations, and international corporations all were investing heavily in industry there from the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s. Before the 1905 arrival of the Hejaz Railway, Haifa had been "an

insignificant little town on the Syrian coast between Jaffa and Beyrout."<sup>28</sup> Thirty years later, it was the major industrial center of Palestine. Massive construction projects, beginning in 1929 and at their height employing 1,800 workers, culminated in 1933 with the opening of the new deep-water harbor. Imports through Haifa multiplied nearly eightfold between 1926 and 1935; exports (not including petroleum) nearly tripled between 1934 and 1937.<sup>29</sup> In 1934, the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) pipeline reached its Haifa terminus. The British continued to build new facilities, such as an oil dock (completed in 1936) and refinery (completed in 1939). The eastern shore of Haifa Bay became an industrial zone with many Jewish- and multinationally-owned plants and a housing development for Jewish workers. In Haifa, Palestinian Arabs worked alongside Jews and expatriate Arabs and Europeans in enterprises run on Western capitalist lines.

PAWS saw its opportunity in the growth in numbers and sophistication of an Arab industrial workforce. While destitute migrants and day laborers joined village associations or dedicated themselves to the teachings of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, PAWS, which remained Haifa's major Arab union through the 1930s, organized workers -- both established urbanites and recent migrants -- who had regular jobs. From the mechanics and other employees in the Palestine Railway maintenance shops, it moved on in the 1930s to the construction workers on the new harbor and the regularly employed

customs porters at the old; to the refinery workers at IPC and Shell, the quarrymen of the Nesher Cement Company, and the employees of Steele Bros., the government's transport contractor.<sup>30</sup>

Haifa was the center of activity not only for PAWS, however, but for the Histadrut's PLL. In Haifa, as in Jaffa, the decisions of Arab workers and unions inevitably rested on national and workplace considerations that could not be disentangled from one another. This combination in turn warped the competition between the two federations. They contended less for the normal organizational prize -- members -- than for one that combined political and economic with organizational concerns: jobs, either for Arabs (who would, incidentally, join PAWS) or for Jews (who would join a Histadrut union). Although the PLL was established as a union for Arabs, it could guarantee its members full support from the Histadrut only in cases where securing a contract would open up jobs for Jewish workers at a formerly all-Arab site. As in Jaffa, Haifa's Arab workers sometimes turned to the PLL, drawing on its organizers' union experience and the benefits it offered. They did not, however, join in large numbers, and they were likely to defect to PAWS.

Relations between PAWS, on the one hand, and the PLL and Histadrut, on the other, were customarily hostile. The rival federations occasionally, and briefly, cooperated in presenting demands to the government. Recrimination, in contrast, was common. Each organization accused the other of

serving political ends, even when its evident goals were economic. In April and May 1935, for example, PAWS backed a strike at a stone quarry owned partly by Arabs, partly by the Histadrut's construction firm, Solel Boneh. The workers demanded a 25 percent raise (to 60 percent of the minimum daily wage of their Jewish co-workers) and a reduction from a nine-and-a-half- to an eight-hour day, along with paid sick leave and free medical care. Despite the very non-political nature of the demands (which the workers eventually won), the Histadrut newspaper, Davar, alleged that the strike had been set up by political agitators -- as, of course, it may have been.<sup>31</sup> The PLL, whose parent body was becoming one of the largest employers in Palestine, also routinely accused PAWS of being controlled by Arab employers.

Palestine's economic growth of the early 1930s evidently encouraged Arab workers in Haifa -- as elsewhere -- to press demands for higher pay, shorter hours, and better benefits, and they did so with growing success. In 1933, they took part in five Arab and two joint disputes out of 45 strikes and lockouts nationwide. Two years later, their ratio of participation had more than doubled to include twenty out of sixty disputes. By then, Arab workers had become skilled strike organizers. In the Haifa area, a PAWS strike against Karaman-Dik-Salty, the Arab-owned "largest tobacco factory in Palestine," was, according to the government, one of the most important labor disputes of 1935. An

Arab veteran of Palestine Railways led another of the largest job actions of that exceptionally active year, a seventeen-day joint strike of Arab and Jewish employees of the International Petroleum Company in February and March. The strike spread from IPC's operatives to its transport division, eventually involving some 500 workers. It was resoundingly successful. Workers gained, among other improvements, the eight-hour work day, thirteen paid holidays and religious leave days a year, a week's notice of projected layoffs, promotions at regular intervals for unskilled workers, free transportation from Haifa to the work-site, and the right to organize.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the strike, as PLL organizers complained, almost all the IPC's PLL members had shifted their membership to PAWS, apparently finding its conduct of the strike the more effective, or at least the more congenial.

Haifa's labor movement received a massive shock in April 1936 with the beginning of the Arab strike and boycott; during the ensuing three years of disturbance, the disruption gradually widened. In the political strike, Haifa's Arab workers in the large installations participated fleetingly, if at all: with so many Jewish and expatriate workers on hand, the effort may have seemed futile.<sup>33</sup> In 1936, although the number of economic strikes nationwide fell by 75 percent, to fifteen, Arabs again took part in one third of the total. In 1937, PAWS struck Karaman-Dik-Salty to resist layoffs, with an outcome the British pronounced a

compromise. Despite the disruption of the economy, Arab road workers were still striking the government for better pay. In all, nearly half the strikers in 1937 were Arabs, and they lost half again as many workdays as did Jewish strikers that year. Many Arab workers, however, were turning their energies from union to national questions; some, the guerillas of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam prominent among them, took to the hills.<sup>34</sup> PAWS, which had developed functioning chapters in several towns, was eventually reduced to its base in Haifa, and to inactivity. It would be the only Arab labor group to survive the long depression of the late 1930s.

A base for future unions. The disappearance of the Arab unions is easier to understand than their attainments. Early 1935 -- the period of the IPC strike -- marked the fullest success of this first generation of Arab unions. At that point, Arab workers had done better than any outsiders in organizing themselves, and their unions were growing steadily in strength and sophistication. At the same time, those unions were contending with two difficult problems: the pressure of Zionist institutions and the brevity of their members' experience with industrial work. The unions, notably the Jaffa ALF and PAWS, were forced to meet the impact of the Histadrut, the most powerful economic institution of the Zionist settler colony. To obtain normal economic benefits and security for their members, they had to confront not only employers, but a national adversary.



Arab workers, moreover, had only a shallow foundation of union experience. As late as 1936, at the end of four years of intensive industrialization in Palestine, just 8 percent of Arab wage earners were employed in industry. Another 22 percent were in services; most remained in agriculture.<sup>35</sup> Even "industrial" workers commonly worked in shops with only one or two employees. Most Arab workers in large firms were new to urban wage labor. Except for the employees of the 1906 Nesher cement plant, the railroad yards developed by the British on an Ottoman base, and the old Haifa and Jaffa harbors, the majority had assembled in response to economic developments of the past two or three years.

Judging from the decisions they made, Arab workers understood both the possibilities of collective action and the Zionist goals that reached into their workplaces. They had not, however, held their positions for long enough to build up an overriding sense of solidarity in their workplaces, in their occupations, or as urban Arab workers. When the depression and political disruption swept away their jobs, they, like workers in similar situations elsewhere, had no effective means of resistance.

Similarly, the hibernation of the Arab unions between 1936 and 1942 resembled the response of other unions to unfavorable conditions.<sup>36</sup> Like most union members -- especially members of a new workforce and newly organized unions -- in other countries, the Arab unionists were unable to keep

their organizations united and militant in face of prolonged depression and civil violence.

The disorganization of 1936 to 1942 was temporary. Just as Arab workers built the union experience of the 1930s on the tentative organizing initiatives of the previous decade, the Arab unions' experience of the 1930s was by no means wasted. The Allied industrial drive to hold the Middle East against the Axis powers would give them the chance to bring that experience once more to bear.

Chapter 3Unions Like Any Others, 1942-1947

When World War II began to revive the Palestinian economy in 1942, Arab unions resumed their progress at a point further advanced than when events had cut them off after 1936. Several factors contributed to this silent advancement. Workers and union activists of the previous decade provided a foundation to build on. Allied military requirements added tens of thousands of new wage workers to the Arab workforce. In addition, two new organizing groups -- the British administration and the newly legal Communists -- stepped forward to bring those new workers into Arab unions. This chapter outlines the circumstances surrounding Arab workers in the 1940s and traces the development of their union federations. It then presents some major features of the federations in the context of Western union practice.

The coming of war did not bring immediate prosperity to Palestine. At first, it deepened the depression of the late 1930s. Axis warships cut off the already faltering citrus trade, along with other shipping; in so doing, they cut off the jobs of many port and citriculture workers. The British had in 1939 limited legal Jewish immigration to 15,000 a year; now the Axis cut off virtually all immigration. While the pressures of colonization eased, building workers and others whose jobs depended on population growth lost some or all of their work. In 1940 the cost of living began to rise,

but average incomes continued to decline. Arab workers' buying power, originally less than that of Jews, now fell more than theirs. An Arab carpenter's pay bought 57 percent as much food in 1940 as in 1937, while a Jewish carpenter's pay bought 87 percent as much. Nevertheless, the flow of underemployed Arab farmers into wage work had continued through the depression. By the time World War II began, more than half of Palestinian wage earners were Arabs.<sup>1</sup>

### The Time for Unions, 1942

In 1941, the war economy began, haltingly, to take shape. The Allies urgently needed to supply their forces in North Africa, and with as little recourse as possible to sea transport. The British also needed to produce in the Middle East the food and other daily necessities that they could no longer import there.<sup>2</sup> For the first time in half a decade, demand for wage labor began to rise; Arab workers' income, too, started to increase. Inflation nevertheless outran both base pay and cost-of-living adjustments -- as one Arab union complained in 1942 -- "like a speedy motorcar competing with a cart drawn by a sick animal."<sup>3</sup> Prosperity for the national economy might mean an increase in available jobs, but this did not yet mean prosperity for the individual worker.

During the next three years, Palestinian industrial and farm production multiplied in volume. The Haifa railroad workshops, along with other established engineering shops, were making spare parts and carrying out repairs for the

army. Around the country, the administration was constructing fortifications, bridges, new roads on strategic routes, and police posts. Work camps producing munitions and parts for tanks, ships, and airplanes spread across the country.<sup>4</sup> Shipping also revived. After the defeat of Rommel at El Alamein in the fall of 1942, the Allies began to regain control of North Africa, and by June 1943 the Mediterranean was cleared. The IPC pipeline terminal at Haifa became crucially important.

The need for workers grew even more rapidly than did production. Not only were demands for both farm produce and military goods rising, but by 1942, thirty thousand Palestinians, mostly Jews, had left the workforce to go into the military.<sup>5</sup> Farm and factory competed intensely for labor.

The new Arab workforce. Arabs seized the opportunity to enter the waged work force. By the end of 1942, 85,000 to 100,000 of them -- from a third to a half of all working-age Arab men -- held jobs as manual workers. Another thirty thousand were engaged in non-manual work.<sup>6</sup> The war industries enlisted some Arab women as well, typically urban Christians in army production work.

Only about some 35,000 of the Arab workers were established in the coastal cities, where the Arab unions had been based. Most of the new waged workers remained in the countryside. Many were employed on farms or rural construction projects, working in railroad or other transport, or in the police. The army's production camps brought together thou-

sands of others outside the major cities, near the ports and industrial services. Others still -- in Haifa, 45 percent of the workers -- had recently come to work in the city. The established urban wage earners formed a core around which unions could grow.<sup>7</sup>

The conditions confronting the new urban workers of the 1940s were in some respects better than those that their counterparts had faced during the brief prosperity of the previous decade. Throughout the British period so far, Arab job seekers had outnumbered jobs. Now, for the first time, work, although still ill-paid and grueling, was abundant. The tremendous unemployment and underemployment that had made Arabs agree to any compensation just to obtain a day's work were less intense. Because so many of the immigrants were in the Allied military and new immigration had virtually ceased, the pressure of the Histadrut for "Jewish labor" also had eased.

At the same time, the new urban workers faced two related problems that had worsened in the preceding decade: life in the city was far more expensive than village living, and life in the cities of the coastal plain was increasingly unfamiliar. By December 1942, an Arab labor federation, FATULS, was courteously explaining to the government's Wages Commission that city life was no cheaper for an Arab worker than for anyone else: "the social structure and the responsibilities of Arab and non-Arab workers towards their families are similar."<sup>8</sup>

The cost of city living. Those family responsibilities differed in several ways from their rural analogues. To maintain the respectability of the family, the wife of a migrant villager required a veil and shoes -- both items unnecessary in the village. She had contributed to the family income by helping in the fields, practicing handicrafts, and caring for livestock.<sup>9</sup> Now (unlike some city women, who were more likely to be Christian and Westernized), she was expected not to go out to work -- although, regardless of respectability, many Arab women were working as domestics. The children were expected to go to school (although again, in fact, many were working), and this meant spending money for books and special clothing.

Life in the coastal cities in the 1940s was not only more expensive than in the village, but more costly than urban life had been a decade before. In part, the war was to blame. The cost of necessities had soared in the wartime economy; workers' cost-of-living increases were not intended to make up the difference. Arguing for an increase in the minimum wage set in 1925, FATULS pointed out that according to official figures, prices of basic foods had risen between 190 percent (sugar) and 1,200 percent (onions) since 1939. The price of eggs was up 1,000 percent; of lentils and chick peas, 700 percent. The official statistics, moreover, understated the degree of increase, since Arab prewar prices had been lower than the figures that the Government had used. FATULS found it necessary to note, "We do not acknowledge

any scientific proof that the Arab workers require lesser foodstuffs than any other worker performing the same job."<sup>10</sup>

Not only food, but shelter, was harder to afford than ever before. Rents had risen, partly because of growth in the urban populations, combined with wartime rationing of building materials. Beyond these predictable wartime factors, however, simple modernization was taking a toll. Living quarters had become more expensive, FATULS pointed out, because indoor plumbing had become standard. Electricity, newly available, added to expenses.

Although FATULS did not mention the dwellings which were not modern, thousands lived in these. In late 1945, when the wartime economy had begun to wind down, Haifa's population included 30,700 slumdweller, almost 90 percent of them Arabs. Some of these inhabited rooftop shelters constructed of mats and sacking; about two thousand lived in caves, which three or four families might share. Others lived in the "tin towns" of gasoline cans, sacks, and boards.<sup>11</sup> The British had destroyed many of these during the 1936 disturbances, but, being needed, they had reappeared.

#### The Arab Unions' Moment, 1942-1947

Given increased job security and social insecurity, many of Palestine's new industrial workers were apparently ready to turn to Western-style labor organizations. The established urban workers had the union tradition of the 1930s to build on. Among the new village migrants, social aliena-



tion may have inclined some to avoid organizational forms that were Western in origin, just as some nineteenth-century British laborers rejected unions as elitist institutions of skilled workers. In fact, however, Arab workers did not recreate on a large scale the village-based mutual aid societies common a decade earlier. The pressure of capitalist workplaces demanded a Western-style response. Brevity of experience with waged work proved no hindrance to unionization. Like masses of British workers around the turn of the twentieth century, Arab workers overran discouraging circumstances in order to join unions.<sup>12</sup>

The unions enjoyed two conditions favorable to organizing: the union tradition already established in the cities and the activity of experienced organizers. Veteran Arab wage-earners were able to transfer their union tradition not only to the new urban workers, but to the camps and public works projects of the countryside. This expansion began, in the last half of 1942, with the formation of an unlikely but capable team committed to bringing Arab workers into unions. Working in cooperation, British officials and Arab Communists helped pull together union federations that in less than five years mobilized tens of thousands of workers.

New organizers, old union. The Colonial Office had begun to show a new interest in colonial labor in December 1939. Faced with Axis efforts to win the cooperation of Britain's subject peoples, His Majesty's Government apparently shared the view of the socialist Fabian Society: "in

many colonies ... either Trade Unions must be actively encouraged by the Labour Officers or British colonial labour policy will fail, with disastrous results to the cause of peace within the empire."<sup>13</sup> A Colonial Office circular dispatch encouraged colonial administrators to promote harmonious relations between employers and workers during the war and postwar adjustment. By 1941 the number of full-time colonial labor advisers in the Empire reached 150, quadruple the 1937 number. The Government of Palestine received its Labour Adviser in June 1940. The appointee, Richard M. Graves, had served in the British civil service in Egypt for thirty years, the last nine as Labour Adviser; he spoke Arabic fluently. A person of evident ability and energy, Graves went to work with enthusiasm, establishing relations with a range of employers and unions.<sup>14</sup>

In the fall of 1942, the Government of Palestine began directly organizing Arab workers. This was a part of the mission of its new Labour Department, opened in July as the result of another Colonial Office initiative. The Colonial Office furnished Graves, the new department's director, with five inspectors from Britain. Four were civil servants; the fifth, Harold Chudleigh ("most level-headed, sound, and sensible," according to Colonial Office officials), came from the Amalgamated Engineers Union. Locally recruited Arab and Jewish sub-inspectors worked with the British.<sup>15</sup>

The new Labour Department immediately began helping Arab workers to develop, as High Commissioner MacMichael

wrote the Colonial Office, an "Arab trade union at present in embryonic stage, to whose progress on sound lines I attach great importance."<sup>16</sup> Not only did the Colonial Office favor the Western-style labor union as a healthy expression of possible wartime discontent, but the Government of Palestine felt the need for an Arab counterweight to the well-staffed and assertive Histadrut.<sup>17</sup> Much of the organizing work was entrusted to Chudleigh. Impatient of nationalisms ("'Pig-headed' would not be too strong a term to apply to the leadership on both sides"),<sup>18</sup> he at once set about visiting existing Arab and Jewish unions and meeting with unorganized workers. Within a month of his arrival, he had addressed a founding meeting of 200 workers for a Jaffa labor society and visited several other towns to urge Arab workers to unionize. During the next few months, the Labour Department helped organize independent unions in Nablus, Nazareth, and Ramallah. The Nablus organization became the first to sponsor economic projects, setting up several enduring cooperatives in the next few years. In November 1942, the Palestine Post noted the formation in Haifa of "the first Arab women workers' union" of fifty Christians employed in an army workshop.<sup>19</sup>

One major beneficiary of the Labour Department's attentions was PAWS. Only the founding chapter of Haifa railroad workers had survived the depression of the late 1930s, but by 1942 the organization was beginning to revive. PAWS began by reactivating its Jerusalem and Jaffa affiliates and es-

tablishing branches in Nazareth and Bethlehem. In mid-October, it counted a thousand members. By the end of December, enrollment had reached some five thousand; in the spring of 1943, PAWS secured representation of most of the Arab workers in the British military production camps; and by summer, the Labour Department estimated PAWS membership at nine thousand, concentrated among railway, tobacco, and municipality workers. By then, the federation had a full-time staff of five. PAWS was on the way to realizing its founders' evident intention: to become a national federation with a large membership. By mid-1945, it claimed 20 chapters nationwide and the Labour Department reported that it had 15,000 members.<sup>20</sup>

Old organizers, new unions. As PAWS began to expand, it for the first time faced competition from another Arab union federation. After Hitler's 1941 attack on the Soviet Union, the Allies regarded the USSR as a partner. The new status of the Soviet Union in turn affected the standing of Communists in Allied-controlled territories; the Government of Palestine began permitting Communists to operate openly. Working with the Labour Department, in November 1942, a group of Arab leftists in Haifa founded the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies (FATULS). The new organization's head, the thirty-two-year-old Boulos Farah, united in his person three characteristics extremely common among Arab union activists: he was a Communist, a Christian, and a veteran of the Haifa railroad shops. Taking a position well

to the left of PAWS, FATULS insisted on the common interests of workers regardless of nationality and advocated social programs as well as workplace reforms.

The new federation expanded quickly within the Haifa heavy industries that would remain its strongest base. At its founding, FATULS included unions of Arab workers in the International Petroleum Company (IPC), Shell, Consolidated Refineries Limited (CRL), Public Works Department, and Haifa shops of the Royal Navy. It also incorporated the Arab Workers Society of Nazareth, along with some individuals. By the end of 1942, the Labour Department estimated that it spoke for some 3,000 workers. By the end of its first year, FATULS had also organized the employees of Haifa harbor, including shipwrights and engineers, and the drivers and sixty garage workers at Steele Bros., the government's transport contractor. In some cases, the new federation had won union recognition where other unions had failed.<sup>21</sup>

The two labor federations quickly became rivals. Because FATULS concentrated on skilled workers in large enterprises, particularly oil, naval, and transport workers, its initial growth did not often encroach on the territory of PAWS. Despite this division of constituencies, and despite an agreement against raiding, PAWS did try to alienate the FATULS chapter in the CRL. FATULS in turn criticized PAWS for ignoring workers in large enterprises (presumably other than the CRL) and for imitating the Histadrut in emphasizing economic and social programs for members.<sup>22</sup>

Almost from its founding, FATULS influenced many more workers than it enrolled. In May 1944, it began publishing a weekly newspaper, al-Ittihad (Unity), which became popular with PAWS members, as well as in Lebanon and Iraq.<sup>23</sup> By 1945, people identified as FATULS "sympathizers" led the Jaffa, Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Gaza-region PAWS branches, among others. At that time, by one estimate, Palestine had up to five thousand Communist-led Arab unionists -- a fourth of the total, but still only a small percentage of Arab urban workers.

In August 1945, discontent within PAWS led to the formation of a new Arab union federation. The leftist-led PAWS branches joined with FATULS and several independent unions to form the Arab Workers' Congress (AWC). The issues that stimulated the move were nationalist effectiveness and union democracy, the latter a question which Arab union activists were raising publicly for the first time. In February, as the end of World War II came in sight, a World Conference of Trade Unions had been organized in London to consider ways to coordinate postwar activities. The Histadrut was of course invited to send a delegation. The conference organizers recognized the Arab unions, too, as representative of Palestinian labor. The British government helped PAWS monopolize the Arabs' invitation, but the self-appointed PAWS representatives, secretary Sami Taha and legal counsel Hanna Asfur, were unable to prevent the body from passing a Histadrut-backed resolution supporting the

Jewish National Home.<sup>24</sup> Asfur's identity as a notable damaged the Arab cause by lending substance to Histadrut allegations that the Arab labor movement was just a front for nationalist politicians.<sup>25</sup> Despite this defeat, a national PAWS meeting held in Nablus -- away from the industrialized coast -- named Taha and Asfur to represent Arab workers at a second WCTU meeting, to be held in Paris. Two weeks later, on 19 August, FATULS and the dissident locals met in Jaffa and founded the AWC. Their grounds for splitting PAWS were the delegation's failure in London; Asfur's inclusion; and the feeling of several large branches that they should have more influence on decisions.<sup>26</sup>

The new federation was powerful from its inception. Its founding meeting drew together eleven PAWS branches; FATULS, which disbanded in favor of the new organization; local unions at the IPC and CRL; and several small independent unions. FATULS endowed its successor organization not only with its members but with its greatest political asset, the newspaper Unity. The leaders of the new organization showed immediate political effectiveness. Nudging PAWS into observer status, they secured for AWC the representation of Palestinian Arabs at the Paris meeting. Once in Paris, they argued successfully for the rejection of the Histadrut resolution, then went on to help a Lebanese Communist defeat a Histadrut candidate for Middle East representative to the WFTU executive committee.<sup>27</sup>

The AWC took a somewhat different approach to its role as a union than had its predecessor. Although its founders were committed leftists, the AWC was less political in its programs and statements than FATULS had been. Leaving politics to the National Liberation League, founded in early 1944 as an Arab Communist Party, the federation and Unity concentrated on economic and union issues. At least one scholar, Musa Budeiri, has designated it, rather than PAWS, "the first Arab union association organised and run on modern Western lines."<sup>28</sup>

The last challenge. The AWC succeeded FATULS just as workers entered the difficult postwar years. Troops went home, and regular shipping resumed. As a result, military supplies, civilian import replacements, and foodstuffs for military personnel were no longer needed in quantity -- nor was Arab labor. As the British demobilized Jewish soldiers, the Histadrut drive for "Jewish labor" recommenced. The British, always uneasy about concentrations of natives, were determined to disperse their Arab wartime employees to the villages from which they presumably had come. To avoid losing floods of unemployed Arabs on the countryside at one time, however, they provided employment in public works at gradually decreasing levels.

For two more years, until the fall of 1947, the Arab unions continued to grow in size and militancy. They recruited large numbers of members in the British army's production camps, the Haifa Bay oil refineries, and the IPC.



Strikes -- which often gained concessions from the employers -- became more common as economic contraction threatened jobs and pay. Disputes of civil service workers in 1944 and 1945 led in April 1946 to the week-long general strike of government employees noted at the beginning of this thesis. More than 15,000 Arab and Jewish workers struck for a week, winning most of their demands. The 1946 total of twenty-five Arab strikes, some against Arab employers, more than doubled the wartime high of eleven, reached in 1943. The following year, the AWC convened a 120-delegate congress of camp workers to formulate demands to the British military. When the demands met rejection, the AWC called a one-day protest that reportedly turned out 50,000 Arab and Jewish camp workers.<sup>29</sup>

Within six months of the camp workers' protest, the Arab union federations were disintegrating. The reasons combined extraneous shocks with lack of the internal cohesion to resist such shocks. On 12 September 1947, PAWS head Sami Taha was shot dead in front of his house. His funeral was accompanied by "huge crowds, including Arab labourers from all over Palestine."<sup>30</sup> Richard Graves, by then the appointed mayor of Jerusalem, thought Taha was murdered because of a speech asserting that "whether the Jews in Palestine are going to be many or few, we shall have to collaborate with them, and we had better make up our minds to that from now on."<sup>31</sup> This statement could apparently be interpreted not only as binational workers' solidarity, but as an abandon-

ment of the Husayni political faction for a rival, and less confrontational, national leader, Musa al-Alami. In fact, a few days earlier the Palestine Post had reported that Taha had made just such a shift. Regardless of the specific motive, the consensus of historians has been that the exiled Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, was responsible for Taha's assassination. Unprepared for the loss of Taha, PAWS apparently came within weeks under the control of a body of notables controlled by the Husaynis.<sup>32</sup>

On 29 November, the United Nations passed a resolution to partition Palestine, allotting the coastal plain to a Jewish state. The consequences of the decision would destroy Palestine. More immediately, the resolution shattered the remaining Arab union federation as the AWC split over whether to support or condemn the proposal.<sup>33</sup>

The disintegration, and the chances for recovery, of the Arab unions soon became irrelevant. By the summer of 1948, 600,000 Arabs -- some four out of five -- their armed forces untrained, ill-armed, and militarily outnumbered, fled Palestine ahead of the highly organized Jewish troops who were seizing possession of most of the country. On 15 May 1948, Arab workers who remained found their workplaces and their country changed overnight with the establishment of the state of Israel. The unionists among them did not suddenly abandon their organizing traditions. They did, however, have to adapt them -- along with almost every other

part of their lives -- to the very new circumstances of Arabs in the new state.

### Standards of reality

By the mid-1940s, the conditions in which the Arab unions operated had become sufficiently ordinary that these unions can fairly be examined in relation to their counterparts elsewhere. The high employment, committed organizing, and lengthening union traditions of this period allowed the unions to develop in a nationwide, not a suppressed, economy. Examination of several aspects of the unions' structure and operation will give an idea of what they did with this half-decade of opportunity. These aspects are their size, both as absolute mass and relative to potential membership; their composition; the strikes they conducted; the programs they put forward and demands they made; the way they governed themselves; their relations to national political forces; and their relations to other unions. Available information will not permit solid assessment of all the relevant characteristics, but some broad outlines are clear.

The Arab unions in themselves. Estimates of the size of both the Arab unions and the Arab workforce vary widely. According to figures at one extreme, the two federations -- with PAWS at 15,000 members and the AWC at 18,000 -- in 1945 enrolled more than a fourth of some 115,000 Arab wage workers. Other estimates fall as low as 15,000 Arab unionists out of 130,000 Arab workers, less than one in

eight.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, however, the Arab unions, which began with very few members in 1942, had by the mid-1940s made significant progress in enrolling a workforce that grew faster than activists could organize.<sup>35</sup>

Another aspect of membership is its composition. The core of the unions' membership always consisted of urban workers in jobs considered skilled, employed in large workplaces, and, later, of workers in the government's military production camps. The unions eventually represented most urban workers and most industries. In addition to urban wage earners, PAWS organized some people who were not employees but self-employed -- usually artisans -- or employers, or even, in the villages, farmers and family members of urban unionists.<sup>36</sup> This was a dangerous practice for a bargaining agent, because it presented the possibility of conflict of interest. It was, however, understandable: the Histadrut, which was the most readily available pattern for the Arab unions, was itself an employer. Some unions -- in North America, for example -- have customarily set up a special status, such as associate or auxiliary, for affiliates with non-employee members. The Arab unions did not; but neither did they organize the employers of their industrial members: they were not enrolling the administrators of Haifa corporations, the British administration, or even the Karaman-Dik-Salty tobacco firm.

In the benefits and protection they secured for members, the Arab unions seem to have been quite ordinary.

Unions functioning throughout the wartime period in such enterprises as the CRL must be assumed to have negotiated, and done it well enough to keep their members from turning to competing labor organizations. Few of the negotiations have been described, however, as only those that led to disputes have attracted the attention of observers and scholars. Even disputes did not always lead to strikes; Kimmerling has pointed out that PAWS preferred legal and judicial tactics.

When the Arab unions did strike, their aims and success seem, again, to have been quite unexceptional. The Arab unions' most common recorded strike issues were, as in the strikes described in this thesis, perfectly normal: pay, hours of work, benefits, and, in bad years, job security. The Histadrut, in contrast, throughout its early years often struck to secure a veto over the hiring of nonmembers or non-Jews.<sup>37</sup> Among the Arab strikes described in the British records, most secured some or all of their demands. The few singled out for individual description would, judging from those descriptions, have been milestones in any ordinary union's activities. Histadrut accounts of Arab strikes, on the other hand, generally emphasized the childlike impulsiveness of the workers and the treachery of the notables who pretended to help them; they attributed any success to the fraternal benevolence of the PLL. These reports, however, often featured groups of unorganized workers rather than Arab unions. The sum of available information suggests that, in most of the strikes they conducted, Arab unions

were able to win at least some of their demands, and in good years to do far better than that: a normal performance. Because most large industrial and government workforces were mixed and most unions were not, strikes by large workforces were commonly conducted jointly by two or more unions, Arab and Jewish. Their various and volatile abilities to agree on ends and means were crucial for the widely varying success of such strikes.

The programs of the two Arab federations emphasized different elements, which Laurie terms "workplace action and social reconstruction,"<sup>38</sup> distinguishing two familiar sorts of union. PAWS (as FATULS readily pointed out) emphasized benefits of the kind the Histadrut provided its members. In mid-1943, Harold Chudleigh of the Labour Department reported that PAWS had involved five thousand members in six producers' or consumers' coops, had set up a savings and loan institution, and was considering the provision of health benefits. In contrast, FATULS and, to a certain extent, the AWC pressed government and employers for social and economic reforms. Going beyond the visions both of PAWS and of the Arab labor congresses of the 1930s, FATULS demanded the right to strike and bargain, social insurance, public works for postwar employment, and farm subsidies to help displaced workers return to the land. It also expressed nationalist and civil libertarian goals.<sup>39</sup> In line with their emphases on political aims, both FATULS and the AWC sought, with apparent success, support for their programs from labor orga-

nizations overseas. As early as 1942, FATULS had forwarded its memo written for the government's Wages Committee to the International Department of the British Trades Union Congress. The AWC seems to have built on its victories in the WFTU elections of 1945. By 1947, its annual meeting was receiving greetings from a dozen foreign labor bodies besides the WFTU. PAWS and FATULS/AWC, in short, exemplified the bread-and-butter and the social sides of the normal union spectrum.

As time passed, however, PAWS and the AWC increasingly resembled one another in program emphasis. The AWC, by concentrating more on economic and less on political issues than its predecessor had done, had from the beginning been closer than FATULS to the PAWS model. Throughout the mid-1940s, on the other hand, the AWC's distinct positions on union issues were certainly reaching PAWS members through Unity. PAWS in its public statements began to move closer to the AWC's concern with political and social issues. By August 1946, Taha was addressing the PAWS convention on "Our Socialist Principles."<sup>40</sup> Taha also took an increasing interest in international support, although for nationalist, rather than social, initiatives.

In their governance, as initially in their programs, the two Arab federations exemplified two familiar types. PAWS fell within H.A. Turner's definition of a "popular bossdom."<sup>41</sup> According to Turner, leaders of this type of union remain in control for long periods -- as did Sami

Taha. Like many union activists a former Haifa railroad worker, Taha was "very close to the Western stereotype of 'union leader'" in the view of sociologist Baruch Kimmerling. (He impressed Graves, on the other hand, as "not a natural leader, [but] ... a hard worker who never flagged in his devotion to the cause of Arab labour.")<sup>42</sup> Members of a "popular bossdom" -- in this case, many of the camp workers and other recent or temporary recruits to the workforce -- generally have no long-term commitment to their occupation. They therefore care less about democratic rights within the union than about protection and improvement of their jobs. As long as the leaders provide effective service on workplace concerns, then, they have wide latitude on other issues. When discontent over service or policy does arise, the members, because they do not guide policy through the democratic process, tend to express dissent through secession -- as PAWS conspicuously demonstrated. PAWS never held a national election; its governing body, the Supreme Workers' Council, was made up of the secretaries of its affiliated unions.<sup>43</sup> Each local had a vote, and Taha in effect directed the numerous small branches. As for the internal governance of the branches themselves, at the time of the secessions of August 1945 the flagship local, in Haifa, had not held an election for at least a decade.<sup>44</sup>

The AWC exemplified a different type of union governance. Throughout its brief existence, it held elections for both local and national offices. It also conducted regu-



lar annual conventions with open debate. At the AWC's second such convention, in April 1946, two women won seats on its Executive Committee -- more probably a result of enlightenment on the part of other union leaders than an indication of a large female membership.<sup>45</sup>

The Arab unions and others. The union leaders' external relationships -- with the national political structure and with other unions, Arab and Zionist -- also situated the Arab federations within the established range of union behavior. Like European and North American labor organizations, both PAWS and FATULS/AWC were subject to embarrassing connections with authoritarian political figures and with chauvinist national policies, to inter-union rivalries, and to the personal ambitions and antipathies of leaders. They also were capable of sweeping reforms and of class solidarity transcending any other loyalty.

As noted in the Introduction, colonized workers commonly maintain relationships with non-worker politicians because of their shared national interests. PAWS had an especially close relationship with nationalist leaders. In the case of neither Arab federation, however, did shared interests translate into union subservience to Arab politicians. At the same time, both a colonial government and a settler union had their own reasons to present the Arab unions' nationalist connections as unethical and a betrayal of class. Despite its Labour Department's early support for PAWS, the Government of Palestine considered the federation "right-

wing" -- a nationalist body close to the Husayni faction, and correspondingly lacking in class solidarity. The Histadrut, sublimely indifferent to its own structural peculiarities, saw both backwardness and fascism in PAWS's connections with employers and politicians: "It is quite probable that what the leaders have in mind is some sketchy, fragmentary ideology, an admixture of modern trade unions, medieval guilds and Fascist corporations."<sup>46</sup>

The PAWS leader, Taha, was in fact gaining in national prominence. He sat on the constitutional drafting committee named by the Higher Arab Committee, a Husayni-dominated group of nationalist politicians which the Arab League had set up in 1945. He was also one of a delegation that accompanied HAC leader Jamal Husayni to Anglo-Arab talks in London in February 1947. Both the British and the Arab League, apparently wanting to see the HAC more broadly representative, pressed unsuccessfully for Taha's appointment to that body. Yet PAWS consistently maintained the importance of Arab workers vis-à-vis the nationalist politicians. Taha refused, for example, to take part in a 24-hour Balfour Day political strike which the Higher Arab Committee called for 2 November 1946, calling the idea "negative" and too costly to Arab workers. Some Arab political figures believed him to be considering formation of a labor party, and PAWS in the summer of 1947 passed a resolution favoring establishment of such a party. Taha's murder came the following month.<sup>47</sup>

The AWC worked as closely as PAWS with political figures, but its connections were with dissident nationalists; one historian has called it "the only organized opposition to the Husaynis."<sup>48</sup> The political grouping to which it was closest was made up of veterans -- mostly intellectuals -- of the left-nationalist Istiqlal movement. The AWC consistently called for the reconstitution of the HAC as a representative body (which would naturally include some Istiqlal delegates). It did not favor a labor party, but advocated unity of workers of all political persuasions.

The Arab union leaders, in short, apparently maintained connections with political figures, much as other union leaders do, to express union views, affect policy, and acquire class, organizational, and personal power. Because many politicians were at the same time employers, the union leaders must sometimes have encountered strains on class integrity (also familiar in the history of Western labor unions). The Histadrut was able to recount several incidents in which PAWS leaders allegedly yielded to such strains by betraying strikes against notables.

The relationships of colonized workers' unions to other workers' organizations -- their class solidarity -- when set beside their relationships with national political figures, provides a further standard of their effectiveness in the cause of workers. The Arab federations had very different sorts of relationships with one another, with the Histadrut, and with Jewish workers.

Relations between the leaders of the two federations were consistently strained by both organizational and ideological rivalries. The AWC criticized Taha for alleged pro-British stands and subversion of strikes against British and foreign corporations. At the same time, calling for unity among Arab workers, the AWC persistently sought a way to work with PAWS; in December 1946 it went so far as to bring in a Lebanese labor leader as an intermediary. Taha refused to discuss amalgamation.<sup>49</sup>

Arab unions' perceived willingness to stand beside the Jewish workers on the basis of class varies according to the observer. The Histadrut and its supporters have commonly alleged that Arab unions' nationalist commitment prevented them from exercising class solidarity except when their members, presumably more enlightened than the leaders, demanded it. The British commonly took a broader view, considering the Histadrut along with the Arab unions. In 1945, a Captain Filsar of the British army, reporting on the Arab unions to the British Trades Union Congress, made this analysis:

The PAWS & the Federation [FATULS/AWC] have both been steeped in Arab nationalism, just as the Histadruth has been Jewish Nationalist. To some extent, Arab T.U. leaders would willingly postpone TU successes if they could do the Jews in the eye, e.g. by breaking a P.L.L. strike. But I do not accept the Zionist accusation that Arab T.U.s is merely a nationalist dodge designed to keep the Palestinian working class split. As long as the Histadruth is 100% Zionist you can hardly blame Arab TUs for devoting some of their time to anti-Zionism.<sup>50</sup>

Despite its nationalist preoccupations, "the PAWS does a lot of TU work," according to Filsar. Albert Hyamson, a former

official of the World Zionist Organization who later worked in the Government of Palestine, considered both the PAWS and the Histadrut to be political, the difference being that the Histadrut was officially affiliated with a political party.<sup>51</sup>

From the Arab point of view, the Histadrut's identity as the pre-eminent Zionist institution of the yishuv and exponent of "Jewish labor" limited the extent to which an Arab union could exercise class solidarity without reducing both its members' job security and their right of national self-determination. The Arab unions were aware that, within the limits set by colonialist pressures, their basic interest lay in presenting a united front with fellow-workers vis-à-vis their employers. Experience, however, had led them to fear that the Histadrut would use any cooperation as a chance either to secure jobs for Jewish workers or to claim that it represented Arab workers. Although they later increasingly worked with the Histadrut on specific common issues, PAWS leaders refused, for instance, to respond to the Histadrut's call for a 10 May 1943 strike of camp workers, who were primarily Arab. To participate, they argued, would allow the Histadrut to claim that it represented Arab workers.<sup>52</sup>

To differing degrees, and within the limits of Arab national interests as they saw them, both Arab federations differentiated between the Zionist unions and Jewish workers. In this, they followed the experience of many mem-

bers, who had developed workplace solidarity with their Jewish co-workers. In a 1944 joint sit-in at the Haifa railroad workshops, for example, Arab and Jewish workers shared the food their unions sent in to them. They spent the evenings telling stories around their fires, the Jewish workers ignoring Histadrut leaders' allegations that the strike would damage the case for immigration.<sup>53</sup> The leaders of each Arab federation expressed the conviction that workers' need to cooperate was more important than their differences of identity. PAWS leaders occasionally drew a distinction between Jewish workers and the Zionist establishment, which they considered Arab workers' primary enemy. The AWC, for its part, insisted on the common interests of all workers, stressing repeatedly that racism benefits only employers. Unlike PAWS, it steadfastly maintained the customary leftist view that the British colonialists, rather than the immigrant workers or even the Zionist settler establishment, were the basic adversary.<sup>54</sup>

The six-day April 1946 general strike of government workers exemplified what Arab and Jewish workers could accomplish together when they did not fear losing some national right. The strikers belonged to PAWS, the Histadrut, and the mixed Second Division Civil Service Association. The Arab and Jewish left -- the AWC, the National Liberation League, and the Palestine Communist Party (which by that time was again primarily Jewish) supported the strike. When Arab and Jewish strikers marched through Jerusalem, their

signs read "Long Live Unity" in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. The strike committee sent greetings to Muslim, Christian, and Jewish strikers on the religious holiday each group celebrated during the strike. The job action succeeded in closing down the post, the telegraph system, the broadcasting services, the railroads, and the ports. The results vindicated the workers' mutual trust: in the end, they won most of their demands.<sup>55</sup>

In the mid-1940s, the membership, the activities, the programs, the governance, and the relationships of the Arab unions clearly fell within the range not only of the recorded, but of the familiar, behavior of Western-style unions.<sup>56</sup> For five years, Arab workers enjoyed new opportunities to mobilize a Western-style response to Western capitalist employers. For the first time, they could draw on a developing union tradition, an expanding economy that built up the Arab workforce, and dedicated organizers whose primary interest was to establish strong Arab unions. The Arab unions as they stood in 1947 were testimony that workers had made the most of those opportunities.

## Conclusion

### Unions to Fit the Circumstances

This thesis presents evidence to contradict two long-accepted assumptions about the Arab unions of British Palestine. It first shows that (the preponderant historiography to the contrary) these unions were "real unions": despite the colonized status of their members, their structure and operations fell within the range that European and North American unions had established. Second, the Arab unions were not "weak" in size or effectiveness as a result of workers' "backwardness" (by which, in this context, writers have generally implied a culturally based reluctance to confront employers, to adopt Western forms of organization, or both). Throughout the British period in Palestine, Arabs sought waged work and Arab wage earners sought to form or maintain unions to protect their interests. The effects of the Jewish National Home and of British policies, both in limiting Arab access to the waged workforce and in maintaining Arab workers and jobseekers as a source of cheap labor, were sufficient to impose any limitations the Arab unions in fact demonstrated. Such limitations, affecting unions' size and durability, were most noticeable before the employment expansion of the World War II period.

Examination of the fitful development of Palestine's Arab unions reveals a normality that would seem bland in or-



ganizations that were not contending with colonial conditions. These unions grew when circumstances were conducive to union growth; in the circumstances that block union growth, they failed to grow. Their development was no more (but also no less) determined by cultural background than the development of unions among, say, the Irish or the Japanese. These conclusions, which appear obvious, have for decades been obscured by a historiography which apparently accepted the Histadrut's definition of itself as a labor union federation; took note (correctly) that the Arab unions were far different; and then identified (incorrectly) the cause of the difference in Arab culture. Sufficient cause lay, rather, in economic, social, and political conditions.

The Arabs of Palestine had no substantial occasion for unionization before the 1920s. At the time of the British invasion, the employment circumstances that in other places gave rise to the union did not exist. The relatively few Palestinian wage earners were employed on farms or in small workshops. With the British came both large-scale employment in capitalist industry and workers familiar with the established form of response to such employment, the labor union.

For the Arabs, as indigenous workers in a newly capitalist industrial economy, forming or joining a labor union would have had a very different meaning than it would for Western workers who had grown up with a decades-old union tradition. Such actions required the will and ability to imitate, adapt, and improvise. Despite this challenge to their

flexibility, the Arabs who got work in capitalist work-places, and who had the opportunity to observe the union response, quickly took up the example of their co-workers and established unions of their own.

The British, however, brought with them not only capitalist enterprise, which would stimulate the development of Arab unions, but a political commitment to the establishment of the Jewish National Home, which would hamper such growth. The Zionist organizations' major aim, to attract enough Jewish immigrants to form the basis of a state, required an abundance of well-compensated jobs for Jewish workers. This in turn required the exclusion of low-paid indigenous labor from large sectors of the job market. The Zionists largely succeeded in establishing this exclusion, as well as in promoting Zionist enterprises at the expense of Arab entrepreneurs, incidentally reducing opportunities for large-scale employment in the Arab sector. They thus limited Arabs' access to jobs in large industrial enterprises, constricting the potential membership of Arab unions. Given this context, the term "weak" is relevant less to Arab unions than to the position of Arab job-seekers in the face of Zionist and British commitment to the Jewish National Home.

The Arab workers who managed to secure jobs in industry showed considerable strength and determination. They established increasingly sophisticated and militant unions in the 1920s and 1930s. They were still too few, however, and their organizations too new, to sustain a union movement through

the depression of the late 1930s. The Arab unions nevertheless accomplished more than they themselves may have realized. Within the limits imposed by the special Zionist economy, they built a strong organizing tradition. When Arab workers gained full access to an economy that had become nationwide, they brought with them not only the habit of turning to unions but experienced union activists.

In 1942, the basis of the Palestinian economy shifted. No longer dominated by a Zionist sector that had all the outside support required for success, it became a national economy similarly supported by the Allied war effort. World War II created a nearly insatiable demand for labor in Palestine; for the first time, masses of Arabs were admitted to Western-style industries. The war also, in different ways, brought both the government and the Communists into openly organizing Arab unions. Together, the workers, the organizers, and the veteran activists from the Arab unions of the 1930s created active and rapidly growing unions.

In the 1940s Arab unions operated in ways made familiar by European and North American unions. As in the previous decades, they bargained contracts and, that failing, conducted strikes. Now, however, increases in membership and potential membership enabled activists to create a more varied web of organizations. They formed both benefit-centered and policy-centered union federations, PAWS and FATULS/AWC. They indulged in jurisdictional disputes. They sought union democracy through secessions and reorganiza-

tions. They established tactical alliances with each other and with the Histadrut. They sought union rights and social welfare from the government. They sometimes put national identity ahead of class solidarity, and sometimes did not.

The Arabs' situation as indigenous workers in a settler colony elicited some anomalies in union operation. They formed enduring unions less often in Arab enterprises than in British or international or Jewish enterprises: fewer Arab firms had workforces large enough to sustain unions. Their organizations also shared the national concerns typical of indigenous unions in settler-colonies, in that their adversaries were not only their employers, but the settler/workers (who should have been class allies) and the government, as the administration of an occupying power.

As representatives of indigenous workers in a settler-colonial system, the different Arab union federations defined members' interests differently in relation to national considerations. The PAWS, more concerned with workplace issues, considered the workers' major adversary to be the Zionist organizations that sought to reserve whole categories of employment for Jewish immigrants. The leftist unions -- for example, the Jaffa Arab Labor Federation, and, later, the FATULS and AWC -- not only held the British responsible for the Zionist presence but were concerned with issues of social and economic policy that brought them into conflict with the government. They accordingly defined the British occupiers as their primary opponents, even though

British officials had helped them organize. For both federations, then, their definition of members' interests shaped their definition of nationalist aims. For both, too, the protection of Arab jobs was their most conspicuous nationalist activity.

This thesis is not concerned to deliver judgment on whether the Palestinian Arab union movement "succeeded" or "failed." Criteria of union success are too numerous and complex to allow for so simple a verdict. In any event, the Arab federations had not reached the height of their development when political events and civil turmoil cut them off. No functioning union can safely be assumed to have reached the height of its development, and in mid-1947 the Arab unions were not merely functioning, but growing in both size and effectiveness. The postwar economic retrenchment was a challenge which the Arab unions might or might not have overcome. On the evidence of their ability to mobilize, their tactical versatility, and their national and international alliances, the Arab unions in 1947 were, however, as well-prepared to meet that challenge as were most unions in Europe and North America. Put differently, "Arab backwardness" had not rendered the Arab unions of British Palestine congenitally weak, nor had loyalties to traditional leaders prevented them from being "real unions."

## ENDNOTES

### Introduction: Special Unions -- or Special Capitalism?

<sup>1</sup>Rachelle Leah Taqqu, "Arab Labor in Mandatory Palestine," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1977, p. 269, citing Government of Palestine, Department of Labor Annual Report for 1946.

<sup>2</sup>The formerly unexamined concept of exceptionality has in any event become controversial among labor historians. Citing "distinctive conditions within each nation that shaped the character of class conflict and class consciousness," Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), p. 11, has articulated a position that seems unlikely to be refuted: "Each nation is different in some sense; none is exceptional." Similarly, James Cronin, "Neither Exceptional nor Peculiar: Towards the Comparative Study of Labor in Advanced Society," International Review of Social and Economic History (1993), p. 63, notes that a search for the reason a particular labor movement differs from a supposed "normal" pattern is liable to produce overemphasis on one or two factors designated as both anomalous and powerful.

<sup>3</sup>This thesis does not assume that the factory, the factory worker, and the union have any more inherent importance than any other type of workplace, worker, and workers' organization -- that they are, for example, at the head of some teleological procession or even chronologically subsequent to others. Arguments against such an assumption appear in Zachary Lockman's introduction to his edited Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. xix-xxvi; in Edmund Burke, III, "The History of the Working Classes in the Middle East: Some Methodological Considerations," *ibid.*, pp. 305-310; and in Ellis Goldberg, Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker: Class and Politics in Egypt, 1930-1952 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 47-52, 78-82, as well as in the work of historians of European and North American labor.

<sup>4</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 28; G.D.H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working-Class Movement, 1789-1947 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948), pp. 6, 9; Walter Galenson, ed., Comparative Labor Movements (New York: Russell & Russell, 1952, reissued 1968), p. x.

<sup>5</sup>Point Twelve of Wilson's Fourteen Points specifies "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" for non-Turkish nationalities of the former Ottoman Empire.

<sup>6</sup>Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), chapters 1-3 passim.

<sup>7</sup>Goldberg, pp. 74-75, discusses a manifestation of the notion of unions as nationalist fronts in Egypt in the 1930s. In that instance, defending unions as a means of communicating with workers was Labour Adviser Richard Graves, who would in 1940 become the first Labour Adviser for Palestine.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Hodgkin, "Some African and Third World Theories of Imperialism," Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, ed. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 111-13; Zachary Lockman, "Introduction," Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. xxiv.

<sup>9</sup>Justin McCarthy, The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Shalev, "The Labor Movement in Israel," The Social History of Labor in the Middle East, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 141. Gershon Shafir has pointed out that, even before the formal establishment of the Histadrut, this symbiosis had transformed the labor movement into a settler movement. "Zionism and Colonialism: A Comparative Approach," Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom, ed. Michael N. Barnett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 236.

<sup>11</sup>David Horowitz and Rita Hinden, Economic Survey of Palestine with Special Reference to the Years 1936 and 1937 (Tel Aviv: Economic Research Institute, Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1938), p. 81.

<sup>12</sup>Shafir, p. 234.

<sup>13</sup>J.C. Hurewitz, The Struggle for Palestine (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968; reprinted from New York: W.W. Norton, 1950), p. 33.

<sup>14</sup>Ann Mosely Lesch, Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 64.

<sup>15</sup>Issa Khalaf, Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948 (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991), p. 42.

<sup>16</sup>Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal, Palestinians: The Making of a People (New York: Free Press/Macmillan, 1993), pp. 50-51. As in many comparisons between the Jewish and Arab communities, the populations compared are not precisely commensurate. Because of the nature of Zionist immigration, the Arab "population more than twice as large" contained only slightly more potential wage-earners than did the yishuv, according to Roger Owen, "Economic Development in Mandatory Palestine," The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development under Prolonged Occupation, ed. George T. Abed (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 16. Of these, less than a third of the men actually were wage-earners, even in the high employment years of the mid-1940s, according to Rachelle Leah Taqqu, "Peasants into Workmen: Internal Labor Migration and the Arab Village Community under the Mandate," Palestinian Society and Politics, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 261.

<sup>17</sup>Taqqu, p. 113.

<sup>18</sup>Writing of the nineteenth century, Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), has emphasized that not only did the United States government exert more violence against workers than the British or even the more rigid regimes of Germany and France (p. 209), but U.S. employers were unusually "implacable anti-unionists" (p. 219).



## Chapter 1: Arab Workers in a Divided Home, 1917-1942

<sup>1</sup>Ellis Goldberg, Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker: Class and Politics in Egypt, 1930-1952 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 47-49, has discussed this identity in Egypt. He emphasized that the urban artisan was a stable type of worker, not a stage in a transition from traditional rural artisan to modern urban factory worker. Zachary Lockman, Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp xxi-xxii, has noted urban artisans' continued place in Middle Eastern society and economy.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Quataert, Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration (New York: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 78-93; idem, Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 177.

<sup>3</sup>Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 36-42 passim.

<sup>4</sup>Zachary Lockman, "Railway Workers and Relational History: Arabs and Jews in British-Ruled Palestine," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 35, No. 3 (July 1993), p. 608.

<sup>5</sup>Beshara Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 105-107, 117ff.; Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914, ed. Halil Inalcik with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 831.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Issawi, An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 157.

<sup>7</sup>Doumani, pp. 199-201 passim. Describing the situation in Egypt, Goldberg, p. 31, has distinguished the union's drive for workers' rights from the traditional system of mutual obligations of employer and employees, maintained by the influence of community leaders.

<sup>8</sup>Gershon Shafir, Land, Labor and the Origins of the

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 56-57.

<sup>9</sup>Frederick H. Kisch, "Letter to the Chairman, Political Commission, XVIIth Zionist Congress, and the Chairman, Political Commission, IInd Assembly of the Council of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, accompanied by a report on the work of the Joint Bureau for Arab Relations and a memorandum on intellectual, social and economic cooperation between Jews and Arabs" (Jerusalem: Gabriel Press, 1931), p. 72.

<sup>10</sup>Lockman, pp. 610-15; idem, "'We Opened Up the Arabs' Minds': Labor Zionist Discourse and the Railway Workers of Palestine (1919-1929)," Review of Middle East Studies 5, 1992, pp. 7, 11-22; idem, "Exclusion and Solidarity: Labor Zionism and Arab Workers in Palestine, 1897-1929," After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 224-31.

<sup>11</sup>Two extremely sensible, although nominally opposed, viewpoints on this question come from, on the one hand, Roger Owen, "Introduction," Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed. Roger Owen (Oxford: St. Antony's College, 1982), pp. 5-6, and idem, "Economic Development in Mandatory Palestine: 1918-1948," The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development Under Prolonged Occupation, ed. George A. Abed (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 13-15 et passim, and, on the other hand, Barbara Jean Smith, The Roots of Separatism in Palestine: British Economic Policy, 1920-1929 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), throughout, but explicitly on pp. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1934, Colonial No. 104 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), p. 103.

<sup>13</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1926, Colonial No. 26 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), pp. 58-59; idem, Report ... for the Year 1927, Colonial No. 31 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 69; Justin McCarthy, The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 36.

<sup>14</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 155, points out that unionization does not automatically result from prosperity, or from depression, but is produced by a combination of factors in interaction. For

Palestinian Arabs, apparently, the combination routinely included growth of the job market.

<sup>15</sup>David Horowitz and Rita Hinden, Economic Survey of Palestine with Special Reference to the Years 1936 and 1937 (Tel Aviv: Economic Research Institute, Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1938), p. 31.

<sup>16</sup>Kisch, p. 73, asserted this right with some delicacy:

We claim -- and this view has been recognised by his Majesty's Government -- that Jewish labour should be assured a fair share of Government and Municipal works, and that in calculating this share the Jewish contribution to public revenues should be taken into consideration.

Kisch nevertheless, p. 62, advocated some Jewish employment of Arabs to reduce hostility and the likelihood of boycott.

<sup>17</sup>Palestine Royal Commission, Memoranda Prepared by the Government of Palestine, Colonial No. 133 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), pp. 141-42. The government reported that of 13 requests for bids on labor contracts between April 1933 and February 1934, the Histadrut unions had responded to only one, because Jewish workers were fully employed.

<sup>18</sup>Zeev Rosenhek, "The Historical Roots of the Israeli Welfare State and the Zionist-Palestinian Conflict," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Israel Studies, Boston, Massachusetts, June 3, 1996.

<sup>19</sup>Stanley Greenberg, Race and State in Capitalist Development: Comparative Perspectives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 276, 283, discusses the government help necessary for an industrial or general workers' union to segregate jobs, exclude a particular group from employment, and subsidize a privileged group.

<sup>20</sup>Palestine Royal Commission, Report, Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament, Cmd. 5479 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), p. 320; idem, Memoranda Prepared by the Government of Palestine, p. 140.

<sup>21</sup>David Ben-Gurion, Jewish Labour (1935), pp. 22-23, quoted in Greenberg, p. 356.

<sup>22</sup>Greenberg, p. 286, discusses methods of attempting to make subsidized workers competitive in the labor market.

<sup>23</sup>Testimony of George Mansur, Palestine Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence heard at Public Sessions, Colonial No. 134 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), p. 343.

<sup>24</sup>Smith, p. 170.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>26</sup>Greenberg, pp. 281-82.

## Chapter 2: Inside Organizers, Outside Organizers, 1925-1936

<sup>1</sup>Ann Mosely Lesch, Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a National Movement (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979) considered these events the catalyst for a shift in the Arab community from "mobilization from above" to "mobilization from below." Yehoshua Porath selected it for the culmination of his Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement: Volume 1, 1918-1929 (London: Frank Cass, 1974) and opening of Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, Volume 2, 1929-1939 (London: Frank Cass, 1977). Philip Mattar, The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) has analyzed the role of al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, in the events of 1929 and their effect on his subsequent policies and public image.

<sup>2</sup>Porath, vol. 2, has treated in detail the Revolt and the developments that led up to it. Ted Swedenburg has brought forward "The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt (1936-1939)" in Islam, Politics, and Social Movements, ed. Edmund Burke, III, and Ira M. Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 169-203. Swedenburg has examined the interaction of politics and memory in stories of the Revolt in his Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). The account by Abdul Wahhab Said Kayyali, Palestine: A Modern History (London: Croom Helm, [1978]), stresses the irresponsible behavior of the Arab politicians.

<sup>3</sup>Information about the activities of the Palestine Communist Party comes from Musa Budeiri, The Palestine Communist Party, 1919-1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism (London: Ithaca Press, 1979).

<sup>4</sup>Abba Khushi, "The Palestine Labour League: The Record of a Fight for Arab-Jewish Labor Cooperation," Jewish Frontier (March 1944), 24; J.C. Hurewitz, The Struggle for Palestine (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968, reprinted from New York: W.W. Norton, 1950), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Zachary Lockman, "Railway Workers and Relational History: Arabs and Jews in British-Ruled Palestine," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 35, No. 3 (July 1993), pp. 601-27.

<sup>6</sup>Ann Mosely Lesch, Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a National Movement (Ithaca:

Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 110.

<sup>7</sup>General Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine, Department for Relations with Arab Workers, Survey of Arab Labour Organisation in Palestine (Tel-Aviv: the Federation, 1945), p. 16; Government of Palestine, A Survey of Palestine, prepared for the information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946-1947), p. 760. Despite the presence of the 15,000-member PAWS, the Histadrut reported in its 1945 Survey, p. 4, that "owing to the naturally slow development of trade unionism among the backward and rather small Arab working classes, the Arab organization [PLL] is still in its infancy."

<sup>8</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1928, Colonial No. 40 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), p. 92; Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1930, Colonial No. 59 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931), p. 101.

<sup>9</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1931, Colonial No. 75 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932), p. 74. The fruitless "promise" was apparently that of the national labor congress described below. Of PAWS, the British reported, *ibid.*, that it "continues to exist, but does not show signs of increasing vigour."

<sup>10</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1927, Colonial No. 31 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 69.

<sup>11</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1928 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), p. 92.

<sup>12</sup>Except as noted, material on the Congress comes from Maher al-Charif, "Le premier congrès ouvrier arabe: émergence du mouvement ouvrier arabe en Palestine," Mouvement ouvrier, Communisme et nationalismes dans le monde arabe (Paris: Les éditions ouvrières, 1978), pp. 152-55.

<sup>13</sup>Rachelle Leah Taqqu, "Arab Labor in Mandatory Palestine" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977), p. 140.

<sup>14</sup>The British never overcame their expressed reluctance to accord Arabs the eight-hour day (see PRO/CO 733/165, minute by L. Mayle) or minimum wage (Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1935, Colonial No. 112 [London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936], p. 101).

<sup>15</sup>H.A. Turner, Trade Unions Growth, Structure and Policy: A Comparative Study of the Cotton Unions in England (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d., reprinted from London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), pp. 80-81, describes a range of organizational responses, including many of those mentioned here, that have been common among various kinds of workers, with which the Arab groups are consonant.

<sup>16</sup>Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, "The Origins of the Process of Proletarianization and Urbanization of Arab Peasants in Palestine," City and Peasant: A Study in Sociocultural Dynamics, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 220, Article 6 (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1974), p. 472.

<sup>17</sup>Between 1931 and 1944 (which of course includes the strong early wartime urbanization), the Muslim population of Jaffa grew by 32 percent, to more than 50,000; that of Haifa, by 76 percent, to more than 35,000, according to Justin McCarthy, The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 163.

<sup>18</sup>George Mansur, The Arab Worker Under the Palestine Mandate (Jerusalem: Commercial Press, 1937), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup>Abdullah Schleifer, "'Izz al-Din al-Qassam: Preacher and Mujahid," Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East, ed. Edmund Burke, III (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 172-75.

<sup>20</sup>Salim Tamari, "Factionalism and Class Formation in Recent Palestinian History," Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed. Roger Owen (Oxford: St. Antony's College, 1982), p. 198.

<sup>21</sup>Husni Sawwaf, "Transportation and Communication," Economic Organization of Palestine, ed. Sa'id B. Himadeh (Beirut: American Press, 1938), p. 337.

<sup>22</sup>Palestine Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions, Colonial No. 134 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), p. 340; Mansur, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup>Mansur, pp. 29-32, 59, 61; Palestine Royal Commission, Minutes, p. 343.

<sup>24</sup>Taqqu, p. 149.

<sup>25</sup>Taqqu, p. 152. Ghassan Kanafani, The 1936-39 Revolt in Palestine (Committee for a Democratic Palestine, [1972]), p. 6, held the Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, responsible for the killing.

<sup>26</sup>Barbara Kalkas, "The Revolt of 1936: A Chronicle of Events," The Transformation of Palestine: Essays on the Origin and Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 239-42.

<sup>27</sup>For two very different accounts (even giving different dates) of the destruction of Jaffa's old city, see Nevill Barbour, Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy (London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1946), p. 168, and Porath, *ibid.*, p. 180. Kalkas, pp. 252-53, gives a chronology of the two-stage demolitions.

<sup>28</sup>Frances E. Newton, Fifty Years in Palestine (London: Coldharbour Press, 1948), p. 111.

<sup>29</sup>Sawwaf, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>Taqqu, p. 145.

<sup>31</sup>Mansur, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1935 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), pp. 124-25.

<sup>33</sup>Abdul Wahhab Said Kayyali, Palestine: A Modern History (London: Croom Helm, [1978]), p. 194.

<sup>34</sup>Mansur, p. 9; Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1937, Colonial No. 146 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), p. 130. Porath, in his analysis of lists of lower- and mid-level leaders of the Revolt, *ibid.*, pp. 263, 388-403 *passim*, identifies only six (out of some two hundred) as workers from the Haifa area. In contrast, twenty-five were known members of al-Qassam's group. For most of the leaders, however, no occupation is given, and Porath has no information on insurgents who were not leaders.

<sup>35</sup>Roger Owen, "Economic Development in Mandatory Palestine: 1918-1948," The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development Under Prolonged Occupation, ed. George A. Abed (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 16.

<sup>36</sup>Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), p. 215, describes, for instance, how the Panic of 1837, followed by recessions and waves of new workers, cut off union development in the United States for years.



### Chapter 3: Unions Like Any Others, 1942-1947

<sup>1</sup>Rachelle Leah Taqqu, "Arab Labor in Mandatory Palestine" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1977), p. 164; Stanley B. Greenberg, Race and State in Capitalist Development: Comparative Perspectives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 360.

<sup>2</sup>Martin W. Wilmington, The Middle East Supply Centre (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), pp. ix-x, points out the magnitude of the challenge. In his words, the (Anglo-American) Middle East Supply Centre

materially contributed to the preservation of stability by ensuring ... that the inhabitants of the region (there were more than 100,000,000 of them) were properly fed and clothed, and that essential medical supplies were available. ... Great changes were made in agricultural production in order to reduce imports; industrial facilities were directed to the needs of the Armed Services; the entire transport system was mobilized for the movement of munitions, yet at no time was there any breakdown in meeting the essential needs of the civilian population.

<sup>3</sup>MRC MSS.292/956.9/3, Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labour Societies (FATULS), memo to Wages Commission, 31 December 1942, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Palestine Post, 26 June 1942, p. 3; 16 July 1942, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Rachelle Leah Taqqu, "Peasants into Workmen: Internal Labor Migration and the Arab Village Community under the Mandate," Palestinian Society and Politics, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 265, quoting Government of Palestine, Department of Labor, Annual Report, 1942.

<sup>6</sup>Taqqu, "Arab Labor," p. 159, says the figure represents a third; Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, "The Origins of the Process of Proletarianization and Urbanization of Arab Peasants in Palestine," City and Peasant: A Study in Sociocultural Dynamics, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 220, Article 6 (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1974), p. 182, give the same figure but regard it as half; J.C. Hurewitz, The Struggle for Palestine (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968, reprinted from New York: W.W. Norton, 1950), p. 121.

<sup>7</sup>Hurewitz, p. 121; Taqqu, *ibid.*, pp. 166, 145, 280.

<sup>8</sup>FATULS, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup>Suad Amiry and Vera Tamari, The Palestinian Village Home (London: British Museum, 1989), discuss in detail the productive work of village women.

<sup>10</sup>FATULS, pp. 4, 6.

<sup>11</sup>Albert M. Hyamson, Palestine Under the Mandate, 1920-1948 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976 [reprinted from London: Methuen, 1950]), p. 184.

<sup>12</sup>Greenberg, pp. 181-82, has noted the rapid and evidently unstoppable formation of general workers' unions despite supposedly adverse organizing conditions.

<sup>13</sup>Fabian Society, Labour in the Colonies: Some Current Problems, reports submitted to the Labour Committee of the Fabian Colonial Bureau (London: Victor Gollancz and the Fabian Society, 1942), p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Great Britain, Colonial Office, Labour Supervision in the Colonial Empire, 1937-1943, Colonial No. 185 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1943), p. 4; PRO/CO 859/28/12259/3F, High Commissioner MacMichael to Lord Lloyd, Principal Secretary of State for Colonies, 20 May 1940; Palestine Post, 18 October 1940, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>PRO/CO 859/55/12259/4, Geoffrey Hibbert (Social Services Department, Colonial Office) to Richard M. Graves, Labour Adviser, Government of Palestine, 20 April 1942; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>16</sup>PRO/CO 859/55/12259/4, MacMichael code telegram to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6/8/42.

<sup>17</sup>Issa Khalaf, Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup>PRO/CO 859/93/3, Harold Chudleigh, "Progress of the Palestine Arab Trade Union Movement During 1943," 13 September 1943, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup>Government of Palestine, A Survey of Palestine, prepared for the information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (three vols.) (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946-1947), p. 764; Chudleigh, p. 2; Palestine Post, 6 October 1942, p. 3, quoting the Jaffa-based newspaper Filastin, October 1942; Palestine Post, 10 November 1942, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>Hurewitz, p. 122; Chudleigh, p. 3; John Asfur, "Arab Labour in Palestine," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, 32 (1945), p. 204.

<sup>21</sup>Musa Budeiri, The Palestine Communist Party, 1919-1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), p. 141, 143-44; Taqqu, *ibid.*, p. 292; Hurewitz, p. 122, quoting Palestine Government, Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1942, pp. 3, 15; Chudleigh, p. 2; Israel State Archives, I/31/42-258, Chudleigh, "Notes on the Federation of Arab Trade Unions," 15/7/43, p. 2, cited in Budeiri, p. 143.

<sup>22</sup>Chudleigh, "Progress," p. 3; Budeiri, p. 141.

<sup>23</sup>According to Hurewitz, p. 188, the newspaper was the result of a determined campaign to get Government permission to publish, which succeeded in May 1944. Taqqu, *ibid.*, p. 209; Government of Palestine, p. 765.

<sup>24</sup>Taha had earlier created a stir among British Labour Party policy makers. In 1944, he protested a proposal that "here too in Palestine is surely a case for transfer of population. Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in." Taha's telegram appealed to Labour Party principles ("Jewish labour movement in Palestine which fosters the spirit of class and race distinction is in no way consonant with the true and honest socialist creed and teachings"), demanded revocation of the policy, and insisted on Arab workers' right to self-determination. The protest apparently aroused the interest of the general secretary of the International Federation of Free Trade Unions, to whom the TUC international department explained that relevant Labour Party committees (in consultation with a Jewish Agency official) had concluded that "the sentence . . . was unhappily worded and that it might be necessary to reconsider it." MRC MSS.292/956.9/3, Sami Taha telegram to British Labour Party, 3/5/44, and H.B. Kemmis, secretary, TUC International Department Colonial Advisory Committee, memo to W. Schevenels, General Secretary, IFTU, 14/8/44. According to Kemmis, the TUC and Labour Party considered it unnecessary to reply to Taha.

<sup>25</sup>The same year, for example, the Histadrut reported in its "Survey of Arab Labour Organisation in Palestine" (Tel-Aviv: the Federation, 1945), p. 23, that "any statement of opinion which may be made by [the Arab working masses] is only what has been put into their mouths by others."

<sup>26</sup>Except as noted, material on the formation of AWC and on the Paris conference comes from three sources: Government of Palestine, *ibid.*, pp. 765-66; Budeiri, pp. 190-94; and Gabriel Baer, "Jewish and Arab Workers: Divided or United?" Towards Union in Palestine: Essays on Zionism and Jewish-Arab Cooperation, ed. Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and Ernst Simon (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972, reprinted from Jerusalem: IHUD [Union] Association, 1947), pp. 78-79.

<sup>27</sup>Fédération Syndicale Mondiale, Rapport de la conférence congrès syndicale mondiale (Paris: [FSM, 1945]), pp. 208-209.

<sup>28</sup>Budeiri, p. 199.

<sup>29</sup>Taqqu, *ibid.*, p. 315, "Peasants into Workmen," pp. 281-82; Budeiri, p. 195.

<sup>30</sup>Khalaf, p. 156, quoting PRO/CO 537/2280, Galilee DC to CO, 16/9/47.

<sup>31</sup>Richard M. Graves, Experiment in Anarchy (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), p. 84.

<sup>32</sup>Kimmerling, p. 96, note 101; Graves, *ibid.* Historian P.J. Vatikiotis, who grew up in Haifa, has implicated both faction and ideology, asserting that Taha was assassinated "for heading a left-oriented Arab trade union movement that was not subservient to the Mufti." Among Arabs and Jews: A Personal Experience, 1936-1990 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p. 30; Taqqu, "Arab Labor," p. 318.

<sup>33</sup>Budeiri, pp. 199-200.

<sup>34</sup>For the figures 15,000 and 18,000, see Baer, p. 79; the figures 115,000 to 130,000 come from Hurewitz, pp. 121, 189; the totals of 15,000 to 20,000 come from Government of Palestine, p. 766.

<sup>35</sup>A high rate of enrollment is not requisite for acceptance as a legitimate union. According to Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" History Workshop 17 (1984), p. 68, no more than a fourth of the U.S. workforce was ever unionized.

<sup>36</sup>Government of Palestine, p. 763; Chudleigh, *ibid.*, p. 1. Chudleigh, *ibid.*, consistently supportive of union organizing, found it "difficult to see why Arab village wage earners (and peasants) should not be free to combine in the same manner as similar populations elsewhere in the world." Ellis Goldberg, Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker: Class and Politics in Egypt, 1930-1952 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 30, found that in Egypt, nationalist unions (analogous to PAWS) defined workers -- thus potential members -- as anyone who worked with the hands. Egypt provided an analogue to the AWC also, in leftist unions that instead emphasized wage earners' rights vis-à-vis employers.

<sup>37</sup>Baruch Kimmerling, The Economic Interrelationships Between the Arab and Jewish Communities in Mandatory Palestine (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1979), p. 69; for examples of what seem to be typical Arab strike

aims, see Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1927, Colonial No. 31 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 69; idem, Report ... for the Year 1928, Colonial No. 40 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), p. 92; idem, Report ... for the Year 1935, Colonial No. 112 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), pp. 124-25; idem, Report ... for the Year 1937, Colonial No. 146 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), p. 130; and George Mansur, The Arab Worker Under the Palestine Mandate (Jerusalem, Commercial Press, 1937), pp. 9, 33.

In 1926, the aims of twelve of the thirteen strikes recorded by the government were either to exclude Arab workers or to limit employment to members of the striking union. The thirteenth strike was conducted by Arab workers. Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1926, Colonial No. 26 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), p. 60. In 1933, twenty-five of fifty-seven strikes were undertaken to secure "Jewish labor." Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report ... for the Year 1933, Colonial No. 94 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), pp 99-100.

<sup>38</sup>Laurie, p. 217.

<sup>39</sup>Cudleigh, *ibid.*, p. 2; Budeiri, pp. 143-44.

<sup>40</sup>Taqqu, *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>41</sup>H.A. Turner, Trade Unions Growth, Structure and Policy: A Comparative Study of the Cotton Unions in England (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d., reprinted from George Allen & Unwin, 1962), pp. 290-91, 315-19 *passim*.

<sup>42</sup>Taqqu, *ibid.*, p. 290; Kimmerling, p. 96, note 101; Graves, p. 84.

<sup>43</sup>Budeiri, pp. 198, 199; Asfur, p. 204.

<sup>44</sup>MRC MSS.292/956.9/4, Capt. Filsar, report to the Trades Union Congress, p. 1. The only information available about Filsar is an endorsement which H.B. Kemmis, the TUC's international secretary, appended to the Filsar report: "He'd get full marks from me for integrity and is a careful investigator."

<sup>45</sup>Budeiri, pp. 195, 199.

<sup>46</sup>General Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine, Department for Relations with Arab Workers, "A Survey of Arab Labour Organisation in Palestine" (Tel-Aviv: the Federation, 1945), pp. 21-22. Hebrew University sociologist Michael Shalev, "The Labor Movement in Israel," The Social History of

Labor in the Middle East, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 138, has noted that Israeli political theorist Zeev Sternhell, in an interview in the newspaper Ha'aretz and in work in progress, turns this analysis around. "For Sternhell, the ideology of the Zionist labor movement in the interwar period suggests a European parallel, but not social democracy. Rather he looks to national socialism with its tribal-nationalist outlook, reverence for productivity, and contempt for 'parasites.' ... In this reading, the synthesis between socialism and Zionism was not a synthesis but the capitulation of socialism to nationalism." Shalev has built on Sternhell's distinction between Labor Zionism and European socialism.

<sup>47</sup>Taqqu, *ibid.*, pp. 298-309 *passim*; Khalaf, pp. 128-130, 156.

<sup>48</sup>Hurewitz, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup>Budeiri, p. 197.

<sup>50</sup>Filsar, p. 3. The breezy captain, evidently of a zoological bent, characterized Sami Taha as both a rat and a snake.

<sup>51</sup>Filsar, *ibid.*; Bernard Wasserstein, The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab Jewish Conflict, 1917-1929, second edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 211; Albert Hyamson, Palestine Under the Mandate, 1920-1948 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976, reprinted from London: Methuen, 1950), p. 184.

<sup>52</sup>Budeiri, p. 143, describes different factions' responses to the Histadrut's strike call.

<sup>53</sup>Baer, pp. 76, 81.

<sup>54</sup>Budeiri, p. 195.

<sup>55</sup>Baer, p. 76.

<sup>56</sup>Kimmerling's, p. 69, assessment of PAWS, whose identity as a union he accepts, is that "according to Western criteria, [its] achievements ... could be considered as very modest. Yet from a developing society's outlook, its very existence, its achievements, such as the attachment of workers' wages to the cost of living (in the 1940's), and its autonomy from the political struggles would be viewed as a major feat." The achievements of the Arab unions were no more modest than those of many unions in the West whose identities as unions are unchallenged and which are not considered particularly weak.

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