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The Binationalist

BY 1929, seven years after he arrived in Palestine, Judah Magnes had established a place for himself in the Yishuv through his position as chancellor of the Hebrew University from which he could generate influence on Jewish culture in Palestine. He had done so by retaining positive and constructive relationships with both wealthy and influential American non-Zionists and Jewish scholars in Palestine.

In response to the August 1929 riots, Magnes reevaluated his mission in Palestine. Just as America's entrance into the First World War had sparked his pacifist activism, the Arab riots motivated him to publicly advocate for cooperative relations between Jews and Arabs.

There were several things at stake for Magnes. As a Zionist, he prized his romantic image of the Jewish nation, where the prestige and reputation of the Jewish nation rested on its ability to act as a moral and liberal beacon for the world. As an American, he valued his native country's ideals of equality and democracy. Finally, as a staunch pacifist, he believed it essential to find avenues that would avoid future conflicts between Arabs and Jews in Palestine.

These three impulses motivated Magnes to actively pursue democratic and ethical solutions to the Arab-Zionist conflict. He drafted his own plans for a binational Palestine. Whereas he demanded that Arabs recognize Palestine as the Jewish national home and take responsibility for violence against Jews, he was willing to give up the political objective of establishing a Jewish state. He believed his other priorities were more important and still within the realm of Zionism: establishing a liberal democracy in the Jewish historical homeland, demonstrating an image of the Jewish nation as ethical and liberal, and pursing peace. Magnes was idealistic. In claiming that Jews and Arabs could coexist together in a culturally and politically binational Palestine, he was thinking of America, his conception of a pluralistic America that he had described in 1909 as being a "republic of nationalities."

Scholarship that has examined the differences between how European and American Jews understood notions of "state" is instructive in helping to understand Magnes in relation to the dominant Zionist political culture in the Yishuv regarding the Arab-Jewish conflict. In his work comparing European Jewish immigrants in America and Palestine, Daniel Elazar argues that whereas American Jews valued social justice for all minority groups, Palestinian Jewry focused on "solidarity and parochialism." Boas Evron, in discussing the differences between America and Israel, similarly argues that while Americans understand the state as protecting "individual liberty and equality," the majority of Israel's founders understood the state as "expression of the nation." The ideological differences between Magnes and Zionist political leaders highlights the distinctions presented by Elazar and Evron. Magnes's American values and American experience made him view the Arab-Jewish conflict differently from most of the Eastern European-born Jews living in Palestine: while Magnes argued that in their efforts to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine, Jews must simultaneously seek equality and social justice for Arabs, the Zionist leadership's primary aim was to sustain the Zionist political cause.[1]

The Zionist response to Magnes is instructive because it sheds light on the history of Zionism during the 1930s. When studying the Arab-Zionist conflict, historians tend to focus either on ideology or on politics and diplomacy.[2] The ever-changing Zionist response to Magnes during the 1930s, however, highlights the way in which political tactics, ideology, and historical circumstance shaped Zionist attitudes toward the Arabs throughout the 1930s. While many scholars have dismissed the significance of Magnes's activities during the 1930s, because he challenged Zionists politically and ideologically, Zionists at the time did take him seriously even as they publicly dismissed him as an idealist. With that said, Magnes's insistence on maintaining the reputation of the Jewish people as ethical, that Zionists rise above political and nationalist objectives, landed on deaf ears; such views had little meaning for the Zionist leadership, and in their eyes had no tactical merit. Moreover, Zionist leaders became increasingly annoyed at Magnes for his speeches and negotiations when they were made independently, without official sanction. They viewed him as a rogue American Jew, one who could have dangerous influence because of his connections but who acted recklessly, without respect for official bodies like the Jewish Agency and without consideration for the political consequences of his actions.

Magnes also had incredible access to British and American government officials in Palestine. While Zionist leaders often struggled to get an

appointment with British officials, Magnes could meet with the high commissioner for Palestine at will. He also had regular contact with the American consul general. Such access made him politically dangerous.

The 1929 Riots

The relatively peaceful relations between Arabs and Jews were shaken on Yom Kippur in 1928 over a dispute at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. At issue was ownership of the Wall. Both Jewish and Arab leaders issued propaganda that made claims to the Wall, which created an extremely hostile environment. In this atmosphere, neither the British government nor the Palestine Zionist Executive was able to ease the tensions.[3]

The dispute over the Western Wall remained unresolved a year later. In August 1929 Revisionist Jews and the Supreme Muslim Council used the conflict to ignite public controversy for their own national aims. Demonstrations and counterdemonstrations in the middle of August culminated when Arabs launched a series of attacks against Jews that started on Friday, August 23 in Jerusalem and later spread to other parts of Palestine. Sixty Jews were massacred in Hebron alone. The riots lasted a week; by the end, 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were killed, and an additional 339 Jews and 232 Arabs were wounded.[4]

The August riots focused the attention of the Yishuv on Arab-Jewish relations. For Jews living in Palestine, the riots taught them that building a Jewish national home would be a process full of danger. Labor Zionists compared the riots to the anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia. Because most Jews living in Palestine in 1929 came from Eastern Europe, the pogrom comparison had resonance. To have recognized the Arab national claim would have undermined the righteousness of the Zionist ideals that they proclaimed. Thus the majority of the Yishuv rejected any suggestion of a nascent Arab nationalism and the need for an Arab-Jewish partnership. For many, that was the equivalent of arguing for a Jewish-Gentile alliance in Russia. Anti-Arab sentiment, in addition, consumed the Yishuv. The riots proved to many that Arabs could not be trusted and posed a physical threat. Lack of sufficient security from the British also led many Jews in Palestine to feel that they would always be susceptible to attacks from Arabs. Consequently, self-defense became a national ideal. Those unwilling to defend themselves were accused of failing to participate fully in Jewish national existence. Jews who called for peace and understanding, like the members of Brit Shalom, were condemned on the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in the belief that they demonstrated Jewish weakness, not Jewish strength.[5]

After the riots, Chaim Weizmann focused his attention on the British government. He feared that the British would respond to the Arab riots by limiting Jewish immigration and implanting a legislative council, as outlined in the 1922 White Paper. After the riots, Britain sent a commission to Palestine to investigate the situation. Meanwhile, Weizmann met with British prime minister Ramsay MacDonald and argued that instead of encouraging Arab violence by conceding to their demands, the British should play a "broker" role in Arab-Jewish negotiations by organizing a round-table conference.[6] Weizmann always maintained that Jews must not dominate Arabs. But neither should Arabs dominate Jews. As Arabs would no doubt restrict immigration if they could, he objected to a legislative council in Palestine because it "would render our position untenable after the first few months." Weizmann also "opposed . . . any negotiations with the Arabs being initiated by us" because Arabs had no inclination to compromise with Zionists: "What they desire at present is plainly to drive us into the Mediterranean." Thus, he concluded that Arab leaders "are utterly unprepared for any reasonable compromise." Weizmann therefore stressed that negotiations must begin in London: if the British officials showed they intended to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine, Arabs would eventually be forced to come around.[7]

In America, as might be expected, Zionists and non-Zionists expressed opposing views on Arab-Jewish relations. Felix Warburg and other American non-Zionists were deeply concerned about the Arab problem. They did not want a Jewish minority to dominate over an Arab majority, as this went against their American democratic ideals. They believed that the Jewish Agency, through which they could now voice their presence, should commit itself to both the development of Palestine and the ideal of democracy.[8] American Zionists, in contrast, insisted that no concessions be made to Arabs. They wanted to establish a democracy in Palestine, but only once Jews became a majority. Louis Lipsky, Stephen S. Wise, and the Brandeis Group criticized Britain for being pro-Arab, condemned Weizmann for his conciliatory attitude, and castigated the Arabs for the riots.[9]

When the riots broke out, angry that political leaders never considered "a pacifist policy," Judah Magnes faulted all parties involved (the British, the Arabs, and the Jews) for the riots. He placed partial blame for the riots on "that characterless" and "arrogant" British government for doing nothing. Equal responsibility had to be placed on the Arabs who had no interest in liberalism or democracy. Magnes placed particular blame on the grand mufti, a new religious title the British had given to Haj Amin al-Husseini in

the early 1920s. As head of the Supreme Muslim Council, the grand mufti had "religious authority over all Islamic Palestine." Immediately following the August 1929 riots, many Jews placed blame on the grand mufti for instigating battles over religious rites in the Old City of Jerusalem. Magnes agreed with this assessment and declared that the grand mufti was a "scheming fox."[10]

But Magnes also maintained that Zionists shared responsibility for the riots. He began to see, almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy, that Zionism was becoming like the American nationalism of the First World War. Right-wing Revisionists in particular, by preaching extreme militarism, were "corrupting" the Jewish youth in Palestine. "It is they," he claimed, "who preach hatred." But even mainstream and Labor Zionists, by their refusal to take any responsibility for the riots yet all the while "making chauvinistic demands" were "no better than the war mongers of 1914 and 1917." To ease tensions between Arabs and Jews, Magnes believed that Zionists must limit their objectives. He wanted Jews to focus their energies on redefining Zionism to be pacifist and ethical. Only if the Zionist movement changed its attitude, he felt, could Arabs and Jews be reconciled; cooperative efforts with Arabs should be the primary task of Jews. But while he argued for Zionist political aims to be curtailed, he refused to compromise on the goals of cultural Zionism. Thus, he maintained that Zionists should refrain from demanding Jewish political control of Palestine but at the same time stipulated three conditions: the right for Jews to immigrate to Palestine based on the country's economic absorptive capacity, the right for Jews to buy and sell land in Palestine, and the right for Jews to build their own cultural and religious institutions in Palestine.[11]

Magnes made no direct reference in his diaries and journals, nor in his correspondence and public addresses, to Jewish self-defense efforts in Palestine. That does not necessarily mean that he opposed it, but his silence on this matter shows how much he had changed since he so adamantly supported Jewish self-defense organizations in Russia after the 1905 Kishinev pogroms. There are two reasons for this. First, since 1905 he had slowly arrived at the belief that Jews maintained their national prestige and dignity by acting in accordance with the Jewish ethical tradition (which for him included pacifism). Second, unlike many Zionists, Magnes saw the Arab riots as an expression of Arab national aspirations rather than one of anti-Semitism. Once Zionists recognized the existence of Arab nationalism, Magnes wrote Chaim Weizmann, they could only follow one of two routes: either Zionists must support Jabotinsky's militaristic nationalism,

which wanted to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine "no matter how much this oppresses the Arabs"; or, as Magnes would argue, they could follow spiritual Zionism based on pacifism and cooperation with Arabs.[12]

For Magnes, if Jews failed to stand by both their ethical tradition and the Zionist claim to the right of national self-determination for all nations, they compromised the reputation of the Jewish nation as ethical. It did not matter that Arab "leaders are almost all small men" because nothing should deter Jews from attempting to build up Palestine "peacefully" with the Arabs. "If we cannot even attempt this," Magnes wrote Chaim Weizmann, "I should much rather see the eternal people without a 'National Home'" because "a Jewish Home in Palestine built up on bayonets and oppression is not worth having." The very prestige of the Jewish people depended upon them building up Palestine based on their own ethical values. "And if the Arabs are not capable of this [pursuing peace]," Magnes maintained in a letter to Felix Warburg, "we Jews must be, else we are false to our spiritual heritage and give the lie to our much-vaunted higher civilization."[13] From Magnes's perspective, seeking a cooperative relationship with Arabs would benefit the Zionist movement in the long run. The hostile position toward Arabs, he argued in a conversation with Zionist leaders in Palestine, was "providing a very good school for the training of Arab nationalist revolutionaries." He recognized the animosity Arab leaders held toward Zionist political aims. Nevertheless, he was unprepared to compromise with Arabs who failed to concede to what he believed to be the most fundamental nonpolitical Zionist objectives: Jewish immigration, land sales to Jews, and Jewish cultural institutions. These issues, even as they went beyond cultural Zionism to include aliya, were sanctioned by non-Zionists. For most Zionists, this was not enough because it excluded Zionist political objectives.[14]

Magnes refused to appease Arabs regarding goals he deemed to be the very essence of Zionism. In this respect he differed from his friends in Brit Shalom.[15] After the 1929 riots, Brit Shalom members called for an abrogation of the Balfour Declaration to be replaced by an Arab statement declaring Jewish rights. Only in this way, so they argued, could peace with Arabs in Palestine and neighboring countries be assured. They also believed that as a gesture of good faith, Jews should offer to limit immigration and land sales. Magnes, despite his concerns about the meaning of the Balfour Declaration at its inception in 1917, twelve years later firmly believed that it must be accepted by the Arabs as the basis for any settlement; otherwise the validity of international agreements would be completely undermined. Moreover, unlike the members of Brit Shalom, he

refused to agree to limits on immigration or land sales (except on the basis of economic absorptive capacity).[16]

The Philby Plan

In the months following the August 1929 riots, Magnes struggled to find a way to alter the direction of the Zionist movement. The humanistic values he shared with Brit Shalom's members did not have the same resonance with most Zionists. He recognized the need to present a workable plan that would at once appeal to their political instincts and Zionist agenda while remaining true to his insistence on nondomination and cooperation. Without a concrete plan, he knew his humanistic ideals had little meaning for Zionist leaders.

Just such a plan fell into his lap on October 27, 1929, when the Jerusalem correspondent for the *New York Times* Joseph Levy visited Magnes. Levy told him about a plan for Jewish–Arab rapprochement that was being developed by H. St. John Philby, a former British representative in Transjordan. Philby had recently met with Syrian and Palestinian leaders who wanted to establish self-governing institutions in Palestine. On the basis of his meetings with these Arabs, Philby drafted an article for the *New York Times* and gave it to Levy. According to Philby's outline, "all elements" must be represented in Palestine "upon the basis of their numbers," and Jews must give up their "dream" of "political domination."[17]

Magnes was not immediately impressed with the plan. Philby, a known anti-Zionist, had "emphasized the National Arab too much" without drawing enough attention to Jewish nationalism. Magnes was unprepared to compromise Zionist aims without concessions from Arabs. Any agreements remained impossible until Arab leaders made some conciliatory offer and at the very least condemned the August riots. But Magnes "sympathized" with the motives behind the plan and agreed to consider it. Pleased that Arabs were making some effort to reach an agreement with Jews, he did not reject the plan outright. He saw Philby's plan as opening up an avenue for cooperation.[18]

The Zionist leadership, in Magnes's view, was not taking the initiative in pursuing Arab–Jewish cooperation. With Philby's plan due to create public discussion on the issue, Magnes decided to take the initiative himself. The day after his meeting with Levy, Magnes redrew Philby's plan according to his own ideas of cultural pluralism and democracy that he had developed in New York. Emphasizing that Palestine belonged neither to Jews nor to Arabs, he called for a pluralistic Palestine that encouraged national

self-determination for Arabs and Jews so that both national groups would retain their cultural autonomy; at the same time, Jews and Arabs should aid each other in their national aims. In return for instituting the democratically elected legislative council proposed by Britain, Magnes believed that Arabs should be willing to help Jews build their national home in Palestine. In addition, he significantly altered the immigration policy as outlined in the Philby Plan to avoid compromising his own Zionist goals. Philby had stated that while immigration "shall not be forbidden," the Palestinian government would determine immigration based on its economic absorptive capacity. Magnes rephrased the immigration policy, fearing that if the Arabs ruled the government through the democratically elected legislative council, they would restrict immigration. Using positive terminology, he insisted that there be "free immigration." Moreover, instead of the government regulating immigration, a less partisan agency should determine this very sensitive issue. In American progressive tradition, he suggested that a commission of three independent experts, working with four Arabs and two Jews, regulate immigration based on the economic absorption capacity of Palestine. This, he believed, would eliminate the Arabs' power to restrict Jewish immigration for their own political ends.[19]

Magnes met with Zionist leaders on November 4 and November 5 to seek their approval for his plan. They were generally uninterested. Harry Sachar, a member of the Zionist Executive in Palestine, asked Magnes to keep his views to himself: the Arab-Jewish conflict would soon "'blow over'" and thus Magnes should avoid drawing attention to plans that compromised the Zionist project.[20] David Ben-Gurion agreed with Magnes that Jews should initiate a plan. His motives, based on the fear that the British would institute a legislative council if Jews failed to take the initiative, were entirely political. The Arab riots also awoke Ben-Gurion to Arab hostility against Zionism. But he saw Arabs in Palestine as part of the larger Arab nation, not a separate nation. Politically speaking, moderation seemed the best option. After reading the draft of Magnes's proposal, however, Ben-Gurion "was very distressed about the matter." He wanted to reach some kind of peaceful settlement with Arabs that incorporated a specific settlement plan for Jews. Fearing Magnes's influence, Ben-Gurion developed his own three-stage alternative plan, one in which there would eventually be two separate national cantons that would join together under a federal government and the high commissioner.[21]

Magnes took some credit for Ben-Gurion's plan. After hearing Ben-Gurion's lecture about the plan to Jewish workers, he noted that Ben-

Gurion and other labor leaders were discussing compromise. While only two weeks before Ben-Gurion had told Magnes that "concessions" were "unthinkable," now he was making compromise with Arabs part of his platform.[22] Certainly, in his self-congratulatory mode, Magnes was exaggerating his influence. Although he failed to recognize it, his influence was more political than ideological; Ben-Gurion was responding to the political threat Magnes posed rather than integrating his ideas.

Magnes also sought Felix Warburg's support for his plan. Referring to Warburg's important position in the Jewish Agency, Magnes wrote him that the "key" to the "entire situation now [is in] your hands." He thought that with Warburg and other American non-Zionists behind him, he could then pressure Zionists to accept the plan; with half of the Jewish Agency in favor of his plan, Magnes believed that the Zionists would be forced to rethink their own program. Warburg, however, was not as enthusiastic as Magnes had expected. Worried about the political consequences of a legislature on a Jewish minority, Warburg insisted that there be "safeguards" to protect Jews. Warburg also wanted to maintain the alliance between the Zionists and non-Zionists, and thus he asked Magnes to "cooperate with Zionists." At the same time, Warburg recognized the importance of Arab-Jewish reconciliation. Although he rejected Magnes's plan, he attempted to pressure Weizmann into pursuing negotiations with Arabs by claiming that American money would be pulled out of the Jewish Agency if there were no attempts at negotiation.[23]

Even as Warburg expressed apprehensions about Magnes's plan, Zionists were extremely worried about Magnes. Not only were they uneasy about the ideas he was expressing, but he was also acting independently, without the sanction of the Jewish Agency or any official Zionist organization; he was dangerous because he could seemingly act freely. Zionist leaders thus felt an urgency to rein him in. On November 11 the Political Committee of the Jewish Agency met in London to discuss Magnes and the Philby Plan. Until Britain issued a definitive pro-Zionist policy, Zionists felt they lacked the necessary British support to properly engage in political negotiations. While agreeing to study the Arab-Jewish problem, the committee demanded that Magnes drop his negotiations until the British government first proposed something similar. The committee asked Felix Warburg to send the message to Magnes, which he did.[24]

Not all Zionist leaders were unsympathetic to Magnes. The industrialist Pinhas Rutenberg, who had recently become the head of the Va'ad Leumi (the National Council of the Yishuv), demonstrated some interest in

Magnes's ideas.[25] Rutenberg found the plan "sound in essence" but believed it premature as neither Jews nor Arabs were ready to work together. Until both sides demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the other's needs and fears, Palestine needed "English bayonets." Rutenberg also believed that making compromises with Arabs so soon after the August 1929 riots would reward Arab violence, a very dangerous precedent. But Rutenberg agreed with Magnes that the policies and abilities of the present Zionist leadership regarding Jewish-Arab relations left something to be desired.[26]

Rutenberg invited Magnes to present his views to the Va'ad Leumi on November 13. With Zionist leaders opposing him and Warburg ambivalent, Magnes saw this as an opportunity to gain the support of the Yishuv. Despite the large attendance at the meeting, Magnes received a cold reception. In his American style, he was anxious to be "frank and outspoken." Most of those in attendance, however, believed Magnes compromised Zionist objectives. Three Revisionists left the room when Magnes was introduced to speak. After listening to the address, others scoffed at the plan, considering it to be "on [a] very low plane." One Zionist, expressing the general view within the Yishuv and the Zionist leadership that Magnes posed a danger in acting and speaking independently, shouted "We shall find a way of forcing you to observe discipline." In Magnes's own view, though, his address was powerful enough to make many "sympathetic" to his cause.[27]

Whether or not anyone really left the meeting transformed by Magnes's ideas, by speaking publicly about them he had alienated his most avid supporter. Felix Warburg was livid when he learned about the Va'ad Leumi meeting.[28]

Self-righteous and passionate in his pursuit of a peaceful solution, Magnes acted autonomously. He stubbornly refused to concern himself with the possible negative consequences of his actions. Ideals, in his mind, should be above politics.

Magnes's sense of himself as an American played an important role in his decision to voice his views. In his view, encouraging democratic discussion on important political issues was part of being American. Deeply concerned with "the political life" in Palestine, Magnes later explained that it is "perfectly legitimate that I, as an American citizen, devote my thought and energies to the political problem here."[29] The "agony" he experienced upon learning about the violence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine convinced him of the need to give voice to his pacifist views. As he explained to Chaim Weizmann in September 1929, "I cannot keep silent for Zion's sake in these tragic days."[30]

"For Zion's Sake"

Failing to gain Zionist, non-Zionist, or Yishuv support, Magnes decided to take it upon himself to alter the course of Zionism. "I thought I had a function to fulfill," he explained to a friend, "namely, to try as far as I could to force the Jewish side to an appreciation of the realities of the situation." Magnes had always maintained, particularly regarding Weizmann's interest in heading the university, that the Hebrew University must be free of Zionist politics. But after the August 1929 riots, taking advantage of his own position as chancellor, Magnes exploited the notion of nonpartisanship to erect a platform at the Hebrew University for his political views. He wanted "to bring the University into politics," Magnes wrote Warburg in September, "in my sense and on behalf of my views." The Hebrew University's nonpartisan stance, he argued, made it "the place where Arab-Jewish relations can and must be worked out."[31] Because the Hebrew University remained unassociated with the World Zionist Organization, or any other political organization for that matter, Magnes believed that as chancellor he could voice his opposition to the Zionist movement. His goal was to make the Hebrew University a powerful cultural force within the Yishuv, one that could have an ideological influence to push Zionists toward reconciliation with Arabs. By helping Jews "resist" the "temptations" of "politics and bloodshed," he would give the Hebrew University "new meaning" and help change the course of Zionism.[32] Magnes's previous university addresses had discussed the development of the Hebrew University. At the opening of the 1929–30 academic year on November 18, Magnes focused on Arab-Jewish relations.

Magnes's Hebrew University address gave public expression to his thoughts as developed during the immediate aftermath of the riots. No mention was made of the Philby Plan nor the specifics of any other plan. He only hinted at his own plan when he argued that Jews and Arabs had an equal right to Palestine and should build together a pluralistic society. Rather, Magnes focused attention on one of his primary Zionist objectives—establishing the reputation of the Jewish nation as ethical. The very prestige of the Jewish people, he maintained, depended on their initiating a peaceful partnership with Arabs. Without such initiative, their whole "enterprise" in Palestine "is not worthwhile." While he warned about "the absence among the Arab leadership of at least humane and high language," Magnes claimed that Jews should still try to find ways of cooperating with Arabs because Jews had a "great civilizing" task to bring peace to Palestine.[33]

A week after the university address, against the advice of both Warburg and Zionist leaders, Magnes presented his plan in an article published alongside Philby's Plan in the *New York Times*. Magnes's concerns about minority rights, which had been shaped by his experience in American Jewish politics, made him very suspect of Philby's Plan. During the debate over the "American Jewish Congress" that overshadowed American Jewish politics between 1915 and 1916, Magnes insisted that the two main factions come together as equals instead of making decisions based on majority votes. He now applied this same principle to Jewish-Arab relations. While praising Philby's Plan as a "great advance" from the Arab perspective because it retained the Balfour Declaration and supported the immigration of Jews, Magnes differed as to the best form of self-government for Palestine. Indeed, his differences with Philby were the same differences he had with Brandeis during the debate over an American Jewish congress. In both instances Magnes opposed majoritarian democracy in favor of a pluralistic democracy in equilibrium. Democracy, for him, had to protect the rights of the minority. Whereas Philby wanted "representation" in government from all elements in the population "on the basis of its numbers," Magnes was concerned about the possible tyranny of the majority that might occur even with a mandatory government in control: "The majority must be made impotent to do harm and injustice." Philby's aim to create an "independent national government" worried Magnes. Under the present conditions, considering Jews represented less than 20 percent of the population, this would mean the establishment of an Arab state with Jews in minority status. As an alternative, Magnes offered a political structure based on the equality of both nations, a "bi-national government." Magnes, it will be recalled, successfully achieved peace in the New York fur industry by establishing a conference committee that consisted of an equal number of employee and labor representatives. He hoped that he could apply the same principle in Palestine. "Palestine," he wrote, "should not be a place of political 'domination' at all on anyone's part."[34]

Once he publicly expressed his views, critics condemned the Hebrew University chancellor. They could not believe that Magnes, who had for so long maintained that the Hebrew University must remain nonpartisan, embroiled the Hebrew University in the center of the debate on the Arab problem. Menechem Ussishkin, the president of the Jewish National Fund, interrupted Magnes in the middle of his university address. Menechem angrily reminded the chancellor that "his audience had come to hear a learned address and not a political speech." Revisionist students at the

Hebrew University "greeted" Magnes's speech with "hisses." Hebrew newspapers in Palestine were equally critical and demanded that students boycott classes until Magnes resigned his position as chancellor.[35]

Such responses show that a dramatic change had occurred. Previously, residents in Palestine associated with the Hebrew University had generally aligned themselves with Magnes. They saw him as representing their interests. Many now turned against him. He had unleashed some antipathy in Hebrew University circles when he sought to establish a chair in Yiddish, but the anger he now fueled was much more virulent. His effort to establish a chair in Yiddish illustrated the extent to which he could sometimes remain disconnected from the Yishuv. In general, though, his administration of the Hebrew University, and the American ideas upon which it was based, had support from university circles within the Yishuv. The response to his 1929 address illustrates the extent to which his American values, when applied to Zionist politics, had no meaningful translation in the Yishuv. By engaging in political activities that went against the dominant mood in the Yishuv, Magnes was seen as abusing his position as chancellor of the Hebrew University. The public, students complained, were unable to "differentiate between his actions and his position as chancellor of the University."[36]

Joseph Klausner, whose house was destroyed during the riots, rejected Magnes's position as unrealistic because Arabs would never agree to a strong Jewish community in Palestine. But the chair of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University maintained enormous admiration for the chancellor of the Hebrew University: "We always remained antagonists in many matters of principle. But I honored and respected his uprightness and his humanistic ideals, his nobility and gentleness, and his wonderful ability to rise above all differences of ideas as long as he felt the opposition stemmed from a pure conscience and from honest inner conviction, and not from any ulterior motive."[37]

From the perspective of Zionist leaders, the admiration Magnes received from Jews in Palestine made him an important person to contend with. Moreover, by placing his ideas in the public arena, the chancellor of the Hebrew University forced Zionists to respond to his American ideas and debate the relationship between Zionism and democracy, an issue many Zionists wanted to avoid discussing publicly as they feared public scrutiny. Because Jews were a minority in Palestine at the moment, Zionists wanted to postpone democracy until they had a majority. They criticized Magnes for presenting a negative image of the Zionist movement, and ultimately for not understanding, or supporting, Zionist objectives.

Chaim Weizmann expressed an ambivalent attitude toward Magnes and his ideas. Unlike many Zionists, Weizmann refrained from demanding Magnes's resignation from the Hebrew University. In light of the Wall Street crash, such a move could be financially devastating to the Hebrew University.[38] But he did fear that Magnes would turn the Hebrew University into a political instrument for his ideas, and thereby compromise its reputation. The president of the World Zionist Organization, however, was more concerned with how Magnes's ideas would affect the goals of the Zionist movement once they entered the public discourse. Weizmann opposed Magnes's democratic ideals as politically dangerous and a threat to Zionist aims and complained that "Magnes behaved like a child in having agreed to everything before the Arabs said a word in our favor." Yet Weizmann simultaneously maintained that he supported "cooperation with the Arabs on binational lines."[39]

This apparent contradiction actually reveals important insight into Weizmann's criticism of Magnes. Weizmann, while sympathetic to Magnes's ideas, found his tactics politically problematic. For Weizmann, in advocating for democracy, Magnes ignored the fragile political situation and could potentially do irreconcilable damage to the Zionist project. Like Magnes, Weizmann wanted to form a partnership with Arabs, but believed it could only be achieved through political negotiation with the British government as a third party. Weizmann and Magnes agreed that Arab leaders could not be trusted. But whereas Magnes felt this should not impede on Jewish efforts to reach a peaceful agreement, Weizmann believed that Arab intransigence made it politically impossible to negotiate with them. If Zionists were to come to any negotiations already offering a democratically elected legislative council, they would be left with no room to negotiate to protect their interests.

Weizmann was also angry that Magnes was so willing to act independently. He feared, for example, that Magnes was undermining the authority of the Zionist leadership by gaining popularity among Arabs. An Arab newspaper, Weizmann complained, wrote "that the Arabs are prepared to discuss matters with men like Magnes or Bergman, but Jabotinsky and Weizmann are extremists." Weizmann accused Magnes of being a "Tartuffe" who was breaking "our united front, presenting matters as if we do not want peace."[40]

At the same time, Magnes forced American Zionists to address their belief in American ideals of democracy and their claims that Zionism was founded on the principles of liberalism. They responded defensively. Stephen

Wise feared that Magnes and his friends in Brit Shalom were turning "liberal opinion" in America "against us [Zionists]" by criticizing Zionist policy toward Arabs.[41] Yet in response to Magnes, a public debate erupted among American Jews eager to demonstrate that Zionism could coexist with American ideals of democracy. Some argued for delaying democracy. Others maintained that there were practical reasons why democracy was not suitable in Palestine. Until Jews represented a majority of the population in Palestine, these Zionists opposed the establishment of democratic institutions. Democracy at that particular moment would simply destroy Zionist objectives. They agreed that in Palestine the "'democratic principle' should not be applied.'" The relatively moderate National Board of Hadassah, for example, "were shocked" at the thought of "granting representative rights to the Arabs."[42]

American non-Zionists were equally troubled by Magnes's activities. His actions increasingly strained what had previously been a solid relationship. American non-Zionists sympathized with his ideas but felt his acting independently showed him to be politically incompetent. Nor were they willing to prod the Zionists to push for democracy: they were unwilling to strain their new relationship with the Zionists over an ideological issue. Magnes may have thought that the non-Zionists would pressure the Zionists, but instead they placed the political unity between Zionists and non-Zionists above ideology. Magnes had placed Felix Warburg in a very awkward position by forcing him to choose between loyalty to a long-time friend and his recent success with the Jewish Agency. Like many American non-Zionists, while he expressed "full sympathy" with Magnes's views, Warburg felt it inappropriate for Magnes to voice them independently at a time when unity had just been achieved between Zionists and non-Zionists. The whole Arab issue, Warburg wrote to Magnes, which had "driven a wedge to cause a split-up among Jews," was only exacerbated by Magnes's speeches and articles. Because of his position in the Jewish Agency, Warburg thus felt that he could not "publicly back" Magnes, although he hoped "this agitation against [him] will die out." Cyrus Adler was also disturbed by Magnes's actions. Magnes had previously maintained that the chancellor of the Hebrew University should not be engaged in political issues. This was the argument he had used when he declined Warburg's invitation to be involved in the Jewish Agency. But now, Adler complained, Magnes seemed to be going against his own principles. His "method" of acting on his own accord, without the sanction of the Jewish Agency, undermined the agency's authority and stunned Zionists and non-

Zionists alike. Magnes also received angry telegrams from American Jews who considered Magnes's "tactless unauthorized meddling [in] Palestine affairs" as "dangerous propaganda" veering on "treason." French Jewish leaders including Baron Edmund de Rothschild later expressed their anger. In a meeting with Magnes in February 1931, he explained why he opposed Magnes's activities. "We must," the baron insisted, "hold them [the Arabs] down with a strong hand." Moreover, he demanded that "your university . . . should have nothing to do with the political situation, but rather with things of the intellect."[43]

In the months immediately following the Arab riots, it should be stressed, Magnes had no intention of engaging in direct negotiations with Arabs. Arab leaders like Fakhiri al-Nashashibi had expressed an interest in meeting with Magnes. Fakhiri al-Nashashibi, a leading figure in the Opposition Party against the Arab Executive (the unofficial representative body of Arabs in Palestine), had favored cooperative efforts with Zionists since the early 1920s. Although publicly hostile toward Zionism, the Opposition believed that once they defeated the grand mufti, Jewish-Arab cooperation was possible.[44] Just days after the Hebrew University address, Joseph Levy came to Magnes's office at the Hebrew University to tell him that Fakhiri al-Nashashibi was anxious to meet with him. Magnes hesitated. Demonstrating that he understood on some level the criticisms against him, he explained to Levy that he had no political position in the World Zionist Organization or the Jewish Agency. Were he to begin meeting with Arab leaders, he would be speaking for no one but himself. Thus, even though Fakhiri considered him "the fairest Jew in Palestine," Magnes declined to meet him.[45]

For the moment at least, Magnes saw himself as politically impotent and as more an ideologue than a politician. He chose to take the position of a critical Jewish intellect, hoping to offer a new ideological direction for the Zionist movement. His objective in the months following the riots was to change Zionism, to alter the ideological platform of the Zionist leadership so that the pursuit of a peaceful relationship with Arabs would become a central Zionist tenet. He felt great "sorrow," however, "at the lack of Zionist policy" on Arabs, "or" what he believed could be outright "intransigence." Thus, instead of negotiating with Arabs, he decided to answer his Jewish critics in a lengthy pamphlet titled *Like All the Nations?*[46]

Magnes's objective, first formulated in America during and immediately after the First World War, was to hinge the prestige of Zionism with Jewish ethical values. With the publication of *Like All the Nations?* and his protest

that there "is no central action" to cooperate with Arabs, Magnes hoped to induce Zionists to reach an understanding with their neighbors in Palestine. As he explained to Stephen Wise, the period after the Arab riots represented "a testing-time for Judaism, and not a time to fall prostrate before the idol with clay feet named Organization." He therefore wanted "to take advantage of this exceptional moment and try to mould the Jewish mind and heart in the image of its higher and better self."[47] When he looked back several years later he complained that, even though several "leading Arabs" had approved his plan, the Zionist leadership "were not interested" and "were enraged that anyone should try to find the basis of agreement."[48]

In the pamphlet's very title Magnes drew attention to the conflict between the Zionist effort to normalize the Jewish people and his claim that the Jewish people are a unique nation. The title *Like All the Nations?* referred to a biblical passage (2 Samuel 7:23) that declares Israel is a unique nation in the eyes of God. But Magnes's title also made reference to Theodore Herzl's attempt to normalize the Jewish nation, to make it like all other nations, by giving it a territory and a state.

In the main article in the pamphlet[49] Magnes addressed the tension between the Herzelian effort to normalize the Jewish nation and his own belief in Jewish exceptionalism. Jews, it seemed to him, had a choice between establishing their life in Palestine as a "'normal'" nation on the basis of "force and power" or as a unique nation based on their ethical tradition of "human solidarity and understanding." Although the Quakers were not a nation, as a religious society they provided a model to follow.[50] Ideally Jews should "make every possible effort politically as well as in other ways to work hand in hand . . . with the awakening Arab world." He stressed that Jews should "repeople" their homeland based on the "long ethical tradition of Judaism." In terms of specific plans, he admitted that he was "no expert in political science" and asked others to take up his ideas. But he did present a clear sense of his priorities: "Immigration. Settlement on the land. Hebrew life and culture."[51]

In applying his American democratic ideals to Palestine, Magnes sought to "Americanize" the conversation about the future of Palestine. As he outlined it, an egalitarian pluralistic democracy could exist using American governmental structures as a model. Instead of a simple legislative council, he suggested having two houses (what he termed "chambers") like the United States Congress. The lower chamber would be elected by the population and give Arabs a majority. The upper chamber would be elected equally from the three nationalities, Arab, Jewish, and British. "This is

similar to the United States," Magnes wrote, "where the Senate is composed of two representatives of each state in the Union, large or small, populous or sparsely peopled, thereby expressing the equal rights of the states constituting the Union." On this model, just as each state was represented equally through the Senate, Magnes wanted each nationality represented equally through the upper chamber.[52]

Demonstrating the influence of American pragmaticism on his thinking, like the American progressive philosopher John Dewey,[53] Magnes also emphasized that government itself could be an educational tool for democracy; experience should be the guide for Arab-Jewish relations. He advocated for self-government in Palestine as a means of getting Jews and Arabs to work together. First, institutions had to be established to allow Arabs and Jews to interact with one another on a daily basis. The practice of self-government would teach both Jews and Arabs to transcend their national interests. A binational government, he believed, "may realign parties along other than nationalistic lines, cutting through present groupings and bringing into one party those Jews and Arabs who have common economic and social interests." Then pluralism could work in Palestine.[54]

Magnes's pamphlet only further marginalized him from Zionists and non-Zionists alike. By pressurizing them to reevaluate their positions on Arabs, he threatened the fragile and tenuous unity Zionists and non-Zionists had only recently achieved.[55] Moreover, after the publication of the Shaw Report in the spring of 1930, Magnes's ideas posed an even greater threat to Zionists.

The Shaw Report, based on the findings of a British commission sent to Palestine to investigate the causes of the August 1929 riots, placed responsibility for the riots on the Arabs. Arab animosity, the Shaw Report explained, stemmed from their frustration at having their national aspirations squashed. Arabs wanted self-government, and they feared that continued Jewish immigration would have a negative effect on their own economic well-being. After the Shaw Report was published, Sir John Hope-Simpson was appointed to submit a more detailed report on the economic conditions in Palestine in order for Britain to develop a specific policy. While Hope-Simpson prepared his report, the British government decided to withhold all immigration certificates.[56] Extremely disappointed with the details of the Shaw Report, many Jews concluded that the Shaw Commission had been "unsympathetic to the Jewish case."[57]

The Shaw Report made Magnes's public views more perilous for Zionists. They feared that his ideas, because they were expressed by an influential

Zionist, would be seen as sanctioning the Shaw Report. They rushed to silence and dismiss him before he had an opportunity to influence British policy. Zionists dismissed his calls for democracy by arguing that it would immediately lead to an Arab state. In June 1930 the Political Committee of the Jewish Agency once again discussed Magnes's position. Weizmann attacked Magnes for being irresponsible. His activities were dividing the Jewish Agency. Nor was Palestine ready for a democratic government.[58] Under Magnes's plan, as the majority, Arabs would dominate over Jews, leaving no room for the establishment of a Jewish national home. Weizmann explained his position to Magnes, maintaining that democracy should be opposed until Jews were a majority.[59]

Leading Zionists in the Yishuv agreed with Weizmann. Frederick Kisch criticized Magnes for believing "everything can be attained" through "a policy of renunciation." The chancellor of the Hebrew University seemed to him too idealistic: "I often wonder how Magnes reconciles this naïve conception with the daily outpourings of the Arab press which covers its pages with hate and provocation directed against Jews."[60]

Even while they dismissed Magnes, however, Zionist leaders addressed the issues he raised. As Magnes's ideas entered the public discourse, after the publication of the Shaw Report, Weizmann thought it vitally important that Zionists initiate their own plan and asked Pinhas Rutenberg to develop one with the British Colonial Office. The plan Rutenberg subsequently submitted called for separate Jewish and Arab councils and a joint advisory committee to work with the British.[61] While both Weizmann and Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield supported the plan, several Zionist leaders were concerned about granting Arabs their own elective body. The anti-Zionist High Commissioner Sir John Chancellor, however, was most adamantly opposed to the plan, and intervened to turn the Colonial Office against the Rutenberg plan.[62]

In October 1930 the Hope-Simpson Report was published along with Britain's statement of policy, known as the Passfield White Paper. The Hope-Simpson Report gave a negative view of economic conditions in Palestine; it claimed that industrialization was only a remote possibility and that little land was available for future agricultural settlement. The Passfield White Paper stated that the British were equally obligated to Jews and Arabs and that any continued Jewish immigration must be based on Arab consent. The high estimated number of landless Arabs, moreover, was blamed on Jewish land purchase, which needed to be restricted. Jews around the world were horrified. The British government appeared to be backing away from

the Balfour Declaration and to be in complete sympathy with Arab farmers, blaming Jews for their plight. Both Weizmann and Warburg, signaling their feeling that the British had completely betrayed them, offered their resignations from the Jewish Agency.[63]

Brit Shalom, in contrast, while also suspicious of British intentions, saw value in Hope-Simpson's suggestion of a legislative assembly and urged for something on a "much broader democratic basis." Magnes thought Brit Shalom displayed too conciliatory an attitude. At a Brit Shalom meeting, he condemned the Hope-Simpson Report, declaring that the "method" and "tone" was completely "unsatisfactory." Much of the biased report demonstrated favoritism toward the Arabs, Magnes complained, and "rancor" against Jews.[64]

Magnes's contemporary critics placed him in the same camp as Brit Shalom.[65] His response to the Hope-Simpson Report and the Passfield White Paper, however, illustrates that he did not align himself directly with Brit Shalom and often exhibited the same views as the Zionist leadership. While some Brit Shalom members shared many of the same ideals (particularly the Bergman-Kohn faction of Brit Shalom), they offered a much more conciliatory policy than Magnes did toward both Arabs and the British government. As a result of his democratic ideals and his own experience in American Jewish politics, Magnes expressed more concern with minority rights than they did. In the 1930s Magnes suggested, for example, that the Brit Shalom program included the need for a "democratic legislative assembly" that "safeguards" minority rights.[66]

Magnes shared the humanitarian ideals of Hugo Bergman and Hans Kohn, but he disagreed with their readiness to appease Arabs. Concurrently, he supported some of the fundamental Zionist demands, such as free immigration to Palestine (based on the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine as determined by independent experts) and the recognition of the Balfour Declaration, but he opposed Zionist politics. Caught in between, Magnes chose to work independently based on his own American democratic ideals. By remaining independent, Magnes enabled himself to resist the dominant discourse in the Yishuv and to carve out a separate space for himself where he could offer a critical position and an alternative language for Zionism, one that coalesced democracy, Jewish ethics, and Jewish nationalism. True, he could have easily done that by joining Brit Shalom. But in his eyes he was in between Brit Shalom and the Zionist leadership, and it was that space in between that he sought to solidify.

Magnes's discontent with Zionist efforts to work with Arabs is exemplified by his refusal to work with the Bureau of Jewish Public Bodies in

Palestine (BJPB). This organization, which consisted of the Jewish Agency, Va'ad Leumi, and Agudath Israel, hoped to improve the Jewish-Arab relationship by coordinating Jewish efforts to develop the economy in Palestine. They hoped that in light of the Shaw Report and the Hope-Simpson Report, loans by Jews to Arab farmers would both develop the Arab economy and also improve the relationship between Jews and Arabs. They reasoned that boosting the financial situation of Arab tenant farmers with Jewish loans would make them less dependent, and less tied, to Arab landowners. Those involved hoped that Arab tenant farmers would eventually see Jewish settlement as beneficial. Magnes, unconcerned with the complex Zionist politics related to loans to Arabs, chose to work independently rather than join the BJPB. In December 1930 he met with Arab leaders from villages around Nazareth. Discussions focused on Muslims forming an association that would seek peace with Jews. Magnes also proposed that a bank be established to grant loans to Arab farmers. When Frederick Kisch learned of Magnes's activities, he criticized him for acting independently and encouraged him to join the BJPB. Kisch had ideas about the BJPB granting loans to Arab farmers that he wanted to discuss with Magnes. Not interested in working with the BJPB, Magnes responded by explaining that "my views . . . would seem to be rather different from those of the bureau."[67]

By 1930 Magnes distrusted Zionist efforts to cooperate with Arabs and questioned the extent to which they were genuine. The BJPB's activities appeared more like Zionist public relations than a reflection of any real effort to help Arab farmers.

By 1930 Zionists feared Magnes's willingness to act independently, which threatened to undermine their own political objectives. Frederick Kisch sought to include him in Zionist initiatives to control him.

Magnes also continued to embroil the Hebrew University in controversy related to the Arab-Jewish conflict. In the early 1930s, at the opening and closing ceremonies, special university events, and fund-raising speeches, he spoke about the Hebrew University's role in Arab-Jewish relations, focusing on the ethical character of the Jewish people and religion. During the dedication ceremony of the new building for the university library in April 1930, for example, he suggested that the scholars at the Hebrew University should create "an overwhelming ideal, a form of living together that makes for justice and peace." Several years later, at a Hebrew University reception dinner in New York, Magnes complained that Zionists focused on the "primacy of the nation" and completely disregarded the "higher values" of Judaism.[68]

In 1931 Magnes created a new position at the Hebrew University, the chair of International Peace, for his friend Norman Bentwich. The inaugural lecture on February 10, 1932, became a subject of controversy in the Yishuv. Just prior to the inauguration, the Covenant of Terrorists, an organization founded by Revisionists in 1930, wrote threatening letters to Magnes. At the inauguration, when Bentwich began his lecture "Jerusalem, City of Peace," voices from the crowd told him to talk to the mufti instead of them. After the crowd haggled him for fifteen minutes, Bentwich began again, "but they resumed the row, throwing stink bombs and showering pamphlets saying that the student society of Revisionists resented Norman's appointment." Finally, a British guard stood beside Bentwich while he gave his lecture on peace. Revisionist students subsequently boycotted Bentwich's lectures. Bentwich's wife could not help but comment, "It's bad enough to be persecuted by the British for being a Jew, but it's worse to be persecuted by your fellow Jews for being the kind of Jew you are."[69] As he tirelessly pursued a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine, Magnes began to share these sentiments.

Searching for a Role in Arab-Jewish Relations

Meanwhile, criticism from Jews as well as British Conservative and Liberal Party leaders against the Passfield White Paper soon led to a modification of British policy. A committee of British and Jewish Agency representatives composed an agreement that affirmed the British commitment to the Mandate and that Britain had no intention to change previous immigration policy. The agreement was confirmed in a letter dated February 13, 1931, from British prime minister Ramsay MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann. MacDonald's letter represented a great political achievement for Weizmann, who agreed to remain head of the Jewish Agency until the next Zionist Congress. Neither the Jewish Agency nor Jews were being held responsible for Arab tenant farmers losing their land. Arabs in Palestine were furious. Feeling betrayed, Arab leaders called for a policy of noncooperation with the British.[70]

Magnes saw this as an opportunity for Jews to begin meeting with Arab moderates before Arab extremists got the upper hand, something he had advocated for since publishing *Like All the Nations?* the year before.[71] The question remained with whom to negotiate. Magnes maintained that Jews "could be carried along" to his ideas "if only Moderate Arabs would show themselves."[72] Zionists, leery of negotiations, wanted to make sure that any negotiations with Arabs were done with men who could influence Arab policy.[73]