

Identity Crisis:

The Condition of Egyptian Jewish Acceptance in the 1930s and 1940s

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Note to the Reader

All translations of articles within *al-Shams* and *al-Ahram* are mine unless otherwise noted.

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Introduction

The Jewish population of Egypt for the year 1947 was estimated to be between 65,000 - 75,000 persons; a mere twenty years later, in 1968, the country's Jewish population consisted of only 2,500 individuals.¹ In 1956 the Egyptian government, under the policies of Gamal Abdel Nasser, expelled up to 21,000 Jews from Egypt in retaliation to Israeli involvement in the Suez Crisis. Scholars of modern Egyptian Jewry, therefore, have attempted to explain the overall decrease in Jewish population in Egypt through such governmental policy. However, almost a decade prior to 1956, mass migration of Jews out of Egypt was underway; between 1949 and 1950 approximately 20,000 Jews left Egypt.² This first wave of migration, despite a peak in the Jewish population in Egypt a year prior, reveals deeper causes of Jewish relocation. I believe that a more effective approach to explaining the mass exodus that began in 1948 involves evaluating the changing status of Jews in Egypt within the broader frame work of changing perceptions of the place of Jews in Egyptian society. The domestic and political events that came to shape the decades of the 1930s and 1940s transformed perceptions of Jews within Egypt, a development which both challenged and imposed an increasingly narrow range of options for Egyptian Jews, and sparked identity crisis as the harmony between the multiple loyalties of these Jews became less tenable. The focus of my study, therefore, concerns the causes and effects of these changing representations of Jews within Egyptian society.

¹ Sources estimate between 65,000 and 80,000 Jews in Egypt for the year 1948. See Arieh Avneri, *Claim of Dispossession: Jewish Land-Settlement and the Arabs, 1878-1948*. (New Bruswick; Transaction Publishers, 1984). 276. Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914-1952*, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1989). 54

² Joel Beinin, *Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 35.

My evaluation begins in the 1930s with the increased social activism among Egyptian Jews, which manifested itself primarily in the anti-fascist, communist, and Zionist movements throughout the 1930s and 1940s. These movements served to contribute to the changing social perceptions of Jews, but initially also made the multiple facets of Egyptian Jewish identity tenable. My thesis follows the evolution of these movements, as well as developments in Palestine, throughout the 1940s. Through this evaluation, it becomes evident that by the conclusion of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, the possibilities open to Egyptian Jews were restricted as Egyptianization and Islamic nationalism came to tolerate increasingly narrow definitions of patriotism.

In the pages below, I use the phrases “Jews of Egypt” and “Egyptian Jews” interchangeably to refer to the Jews present within Egypt throughout the time period of my evaluation. I also clarify when I refer to those Jews of foreign or European origin, and likewise identify indigenous Jews (composed of both Karaite and Rabbinite populations) as such. While this distinction between foreign and indigenous Jews played a role in the transformation of the perception of Egyptian Jews, my overall argument regarding imposed identity applies to all Jews within Egypt at the time. This in mind a central focus of my assessment involves a certain category of Egyptian Jewry, namely the Egyptian Jewish cosmopolitan elite.

Egyptian Jewish Cosmopolitan Elite:

Jacques Hassoun, an Egyptian Jew who left Egypt in 1952, eloquently describes various aspects of Egyptian Jewry by quoting Abdallah al-Yahudi, a Jewish beggar in Alexandria, who once said: “See my galabia, I am Egyptian! See my jacket, I am

European!”³ What Abdalla al-Yahudi referenced was the formation of a cosmopolitan construction within the Jewish community in Egypt that distinguished itself from indigenous Egyptian Jewry. Hassoun viewed this construction as a bridge between “the world of the Jewish *khawagat* [foreigner], oriented to Paris and London and crowned by the glittering circles of Jewish beys, pashas, and barons - and the world of the *galabia* and *kafiltan*, of *ful*, *mulukhiya*, and *qulqas* [traditional Egyptian dress and food]”⁴

My considerations of the Egyptian Jewish cosmopolitan elite, however, are complicated by the use of the term to denote specific reference to those Egyptian Jews who encompassed a nationalist and cosmopolitan identity and worked to mediate the two as the 1930s and 1940s progressed. This class is comprised primarily of middle to upper-class Sephardic Jews - those who shared the traditions of the Jewish population expelled from Spain in 1492, and who migrated to Egypt from other Ottoman lands - who were able to maintain solidarity with Arabs by virtue of their own Ottoman background, and merged this with European and cosmopolitan culture. This class spoke multiple languages including Italian, French, and Arabic, and was largely educated in Western style schooling such as the Alliance Israelite Universelle or else studied in Europe. They operated in prominent sectors of business including corporate profiles and stock exchange. They were establishment both financially and socially in Egypt, at a time when Egypt was distinguished with diverse minority populations including Greek, Italian, and Armenian. They therefore operated in social and intellectual circles that extended beyond exclusively Egyptian or European thought. Thus this class attempted to bridge numerous nationalities within an international identity. Through such effort, this elite established

³Jacques Hassoun, “The Traditional Jewry of the Hara” in Shimon Shamir, *Jews of Egypt a Mediterranean Society in Modern Times*. (London: Westview, 1987), 169.

⁴ *Ibid*, 172

multiple international connections which aided them in establishing the social and political movements that took off in the 1930s, and came to propagate a new representation of Egyptian Jewry.⁵

A second notable trend among these cosmopolitan elite is aspiration towards Egyptian patriotism. Egyptian nationalism was particularly present among these elite due to the social and financial establishment of upper class Sephardic Jews who openly engaged in Egyptian politics and society. Individuals such as Rene Cattaoui and Togo Mizrahi were each respectively active in the Egyptian parliament and Egyptian film. The prosperity and comfort of this elite class deterred the pull of Zionism, which rather attracted most of its followers from the lower classes of Egyptian Jewry.⁶

Egyptian Zionism:

Zionism plays an active role in determining the fate of Egyptian Jewish identity. It is therefore important to outline the specific context by which I use the term. The modern Zionist movement was largely a secular movement taken up by Eastern European Jews who sought to establish a Jewish homeland. In November 1917 the Balfour Declaration, a letter issued by the British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour to Baron Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community, stated British support for the establishment of a national homeland for Jewish people in Palestine. The move to make Palestine the national homeland for Jews sparked conflict with Arabs who were not necessarily opposed to the

⁵ Benin, 44.

⁶ This is not to say that nationalist sentiment was absent among the lower classes, in fact there are several expressions of patriotism found in *al-Kalim* (the Egyptian Karaite newspaper), rather the majority of active patriots and anti-Zionists derived from middle and upper-classes.

ideological notion of an establishment of a Jewish State, however strongly objected to the formation of that state in Palestine. Arabs therefore equated Zionism with imperialism.

While multiple strands of Zionism and Zionist ideology were active in Egypt during the 1930s 1940s, I focus on the faction of Zionists within Egypt that sought to harmonize the dual nationalities and aspirations of Egyptian patriotism and Zionism. This Egyptian Zionism is characterized by a belief in cooperation and coexistence between Arabs and Jews within Palestine and referenced to such harmony found within Egypt. As will come to be seen, however, developments in Palestine, coupled with domestic discontent, increasingly limited the ability of these Egyptian Zionists to maintain dual loyalties, and by 1948 the two nationalities were polarized and categorically opposition to one another.

Egyptian Communism:

The second movement that necessitates introduction is that of Egyptian communism. The communist movement that took place during the 1930s and extended until the mid 1950s was in part an adaptation of the first communist movement in Egypt which took place in the 1920s. This original movement was founded by foreign intellectuals inspired by the 1919 Russian revolution. In August 1921, active socialist groups met and established the Egyptian Socialist Party. The extent of Jewish activism in this early movement is unclear; however, active members bear Jewish surnames including Rosenthal and Nahum.⁷ Much like the later communist movement, the Egyptian Socialist Party was strongly anti-imperialist, thus the Egyptian Socialist Party was dissolved by British authorities in 1923. Circles of this original movement carried on Marxist thought and contributed to a revival of communist ideology in 1930s.

⁷ Suliman Bashear *Communism in the Arab East 1918-1928* (Ithica Press: London, 1980), 23-33.

The communist movement that took place during the 1930s and 1940s is fundamental to the larger discussion of Egyptian Jewish identity as it presented an outlet of Jewish national sentiment and political activism during the 1930s and 1940s. My evaluation of the Egyptian communist movement, therefore, is not centered on discussion of communist ideology or application. Rather, I focus on the study of the movement within this period as it can provide further insight into the struggle to maintain multiple loyalties among Egyptian Jews as it mediated between Zionism and Egyptian nationalism.

Historiography

The majority of research on the topic of Jews in Egypt in modern times focuses on descriptive analysis of the Jewish community as well as questions of identity and political activism. These discussions focus largely on either Egyptian nationalist and Zionist trends among Jews, thus neglecting the formation and significance of Egyptian Jewish communism. Scholars such as Norman Stillman and Michael Laskier argue that Arab and Egyptian Jews more specifically acted as passive communities that worked to maintain their status within society, while at the same time working “behind the scenes” in order to support Zionist aims, rather than working to reconcile these aims with that of Egyptian nationalism. More recently, Lisa Lital Levy, has presented the idea that within “Ottomanism” Jewish intellectuals created their own unique identity and claims towards society that connect Jewish and Arab intellectual thought.⁸ I am interested in tracing Levy’s argument through a later period and exploring the intellectual movements that

⁸Lisa Lital Levey, *Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History, and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863-1914*. (Diss. Columbia University, 1996) 8.

emerged during the 1930s and 1940s, asking how these developments evolved and influenced larger Egyptian society. More importantly however is there effect and contribution to the formation of unique Egyptian Zionist identity that was both pro-nationalist and pro-Zionist. This identity was further complicated by tensions of cosmopolitanism and Egyptianization which increasingly limited room for conciliation.

In order to pursue these questions, I focus my attention on the Jewish intellectual and cosmopolitan elites of Egypt during the era of the late interwar and Second World War with a focus on the transformations, problems, and programs of these Egyptian Jewish elites during the period. I have been interested both in how these mid-twentieth century Jewish elites shaped and debated definitions of Egyptian-Jewish identity and in how the same debate came to be increasingly restricted by the end of 1948. Along with this I intend to demonstrate the persistence of Egyptian Jewish nationalism in the face of constricting allegiances.

Furthermore, the time period of the 1930s and 1940s is often neglected by scholars of Egyptian Jewry, who, while acknowledging a number of important events and formations, tend to pass over many of the intricacies of the period and its importance in establishing a turning point for the Jews in Egyptian society. I argue that this era is in fact one of the most important times in the modern history of Egyptian Jews, precisely because it reveals the transition of Jews in Egypt, and the Egyptian Jewish community at large, from a community that had become in debate and politics, to a silenced community forced to adapt a singular public position. In terms of the social conditions within Egypt during this time, Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski argue, in their *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* that this time period in essence laid the foundation for the

mass nationalist movement that followed the 1952 Free Officers Revolution. They argue that in the time between 1930 and 1945 the Egyptian middle class became more actively conscious or “self-understanding” of an Arab and Muslim identity.⁹ This newly developing urban middle class, they suggest, hail from the traditionalist background of village life. Their traditionalist values, combined with growing social strife resulting from financial pressures and compounded by the lack of government action and responsibility, began to erode the foundations of the earlier Egyptian social and governmental order. My thesis explores the different voices that composed the complex and evolving discourse of Jewish self-definition and identification, while also focusing upon the types of identification adopted by various actors within greater Egyptian society. Within the time period of my evaluation the status of foreigners and cosmopolitan elites came to be eroded as the popularity of Egyptian nationalism mushroomed. My study therefore ends in 1948, since, with the establishment of Israel in that year, the possibilities for Jewish identity and belonging in Egypt narrowed to a singular position of Egyptian nationalism and anti-Zionism. Discussion both within the Jewish community itself, as well as between other members of Egyptian society were further limited in the wake of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 as the Egyptian government shut down any papers and organizations that were accused of supporting the Zionist cause. As will be seen in the pages that follow, it was therefore not the formation of the state of Israel alone that led to a change in position of Egyptian Jewry by 1948, but also the tensions caused by reactions to developments in Palestine by various Egyptian political groups and the government that forced Egyptian Jews to re-evaluate and debate the tenability of their future in Egypt.

⁹Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002).

Finally, it is important to note the necessity of separating the issue of Jewish treatment in Egypt from present political dialogue regarding conflict in the Middle East, particularly surrounding the issue of Palestine and Israel. In several cases, modern Egyptian Jewish historiography reveals the tendency to superimpose the modern conflict onto conclusions drawn out in the evaluation of this minority group. On both ends, writers such as Ghada Talhami and to a lesser extent Joel Beinin express their own anti-Zionist positions in their work on the subject and thus argue the incompatibility of Zionism and Zionist activism on one hand and Egyptianization on the other.¹⁰ Other writers such as Michal Laskier and Itamar Levin focus on anti-Jewish events following the Arab-Israeli War, the 1952 revolution, the 1956 Suez Crisis, and the 1967 Six Day War; Levin in particular emphasizes the loss of Jewish property and investments caused during these events, again focusing on events affecting the Jewish community rather than events engendered by Egyptian Jews.¹¹ Furthermore, scholars such as Jeffery Herf focus on the affiliation of ex-German Nazi involvement in Egypt's political circles and influence on society, again with a focus on post-1948 developments.¹² These evaluations, focused on the suffering of the community tend towards what the historian Mark Cohen defines a neo-lachrymose view of Jewish history which claims a long-standing history of Jewish persecution in Arab lands.¹³ The analysis I will offer here is not focused on these post-1948 developments or subsequently laying blame, rather I evaluate the evolution of

¹⁰ Ghada Talhami *Palestine and Egyptian National Identity* (New York: Praeger, 1992). Beinin.

¹¹ Itamar Levin, *Locked Doors The Seizure of Jewish Property in Arab Countries* (New York: Praeger, 2001). Michael Laskier, *Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970 in the Midst of Zionism, anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict*. (New York: New York UP, 1992).

¹² Jeffrey Herf, "Nazi Propaganda in and towards the Middle East during World War II and the Holocaust". Lecture at the Yale Initiative for Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism. February, 5 2009.

¹³ Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross the Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton UP, 1994.

perceptions that may have caused or led to the subsequent ill treatment of Egyptian Jews following 1948.

Sources:

My study, similar to that of Michael Laskier's *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East Conflict*, is intended to draw larger conclusions out of research of Egyptian Jewish press. While Laskier focuses on the pro-Zionist, French paper *Israel* as a forum for propagating Zionism in Egypt and solidarity with the *Yishuv* (Jews in Palestine), I evaluate the Arabic periodical *al-Shams* in order gain a greater understanding of pro-Zionist and pro-nationalist tensions among Egyptian Jews. Thus I intent to help fill the void of research on Egyptian Jews by explaining *how* such compromises between Zionism and Egyptian nationalism were attempted or accomplished.

In evaluating the transformation of Egyptian Jewish identity, I have therefore relied heavily on primary source documentation from *al-Shams* - arguably the most prominent Egyptian-Jewish newspaper of the era. *al-Shams* was one of two Egyptian Jewish newspapers published in Arabic within the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁴ The paper was founded in 1934 by Sa'ad Yaqoub Maliki who served as the owner, publisher, and editor. Gudrun Kramer, author of *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952*, describes the paper as "the first Arabic Jewish paper of any importance in Egypt."¹⁵ *Al-Shams* in many ways reflected the intellectual trends of the Jewish cosmopolitan elite of the country during this

¹⁴ The other Egyptian Jewish newspaper published in Arabic was *al-Kalim*, a Karaite bimonthly published by the Young Karaite Jewish Association founded in 1937. This paper continued publication until 1956. See Beinlin, "The Karaites: An Arab Jewish Community" in *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*.

¹⁵ Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews of Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 169.

period. More importantly, however, it provides a unique insight into the minds of those Egyptian Jews who attempted to straddle the growing divide between Egyptian nationalism and Zionism. The owner and editor of *al-Shams*, Sa'd Yaqoub Malki, embraced both Egyptian nationalism and a moderate form Zionism, a pattern that was common among Egyptian Jews during the 1920s. In the words of modern Middle Eastern Historian Joel Beinin, "Maliki's distinction was to maintain these dual commitments until May 1948, when *al-Shams* was closed by the government."¹⁶ While there seems to be debate regarding the classification of *al-Shams* – scholars such as Norman Stillman claiming it Zionist, while Ghada Talimi claims it as not Zionists – it is clear to me that *al-Shams* represented both Zionist and nationalist sentiments and advocated a harmonizing of the two.¹⁷

To supplement my research in *al-Shams*, I engage with documentation from the well known and influential Egyptian newspaper, *al-Ahram*, also published in Arabic, which provides the perspectives of Egyptian society on a variety of topics. This periodical targeted a wide audience and remained independent until 1953 when the government claimed a majority of the shares of the paper.¹⁸

¹⁶ Beinin, 246.

¹⁷ Stillman, 505; Talimi, 14.

¹⁸ Munir Nasser, *Press, Politics, and Power* (Ames: Iowa State University Press), 4.

Prologue:
The Egyptian Jewish Community from Muhammad Ali to the 1930s

Egyptian Jewish Community Prior to 1930

In order to understand the situation of Egyptian Jews within the 1930s and 1940s, background information regarding the community and communal structure prior to this period is necessary. At the start of the nineteenth century, Egypt essentially seceded from the Ottoman Empire under the rule of Muhammad Ali (1805). At the start of this reign Jewish communal structure maintained its semi-autonomous millet structure: it functioned under a separate Jewish legal court (*Halakha*) and was represented by its community leaders, as well as taxed the *jizya* (the tax for non-Muslims under Sharia law), and exempted from serving in the military also remained intact. The communal structure of the Jews in Egypt followed the formation of the *hara*. Afaf Marsot, a scholar of modern Egyptian history, describes the function of the *hara* as a social construction implied, “primary contacts, intermarriage, mutual assistance, and a propinquity that verges on the claustrophobic in intensity...diminish[ed] the need to further human contacts outside the periphery, hence turning urban society into discrete entities, much like the rural *izba* [village].”¹⁹ Rabbinate and Karaite Jews (a minority in Judaism that rejected the Talmud as a source of Jewish Law) populated separate, yet adjacent, *hara*.²⁰ The largely indigenous population of Egyptian Jews within the early nineteenth century amounted to 6,000-7,000 individuals.²¹ E.W. Lane, in his first hand accounts of Egypt in the time of Muhammad Ali, noted that Jewish (as well as Christian) men wore colored

¹⁹ Sayyid, 37.

²⁰ Joel Beinin, *Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 2.

²¹ Jean-Marc Ran Oppenheim “Egypt and the Sudan” *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2003), 412.

turbans and the women wore veils and dress “in every respect, in public, like the other women of Egypt.”²² Thus while Egyptian Jews were distinguished in society, they were not considered foreign.

Under the guidance of Muhammad Ali, interaction between Europe and Egypt increased, as foreign interests entered Egypt to pursue capitalist ventures. Capitulations were initiated as trade agreements between European countries, primarily England and France, and the Ottoman sultanate. These trade agreements allowed extraterritoriality for foreign investors and merchants within Egypt. It not only exempted the *jizya*, Ottoman tax on non-Muslims that was abolished with the reforms of the Young Turks in the mid nineteenth century, but more importantly provided exemption from Egyptian jurisdiction and local taxation. Foreign and Sephardic Jews, who’s migration into Egypt increased during this period, therefore sought the financial benefits of foreign nationality.²³

In 1882, the British occupied Egypt and unofficially continued to control the country until it was made a British protectorate following the end of the First World War.²⁴ British rule altered the structure of minority representation and allowed for Jews and other minorities to more openly engage in civil politics (this civic engagement significantly increased with the constitution of 1922). While Jewish political activism was relatively limited following the linear structure of representation under the Ottomans, as the empire came under British rule, political and national efforts in Egypt were supported by active Jewish individuals. The most notable Egyptian Jewish nationalist of the time was Ya’qub Sanu, also known as Abu Naddara, who actively campaigned

²² Edward William Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, (C. Knit and Co.: London, 1954), 559.

²³ Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews of Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 9-67.

²⁴ John Marlowe, *Cromer in Egypt* (London: Elek, 1970).

against the Khedive Isma'il in the late nineteenth century through his press forum *Abu Naddara*, and collaboration with notable Islamic reformists including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh.²⁵ Sanu is also credited with coining the popular revolutionary phrase "Egypt for Egyptians."

By the start of the twentieth century the population of Jews in Egypt followed a trajectory of growth that continued to increase until 1948 as Egypt became a center for opportunity and wealth. The influx of foreign Jews began to challenge the traditional representation of Egyptian Jewry by the locally embedded Karaite and Rabbanite communities as Sephardic Jews came to constitute the majority of the Egyptian Jewish community. Along with this change in demographics came significant diversity of social and economic status within the community. There was a wide spectrum of employment and subsequently varying income levels within the community (See Table A). It can be argued that this economic diversity correlated with ethnic diversity. Foreign Jews were notably more financially secure, and were employed in economic sectors of trade and personal services. According to the following graph, the indigenous Karaite and Rabbanite Jews were largely unemployed, or else employed in the informal economy. Furthermore, steady urbanization of Jews, particularly those migrating to Egypt concentrated Jewish population into cities (See Table B). Therefore while in 1938 agriculture still employed the majority of Egyptians, the majority of Jews were concentrated into cities and lived within their respective ethnic *hara* or Jewish quarters.

Throughout the first quarter of the century, the social and communal structures of the urban Jewish communities were largely preserved. The interdependence of members

²⁵ Jacob Landau, "Abu Naddara: An Egyptian Jewish Nationalist" *Jews, Arabs, Turks*, (The Magnes Press: Jerusalem, 1993), 34-48.

of the Jewish *hara* is symbolic of the Egyptian Jewish community at large. Jews in Alexandria and Cairo had a support network which included intra-communal social development projects, independent Jewish school systems, and communal councils and leadership. For this reason, pronouncements on the community's behalf were largely left to representation by communal and religious leaders. Consequently there was little political or social demand for significant interaction with the wider Egyptian society among most of Egypt's Jews, since the communities relied on representation through their leaders, and were consequently politically and self-sufficient.

Jewish Political Activism

Throughout the early years of the century, Egypt transformed both politically and socially as movements pressing for national consciousness and self governance grew in popularity. Egyptian national sentiment swelled after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the First World War, resulting in the non-violent revolution of 1919 led by the Wafd nationalist party. The revolution ended in 1922, Britain conceded to grant Egypt limited independence and implemented King Fuad, its political ally, in a parliamentary government set up by the 1923 constitution.

During the early twentieth century, political activism was strong among Egyptian Jews, as compared with other Jewish communities in the Middle East.²⁶ From the start of the century, prominent Jewish leaders in Egypt participated in nationalist movements including the 1919 Revolution. Jewish nationalists including Leon Castro was actively involved in the Wafdist movement and directed its French newspaper *La Liberte*. A

²⁶Norman Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 53.

prominent, secularist slogan of the revolution became “Religion is for God and the homeland is for all (*al-din li'llah wa'l-watan li'l-jami'*).”²⁷ Other active political figures included Murad Farag (1866-1956), an active nationalist and Zionist writer who helped to draft the Egyptian constitution of 1923; Joseph Aslan Cattaoui who served as president of the Jewish community in Cairo as well as chairman of the finance committee in the Egyptian Senate from 1931-1935, and whose wife Alice was “the first Jewish woman to receive a high Egyptian decoration” as well as the “first lady-in-waiting to Queen Nazli.”²⁸ Furthermore, Joseph Aslan Cattaoui was chairman of the finance committee in the Egyptian Senate from 1931-1935. During the same period, the chief rabbi, Haim Nahum Efendi, was appointed by the King as a senator in 1931. He later helped found the Royal Academy of the Arabic language.²⁹ As the 1930s and 1940s progressed, however, Egyptian nationalism became increasingly entangled with pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism, thus limiting the dual loyalty to Egyptian Nationalism and Zionism shared by many of these Jewish political leaders and limiting the opportunity for Jewish involvement within the emerging Egyptian political and national arenas.

The influence of the Jewish cosmopolitan elite and the changing demographics of the Jewish community in Egypt is apparent in the strained relations between the country's foreign population and the indigenous Karaite and Rabbinic Jewish populations. The Karaite and indigenous Jewish populations, whose traditional cultural and intellectual activism focused on their Egyptian heritage was challenged by the new European

²⁷ Benin, 37

²⁸ Kramer, 95

²⁹ Victor D. Sanu, “Haim Nahum Efendi 1872-1960: Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Egypt (1925-1960)” April 10, 2010, Historical Society of Jews from Egypt: http://www.hsje.org/Whos_who.htm; Kramer, 96-97.

ideology presented by European or European-educated Jews.³⁰ This strain is primarily seen in efforts at reform by the newly powerful and growing class of cosmopolitan Jews who, unlike their indigenous peers, applied European ideologies and rationalities in their reform efforts. Such is reflected in the evolution of Jewish education in Egypt. Following the wave of migration in the 1860s Jewish communal education transformed from traditional religious education to European standards as is epitomized in the function of the French Alliance Israelite Universelle.³¹ Direct tensions between indigenous and cosmopolitan Jews is furthermore noted in the records of His Britannic Majesty's Supreme Court in Egypt, in a memorandum from Judge Wasey Sterry to the British Consulate General in June of 1931, in which the judge stated,

In the early summer of 1929, I was asked for an interview by Mr. Rolo a leading Jew of Alexandria. At that interview he told me that the community generally speaking was exceedingly dissatisfied with the provision that Jews in matters of personal status were to be treated under Jewish law, which in their opinion was, especially in matters of inheritance, of testamentary powers and matrimonial relations, unsuited to modern conditions and in cases of matrimonial relations positively unjust and uncivilized and that causes arose under it which were considered a scandal to the community. He also told me that not long before a petition had been prepared by leading members of the community... I have forgotten why the Community had dropped the original petition but I think it was some matter of personal feeling between Cairo and Alexandria, which may also have prevented their putting one forward when I suggested it to them. I was further given to understand that the Chief Rabbi in Cairo was really in favor of the change though I did not suppose he was in a position to say so openly.³²

The chief rabbi in Cairo was Rabbi Haim Nahum Efendi, who was of Turkish origin and educated in Britain and the United States.³³ The memorandum above therefore helps depict the agency of the cosmopolitan elite. The activism and influence of this group foreshadows the impact its members later had in presenting a new form of Jewish representation in Egypt. In the process, members of this Jewish elite increasingly

³⁰ Joel Benin. *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 40.

³¹ Oppenheim, 417.

³² _____ in *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani, vol. 3 . (London: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 2005), 404.

³³ Gudrun Kramer. *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1989.), 95.

challenged traditional structures and representations of the Egyptian Jewish community, while also actively engaging the Jewish community, other sectors of Egyptian society, and the Egyptian government in dialogue.

Egypt at the Start of the 1930s:

By the close of the 1920s, however, Egypt found itself in the midst of the 1929 global depression. In response to the growing social and economic challenges posed both by the economic crisis and by rapid urbanization, prominent social organizations and movements were born. These included the Muslim Brotherhood (established by Hassan al-Banna in 1928), which began as a grass roots organization popular among the lower-middle class and represented the values of social reform under *Shari'a*, or Islamic law. The Muslim Brotherhood's founders opposed what they saw as secular movements such as the Egyptian feminist movement begun by Huda Sha'rawi in 1922, yet more importantly they were strongly anti-imperial and anti-foreign.³⁴ The organization actively campaigned against both the British and Zionism, which scarcely distinguished the two.

³⁴Selma Botman, *Rise of Egyptian communism, 1939-1970* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse UP, 1988) xv.

Chapter 1:
Egyptian Jewish Representation in the 1930s

The formation of a cosmopolitan elite within the Jewish communities of Egypt followed the economic stimulus of the Suez Canal and imperial political developments of the early twentieth century. Jews from this cosmopolitan class were often of European descent. Others, raised in Egypt or elsewhere in the Middle East, were educated in Europe or in the European *lycées* within Egypt. While this class certainly overlapped with the financial and social elite, it was not determined solely by financial circumstance; rather, the Egypt's cosmopolitan Jewish elites were those for whom European cultures and ideologies were important parts of their social, economic, and intellectual lives. This is not meant to suggest that this new cosmopolitan class of Jews lacked in patriotism towards the Egyptian state. In fact it was this class that constituted the most active group of Jews within Egyptian public spheres and whose members entered Jewish communal and representative leadership, including governmental positions. Many of these Jews had political and economic interests in Egypt and were also actively involved in Egyptian society as a result. Therefore while the cosmopolitan elite shared values and culture with their European neighbors in Egypt as well as others on the continent, many also supported Egyptian nationalism. The role of the Egyptian Jewish cosmopolitan elite can be seen through the civic and political activism of its individual members, as well in the pages of the prominent Jewish-Egyptian paper, *al-Shams*.

Beginning in the late 1920s and continuing until the late 1930s, Egypt was undergoing what Afaf Marsot, a scholar of Egypt in the interwar years, describes as the *liberal experiment*. This experiment, begun by King Fuad "allowed for a multiplicity of political parties (albeit with restrictions), a wide range of newspapers, and a host of

political clubs.”³⁵ This environment fostered the introduction of European fascism and new developments of communism, as well as socially oriented Islamic organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus the 1930s was a dynamic time of social, intellectual, and political change. The 1930s therefore provides a suitable starting point for evaluating the emerging representations of Egyptian Jews, as it was a time of particular strength and activism for the cosmopolitan Jewish elite.

Acknowledging the complex and dynamic situation of Jews in interwar Egypt, I argue that Egyptian Jews reshaped their public face through new forms of representation, all of which were influenced by the various movements that the individuals who made up this elite founded and supported throughout the decade of the 1930s. This chapter will focus on those movements founded by and comprised of members of the Jewish Egyptian cosmopolitan elite, primarily the anti-fascist, Marxist, and Zionist movements, many of which were often interconnected.

The Anti-Fascist Movement: *Ay Ya Shams Itl'a* (Oh Sun Come Out)

In 1934 Adolf Hitler had been in power a year, and the National-Socialist agenda against the German Jewish population was underway as seen in policies such as the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (1933), followed a year later by the Nuremberg Race Laws (Sep. 1935).³⁶ In response to these events, an anti-Fascist movement in Egypt had arisen, quickly becoming the largest and most unified Jewish movement in Egypt throughout the decade. Egyptian Jews involved in anti-fascist

³⁵ Afaf Sayyid-Marsot. *Egypt's liberal experiment, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977)

³⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Anti-Jewish Legislation in Prewar Germany” (31 January 2010)
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?ModuleId=10005681>

activism effectively mobilized efforts at awareness, intellectual debates, boycotts, and petitions. The anti-fascist movement worked to protest against the treatment of Jews in Germany, as well as to combat the Nazi propaganda then entering Egypt. In an ideological sense, it “supported the aims of the international peace movement and a return to relative harmony among diverse populations.”³⁷ *Al-Shams* was born in the 1930s as an active Jewish component of the anti-fascist movement in Egypt. In the first article of the first edition, Sa’ad Yaqoub Maliki, the founder and editor of the paper, addressed the purpose and necessity of publishing *al-Shams* in terms of the implied struggle with anti-Semitic Germany.³⁸ Even prior to founding *al-Shams*, his writings focused on anti-Semitism and the struggle against its Nazi perpetrators³⁹. *Al-Shams* joined the ranks in the fight against anti-fascism through its commitment to spreading awareness. Article after article in *al-Shams* addressed not only the grievances of German Jews but also the fallacies of the Nationalist Socialist ideology.

Notably, the movement was focused on European fascism, and dismissed the possibility of any overt fascist threat in Egypt. The article, “Nazi Propaganda in the East,” noted that, “resent news came from Syria that says that the German consul in Aleppo received from Hitler’s government a large sum of money to set up an encompassing network of Nazi propaganda in Arab countries.” It continued, “The Nazis make a big effort to broadcast their propaganda in Eastern countries and yet this bold objective is surprising. How can Eastern principles even accept discussion [with Nazis], with their

³⁷ Selma Botman, *Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939-1970* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse UP, 1988), xvi.

³⁸ Sa’ad Maliki. “Our Purpose for Publishing *al-Shams*,” *al-Shams*, 14 Sept. 1934, p. 1

³⁹ Michael Laskier, *Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the midst of Zionism, anti-Semitism, and the Middle East conflict* (New York: New York UP, 1992), 66

[Eastern] values and weight of their dignity?”⁴⁰ Such faith in the nature of Egyptian society was also related by the editor of the French-language Jewish Egyptian newspaper *L'Aurore*, Jacques Maleh, who wrote against the German colony of Cairo stating,

A Hitler-style political party was created in Cairo...It is a body whose program in article 4 encourages people to despise a Jew and to strive toward his annihilation. This is a party whose demagogic aims and hatred for mankind are well known...Doesn't all of this appear shocking? To plant in the heart of Egypt – a country where everyone lives in complete harmony, where all ethnic groups coexist without conflicts, where the spirit of liberty and liberalism is known to the whole world – the seeds of fanaticism and hatred, is sheer arrogance and stupidity of the first order.⁴¹

This reveals an appeal to and faith in the character of Middle Easterner to reject the acceptance of such propaganda. This in turn reveals the dual identity attainable by Egyptian Jews by which they felt loyalty and pride in Egypt and in the nature of Egyptian people. Thus, as Egyptian Jews grew increasingly disillusioned with Europe, even those with European educations and backgrounds, they continued to praise Egyptian tolerance, and thus strengthened their sense of belonging to the state.

In addition to such proclamations concerning the tolerant nature of Egyptian society, anti-fascist Jews also sought to spread their activism by making appeals to Egyptian nationalism, and by establishing a common identity among Jews and other Egyptians. This is reflected in a flyer distributed throughout Alexandria and Cairo titled, “The Ten Commandments of the Egyptian Jewish Boycott of Axis Goods” in which all Jews were encouraged to confront shop owners selling German or Italian items, upon which the first point of protest should be “Why aren't these articles Egyptian-made, when it is the duty of all Egyptians and residents of the country to favor local industry?”⁴² A

⁴⁰ “Nazi Propaganda in the East,” *al-Shams*, 19 Oct. 1934 p. 3

⁴¹ Laskier, 58.

⁴² “Les Dix Commandements du Boycotteur,” flier distributed in Cairo and Alexandria and published in the Egyptian Jewish press. Text in Maurice Mizrahi, *L’Egypte et ses Juifs: Le temps revolu (XIXe et XXe siècle)* (Geneva, 1977), Annexes, pp. 224-25 in Stillman, 378.

second example is seen in an article published by the pro-Zionist Egyptian Jewish newspaper *Israel* which stated,

In our struggle against German anti-Semitism we have been aware of the fact that the Muslims of Egypt have not joined us in a united front against a common enemy. We have brought to their attention that Hitlerism is a threat to them as much as it is to us. Are they not the same people as we? Middle Easterners, Semites, Monotheists?⁴³

With an appeal to common identity rooted in ethnic and even religious terminology more than to Egyptian nationalism per se, the author of these words expressed his frustration with the lack of solidarity he was witnessing between Jewish and other Egyptians. A second example is seen in an article published in *La Tribune Juive* (1939) which accuses Misr Al-Fatat with conducting “a violent anti-Jewish propaganda campaign” and relating the arguments of the organization to that of fascist and Nazi ideology. The article emphatically states however,

We repeat: WE DO NOT FEAR ANTI-SEMITISM IN EGYPT....we believe moreover THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CREATE A SPECIFICALLY ANTI-JEWISH MOVEMENT IN THIS COUNTRY...the tactic of sowing hatred and discord is indeed pursued by the Hittlerian Fascists in all the democratic countries to better divide and weaken them. We are convinced that every Egyptian, every sincere friend of Egypt, envisages such an eventuality with horror. Those who at this moment hold the governance of the country in their hands and whom we know to be conscientious and proven patriots certainly desire this less than anyone else.⁴⁴

Thus the article appeals to the essence of Egyptian tolerance and plurality, and defining patriotism in terms of adherence to these values.

The anti-fascist movement in Egypt mobilized mass Jewish participation, on the other hand. By March of 1933 large meetings, organized by Jewish community leaders and the local Egyptian branch of B'nai B'rith (an Egyptian branch of the international Jewish fraternal and service organization modeled after the freemasons)⁴⁵, took place

⁴³ Laskier, 61

⁴⁴ L.T.J.I., “Agitation anti-juive: Quatre bombes en deux semaines,” *La Tribune Juive* (July 26, 1939): 1-2 in Stillman, 394-395.

⁴⁵ Miachael Laskier, Sara Reguer, and Haim Saadoun “Community Leadership and Structure” *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2003), 61.

throughout the major cities in Egypt. These meetings included participation from all sectors of Egyptian Jewry, including Karaite and other indigenous communal and religious representatives. As a function of these meetings the *Association Formée par Toutes les Oeuvres et Institutions Juives en Egypte* (Association formed by All Workers and Jewish Institutions in Egypt) and the *Ligue contre l'Antisemitisme Allemand* (League Against German Anti-Semitism) were created in order to work against Nazi activities on Egyptian soil.⁴⁶ The Egyptian Jewish boycott of German goods, begun in March of 1933, was successfully organized and carried out by members of the Jewish community. (*What did it accomplish if anything, why?*) In addition, with support from the LICA and B'nai B'rith Umberto Jabes, a Jewish business man and Italian national in Egypt sued the publisher of the pamphlet, *On the Jewish Question in Germany*, Von Meeteren. Although his case was rejected by the Mixed Court of Alexandria, it reveals the fervor by which Egyptian Jews worked to counteract Nazi propaganda.⁴⁷

Anti-fascist activism was not unopposed, yet few articulations of German anti-Semitism reached Egypt. The strongest of such articulations was direct German propaganda carried out through free wave radio broadcasts from Germany to Egypt, which merged German ideology with radical Islamist ideology.⁴⁸ Such calls particularly appealed to the fascist *Misr al-Fatat* (Young Egypt) organization, founded in 1933. This movement, founded by Ahmad Husain, was among the first to display German anti-Semitism, attributing the "social and political ills of the Muslim world to a Jewish

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Laskier, 61-64; Kramer 131-135.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Herf, "Nazi Propaganda in and towards the Middle East during World War II and the Holocaust," Lecture at the Yale Initiative for Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism, February, 5 2009. <http://www.yale.edu/yiisa/videos.htm>

conspiracy.”⁴⁹ Other forms of Nazi propaganda that made their way into Egypt include pamphlets of Wilhelm Grau’s *On the Jewish Question in Germany* (1933) and translated editions of Hitler’s prison diary, *Mein Kampf*.⁵⁰ Fascist influence was further detected in events such as the trials of the Jewish Egyptian Maurice Fargeon. Fargeon was tried and later convicted for defaming the Führer, through his publication *Le Tyran modern: Hitler*

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By the end of the summer of 1933 the tension between fascist and anti-fascist groups in Egypt had reached a point in which the government as well as the British authorities decided to step in, and “banned all open-air meetings staged by either side.”⁵² The British high commissioner, Walter Smart, admonished the aforementioned Jewish protester, Jacques Maleh stating, “I admonished him suitably on the basis that the Jews were fouling their own comfortable nest in Egypt by stirring up this trouble as their action is represented by their Egyptian hosts. It was not in the interests of the Jews to create in Egypt anti-Jewish feeling similar to that in Palestine.”⁵³ This indicates that the activism within the Jewish community was vocal to the point of drawing concern from the British. It furthermore reveals the start of an inconsistent relationship between the British and the Jews which, during the years leading up to the Second World War, witnessed increasing tensions between Great British and the Egyptian Jewish anti-fascist movement. While in the early 1930s, anti-German sentiment was present throughout

⁴⁹ Laskier, 68.

⁵⁰ Kramer, 128-139.

Norman Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 104-5

⁵¹ Kramer 130.

⁵² Kramer, 135.

⁵³ Ibid.

Europe, Britain maintained the policy of appeasement and therefore did not overtly support the early anti-fascist movement.

Neither the fascist, nor the anti-fascist movement was particularly successful in mobilizing greater Egyptian society. A German lawyer in Cairo named, Dahm, was in contact with Wolfgang Diewerge from the Nazi party in Berlin stated in correspondence that, "The educational level of the broad masses is not advanced enough for them to understand racial theory. The awareness of the Jewish danger has not been roused here as yet."⁵⁴ Around the same time J.D. Mosseri, writing in the pro-Zionist paper *Israel*, stated that "despite our warnings and publicity, our Muslim brethren remain deaf and did not join us."⁵⁵ Rather, one of the principal successes of the anti-fascist movement was its ability to mobilize among Egyptian Jews. This movement created a brief episode of wide spread unity among Egyptian Jews and allowed for various Jewish intellectuals to come together - whether in mass community meetings or smaller communal projects and to break off into smaller intellectual circles that not only discussed social issues, but also intellectual pursuits related to their anti-fascist aims. These new intellectual circles served as a forum in which Jews could openly discuss Marxist ideology, thereby laying the foundation for the Jewish-led Marxist movement in Egypt.⁵⁶ In a similar fashion, the anti-fascist movement helped to lend vitality to the Egyptian Zionist movement, by evoking solidarity within the community and focusing on the plight of individuals' Jewish brethren in Germany, as well as through *Yishvue* emissaries from Palestine who traveled to Egypt and were active anti-fascists. The anti-fascist movement was therefore an important development among Egyptian Jewry, as it bridged all forms of Egyptian Jewish

⁵⁴ Ibid, 138.

⁵⁵ Laskier, 61.

⁵⁶ Botman, 6.

identity, and allowed for the growth of Egyptian Jews' activism and ability to successfully mobilize during the 1930s.

The Role of Jews within the Egyptian Communist Movement

In the 1930s, agriculture employed a majority of the Egyptian workforce and supplied over half of Egypt's national output. Yet, also during this period, the introduction of new technologies allowed industry to grow rapidly and to develop new modes of urban transportation and factory output.⁵⁷ These new technologies brought changing social conditions, including migration into the cities and urban poverty. These developments in turn fueled new discussion among intellectuals concerning how to address the ever-growing social problems they faced. In this context new Marxist ideology, revitalized and reformed from its earlier manifestation in the 1920s, developed among Egyptian Jews in the 1930s and incorporated wider European ideologies. This take on social reform provided an alternative to the limited social reform agenda adopted by the Islamic revivalist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which was then growing in popularity. Significantly, Egyptian Jews, and especially the Jewish "cosmopolitan community of Egyptianized Europeans," became associated with Egyptian communism during this period.⁵⁸

The communist movement found significant support among Jewish Egyptians within the middle and upper classes, many of whom hailed from European descent, and were active in the anti-fascist movement.⁵⁹ These Egyptian Jews within the anti-fascist movement were among those who initiated relationships with the self-declared Marxists

⁵⁷ Sayyid, 10; Nancy Reynolds, *Commodity Communities: Interweaving of Market Cultures, Consumption Practices, and Social Power in Egypt 1907-1961* (Diss. Stanford University, 2003), 57.

⁵⁸ Botman, 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 5.

from the Italian, Greek and Armenian communities in Egypt. These individuals served as resources and points of contact for Egyptian Jewish intellectuals and later “contributed to the revival of indigenous Marxist thinking” among the Egyptian Jewish community.⁶⁰ Egypt’s Marxist movement thus developed partly out of meetings of Jewish intellectuals who first organized as part of the country’s anti-fascist movement. As Selma Botman, a scholar on the Egyptian communist movement suggests, “radicalized members of the Jewish minority set up clubs or ‘circles’ of political, cultural, and intellectual activity.”⁶¹ Familiar names such as Leon Castro, vice president of the aforementioned “League against German anti-Semitism,” formed *Les Essayistes*, a cultural and intellectual society that allowed for open intellectual discussion of various ideas and ideologies including Marxism.⁶²

The intellectual movements that gave rise to Egyptian communism often derived from European philosophy and ideology and were epitomized by organizations such as the “Union of Peace Supporters,” established in Egypt in 1934 by Paul Jacot Descombes. This group was primarily comprised of college students, and youths in their late teens or early adulthood. Most were of essentially “European origin and culture,” or else were Egyptian minorities educated in French *lycées*.⁶³ Descombes was a stringent Marxist and believed in the necessity of the class struggle and “political militancy” of classical Marxism.⁶⁴ He therefore established the Union of Peace Supporters which at least formally presented a “democratic, antifascist, and antiwar character, yet actually operated

⁶⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 6.

as a front group for leftist activity.”⁶⁵ Raymond Aghion was a Jewish man of the elite who joined the organization in the 1930s. He states:

We were a small group of foreigners who all knew one another and talked with one another. For me, we lived in Egypt as foreigners. I frequently visited Europe and was dazzled by it. When I returned to Egypt I would feel that things were not moving in the right direction. I formed, in the beginning, utopian socialist ideas. I read Rousseau, Victor Hugo, then I would go down from the house into the street and feel what Victor Hugo described of the misery present in Egypt....There was another problem: the victory of Hitler and the fear of the Jews. I, being a Jew, felt what many Jews were feeling – the necessity of relying on the democratic movement against fascism. I slowly come closer to the leftist movement.⁶⁶

The excerpt therefore reveals the connection between the Marxist and anti-fascist movement, as well as embedded European ideologies.

As stated above, the 1930s was a time of rising social movements that strove to address the inequalities of wealth and education within Egyptian society. Movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood remained in the early 1930s little more than a Muslim YMCA, focused on social issues such as poverty and community and youth developments such as fitness. As opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, however, the Marxist social reform program supported by influential Egyptian Jews was primarily based on concepts that had originated in Europe.

The Zionist Movement

The final movement that actively involved the Egyptian Jewish community in the 1930s was Zionism. Like the Marxist movement, the Egyptian Zionist movement was indirectly supported by the larger anti-fascist movement of the 1930s and was largely derived from Zionist ideologies that had developed first in Central and Eastern Europe. In

⁶⁵ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁶ Rifaat al-Said's interview with Raymond Aghion, April 4, 1975, Paris, transcript of the meeting provided to Selma Botman in Botman, 7.

order to better understand the Egyptian Zionist movement of the period, however, it is important to undo certain misconceptions about the nature of Zionism. Although it was an international movement during the early twentieth century, Zionism was hardly unified. It had entered Egypt by virtue of independent Zionist “preachers,” largely Ashkenazi Jews from Palestine, who sought to spread the concept, and rally support among the Egyptian Jewish populations (**CITE**). Political Zionism entered Egypt primarily through Yishuv (Jewish community of Palestine). In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Zionist activity in Egypt was largely confined to fundraising for the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet Le-Ysra’el). After the Balfour Declaration, however, Zionist activism increased and Zionist federations were created in Cairo and Alexandria. These were largely efforts from Ashkenazi Jew who immigrated from Palestine at the start of the century. During the 1930s and 1940s emissaries (*Shelihim*) from Palestine who represented Zionist institutions such as the *Hagana*, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and the *Mossad Le’Aliya* (responsible for coordinating migration to Palestine). Within the Egyptian community, leading Zionist youth movements included *He-Haluts ha-Tsa’ir* (founded in 1933), *ha-‘Ivri ha-Tasa’ir* (1932), and *Bene ‘Akiva*; supporters of Ze’ev Jabotinsk’s Revisionist Zionism were also temporarily active in Egypt until the Stern Gang *Lehi* assassinated the British minister Lord Moyne in Cairo in November 1944. The most prominent and active Egyptian Zionists were Leon Castro, a lawyer and active collaborator of the 1919 revolution, and Dr. Albert D. Mosseri, a physician who founded the pro-Zionist editorial *Israel*.⁶⁷ Zionism in Egypt largely concerned the middle and lower classes of Egyptian Jews (Laskier).

⁶⁷ Laskier, 11.

As the century progressed, the movement began to solidify and by 1934 movements towards greater unification took place, including an accord agreement that unified the Zionist Committee led by David Ben Gurion, and the Correctional party led by Jabotinsk⁶⁸ A second key historical factor to consider is that in the early 1930s the question of whether or not Jews would have a “state,” or legal and political formation of their own was still uncertain. It was not until the British Peel Commission of 1937 that a plan for partition was suggested, and arguably, it was not until after the Second World War and the knowledge of the Holocaust that Western European and American Jews more fully committed themselves to the Zionist cause, and facilitated substantial international support for the movement. As a result of the still unformed and undetermined nature of the Zionist project in the 1930s, and especially during the earlier part of the decade, the focus of Egyptian Zionism among those who reconciled the two nationalities during this period was not only one of Jewish migration to Palestine but, among the intellectual elite, also one that incorporated coexistence with fellow Arabs both in Palestine and Egypt.

The goals of this Zionist movement in Egypt reflect this focus on cooperation. This is significant in that the identity sometimes proposed by Egyptian Zionists was one of “Arab” Jews whose life in Palestine would be similar to life in Egypt. Among the Jewish cosmopolitan elite, this nuanced Zionism was harmonized by those who identified un-exclusively with Europeanism, but also with a larger Arab identity. The article, “Can there be Any Dialogue between Jews and Arabs in Palestine?” published in *al-Shams* in 1934 states that the two goals of the Zionists are to “provide a place for them [Jews] to flourish and live in dignity,” and two, “to work with the Arabs in this country [Palestine]

⁶⁸ “Understanding between the Zionist Parties,” *al-Shams*, 2 Nov. 1934, p.4

to prosper in an advanced nation without discrimination.”⁶⁹ A second article published in the same edition, consisted of a letter sent from Ilyas Sason, a prominent Arab-Zionist and Jewish author in Jerusalem who made frequent trips to and from Egypt and Palestine, to Sa’ad Maliki. It reads,

I wish for you to discuss the issue of tolerance and mutual understanding between the two great peoples: the Arabic people and the Jewish people. I wish that you change the ignorance to knowledge and help people within the Jewish community to understand the myth posed to them by the politicians that these two groups are enemies, while we are in fact friends, and they [Arabs] occupy a high place in our [Jews] hearts.⁷⁰

Sason’s statement sheds light on the diversity and complexity of the Zionist movement broadly and in Arab lands more specifically. It furthermore reveals that while many progressive readers and contributors to *al-Shams* held Zionist aspirations, they also advocated the greater understanding and cooperation of Jews and Arabs due to their sense of shared identity, and the notion that the aims of the two peoples were compatible rather than diametrically opposed. A similar sentiment is clearly depicted in the following responses to suggestions for the partition of Palestine in 1937.

The idea of partitioning Palestine following the Peel Commission (1936-1937), sparked debate not only among the British but among Egyptian Jews as well; in fact *al-Shams* dedicated a serialized piece throughout several editions in 1937 dealing with the question of the “division of Palestine.” The article “The Division of Palestine into Two Parts and the Negative Effects on the Future of the Country” critiqued the plans for partition; it eloquently stated,

The observer should realize that the affairs of the Jews and Arabs in this country are shared and entangled and it is very difficult to divide it and separate between Jews and Arab affairs because this will sever the relationship between people who have lived many centuries in peace and harmony and great collaboration. In addition this division will be followed by transferring Jewish affairs to one side and Arab affairs to the other and as a consequence there will be competition and struggle between the two areas and this will

⁶⁹ “Can There be any Dialogue between Jews and Arabs in Palestine?,” *al-Shams*, 26 Oct. 1934, p.1

⁷⁰ Ilyas Sason. “To the Publisher of Al-Shams,” *al-Shams*, 28 Sept. 1934, p. 3

create antagonism...partition will be negative for Arabs even though it will relieve the Jews from political struggle.⁷¹

Apparent is an undeniable concern for Arab prosperity, which various Egyptian Zionist authors believed was inextricably entangled with the fate of Jews who identified with Arabs. Also apparent is the growing disconnect that was emerging between Zionists and the British, seen in the reference to British policy in Palestine was imperialist and dictating the future of Palestine in undesirable ways. The same author states “how strange that many in the British Government insist on the separation between Arabs and Jews, and many of the British newspaper writers announce that this is a grave mistake and will hurt the peace and stability because it will come to mind that the government is supporting one side over the other.”⁷²

The Zionist movement, however, was an international movement, and relied on strengthening Jewish identity and in so doing promulgated the concept of Jewish pride, belonging, and global connection. *Al-Shams* appealed to a greater Jewish identity through articles with titles like “The Virtue of Jews in the Discovery of America” or “The Discovery of an Israelite Tribe in the Desert of Africa,” all of which worked to foster a greater Jewish identity represented in the inter-connection of Jews worldwide, thus superseding national borders.⁷³ While acknowledging an overarching Jewish identity *al-Shams* also presented perceptions of belonging held among Egyptian Zionists which often focused on Jews’ historic ties to Egypt. The paper promoted this approach in a multi-part series that ran under the title, “The History of Jews in Egypt.” In its third issue, this column linked Jewish identity with a greater Egyptian identity, thereby supporting

⁷¹ “The Division of Palestine into Two Parts and the Negative Effects on the Future of the Country” *al-Shams*, 8 April 1937, p.1

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “The Discovery of an Israelite Tribe in the Desert of Africa” *al-Shams*, 24 Sept. 1934, p. 2-3

the belonging of Jews in Egypt. Relating the history of the Jews of Egypt in the time of Ptolemy it states, "Alexandria is the first Jewish city in the world after Jerusalem."⁷⁴

While *al-Shams* supported Jewish efforts to construct a Jewish homeland in Palestine, it did not call for Jews to abandon Egypt in favor of the establishment of a Jewish state. Rather it displayed the mediation between the two loyalties which allowed for Egyptian Zionists to adopt a dual identity, reflected in the effort among Egyptian Zionists to stray from contradicting Egyptian nationalism. Among Egyptian Jews, therefore, the profession of Zionism did not necessarily entail a lack of patriotism to a Jewish individual's state; rather many Jewish intellectuals felt that they could be both patriots of the country in which they resided and Zionists. While Zionist ideology was in fact greatly influenced by European thought, its manifestation among Egyptian Jews took on the quality of cooperation between Arabs and Jews, as related in the following passage in *al-Shams*: "One of the main principals of this newspaper is the collaboration between Jews and Arabs"⁷⁵ In order to demonstrate the paper's dedication to this approach, the author of the article summarized what he called a "very valuable lecture." The lecture, delivered by the Egyptian Professor Dr. Ali al-Anani, in 1934, focused on the "natural connections between the Hebrews and Arabs."⁷⁶

Opposition to the Zionist movement remained subdued in the greater Egyptian society of the early 1930s, which was mostly disengaged from the events occurring in Palestine during the period, until the outbreak of the Arab revolts that began in 1936. In

⁷⁴ Hilaal Farhiy. "The History of Jews in Egypt," *al-Shams*, 19 Oct. 1934, p. 4

⁷⁵ "The Doctor Ali Al-Anani Talks to us About the Natural Connection Between the Hebrews and Arabs," *al-Shams*, 2 Nov. 1934, p.3

⁷⁶ Ibid. The lecture discussed the similarities between Jewish and Arab history, culture, language, and religion; and went so far as to assert that the "similarities [between Arabic and Hebrew language] are so close that the Standard Arabic is closer to Hebrew than the colloquial Egyptian is to Standard Arabic."

connection, or perhaps as a result, both Egyptian Jews and voices from Egyptian society more broadly continued to differentiate between Judaism and Zionism throughout much of the 1930s.⁷⁷ In 1934, Shikh al-Tiftazani, a prominent Muslim cleric in Egypt addressed slander written in the German newspaper, *The Open Book* by stating, “The Jews of Egypt are a team of the most active and smart [individuals] in society. They have lived in Egypt for hundreds of years and I have many of them as friends. There is no danger in the Jews of Egypt or of the Middle East, except the Zionist disaster in Palestine.”⁷⁸

The Egyptian Zionist movement did, however, face opposition within the Egyptian Jewish community itself. In 1930, a Zionist activist from Alexandria reported negative attitude concerning Zionism among his coreligionists. He states,

It is not only that people are frightened, but a decided animosity and antipathy to Zionist aims has sprung up. They look upon it as something that threatens their own peace and must be discouraged. The doors have been completely shut, with a solid determination not to allow anything to be done.⁷⁹

Therefore, while Zionism met with some resistance during the 1930s, the nature of this resistance was largely communal, resulting from intra-Jewish dialogue, rather than by virtue of greater societal pressure. Therefore, key figures within the Jewish community remained firm in their opposition to the Jewish nationalist movement. Robert J. Rolo, president of the Alexandrian Jewish community in 1934, was “a convinced anti-Zionist” who by 1948 resigned out of conflict with prominent pro-Zionist individuals within the Alexandrian community.⁸⁰ The president of the Cairo community during the 1930s, Joseph Aslan Cattaoui was also a vocal anti-Zionist. Along with the chief rabbi of Cairo, Haim Nahum Efendi, Cattaoui was both critical of Zionism. The two “saw themselves as

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ “Response of the Shikh Al-Tiftazani” *al-Shams*, 26 Oct. 1934, p.4

⁷⁹ CZA, KH4b/451, Bension to Hermann, 5 March 1930, and 17 January 1931 in Kramer 187.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 78.

Egyptian patriots and as champions of a policy of integration, and considered Zionism a potential danger to the security and well-being of the Egyptian Jewish community.”⁸¹

The connection of Zionism to British imperialism is perhaps the most significant and lasting accusation placed upon Egyptian Jewry and the Egyptian-Zionist movement. This association is clearly depicted in a pamphlet found within the Egyptian Gazette in 1938 which stated, “O Politicians: ...Tear up the unjust treaties...Compare democratic England in Palestine with dictatorship Germany in the Sudetenland, and know that the foremost enemies of Islam are the English, the catspaws of the Jews, the lowest race on earth.”⁸² In this light it is important to evaluate the relationship between Egyptian Zionists and the British. This relationship, between the British and Zionist organizations later became strained, however, as Zionist resentment built up against the British whom they increasingly came to view as imperialists. As antagonisms escalated, problems between the British and Zionists in Palestine grew and by 1939 the British enacted the White Paper policy which severely limited Jewish migration into Palestine. As a consequence *Yishvut* in Egypt embarked on instituting illegal immigration from Egypt to Palestine.⁸³ This antagonism offers a paradox, as factions within Egyptian society later accused the British and Zionists of lastingly cooperating in a greater conspiracy of colonization and domination of the Middle East. As it turns out, the relationship between Britain and Egyptian Jews was much more complicated than such a characterization allows.

Movement for Egyptian-Jewish Unification

⁸¹ Ibid, 98.

⁸² *The Egyptian Gazette* (October 29, 1938) in Stillman 385.

⁸³ Laskier, 113.

While the various movements taken up by various members of the cosmopolitan Jewish elite in Egypt speak to the diversity of ideological pursuits among Jews in Egypt, efforts at unification that took place in the 1930s also cannot be overlooked. Many scholars of Egyptian and Middle Eastern Jewries suggest that Jews in Arab lands worked primarily behind the scenes to advocate for themselves, and that their greatest difficulty was their division. While this was true in some respects, it would be misleading to assume that that Egyptian Jews were passive in accepting communal division. Rather, throughout the 1930s, they undertook efforts that advocated for greater unity by focusing on their common identity of being Jews in Egypt. Work towards this goal included movements of Jewish youth organizations, community celebrations of notable Egyptian-Jewish leaders, and cultural events.

Various Jewish youth organizations were founded in Egypt in the 1930s, each of which presented their own unique struggle for identification and association. Eventually, however, these groups joined in a larger effort to bring all Jewish organizations under one all-encompassing umbrella organization. In 1934, Sa'ad Maliki, editor of *al-Shams*, co-founded the *Association de la Jeunesse Juive Egyptienne* (Association of Egyptian-Jewish Youth), and was supported by Rene Cattaoui, leader of the Cairo Sephardic Jewish community. The manifesto of the organization was "Egypt is our homeland, Arabic is our language" and it encouraged Jews "to take part in the Egyptian national renaissance."⁸⁴ In 1937, the Young Karaite Jewish Association was formed with the intent to establish a modern Karaite identity.⁸⁵ A larger effort to unify various youth

⁸⁴ *Israel*, Nov. 18, 1937, quoted in Bat Ye'or, "Zionism in Islamic Lands: The Case of Egypt" and in Beinlin, 46.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 40

organizations was lead by Leon Castro, based on the premise that “unification is strength.”⁸⁶ *Al-Shams* hailed this effort as “The Blessed Movement.”

Proponents of the move towards communal unification utilized both Jewish and Egyptian culture to strengthen the ties between the diverse populations of Jewish Egyptians. This is seen in the acknowledgment of prominent Egyptian Jews under the serialized piece in *al-Shams* titled “Great Jewish Egyptians”⁸⁷ Interestingly, the majority of individuals featured in the serialized entry were either foreign Jews who had won their fame in Egypt, or Egyptian Jews who had won their fame abroad. Full pages of the paper, however, were also dedicated to honoring Egyptian-Jewish historical leaders, such as the philosopher Haim Kaboosie.⁸⁸ The article “We Must Care about the Culture in Our Community Lives” perhaps best articulates this movement for unification as it advocates for the greater attendance for celebrations of historic Jewish Egyptians and the necessity to preserve Egyptian Jewish history. It called for investment from the Jewish councils and leaders in literature and historical preservation in their common Jewish Egyptian history.⁸⁹ This emphasis on Egyptian Jewish cultural history and identity represents the ongoing challenges faced by Egyptian Jews during this period. Furthermore, the number of these youth movements as well as the attempts to unify them represent the richness of the Jewish community in terms of intellectual and cultural discourse. This development also allowed for the adaptation of multiple identities within the common framework of Egyptian, Jewish identity.

⁸⁶“The Blessed Movement” *al-Shams*, 2 Nov. 1934, p.3

⁸⁷ Hilal Farhy. “Great Jewish Egyptians,” *al-Shams*, 3 Dec. 1936.

⁸⁸ “Annual Celebration of the great Philosopher Haieem Kaboosie,” *al-Shams*, 28 January 1937

⁸⁹ “We must care about the Culture in our Community lives,” *al-Shams*, 4 Feb. 1937

The movement towards Jewish unification therefore aimed at uniting the larger Egyptian-Jewish community beyond class and cultural barriers, and served as an attempt to form a unified Egyptian-Jewish identity. In the process, space was made for different Egyptian –Jewish identities and ideological positions towards the end of bringing people together in respectful discourse. This respectful unity was shaken as Egyptian Jewish identity later came to solidify, particularly as Zionism and Egyptianization became oppositional.

British Influence and Egyptian Jews

Evaluating the British influence on Egyptian Jews, involves evaluating the role that the British played in helping to shape Egyptian Jewish identity as it was perceived both by Jews and by outsiders. From the start of British governance in Egypt, the minority populations, including the Jews and Coptic Christians, were viewed as possible ambassadors of the West. Egyptian Jews had an established relationship with the Anglo-Jewish Association in Britain, which served to further British efforts at endowing the Egyptian-Jewish population with British culture. The function of endowing British culture by virtue of this triangular relationship between the Anglo-Jewish association, the British consulate and Egyptian Jews is represented in a correspondence between the Anglo-Jewish Association and the British Foreign Office in Egypt from 1932. This exchange discussed the issue of re-instating a yearly grant which would support the salary of an English teacher in the Jewish Communal Schools of Cairo, the funds of which were revoked by the Association. Its representatives claimed that, “the extremely wealthy Egyptian Jewish community could and should undertake the burden of their own

communal schools without looking to their English co-religionists for financial help.”⁹⁰

What is interesting, however, is the role of the British High Commissioner, Sir Percy Loraine, who urged the Association to re-instate its funds,

The Jewish community of Cairo is, as you know, very influential in the spheres of finance and commerce and at times plays a not unimportant part in Egyptian politics; French and Italian, as well as English, are taught in the schools, and it would be very detrimental to our interests if the Jewish youth of Cairo were to be abandoned solely to Latin Cultural influences.⁹¹

In continued correspondence, the office of Percy Loraine stated,

Both Loraine and his predecessor have done their utmost to establish British culture in Egypt on surer foundations; they have achieved some measure of success, and in furtherance of their object, with which His Majesty's Government have every sympathy, we enquire of the Anglo-Jewish Association in 1930 whether they could see their way to renew the financial support which formerly permitted the teaching of English under adequate conditions in the Jewish schools at Cairo, Alexandria, and Tanta.⁹²

This triangular relationship was further bolstered by Egyptian Jewish praise and acknowledgement of their connection with British Jews as depicted in the article “The Kindness of British Jews,” published in *al-Shams* in 1934.⁹³

British, and wider European influence, was also indirectly represented in the convergence of cultural and economic influence manifested in the Westernization of elitist Egyptian culture. In the 1930s, foreignness represented a desirable social status.⁹⁴ Such a sentiment was clearly reflected in the advertisements of the popular *al-Ahram* newspaper. In 1934, much of the paper's pages were comprised of advertisements, primarily for foreign products and interests. In particular, these advertisements, both in Arabic and English, announced British products, as well as Western fashions. Numerous advertisements promoted European night clubs and cabaret, as well as alcohol - the consumption of which is forbidden in Islam (See Figure 1). Similar advertisements of

⁹⁰ Sir Percy Loraine FO No.73. (J 84/84/16) in *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani, vol. 3. (London: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 2005),410

⁹¹ Ibid, 411.

⁹² F.O. No. 73 S.W.L. January 26, 1932 in *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani vol. 3. (London: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 2005), 409.

⁹³ “The Kindness of British Jews,” *al-Shams* 26 Oct. 1934, p. 3

⁹⁴ John Marlowe. *Cromer in Egypt* (London: Elek, 1970), 311.

Western fashion can be found within the pages of *al-Shams* (See Figure 2). This Westernized elite culture was portrayed in many Egyptian movies of the 1930s as well. Cinematic productions were almost always set in the upper-class setting of Egyptian villas where men were dressed in suits and the women wore European-style dresses.⁹⁵ European elitist culture is also preserved in the testimonies of Jews who lived in Egypt during the interwar years. Rachel Maccabi, author of the book *My Egypt*, described her life in the upper middle class of Egyptian society as an image “a sophisticated, cultured, and Westernized society cushioned in comfort while living in the backward country, without any real contacts with its indigenous population.”⁹⁶ Itzhak Gormejan Goren, in his memoirs, *Alexandrian Summer*, likewise describes cosmopolitan society by depicting the image of a “colorful Europeanized society influenced by Sephardic culture and oriental Jewish values and norms.”⁹⁷ Finally, Ada Aharoni, in her book *The Second Exodus*, writes that Jewish quarters were “usually a mixture of European culture, Jewish traditions, and oriental customs.”⁹⁸ The identification of Egyptian Jews with Western culture, served British economic and political interests.

As will be discussed below, however, developments that emerged starting in 1936 began to change the status of foreigners in Egypt. It put an end to the financial capitulations imposed by the British and sparked a nationalistic fervor which encouraged Egyptian Jews and foreigners to Egyptianize themselves or their businesses. As John Marlowe, a scholar of colonial Egypt, later wrote, “foreign nationality was no longer a

⁹⁵ Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class, and Nation* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007), 102.

⁹⁶ Ada Aharoni, "The Image of Jewish Life in Egypt in the Writings of Egyptian Jewish Authors in Israel and Abroad." *Jews of Egypt a Mediterranean Society in Modern Times* (Boulder: Westview, 1987) p. 195

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 197.

privilege; it was a liability.”⁹⁹

Political Change and the Swelling of Egyptian Nationalism:

In August, 1936 Egypt and Great Britain signed the Anglo-Egyptian treaty. Although the treaty was meant to end the British occupation of Egypt in a formal sense, the treaty stipulated continued British military presence in the Suez Canal area, as well as Britain’s right to impose censorship and martial law in Egypt during times of emergency.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most significant result of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, however, was the subsequent rise in nationalism, that soon spread throughout Egypt. Unlike the 1919 revolution, the Anglo-Egyptian treaty was not a result of mass popular protest; rather it was enacted primarily between government officials and as a response to the Second Italo-Abyssinian War. The popular responses to this treaty, as well as various other political policies that followed sparked a new wave of nationalism among those who were unsatisfied with the terms of the treaty and who viewed it as creating a façade of independence. This is evident in the advertisements of national newspapers such as *al-Ahram*, as well as *al-Shams*. As Nancy Reynolds, a historian of twentieth century Egypt, points out, these advertisements began to include nationalist sentiment in advertising slogans such as “100% Egyptian” or in overt statements such as that of the al-Nahhas department store advertisement which stated, “[al-Nahhas] raises high the flag of Egyptian manufactures to assume their place in place of the foreigner.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Marlowe, 311.

¹⁰⁰ Afaf Sayyid-Marsot. "Treaty of Alliance: between His Majesty, in respect to the United Kingdom, and His Majesty the King of Egypt." *Egypt's liberal experiment, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 253-68.

¹⁰¹ Nancy Reynolds, “Sharikat al-Bayt al-Misri; Domesticating Commerce in Egypt, 1931-1956,” *Arab Studies Journal* 7.1/8.1, 90.

Advertisements seen in *al-Shams* appearing in 1936, advertise, "I am Egyptian! My flesh and blood...and my cloths. So must be every Egyptian!" (See Figure 2)¹⁰² This form of nationalism therefore added a negative connotation to the once sought-after association with foreignness. Members of Egypt's Jewish community thus found themselves in a position in which they both sought out novel forms of belonging in this new wave of nationalism and also had these imposed upon them.

Approximately four months following the ratification of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, in Aug. 1936, an article in *al-Shams* discussed the new requirement instituted by the Egyptian government mandating that the Jewish leader, as well as the committee that appointed him, be Egyptian and not a foreign Jew.¹⁰³ At the same time, however, many Egyptian Jews embraced Egyptian nationalism, a development clearly illustrated in their praise of the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty. At one such celebration by the Young Men's Jewish Egyptian Association, Sa'ad Maliki gave a speech which began by welcoming the era of freedom after struggling for the last fifty years, he stated, "All the young men in Egypt from all different religions stick together like a single hand, and with the support of their leaders they protest for the sake of their country...and they move toward forming political parties and they unite their causes and they are under one banner and all work towards the benefits of the country."¹⁰⁴

This wave of nationalism also sparked an internal debate within the Cairo Jewish community regarding the teaching of Arabic rather than Hebrew as the primary language in Jewish schools. The paper supported the idea of enacting this change, stating "We live

¹⁰² *al-Shams*, 24 Dec. 1936.

¹⁰³ "The Jewish Community in Egypt," *al-Shams*, 17 Dec. 1936.

¹⁰⁴ "The Youth of the Nation," *al-Shams*, 3 Dec. 1936, p.4

in Egypt,” and “Hebrew is not practical” in the daily lives of the Jewish youth.¹⁰⁵ The debate regarding teaching Arabic in Jewish communal schools soon turned into a debate regarding the “Egyptianaization” of these schools. This debate surfaced in the article, “We Need A Real Solution Not a Temporary Condition Regarding the Egyptianization of Education in our Schools.” The author of the article stated,

I realized that what the newspaper *al-Shams* calls improvement is not real improvement in the eyes of any patriotic Jewish Egyptian...What the school committee claims to be ‘Egyptianizing’ education is nothing but reducing the Arabic language classes from six to four weekly and replacing those two classes with two history classes which are taught in Arabic...The school committee is responsible for the future of our kids, those kids, who will find the doors of employment closed in their faces when the Arabic language after another year or two becomes the sole language in...this country.¹⁰⁶

This debate over teaching Arabic in Jewish schools, indicates a deeper debate regarding the future of the Egyptian Jewish community. It similarly foreshadows the identity crisis that Egyptian Jews would come to face as nationalism grew within the country and various members of Egyptian society increasingly came to challenge their place in the country.

Egyptian nationalism also manifested itself in response to a new wave of xenophobia sparked by the Arab revolts of 1936-1939 in Palestine, as the larger issue of Palestine began to take center stage in political debates and social consciousness in Egypt for the first time. This development targeted Jews in particular since, in the eyes of members of various factions of Egyptian society, all Jews were to be associated associated with Zionism as well as British imperialism. In 1936, the Arab Higher Committee for the Palestinian Cause sent delegates to Egypt to mobilize pro-Palestinian support. In May of that year, the Muslim Brotherhood issued a boycott directed against

¹⁰⁵ “Teaching Arabic Language in the Community Schools,” *al-Shams*, 17 Dec. 1936

¹⁰⁶ Alfred Blowz. “We Need Real Solution Not a Temporary Condition Regarding the Egyptianizaion of Education in our Schools” *al-Shams*, 17 Dec. 1936.

Egyptian Jews, and in September, “the first anti-Jewish graffiti appeared on the walls of the Jewish quarter in Port Said”, which coincided with protests in the same area.¹⁰⁷ Concern over Palestine also presented itself within the political realm. Mustafa al-Nahas, who was the leader of the dominant Wafdist party “warned that the conflict over Palestine might lead to anti-Jewish outbursts in Egypt.”¹⁰⁸ By the end of the decade, this in fact proved to be the case. In 1938 a pamphlet published in the *Egyptian Gazette* revealed anti-Semitic sentiment in direct correlation to Palestine, it stated, “O Moslem and Christian youth alike: The jihad on behalf of Palestine has become a sacred and holy obligation...Your duty in this severe affliction is to make of the Palestine revolution a general revolution whose flames will spread to Egypt and burn up the English and the Jews, the opponents of the Arabs and Islam.”¹⁰⁹

The nationalism that surrounded the 1936 treaty came to a halt with the closing of the liberal era with the advent of King Farouq’s succession. This led to greater censorship and limits on political parties. Furthermore, the war provided the state of emergency stipulated within the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, which consequently allowed for Britain to enact virtual martial law in Egypt. This act shattered the illusion of Egyptian sovereignty and thus created new dilemmas for Egyptian Jews.

Conclusion:

The early 1930s proved to be a time not only of political and intellectual activism among Egypt’s Jews, as is seen with the formation and growth of the anti-fascist,

¹⁰⁷ Kramer, 146.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 148.

¹⁰⁹ Stilman, 385.

Marxist, and Zionist movements, as well as attempts to unify the Jewish community as a whole, during this period. Such developments were significant because they reveal the multiplicity of Jewish identities as well as for the pull of Western status, culture, and languages. At the same time, pressure for Egyptian nationalist and anti-British position coexisted with Westernizing trends during this period . Important members of Egyptian society were actively involved in local Egyptian politics, thereby interacting to a greater extent with the larger Egyptian society than past generations of Egyptian Jews had done. In these various senses, the 1930s were representative of the growth and mobilization within the Egyptian Jewish community. During this period, especially before 1936, Jews were able to uphold and benefit from multiple identities, including those connected to Zionism. This decade was also a time of cultural prosperity, and relative unity within the larger community by virtue of anti-fascism and tolerance of active intra-Jewish debates.

The various Western-oriented political, cultural, and intellectual movements supported by the Egyptian Jewish elite throughout the 1930s affiliated them with Europeanism and foreignness more generally. This affiliation, in addition to the economic privileges conferred by connections to Europe under the capitulations system, strengthened the association of Jews with the imperialist British authorities. Furthermore, the rise of a more virulent and exclusionary form of nationalism, combined with a greater social sympathy for the Palestinian cause, especially beginning in 1936, narrowed the opportunities for Jewish self-representation in Egypt by the late 1930s. The limitations on Egyptian Jews' position only increased as the Second World War broke out.

Chapter 2: Changing Tide of Jewish Identity

The focus of this chapter is the changing circumstances faced by Egyptian Jews during the period of the Second World War, beginning with the start of the war in 1939 and concluding with what came to be called the Balfour Day riots of November 2, 1945. These years witnessed significant developments in the anti-fascist, communist, and Zionist movements among Egyptian Jews, who both resisted, but were also forced to confront growing divisions among Egyptian Jews. As they engaged in political and communal struggles, Jews in Egypt found themselves increasingly labeled as allies of the British.

The Italian invasion of North Africa in June 1940 brought the European war to Egyptian soil as the Maghrib and Egypt became extended battlefronts. At the request of the British, the Egyptian government, under Prime Minister Ali Maher, declared a state of martial law on September 1, 1939, in accordance with the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.¹¹⁰ The British fortified troops stationed in the Suez Canal Zone, formed a military base in Cairo, and established Port Said as a Mediterranean naval center.¹¹¹ In the larger scheme of the Second World War, the role of the desert campaign had a great significance on the outcome of the war. The battle at al-Alamein is considered one of the greatest allied victories of the war: Winston Churchill described the pivotal nature of that battle, stating “Before Alamein we never had a victory, after al-Alamein we never had a defeat.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Britian and the Egyptian National Movement* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1994), 41

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² David Knowles, “How El-Alamein Changed the War” *British Broadcasting Company*. 23 October, 2002. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/uk_news/2347801.stm

Just as the Second World War fundamentally changed Europe, it escalated the already present discontent following the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty within Egypt. This discontent led to essential changes within the societal and political spheres that later came to facilitate the 1952 Revolution. The enactment of a state of martial law was the first of several events that set the stage for the political transformation of the country, leading to the fall of the Wafd party, which had dominated party politics since the 1919 revolution. Within the six year span of the war, Egypt was under the leadership of six successive prime ministers.¹¹³ The fall of the Wafd party coincided with the rise and politicalization of Islamic-nationalist movements, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. These political and social changes presented Egyptian Jews with increasingly narrow and constrained options for participation in the public sphere.

Pro-Fascist and Anti-Fascist Sentiment in the War

The Egyptian government, as well as much of Egyptian society, viewed the war as a European concern and therefore supported neutrality and remained detached from the war effort.¹¹⁴ While the British command was stationed in Cairo, the primary battlefield of the war was along the North Western coast, in a remote area near the border of Libya. Rather, the war impacted the daily lives of Egyptians by virtue of British military presence in the region and the consequent British influence over Egyptian politics and governance. This influence is seen in policies adopted within the first years of the war. While the Egyptian government avoided a declaration of war until February 1945,¹¹⁵ in

¹¹³ Gurund Kramer, *The Jews of Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 154.

¹¹⁴ Nasser, 45

¹¹⁵ After reading the declaration of war to Parliament the Prime Minister, Ahmad Maher, was shot dead.

1939, under pressure from the British, it interned or expelled all German citizens with the exception of German Jews; likewise, when Italy declared war in 1940, the Egyptian government interned many of the estimated 60,000 Italian citizens, again with the exemption of "Italian Jews and known antifascists."¹¹⁶ While the British therefore had tight control over government policy, they faced resistance from Axis sympathizers both within the institutions of the Egyptian government and within greater Egyptian society.

The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend:

While Egypt officially supported the Allies, notable individuals within the government as well as Egyptian society sympathized with the Axis powers. The support of the Axis powers primarily followed the adage, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." For the most part, this support was fueled by the hope that a German victory would release Egypt from Britain's imperial grip. While some groups such as Young Egypt were attracted to fascist ideology, German opposition to the British was the primary appeal.¹¹⁷

There is even evidence that King Farouq sympathized with the Axis powers. As related in a telegram sent to Hitler, King Farouq expressed that, "He was filled with the highest respect for the Fuehrer and the German people, whose victory over England he was fervently wishing for. He knew himself united with his people in the wish to see German troops victorious in Egypt as liberators from the unbearable, brutal English yoke as soon as possible."¹¹⁸ This statement clearly demonstrates the hope that German victory

¹¹⁶ Kramer, 154.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 155.

¹¹⁸ Telegram as transmitted by AA, Buro des Staatssekretars, Ettel, Tehran, 15 April 1941; and vot Papen, Ankara, 10 November 1941; in Kramer, 156.

would liberate Egypt. In 1943, following reports that the monarch publically supported the Axis powers, the British military surrounded King Farouq's palace in Cairo and threatened to overthrow the government unless he implemented a new Wafdist government.¹¹⁹ The King's throne, however, was dependent upon the British, and his connection with Germany held no significant weight. King Farouk, therefore reluctantly abided by the demands of the British.

As for popular support, one notable demonstration of Axis sympathies was led by students in Cairo on February 1942. Protestors shouted "Advance Rommel! (*ila 'l-amam ya Rumi!*)."¹²⁰ This protest, targeted at the British, took place at a time of food shortages and followed the breaking of diplomatic relations with Vichy France, which impacted trade agreements and thus added to economic setbacks within Egypt.¹²¹ Despite this example, the majority of the population did not harbor pro-Axis sympathy and remained rather detached and apathetic during the war. This is reported by German diplomats in Berlin who "were well aware of this state of affairs and noted that, even though the king was pro German 'through and through,' the mass of the Egyptian population was uncritical and not interested in politics."¹²² The hope for a German victory and an end to British occupation was, however, crushed in February 1943, when the German defenses at Stalingrad broke and German defeat now appeared inevitable.¹²³ Pro-Axis sympathies represented Egyptian discontent and resentment with the British presence in Egypt. To support the Axis was therefore an expression of Egyptian nationalism. Conversely, to support the British during the war was, in some way, unaligned with Egyptian

¹¹⁹ Nasser, 83

¹²⁰ Gudrun Kramer, *Hasan al-Banna* (Oxford: One World, 2010). 64.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Kramer, 156.

¹²³ Ibid, 157.

nationalism. It is not difficult to ascertain, therefore, that Jewish support for the Allied effort, worked to further ostracize Egyptian Jewry.

Anti-Fascist Movement:

Egyptian Jews and other anti-fascists were well informed about the treatment of Jews by Nazi Germany. It is therefore no surprise that they were particularly anxious concerning the outcome of the war and strongly supported Allied efforts. In this light it is important to evaluate the extent and visibility of Jewish support for the Allies, the British in particular, and how the expression of such support affected the larger perception of Jews in Egypt.

Anti-fascist activity during the war manifested itself in the press as well as services rendered for Allied forces in Egypt, particularly Jewish troops. In the realm of journalism, *al-Shams*, continually critiqued Nazism and Fascism. The paper drew particular attention to the flaws of fascist ideology, represented in the position it developed in the serialized entry, "Human Rights is the Climax Civilization and if Lost Life would lose its Value."¹²⁴ These entries attacked fascism for its characteristic oppression of "any difference of opinion." Interestingly, they also focused on the restrictions it put on labor unions, which were no longer allowed to strike, as well as on the persecution of religious institutions such as the Catholic Church by highlighting fascist ill treatment of monks and church officials.¹²⁵ Overall the series highlighted the connection between the anti-fascist movement and democratic movements, which attracted not only Egyptian Jews within but also appealed to a larger international

¹²⁴ "Human Rights is the Climax of Civilization, and if it is Lost then Life would Lose its Value: Democracy is the only Assurance of these Rights. *Al-Shams* 19. Sep. 1941

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

democratic movement. Maurice Mizrahi, a Jewish anti-fascist activist in Egypt who actively wrote for *L'Aurore*, *L'Egypte Nouvelle*, and *La Tribune Juive*, called upon his fellow Egyptian Jews to support the anti-fascist movement by calling for active participation in the war effort. He stated, "We [the Jews] not only have to defend our existence and the independence of our country, but also to settle an old score with Germany! The participation in the war of all the Jews throughout the world must be and will be substantial and total!...We, the Jews of Egypt, will contribute our efforts, too."¹²⁶ Thus Mizrahi appeals to the nationalist will to defend the country, but more substantially, to the greater duty of Egyptian Jews, and in fact all Jews, to engage in battle with Germany. Mizrahi continues, "Under which flag will we serve? Egyptian, British or French? It is all the same." He therefore implies that the imperial powers of Britain and France are fighting the Germans, and thus there is no contradiction in fighting under their banner. In this light, proverbial wisdom applies once more as the enemy of Germany is in essence the friend of Jews.

Political activism was carried out primarily through known and new anti-fascist organizations that arose within the war era. Italian Jews in particular formed anti-fascist committees in the spring of 1940. These committees particularly targeted fascist influence within the Italian community in Egypt. Joining the B'nai B'rith was the newly-formed Garibaldi lodge, Cesare Battist, which was at the forefront of actively combating fascist interests. A coalition of these Masonic lodges organized into the Antifascist Action Group. In 1941, this group joined the Free Italy organization to form the *Gruppo d'Azione Antifascista Italiani Liberi*, which numbered 160 members. They failed,

¹²⁶ Maurice Mizrahi, "Notre effort ce que nous pouvons et ce qui nous devons faire," *La Tribune Juive*, 11 April 1943 in Lasiker, 76.

however, to produce mass movement with Egyptian society. Gudrun Kramer states that “as Jews and Freemasons, many of them, moreover, known for their leftist sympathies and as collaborators with the British who supported their endeavors, they were easy to discredit in the eyes of the other Italians.”¹²⁷

The most visible efforts to combat fascism are seen in the support given to British and Allied troops by Egyptian Jews. Volunteers among foreign Jews of British, French, or Greek nationalities joined the ranks of their respective nations. According to *al-Shams*, within the year of 1941, it was estimated that up to 10,000 volunteers in the British army were Jewish, “most from Palestine”, and serving in the British army stationed in Sidi Birani (near the border of Libya).¹²⁸ The article, “Jewish Volunteers in the British Army” issued praise of these soldiers while also noting their importance in the war effort as detailed by the British. Furthermore, notable members of the Jewish community and known Zionists such as Leon Castro and Albert Staraselski (the head of the revisionist New Zionist Organization) engaged in informing British authorities about German and Italian fascist activism within Cairo.¹²⁹ The primary expression of support, however, was evident in the public services provided to Jewish soldiers within the British army. Within the single edition of *al-Shams* on October 10, 1941, there are several articles discussing the services provided for these Jewish soldiers in the Allied army. Expressions of hospitality include, “Salutations to the Soldiers”, detailing Jews in the British Army joining in the Yom Kippur prayer in Marsamatrouh, Ismayliya, and other battlefronts.¹³⁰ “Generous charity”, states that Madam Aslan Fidon, paid for the food of 700 Jewish

¹²⁷ Kramer, 158.

¹²⁸ “Jewish Volunteers in the British Army” *al-Shams* 10 Oct. 1941

¹²⁹ Kramer, 157

¹³⁰ “Salutations to the Soldiers” *al-Shams* 10.Oct. 1941

solders during Yom Kippur. It also states that Yusif Cicurel sponsored dinner for 50 soldiers.¹³¹ "Prayer for Dead Jewish Soldiers" details services and prayers held for those Jewish soldiers who died in the aerial bombing of Cairo.¹³²

Throughout the Second World War, anti-fascism therefore served as a unifying movement among Egyptian Jews, surpassing ideological divides and uniting them around a central common concern. The anti-fascist movement maintained its characteristic unity among the different factions of the Jewish cosmopolitan elite. Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum, known for his distaste of Egyptian Zionism, actively engaged with local Zionist organizations to prepared lists of known antifascist and Zionists whom the British promised to evacuate from the country should a German invasion take place.¹³³

There is a stark contrast in between the hospitality of Egyptian Jews towards Allied forces and the cheers of demonstrators in 1942 calling Rommel to the front lines. The connection between Egyptian Jews and the British thus became increasingly pronounced during the war. In this respect Egyptian Jews and the British share an established connection. However, the Egyptian population remained calm, and the prime minister assured the chief rabbi Haim Nahum that in the possible advent of German occupation, Jews would not be targeted, nor should they fear discriminatory policy."¹³⁴ This, however, was not particularly reassuring, as the government itself struggled to maintain power against the competing interests of the British, the Muslim Brotherhood, and internal governmental factions.

¹³¹ "Generous Charity" *al-Shams*. 10. Oct. 1941

¹³² "Prayer for Dead Jewish Soldiers" *al-Shams* 10. Oct. 1941

¹³³ Kramer, 157

¹³⁴ Kramer, 157

Politics of the Early 1940s and Wafd Corruption

As outlined in chapter one, the liberal era came to a close at the end of the 1930s. The tightening restrictions on press and political parties which started in the late 1930s, soon swelled with the imposition of martial law and strict censorship.¹³⁵ In addition, important political changes occurred during the war era, notably, the growing disillusionment with King Farouq and the loss of power by the dominant Wafd Party. The Wafd, formed in the wake of the 1919 revolution, dominated the political arena with its platform of “Egypt for the Egyptians” throughout the 1920s and 1930s. By the start of the war, however, the Wafd became fragmented and crippled by the exposure of corruption within its ranks. As the power of the Wafd waned, new Islamic nationalist groups, primarily the Muslim Brotherhood, became increasingly politicized and strove to compete directly with the Wafd and other political parties for legislative power.

Corruption:

By the end of the war the perception that the government was corrupt, had become prevalent within Egyptian society, and eventually led to the fall from grace of the regime. Although Egyptians had initially praised him to the point of calling him “the righteous King,”¹³⁶ King Farouq’s popularity soon diminished as well, as he came to be viewed as “inefficient, fat, and notoriously pleasure-seeking.”¹³⁷ In the early 1940s, however, Farouq was still held within the good graces of most members of Egyptian society. Differing factions, including some among the Egyptian Jewish population as well

¹³⁵ Israel Gershoni, *Redefining the Egyptian nation 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 195) 192.

¹³⁶ Kramer *Hasan al-Bana*, 59

¹³⁷ Kramer, 160

as the Muslim Brotherhood, respected the stature of the monarch. Several articles of *al-Shams* throughout 1941 praise the King, such as the article “Generosity of Gracious King to the Poor” which details donations and actions he had undertaken to feed Egypt’s poor.¹³⁸ A second expression of high regard for the King is expressed in “Prayer for the His Majesty the King during the Night of Yom Kippur” which detailed a prayer delivered at the Jews’ High Holiday services, for long life and prosperity of the King, and a prayer for peace for the Egyptian people.¹³⁹ Such praise is particularly interesting due to the affiliation of the King as a Nazi sympathizer; how much of this was known to the Jewish population is yet to be determined, however. Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was also known to express respect for the King, particularly during the early 1940s.¹⁴⁰ Even, after the 1942 corrupt re-instatement of the Wafd party, when the stature of the King fell, his position was unlike that of the Wafd as a whole, as strong discontent with the king did not grow until after the War.

Two major developments which occurred during the war publically exposed the Wafd to ridicule; these included the leaking of information concerning the events of February 4, 1942, when the British essentially re-instated Nahhas Pasha, leader of the Wafd, as Prime-Minister; and the 1943 publication of Makram Ebeid “*Black Book*” which publically exposed Wafd corruption. With the resignation of Prime Minister Ali Mahir in 1942, the British wanted to ensure the office would not be appointed to a pro-Axis sympathizer. They took direct action in giving the King, whom they considered “unfaithful,” an ultimatum to either abdicate, or appoint Mustafa Nahhas to form a new government. When at first this request was denied, the British, under the orders of the

¹³⁸ “Generosity of the Gracious King to the Poor” *al-Shams* 3, Oct. 1941

¹³⁹ “Prayer for His Majesty the King During the night of Yom Kippur” 10 Oct. 1941

¹⁴⁰ Kramer *Hasan al-Banna*, 58

British ambassador Lampson and accompanied by General Stone, surrounded the King's palace in Cairo with fully armed troops and announced: "Your attitude, and the associations of Your Majesty have constituted a breach of Article 5 of the Treaty of Alliance... [which] make it clear that Your Majesty is no longer fit to occupy the throne."¹⁴¹ The ultimatum was repeated and the King finally capitulated, instating Nahhas as Prime Minister. The public knowledge of this event, however, convinced populations within Egypt that the Wafd was both dependent upon the British and corrupt in its lack of fortitude and commitment to the principals of Egyptian nationalism.¹⁴²

The second major setback to the Wafd's credibility came in 1943 when Makram Ebeid, a prominent Wafdist leader who was expelled from the party, published his *Black Book* which attacked the appointed Prime Minister, Nuri Nahhas Pasha. It revealed instances of nepotism and corruption within the Wafd, and further highlighted the dependence of the Wafd on the British. Hoda Gamal Abdel Naasser, historian of Egyptian politics of the era, argues that

In tackling the crisis, the Wafd leader [Nahhas] sought the protection and support of the British government against the Palace, but the manner in which he dealt with his party's internal feuding, and the unscrupulous measures (including searches, arrests, censorship, intimidation and dismissal of deputies, and staging of demonstrations of support) taken by his government in dealing with the 'Black Book' crisis, contributed more than anything else to the decline in the Wafd's popularity and also had the most telling effect on attitudes among the British authorities in Egypt towards the Wafd.¹⁴³

Thus sentiments of Wafd corruption were further confirmed by the manner in which the Wafd responded to the publication of the *Black Book*. The detrimental effects of February 4 events as well as the *Black Book* were further compounded by fragmentation within the Wafd party, so that by 1944 the Wafd government lost its political standing; in 1945, the party boycotted the 1945 elections, thus allowing for the Liberal Constitutionalist and

¹⁴¹Lampson to FO, no. 429, *telegram*, 5.2.42, FO 371/31567 in Nasser, 77.

¹⁴²Kramer, 160.

¹⁴³Nasser, 82

Saadists to assume control of the government. The popular support that the Wafd had once commanded now shifted primarily towards the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁴⁴

Nationalist Policies and Palestine:

In an attempt to rebound from the embarrassments of 1942 and to debunk accusations of the Wafd as puppets of the British, the government engaged in a series of policy initiatives to limit foreign influence in Egypt. As anti-foreign sentiment began to rise among the population, particularly in the later years of the war, the government could not afford to oppose these popular trends. Consequently, from 1943-1944, a period of nationalization and de-Ottomanization took place as observers noted that foreigners and minorities were “practically eliminated from public functions” and once-Ottoman subjects were denied recognition as Egyptian nationals “practical discrimination.”¹⁴⁵ In 1942-1943 preliminary mandates towards Egyptianization were instituted as the use of Arabic became the mandatory language of all business dealings. Such laws constrained those businessmen unable to read and write Arabic, who were consequently made to take on additional Egyptian personnel.¹⁴⁶

Nationalist sentiment within the government was further revealed as the issue of Palestine moved from the periphery to the center of Egyptian domestic politics. As discussed in chapter one, the issue of Palestine began to gain popular support in Egypt starting in the second half of the 1930s. This wave of popular sentiment soon came to impact policy-makers, particularly due to the instability of party politics in the wartime

¹⁴⁴ Kramer, 160.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 207

¹⁴⁶ MAE, Guerre 1939-45, Alger 1310, “Note sur la situation politique et social de l’Egypte,” May 1944 in Kramer, 206

era. This point is made clear in the following correspondence regarding political relations between Egypt, Palestine, and Britain. Anthony Eden, an official in the British consulate stated,

“I spoke to Nuri yesterday, He said that he had, in speaking to Nahas, only referred to a statement which had appeared in the ‘New York Times’ under the signatures of Mr. Hoover and Mr. Stimson supporting the idea of the formation of a Jewish Army. Nuri pointed out that, if the Jews wished to help the Allies, they could enlist in the Allied Forces. A Jewish Army in Palestine would be quite useless against the Nazis and was only intended by the Jews to be used against the Arabs after the war.”¹⁴⁷

Therefore as Palestine became a central concern within of the Egyptian government, it increasingly divided the government and population against Egyptian Jews. In response to the talk of a Jew army in Palestine, an article in *al-Shams* displayed the Jewish argument for the necessity of such a fighting force. The article, “The Defense of Palestine and the Role of Jews in It” called for the need and virtue of a Jewish army in Palestine to defend it from the Nazis. The article states, “Because they [Jews] were the first victims of the Nazis and because they are trained and prepared with honor and passion...they are the only ones who know what to expect.”¹⁴⁸ This issue therefore serves as an example of the increasing polarization of identities and loyalties, as the issue of Palestine and Egyptian Zionism created an increasingly entrenched divide between Jews, other Egyptians, and the government.

Egyptian Zionism During WWII:

Egyptian Jews remained divided throughout the war era regarding Jewish identification with Zionism and Egyptian patriotism, as these two identities became increasingly polarized. During the war thousands of Ashkinazi, Eastern European Jews,

¹⁴⁷ F.O. 141/865 December 31, 1942 in *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani vol. 3. (London: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 2005), 651.

¹⁴⁸ “The Defense of Palestine and the Role of Jews in It” *Al-Shams* 3 Oct, 1941

took refuge in Egypt. While many migrated to Palestine following the war, their significance in the interwar period is seen in their contribution to the Zionist effort in Egypt which increased during the war. As the movement intensified in social and financial commitments, it also became increasingly independent from the structure and confines of the official Jewish communities. This shift allowed for factions within the movement to become more vocal, active, and by the end of the war, violent.

As the preparations for Palestine came to materialize, Egyptian-Zionists came to view Egypt in increasingly religious and historical terms. The 1942 *Annuaire des Juifs d'Egypte et du proche-orient*, edited by Maurice Fargeon, expounds upon the relationship between the Jews and Egypt:

The history of the Jewish people has been linked, since the remotest times, to that of Egypt. Already in the time of the pharaohs of the first dynasties we find Joseph sold by his brothers becoming, because of his great wisdom and profound judgment, a powerful minister in the valley of the Nile....The children of Israel when to Goshen (a province of Egypt) at the call of Joseph...Moses, the most sublime figure of Israel, the first legislator, emerged from the womb of Egypt... Thus the first *halutzim* [pioneers] of history were the Jews of Egypt led by Moses and then Joshua.¹⁴⁹

Fargeon viewed that the connection between Egypt and the Jews as historically and religiously significant, and relied more on a territorial bond to the country rather than a bond to the greater notion of the Egyptian nation. The religious references to Moses and Joshua, particularly as pioneers, evoke the reference to the exodus out of Egypt and to the lands of Canaan, thus implying the necessity of a second exodus begun by modern Zionist pioneers. Furthermore, by 1941 the findings of the Peel commission became more widely accepted by Egyptian Jews, and with the dreams of a Jewish homeland in Palestine growing, the Zionist movement intensified. Projects were set up within Egypt that allowed direct connections with the Jewish efforts in Palestine. Advertisements

¹⁴⁹Maurice Fargeon (ed.), *Annuaire des Juifs d'Egypte et du proche-orient, 5706/1945-1946* (Cairo: La SSociete des Editions Historiques Juives d'Egypte [1945]) pp. 80-86 in Beinun, 33.

found within *al-Shams* for the Egyptian Palestinian Trade Company advertised that the company would supply “household needs from Palestinian products.”¹⁵⁰ This therefore reveals the agency by which Zionists furthered their efforts. It must be noted, however, that there was no overt detachment from Egypt, as is noted in the “Egyptian Palestinian Trade Company” which aimed at establishing cooperative trade rather than accepting direct donations.

Although the hopes for Jewish-Arab coexistence in a single country were weakened, there still remained outlines and efforts at highlighting the connection between Jews and Arabs in the region. This is seen within the article, “Aspects of Cooperation between Arabs and Jews in Palestine” in which the author, Vita Sonsino (who Laskier labels as one of Egypt’s leading Zionists)¹⁵¹, describes the hospitality of both the Jews and Arabs who received him in Palestine. He details their “great deal of admiration for Egyptians,” and continually repeated the similarity of Jews and Arabs, identifying both as “sons and daughters as the Semitic race”.¹⁵² Thus through religious and ancestral race, Sonsino attempts to harmonize the two nationalities.

While the Egyptian Zionist movement developed and evolved within the war time era, growing tensions between communal and Zionist leaders surfaced. Communal leaders were concerned with the status and prosperity of the Jewish community in Egypt. They feared that the growing Zionist activities within the country, particularly at a time when Egypt was becoming more politically involved in the Palestinian conflict threatened to implicate Egyptian Jewish identity as a whole. Jewish communal leaders such as Robert J. Rolo and Rene Cattaoui, as well as the Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum

¹⁵⁰ *Al-Shams*, 3 Oct, 1941 See Figure 4.

¹⁵¹ Laskier, 81

¹⁵² Saonsino, Fita. “Aspects of Cooperation between Arabs and Jews in Palestine” *al-Shams* (3. Oct. 1941)

actively worked to convince Egyptian Zionists to suspend their local activism. These communal leaders, however, could not enforce their will on the country's Zionist factions, and often ended up mediating between Zionist and non-Zionist factions within the Jewish community instead. These leaders meet with representatives of the Zionist Executive but accomplished no significant breakthroughs.¹⁵³ They also acted as the primary representative engaged with Egyptian politicians and press circles. Thesis

In November 1944, Rene Cattaoui, president of the Alexandria Jewish community, wrote to the World Jewish Congress, a "Note on the Jewish Question." In it he argued that Palestine was regionally confined and would not be able to absorb all the European Jewish refugees, and he went on to note Egypt's exemplary treatment of its Jews.¹⁵⁴ Cattaoui was supported in this venture by Robert Rolo, the president of the Cairo community, who was fundamentally concerned with the relationship between Jews and Arabs that would arise out of the formation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine:

For some, PALESTINE has seemed an insufficient outlet. It is therefore essential to select a country other than Palestine...It would be most desirable (and we think it is possible) that the Palestine question be solved as a result of Jewish-Arab collaboration in an atmosphere of mutual understanding between the parties [concerned] on the basis of perfect harmony imbued with sincerity and loyalty.¹⁵⁵

This almost desperate attempt to convince the World Jewish Congress to re-evaluate their location for a Jewish state reveals the deep concern and inter communal dilemmas and debates engendered by the presence of Zionism among Egypt's Jews. According to the above statements, the challenge issued against Zionism was not an ideological or religious opposition to the construction of a Jewish state, but rather an objection to the location of this state. Unlike European Jews, implementing a state in

¹⁵³ Ibid, 162.

¹⁵⁴ Beinun, 47

¹⁵⁵ CZA, S25/5218, "Incidents of 2 and 3 November 1945 in Cairo, Egypt," unsigned, Cairo, 21 November 1945, Appendix III in Kramer, 202

Palestine promised to sour Arab-Jewish relations in the region and thus challenged the position of Egyptian Jews.

The role of Jewish soldiers from Palestine serving with the Allied forces also served to exasperate intra-communal tensions. Several of these soldiers served as *Yeshvue* in Egypt and contributed to increased Zionist activism in the country. Lower and middle class Jews hailed the arrival of these soldiers, however elite Jews, particularly those who were anti-Zionist, conceded to supply these Jewish soldiers with food and necessities, yet were weary of their pro-Zionist associations. Therefore as Laskier states, these Jewish soldiers were treated as “guests” rather than a contribution to the community.¹⁵⁶ Through the tension inherited by *Yeshvue* in the later years of the war, factions within the Zionist movement militarized, and linked with stern gages in Palestine. In the November 1944, Lord Moyne, the British minister in the Middle East was assassinated by the Zionist stern Gang *Lehi*.¹⁵⁷

Social and Domestic Change During WWII:

While the war drastically affected Egypt’s political future, it also greatly impacted social change by fueling communist and Islamist groups calling for political reform. Social change was in many ways a direct effect of the economic issues that arose out of the war. A central economic impact of the war was the provisioning of troops, particularly those stationed in Cairo. As is common in war time economies, the demand to meet this need led to a revival of local industry and increasing demand for business and commerce, particularly within the city of Cairo. Furthermore, severing economic ties

¹⁵⁶ Laskier, 99.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 161

with Germany and Axis powers included a blockade on imported goods from those regions. While this helped to bolster local industry, it also led to increased prices. Between late 1939 and late 1944 the index of consumer goods rose by almost 300%.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, along with the birth of new companies and developments of new branches of industry came migration from the countryside into the cities. This led to rapid population increase within the cities of Cairo and Alexandria. Many of these migrants provisioned the Allied troops who “employed some 200,000 to 245,000 persons” during the war but later laid them off following the cessation of hostilities.¹⁵⁹

This growth in urban population led to more visible disparities between socio-economic classes in Egypt, as resentment grew towards upper-class individuals, who openly displayed their wealth as well as the presence of Allied soldiers, who sought outlets of pleasure and indulgence within the city.¹⁶⁰ Discontent with “modern” city life is expressed within the serialized article in *al-Shams* which discussed the problem of marriage among Egyptian Jews which included infidelity and the status of women. The author blames the vice among the youth within the Jewish community as engendered out by the culture of the city life.¹⁶¹ To contrast, the author praised country life for its purity and simplicity. Similar admiration for pastoral lifestyles appeared in an article praising the Jewish community in Damanhour (a rural city outside of Alexandria) for its celebration of the Hebrew New Year, in which the larger Muslim community supported. It stated, “the day of Roshashana is well known in the history of the capital of the Bahera, because of the cooperation within the Egyptian community where there is no difference

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 159

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ “The Problem of Marriage Among Egyptian Jews” *Al-Shams*, 3 Oct. 1941

between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.”¹⁶² The article continued by lauding the Damanhour community as the “best example” of dedication to religious, communal, and ethical duty.¹⁶³

Rise of Muslim Brotherhood:

The Members of the Muslim Brotherhood similarly offered observations regarding the vices of urban society. Throughout the war era, the Muslim Brotherhood had gained substantial influence, becoming “the strongest popular force in the country besides the Wafd.”¹⁶⁴ At the start of the war, the Muslim Brotherhood, announced its desire to actively contribute to domestic politics.¹⁶⁵ In his speech, delivered in 1938, Hassan al-Banna, stated,

We will direct our call to the leaders of the country: its notables, ministers, rulers, elders, delegates and political parties and invite them to follow our method. We will place our program in their hands and demand that they lead this Muslim country, the leader of the Islamic world, on the path of Islam with courage and without hesitation¹⁶⁶

Central to the argument and popularity of the Brotherhood was the message that Islamism was a form of anti-imperialism and that to engage and adopt the Islamic identity was to act against imperialism. As the Brotherhood advocated for an end of Western influence and imperialism, it was targeted by the British. In October of 1941, after delivering a speech addressed against British imperialism and advocating the necessity of the implementation of Sharia, al-Banna was arrested and the Muslim Brotherhood’s press

¹⁶² Abdul Rahman al-Basyouni. “Celebration of the Jewish New Year in Damanhour” *al-Shams*, 3 Oct. 1941

¹⁶³ Ibid. Abdul Rahman al-Basyouni who was the author of the article, signed with: “reporter for *al-Shams*.” It is worth noting that Abdul Rahman, unquestionably a Muslim name, which serves to indicate to a certain degree the involvement of Muslim reporters for *al-Shams*.

¹⁶⁴ Kramer, 160

¹⁶⁵ Kramer *Hasan al-Banna*, 47

¹⁶⁶ Hasan al-Banna, ‘Khatwatuna al-thaniya [our next step], *al-Nadhir*, no. 1, 1357/1938, editorial in Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1942*, (Ithica: Reading, 1998), 202.

and meetings were shut down.¹⁶⁷ This, however, did not stifle its popularity: as the decade wore on it became increasingly apparent that the Brotherhood would play a large role in influencing domestic politics.

Along with the Muslim Brotherhood's message of anti-imperialism, was of its message of anti-Zionism. Its members viewed Zionism as an extension of European imperialism, in direct connection with the British. As mentioned in chapter one, in 1937 the Muslim Brotherhood called for a boycott of Egyptian-Jewish businesses because it did not distinguish Egyptian Jews from Zionists but rather viewed Egyptian Jews as the "Fifth Column" of Zionism. The Brotherhood consequently worked to actively instigate discussion of Palestine in public, and even trained members to "heat up public opinion with regard to the Palestine question" and to continue in boycotting Jews living in Egypt.¹⁶⁸ With the conclusion of the war, the Brotherhood organized the first significant mass demonstration against Zionism and the British, and, by implication, also against Egyptian Jews.

Notably, in a meeting between Hasan al-Banna and the British Oriental Counselor on October 17, 1945, al-Banna pointed out that his organization served as a stabilizing force within Egyptian society and helped prevent it from succumbing to communism.

The Counselor recalls,

He then went on to repeat his old thesis, namely that the Moslem Brethren were our [British] most useful allies in a society threatened with dissolution. They were the greatest barrier against communism and the strongest factor working for stabilization. Islam, while democratic, was a force of conservation.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Gershoni, 193

¹⁶⁸ FO 371/41331, Kellar to Scrivener, registered 31 August 1944 in Kramer, 161

¹⁶⁹ Bowker (Cairo) to Bevin, no. 1441, 27.10.45, FO 371/45927 in Nasser, 61

In situating itself as the only other option to communism, the Brotherhood further narrowed and complicates possibility of upholding varying political identities simultaneously.

The Muslim Brotherhood therefore played a significant role in the discussion of Egyptian Jewish identity as it acted to constrain Jewish identity into increasingly narrow spheres of tolerance. A deeper understanding of the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood in limiting such possibilities of identification of Egyptian Jews is perhaps best explained through the traditional and Islamic understanding of Jews as among the protected *ahl al-kitaab* or people of the book. It is the clash between this traditional identity and the newly formed, largely cosmopolitan, identity of Egyptian Jews against which the Brotherhood reacted. Thus despite attempts from Egyptian Jews to be Egyptian and promote Arab/Jewish harmony, the Brotherhood reacted to the elevated stature of Egyptian Jews, and thus sought to suppress it. Nationalism, in the eyes of the Brotherhood, implied reverting to the establishment of the Islamic state and the deflated stature of non-Muslim minorities. The nuanced view of Jews as politically and socially active and increasingly in control of economic and political sectors including the press was rather internalized by the Brotherhood to represent Jewish imperialism and conspiracy. This position can be seen in the Brotherhood's threats to revoke protection of Egyptian Jews if they did not conform to the traditional conception of *dhimmi* status.

Communism:

The Communist movement, like the Muslim Brotherhood, observed inequalities created within Egyptian city life, most prominently the growing gap between rich and

poor. Its members also viewed the current political system of the Wafd and the King as inefficient and corrupt. However, the communist party served to provide an alternative to the politics of religious identity embodied by the Brotherhood. As Selma Botman argues, “because the communists were secular, internationalist and, above all cosmopolitan, they could find no place for themselves politically in either Young Egypt or the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹⁷⁰ Whereas the Muslim Brotherhood had no room for Jews within its organization, the communist movement was led by Jewish intellectuals from the cosmopolitan elite, while also incorporating non-Jews such as Muhammad Hasan Ahmad and Ahaman Sadiq Saad. The party, however, did not gain the popularity or numbers to form a mass movement. Rather, communist activity in Egypt relied on independent activism and “consisted mainly of distributing angry leaflets to students, professionals, and some workers, publishing critical articles in oppositional newspapers, and occasionally organizing demonstrations which were designed to stir up popular discontent at key moments in time.”¹⁷¹ Furthermore, Egyptian communism served as a gateway towards a greater nationalist vision of liberation from British imperialism and as liberation for the Egyptian masses.

National independence became a primary objective of the Egyptian communist movement in the 1940s. Among the most prominent communist ideologies of the era was the belief that only after the withdrawal of the British imperial military would Egypt be sovereign and able to implement meaningful and effective social reform.¹⁷² While during the war fascist groups such as Young Egypt viewed Germany as a means by which to gain independence from Britain, some communists believed that an alliance with the

¹⁷⁰ Botman, 21

¹⁷¹ Botman, 53

¹⁷² Ibid, 30.

Soviet Union would achieve this freedom. Botman points out that, “not accidentally, the first communist groups were formed after the successes of the Red Army were widely publicized by the Allied forces.”¹⁷³ Communism was an expression of Egyptian nationalism and patriotism, however, it was most visible in the character of individuals involved in the various communist branches such as Latifa al-Zayat, a student and female activists of the 1940s, who recalls her attraction to Marxism thus:

I was born in a small town overlooking the Mediterranean, Damietta, in 1924...into a lower middle class or upper petty bourgeois family...and I came to Cairo in 1936 for my education. I began university in 1942/1943...By the time I was in university I lost all hope in the existing parties because they failed to answer the national question. I became a Marxist or a communist from a nationalist point of view. What appealed to me very much in Marxism...was the ethics...the absence of discrimination in religion, race, sex...I was tired of the hypocrisy, cowardice, caution and trembling of the class I belonged to.¹⁷⁴

A second significant example of the direct relationship between Egyptian communism and nationalism is the Jewish Egyptian Henri Cicurel. Cicurel was founder of The Egyptian Movement for National Liberation (*al-Haraka al-Misriyya lil Taharrur al-Watani*) in 1943. He was particularly interested in the wider movement towards Egyptian nationalism, and very much considered himself an Egyptian patriot. Observing a lack of progressivism in Egyptian society and frustrated with the social and economic conditions of the country, he lost faith in the intuitions of the government. He viewed the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 as a false peace that masked a national defeat by granting Egypt only limited independence.¹⁷⁵ Rather, Cicurel turned to communism as a means by which to address the economic and political strife of Egypt. He charged himself with the duty of “bring[ing] Marxist theory to the Egyptians.”¹⁷⁶ He did so by opening a bookstore, *Al-Midan*, in central Cairo in 1941. Botman describes the purpose of the bookstore as

¹⁷³ Ibid, 34.

¹⁷⁴ Interview between Selma Botman and Latifa al-Zayat, February 9, 1980 in Botman, 24

¹⁷⁵ Botman, 35-36

¹⁷⁶ Botman, 38

serving as a “meeting place for Egyptian intellectuals, allowed Egyptians to make contact with foreign radicals, including members of European military forces stationed in Egypt during the war, and offered a forum for discussion of social and political issues.”¹⁷⁷ Thus Cicurel served as an ambassador of European Marxist ideology. In recounting the bookstore, William Handley, a member of the American Embassy in Cairo described, “There was one entire section devoted to Arabic books, many of which had obviously Russian slanted covers, [and] for example pictures of Stalin and what appeared to be Russian trade union representatives.”¹⁷⁸

For some communists in Egypt joining the communist movement was taken in the hopes of achieving greater acceptance into Egyptian society. Sharif Hatata who was half-Egyptian and half-English stated,

Everyone has a different reason for becoming attached to a political movement. For me it wasn't a matter of social interest as regards my class. IT was mainly due to the fact that belonging to an upper class family with an English mother and a way of life that was somewhat isolated from the mainstream of Egyptian society, I had a need not to feel alienated.¹⁷⁹

Such actions contributed to the larger dialogue of Egyptian Jewish identity and represented a forum for growth and debate. In terms of this intra-communal debate, the communist movement also reinforced a divide within the Egyptian Jewish community as well, as it provided pro-nationalist and opposed Egyptian Zionism.¹⁸⁰ Two of the most notable communist groups, EMNL and *Iskra* opposed the notion of Jewish immigration to Palestine. The movement however, maintained that British imperialism was the central

¹⁷⁷ Botman, 38

¹⁷⁸ RG 319 232870, January 10, 1946. U.S. National Archives and Records Service in Botman, 38

¹⁷⁹ Interview between Selma Botman and Sharif Hatata, February 28, 1980, Cairo in Botman, 51

¹⁸⁰ Kramer, 201

evil that acted to divide the peaceful cooperation of Arabs and Jews.¹⁸¹ Albert Arie, a prominent Egyptian Jewish communist stated,

From the beginning in Iskra and in the EMNL, then the DMNL, the members were absolutely against Zionism, against the further immigration of Jews to Palestine. They advocated a solution to the Palestine problem consisting of the common fight of Jews and Arabs against imperialism. They said to resolve the problem, first of all, the imperialists must leave Palestine – that meant the end of the Mandate. They advocated a democratic Palestine for all the inhabitants.¹⁸²

A Change in British Interests

The relationship of the British to the Egyptian anti-fascist, communist, and Zionist movements in Egypt during the period cannot be overlooked. The anti-fascist movement was the more sympathetic to Britain's interests and worked on a cooperative level with the British to combat fascism. The communists, however, opposed the structure of colonial imposition, while Zionists became increasingly anti-British for similar reasons of imperialism particularly dealing with Palestine. Zionist antagonism in Palestine had reached the point of violence. This violence was carried into Egypt where in November 1944 the Jewish extremist organization, the Stern Gang, assassinated Lord Moyne, the British Minister Resident in Egypt. While this assassination did not have a significant impact on Egypt or Egyptian Jews it reveals the growing rift in British policy and Zionist interest.

At the same time, we must note broader British treatment of Arab Jews during these years. The following memo reveals the subversive interests at play in British policy in the greater Middle East at mid-century. It discussed the Law of June 2, 1941 in place in Syria and Lebanon which were deemed anti-Jewish by the World Jewish Congress. Concerning this issue, the memo from Cairo to General Spears in Beirut stated,

¹⁸¹ Botman, 53

¹⁸² Personal interview between Albert Arie and Selma Botman, April 12, 1980; in Botman 87-88.

From Arab point of view, it would be better that [the] Free French should, if possible, avoid specific repeal of anti-Jewish Laws at the moment. It would be exploited against them and ourselves in Arab world. Among the Arabs, Free French are being accused of being run by Jews and not of being rebels. This step might, no doubt, be taken later at a more convenient moment.¹⁸³

British concern for Jews in Egypt had shifted as the British became increasingly preoccupied with larger issues of stability in the Middle East. The memo also makes clear the growing association between the British and Jews throughout various Arab lands. This relationship, increasingly complicated by the politics of Palestine, proved detrimental to both sides in light of changing Egyptian perceptions on the ground during wartime.

Conclusion

The Second World War solidified the divides within Egyptian society whereby the dual or even multiple identities that Jews once held, particularly in the early 1930s, became increasingly untenable as the definition of Egyptian nationalism narrowed and conflicted directly with Zionism. Egyptian Jewish self identification came to be defined less by Jews and more by larger forces within Egyptian society such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Following the war, the Brotherhood's members took it upon themselves to consider all Jews as guilty of Zionist tendencies unless proven innocent by open and active declarations of opposition to Zionism. Furthermore, as the Jewish position in Egypt became more unsecure, the once-supportive relationship Jews had fostered with the British began to diminish as British and foreign influence in the region became increasingly weakened and unpopular.

¹⁸³ "Washington Telegram No. 17. Following from Minister of State:.. *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani, vol. 3. (London: Cambridg University Press Archive Editions, 2005), 608

Chapter 3: Between a Rock and a Hard Place - Imposed Jewish Identity

In October 1945, the assistant commandant of the Cairo city police stated in a confidential report to the British embassy that “if any move is made by the Jews in Palestine against the Arabs, there will certainly be a reaction in Egypt.”¹⁸⁴ By the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, on November 2, the first mass protest over Palestine erupted, as crowds in Cairo targeted the British as well as the Jews. Press from the Wafd, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Misr al-Fatat called for demonstrations to protest British policy in Palestine. Approximately 20,000 participants gathered to march from Azhar Mosque to the residence of the king at ‘Abidin Palace; smaller groups continued to march into shopping areas and looted foreign and Jewish-owned shops. Factions of the mob even entered the Jewish quarter and attacked individuals and set fire to the Ashkenazi synagogue. Other Coptic and Greek institutions were equally vandalized, leaving a total of four hundred injured and an estimated £1 million in property damage.¹⁸⁵ The Jewish Agency for Palestine Information Office, in its 1946 publication, “The Position of the Jewish Communities in Oriental Countries,” described the Balfour Day Riots,

On the 2nd of November, 1945, a protest strike against the Balfour Declaration was proclaimed for the first time in Egypt. Jews and foreigners alike were forced by the crowds to close their shops. The rabble paid no heed to the artificial distinction made by the Egyptian leaders between Jews and Zionists; they assaulted the Jewish quarters indiscriminately. A number of synagogues were destroyed; Scrolls of the Law were burned in the streets in Nazi fashion; many Jewish shops were looted. At the same time churches and shops belonging to non-Jewish foreigners were also attacked.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Report included in FO 371/53333, Speaight to Egyptian Department, 30 October 1945; see also CZA, S25/5218, Alexander, “The Egyptian Jews on the Eve of the Great Decision,” 24 October 1945 in Gudrun Kramer. *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1989.), 162.

¹⁸⁵ Kramer, 162-163

¹⁸⁶ “The Position of the Jewish Communities in Oriental Countries” *The Jewish Agency for Palestine Information Office*: Jerusalem, 1947), in *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani, vol. 4. (London: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 2005), 93.

Although the riots did not represent societal sentiment towards Egyptian Jewry as a whole, it is clear that Palestine had become a defining factor in the treatment of Jews in Egypt.

Two days after the Balfour Day riots of 1945, Haim Nahum addressed a note of protest to Prime Minister Fahimi al-Nurqrashi. While the note had been produced as a result of the collaboration of the local Zionist organization and the Cairo Jewish community *council?*, it remained relatively mild in its condemnation. In response, the government offered to pay for the damages to the Ashkenazi synagogue attacked during the riot. A day later, however, the head of al-Azhar University, as well as prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood demanded a public repudiation of Zionism from the Chief Rabbi, who initially refused but was purportedly pressured by the court, the government and Rene Cattaoui, leader of the Cairo Sephardic community, and on November 9, sent a second note to the prime minister announcing his opposition to Zionism.¹⁸⁷ This foreshadowed the increasing expectation for Jews to support a nationalist and anti-Zionist position if they wanted to claim belonging to the Egyptian State. In this chapter, I will discuss the transition of Egyptian Jewry from countrymen to possible enemies of the state as evaluated through looking at reactions to the Palestinian issue by Egyptian government and non official voices in the immediate post war era from 1945-1948. I will further assess the intra-communal debate sparked among Egyptian Jewish community leaders, as well as Jewish communists concerning loyalties to Zionism verses Egyptian patriotism. During these years, the tone of the debate within the Jewish community suggests either the suppression or silence of voices that did not comply with the inflexible category of anti-Zionist Egyptian nationalism. Finally I will evaluate trends

¹⁸⁷ Kramer, 164.

of Egyptianization that continued within the period and further challenged Egyptian Jewish commitment to an even more restricted form of nationalism. This tension decreased the diversity tolerated in Egypt (particularly by virtue of the company laws) and limited the prosperity available to the Egyptian Jewish community. By 1948 when the first mass wave of migration out of Egypt takes place foreigners and those who refused to let go of other identities are the first to leave.

Before exploring this dynamic further, it is important to understand the developments that took place within Palestine during the three years between the conclusion of the war and the declaration of the State of Israel, as they correlate to discontent within Egypt.

Palestine

By the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945, the British Mandate of Palestine had a population of over 1,845,560, 58% of which was Muslim and 33% of which was Jewish. Many cities, such Tel Aviv and Haifa, had Jewish majorities, while others, like Jerusalem and Tiberius had significant populations of Jews.¹⁸⁸ The idea of partitioning Palestine, proposed by the Peel Commission of 1937 began to gain international support. In May of 1945, the Arab League was created in Cairo, and represented the countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. This was the first initiation of Palestine directly affecting Egyptian political policy. Egypt's role in the Arab League therefore solidified its enmity towards the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and therefore set up the precedent of viewing Zionists as enemies of the

¹⁸⁸ *A Survey of Palestine: Prepared in December, 1945 and January, 1946 for the Information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991), 12–13.

Egyptian state. In reaction to America acknowledging and supporting the growing plan for partition, *al-Ahram* reports that the Arab league took precautionary military steps, with Arab armies moving to their borders with Palestine, Egypt committing 10,000 troops.¹⁸⁹

Despite the Arab threat on November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted 33 to 13, with 10 abstentions, in favor of the Partition Plan. The division was to take effect on the date of British withdrawal. Partition was opposed by Britain and the five members of the Arab League who viewed the Partition as an unstable means of compromise not accepted by both parties. Arab resentment over the partition of Palestine directly affected the comfort of Jews in Arab lands. In Egypt the partition was met with mass protests that implicated Egyptian Jews. Meeting in Cairo in November and December 1947, the Arab League then adopted a series of resolutions aimed at a military solution to the conflict.

These developments in Palestine directly affected public opinion and domestic politics in Egypt generating debate not only in relation to government treatment of Jews and Jewish institutions, but also within Egyptian Press circles where the collective identity of Jews was debated. All of these developments further strained the already precarious tensions of Jewish identity being managed by the Egyptian Jewish elite.

Social and Governmental Reactions to the Palestine Issue in Egypt

While the Balfour Day riots of 1945 proved to be the first mass expression of Egyptian discontent with the situation of Palestine, mass demonstrations continued to coincide with new developments in the region. This was particularly true in 1947,

¹⁸⁹ "Palestine between Arab League and the United Nations," *al-Ahram*, Oct. 12 1947

following the UN announcement of the partition of Palestine, as well as later developments that occurred throughout 1948, leading to the establishment of the State of Israel. Prior to partition, Muhammad Husayn Haykal from the Egyptian liberal Constitutionalist Party, and head of the Egyptian delegation to the UN, warned that a decision to partition Palestine could lead to waves of anti-Jewish feeling in the Arab world, and that “the spilling of Arab blood in Palestine would inevitably lead to the spilling of Jewish blood in Arab countries.”¹⁹⁰ Thus Egyptian, and other Middle Eastern Jews were increasingly grouped with Zionists and the Jews in Palestine. For some such as Haykal, Jews in Egypt thus deserved to be punished for the actions of Jews in Palestine. Articles in the Egyptian press of the period issued calls to Jews to either fully support Zionism, thus becoming prosecutable, or else to denounce it completely. Within a larger nationalist context, the partition of Palestine was particularly important in escalating the demand for Jews to identify as patriots of Egypt exclusively.

The periodicals of the Muslim Brotherhood, *al-Ikhwan*, was particularly vocal due to lax censorship following the abolition of martial law at end of the war. In 1947, in particular, the Brotherhood devoted considerable space to the position of Egypt’s Jews, “warning them of dire consequences if they aid the Zionists.”¹⁹¹ Among the prominent charges it issued was the claim that Egyptian Jews were spreading Zionist propaganda in Egypt. As related in a telegram from the Foreign Service of the United States December 20, 1947 from Jefferson Patterson, Counselor of the American Embassy in Egypt,

The newspaper wrote on October 19, 1947, that “Zionists in Egypt spare no effort in spreading Zionist propaganda among the Egyptian Jews using the following media: newspapers and pamphlets, social clubs, meetings, sports clubs, and inducing the Jews to

¹⁹⁰ Kramer, 209.

¹⁹¹ Jefferson Patterson, National Archives (Washington) RG 59867N.01/12-2047 Dec. 20 1947 in *Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, Norman Stillman (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 505.

immigrate to Palestine by facilitating immigration.” The paper listed the leaders of the Zionist movement in Egypt as [Henri] Haim, the Director of the Société Orientale de Publicité, Togo Mizrahi, the film producer, [Lt.] Colonel [Clement N.] Ades, formerly of the British Intelligence in Egypt, and Clement Cicurel, nephew of [the] proprietor of the famous shop which bears that name.¹⁹²

The charge of propagating Zionism through the aforementioned outlets of propaganda, suggests an epidemic-like spread of Zionism within the Egyptian Jewish community. This in fact was not the case. While there were in fact underground Zionist circles operating within Egypt during this period, this conclusion largely ignores the strong opposition to Zionism within Egyptian Jewish communities.

During the final years of the 1940s, Egyptian Jews found that they were increasingly asked to prove their loyalty to Egypt and Arabs more generally by providing financial support to the Arab cause in Palestine. On December 2, 1947, *al-Ikhwān* called for the Arab League to demand monetary contributions from the Jewish communities in their respective nations. On December 10, it also published a manifesto issued by officials at al-Azhar University to the Jews of Egypt, reminding them of the denunciation of Zionism by their community leaders, and asking that they demonstrate their commitment to this position by financially contributing “freely to save Palestine.”¹⁹³ Paterson’s telegram referenced the Muslim Brotherhood’s warning to Egyptian Jews against cooperating or aiding Zionists which stated, “if you follow this advice [renouncing Zionism], your lives and property will be protected, and if you do not take our advice you will not be entitled to protection.”¹⁹⁴ The press of the Muslim Brotherhood in fact played a significant role in orchestrating a number of the mass demonstrations, as well as the violence that was perpetrated against the Jewish quarter.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²Ibid, 504.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, .

¹⁹⁵ Kramer, 162-163.

True to Haykal's words, in December of 1947, following the announcement of the partition of Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood, *Misr al-Fatat*, and even some clerics of al-Azhar University called for a holy war on behalf of Palestine. In December of 1947, *Misr al-Fatat* demanded that because Egypt was in "a state of war with the Zionists" Egyptian Jews should be detained and their property confiscated due to the suggestion that there were Zionist among the Jews of Egypt. Similar statements were issued by *al-Kutla*, an Egyptian daily overseen by Makram Ebeid – the infamous publisher of the *Black Book* – which advocated for the registration and disarmament of Egyptian Jews.¹⁹⁶

In order to maintain the standards of nationalism imposed by the extreme yet popular Muslim Brotherhood as well as *Misr al-Fatat*, Egyptian Jews not only had to denounce Zionism, but also to financially contribute to opposing the movement. While notable members of the Egyptian Jewish communities, such as Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum, Rene Cattaoui, and Aslan Fidon fulfilled the obligation of publically denouncing Zionism, organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and *Misr al-Fatat* continued to narrow the options available to Egyptian Jews by further collectively identifying them with Zionism, now the clear enemy of these Egyptian political parties. One article in *al-Ikhwān* charged from "most reliable sources" that "Mr. Silverman, a senior official of the Jewish Agency, made a speech recently at Tel Aviv in which he stated that the Jews of Egypt had donated L.E. 10,000,000 to the new Jewish state."¹⁹⁷ The article's author continued by explaining that given the Brotherhood's appeals to Egyptian Jews to prove their loyalty by opposing

¹⁹⁶ Patterson, ____

¹⁹⁷ Patterson, ____

Zionism, "we did not expect that they would do exactly the opposite thing and give their money - Egypt's money - to the Zionists."¹⁹⁸

The Egyptian Government and Palestine

The Muslim Brotherhood and Misr al-Fatat, while growing in popularity, did not represent Egyptian sentiment regarding Egyptian Jews as a whole. They none the less constituted a vocal component of public opinion in the country at the mid century. A second vocal constituent addressing the issue of the place of Egyptian Jewry in Egyptian society was composed of members of the government, particularly Wafd representatives. As the issue of Palestine entered deeper within the folds of domestic politics in Egypt, the government addressed and debated the status of Egyptian Jews in its own newspaper publications as well as in parliamentary action.

Pro-Wafdist and pro-government weeklies, such as *Sawt al-Umma*, and *Akhir Sa'a*. discussed the status of Egyptian Jews, particularly regarding to the question of Egyptian Jewish financial support for Zionism. The October 25 issue of *Sawt al-Umma* in 1947 reported that Jewish financiers were engaged in collecting "one pound from every Jew in Egypt as a contribution to the Zionist cause in Palestine." The paper also stated that it was drawing the government's attention to "these destructive movements."¹⁹⁹ In early December 1947, *Akhir Sa'a* commented on the finances provided to the Arab League by Jews in the surrounding Arab counties, in which it praising the contribution of L.E. 500,000 from Iraqi Jews, and a contribution of L.E. 10,000 from Lebanese Jews before writing,

But our feeling towards the Jews of Egypt is one of suspicion. The Chief Rabbi said that Egypt's Jews were true Egyptians and Zaki al Oreibi Bey, the Jewish lawyer, declared at

¹⁹⁸ Patterson, ____

¹⁹⁹ Patterson, ____

the court room that the Jews of Egypt abhorred partition. But we are still suspicious and so is the rest of Egypt... They must contribute money because money is the only weapon with which they know how to fight.²⁰⁰

Akhir Sa'a therefore suggested that for the Jews of Egypt to share the responsibilities of all Egyptians, expressing disapproval of partition would not suffice: they had to financially contribute to the Arab cause in Palestine in order to prove their loyalty to Egypt. Furthermore, the above statements play on a common stereotype of Jews as only able to deal matters of money. The article therefore implied that the only acceptable expression of Egyptian nationalism was through funding the Arab League.

While these various sources established associations between Egyptian Jews and Zionism, other notable pro-government newspapers expressed sympathy and understanding regarding the Egyptian-Jewish community, and advocated for tolerance. Both *al-Assas*, regarded as the mouth piece for Prime Minister Nurqrashi, and *Akbar al-Yom* defended Egypt's Jews. On November 29, 1947, *Akbar al-Yom* announced the government's commitment to the protection of Egyptian Jewish life and property, stating, "We must differentiate between Jews and Zionists." Furthermore, *al-Assas* in its December 12, 1947 issue, criticized reports questioning the financial commitments of Egyptian Jews in comparison to the contribution of half a million pounds donated to the Arab League by Iraqi Jews. It stated that such a comparison was "grossly unfair to the Jews of Egypt who constitute a minority and who are entitled to the full protection of the government and a courteous treatment at the hands of the majority."²⁰¹

While government sentiment remained tolerant of Egyptian Jews, there was no tolerance for active Zionism. *Al-Assas* argued that Egyptian Jews should not be punished

²⁰⁰ Patterson, 506.

²⁰¹ Patterson, 506-507

for “possible feelings which they may be hiding inside themselves,” but rather judged according to their actions. It continued, “so long as the Jews of Egypt do not say or do anything in support of Zionism, they must in no way be molested, embarrassed, or annoyed.”²⁰² This position therefore viewed Jews as rightful recipients of civil rights and protection, assuming that they would accept a larger Egyptian identity that rejected Zionism without specifically mandating anti-Zionist activism. Perhaps the most liberal remark regarding the Egyptian Jewish association with Zionism was proposed by Ibrahim Abdel Kader el-Mazni who stated,

It is at once illogical and unfair to expect a Jew to help fight another Jew who is trying to establish a national home to which he can immigrate if he had to. Every Jew is in favor of a Jewish State. This is only natural and it is absurd to imagine that the Jews in Egypt or in other Arab States are against the establishment of a Jewish State. It is therefore wrong to embarrass the Jews in the way they have been embarrassed lately by the Arabic newspapers. So long as they abide by the law and do not say or do anything that hurts our feelings one should have nothing against them. No decent Arab who has pure Arab blood in his veins should ask the Jews to contribute money in aid of the Palestine Arabs. In our opinion, Egypt is a civilized country, and our civilization is the oldest in the world. Our traditions and religion should deter us from embarrassing the Jews by demanding that they should contribute money for the Arab cause.²⁰³

While certain members of the government expressed tolerance toward Egyptian Jews, the credibility of the government had declined during the Second World War, as the Wafd increasingly came to be viewed as a puppet government of Britain. As argued in chapter one, the association of Jewish elites with the British as well as the Wafd government circulated among extremist circles. These accusations resurfaced in response to government support of Egyptian Jews in the immediate post-war era. The above defense of Jews by Ibrahim al-Mazni was countered by the Muslim Brotherhood, who accused the government of bribery and puppetry, labeling al-Mazni as “the advocate of

²⁰² Patterson, _____

²⁰³ Patterson, _____

the Jews.”²⁰⁴ The organization countered his argument by stressing its demand that the Jews contribute financially to the cause of Palestine, which it claimed it had requested from Egypt’s Muslim and Christian populations as well. It continued,

We have great traditions, but there is nothing in our religion that says that we should protect the Jews and forfeit our liberty and dignity. The writer of *al-Assas*’ article says that he is not in the pay of the Jews. Ha, Ha, Ha! His words sound very much like the jingling of Jewish gold.²⁰⁵

On the whole, the Egyptian government stood relatively firm in its commitments to the Jewish community. In July of 1947 it placed a ban on all demonstrations planned against the Jews and the British in correlation to the Palestine hearings at the United Nations. Anticipating demonstrations similar to those of the Balfour Day riots of 1945, the Egyptian government enacted a state of emergency on Balfour Day of November 1946 and 1947, as well as fortified police protection in areas of Jewish establishments. Even after the partition of Palestine, the government diffused speculation that a cholera epidemic had been the effect of Jews poisoning water supply with microbes, and as late as March of 1948, the government enacted censorship orders that prohibited any propaganda that threatened inter-communal relations.²⁰⁶ In terms of policy, the primary law which actively discriminated against the Jews of Egypt regarded travel to Palestine. Starting in 1946, policy was passed restricting Egyptian travel documentation to and from Palestine, an act that can be understood in light of the Arab League’s demand for an end to Jewish migration to Palestine.²⁰⁷

While the government took various initiatives in the interest of protecting its Jewish minority, it simultaneously targeted the efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood.

²⁰⁴ Patterson, *Al-Ikhwān*, December 14, 1947.

²⁰⁵ Patterson, *Al-Ikhwān*, Dec. 14, 1947.

²⁰⁶ Kramer, 209.

²⁰⁷ Kramer, 208.

However, beginning in December of 1947 and well into 1948, the government was unable to prevent mass demonstrations staged throughout Egypt. These demonstrations, particularly those of early December 1947, voiced discontent with the British, the Zionists, and Jews. These demonstrations, similar to those of the Balfour Day riots of 1945, were led by students as well as members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and contained mobs that engaged in acts of vandalism. They attacked establishments owned by foreigners, Jews, and even some Coptic stores. The police did not intervene until demonstrators were on the verge of entering the Jewish *hara* in Cairo. Following this two day demonstration, the government announced a state of emergency in Cairo and prohibited a further protest that was planned for later that month.²⁰⁸

After the partition of Palestine, the Egyptian government began to adopt the notion of war with the Zionists in Palestine. From this moment on, Palestine began to change from being an issue of domestic concern to one of national security. In January of 1948, a proposal to declare Zionism illegal and place Egyptian Jews under stricter surveillance surfaced in the Egyptian parliament. The minister of justice opposed the bill, however, declaring it unnecessary. Despite this initial rejection, Zionism was officially illegalized in May 1948, following the advent of the Arab Israeli war. During this month martial law was imposed and six hundred Jews were interned for their past participation in Zionist activities. Furthermore, all Zionist press, including *al-Shams* were shut down.²⁰⁹

Mediated Nationalism: The Zionist and Communist Movements of 1945-1948

²⁰⁸ Kramer, 210.

²⁰⁹ Laskier, 126.

Clandestine Egyptian Zionism:

After the great traumas of the Second World War interest in Zionism revived among the Jewish communities worldwide, including among Egyptian Jews. In addition to the now formidable societal pressure exerted by the opponents to Zionism, the new pull toward Zionism caused diametric camps of Jewish identification, and particularly complicated Jewish self-identification in Egypt. Intra-Jewish debate centered on this issue of identification, as pro and anti-Zionist factions of Egyptian Jews debated the identity of their community. While the dichotomy of Zionist and anti-Zionist opinions had been present within the Egyptian Jewish community since the beginning of the twentieth century, such identification was not considered within a strictly oppositional and antagonistic frame work. By the late 1940s, however, Egyptian nationalism and Zionism became polarized and this same debate held the possibility to determine the fate of the Jewish community in Egypt.

At the conclusion of the Second World War, approximately 7,500 Egyptian Jews purchased *shekels*, which served as the financial contribution that allowed for their representation at the Second Zionist Congress in 1946.²¹⁰ This population consisted of approximately ten percent of the Jews in Egypt. As the Zionist movement gained sympathy among the lower and middle classes of Egyptian Jews throughout the war, the control and influence of Jewish communal leadership was unable to curb Zionist operations in the country. Zionism therefore continued to flourish in Egypt until the advent of the partition of Palestine in 1947. Zionist organizations responded with heightened caution to the strong social reaction caused by the partition. Cognizant of growing government and social surveillance, factions within the Zionist movement

²¹⁰ Beinlin, 121.

sought to continue underground operations, which proved particularly difficult for youth movements.²¹¹

In evaluating the Egyptian Zionist movement, it is important to note the ideological diversity held by Zionist and pro-Zionist sympathizers. The ideological currents found among some Zionist sympathizers continued to fight the solidification of either pro-Zionist or anti-Zionist identity. One means of bridging the gap between these two currents was to address the notions of Zionism through terminology that refrained from overtly advocating for the formation of a political Jewish state. In March of 1946, *Al-Shams* addressed the importance of creating a Jewish state in Palestine, yet avoided specifically discussing the establishment of a state there. Furthermore, in July of 1945 *al-Kalim*, a Karaite Jewish newspaper, continued to advocate for *aliya*, or Jewish migration to Palestine, but distanced itself from Zionism, and condemned the formation of the “so-called state” of Israel.²¹² At the same time, however, *al-Shams* supported controversial issues such as partition, as well as migration to Palestine.²¹³ In fact, partition was widely accepted by Egyptian Jews, not only by *al-Shams* but also among communist groups, who viewed a two state formation as a viable solution to the Palestinian issue.

With the assassination of the British Minister Lord Mayon - by the Jewish Stern Gang, or *Lehi* - in Cairo on November 1944, the antagonistic relationship between the British and the Jewish Resistance Movement for Palestine continued to escalate. The Jewish Resistance Movement in Palestine was a coalition of organizations including *Irgun*, *Haganah*, and *Lehi* formed in 1945 and lasting until 1946. Officially denounced by the Jewish Agency, the resistance movement engaged in a series of terrorist attacks,

²¹¹ Kramer, 203;208.

²¹² Kramer, 213-214.

²¹³ Kramer, 208.

targeting the British. The Jewish Resistance movement viewed the British as “criminal members of the Nazi-British Army of Occupation”²¹⁴ while the British viewed them in turn as terrorists. Sir James Grigg, the Minister of State resident in the Middle East stated, “The Christian world will not stand for the development of a regular Nazi type of gangsterism which has caused so much terror and destruction in Palestine.”²¹⁵ This antagonism thus strained Anglo-Jewish relations in Palestine. In 1946, the *Irgun* blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the British administration, killing 92 people. Anti-British Jewish terrorism increased and the situation required maintenance of over 100,000 British troops in the country.²¹⁶ Finally, following the Acre Prison break in May 1947, and the hanging of British Sergeants by the Irgun, the British announced their desire to terminate the mandate and withdraw by May 1948. During these years, articles appearing in *al-Shams* depicted significant resentment of the British, particularly regarding British policy in Palestine. These pieces spanned the years 1946-1948 and expressed a broad range of discontent with British policy, and even discredited the efforts of the British during the war that they had once praised. Articles such as “Remembering al-Alamain: how the British used Terrorists” stated that “the Allies are known for being unfaithful and untrustworthy” and discussing how the British used Jewish soldiers under false pretenses of a German attack on Palestine.²¹⁷ Other articles included “The Mistakes of British Policy in the Middle East,”²¹⁸ and “The Viciousness of the British in Hamburg.”²¹⁹ Interestingly, most of these articles focused on British policy in Palestine,

²¹⁴ “Terror Lays Siege in Palestine” *New York Times*, Aug 3, 1947, E1.

²¹⁵ “Zionists Warned Against Terrorism” *New York Times*, Jan 4, 1945.

²¹⁶ “Terror Lays Siege in Palestine” *New York Times*.

²¹⁷ “Remembering al-Alamain: how the British used terrorists” *al-Shams*. Sept. 20, 1946.

²¹⁸ “Mistakes of British Policy in the Middle East” *al-Shams*. Sept. 20, 1946.

²¹⁹ “The Viciousness of the British in Hamburg” *al-Shams*, Sept. 26, 1948.

and avoided the subject of Egypt. In a striking reversal of its position during the inter war and war periods, *al-Shams*' new anti-British position largely replaced the anti-fascist focus that had once prompted its creation. Thus by virtue of being anti-imperialist, Zionists who shared the sentiments of Egyptian nationalism (granted not all did) were able to mediate their dual loyalty.

Pro-Zionist who shared Egyptian nationalist sentiment also responded to the announcement of partition. In response to the UN declaration of the Partition of Palestine on November 29, and the subsequent rise in anti-Jewish sentiment that arose as a result, the first response *al-Shams* publishes addresses the distance of Arab Jews from this decision. The author states that Arab Jews are worried because he since bad things are said of Arab Jews, but he argues that "Arab Jews have nothing to do with occupation of Palestine, which was a decision of the great nations"²²⁰ after the war in order to relieve European refugees. He argues that therefore Arabs should not hold Arab Jews responsible, Arab Jews who have lived in Arab lands for centuries and, "are a part of the fabric of these nations." Arab Jews are not a part of the occupation of Palestine.

In mediating the identity of Egyptian Jews, both Zionist and anti-Zionist, who shared nationalist sentiment blamed the British and British imperialism for the rift between Jews and Arabs. The conspiracy of the British is expressed in *al-Shams*, which stated as the article states that "the British occupiers tried repeatedly to try to widen the gap between the religions." It states that the British sent a message to Rene Cattowi, then president of the Cairo community asking if the Jews of Egypt need British support. In response Mosis Cattouie blocked British interest/intrusion and stated "Egyptian Jews are unseperable from Egyptian people and Egyptian Jews have no demands and their

²²⁰ "The Decision of the United Nations and its Eco in the East" *al-Shams*, December 5, 1947

demands are the same as Said Zagloul Pasha, who represented the entire Egyptian people.”²²¹

Government action against Zionism grew by the end of the 1940s accompanied by actions undertaken by the British consulates in the country. Strong surveillance and restrictions on Zionist organizations and sympathizers occurred particularly in 1948, as the British pulled out of Palestine, and Egypt prepared for war with the new state of Israel. The British blocked travel visas to Palestine at the start of 1948 limiting any legal means of *‘aliya* from Zionist youth movements in Egypt. In maintaining strict surveillance, the Egyptian government searched the offices of both the Zionist Federation in Alexandria, which closed down in early 1948, and the Jewish Agency in Cairo, which also closed down in May of 1948.²²² The government additionally formed lists of members in Zionist youth organizations as well as participants in Zionist meetings during this year. Once the Arab-Israeli war began in May of 1948, all organizations perceived to be Zionist were shut down by the government.

Communism: Activism, Nationalism, and Palestine

Jamal Ghali, a student at Cairo University during the late 1940s, describes the political and social trends within Egypt following the conclusion of the Second World War in the following manner,

In September 1945, at the end of the summer holidays, students from different faculties in the university gathered at the Faculty of Medicine. Students from Law, Science, [and] the Arts began discussing what should be done in 1946. It was the end of the war and we believed we should start the liberation movement for complete Egyptian independence. At these meetings there were three influences: the Wafd, the Muslim Brotherhood and the

²²¹ “Egyptian Interests as Seen by the Officials” *al-Shams* Dec. 5 1947.

²²² The government did not do so without giving previous warning to its leaders. It is furthermore unclear whether these offices were shut down by the Egyptian government or else closed of their own accord. See Kramer, 211.

progressive movement which meant Iskar and the EMNL... We discussed liberation for Egypt and the Sudan and economic targets....Later, during October, November and December a committee was formed which agitated among students in the university.²²³

Ghali's description depicts the student activism that skyrocketed after the war. During the immediate post war era, as the provisions of martial law and press censorship were terminated, activists took to the streets in demonstrations calling for independence.²²⁴ Yet political activism among Egyptian Jews remained apparent within the socialist and communist movements of the era, which increased in followers and activism. The communist movement was most active during this latter part of the 1940s and prior to the Arab-Israeli war. Jamal Giliani states that coinciding with the above discussion regarding Egyptian independence, was a student effort to establish a united trade union movement in Egypt. He goes on to state that "in 1946, there was contact between this embryonic student organization...and this trade union movement. By January 1946 there was an upsurge of activity among students, student elections were held and delegates were selected to make contacts with the workers."²²⁵ Thus a series of strikes took place after the war protesting increased unemployment, poverty, and declining wages.

In 1945, the EMNL (Egyptian Movement for National Liberation) founded the Congress of the Union of Workers of Public Companies and Institutions, which included trade union representatives such as "Muhammad Abd al-Halim, president of the Union of Egyptian Workers at the Egyptian press, David Nahum, vice-president of the Union of Egyptian Workers of Commercial Stores, and Murad al-Qaliyubi, president of the Union of Cinema Workers" each of which represented the Congress at the World Federation of

²²³ Personal interview between Selma Botman and Jamal Ghali, March 26, 1980, Cairo, in *Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939-1970* Selma Botman (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse UP, 1988), 59.

²²⁴ Selma Botman, *Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939-1970* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse UP, 1988), 58.

²²⁵ Botman, 59

Trade Unions. The movement met opposition from the government, as seen in the prevention of the mass meeting scheduled on May 1, 1946. That same day the Congress of the Union of Workers of Public Companies and Institutions was deactivated and in its place was established the Congress of the Union of Egyptian Workers. The composition of communist parties during this period changed from Jewish cosmopolitan dominance to incorporation of wider population of Egyptians. Nationalism is easily seen within this union in that their first demand sent in a memo to Prime Minister Sidqi was “to realize total evacuation of the British from the Nile Valley.”²²⁶ Communists, however, continued to be targeted by the government as seen in the communist organization, Iskra’s program, House of Scientific Research, which was closed down on the orders of the Prime Minister Sidqi, on July 11, 1946.”²²⁷

As previously discussed, the main objective of Egyptian Communist movements since the 1930s was national independence from imperial Britain. For Egyptian Jews, the communist movement maintained the distinction of acting as an alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood. The interplay of communism and the Brotherhood is clearly depicted in the statements of Latifa al-Zayat who stated,

The years after the victory over fascism were glorious years in the history of Egypt and fruitful years. It seemed that all prospects were open to us. Any real nationalist had to make a choice, a decision, to become a communist or a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. This was especially true after the failure of the established parties to meet the requirements of the country.²²⁸

Thus the movement came to attract wider populations of Egyptians. For the EMNL this was facilitated by the organization’s distance from the Marxist atheist perception on religion. Rather EMNL members such as Abd al-Rahman al-Thaqafi attended Al-Azhar and used Islam in the service of communism. While activism gained among Egyptian

²²⁶ Civil Court, Case no. 1949, Abdin, year 1947, 72-74 in Botman, 42.

²²⁷ Botman, 49.

²²⁸ Interview between Selma Botman and Latifa al-Zayat, February 28, 1980 in Botman 52.

Muslims, cosmopolitan Jews still comprised the central committees. Furthermore, the primary concern of organizations such as EMNL, WCNL (Workers' Committee for National Liberation, New Dawn, and Iskra, the National Committee of Workers and Students (NCWS) was the end to British imperialism. In May 1947 EMNL and Iskra together formed the Democratic Movement for National Liberation. This merger became the largest and most enduring communist organization in Egypt, up until the mid 1950s.²²⁹

While Egyptian Communists were initially opposed to the partition of Palestine, in the years following the war a majority of Egyptian communist came to support the plan. This was due in part to twofold purpose of following the leadership of the USSR, as well as in hoping to weaken the British imperialism.²³⁰ Furthermore, Egyptian communist support for partition was, at least ideologically, conditional upon the principle of a two state formation. Albert Arie, a prominent Egyptian Jewish communist of the era, discussed the understanding between communist and Zionist motives:

For the DMNL, the analysis was that there were now in Palestine two nations under formation and each had the right to self-determination...Despite our radical opposition to Zionism, we analyzed the fact that a Jewish nation was already in formation. Even if it was wrong in the beginning, it was a fact. We said that the best form would be a single state with two nationalities, but due to the historical situation, this single state option was difficult. As a result, there was no solution except partition...Partition meant the end of the British Mandate and the evacuation of British troops. We thought that the formation of two states, one for each nation, could lead to the seeds of collaboration between these two states in the future.²³¹

Thus Egyptian Jews within the communist movement attempted to resolve the Arab-Jewish impasse by arguing for a greater conflict with British imperialism. They further attempted to circumvent the association of Zionism as imperialist by virtue of a two state formation. Thus a second expression of this same sentiment is seen within the DMNL's

²²⁹ Botman, 69.

²³⁰ Botman, 86.

²³¹ Personal interview between Albert Arie and Selma Botman, April 12, 1980 in Botman 87-88.

periodical *al-Jamahir* which stated, "We do not want to take Palestine away from the Arabs and give it to the Jew, but we want to take it away from imperialism and give it to the Arabs and Jews."²³² This attempt at common reconciliation, however, was not fully accepted by all elements within the communist movement. As it came to incorporate larger populations of Egyptians efforts at Egyptianization took place. Within the newly formed DMNL Sa'id Sulayman al-Rifa'ai advocated expelling Henri Cicurel and Hillel Shwartz from the organization particularly in response to the acceptance of partition and their ethnic origins.²³³

Egyptian Nationalism:

Communal Identity: Public Proclamations

If the Second World War provided an opportunity for Zionist and non-Zionist Jews to work together towards the cause of the war, then the partition of Palestine served to further divide the Egyptian Jewish community. Antagonism between Zionist and communal leaders is particularly notable in the relationship between Rene Cattaoui, president of the Cairo Jewish community, and Leon Castro, an influential Egyptian Zionist. As the Zionist movement became increasingly active and independent of the official Jewish community, particularly after the war, attempts to curtail Zionist activism became increasingly difficult, to the point that in January 1, 1945, Cattaoui threatened Castro that if he did not scale down his Zionist activism, the Jewish council would be obliged to "solicit, in the public interest, the intervention of the Egyptian authorities."²³⁴ This warning was sent in reaction to the refusal of Castro to end *'aliya* preparation camps

²³² *Al-Jamahir*, November 22, 1947 in Botman, 88.

²³³ Botman, 88.

²³⁴ FO 371/45404, Killearn to Eden, 12 February 1945 in Kramer, 202.

which Cattaoui argued would undermine paternal authority as well as “seriously compromise the official relations between our community and the national authorities” and which was intolerable because it stood “in flagrant opposition to the currents of opinion among official circles and the overwhelming majority of the Egyptian nation to which this community belongs.”²³⁵ This proved an empty threat, however, as Cattaoui had to contend with Zionist sympathizers within the Cairo Jewish community, a reality which finally led him to resign in August of 1946. Zionist opponents could not prevent Egypt’s chief rabbi, Haim Nahum, from issuing an anti-Zionist statement on behalf of Egyptian Jewry after the incidents of November 1945. Nahum also faced opposition, however, as Dr. Moise Ventura, chief rabbi of the Alexandrian community and a strong supporter of Zionism; Ventura eventually resigned in January 1948 due to such tensions, and migrated to France.²³⁶

Prior to partition, and even despite the Balfour Day riots of November 1945, the anti-Jewish sentiment of nationalist and Islamic groups did not significantly influence anti-Jewish sentiment within larger Egyptian society, nor in governmental policy, for a number of years. In August of 1947, Chief Rabbi Haim Nahum, contacted the United Nations expressing the Jewish communal support for the national aspirations of Egypt. Before the partition of Palestine, Jews still had a great deal of flexibility within Egyptian Society. In response to an article published in *al-Ahram* which questioned the desire of Egyptian Jews to remain in Egypt, Nahum denied the idea that Egyptian Jews were discriminated against and wanted to go to Palestine because of this discrimination. He

²³⁵ Letter included in FO 371/45404, Killearn to Eden, Feb. 12, 1945, in Kramer, 202

²³⁶ Kramer, 202.

stated that Egypt is very advanced in civil rights.²³⁷ A report by a British embassy official in Egypt further noted the statements of the rabbi in November of 1946 that, “the Jewish community in Egypt lives in entire harmony with other elements of the population and feels perfectly secure under the protection of the King and his Government...neither in Egyptian law nor its administration is there any tendency to discriminate on religious or racial grounds.”²³⁸

Following partition, however, the impact of Palestine began to create a state of uneasiness for Egyptian Jews as both the government and the wider public became more vigilant of the community. As a result almost all public proclamations issued by leaders of the Jewish community emphasized Jewish Egyptian nationalism. On December 3, 1947, Haim Nahum addressed the entire Egyptian-Jewish community in a radio broadcast, speaking of the belonging of Jews in Egypt to the Egyptian nation, Nahum continued to urge the Jewish community to “cooperate fully with their Egyptian brothers in these critical times.”²³⁹ Furthermore, on October 14, 1947 a publication within *al-Ahram* titled “Egypt’s Jew” was written by Aslan and Rene Cattaoui.²⁴⁰ The articles stated that “The Jews of this country first and foremost are Egyptians, they were born in this country as were their fathers.”²⁴¹ They strongly condemned Zionism stating that “all their patriotism and loyalty is to Egypt.” They go on to denounce Zionism as nothing but “an imperial implantation.” The Cattaouis, like the Egyptian Zionists and communists before them, continue to imply therefore that the British set up the feud between Jews and Arabs in

²³⁷ “Jews of Egypt and their Migration to Palestine: Statements from the Great Rabbi” *al-Ahram*, Nov. 13, 1946.

²³⁸ “Jews of Egypt and their Migration to Palestine: Statements from the Great Rabbi” *al-Ahram*, Nov. 13, 1946, 2.

²³⁹ Patterson in Stillman, 507

²⁴⁰ During 1947, Aslan Cattaoui was in the Egyptian Senate and Rene in the Egyptian House of Representatives.

²⁴¹ “Egypt’s Jews” *Al-Shams*. Oct. 14 1947

order for them to return.²⁴² Given their professions, such strong articulations are in some way mediated by the pressures of their office. What is significant is that they apply the same relationship direct between the British and Zionist, that Jews are accused of having by elements such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

The extent of surveillance and critique placed upon the Egyptian Jewish community is represented in the suspicion placed upon the declarations of Egyptian loyalty by leaders within the Jewish community. This approach can be clearly seen in the reactions issued in response to Cattaoui's statements in the above article in *al-Ahram*. *Al-Kutla*, a newspaper run by Makram Ebeid, a Coptic leader of the Wafd Bloc, expressed its skepticism concerning the former Jewish leaders' declarations in its December 6, 1947 issue which stated, "these two Jewish gentlemen denied the report but said nothing in condemnation of Zionism. Is it too much to expect the Jews of Egypt to express their sympathy with the Arabs?"²⁴³

In January 1948, Rene Cattaoui and Edwin Goar, leaders of the Cairo and Alexandria communities called upon Egyptian Jews to show their solidarity with the Palestinians. In May 1948, *al-Ahram* published a letter issued by Rene and Aslan Cattaoui, both of whom by that time had resigned from communal office, which claimed that "their religion was Judaism, their homeland Egypt, and their nationality Egyptian."²⁴⁴

Despite such proclamations it is clear that Jewish life in Egypt was becoming increasingly complicated and uneasy. Discrimination against Jews was increasingly felt in Egypt as it began to encroach upon the daily lives of Egyptian Jews. In a rare

²⁴² "Egypt's Jews" *al-Shams*. Oct. 14 1947

²⁴³ Patterson in Stillman, 505.

²⁴⁴ "Jews of Egypt" *al-Ahram*, May 16, 1948.

expression of discontent, *al-Shams* published an article directly confronting the discrimination against Egyptian Jews in the Egyptian press. The author states,

The Arab press writes about Jews with strange language that does not agree with religious tolerance that is expected in a democratic nation. A large and important respected newspaper like the Egyptian Gazette writes "that the authorities arrested Jewish criminals (gangs) for laundering foreign money out of the country" If those accused were anything but Jewish then they would not mention their religion, whatever the Egyptian Gazette does so the other newspapers do. And the question is, why they mention the Jewish religion when if they were Egyptian or foreign they would not mention their religion and they do not leave any accident or happening without first associating it with Jews.²⁴⁵

A second instance of discrimination is described within *al-Shams* as efforts from the government to reduce Jewish and even Christian liberties. The example outlined in this claim is that of the unwarranted searching of Jewish clubs carried out under the pretext of rumors regarding wireless communication system with Palestine. The article stated, "As proof [of discrimination], police came to Jewish clubs in Cairo and polices searched [surroundings]" Interestingly the author describes the incident as government effort frame Jews as unpatriotic.²⁴⁶ In response the Jewish council is discussing initiating an office to refute such rumors against the Jewish people, which again displayed the extent to which Egyptian Jews strove to prove their nationalism and loyalty.²⁴⁷

Jewish life in Egypt therefore experienced closer surveillance and uneasiness as society challenged the larger categories of Jewish and Egyptian self identification. While groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and at times the government, pushed for Egyptian Jews to adopt a clear Egyptian, or national identity, these institutions did not make room within their own classifications to accept Egyptian Jews, even if they renounced Zionism. The Muslim Brotherhood called for Pan-Islamism and adaptation of the Islamic identity. This focus on religious identity rather than ethnic or Arab identity

²⁴⁵ "What is Discrimination" *al-Shams*, Sep. 26 1948.

²⁴⁶ "Elections of Jewish council" *al-Shams* May 19, 1948.

²⁴⁷ "Elections of Jewish council" *al-Shams* May 19, 1948.

left no room for Jewish inclusion. Governmental policy, however, came to lean more on the ethnic category of being Egyptian. As discussed in chapter one, however, a large portion, if not the majority, of Egyptian Jews were affiliated with foreign nationalities, which worked to associate Egyptian Jewry as a whole with foreignness. Thus the pressure for Islamic, and Egyptian, identity both worked to exclude Egyptian Jewry from social acceptance.

Egyptianization:

During the late 1940s, exclusion of Jews in Egypt took a two pronged approach. On one hand, Jews were excluded by the growth of Islamic revivalist and nationalists political parties. These views espoused by these groups increasingly linked Jews to the Zionist movement and to the situation in Palestine. A second front of exclusion appeared in the legal realm, in which Egyptianization and nationalization excluded foreigners and sought to limit the influence of foreigners. The trend of Egyptianization was propagated by government policy, namely the Company law (1947) and naturalization.

Perhaps the most significant example of this type of policy is the passing of the Company Law, law number 132, in July of 1947. The Company Law set the quotas for employment of those with Egyptian nationality to a minimum of “75 percent of all salaried employees, 90 percent of workers, and 51 percent of paid-up capital of joint stock companies.”²⁴⁸ The law also required the submission of records of nationality for all employees in order to enforce its quota policies. Although several Jews in Egypt suffered from such measures, there was no targeted anti-Jewish bias implied in the law. Interestingly, *La Tribune Juive*, a French Zionist paper at the time, reported that Jewish

²⁴⁸ Kramer, 206.

managers of various companies in Egypt found ways to maneuver around the various legal restrictions of the law.²⁴⁹ However, *al-Shams* claimed that only the Jewish staff of certain companies was asked to show proof of nationality.²⁵⁰ Objection to the Company Law among Egyptian Jews was significant, however. Salvatore Cicurel, then president of the Cairo Sephardic Jewish community and owner of the eponymous popular Cairo department stores, appealed to the American Jewish Committee leaders with the hope that they could convince the American government to attempt to restrict the enforcement of the law. Yet, from the perspective of Egyptian representatives, such laws were meant to protect what the Minister of Trade considered “real Egyptians” and not those who were only “nominal Egyptians.”²⁵¹ This distinction is significant due to the growing relevance of national categorization, in the formation of Egyptian national identity during the period.

According to the historian of Egyptian Jewry, Gudrun Kramer, British and French diplomats alleged discrimination against local foreign minorities as well as indigenous Copts during these years. The effects of Egyptianization are evident through the migration of religious and ethnic minority groups out of Egypt. In fact the flight of different groups from Egypt during this period even extended to other non-Egyptian Arabs: in September of 1948, *al-Shams* reported that the Lebanese community in Alexandria requested to return to Lebanon where they planned to financially invest in public projects.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Kramer, 206.

²⁵⁰ Ibid; *al-Shams*, January 30, 1948.

²⁵¹ Kramer, 207.

²⁵² “Lebanese-Egyptians Return to Lebanon” *al-Shams*. September 26, 1948.

In response primarily to the Company Law, and the greater trend of Egyptianization during the immediate post war years, applications for naturalization among Egyptian Jews increased. The once-revered status of foreigner, which had once allowed Jews and others within some form of Egyptian protection to benefit under the provisions of the capitulations, now crumbled as the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 abolished the capitulations. The different moves to Egyptianize society proved the earlier author for *al-Shams* right; he had foreseen that without access to Arabic and clearly “national” markers the Jews of Egypt would be excluded.²⁵³ In November of 1947, the Cairo Jewish community alone registered 1,000 applications for naturalization per week.²⁵⁴ Haim Nahom also advocated for the application for citizenship detailing the requirements for application - must be older than twenty-one years of age, and serve in the military (if male).²⁵⁵ Coinciding with this detail concerning how to obtain citizenship was a “declaration to the public” put out by *al-Shams* calling for all stateless Jews and anyone who has reached twenty-one years of age to “apply right away” for Egyptian citizenship.²⁵⁶ The Jewish library in Ismailiya was set up to facilitate these applications.²⁵⁷

The pressure on Egyptian Jews to present their “Egyptiennes” extended into the indigenous Karaite population. Eli Amin Lisha’, an editor of *al-Kalim*, the Karaite newspaper, criticized Karaite isolation, reproached Rabbi Babovitch in 1946 for not approaching/failing to visit the newly appointed sheikh of Al-Azhar and not greeting

²⁵³ Alfred Blowz. “We Need Real Solution Not a Temporary Condition Regarding the Egyptianization of Education in our Schools” *al-Shams*, 17 Dec. 1936

²⁵⁴ Kramer, 207; In 1948-1949, hundreds of applications for nationality were still pending, with many applications having already been rejected. This indicates that the government was either intentionally slow, or bogged down with applications.

²⁵⁵ “Egyptian Citizenship” *al-Shams*. Dec. 5, 1947.

²⁵⁶ “Egyptian Citizenship: Declaration to the Public” *al-Shams* Dec. 5, 1947.

²⁵⁷ “Egyptian Citizenship” *al-Shams*, Dec. 5, 1947.

King Faruq in his return to Cairo (from Alexandria). He furthermore encouraged participation in Egyptian national holidays “because our Egyptian citizenship requires this.”²⁵⁸

The Arab-Israeli War and Egyptian National Security

By the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War on May 14, 1948, Egypt had prepared for battle, declaring a state of emergency three days before the outbreak of war, as well as full martial law on May 15. The debate for Jewish identity among the Egyptian Jewish elite between communal and Zionist leaders was in an essence put to an end as the advent of the Arab-Israeli War now framed the discussions of Jewish identity in Egypt primarily in terms of national security.

On the night of May 15 1948, for stated reasons of “public security related to the present situation,” mass arrests of Zionists, communists (primarily Jewish communists) as well as members of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested and interned by the Egyptian government.²⁵⁹ The lack of distinction between communists and Zionists represented a new phase of Egyptian policies towards the Jews. Sir Ronald Campbell, the British ambassador in Egypt, reported the repeated declarations of the Prime Minister al-Nuqrashi who declared, “[A]ll Jews were potential Zionists but that anyhow all Zionists were Communist, and he looked at the matter as much from the point of view of Communism as from the point of view of Zionism.”²⁶⁰ As has been explored above, although communist groups were almost invariably anti-Zionist, the government

²⁵⁸ Eli Amin Lisha', “Makanat ta'ifat al-qara'in fi misr” (The place of Karaite Community in Egypt) *al-Kalim*, Jan. 1, 1947 in Beinon, 41

²⁵⁹FO 371/69259, Chapman-Andrews to Foreign Office, 22 June 1948 in Kramer, 211.

²⁶⁰ FO 371/69259, Campbell to Bevin, 14 June 1948 in Kramer 212.

refrained from making this distinction, as it considered both movements as a threat to Egyptian national security.

The issue of the transition of Egyptian Jews turned into dialogue regarding national security is addressed in the article which states that Egyptian express that the most important interest of Egyptian officials is security. It reports officials declared that the Palestinian issue is not helped by attacking Egyptian Jews and that Egyptian Jews have nothing to do with the Palestinian issue. Rather it stated that the government officials said that the struggle has to be directed against Zionist, "since Zionism is a political movement and Judaism is a religion as any other...and not all Jews are Zionist as known by every cultured person." The officials state that this call is to save Egypt from illegal actions taken against Egyptian Jews which disturb the peace. The author states that this call for peace is undertaken by people who love Egypt from the bottom of my [their] heart, and that this call for understanding "will preserve the national unity among Egyptians of different religions." The writer reminds the readers of the slogan of the 1919 revolution led by Said Zagloul, "Religion is for God and Nation is for All" and appealing to the history of peace in Egypt since the time of Moses. It furthermore stated that when al-Nahass requested donations for national defiance, Egyptian Jews were of the first to give generously.²⁶¹

The apathy by which Egyptian security protected Egyptian Jews and other foreign nationals during 1948, reveals the effect of viewing Egyptian Jew under the pretext of national security. This is revealed in the frustration of one official from the British foreign ministry who accuses the Egyptian government of having no serious desire to temper assaults on Egyptian Jews and foreigners.

²⁶¹ "Egyptian Interest as Seen by the Officials" *al-Shams* Dec. 5 1947.

[A]parent inability of the Egyptian authorities to prevent during the last two or three days repeated and indiscriminate attacks not only on Jews but on anyone having the appearance of a European. The Egyptian embassy has already heard of a number of cases where British subjects have been gratuitously assaulted....It is clear that extremist elements such as the "ikhwan el Muslimeen" [Muslim Brotherhood] have for some time past been deliberately working up the feelings of the populace against Jews in a way which was obviously bound to end in mob violence. The authorities seem to have done nothing to check these activities.²⁶²

Conclusion:

By the end of the 1940s, Islamic activism coupled with government Egyptianization programs had greatly restricted the qualifications for belonging in Egypt. These developments largely excluded those who were cosmopolitan, held multiple loyalties, and most certainly those without Egyptian papers. The once multi-vocal Egyptian Jewish community now issued the only public position that still fit within the narrowing boundaries of Egyptian nationalism. This new silence constricted the prosperity of Jews in Egypt. By the end of 1948, restrictions on travel imposed both by the British and the Egyptian government was largely cancelled. Consequently, a large migration of Jews out of Egypt took place and set the stage for what some scholars label "the second exodus", or mass migration of Jews out of Egypt. This early migration, although voluntary, was spurred by the increasing restrictions placed on Egyptian Jews to the point of virtual exclusion from participation in the public sphere and the national polity.

Thus a deeper question of whether the social reaction to the Palestine issue in Egypt was singularly concerned with the events taking place in Palestine or whether this agitation was also tied to domestic resentment towards British imperialism and domestic economy is difficult to resolve, however, the perception of Egyptian Jews as imperialists

²⁶² *Minorities in the Middle East*, ed. Beitullah Destani, vol. 4. (London: Cambridge University Press Archive Editions, 2005), 155.

indicate that domestic resentment of the British strongly influenced reaction to Palestine. Yet what is unquestionable is that factions with Egyptian Zionism and Egyptian communism attempted to reconcile nationalist sentiment, primarily by virtue of opposition to British imperialism.

With the advent of the Arab-Israeli war martial law was imposed in Egypt on May 15, 1948. Under martial law all deviant voices were silenced including those of Egyptian Zionists, Egyptian communists, and even the Muslim Brotherhood. What was tragic, was the silence of the voices of those caught in the middle, those like *al-Shams* which maintained, or attempted to maintain the distinction between Zionist and Egyptian nationalism, as well as the rejection of those who went so far as to consider themselves "Egyptian before all else."

Conclusion:

The extent to which Egyptian Jews were indeed a part of the fabric of Egypt is represented in a photograph published in *al-Ahram* in 1946 of the three religious leaders in Egypt, Haim Nahum the Great Rabbi, Sheikh Hussayn Muhammad the Mufti of Egypt, and Yusaab Patrick the Coptic cleric, who stand together greet the King as he travels to the capital.²⁶³ This image signifies the place of Egyptian Jews as an integrated minority that constituted a significant component of the Egyptian nation. During the 1930s the political activism and involvement of Egyptian Jews both within and outside of the Jewish community indicated this level of acceptance and belonging that allowed Egyptian Jews to prosper, as well as attracted continual migration of Jews into Egypt. The advent of World War Two, however, revealed the corruption and weakness of the Egyptian government, which led to heightened expressions of discontent among vocal factions of Egyptian society. Disgruntlement from the increasingly popular Muslim Brotherhood showed aggression towards the British and Jews within Egypt, associating the two in a larger imperial conspiracy against Egypt and Palestine. By the end of 1948, the life for Jews in Egypt had become exceedingly circumscribed. Nationalist platforms won out through an imposed silence of Zionist and communist voices among Jews. Local responses to the situation in Palestine and Egyptianization but acted as barriers to the continued economic and intellectual prosperity of the country's Jews. During this period the government not only limited the financial growth of Jewish individuals and companies through its Egyptianization program, it also imposed increasingly strict surveillance on both the Zionist and communist activities of Jews. Additionally, different

²⁶³ *Al-Shams*, Nov. 11 1946

factions within society, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, compounded this pressure by engaging in critical inspection of the Jewish community, and limiting the conditions for Jewish acceptance within society.

After the loss of the 1948 war Egyptians increasingly came to view Jews as affecting threat to Egyptian national security. Jewish involvement and influence in mainstream politics including the Egyptian Communist movement, which continued into the early 1950s, was largely reduced and Egyptianized. Actions against Jews were therefore no longer taken up by rogue elements within Egyptian society alone but rather government representatives as well. Thus in the wake of the 1948 war, Jews in Egypt were interned. The backlash towards the Levon Affair (an Israeli espionage scandal that involved Egyptian Jewish spies), and the Suez Crisis (a three front attack on Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel following the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal) led to the eventual ousting of the majority of the Jewish population out of Egypt (today there are less than 200) taken in the interest of national security thus meriting a separate evaluation.

What is significant is that there was a time when Egyptian Jews were integrated minorities in Egyptian society. There were patriotic Jews, and there were Jews who attempted to reconcile the rift that polarized Egyptian nationalism and Zionism. In all, there was diversity, and yet this diversity remains unacknowledged, and continues to remain a key barrier in the understanding the more meaningful narrative of Egyptian Jewry.

Epilogue:

The modern day Arab-Israeli conflict has continued as an on-going crisis involving rhetoric that alienates and dehumanizes individuals on both sides of the problem. In the process of writing this thesis, I was sitting in my dining room table reviewing articles within *al-Shams* with my father who was born and raised in Egypt. After reading several of the nationalist pieces within *al-Shams* and *al-Ahram*, my father turned to me and said in Arabic, "I lived in war with Jews, and to read that they are Egyptians like me...it makes me want to cry...it makes me want to approach them." The purpose of this thesis is to recognize the diversity of the Egyptian Jewish community. It is an effort to understand a largely misunderstood minority group, and to attempt to identify with a minority that debated its own identity and had versions of it imposed upon them. Through such understanding perhaps can we resist sweeping judgments and condemnations by virtue of our narrow constructions of "the other" so that we may all be brave enough to approach one another.

Table and Images:

Table A:

Occupation of the Jews in Egypt, Egyptian Census of 1937 and 1947

	1937				1947			
	Egypt	Cairo	Rabbanites	Karaites	Egypt	Cairo	Rabbanites	Karaites
Total number of Jews	57,833	35,014	3,601	1,767	58,891	41,860	3,874	1,725
Employed	32,060	21,202	2,436	1,739	55,749	37,301	3,506	1,565
Agriculture, fishing, and hunting	134	37	4	2	126	32	7	1
Industry, mining, and construction	4,289	2,341	240	258	4,301	2,705	369	314
Transport and communications	483	241	21	16	571	351	32	10
Trade	11,997	6,827	690	210	13,042	8,367	769	222
Public and social services	2,105	1,249	1,099	516	2,779	1,815	111	33
Personal services	1,280	686			22,009	13,779	1,361	653
Unproductive and ill-defined	11,762	6,871	-	-	12,921	8,390	957	332
Unemployed	25,773	13,808	1,115	28	3,142	1,862	368	160

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Table B:

Year	Cairo	Alexandria	Other Places	Total	Surplus of Females	% of Foreign Nationals
Estimate 1840	—	—	—	5,000	—	—
Census 1897	11,608	9,831	3,761	25,200	—	49.6
Census 1907	20,281	14,475	3,879	38,635	-825	—
Census 1917	29,207	24,858	5,516	59,581	+41	58.1
Census 1927	34,103	24,829	4,618	63,550	+976	49.1
Census 1937	35,014	24,690	3,249	62,953	+1,123	36.0
Census 1947	41,860	21,128	2,651	65,639	+1,047	22.5
Census 1960	5,587	2,760	214	8,561	+183	—
Estimate 1968	—	—	—	2,500	—	—
Estimate 1972	—	—	—	300	—	—

²⁶⁵ It must be noted that while these numbers represent official census figures for the era, scholars agree that they are largely under-estimated, it however, serves the purpose of displaying the trajectory of growth in population of Egyptian Jews within the period.

²⁶⁴ Figures for 1937 from *Population Census of Egypt, 1937* (Cairo, 1942), table 35, p. 294; for Cairo, *ibid.*, vol. 9 Muhafazat al-Qahira (Cairo, 1940), table 13, pp.80-81; for the Rabbanites and Karaites, *ibid.*, table 4, pp.20-21. Figures for 1947 from *Population Census of Egypt, 1947* (Cairo, 1954), table 44 pp. 444-45; for Cairo, *ibid.*, vol. 15 Muhafazat al-Qahira (Cairo, 1952), table 14, pp. 124-26; for the Rabbanites and Karaites, *ibid.*, table 4, p. 51, in Kramer 54.

²⁶⁵ Hayim Cohen, *Jews of the Middle East, 1860-1972* (New York: Wiley, 1973) 70.

صحيفة الأزياء لموسم ١٩٣٤-٣٥

يقدمها **أوروزدى باك** «عمرافدى»
المعرض العظيم يوم الاثنين ٢٩ أكتوبر



Figure 2²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Al-Shams 2 November, 1934.

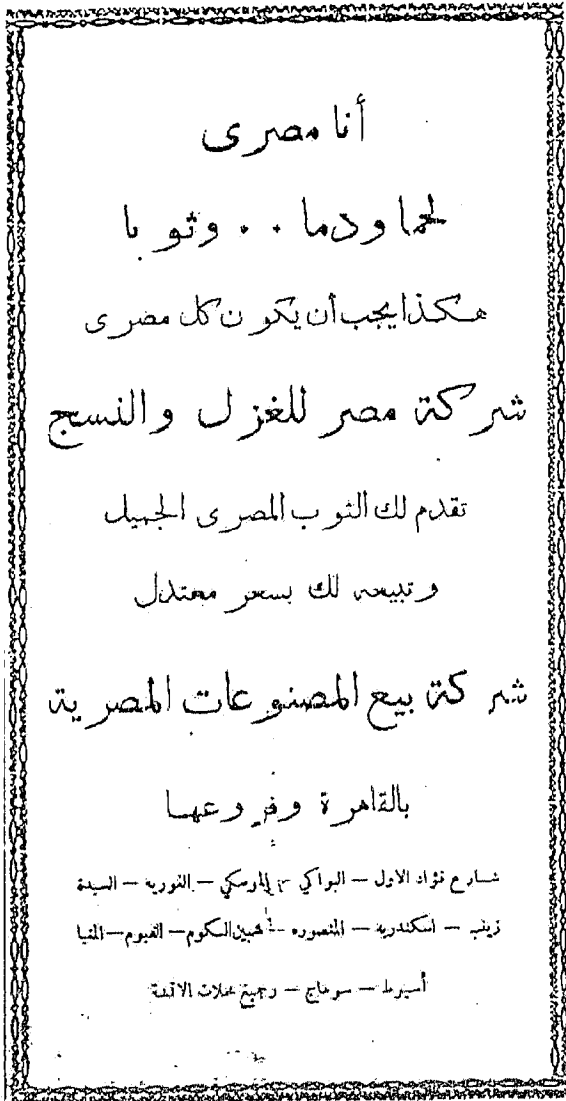


Figure 3²⁶⁸

الشركة التجارية المصرية الفلسطينية

بشارع عدلى باشا رقم ١٩

هذه الشركة معتمدة لتقديم ما يحتاج اليه كل

رب مائة من المنتجات الفلسطينية. فاصلوا بها بالمعنوان

الوضح أعلاه رقم التليفون ٤٨٤٩٠ بالقاهرة فسترون

من معاملتها ما يسركم

Figure

4

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الرؤساء الدينيون في استقبال جلالة الملك بمحطة سراي القبة وقد وقف
في الوسط فضيلة الاستاذ الشيخ حسنين محمد مخلوف مفتي الديار
المصرية والى يمينه غبطة الانبا يوساب بطريرك الاقباط والى يساره
سيادة ناحوم افندي الحاخام الاكبر .

Figure 5²⁷⁰

The caption reads:

The religious leaders welcoming His Majesty the King... Standing in the middle is Sheikh Hussayn Muhammad Mufti of Egypt. To his right is Yusaab Patrick the Coptic cleric, and to his left is Sayadah (the honorable) Nahum Effendi the Great Rabbi.

²⁷⁰ *Al-Ahram*, Nov. 11 1946.

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