

failure could be explained by 'the obvious inadequacy of the assimilationist view of anti-Semitism, the fact that bitter Jew-hatred persisted even where its objects were most completely de-Judaized'.¹¹ The reaction to this failure took the form of a call for a national Jewish entity, preferably a national return to Zion.

Thus, Zionism, with its inherent implication of loss of hope in the future total acceptance of the Jew as an individual by the majority of society, did not begin to find its way to popular appeal and acceptance until after the Russian pogroms of 1881, which set a mass exodus of millions, in eastern and western Europe, into motion.

There were a number of attempts to create Jewish agricultural communities in Palestine prior to 1881. But philanthropy, not nationalism, was the basis of the *London Hebrew Society for the Colonization of the Holy Land*, founded by Jews in 1861.¹² The same year witnessed the establishment of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, an institution for the protection and improvement of the Jews in general and of those in Europe and in the Muslim lands in particular. In 1870, the *Alliance* established the Agricultural School *Mikveh Israel* near Jaffa, obviously aiming at the settlement of Jews in Palestine on a considerable scale.

Following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and the ensuing pogroms in Russia, the enthusiasm for *Haskalah* collapsed and its place was taken by a new movement *Hibbath* (also, *Hovevei*) *Zion* (The Love of Zion). Societies were formed in Jewish centres where the question of settling in Palestine as an immediate practical prospect and the study of Hebrew as a living language were discussed.

The first Jewish colonists belonged to an organisation of Russo-Jewish students formed at Kharkov for the colonisation of Palestine, known as Bilu. The growth of Jewish nationalism coincided with the rise of Arab nationalism in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

The Arab Awakening

In his well-known book, *The Arab Awakening*, George Antonius traced the pioneering manifestations of political consciousness in the *Vilayet* of Syria:

It was at a secret gathering of certain members of the Syrian Scientific Society (1868) that the Arab national movement may be said to have uttered its first cry.¹³

There is no need to go into the question here in great detail. Suffice

it to say that after centuries of political inertness the Arab East began to experience a certain political awakening and the beginning of a consciousness of a common Arab identity. On 13 December 1875, the British Consul in Beyrout (Beirut) reported:

For some years past there has existed amongst certain classes, especially the Mohametans, of the population of Syria a secret tendency to desire annexation to Egypt which has gradually grown in intensity.¹⁴

On 28 June 1880, the British Consul-General in Beirut reported the appearance of 'revolutionary placards in Beirut'.¹⁵ In subsequent telegrams the British Consul reported the main points of the first recorded statement of an Arab political programme (1880):

- (1) the grant of independence to Syria in union with the Lebanon,
- (2) the recognition of Arabic as an official language in the country,
- (3) the removal of censorship and other restrictions on the freedom of expression and the diffusion of knowledge.¹⁶

From the scanty evidence available we learn that Palestine was not insulated from the new political trends in the Levant. Following Arabi's stand against the British in Egypt, the British Consul reported riots and excitement in Jerusalem and Jaffa:

It is quite certain that the native Moslems profoundly sympathised with Arabi, both as a Mohammadan fighting against unbelievers and more especially, as the champion of the Arab Mussulman race, upon whose success posed possibilities affecting the future of their race other than merely repelling the invasion of Egypt.¹⁷

Two years later, the British Consul reported the Palestinians' reactions to the revolt of the Mahdi in the Sudan in the following manner:

Whilst the general feeling of the Moslems as regards the religious aspect of the (Mahdi) Movement is such as I have stated there is an undercurrent of sympathy carefully suppressed on their part in favour of the Mahdi as an Arab struggling for his race against Ottoman domination and misrule.¹⁸