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Politicization of Unemployment in  
British-Ruled Palestine

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Unemployment in Mandate Palestine (1917–47) has long attracted the attention of historians. One reason was the sheer size of unemployment, its share in the labour force, and its relation to immigration. The second reason was the politicization of the issue. Whilst the Arabs persistently claimed that expanding Jewish immigration aggravated unemployment, the Jews retorted no less vociferously that Jewish immigration brought along capital and skills which, in turn, enhanced economic opportunities, thereby eventually reducing unemployment. Against the background of a social phenomenon hitherto unknown in Mandate Palestine in such dimensions, and of political leaders in the two communities mobilizing the unemployed for political purposes in the Arab–Jewish conflict, emerged a third characteristic of contemporary unemployment: the yawning gap between the potential it created for social unrest and the paucity of organized protest by the unemployed themselves. Contemporaries were keenly aware of the wrath of the unemployed. It evoked substantial fears among the British authorities, in particular during the Arab rebellion; and many among the leaders of the Jewish polity in pre-1948 Palestine suspected that it undermined the hegemony of Zionist institutions in the towns. At the same time, however, hardly any serious institutional measures were required in response to the scattered protests of the unemployed—they simply died out on their own, and to many they unsurprisingly seemed to lack energy and persistence. This interplay between the enormity of unemployment and the feeble expression of protest is a telling prism through which the protests of the unemployed in Mandate Palestine and the contexts in which they emerged can be understood.

First we focus on the Yishuv, and in particular on the economic crisis which dramatically affected the Jewish sector of the Palestine

economy in 1926–8. It was here that post-First World War Palestine first witnessed the full intensity of the social force inherent in unemployment, its impact on Zionist institutions and on the Zionist labour movement itself. Our second focus is on the potential in the anger of the unemployed to influence ideology, organization, and politics. Here we turn to the Arab community of Mandate Palestine and, in particular, to the Arab revolt of 1936–9 and the politicization of unemployment. Finally, we consider the British Mandatory ‘state’ as a major employer in Palestine and in particular the united Jewish–Arab protests of May 1947 against the threat of unemployment faced by demobilized servicemen and those employed by the Mandate authorities during the Second World War.

### *Unemployment and the Jewish Community*

Organized protest of unemployed immigrants and workers was introduced to Palestine in the 1920s, largely by Jews. Sporadic discontent about lack of jobs emerged among Arabs during the First World War and among Jewish immigrants during the economic slowdown of the early 1920s, but it did not amount to much. If anything, the response to mounting unemployment was mainly institutional. The British Palestine government sought to reduce the cost of its rule and shirked responsibility for the unemployed, and it curtailed Jewish immigration because of the conviction in government circles that the Palestinian economy was incapable of absorbing new entrants.<sup>1</sup> Response in the Jewish community came mainly from the labour movement. Using the Histadrut (established in December 1920), its trade union organization, and local labour councils, labour developed a more active approach seeking to convince Jewish employers to prefer Jewish immigrants and workers over ‘cheap’ Arab labour. Many Histadrut members joined this national-oriented campaign, often by participating in strikes and, occasionally, in violence. Although these battles employed the Zionist terminology of Jewish state-building, they hardly had an impact on private employers and without concerted Zionist pressure to bring about a change in Britain’s non-interventionist

<sup>1</sup> John Gal, *Burden by Choice? Policy Towards the Unemployed in Pre-State Palestine and Israel 1920–1995* (Beer Sheva, 2002, in Hebrew), 40.

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approach there was not much labour could do.<sup>2</sup> The Histadrut was left, therefore, to develop a series of social and cultural institutions which, through its town-based labour councils, catered for the needs of the unemployed and served as a surrogate address for their economic plight and anger. During the economic boom of the mid-1920s, which was set off by Jewish immigration and import of capital, and significantly eased the pressure of unemployment, these labour institutions became labour's main lever in organizing new immigrants, finding jobs for them, and providing economic and social institutions and a sense of community. Clearly, the mix of Zionism, institutional care, and control of urban labour that these communal arrangements entailed was hardly a hothouse for working-class radicalism.<sup>3</sup>

It was only in the wake of the 'great economic crisis' which beset the Jewish building and manufacturing sectors in 1926–8 that job scarcity became a specific cause for social unrest. However, the main reason why protest was, by and large, an internal Jewish affair was that it followed the large wave of Jewish immigration (of Russian and Polish Jews) in 1924–5 and focused on the inability of the Jewish private and public sectors to absorb the immigrants. Among the Arab majority of the population in Palestine, unemployment was harsh, in particular, in the agricultural sector, as the British government well noted. But during the 1920s as a whole and the downturn of 1926–8 itself, unemployed Arabs hardly turned to organized protest at all.

In the eyes of contemporaries, the crisis was indeed unprecedented. In 1926 the construction industry stagnated totally, and the number of those without work was five times that of the previous year. In 1927 the crisis climaxed, hitting in particular Jewish immigrants, Jewish workers in the towns, and the unskilled. Of the Jewish population of 149,800 in 1927 with a workforce of 55,900, the unemployed reached a decadal high of 7,300.<sup>4</sup> Though the

<sup>2</sup> On the emergence of the concept see Aviva Halamish, 'Immigration According to Economic Absorptive Capacity: The Guiding Principles, Modes of Operation and the Demographic Implications of the Interwar Immigration Policy', in Avi Bareli and Nachum Karlinsky (eds.), *Economy and Society during the Mandate* (Beersheba, 2003, in Hebrew), 179–216.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Giladi, 'The Yishuv during the Fourth Wave of Immigration, 1924–1929' (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1968), 33–5; David de Vries, *Idealism and Bureaucracy in 1920s Palestine: The Origins of 'Red Haifa'* (Tel Aviv, 1999, in Hebrew), chs. 3–4.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Metzger and Oded Kaplan, *The Jewish and Arab Economies in Mandatory Palestine: Production, Employment and Growth* (Jerusalem, 1990, in Hebrew), 104. See also Nadav Halevi,

impact of the crisis was not uniform, hitting low-waged workers more than salaried workers and the urban areas with a strong Histadrut presence, the sense of catastrophe was widespread.<sup>5</sup>

The major repercussion of the crisis was that it exposed the inability of the Histadrut and the Zionist movement in general to ease the levels of unemployment and to close the gap between the influx of unskilled Jewish immigrants and low capital investment.<sup>6</sup> Pressure exerted by labour on both the Palestine government and the Zionist leadership to create jobs resulted eventually in only a marginal increase in employment. Inability to influence the availability of jobs induced the Histadrut to acquiesce in the granting of material support to the unemployed, using small sums of money from Jewish capital funds transferred by the World Zionist Organization.<sup>7</sup>

The second repercussion of the crisis was the increasing ambivalence in Jewish society concerning the viability of the Zionist project in Palestine.<sup>8</sup> Chronic lack of employment entailed severe hardship and affected the ability to provide even the most basic essentials. In many places real hunger took hold, and workers faced difficulties paying for accommodation, clothing, and medical treatment. Hence the letter written by 'workers who have been hungry for two days' to the Histadrut-affiliated Petah Tikva labour council: 'The situation has reached the point where there isn't even a morsel of bread to last the day.'<sup>9</sup> Physical debility as a result of the shortages made it difficult for workers to return to manual labour, even when this could be found. Conditions regulating aid were such that it barely provided minimal subsistence, and until the financial support programme of Zionist institutions in the summer of 1926, hunger and destitution were the lot of

'The Political Economy of Absorptive Capacity: Growth and Cycles in Jewish Palestine under the British Mandate', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 19 (1983), 458–9.

<sup>5</sup> Giladi, 'The Yishuv', 186; De Vries, *Idealism and Bureaucracy*, 211. The inconsistency in the figures is not coincidental. On the one hand, the leadership of the Yishuv had an interest in hiding the real data in order not to question 'absorptive capacity'; on the other, in the historiography the crisis was conceived as more serious than it actually was.

<sup>6</sup> On the causes of the crisis see Giladi, 'The Yishuv', 180–4.

<sup>7</sup> For details on the financial support plan see John Gal, 'Unemployment Insurance, Trade Unions and the Strange Case of the Israeli Labour Movement', *International Review of Social History*, 42 (1997), 357–96.

<sup>8</sup> Ruben Schindler, 'Unemployment Assistance during the Period of the Yishuv: Philanthropy, Productivity and Mutual Aid', *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 53 (1977), 356–61.

<sup>9</sup> Lavon Institute Archive of the Labour Movement (hereafter LA), IV-250-54-231-c.

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many urban workers.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, there was a net emigration of Jews from Palestine. The difficulty faced by the Jewish community in providing materially for itself brought with it the threat that the Palestine government would reduce the number of immigration permits. The Yishuv's leadership seemed to concur. Long espousing Jewish workers' hegemony in Jewish-owned workplaces, it expressed sympathy with the plight of the unemployed. At the same time it recognized the shortage of work as a malignant disease liable to derail the entire Zionist project.<sup>11</sup>

The third repercussion was the growing threat of chronic unemployment to the political and organizational control of Jewish institutions and those of the Histadrut in particular. The unemployed fought each other for jobs—sometimes physically—in the queues outside the Histadrut-run labour exchanges, the institutions turned to as the best means of finding work. 'No substantial projects were initiated', claimed a senior Histadrut functionary regarding incidents at Haifa's labour council, 'and all the difficulties of the situation and the bitterness of the jobless were expressed, sometimes in the form of shouted demands and sometimes even with violence—and all of this directed solely and exclusively at the representatives of the unions and the employment exchanges.'<sup>12</sup> Attempts on the part of the small Histadrut-affiliated trade unions to decrease unemployment by advertising job vacancies were indeed only partially successful. Consequently part of the economic infrastructure of the Histadrut (such as its building contracting company) collapsed, and the opportunities for corruption among the bureaucrats proliferated.<sup>13</sup> When the crisis peaked in 1927, the Histadrut was increasingly perceived as incapable of protecting the unemployed; many workers with more stable employment left it, and its membership plummeted.<sup>14</sup> This

<sup>10</sup> The aid started in July 1926, approximately one year after the onset of the crisis. It was given only to those who had been unemployed for at least two months, and the entitled had to attend the employment office three times a week. The aid supplied about half of the minimal expenses. See Gal, *Burden by Choice*, 55–6.

<sup>11</sup> De Vries, *Idealism and Bureaucracy*, 216–17; id., 'Drawing the Repertoire of Collective Action: Labour Zionism and Strikes in 1920s Palestine', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 38/3 (2002), 93–122.

<sup>12</sup> Berl Repetor, *Kuntres*, 258 (2 Apr. 1926, in Hebrew). *Kuntres* was the bulletin of Ahdut Haavoda, the majority party in the labour Zionist movement in 1919–29.

<sup>13</sup> Shabtai Teveth, *David's Passion: Life of David Ben Gurion* (Jerusalem, 1976), ii. 365–83; Giladi, 'The Yishuv', 194–6.

<sup>14</sup> For the strategy of segregating strong workers in Haifa see de Vries, *Idealism and Bureaucracy*, 221–34.

deepened the Histadrut's dependence on support from below of the better-off industrial workers and on more economically powerful groups, in particular, private sector Jewish manufacturers.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the weakness of the Histadrut vis-à-vis the Zionist movement became a chief cause for Mapai, its leading political party, to consider a political takeover of the Zionist movement altogether.<sup>16</sup>

The fourth effect of the unemployment crisis of 1926–8 was on the institutions of the Histadrut. An all-out war over the few jobs that did exist was fought between the workers' councils, between union members and non-union workers, between those with permanent jobs and the unemployed, between women workers and men, and between farmers and artisans.<sup>17</sup> The violence of the 'Petah Tikva incidents' is a case in point.<sup>18</sup> As long as unemployment lingered, the unemployed of the Petah Tikva plantation (a few miles east of Tel Aviv) turned their resentment against the farmers who, for economic reasons, preferred to employ Arabs in the plantation's orchards.<sup>19</sup> There were even those who declared that the war against the farmers should be fought shoulder to shoulder with the Arab workers, on the grounds that the 'gulf that separates the Jewish worker from the Arab worker is endangering more and more the status of the worker in the settlement, since it provides the farmer with the means to oppress and exploit them both'.<sup>20</sup> The Histadrut for its part imposed a different policy. With the onset of the citrus-picking season of November–December 1927, and after negotiations with the Jewish citrus-growers had come to nothing, it organized a protest through the

<sup>15</sup> *Idealism and Bureaucracy*, 273–85.

<sup>16</sup> David Ben-Gurion, *From Class to Nation* (Tel Aviv, 1933, in Hebrew), 241; see also the conflict between the Histadrut and the Hadassah Medical Organization over the requirement that unemployed workers produce a 'poverty certificate' as a precondition for exemption from hospitalization charges. Shifra Shvartz, 'Charity or Social Right? The Controversy over the Hospitalization of Members of the Jewish Labour Federation in Palestine, 1926–1928', *Israel Journal of Medical Sciences*, 32/3–4 (1996), 248–55.

<sup>17</sup> For the tension between the labour councils see the correspondence concerning the Jaffa to Petah Tikva road in LA/IV-250-54-146. For the tension between Histadrut members and other Jewish workers see Anita Shapira, *Futile Struggle* (Tel Aviv, 1977, in Hebrew), 38–9.

<sup>18</sup> The Petah Tikva Agricultural Committee, *The Petah Tikva Troubles* (Petah Tikva, 1928, in Hebrew).

<sup>19</sup> Petah Tikva Labour Council to the Agricultural Council, 18 Apr. 1927, LA/IV-250-54-230-a.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of Poalei-Zion party in Petah Tikva, 5 Nov. 1927, LA/IV-250-54-231-b.

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local labour council.<sup>21</sup> Pickets were stationed at the entrances of orchards where Arabs were employed, and occasionally these groups came to blows, ending in violent dispersal by the British police. After a series of incidents which came to a head on 17 December 1927, the Histadrut sealed an agreement with the farmers that stipulated that at least 50 per cent of the citrus-pickers should be Jewish, and that the difference between the wages of the Arab workers and those of the Jewish workers would be paid by the Agricultural Council, a Zionist-backed Histadrut organization. The power of the unemployed was therefore diverted into the struggle against elements external to the Jewish labour community—Jewish landowners and Arab workers.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the difficulties of coping with unemployment and its after effects in 1927–9 increased the orientation of Histadrut leaders towards Zionist, rather than class, solidarity.<sup>23</sup> The financial support which the Histadrut gave to the unemployed was abolished in order to force their migration from the towns to the agricultural settlements,<sup>24</sup> and to enlist them more fully in the Histadrut's campaign to secure more control in the labour market.<sup>25</sup>

In the longer term this policy reorientation proved to be a double-edged sword which turned against the Histadrut. This indeed happened in the unemployment crisis of 1936, when a large and organized group of unemployed among the ranks of construction workers in Tel Aviv demanded material support from the Histadrut and threatened to destabilize Mapai's control of the town's Histadrut-affiliated labour council.<sup>26</sup> The storm this affair caused in the labour movement has to be understood against the background of labour's aspiration in the 1930s to wrest

<sup>21</sup> This policy was driven by David Ben Gurion himself, who was behind the decision on the struggle in the executive committee of the Histadrut. See Teveth, *David's Passion*, ii. 435–55.

<sup>22</sup> Shapira, *Futile Struggle*, 37–42.  
<sup>23</sup> De Vries, *Idealism and Bureaucracy*, 267–73; Eliezer Rosenthal, 'Unemployment—Attitude, Crystallization of Policy and Practice in the Labour Movement, 1927–1948' (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1976, in Hebrew).

<sup>24</sup> Teveth, *David's Passion*, ii. 436; LA/IV-235-1-996-c.

<sup>25</sup> In 1930, after the crisis had ended, Histadrut members were transferred to Petah Tikva in order to get the citrus work. See Shapira, *Futile Struggle*, 89. On gendered aspects in the Histadrut approach to unemployment see Deborah S. Bernstein, 'On Rhetoric and Commitment: The Employment of Married Women during the Depression of 1936–1939', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20/5–6 (1997), 593–604.

<sup>26</sup> The affair was known as 'Ha-Martef' (the cellar) after the group's meeting place in Tel Aviv. See Meir Avizohar, *Through Broken Mirror: National and Social Ideals as Reflected in Mapai* (Tel Aviv, 1990, in Hebrew), 293–313.

provision for the unemployed from all other public institutions. Since 1933 Mapai had controlled not only the Histadrut but the Jewish Agency which ran the entire system of Zionist institutions.<sup>27</sup> Shaping an unemployment policy meant responding to the huge expansion of the Histadrut's urban base resulting from large-scale immigration from Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of the rise of fascism. Through a Histadrut-run unemployment fund, and by mobilizing non-labour forces in the Jewish community and the Zionist movement, Mapai and the Histadrut assured provision for the unemployed, their organization, and their affiliation to labour's institutions in the latter half of the 1930s.<sup>28</sup>

However, institutionalization of unemployment provision and the focused efforts to control the labour market were associated, in the eyes of many non-affiliated workers and unemployed, with political control and even corruption. The violent protest at the Tel Aviv labour council in 1937–9 (mostly by building workers) and its political implications therefore signalled that unemployment could not simply be resolved by political and bureaucratic control of the labour market or by the social regimentation of the unemployed themselves. The affair reflected intra-communal and intra-labour social tension. However, it did not evolve into an open conflict, mainly because of the economic impact of the Second World War and the virtual disappearance of unemployment that the war brought about.<sup>29</sup>

### *Unemployment and Arab National Resentment*

The prevalence of a protest culture of the unemployed within the Arab population of Mandate Palestine is, in all probability, a question of definition. Many scholars reckon that the course and duration of the Arab revolt (1936–9) cannot be understood

<sup>27</sup> Giladi, 'The Yishuv', 243; on Mapai's social ideology see Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Histadrut, *The Unemployment Fund: Report 1933–1938* (Tel Aviv, 1938, in Hebrew); Histadrut, *The Unemployment Fund, 1936–1940* (Tel Aviv, 1941, in Hebrew); Avraham Milstein, *Unemployment Fund, 1933–1941* (Tel Aviv, 1985, in Hebrew); Sternhell, *The Founding Myths*, 306–17.

<sup>29</sup> Nachum Gross and Jacob Metzger, 'Palestine in World War II: Some Economic Aspects', in Geoffrey. T. Mills and Hugh Rockoff (eds.), *The Sineus of War: Essays on the Economic History of World War II* (Ames, Ia., 1996), 59–82.

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without reference to the socio-economic background of the peasant population, unemployment included. However, this socio-economic background has not been defined as unemployment in the accepted sense of the term.

Although the Arab economy was far from stagnant during the Mandate period, underemployment, in particular among the *fellahin* (peasantry), was chronic.<sup>30</sup> Among other factors this derived from natural growth in the rural population, while the area of land available to extended families remained static or even contracted. For this reason, hidden unemployment evaded official statistical measurement.<sup>31</sup> Even when totally lacking employment, the majority of *fellahin* remained bound administratively to the family farm. Therefore, when they were not working for hire, they were not considered part of the workforce.<sup>32</sup> It is for these reasons that estimates of Arab unemployed in Mandate Palestine are very unreliable.<sup>33</sup>

The causes of deprivation of a significant proportion of the *fellahin* population are well known. First, hardship emanated primarily from eviction from the land on which the *fellahin* had long subsisted.<sup>34</sup> Late nineteenth-century changes in Ottoman law and the British Mandate's changes in land control and ownership led to the loss of entitlement to land that had been worked for centuries. Secondly, Zionist land acquisition and settlement began at the end of the nineteenth century, a process that continued over the years of the British Mandate. Finally, the pressure of mounting debts forced the *fellahin* population to sell its land. These debts were created by population growth, British taxation policy, natural disasters, and the agricultural methods that the *fellahin* adopted. The wealthy landowners and financiers who lent money to the *fellahin* took over their land as surety for the debts. If the land was sold to Jews, the *fellah* lost any access to his former land

<sup>30</sup> Here we focus on the *fellahin*. For a more general picture of Arab society see Rochelle L. Taquu, 'Arab Labor in Mandatory Palestine' (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1977); for Haifa see Joseph Vashitz, *Jewish-Arab Relations at Haifa under the British Mandate* (Givat Haviva, 1973, in Hebrew). For an example of the protest of unemployed in Jaffa demanding public works see *Palestine Post*, 15 May 1938; see also A. Becker, 'Is There an Arab Unemployment Problem in Palestine?', *Palestine and Near East Economic Magazine*, 5/12-13 (1930), 233-6.

<sup>31</sup> Mahmoud Yazbak, 'From *Fellahin* to Rebels: Economic Causes in the Breakout of the Arab Revolt in 1936', *Hatzionot*, 22 (2000, in Hebrew), 185-205, at 200.

<sup>32</sup> Issa Khalaf, 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29 (1997), 93-112, at 95.

<sup>33</sup> Taquu, 'Arab Labor', 54, and 62-3.

(those of tenant status under an Arab landowner had customary rights to land). A significant proportion of the *fellahin* were therefore deprived of the means of subsistence.<sup>35</sup>

However, only partial proletarianization of the *fellahin* ensued.<sup>36</sup> They usually remained tied to their family and village, whither they returned at times of shortage of work or seasonal lulls in agriculture. Admittedly, the prodigious expansion of coastal towns was partly created by an influx of *fellahin*, but the latter tended to settle in shanties on the outskirts of the towns, without women, dependent adults, or children. The inhabitants of the shanties, such as those in 1920s and 1930s Haifa, lived in conditions of abject poverty and were set apart from the other Arabs in the big cities. In the mid-1930s some shanties were cleared and the inhabitants forced to return to the villages. Some of the *fellahin* did, indeed, remain in the towns and became a regular part of the workforce, but many continued to roam between paid employment and village life. They were therefore still regarded as *fellahin* and most were not counted as unemployed.<sup>37</sup>

By and large, until the 1930s no political activity or significant self-organization was attributed to this social stratum.<sup>38</sup> Neither the socio-economic causes behind the violent events in Jerusalem in 1929, in the wake of the Muslim–Jewish dispute over access to the Wailing Wall,<sup>39</sup> nor the unemployment in the Arab sector,<sup>40</sup> which was lower than that in the Jewish sector,<sup>41</sup> produced a significant voice for the unemployed in local Arab politics.<sup>42</sup> Change

<sup>34</sup> For their description as ‘banished’, see Yazbak, ‘From *Fellahin* to Rebels’, 196.

<sup>35</sup> See Kenneth Stein, ‘Palestine’s Rural Economy, 1917–1939’, *Studies in Zionism*, 8 (1987), 25–49.

<sup>36</sup> Avraham Cohen, *The Economy of the Arab Sector in Mandatory Palestine* (Givat Haviva, 1978, in Hebrew), 41.

<sup>37</sup> Khalaf, ‘The Effect of Socioeconomic Change’, 102; Yazbak, ‘From *Fellahin* to Rebels’, 201–2.

<sup>38</sup> Stein, ‘Palestine’s Rural Economy’, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Mahmoud Yazbak, ‘Immigrants, Elite Groups and Popular Organizations in Haifa’s Arab Society from the British Occupation to the End of the Arab Revolt’, in Bareli and Karlinsky, *Economy and Society*, 381. See also Colonial Office, *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (London, 1937), 72–6; Vashitz, *Jewish–Arab Relations*, i. ch. 3, 9.

<sup>40</sup> In 1926–8 the rural sector suffered from natural disasters (locust, cattle epidemic, and drought), for which see Stein, ‘Palestine’s Rural Economy’, 40–1. For the extent of unemployment in the Arab sector see Tamar Gozansky, *The Development of Capitalism in Palestine* (Tel Aviv, 1986, in Hebrew), 210.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara J. Smith, *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine: British Economic Policy, 1920–1929* (Syracuse, NY, 1993), 82.

<sup>42</sup> Also influential was the lack of a legacy of a class-based organization. On the hardships of the Arab unionization see Taqqu, ‘Arab Labor’, 113–58.

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emerged only at the turn of the decade when the Palestinian rural economy suffered some serious setbacks, mainly on account of natural disasters, and balanced only by meagre public works in the cities in which *fellahin* were employed. The construction of the Haifa port in 1929–33, the laying of the oil pipeline, and other projects sponsored by the British government combined with increased seasonal work in the citrus sector to bring sporadic employment and a slight improvement in working conditions.<sup>43</sup> The Zionist campaign for control of the labour market was not yet as effective as it was to be later in the decade. Thus *fellahin* found employment even in Jewish-owned industries and agricultural settlements (sources of income which would later be eroded). The huge wave of Jewish immigration in 1932–4 put an end to this period of relative prosperity. Admittedly, until 1935 there was an impressive increase in the flow of capital into Palestine, and this led to a boost in the construction sector, offering employment to Arab job-seekers too.<sup>44</sup> In these years Arab workers were still benefiting from buoyancy in the construction sector, in the citrus sector, and in the docks.<sup>45</sup> But increases in the sale of land to Jews and the completion of some of the public projects threatened the *fellahin*, who at the beginning of the 1930s had for the first time known a period of relatively respectable paid employment.<sup>46</sup> Signs of the impending crisis were beginning to show.<sup>47</sup>

As early as 1931 a new line of action emerged. The letter from Ramsay MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann, called by the Arabs the ‘Black Letter’, abrogated the agreements that had followed the events of 1929 and led to increasing unrest against the British and renewed agitation against the Jews.<sup>48</sup> The anti-British and anti-Zionist Izz al-Din al-Qassam organization was already recruiting members, especially from the rural sector.<sup>49</sup> In 1933,

<sup>43</sup> Khalaf, ‘The Effect of Socioeconomic Change’, 99–100.

<sup>44</sup> Vashitz, *Jewish–Arab Relations*, ii. ch. 5, 47.

<sup>45</sup> Taqqu, ‘Arab Labor’, 56–60.

<sup>46</sup> Mahmoud Yazbak, ‘From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36 (2000), 93–113.

<sup>47</sup> See data on unemployment in Haifa in May Seikaly, *Haifa: Transformation of an Arab Society, 1918–1939* (London, 1995), 147 n. 34.

<sup>48</sup> For the Palestinian response to British policy see Smith, *The Roots of Separatism*, 15–16.

<sup>49</sup> Izz al-Din al-Qassam, the Palestinian militant (1882–1935), established the organization in 1930 as ‘Black Hand’. See Yuval Arnon-Ohana, *A Sword from Within: The Internal Struggle in the Palestinian Movement 1929–1939* (Tel Aviv, 1981, in Hebrew), 268–9; Ted Swedenburg, ‘The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt (1936–39)’, in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus (eds.), *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988), 169–203.

with the surge in Jewish immigration, large-scale demonstrations were called and strikes erupted throughout Palestine.<sup>50</sup> When war broke out between Italy and Abyssinia in 1935 and Arab agriculture was still suffering the effects of earlier natural disasters, the crisis was unleashed in earnest.<sup>51</sup> Short-lived strikes invigorated the Izz al-Din al-Qassam group, which intensified its activities. In April 1936 the Arab revolt finally broke out, partly comprising sporadic strikes organized by the Supreme Arab Council, the body that since 1922 had run the life of the Muslim community of Palestine. In many towns Arab workers stopped work, and the unemployed and the rural population joined the agitation.<sup>52</sup>

From the summer of 1936, the centre of gravity of the revolt passed to the rural sector.<sup>53</sup> Most of the rebellious activities emanated from the rural population, and the fighters themselves were primarily drawn from among the dispossessed *fellahin*.<sup>54</sup> This is not the place to describe the dynamics of the revolt as a whole, but it is important to stress that the social bedrock on which it was based was the same stratum that had undergone proletarianization and was therefore the most prone to unemployment, both overt and covert.<sup>55</sup> Resentment was directed against the British and their policies, perceived as discriminating in favour of the Jews; against the Jews who had, as they saw it, stolen their livelihood, their land, and their ancestral rights; and against the Arab social elite, for charging exorbitant rates of interest on loans and expropriating land, and for arrogant and exploitative attitudes in general.<sup>56</sup> Bitterness was simultaneously economic, social, and

<sup>50</sup> Arnon-Ohana, *A Sword from Within*, 245–50. In most cases the demonstrations ended peacefully. In one demonstration in Jaffa anti-British violence erupted and few Palestinians were killed by the police. *Fellahin* were not included in this protest in order to prevent escalation.

<sup>51</sup> Vashitz, *Jewish–Arab Relations*, i. ch. 2, 13.

<sup>52</sup> Arnon-Ohana, *A Sword from Within*, 21–41.

<sup>53</sup> Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (Jerusalem, 1999, in Hebrew), 102–7.

<sup>54</sup> Amos Nadan, 'From the Arab Revolt to the Al-Aqtsa Intifada: The Socio-Economic Dimension', in Tamar Yegnes (ed.), *From Intifada to War: Landmarks in the Palestinian National Experience* (Tel Aviv, 2003, in Hebrew), 53–85; Yehoshua Porat, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, 1929–1939* (London, 1977), 261–2.

<sup>55</sup> Yazbak, 'From Poverty to Revolt', 93–113; Taqqu, 'Arab Labor', 68; Avraham Sela, 'Society and Institutions among the Palestinian Arabs during the Mandate: Transformation, Lack of Social Mobility and Demise', in Bareli and Karlinsky, *Economy and Society*, 291–347; Seikaly, *Haifa*, 243.

<sup>56</sup> On arrogance towards the shanty residents see Yazbak, 'From *Fellahin* to Rebels', 201. On elements of class struggle at the end of the revolt see Seikaly, *Haifa*, 255.

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political, reflecting an inability to distinguish between unemployment and land, between economics and politics.<sup>57</sup>

The same forces that led to the outbreak of the revolt and to its prolongation and, in particular, unemployment among the *fellahin*, also led to the termination of the revolt and the loss of leadership.<sup>58</sup> In the second phase of the revolt the leadership lost control of its activists, and the latter formed splinter-groups that 'settled scores' rather than set a political agenda. The cruel treatment that the rebel activists meted out among the Palestinian population in 1938–9 aroused fervent Arab opposition to the continuation of the revolt. Alongside Britain's repressive measures (exiling leaders, arresting and prosecuting the activists, and more), the general exhaustion of the population after three years of struggle resulted in the decline of the movement.<sup>59</sup> Here, too, attention may be drawn to the duality inherent in unemployment: the social force deriving from it was indeed expressed in the 1930s in opposition to external enemies (the British and the Zionists in this instance),<sup>60</sup> but it also worked against the traditional leadership and the social elites of the Palestinian population.

Moreover, the revolt politicized the social and the economic. The leadership of the *fellahin* remained religious and traditional, but from the early 1930s onward the patriarchal structure of rural society began to disintegrate, and control passed to external forces, as represented, for example, by Izz ad-Din al-Qassam.<sup>61</sup> The change was accompanied by nationalist and religious radicalization, both anti-Zionist and anti-colonial.<sup>62</sup> Radicalization and mounting anger directed towards the elites favoured the class aspect of political organization.<sup>63</sup> The revolt gave expression to anger, hostility, and violence towards all those social strata blamed

<sup>57</sup> For the need to mix political and economic approaches to the revolt see Nadan, 'From the Arab Revolt', 59.

<sup>58</sup> For the failure of the Arab political organization see Sela, 'Society and Institutions', and Yazbak, 'Immigrants'.

<sup>59</sup> Kimmerling and Migdal, *Palestinians*, 107–10.

<sup>60</sup> The struggle bore some fruit and the government changed its policy towards the *fellahin*, as in the case of the tax system. See Yazbak, 'From *Fellahin* to Rebels', 192.

<sup>61</sup> Arnon-Ohana, *A Sword from Within*, 266.

<sup>62</sup> Yazbak, 'Immigrants', 384.

<sup>63</sup> Khalaf, 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change', 107. Khalaf suggests that class conflict among the Arab community had a tragic effect on the community's collapse in 1948. The point is also made by Rashid Khalidi, 'The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure', in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge, 2007), 12–36.

for the dire predicament of the *fellah* and for the lack of attention paid to his socio-economic grievances. However, this class anger was, above all else, articulated in nationalist terms.<sup>64</sup>

Unemployment among the Palestinians in the period of the Mandate therefore became a potent social force, but never transcended social, political, and cultural limitations. This synthesis found its most eloquent expression in the strike, imposed for political reasons, which initiated the revolt. The strike directly improved the employment opportunities of Jewish workers, and increasingly separated the Jewish and Arab economic sectors. Jewish workers were recruited to work in the Mandatory administration and were also authorized to operate the port of Tel Aviv, an aspiration which had hitherto remained unrealized. While called for political reasons, the strike therefore further aggravated the unemployment situation among the Arabs.<sup>65</sup> Unemployment became political, and it often created a social base for the nationalist struggle. And it is for this reason that we have to turn now to British policy.

### *Unemployment and British Policy*

Unrest among the unemployed in the period of the British Mandate did not pose a substantial problem for the colonial government. However, the politicization of unemployment, as in the case of the *fellahin*, was critical, often provoking among British policy-makers fears of disquiet and disorder.<sup>66</sup> It is against this background that the basic principle of British economic policy regarding Palestine of minimal intervention should be understood. It should be seen as a complex policy that was reminiscent of Britain's gatekeeping approach in Africa.<sup>67</sup> A striking example of this nebulous and open-ended policy was the concept of 'absorption capacity'. Following the crisis of 1926–8, the British announced that henceforth there would be a link between the level of unemployment in Palestine and the issuing of immigration and work permits to Jews.<sup>68</sup> In other

<sup>64</sup> Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge, 2001), 98.

<sup>65</sup> For the impact of the strike see Stein, 'Palestine's Rural Economy', 46.

<sup>66</sup> Yazbak, 'From *Fellahin* to Rebels', 196.

<sup>67</sup> For the basic principles of Mandatory economic policy see Nachum Gross, *Not on Spirit Alone: Studies in the Economic History of Palestine in the Modern Era* (Jerusalem, 1999), 75.

<sup>68</sup> For the period before the formal declaration see Halamish, 'Immigration According to Economic Absorptive Capacity', 180–1. For the debate regarding the origins of this principle

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words, the British government did not commit itself in any way to providing public works or unemployment relief (and this was widely recognized during the crisis<sup>69</sup>) but preferred to regulate immigration as a safety valve. The ‘absorption capacity’ principle had already emerged in the crisis of the late 1920s, when the quota of migrant labourers was restricted, but it was reinforced in the aftermath of the Arab revolt and the government inquiry that followed. The application of this principle, however, had subtly changed. While in the 1920s this policy was implemented on the basis of unemployment levels in the Jewish community alone, in the late 1930s it also took the situation in the Arab economy into account.<sup>70</sup> A direct result of this policy was the politicization of unemployment, in particular on account of its linkage with the granting of immigration permits to Jews. Palestine’s Arabs interpreted economic laissez-faire as a political act, and it therefore aroused anti-colonial, nationalist resentment. As the latter threatened to disrupt the social order, as had happened during the Arab revolt, and as the Second World War required social peace, the British engaged in large-scale and costly intervention.<sup>71</sup> It was therefore the action of the Mandate government that indirectly caused the association between unemployment, national anger, and anti-colonial resentment. Until the end of Second World War this resentment was only rarely translated into united supra-national resistance, mainly in joint labour strikes in government workplaces. However, the government’s new policy led to short-lived cooperation which was expressed in workers’ protests against the threat of unemployment.

In the 1920s and 1930s a gulf was created between the perception of Palestine’s economic development and the condition of the workers, in particular, the unskilled. With non-Jews arriving from

see Smith, *The Roots of Separatism*, 74–85, who claims a pro-Zionist political ‘twist’. See also Jacob Metzger, *The Divided Economy of Mandatory Palestine* (Cambridge, 1998), 66–7, who emphasizes that political considerations gained prominence from 1936 onwards. In any case, Jews and Arabs alike considered it to be more than just an economic issue. For the concept of the ‘gatekeeper’ see Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>69</sup> Although the government provided a few public works, these years ended with budget surplus despite the acute crisis. See the example of the Jaffa to Petah Tikva road in Smith, *The Roots of Separatism*, 153; Gross, *Not on Spirit*, 191.

<sup>70</sup> Another example of this economic policy was protective tariffs for local goods. See Gross, *Not on Spirit*, 184.

<sup>71</sup> In this period the government deviated from its policy of balancing the budget, which had been retained until then even during an economic downturn. See tables, *ibid.* 186–7. Keeping the public peace was paramount for the British from the start.

the Mediterranean basin and Jews from further afield, an influx of workers stemmed from, amongst other things, British promises of work. The workforce was based primarily on migrants from various places who in reality were struggling to realize the dream for which they had come. At times of hardship and crisis, many of them were left frustrated and jobless. The Second World War was at first a time of opportunity, when many who had not previously found regular work came and placed themselves in the labour market.<sup>72</sup> To a large extent this was the only period under the Mandate when there was full employment in Palestine. This was accompanied by a change of policy.

The Second World War did not bring about an immediate change in the economic situation and in levels of unemployment, but when the change came it was dramatic.<sup>73</sup> Palestine became an Allied bridgehead for the whole of the Middle East. Indicators of economic buoyancy (employment, growth, and productivity) soared in 1942 and then rose steadily throughout the duration of the war.<sup>74</sup> Employment came from various sources: growth of local industry in the absence of competitive imports; and an increase in agricultural production to supply the needs of the forces stationed in the country, in addition to local needs. But most influential of all was the recruitment of tens of thousands of Arabs and Jews to meet Britain's manpower requirements in the region.<sup>75</sup> Employment was available in all branches of the public sector: communications, transport and infrastructure, technical services for the army, and even service in the army itself.<sup>76</sup> Improved working conditions for those the British government employed did not accompany the economic boom and this, in conjunction with rampant inflation, led to severe erosion in the standard of living of those who had held these posts before the war.<sup>77</sup> But for many these were places of stable employment after

<sup>72</sup> Histadrut, *Work and Lack of Work in Town and Village, 1933–1941* (Tel Aviv, 1942, in Hebrew).

<sup>73</sup> For details about the British policy during the war see Ian W. Gaskin, 'Palestine, 1939–1945: A Study of Colonial Economic Policy' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 1992).

<sup>74</sup> Metzger and Kaplan, *The Jewish and Arab Economies*, 144–72.

<sup>75</sup> Gross, *Not on Spirit*, 304–13.

<sup>76</sup> In 1943 e.g. the War Department employed 50,000 civilians. See Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* (Berkeley, 1996), 336.

<sup>77</sup> David de Vries, 'British Rule and Arab-Jewish Coalescence of Interest: The 1946 Civil Servants' Strike in Palestine', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (2004), 613–38, at 617.

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many years of uncertainty and seasonal unemployment. A change in Britain's interests in the region was accompanied by a change in its policy towards work and workers.<sup>78</sup> The most visible sign of this change was the founding in 1942 of the Labour Department, headed by Richard Graves. The creation of this department favoured a new direction, leading to increasing state intervention in everyday working lives (issues such as safety and hygiene, for example), alongside an experiment in the control and supervision of the activities of the workers, a policy which continued even after the war.<sup>79</sup> In tandem with increasing intervention by the state as an employer, there was a prospect of far-reaching change in the policy of non-intervention. The Labour Department encouraged the establishment and consolidation of Arab workers' unions which represented tens of thousands of workers by the end of the war.<sup>80</sup> The new policy eventually brought about further politicization of economic issues.

With the end of the war there was a new upsurge in demands that had previously been repressed by the war, and there was pressure to prevent large-scale unemployment. Demands for improved conditions for state employees came to a head in April 1946, in the most extensive strike hitherto known in Palestine. All public sector workers went on strike, Arabs and Jews alike.<sup>81</sup> Cooperation between public service workers also came to the fore on the railways and in army camps.<sup>82</sup> In most cases the struggle was over conditions, recognition of labour unions, war gratuities, and compensation for demobilization. But it seems that it was above all in the army camps that joint Jewish–Arab resistance on the part of those facing unemployment came to be expressed. Differences between the public services and other sectors of the economy were prominent throughout the lifetime of the British Mandate. In the public sector, strikes were initially banned (by an ordinance of 1942 which was not abolished until spring 1946), and employment was

<sup>78</sup> And also in its macro-economic policy. See Gaskin, 'Palestine, 1939–1945', 310–29.

<sup>79</sup> Gross, *Not on Spirit*, 222; Jane Power, 'Different Drummer, Same Parade: Britain's Palestine Labour Department, 1942–1948' (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2007).

<sup>80</sup> On the consolidation of the Arab unions see Taqqu, 'Arab Labor', 194–221; Jane Power, "'Real Unions': Arab Organized Labor in British Palestine', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 20 (1998), 13–28. The main unions were the Arab Workers Congress (AWC) and the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS).

<sup>81</sup> De Vries, 'British Rule'.  
<sup>82</sup> For cooperation in the railways see Deborah S. Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine* (New York, 2000), 197–205. On other sectors, Vashitz, *Jewish–Arab Relations*, chs. 6 and 7; Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 322–39.

offered on the basis of equal access and pay. Jews were a minority in this sector, but contrary to the situation in other sectors, no distinction was made between Jewish and Arab workers in the same post.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the trade union organization of workers in the public sector differed from that in the other sectors, and in general reflected the relative size of the two national communities. While the workers affiliated with the Histadrut or any other Jewish labour union never succeeded in getting a substantial foothold in the public services,<sup>84</sup> a number of the Arab labour leaders emerged from its ranks (such as Sami Taha).<sup>85</sup>

It is against this background that workers' cooperation which took place in the two years following the end of the Second World War should be understood. Early in 1947 the government embarked on a new wave of redundancies in the War Department and this led to a rare instance of cooperation, not only between Jews and Arabs, but also between the two rival Arab organizations. On 20 May 1947 there was a one-day strike by all the employees of the War Department, some 40,000 Arabs and Jews.<sup>86</sup> There were differences of opinion between the workers' organizations over the best way of continuing the protest. But before the further industrial action which had been set by one organization could take place, the British struck an agreement including union recognition with the three unions. Consequently the goal of thwarting the redundancies failed. Apart from the successful cooperation, what stands out in this case is the direct appeal to the British as employers, something that was widespread in the two years after the war. Unlike on other occasions when unemployment threatened, the British feared the political repercussions of unemployment, especially since now for the first time the demands were directed at them rather than a third party. To a considerable extent, this was caused by Britain's greater wartime intervention in everyday economic life.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Compare with the British attitude towards Jewish employees in the railways and Haifa port, in Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*, 205.

<sup>84</sup> In 1943 e.g. the Histadrut declared a strike in the army camps but Arab workers, who were the majority, did not join in. See Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 338. See also 344–7 for the unsuccessful attempts by the Histadrut to organize the Arab workers in the public service.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 238. For Taha's rural origins and his reliance on the social organization of the village see Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries*, 73; Taqqu, 'Arab Labor', 293.

<sup>86</sup> Except those who worked in essential services. See reports in *Palestine Post*, 20 and 21 May 1947.

<sup>87</sup> Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 338–9.

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Arab–Jewish cooperation did not, however, last long. By the time of the strike in the army camps in May 1947, the United Nations Assembly had begun debating the future of Palestine. Political tension lay behind Histadrut opposition to the proposals of the Arab unions, principally the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS). In September 1947 Sami Taha, the leader of this union, was assassinated, apparently by the henchmen of Mufti Haj Amin el-Husseini (exiled leader of the Palestinian Arab national movement) who felt threatened by the ideological and organizational changes which Taha was proposing to make to the traditional leadership of the Palestinians. His death, coinciding with the UN's decision on the end of the Mandate and the partition of the country, once again pushed—in the face of national considerations—the fate of the workers and the unemployed into a corner.<sup>88</sup>

The end of the British Mandate in Palestine exacerbated the problem of unemployment. This was because political transition in 1947–8 destabilized the economy, and because the British administration was the largest employer in Palestine. Moreover, the shortage of jobs was further aggravated by the displacement of many Palestinians following the 1948 war and by the mass influx of Jews into Israel in the early 1950s. Albeit under totally different political circumstances, a legacy associating unemployed discontent with issues of national identity persisted.

During the Mandate period increased social tensions during recessions were far from negligible and mass unemployment had the potential to disrupt the social order. Just as the unemployed could identify their social and political adversaries, they could equally turn on each other. In the economic crisis of 1927 and the Cellar affair of the late 1930s, as well as at the end of the Arab rebellion in 1938–9, these tensions could well shake social institutions and even result in their transformation. Whenever this social force organized on a national or anti-colonial basis, as it did in the Petah Tikva affair and during the Arab revolt, it was fiercer and harboured the potential to turn social tension into an open conflict. While unemployment resulted from the pattern of Palestine's economic development, it was often blamed on one side or the other in the national conflict and therefore exacerbated Jewish–Arab relations.

<sup>88</sup> For decline of the unions see Taqqu, 'Arab Labor', 318–24; Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 339–44.

To convert the scourge of unemployment into nationalist anger required its politicization. Palestine government policy in the 1920s and 1930s indirectly brought about such politicization. It was practically British *laissez-faire* on matters of unemployment on the one hand, and the absorptive capacity principle on the other, that made Arab leaders associate unemployment with the Jewish immigrants. Such politicization led to the nationalist defiance and anti-colonial discontent that surfaced in periods of economic recession and rising unemployment. At these times, Jews demanded preferential employment of 'organized Jewish labour', and when the Arabs demanded 'a halt to immigration' or an end to 'the Mandate's support of Zionism', all were referring among other things to the threat posed by the other side to livelihood and work opportunities. To the extent that unemployment was an economic issue, it also shaped the conflicted collective identities of Arabs and Jews. When Jews attacked Arabs in the Jewish-owned orchards, or when Arabs attacked Jews at the port of Jaffa with its Arab-dominated workforce, these incidents were more often than not acts of unemployed resistance. In other circumstances, however, unemployment could push aside national identities and political considerations and foster supra-national cooperation.

The de-politicization of unemployment which took place in the 1940s defused the national tension and invigorated enmity towards the British along class lines. This was primarily a consequence of the colonial regime becoming a major direct employer of both Arabs and Jews. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, the public servants, clerks, and railway employees working for the government had enjoyed relatively stable employment and a higher social position, but these advantages evaporated with the wartime erosion of their salaries. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the workforce in government services and the military were only recruited during the war. It is against this background that Arab-Jewish cooperation to oppose the threat of unemployment in the army camps in 1947 should be understood. In this extraordinary situation, unemployment unleashed a powerful social force that challenged the British, neutralizing both internal sectarian tensions (that is, cooperation between the Arab unions) and national resentment.

Thus the mobilizing potential of unemployment and the unemployed took a variety of forms, some turning from mere

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discontent to open conflict, some remaining much more subdued.<sup>89</sup> Unemployment had the capability to inflame the national conflict and, at the same time, it could occasion an extraordinary cooperation between ethnically based unions and between national rivals. Politicization of unemployment entailed escalation of the national conflict while its 'economization' could well entail supra-national cooperation. Here the manner of organization was decisive. When the unemployed were organized along national lines and national identity was emphasized, the effect was to escalate the inter-ethnic conflict. Unemployed protest followed nationalist lines during the 1920s and 1930s largely because those involved were unorganized or only in intermittent employment. When defiance and protest were based on the workplace, as in the case of the workers in the British army camps at the end of the Mandate, protest was predominantly expressed in economic terms, and occasioned—admittedly only half-hearted—instances of Arab–Jewish cooperation.

<sup>89</sup> See Khairia Kasmieh, 'Economic Aspects of the Arab–Zionist Confrontation in Mandatory Palestine', in Nadine Mouchy and Peter Sluglett (eds.), *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden, 2004), 447–56. For a wider perspective on protest culture in later Israeli society see Sam Lehman-Wilzig, *Stiff-Necked People, Bottle-Necked System: The Evolution and Roots of Israeli Public Protest, 1949–1986* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990).

