



The Secret Testimony of the Peel Commission (Part I): Underbelly of Empire

LAILA PARSONS

The Peel Commission (1936–37) was the first British commission of inquiry to recommend the partition of Palestine into two states. The commissioners made their recommendation after listening to several weeks of testimony, delivered in both public and secret sessions. The transcripts of the public testimony were published soon afterward, but the secret testimony transcripts were only released by the United Kingdom's National Archives in March 2017. Divided into two parts, this article closely examines the secret testimony. Part I discusses how the secret testimony deepens our understanding of key themes in Mandate history, including: the structural exclusion of the Palestinians from the Mandate state, the place of development projects in that structural exclusion, the different roles played by British anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism, and the importance of the procedural aspects of committee work for understanding the mechanics of British governance. Part II extends this analysis by focusing on what the secret testimony reveals about how the Peel Commission came to recommend partition.

IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH 1936, attempts by successive British high commissioners in Palestine to establish a shared Jewish-Arab legislative assembly effectively came to an end when both the House of Lords and the House of Commons attacked the idea in debate. The high commissioners intended that the legislative assembly would represent (albeit with limited authority) the combined Arab and Jewish population of Palestine: a single, united body for a single, united territory. Palestinian leaders who had tried to persuade the British to establish such a legislative assembly were shocked and disillusioned by the strength of opposition to the idea in the British parliament. Zionist leaders, by contrast, were relieved. They had opposed a legislative assembly—at least one built on proportional representation—given that the Jews remained a minority in Palestine, making up only 29 percent of the total population in 1936.

The mass Palestinian uprising against British rule—that later became known as the Great Revolt—began the following month, in mid-April 1936. Although the Palestinians had engaged in armed resistance against British rule before 1936, this new revolt was widespread, highly organized, and sustained. Arab fighters from outside Palestine also joined the struggle. To crush the revolt, the British army employed brutal measures, including mass arrests, house

demolitions, and executions. The revolt lasted until 1939 and led to the exile and imprisonment of most of the Palestinian leadership. In the middle of the revolt, during a period of truce, a British royal commission visited Palestine. The final report of the Peel Commission (as it later became known, after its chairman, Lord Robert Peel) appeared in July 1937. It recommended the termination of the British Mandate, as it currently stood, and the partition of Palestine into two separate states—one Arab and one Jewish. The Peel recommendations, supported by the Colonial Office, signaled that some British policy makers had definitively abandoned the plan to establish a shared legislative assembly. The Peel Commission stood apart from previous British commissions to Palestine because it was the first time that an official British body recommended the end of the Mandate and formally endorsed the idea of a Jewish “state” in Palestine rather than the much weaker formulation of a “national home for the Jewish people.”¹

The royal commission arrived in Jerusalem on 11 November 1936. Peel, who chaired the commission, had served in the early 1920s as secretary of state for India. The other commissioners included two other senior colonial officials: Laurie Hammond, who had served as governor of Assam in the late 1920s and chairman of the Indian delineation committee in 1935–36; and Morris Carter, who had served as governor of Tanganyika Territory in the early 1920s and chairman of the Kenya Land Commission in 1932–33. The committee’s legal expert was Harold Morris, who was then president of the Industrial Court in London. The Middle East expert was Horace Rumbold, a retired diplomat who held posts in Cairo and Tehran and who had also served as high commissioner in Constantinople in the early 1920s, when the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on behalf of the British Empire. The academic on the commission was Reginald Coupland, Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford. Coupland was an Africanist and an editor of the *Round Table* journal in 1917–19. J. M. Martin, the secretary, carried out the day-to-day procedural work. He acted as the liaison between the commissioners and those who provided testimony. The commissioners stayed at the King David Hotel, and most of the testimony was heard in a British government building that had formally been the Palace Hotel, which Haj Amin al-Husseini had built to house the World Islamic Congress of 1931.

During the months following November 1936, the commission listened to hundreds of hours of testimony, in public and in camera. The latter were also referred to as “the private sessions” or “the secret sessions” at the time. The official terms of reference, set before the commission left London, were as follows:

To ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances which broke out in Palestine in the middle of April; to enquire into the manner in which the Mandate for Palestine is being implemented in relation to the obligations of the Mandatory towards the Arabs and the Jews respectively; and to ascertain whether, upon a proper construction of the terms of the Mandate, either the Arabs or the Jews have any legitimate grievances upon account of the way in which the Mandate has been, or is being implemented; and if the Commission is satisfied that any such grievances are well-founded, to make recommendations for their removal and for the prevention of their recurrence.²

According to the procedures, anyone could apply to give either public or secret testimony, or both, so long as they adhered to the application process and deadline. The Arab Higher Committee (AHC),

formed in April 1936, and headed by al-Husseini, presented itself as the official representative of the Palestinian people. Before the commission left London, the AHC made it clear that they would not give any testimony unless there was a suspension of Jewish immigration. The British government did not meet this demand, and the AHC boycotted the commission during its first few weeks in Palestine. In January 1937, however, the AHC lifted its boycott after being persuaded to do so by King Abdullah, Nuri al-Sa'ud, and Ibn Sa'ud (often referred to at the time as "the Arab Kings"). Members of the AHC then gave public testimony to the commission. The Palestinians did not participate in the secret sessions, even though commission procedures entitled them to apply to do so. By contrast, Zionist leaders and ordinary members of the Yishuv gave copious testimony, both in the public sessions and in the secret sessions. British officials working for the Palestine Government at all levels also gave both public and secret testimony, as did Britons living and working in Palestine who were not connected to government.³

The transcripts of the public testimony to the Peel Commission were published at the time and have been available to scholars since the late 1930s. But the transcripts of the secret sessions remained classified and were only made available in March 2017, when the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office transferred a set of files to the National Archives at Kew as part of a general release of material that had long been labeled as "nonstandard files." Because of its recent release, the secret testimony has not been used up until now as a source for Mandate history generally, or for the Peel Commission in particular. This article offers a first evaluation of this newly available material, and it is divided into two parts.⁴

Part I discusses how the secret testimony deepens our understanding of some key themes of Mandate history, including: the structural exclusion of the Palestinians from the Mandate state, the place of development projects in that structural exclusion, the different roles played by British anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism, and the importance of committee work and procedures for understanding the mechanics of British governance. Part II builds on this analysis and focuses on what the secret testimony tells us about how the Peel Commission came to recommend partition. Because the secret testimony exposes precisely how commissioners broke with their terms of reference by discussing partition in-depth during the in-camera sessions, the article extends—and in some instances, revises—recent scholarship on partition by Penny Sinanoglou, Motti Golani, Arie M. Dubnov, and Laura Robson. More generally, it connects the Peel Commission's secret sessions to the broader contexts of British imperial rule, Zionist political imaginings, and Palestinian resistance politics. But by focusing on the details of the commission's procedures and internal dynamics, the article casts light on how certain individuals used the privacy of the secret sessions to achieve their objectives.⁵

Commissioners held public sessions and secret sessions in Palestine during the same period, from mid-November 1936 to mid-January 1937. Public sessions and secret sessions were convened in the same room at the old Palace Hotel, and sometimes witnesses might give public testimony and secret testimony on the same day, moving into secret session after the lunch break. Commissioners also heard secret testimony in London, between February and May 1937, after their return from the Middle East. Witnesses were allowed to make and keep copies of their own public testimony, but not of their secret testimony. We know this from a note written by J. M. Martin, the secretary to the commission, when he passed the secret

testimony on to the Foreign Office for safekeeping in 1940. He said that copies of the secret testimony had been made only for members of the commission and their staff and that they should be kept confidential until that time when they could be made available because they might “be of considerable value to the historians of the remote future.”⁶

The transcripts of the secret testimony are longer than the transcripts of the public testimony to the commission. The secret testimony is 531 pages of densely typewritten text arranged in two columns. By contrast, the public testimony is only 389 pages in the same format. However, the total number of witnesses was roughly the same: sixty-one for the secret sessions and sixty-two for the public sessions. This tells us that commissioners and witnesses went into greater depth during their discussions in the secret testimony. Fourteen Palestinian leaders gave public testimony; no Palestinian leaders gave secret testimony. Of the leading Zionist figures who gave testimony, twelve did so in both the public and secret sessions, twenty-seven did so solely in the public sessions, and four did so solely in the secret sessions. Of the Britons who gave testimony, four did so in both the public and secret sessions, five did so solely in the public sessions, and thirty-eight did so solely in the secret sessions.* This discrepancy between the number of Britons who gave public testimony and the number who gave secret testimony, combined with the longer length of the secret testimony, indicates that British officials clearly favored the secret sessions as a space where the business of the commission could get done. There is also evidence that some British officials advised Zionist leaders to choose to give secret testimony because particular arguments they were planning to make would be more persuasive if articulated in private to the commissioners. Of course, the mere fact that the secret sessions were closed does not mean that all the secrets of the Peel Commission are revealed in these transcripts. But this article will show that the discussions held in the secret sessions were far closer in content and style to the *ex parte* informal discussions taking place among British officials—as well as between British officials and Zionist leaders—than were the discussions held in the public sessions.⁷

The fact that the secret testimony is not a written composition, but a real-time transcript of a series of lengthy dialogues, makes it especially vivid. And viewed as a complete text, it exhibits a kind of narrative arc. The expertise of the commissioners grows as they move through the questioning of witnesses. In the last quarter of the transcript, the commissioners press witnesses on particular issues that they have identified as important from earlier testimony. Some questioning indicates the moment when specific commissioners drew the conclusion—presumably during backroom discussions—that the final report would in fact recommend partition. This occurs when those commissioners, breaking with their own terms of reference, begin to ask key witnesses what they think of the partition solution as a way of gauging their reactions. The transcript also shows that some witnesses came to the secret sessions in order to respond to and to qualify testimony from the public sessions. In this way, the secret sessions provided an opportunity for witnesses to present arguments and evidence against claims made by their opponents in the public testimony.

* An appendix to this article, published as an online supplement at Palestine-studies.org, lists all those who gave either secret testimony or public testimony, or both. –Ed.

The Absence of the Palestinians from the Secret Sessions

The Palestinian leadership set out three clear conditions for their participation in the proceedings of the commission: stopping Jewish immigration to Palestine, stopping the sale of land to Jewish colonists, and establishing a legislative assembly. None of these demands was accepted.⁸ As if to add insult to injury, the British government proceeded with the issuing of a new immigration allotment in September 1936, despite the fact that the high commissioner had signaled to the Palestinian leadership that immigration would be frozen, at least during the commission's visit to Palestine. The issuing of a new immigration allotment was the immediate cause of the Palestinian leadership's decision to boycott the commission.⁹ More generally, by 1936, the Palestinians had completely lost faith in commissions of inquiry, having seen several commissions come and go in previous years: Palin in 1920, Haycraft in 1921, and Shaw in 1929. The reports issued by the earlier commissions contained recommendations favorable to Palestinian interests, but policy decisions always went in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, the AHC decided in January 1937 to drop its boycott of the commission and to give public testimony. The Palestinian leaders' public testimony shows them making a detailed and convincing case for their rights as the indigenous inhabitants of the land. This was published in the Arabic press and later appeared in booklets distributed throughout Palestine and other parts of the Arab world. Publishing the testimony in this way was designed to inform the Palestinian people, many of whom had either directly suffered from brutal British counter-insurgency methods, or knew those who had, of what exactly their leadership was saying to the commissioners. The AHC refused to participate in the secret sessions. The decision to give secret testimony was a different matter, particularly since the names of those who chose to give secret testimony were also published. Furthermore, procedurally speaking, witnesses had to request to give testimony regardless of whether it was public or private. They were not asked to testify by the commission.¹⁰

The document hints that some Palestinians and other leading Arab figures understood the political price of their absence from the secret sessions; a few tried to indicate to the commission that they might be able to give secret testimony if they were specifically requested to do so. For example, Francis Graham-Brown, the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem who was sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, testified to the commissioners that a group of Palestinian officials working for the government had approached him, saying that if the commissioners requested it of them, they would be able to provide statistical information that would be different from what the commissioners had heard up until that point in the proceedings. These Palestinian officials obviously understood that most of the statistical evidence being provided to the commissioners was generated by Zionist organizations and institutions. However, the commissioners denied the request on the basis of the procedural rule that they could not request evidence from people who had not themselves already come forward to give testimony. At the end of the public testimony of George Antonius, who was Lebanese but a strong and effective advocate for the Palestinian cause (particularly in British circles), there was a compelling exchange. Morris, the lawyer on the commission, told Antonius that he (Morris) understood that after the tea break, Antonius would continue his testimony in private.

ANTONIUS. I am prepared to certainly, if you wish. But not unless you wish me to.

MORRIS. I thought you were offering to, and I was going to suggest we could take your evidence in private at four o'clock, but if you particularly desire that it should be in public?

ANTONIUS. I would rather finish my evidence in public if it is all the same to you?

MORRIS. It is not all the same to me, but it shall be in public if you desire it.¹¹

The reluctance of Antonius and of others to be seen as volunteering to give secret testimony shows how seriously the Palestinian leadership took the public's view of their actions. The AHC had already disappointed many Palestinians when it dropped the boycott and agreed to cooperate with the commission by giving public testimony. But at least the public testimony was published in the press and was thus part of the Palestinian public sphere. In 1936–37, the Palestinian public sphere was alive with nationalist newspapers, rallies, strike committees, prisoner declarations, and rebel fighters. To choose to give *secret* testimony in such a climate would have indicated a break with the solidarity of the revolt. In addition, some Palestinians, particularly those working within the Mandate government, feared potential reprisals for breaking ranks by giving secret testimony, reprisals that might be directed by al-Husseini himself, or come from Palestinian rebel leaders in the countryside.¹²

In the absence of Palestinian testimony that would contradict Zionist claims made in the secret sessions, the agenda of issues under discussion—such as development projects, political infrastructure, the judicial system, the flaws in the British system of administration, and so on—proceeded relentlessly, with Zionist leaders and British officials sounding more and more like partners in a joint project. The way the secret testimony unfolded without the Palestinians reflected what was happening on the ground, as Jewish immigration to Palestine increased and a Jewish state-in-the-waiting was being built. Edward Keith-Roach, who held the important post of district commissioner of northern Palestine in 1936, referred in his testimony to the accelerating speed of Zionist colonization. He hoped to intervene by slowing down development projects and immigration, and by reserving land as inalienably Arab. He wanted this not because he cared especially about respecting Palestinian rights but because he felt that the Palestine government needed time to gather its breath and accurately assess what was really happening. In response to Keith-Roach's statement to this effect, Peel said to him: "Otherwise you must go rolling on?" Keith-Roach replied in the affirmative: "Yes, you have to roll on until one day you reach the cataclysm."¹³

Moral Blinders and the British System

Racism was embedded in the British colonial system, and the secret testimony is suffused with racist language. In this way it is not special. But the fact that the secret sessions were closed meant that the British commissioners and witnesses spoke their minds more freely and let out a particularly clubby kind of British racism that some, at least, would have been reluctant to express in public. Hence the racism in the secret sessions is sharper edged and even more blatant than in the public sessions. I will not dwell too long on reenacting this racism here. Suffice it to say that the language of the secret testimony is full of the genteel anti-Semitism prevalent among the British ruling class in the mid-1930s, particularly when

the commissioners are talking to non-Jewish British officials. The Jews in Palestine were often described as “menacing” and as “invading the professions” and “having the world forces of Jewry behind them [with their] training, experience and money.” Jews were also considered to be too modern or hypermodern. By contrast, Arabs were described as “medieval,” “slow,” and not of the “same calibre as the Jews.” In one example of the clubby racism that emerged when the British were alone in the room, Sir John Calderwood Strathearn, a British ophthalmic surgeon, described how, in a meeting at the Rotary Club, a member of a leading Palestinian family was “trying to make conversation” with a Hebrew University professor: “There was an attempt made to talk and to listen but as [Samuel] Johnson said about women preaching in Church—it always reminded him of a dog walking on its hind legs; it did not do it very well, but you were surprised it did it at all.”¹⁴ This disdain was often combined with a paternalism that—while superficially benign, even affectionate—was just as damning. For many of the British officials, Arabs were incompetent but lovable, whereas Jews were competent but unlovable. Zionist witnesses also contributed to the racist discourse, especially in the secret sessions.¹⁵

It is tempting to allow this racist discourse to distract us from how the secret testimony deepens our understanding of the subtle ways that British officials exercised their power. Because the secret sessions were the place where British officials really spoke their minds, the transcripts of the question-and-answer dialogue between commissioners and Britons working in Palestine expose the mechanics of the British system of rule, with its peculiar professional culture. Much of the British testimony is tethered to a decision-making logic that permeated the intricate imperial bureaucratic system, a system that had its own deep history and was largely impenetrable to outsiders. British officials could ignore the bigger picture by focusing instead on more prosaic issues such as the precise application of procedures, the technical aspects of development projects, the rigor in a particular analysis, and the completeness of evidence. Convinced of their own hard work, common-sense pragmatism, and loyalty to the system that they all served, British officials tended not to question their own right to rule. Generally speaking, they accepted the guiding principle of the Mandate, namely British support for a Jewish national home in Palestine. Indeed, debating the justice or injustice of British rule was seen as weakening their ability to get the job done. Such moralizing was considered frivolous, romantic, naive, self-indulgent, and contrary to the ethos of public service.¹⁶

An example of this can be found in the secret testimony of Arthur Wauchope, the high commissioner at the time. During his secret testimony, the commissioners pressed Wauchope on how the Palestine government interpreted the principle of economic absorptive capacity when deciding on the number of Jewish immigrants to allow into the country each year. The exact meaning of the phrase “economic absorptive capacity,” and more specifically how this capacity was measured, is a theme of the secret testimony. On one occasion, when breaking free from the technical details about measuring economic absorptive capacity, Rumbold broadened the conversation by pressing Wauchope to consider what Rumbold called the “long view” of Jewish immigration with regard to the future balance of population between Arabs and Jews. Wauchope refused to be drawn in and said that he was simply following instructions, adding that he had to “close [his] eyes to other things.”¹⁷ Later asked whether or not he inferred anything from the fact

that the text of the Mandate appeared inconsistent on the question of whether “the Mandatory” or “the Administration” had “the duty to govern,” Wauchope replied that he drew no inferences, saying “I feel I am a public servant and there it is.” He refused to be drawn into discussions about the ethical and political implications of the letter of policy.¹⁸

Numerous Zionist leaders understood the British system well. Chaim Weizmann was himself a British citizen, as were others working for the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency (henceforth JA). During his first secret testimony to the commission, Weizmann was asked to comment on the broader political implications of using “economic absorptive capacity” to gauge how many immigration permits should be issued. He echoed Wauchope when he replied that you could not add moral or political considerations to the algorithm of “economic absorptive capacity” because “you do not know where it will stop.” By this Weizmann meant that if you were to discuss the broader political implications of the number of immigration permits issued during each permit cycle, you would necessarily become bogged down in an endless debate between competing political interests. Zionist leaders were committed to “economic absorptive capacity” as the rationale for how many immigration permits should be assigned precisely because it kept the Pandora’s box of “political implications” firmly shut, while at the same time facilitating a steady stream of Jewish immigration to Palestine.¹⁹

Palestinian and Arab leaders similarly understood the scale of the system that they were up against, but they were not present in the secret sessions to challenge its basic legitimacy. However, they did what they could to mount such a challenge during the public sessions. In his testimony, Antonius elegantly exposed the absurdity of the British continuing to insist on their commitment to fair play in the face of overwhelming evidence of discriminatory British policies towards the Arabs of Palestine. Likewise, Fu’ad Saba politely mocked the stream of commissions of inquiry that the British had sent to Palestine over the years, as if, as he put it, “there must be some fatal disease in this country.” A few British officials did feel morally compelled to break with the system. Resignations on principle were rare, but they did occur. Thomas Hodgkin served as secretary to Wauchope during the early days of the Palestinian revolt and was one such conscientious objector. He resigned from what he termed “public service” in the wake of British military reprisals against rebel Palestinians because “to participate in the Government’s repressive measures is not only repugnant but impossible. By impossible, I mean, I suppose, morally impossible.”²⁰

The moral blinders worn by so many British officials explains their failure to perceive how, when, and why others acted on the basis of moral principle. In the early days of the revolt, hundreds of Palestinians working for the Palestine government signed a letter, written in English, addressed to the high commissioner and the secretary of state for the colonies. The letter objected to the brutal measures employed by the British army to crush the revolt and described in clear and compelling prose the basic injustice of the situation in Palestine. The commissioners raised the issue of this letter during the secret testimony of Hathorn Hall, the Palestine government’s chief secretary. Following a lengthy discussion of the petition-signers’ motives, the commissioners and Hall decided that they must have been driven by the need “to blow off steam” or “to save face.” It did not occur to any of the British men in the room that the petition was a genuine expression of moral and political outrage at the way Palestinians were being treated.²¹

Unequal Access as a Sign of Lax Governance

Zionist leaders were intimately involved in determining the terms of the Mandate from its very beginning. The research of James Renton, Sahar Huneidi, and John J. McTague shows how closely Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow, for example, worked with British officials and politicians to draft the Balfour Declaration and the articles of the Mandate for Palestine. Weizmann enjoyed access to the highest echelons of government in Britain. For example, in February 1931, he persuaded then-Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to issue a letter correcting and superseding the 1930 Passfield White Paper, which the Zionist leadership regarded as too pro-Arab. In the secret testimony itself, Weizmann admitted that he was even sent a draft of MacDonald's letter before it was made public so that he and others in the JA might comment on it and make any necessary amendments.²²

Before the Peel Commission left London, Weizmann and Arthur Lourie, the JA's representative in London, had weighed in on the commission's terms of reference. They also tried to obtain a guarantee that they would have a say in other procedural issues, including the order in which witnesses should be heard and whether or not the testimony should include secret sessions. In the dozens of National Archive files pertaining to the commission's formation or process, there is no evidence that any Palestinian leader was involved in any decision concerning the commission's terms of reference or its procedures.²³

Throughout the secret testimony, commissioners questioned British officials on the glaring imbalance between Zionist and Arab access to the British government. The tone of these conversations is different from those during the public testimony. In the public sessions, British officials stuck to facts and figures. In the secret sessions, commissioners and British witnesses openly discussed difference in access and the implications of this difference for British governance in Palestine. Commissioners expressed concern over the increasingly intricate institutional life of the Yishuv, which by 1937 looked like "another government being set up alongside the existing government," in the words of Peel. The absence of an Arab Agency to counterbalance the JA led one commissioner to ask a witness the following rhetorical question: "It is not equal chances at all? It is like putting a heavy-weight boxer against a light-weight? He knocks him out at once?" Peel's observation that a Zionist government was being "set up alongside the existing government" was underscored by what the commissioners actually saw when they left the Palace Hotel and walked around Jerusalem: "Their buildings in Jerusalem seem to dominate the place. They have all sorts of departments. There is nothing of that kind on the Arab side at all."²⁴

The commissioners probed witnesses on the nature and extent of day-to-day Zionist involvement in government decisions. In an exchange between the commissioners and British District Commissioner Keith-Roach about the fact that the JA consistently challenged the policy recommendations that Keith-Roach made to the Office of the High Commissioner, Peel asks whether the JA officers "have access to government as a sort of appeal against what you send to government." And when Keith-Roach confirms this, the questioning continues as follows:

PEEL. They [the JA officers or departments] always get in?

KEITH-ROACH. Always.

PEEL. You assume they will?

KEITH-ROACH. I know they do. I have proof after proof.

PEEL. But then, after that, are you consulted as to whether what they have represented to government is true or not? Are you asked your opinion?

KEITH-ROACH. Sometimes I am, sometimes I am not. Sometimes I get a note saying "please explain so and so." Very often the letter that is sent by Government to the Jewish Agency is not sent on to me, sometimes it is but at other times it is not.

PEEL. But it is always there as a sort of appeal against you?

KEITH-ROACH. Always, yes.²⁵

Keith-Roach went on to argue that Zionist leaders were able to "always get in" because they were too involved in the everyday decisions of British rule. He talked about Zionist "interference in [many] different departments of government" and the constant, "detailed presentation of facts" by Zionist officials. When one of the commissioners asks him whether the JA "has become almost another form of government," Keith-Roach responds in the affirmative: "Yes," he says. "It is very interesting to watch." By the end of the conversation, he concludes that "the Jewish Agency should only be allowed to consult government on questions of principle and on *no detail at all* [my italics]."²⁶

Beyond the question of day-to-day governance, commissioners also expressed anxiety about the broader issue of who the actual colonial power was in Palestine. They were repelled by the notion that the British government relied on Zionist institutions to carry out its own colonial work. The issue of who chose the Jewish immigrants that were allowed to enter Palestine preoccupied the commissioners. Some statements by Officer for Migration and Statistics E. Mills shocked the commissioners in the secret sessions. Mills was one of only nine British officials who gave public testimony. In his testimony, he restricted himself to describing technical details about the workings of the immigration process. It was only during the secret sessions that he gave his opinion about the soundness of that system, saying that "His Majesty's Government" was not "the colonizing power here; the Jewish people are the colonizing power and in order to facilitate immigration you must use such organs as they have created for the purposes of colonizing." Both Mills and the commissioners wondered whether this state of affairs had arisen from an excessively loose interpretation of the text of the Mandate. They were concerned in particular with the language around the concept of "co-operation" in Article 4 of the Mandate: "An appropriate Jewish Agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine," and how this language connected with Article 2: "The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home." Mills said that he considered the Jewish national home to be fully established by that point in the Mandate. When asked by the commissioners whether it should "be spelled out of the Mandate that the Mandatory is in fact the colonizing power," he replied in the affirmative. They concluded the conversation by agreeing that the Mandatory needed to "take a firmer grip."²⁷

The concern that Zionist institutions had become too closely involved in the day-to-day decision-making of the Mandate government, and that Zionist leaders enjoyed too much direct

access to British officials, did not stem from British worries about Palestinian rights. On the contrary, commissioners blamed the Palestinian leadership for the current state of affairs, frequently criticizing Palestinians' refusal to participate in the elections for a legislative council in 1923.²⁸ The commissioners were instead anxious about the reputation of the government of Palestine as a competent and effective organization. The fact that numerous British witnesses testified about their reliance on Zionist institutions for carrying out the work of governing startled the commissioners. In his testimony, Mills admitted that it was the JA, not the British government, that determined who received an immigration permit. As he put it, this was "a matter of convenience." Wauchope also described how he relied on the JA when deciding on the issuance of permits. Other witnesses admitted that statistics used by the British government to assess the need for particular public works projects often came from Zionist institutions because the Palestine government had established a special department for statistics only the year before.²⁹

In the opinion of several British witnesses, this heavy reliance on Zionist institutions had led some government departments to become slack. Lord Lytton, the chair of the Palestine Potash Company, testified that the Palestine government was "hopeless and obstructive."³⁰ W. J. Farrell, the director of education, talked about the inefficiencies in government, claiming that the response to incompetence in the various departments was to overcentralize. He put it in army-navy terms to the commissioners: "You know what is meant by an unhappy ship or an unhappy regiment, well this is an unhappy government."³¹ Hall described how the JA took over public works projects that would normally have been run by the government.³² He pointed to the fact that the Histadrut (the Zionist trade union federation) offered to top up the pay of Jewish workers so that the higher wages that the Histadrut required did not cause the British government to be out of pocket when hiring Jewish rather than Arab employees. The secret testimony also contains lengthy discussions about how to fix some of the broken mechanics of British government rule using specific bureaucratic reforms.

The notion that the work of governing was being outsourced to Zionist organizations, and that the government in Palestine had thereby become lax, caused a great deal of British consternation. Toward the end of the secret sessions, the suggestion that the Mandate be terminated and partition be imposed emerged as a solution to this problem. The testimony of Officer for Irrigation and Development Douglas Harris took place in the final days of the secret sessions in Jerusalem. Harris made a strong case for partition. Coupland, egging him on, asked if the problem of inefficient, overcentralized government would "be solved by your drastic proposal which you have put before us?" Harris replied, "Quite. There would be no government to decentralize." Part II of this article will cover the discussions around partition in depth.³³

Development and Jewish Superiority

As mentioned earlier, characterizing Arabs as backward and medieval—and the Jews as hypermodern—even permeated the lengthy technical discussions about development that took place during the secret testimony. Jacob Norris has shown how many development projects in Palestine during the Mandate were carried out by Zionist institutions or by Zionist individuals with British support. Norris has also pointed to the central place occupied by development in

the British view of their role in Palestine. He argues that development was the sphere in which Zionist leaders and British officials cooperated most closely, and conversely, that Palestinian attempts to win concessions from the British for development projects were systematically denied. The content of the secret testimony strongly supports Norris's account.³⁴

During the secret testimony, commissioners asked many questions about development projects of both British and Zionist witnesses. Witnesses brought detailed descriptions of development plans into the room, often with accompanying maps and diagrams. For example, Maurice Hexter, a U.S. citizen who had moved to Palestine in 1929 in order to administer the Palestine Emergency Fund and had become an executive member of the JA, presented a blueprint for developing the Hula Valley. He outlined how the British government could possess a stake in the management of the company that would spearhead the project without having to make any financial commitment: Zionist institutions would provide all the money. According to Hexter, this proposal dovetailed nicely with previous British plans for the Hula Valley, which had never been put into effect. When the commissioners questioned Hexter about what this would mean for Arab farmers, Hexter replied that the aim was "to improve, and I ask that that be taken at face value, the position of the Arab cultivator." But Hexter remained adamant that a substantial part of the Hula Valley would be set aside exclusively for Jewish development and Jewish settlement.³⁵

Ignoring the reality that Zionism had brought little to the Palestinians other than an explosion of landlessness, Zionist witnesses boasted about how their developmental projects would help the Arabs. Weizmann was particularly loquacious on this topic. In his first secret testimony to the commissioners, he went so far as to claim that "development will save the Arabs." But he was clear that only the Jews had the know-how to implement development projects, and that it was through the Jews that the British could fulfill their mandate to develop Palestine. Weizmann said, "I believe one can build on the Jew, not so much because I idealize him but because his interest is within the orbit of the British interest." He stressed the ways in which Zionist institutions could help the British improve "the fellah's" standard of living: "Supposing for the sake of argument you were to say to me Government wants to develop the hill country where the Jews have very little land, in order to improve the lot of the fellah, and an improvement in the lot of the fellah means greater stability to the country, would we like to bear a share in it? I would say without hesitation 'Yes, and a very big share.'"³⁶ Some British witnesses saw how the claim by both British and Zionist officials that development—the engine purportedly driving the Mandate forward—was "good for the Arabs" acted as a rhetorical salve to soothe troubled consciences anxious to distinguish development from colonization. During a discussion about whether modernization had improved the standard of living of "the fellah," R. D. Badcock, the assistant district commissioner in Jaffa, had the temerity to say to Peel, "I do not know that he [the fellah] necessarily desires what we call development." Peel snapped back: "I know he does not. . . . I want to know the hard facts and figures of the case. . . . Whether he considers that he is better off or not does not matter, that is another point, that is his own mind, but as far as the facts are concerned and the pure finance of it, you would say it was evenly balanced, would you?"³⁷

Of all the commissioners, Peel comes across as the most committed to the principle that bringing modernity to a "backward" race justified British support for Zionism. Peel insisted on pressing

witnesses for evidence of the improvements that Zionism had bestowed on Palestinian lives. Yet there were also British officials—some more high-ranking than Badcock—who rejected this view. Even the high commissioner pushed back against this line of argument during a discussion about the citrus industry in his final testimony. After saying that he did not think “the Arabs as a whole have benefitted very much,” Wauchope pointed out to the commissioners that despite Jewish claims that native citrus growers had imitated Jewish methods, “there are very rich and very intelligent Arabs who have made their money from citrus groves without any imitation of the Jews.”³⁸

Other British officials pointed out that contrary to Zionist claims, many Zionist enterprises actually failed. Even though the Mandate state had tipped into recession by 1935, the Zionists continued to claim that they needed labor for (supposedly) booming industries in Palestine. For Zionist leaders, “economic absorptive capacity” was the product of a simple algorithm: new Jewish-funded and Jewish-built factories required more Jewish workers; and the need for more Jewish workers in turn required an increase in immigration quotas. As the secret testimony reveals, however, British officials pointed to Zionist companies that failed soon after their establishment, mainly because of lack of raw materials. J. B. Mackie of Imperial Chemical Industries claimed that the relentless Zionist acquisition of land was not based on sound economic reasoning, referencing several instances where expensive farm equipment lay idle. He also attacked the idea of a thriving industrial sector saying that aside from one or two firms, most of the industrial enterprises in the country were “utterly unsound.” He went on to argue that the government should introduce a mechanism for checking the figures of Jewish companies so that “economic absorptive capacity” could be more accurately measured. Hall, in his testimony, raised similar concerns and cited a recent report by the government-appointed examiner of banks, which concluded that the state of the banks in the Yishuv was “extremely unsound.” None of these British officials who questioned the success of Zionist enterprises gave public testimony.³⁹

Most British officials echoed the mantra that Jewish immigration brought development and that development was good for “the Arabs.” And most discussions of development projects focused not on matters of principle but on the technical aspects of individual projects. Commissioners pressed both Zionist and British witnesses on soil quality, water-table levels, the suitability of specific drilling equipment, rainfall patterns, road construction, and so on. What is most striking about these technical discussions is that it is often hard to tell the difference between the conversations that took place between British officials and the commissioners and those between Zionist leaders and the commissioners. Cooperating on development projects was to the British and the Zionists’ mutual advantage. By contracting out some of the work and costs of the Mandate to Zionist institutions and companies, British officials could fulfill their responsibility as the Mandatory power while minimizing their own effort and expenditure. For the Zionists, an increase in the number and scope of ongoing development projects allowed them to point to growth in Palestine’s “economic absorptive capacity,” which resulted in increasing numbers of immigration permits. It was not in either side’s interest to delve too deeply into the question of whether these projects were economically viable in the medium-to-long term.

Part II of this article, which will appear in the next issue of *JPS*, will link the material presented in Part I to the question of why the Peel Commission recommended partition.

About the Author

Laila Parsons is professor of modern Middle East history at McGill University. She is the author of *The Druze between Palestine and Israel, 1947–1949* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 2000), and numerous journal articles on the 1948 war, on rebel soldiers in the interwar period, and on the place of narrative and biography in the historiography of the modern Middle East. Her most recent book, *The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence, 1914–1948* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2016), was the recipient of the 2017 Palestine Book Award and the Society for Military History's 2017 Distinguished Book Award.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For details of the debate, and the role of the British Labour Party in opposing the legislative assembly, see Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), p. 155. For earlier British attempts to establish Palestinian consultative institutions, see Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), pp. 109–39. For the Peel Report itself, see *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), available in the United Nation's digital archives at https://biblio-archiv.unog.ch/Dateien/CouncilMSD/C-495-M-336-1937-VI_EN.pdf. For Zionist opposition to the legislative assembly, see Sir Ronald Storrs, *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 396. For recent work on the Great Revolt (1936–39), see Charles W. Anderson, "From Petition to Confrontation: The Palestinian National Movement and the Rise of Mass Politics, 1929–1939" (New York University, PhD Diss. [unpublished], 2013); and Matthew Kraig Kelly, *The Crime of Nationalism: Britain, Palestine, and Nation-Building on the Fringe of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017). For British brutality, see Mathew Hughes, "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39," *English Historical Review* 124, no. 507 (April 2009): pp. 313–54.
- 2 *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, p. ix.
- 3 For cabinet discussions about the terms of reference and procedures of the commission, see National Archives (NA), Colonial Office (CO) 733/318/12. This includes letters about whether the testimony should be in public or in camera. For the decision of the AHC to boycott, see Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkirat Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza* (Dar al-Gharb al-Islami: Beirut, 1993), vol. 2, pp. 318–23. For the lifting of the boycott and the correspondence between the Arab Kings and the AHC, see 'Izzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkirat*, pp. 362–63.
- 4 The secret testimony is located at NA, Foreign Commonwealth Office (FO) 492/19. My thanks to Steven Wagner for alerting me to this release of new documents in the NA and for copying the documents for me. For more on the nonstandard files, see "Guidance: FCO Non-standard Files," GOV.UK, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fco-non-standard-files>. To be precise, a small number of Zionist witnesses kept records of their own secret testimony, and these records were available in various Israeli archives before March 2017.
- 5 Penny Sinanoglou, "British Plans for the Partition of Palestine, 1929–1938," *Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (March 2009): pp. 131–52; Penny Sinanoglou, "The Peel Commission and Partition, 1936–1938," in *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 119–40; Penny Sinanoglou, "Analogical Thinking and Partition in British Mandate Palestine," in *Partitions: A Transnational History of Territorial Separatism*, ed. Laura Robson and Arie M. Dubnov (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 154–72; Laura Robson, *States of Separation: Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 105–40; Motti Golani, "The Meat and the Bones: Reassessing the Origins of the Partition of Mandate Palestine," in *Partitions*, pp. 85–108; Arie M. Dubnov, "The Architect of Two

- Partitions or a Federalist Daydreamer? The Curious Case of Reginald Coupland," in *Partitions*, pp. 56–84. Other work related to the Peel Commission has informed this article, including, Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), pp. 31–139; Lori Allen, "Determining Emotions and the Burden of Proof in Investigative Commissions to Palestine," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, no. 2 (April 2017): pp. 385–414; Roza I. M. El-Eini, *Mandated Landscape: British Imperial Rule in Palestine, 1929–1948* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 314–44; Norman Rose, *Gentile Zionists: A Study of Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929–1939* (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 123–77.
- 6 J. M. Martin, handwritten note, 1 February 1940, NA, FO 492/19. However, we know that Weizmann broke this rule because he kept a copy of his own secret testimony that now sits in his private archive, Weizmann Archive (WA) 9–1954.
 - 7 Secret Testimony (ST), NA, FO 492/19. The Public Testimony can be found in facsimile in Aaron Kleiman, ed., *The Rise of Israel: The Royal Commission Report, 1937*, vol. 23 (New York: Garland Pub., 1987), pp. 43–450. From here on page references to the public testimony refer to the pages in the facsimile. The public testimony was also published by the government in 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission: Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions with Index* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937). For British officials giving advice, see "Note on an Interview between Dr Weizmann and Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, at Luncheon, Monday the 2nd of November, 1936," WA 12–1942.
 - 8 There is one Palestinian name listed in the list of witnesses giving secret testimony: Musa Effendi Nasir, who was working as a district officer in Ramla. His testimony is short and focused entirely on factual details about the government's responsibilities in his district. See ST, testimony of Musa Effendi Nasir, pp. 406–9.
 - 9 The British *did* agree to reduce the number of immigration permits issued in the next schedule and nearly agreed to a complete cessation of immigration, which the high commissioner had requested, but William Ormsby-Gore finally decided against it at the end of August 1936, after meetings with Weizmann. See Ormsby-Gore to Wauchope, 1 September, 1936, NA, CO 733/297/4. For the AHC statement on their conditions and their call for a stoppage of Jewish immigration, see NA, CO 733/297/2. The high commissioner issued a public broadcast right before the commission arrived in Palestine that did *not* include a statement concerning the stoppage of immigration, which many Palestinians were still expecting. See NA, CO 733/317/2.
 - 10 For the decision of the AHC to boycott, see 'Izzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkirat*, pp. 318–23. For the lifting of the boycott and the correspondence between the Arab Kings and the AHC, see *Mudhakkirat*, pp. 362–63; also see the letter from Akram Zu'aytar to the Peel Commission, 18 January 1937, Akram Zu'aytar private papers, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut. For the published pamphlet of Palestinian testimony, see *Majmu'at Shahadat 'Arab Filastin amam al-Lajna al-Malakiyya al-Britaniyya* (Haifa: *Jaridat al-Nafir*, n.d.), of Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza private papers, Amman. (My thanks to Dyala Hamzah for providing me with a copy of this document.)
 - 11 ST, Francis Graham-Brown testimony, p. 174; George Antonius [public] testimony in Klieman, ed., *The Rise of Israel*, p. 363. Interestingly, there is a letter from Antonius in the NA (dated April 1937) asking for an opportunity to give secret testimony to the commission once it was back in London, NA, CO 733/344/9. This must have been denied because Antonius does not appear in the transcript of the secret testimony.
 - 12 For more on Palestinian political parties and the challenge to elite politics, see Weldon C. Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Bayan Nuwayhid al-Hut, *Al-Qiyadat wa-al-Mu'assasat al-Siyasiyya fi Filastin, 1917–1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1981). Also see Anderson, "From Petition to Confrontation" and Kelly, *The Crime of Nationalism*.
 - 13 ST, Edward Keith-Roach testimony, p. 319. (In the transcripts of the secret testimony, Keith-Roach is identified as district commissioner of Haifa; in 1936, however, when he was giving testimony, he was still district commissioner for northern Palestine.) Edward Said describes the way that Zionist colonization during the Mandate rolled on with "[Jewish] farmers, schoolchildren, pedestrians

- even, going about their business with their backs turned"; see Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 102.
- 14 ST, John Calderwood Strathearn testimony, p. 279. For Jews being "menacing," see ST, Douglas Harris testimony, p. 442; for Jews "invading the professions," see ST, Hathorn Hall testimony, pp. 73–74; for Jews being more modern than Arabs, see ST, Wauchope testimony, p. 7 and Tulloch testimony, p. 399; for Arabs being "slow" and not of the same "calibre," said by Peel during Weizmann's testimony, see ST, Chaim Weizmann testimony, p. 55.
- 15 For Arabs being lovable and Jews unlovable, see ST, Lilian Bane testimony, p. 394. Churchill's secret testimony, which was published, is infamous for its racist reference to the Palestinians as being like the "dog in the manger" who did not have "the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time." See ST, Winston Churchill testimony, p. 507. For examples of Zionists saying racist things about Arabs, see ST, Weizmann testimony, pp. 48–49 and pp. 53–54; and David Ben-Gurion testimony, p. 361.
- 16 It is hard to find theoretical work that precisely explains the peculiar dynamics of the British system in the 1930s. Foucault's "governmentality," Arendt's "banality of evil," and Bourdieu's "habitus" are helpful, up to a point, but do not exactly correspond to what I see in the secret testimony. Some of the more empirical historiography on the development of British imperial institutions in the nineteenth century is more useful; see, for example, Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815–1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); and Mrinalini Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India," *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (October 2001): pp. 489–521. Joyce and Mukerji's article on logistical power and the state is helpful for understanding the impersonal force of procedure; see Patrick Joyce and Chandra Mukerji, "The State of Things: State History and Theory Reconfigured," *Theory and Society* 46, no. 1 (May 2017): pp. 1–19. Some recent work in political theory has helped me conceptualize the way the British system in Palestine set up a structure of exclusion; see Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Critiques of liberalism are also helpful: Anthony Angie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Dominic Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter History* (London: Verso, 2014); and Joseph Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016). However, critics of liberalism tend to focus more on ideas, and less on how the work of liberal empire created a specific professional culture.
- 17 ST, Arthur Wauchope Testimony, p. 28.
- 18 ST, Wauchope Testimony, p. 29.
- 19 ST, Weizmann Testimony, p. 167.
- 20 Antonius testimony and Fu'ad Saba testimony in Klieman, ed., *The Rise of Israel*, pp. 360 and 327, respectively; and *Majmu'a Shahadat*, pp. 67 and 47. (The Arabic testimony of Saba includes the taxation statistics that the commissioners requested of him, but it does not include his quip that "there must be some fatal disease in this country.") See also: Thomas Hodgkin, *Thomas Hodgkin: Letters from Palestine, 1932–36*, ed. E. C. Hodgkin (London: Quartet Books, 1986), pp. 186–89.
- 21 ST, Hall testimony, p. 436. For the petition itself, see "Memorandum Submitted by Arab Senior Government Officials on June 30th, 1936 to the High Commissioner in Palestine," Akram Zu'aytar private papers.
- 22 James Renton, "Flawed Foundations: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate," in *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 15–37; Sahar Huneidi, "Was Balfour Policy Reversible? The Colonial Office and Palestine, 1921–23," *JPS* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1998): pp. 23–41; and John J. McTague Jr., "Zionist-British Negotiations over the Draft Mandate for Palestine, 1920," *Jewish Social Studies* 42, nos. 3–4 (Summer–Autumn 1980): pp. 281–92. For Weizmann's role in the MacDonald letter, see ST, Weizmann testimony, p. 207. For an article that questions the importance of Weizmann's role in the reversal of the Passfield White Paper, see Carly Beckerman-Boys, "The Reversal of the Passfield White Paper, 1930–31: A Reassessment," *Journal of Contemporary History* 51,

- no. 2 (2016): pp. 213–33. For the different levels of access enjoyed by the Yishuv and by the Palestinian community to British decision makers, see Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, pp. 31–139.
- 23 NA, CO 733/318/12 contains memoranda and correspondence concerning the terms of reference: cabinet discussions (18 May 1936) about Weizmann's meetings with Lord Plymouth and Ormsby-Gore; and letters from Weizmann to Ormsby-Gore asking to be consulted on the terms of reference; letters concerning whether or not the testimony should be in public or in camera, including a letter from Arthur Lourie to J. M. Martin (19 August 1936). NA, CO 733/297/4 is an additional file containing material about the terms of reference and discussions concerning the language of a "statement of policy" for the Peel Commission. Here, too, there are numerous exchanges between Weizmann and Ormsby-Gore.
- 24 For the quote from Lord Peel about "a government alongside the existing government" and the JA buildings in Jerusalem, see ST, Churchill testimony, p. 505. For the quote about the lightweight boxer, see ST, Francis Henry Humphrys testimony, p. 500.
- 25 ST, Keith-Roach testimony, p. 317.
- 26 ST, Keith-Roach testimony, p. 322. Edward Said coined the phrase "the discipline of detail" in his essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979): p. 36. Sherene Seikaly expands on Said's observations about detail to show how British rule worked to exclude the Palestinians; see Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), pp. 169–178.
- 27 ST, E. Mills testimony, pp. 41 and 421; Mills [public] testimony, Klieman, ed., *The Rise of Israel*, pp. 1–13.
- 28 For Herbert Samuel's attempts to introduce a legislative council, see Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, pp. 109–39. Wasserstein also discusses attempts later in 1923 to offer the Palestinians an Arab Agency. In addition, see Lauren Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), chapter 2. Banko shows that the proposed council limited the power of Arab representatives to pass laws because they would have been outnumbered by British and Jewish representatives. The high commissioner would also have had the power of ultimate veto.
- 29 ST, Mills testimony, p. 36–46, quote on p. 41. Mills worked hard to build up a department of statistics in order to lessen British overreliance on Zionist statistics. For Wauchope's reliance on the JA when issuing immigration permits, see ST, Wauchope testimony, p. 25.
- 30 ST, Lytton testimony, p. 510.
- 31 ST, W. J. Farrell testimony, p. 265.
- 32 ST, Hall testimony, pp. 437–438.
- 33 For Harris and Coupland on partition, see ST, Harris testimony, pp. 439–444. In his public testimony, Antonius also criticized the government for its inefficiency and incompetence: *Majmu'at Shahadat*, p. 67.
- 34 See Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), and "Toxic Waters: Ibrahim Hazboun and the Struggle for a Dead Sea Concession, 1913–1948," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 45 (Spring 2011): pp. 25–42. Others who have shown such cooperation during the Mandate include, for example: Ronen Shamir, *Current Flow: The Electrification of Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); and Fredrik Meiton, *Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019) and "The Radiance of the Jewish National Home: Technocapitalism, Electrification, and the Making of Modern Palestine," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 4 (October 2015): pp. 975–1006.
- 35 ST, Maurice B. Hexter testimony, p. 118; and Harris and Lewis Andrews testimony, pp. 63–71. For more on the drainage of the Hula Valley, see Glenna Anton, "Blind Modernism and Zionist Waterscape: The Huleh Drainage Project," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 35, (Autumn 2008): pp. 76–92; and Sandra M. Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920–1947* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

- 36 ST, Weizmann testimony, pp. 54 and 219. For the fact that Zionist settlement had led to an explosion of Palestinian landlessness see Charles W. Anderson, "The British Mandate and the Crisis of Palestinian Landlessness, 1929–1936," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 2 (March 2018): pp. 171–215.
- 37 ST, R. D. Badcock testimony, p. 252.
- 38 ST, Wauchope testimony, p. 454.
- 39 Keith-Roach testimony, p. 320; J. B. Mackie testimony, p. 366; and Hall testimony, p. 426. During the public testimony, Palestinian leaders refuted the claims that development had been good for the Arabs; see *Majmu'at Shahadat*, particularly Saba, pp. 47–52. Discussions about the failure of various Zionist companies are intriguing; because of the tendency in the historiography to reify and exalt Zionist knowledge and capabilities, we have relatively little scholarship on Zionist failure. For more on this, see the concluding section of Part II of this article, which will be published in *JPS* 49, no. 2 (Winter 2020). Many Palestinians also participated in a discourse of modernization, although not to justify Zionist settlement. For more on the topic, see Samuel Dolbee and Shay Hazkani, "'Impossible Is Not Ottoman': Menashe Merovitch, 'Isa al-'Isa, and Imperial Citizenship in Palestine," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 2 (May 2015): pp. 241–62; and Seikaly, *Men of Capital*.