

KADİR HAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL, RECOGNITION OF A NEW STATE IN THE
MIDDLE EAST AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS ON THE TURKISH PUBLIC
(1936 – 1956)

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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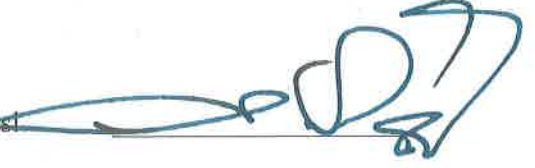
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ONAY TARİHİ:

“Ben, Karel Franco Valansi, bu Yüksek Lisans Tezinde sunulan çalışmanın şahsıma ait olduğunu ve başka çalışmalardan yaptığım alıntıların kaynaklarını kurallara uygun biçimde tez içerisinde belirttiğimi onaylıyorum.”


KAREL FRANCO VALANSI

ABSTRACT

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL, RECOGNITION OF A NEW STATE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS ON THE TURKISH PUBLIC (1936–1956)

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Master of Science

Philosophy in International Relations

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Salih Bıçacı

May, 2016

The nationalist outlook of the Turkish state since the beginning of the Republican era targeted uniform identity formation. While it did not recognize the existence of ethnic identities as long as they were Muslim, non-Muslims were challenging this ideal. During this social engineering, the religious minorities and the state had very turbulent relations. The Jews were presented as model citizens to other religious minorities. However, they were not accepted as equal citizens and the mistrust the state had for them resulted in many discriminative legislations. Following the Second World War, a new state was established in the Middle East. During the Cold War, the Soviet threat led Turkey to recognize the State of Israel established as a Jewish state. The main reasoning of Turkey in recognizing Israel was to strengthen its position in the Western camp. Following its creation, a surprisingly high number of Turkish Jews immigrated to this new country.

This research is an attempt to investigate the first three decades of the Republic for its public including the religious minorities of Turkey with a special focus on the Jewish community as it is one of the major links between Turkey and Israel. The research analyzes the Turkish public reaction to the establishment and recognition of the State of Israel by Turkey and tries to shed light on the reason of this mass immigration which is the second biggest immigration out of Turkey after the labor immigration to Europe starting from the 1960s. This research used Bakhtin's Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) to illustrate the different perspectives and to analyze the developments in an objective and impartial way. It aims to show the reflections of the Turkish public by their experience and their narrative.

Keywords: Turkish Jews, Minorities, Turkey, Israel, Migration, Foreign Policy, Recognition

ÖZET

İSRAİL DEVLETİNİN KURULMASI, ORTA DOĞU'DAKİ YENİ DEVLETİN TANINMASI VE TÜRK HALKI ÜZERİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI (1936-1956)

Karel Franco Valansi

Uluslararası İlişkiler, Yüksek Lisans

Danışman: Doçent Dr. Salih Bıçakçı

Mayıs, 2016

Türkiye'nin içinde barındırdığı tüm farklılıkları birleştirici tek bir kimlikte bir toplum inşası sürecinde tüm etnik kimlikler Müslüman olmaları halinde kapsayan bir anlayış geliştiren Cumhuriyet, gayrimüslim toplulukları bu ideal içine tam bir yere yerleştiremedi. Toplumunu yeniden yapılandırma aşamaları sırasında gayrimüslim topluluklar ile devlet arasında çelişkili ve sıkıntılı bir ilişki hüküm sürdü. Yahudiler diğer gayrimüslim topluluklara örnek vatandaş olarak gösterilmelerine rağmen eşit vatandaş olarak kabul edilmediler. Devletin gayrimüslimlere duyduğu güvensizlik birçok ayrımcı kararı da beraberinde getirdi. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın ertesinde Orta Doğu'da yeni bir ülke kuruldu. Soğuk Savaş döneminin Sovyet tehdidi karşısında Türkiye, Yahudi bir devlet olarak kurulan İsrail'i tanıdı. Buradaki asıl amaç Batı kampındaki yerini sağlamlaştırmaktı. İsrail'in kurulmasının ardından Türk Yahudi cemaatinin önemli bir bölümü bu yeni ülkeye göç etti.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk 30 yılını gayrimüslim vatandaşları dahil Türk halkı açısından inceliyor. İsrail ile Türkiye arasındaki ana bağlardan biri olması sebebiyle Yahudi cemaatine ayrı bir önem verildi. Türk halkının İsrail'in kuruluşuna ve Türkiye'nin bu yeni ülkeyi tanımasına verdiği tepkiyi inceleyen araştırma, Türk Yahudilerinin önemli bir bölümünün neden İsrail'e göç ettiğini cevaplandırmaya çalışıyor. Bu göç, 1960'larda başlayan Avrupa'ya işçi göçünün ardından Türkiye'nin tanık olduğu ikinci büyük göç dalgası. Bakhtin'in Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA)'sını kullanan çalışma, bu sayede toplumu oluşturan bireylerin farklı algılarını ve gelişmelere verdikleri tepkileri tarafsız ve objektif bir biçimde incelemeyi hedefliyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Yahudileri, Azınlıklar, Türkiye, İsrail, Göç, Dış Politika, Tanıma

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This study is dedicated to my mom and dad...

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

At midnight on May 14th, 1948, the State of Israel officially came into being upon the termination of the British mandate in Palestine following various clashes among the Arabs, Jews and British forces. The United States *de facto* recognized the new state within minutes,¹ but it was Stalin's Soviet Union that granted the first *de jure* recognition to Israel, two days after the declaration of statehood². The existence of a Jewish state in an Arab Muslim dominated region initiated a series of conflicts between the newborn country and its neighbors.

The Soviet sponsored coup in Czechoslovakia and the elections results of Italy showed the increased influence of the Soviet Union. These developments caused security concerns among Western European countries. In order to avoid their rapprochement with the Soviet Union, the United States became closely involved with European affairs. Containment, meaning blocking the expansion of Soviet influence, remained the basic strategy of the U.S. throughout the Cold War, until the collapse of communism in 1989. Formulated by Foreign Service Officer George F. Kennan in 1947³, containment became the basis of the Truman Administration's foreign policy. The Marshall Plan⁴ in 1948

¹ The United States recognized the provisional Jewish government as de facto authority of Israel. De jure recognition of the Jewish state was extended on January 31st 1949. The U.S. Recognition of the State of Israel <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/us-israel/> and <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/israel/palestin.htm> (Accessed on October 23rd, 2015)

² For detailed information on Russian foreign policy please read: Galia Golan, *Soviet policies in the Middle East from World War Two to Gorbachev* (New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1990)

³ George F. Kennan (X), "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" *Foreign Policy* July 1947 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1947-07-01/sources-soviet-conduct> (Accessed on May 16th, 2016)

⁴ For further details see on Marshall Plan: A Marshall Plan for Europe published by DGB Confederation of German Trade Unions. http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/a_marshall_plan_for_europe_full_version.pdf (Accessed on December 8th, 2014)

aimed to rebuild Europe that was in ruins after the Second World War. The U.S.'s core objective was to protect its area of influence. Building markets for American goods was another reason behind these extensive investments.⁵ With the Truman doctrine⁶, the U.S. provided economic and military aid to Turkey and Greece, reinforcing their bloc. In order to contain the Soviet Union, the idea of collective defense system led to the formation of North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) in 1949.

During this turmoil, Turkey, a Muslim majority country, recognized Israel nine months following its declaration, in March 1949. Turkey's tendency to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel in spite of a negative Arab reaction was due primarily to Israel's alignment with the West. During the Cold War, Turkey's foreign policy was shaped by the Soviet threat. Consequently, Communism was perceived by the Turkish ruling elites as the main threat of the time. Being part of the Western or the Communist camp, led by the world's superpowers, was an unavoidable choice for countries to make. Turkey's camp was clear since the establishment of the Republic in 1923; it wanted to be part of the Western bloc.

While Turkey was clearly on the West bloc, Israel gained the support of both superpowers; the United States and the Soviet Union - an extraordinarily rare agreement between them during this period of great enmity.⁷ In order to maintain bilateral, balanced relations with both sides, Israel adopted a policy of *i-hizdahut* (non-identification) based on non-engagement with any bloc. There were numerous reasons behind this decision.

⁵ Steven W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009), 51-54.

⁶ For further details see on Truman Doctrine: David Caute, *The Great Fear* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978)

⁷ Avi Shlaim, "Israel between East and West, 1948-1956" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36:4 (2004): 657-673.

Israel wanted to maintain the support of both parties. Economic aid and access to arms was crucial. Both blocks contained large numbers of Jews that Israel needed to protect and/or wanted them to immigrate to Israel. Most Israeli leaders were from Russia or Eastern Europe, and they had sympathy to the Soviet Union. Yet fundamentally, Israel was part of the West because of its culture.⁸

When the Soviet Union changed its pro-Israeli policy, Israel moved openly toward the West camp.⁹ This move was the main reason for Turkish rapprochement to Israel. The relations between Turkey and Israel developed gradually. For Israel, Turkey was the key to break the isolation circle around it.¹⁰ It was an advantage to have relations with a non-Arab Muslim country in its vicinity. In addition, Turkey was in a strategic location, secular and pro-American.

It was in 1952 that Turkey and Greece were accepted as members to NATO. The decision to accept Turkey and Greece into alliance was a natural consequence of the Truman Doctrine of extending military and economic aid to states vulnerable to the Soviet threat. Both countries were seen as security barriers against the spread of Communism in Europe. Both had anti-Communist governments and their military contribution to the approaching Korean War was necessary to stop the expansion of the Soviet Union and China. The world was primarily divided between Warsaw Pact and NATO Pact.

Turkey's relations with Israel were built on Ankara's concerns over the reaction of the Arab world.¹¹ The country weighted the reaction of the Arab states and did not want

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's quest for recognition and acceptance in Asia* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2005), 4-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ Dan Arbell, "The US-Turkey-Israel Triangle" *Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Analysis* No. 34, (October 2014)

to break off from them completely.¹² On the other hand, the Soviet threat and the desire to be part of the NATO pact shadowed the religious solidarity with the Arab states. There was always a caution in developing diplomatic relations with Israel as Turkey hesitated from the Arab reaction, but this and the sensitivities of its own population did not prevent Turkey from starting diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with Israel. Flexibility and pragmatism marked the Turkish foreign policy of the era.

Turkey and Israel maintained their relations with ups and downs over the years. Turkey downgraded relations with Israel to the level of *chargé d'affaires* after The Suez Canal crisis in 1956. Nevertheless, it was just two years later that Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes met in secrecy, which marked an important turning point in bilateral relations known as ‘peripheral alliance’ or ‘ghost pact’¹³

1.1. Turkish Public Reaction

Within this context, this study tries to illustrate the Turkish public reaction to the establishment and recognition of the State of Israel. As mentioned, there was always caution in developing diplomatic relations with Israel as Turkey considered the Arab reaction. On the other hand, there were also the sensitivities of Turkey’s own population that should be taken into account. Religious solidarity with the Arab people and the creation of a Jewish state in a former Ottoman land may have resulted in some protests or at least some question marks in Turkish society.

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/10/09%20Turkey%20us%20israel%20arbel%20trianglefinal.pdf> (Accessed on December 6th, 2014)

¹² Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December 1999): 132.

¹³ Ofra Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship; Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders* (London: Palgrave, 2010)

The nationalist and assimilationist outlook of the Turkish state since the beginning of the Republican era targeted uniform identity formation among its members. While it did not recognize the existence of ethnic identities as long as they were Muslim, non-Muslim communities were challenging this ideal. Turkey had inherited a large number of non-Muslim population from the Ottoman Empire with the Jewish community as one of them. The state policy against the religious minorities under the protection of the Treaty of Lausanne was reflected in the immigration waves out of Turkey which began early, starting in the very first years of the Republic.

The one party regime and a state controlled press were necessary for successful reforms for the modernization process in Turkey but also for the social engineering of desired characteristics in the population. While the state tried to assimilate all differences, renouncing all distinct identities in order to create a unique identity formed under the name 'Turk', non-Muslims could not fit into it. The creation of a Jewish state in 1948 and the reaction of Turkey's Jewish citizens are crucial to understand the Republican story for them. While public opinion did not directly affect Turkey's foreign policy decisions especially in the Middle East, its consequences resulted in a radical change in the population composition.

This research intended to understand how the Turkish public reacted to the recognition of the State of Israel and to the start of bilateral relations between the two countries emphasizing the relation of the Turkish state with its religious minorities and especially the Jews. To achieve that, the second chapter will explain the establishment of the State of Israel starting from the Russian immigration waves to Palestine¹⁴ following

¹⁴ Territorial clarification of Palestine will be explained in this chapter, as the naming of the territory is a central part of the problem.

the assassination of the liberal tsar of Russian Empire in 1881. Every immigration wave changed the already established Jewish community in Palestine. This research will try to underline the cause and effect relations of the events between Arab and Jewish communities of Palestine. “Why did an agricultural community feel the necessity to have armed forces?” is the main question regarding the Jews of Palestine. “How did the Arab community decided on the major dilemma between recognizing Jewish rights in Palestine or starting an all or nothing war against them?” is the major question for the Arab population. The history of the mandate of Palestine is important to understand the dynamics of the region. To this end, the population, demographic of the people, and the way they lived before the creation of the State of Israel will be described. Civil and military Jewish organizations established since the immigration waves will also be explained as these organizations formed the structure of the future State of Israel.

The introduction of the Palestinian problem to the international community by bringing it to the United Nations (UN) changed the political nature of the issue. The reality of *HaShoah* (Holocaust), the UN partition plan of Palestine and the creation of the State of Israel will be explained in addition to its reflections in Turkey.

Chapter three will shed light on a larger picture of the Turkish society until the Second World War, focusing on the non-Muslim minorities. The opinion of the Muslim public towards the non-Muslims and vice versa, including the law and decrees affecting this relation, will be explained from each side’s perspective. As the major point of connection between Turkey and Israel is the Jewish community in Turkey, the life and the events that affected them stands as an important part of the research. This chapter will try to clarify the expectations of the Turkish public from the Republican era and the end result after three decades.

Chapter four will discuss the Second World War and its implications for the Turkish public. The rise of fascism and the victories of the Nazis affected the Turkish politicians, journalists and public as well. From the Turkish press, one can easily differ which groups were pro-Nazi and which were not. It was a subject of polarization but there were not major public discussions as the press was largely controlled by the state. It is crucial times for the Turkish Jews as the fear caused by the news coming from the concentration camps throughout Europe was mixed with the war time legislations that discriminated against the religious minorities in Turkey. Preoccupation and anxiety marked this era for the Turkish Jews who had already formed several secret Zionist groups to protect themselves and/or to search for a safe haven. Numerous mass emigration waves from Turkey to several countries started following major developments like the Thrace events and the Capital Tax. ‘Hospitality of the Ottoman Empire to the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492’ and ‘the loyalty of this community were major discourses on Turkish Jews, but this ‘positive picture’ could not stop the immigration of approximately 34,000 Turkish Jews to newly established Israel around 1948. This chapter will try to clarify their reasons of immigration throughout the Republican era. An historical background of Turkish Jews will be provided to explain the factors that pushed this segment of the Turkish society to make the hard decision to leave the country or to stay. In this chapter the main question is; “Why did the Jews leave Turkey?” It will try to explain the events from the perspective of the Turkish public through memoirs, leaders’ statements, newspaper articles, and interviews.

Chapter five, will explain the diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations between Israel and Turkey. It will try to present the reaction of the Turkish public to the establishment of the State of Israel and its recognition, with a focus on the Turkish Jews struggling to become equal Turkish citizens in the eyes of the Turkish public while the

idea of having its own sovereign state in the historical land of Israel was becoming a reality. The understanding of their experience will be enriched by memoirs and articles published in the Turkish press. The main question of this chapter is; “What was the reaction of the general public and the Turkish Jewish community to the creation of the State of Israel and to the immigration of the Turkish Jews to Israel?”

1.2. Methodology

The most difficult studies are those based on human communication analysis. It tries to examine the interaction of diverse perspectives in a sociological and historical context. As different segments of the community have different perspectives, mindsets, and collective memories, they may interpret the facts very differently. While the meaning of a fact or an occurrence can be perceived differently by various participants, each participant may orient the perspective of the other participant as well. This research will try to give the facts as impartially as possible and to present the perceptions and interpretations of these, by different parties. It will analyze spoken and written actions of different parties in their own place, time, and significance. To this end, this research will use Russian literary critic, theorist, and philosopher of language Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1895-1975) Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) to achieve this goal. With the use of DNA, this research intends to illustrate the different perspectives and to analyze the developments in an objective and impartial way, giving voice to every member of the society affected by the occurrence.

A story always has multiple dimensions hidden in itself. In DNA, Bakhtin emphasizes that there are many aspects of the same story. DNA recognizes that there are many more perspectives and voices to collect in order to fully understand the story. As

political theorist Andrew Robinson explains it; “Each character has their own final word, but it relates to and interacts with those of other characters.”¹⁵

DNA differs from content analysis; a method that counts various aspects of a content or occurrence, as it also adds the impressions of the society. Content analysis limits itself to examine the words and phrases as a qualitative research technique. On the other hand, DNA studies the mirroring between what is told and the perception of the story by different listeners.

This study aims to show the reflections of the Turkish public by their experience and their narrative. It is an attempt to understand through the press, memoirs, expressions, stories, and dialogues the misunderstandings, the mistrust in the Turkish society and the relations between different groups. Although earlier studies identified the historical perspective of the issue, none in my knowledge combined an oral historical perspective to their study with a comparative approach.

History books are great sources to understand the general story, the governmental perspective of the occurrences, and the perspective of only the elites in the society. As it is allied with the state, history is considered as a well-established hegemonic discipline. However, to understand their consequences to the ordinary people, one needs some other tools. Oral history is an important tool as it gives agency to the individual. Oral historian Leyla Neyzi says that it shows how history affects the ways the individual construct their life story narratives and identities.¹⁶ Another tool is the press. While history books

¹⁵ Andrew Robinson, “In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia” *CeaseFire Magazine* 2011. <http://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/> (Accessed on October 21st, 2014)

¹⁶ Leyla Neyzi, “Oral History and Memory Studies in Turkey.” *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*. Eds. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, Philip Robins, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 443-459.

preferred to write about the greatness, the successes of the leaders or ruling elites, newspapers had become a major source of information in documenting historical events and in following the change and differences with time, to understand the daily life of the ordinary man. The ordinary man can also be understood by memoirs, novels, and documentaries. This research will conduct interviews with the Turkish Jewish community to understand their concerns, their experience in the Republican era, and their reason for choosing either to migrate to Israel or other countries, or to stay in Turkey. This research tries to add an understanding of their emotions and their experience to the cold façade of the history. All of these tools combined, will help construct the story and understand in depth the feelings and attitudes of Turkish society.

The research planned to illuminate the hidden part of the story by giving priority to the views, memoirs and anecdotes of the Turkish population of all religious background. It will look through the national newspapers and magazines as well as Jewish newspapers to comprehend various aspects of the situation.

In light of this information, this study aims to understand Turkish-Israeli relations from the perspective of the Turkish citizens themselves, in giving an account to the experience of the Turkish Jews. The Jewish community living in Turkey, and the Turkish Jews migrated from Turkey to Israel around the year 1948 and currently living in Israel constitutes the empirical case for the comparative study. Since there are limited figures who could tell the situation in the frame work of the thesis subject, one utilized snowball technique to locate information rich subjects and to conduct interviews. To position these interviews into the context of International relations, oral history is the main constituent of this research. However, finding information rich subjects was a serious difficulty encountered during the research. One limited the empirical case to those who migrated

during 1948s by their own will. Just by rough calculation someone who was 15 years old in 1948, would be in his/hers 80s. One was not sure if would be able to find many people fitting this definition or even if they would be able to remember and describe their life in Turkey and the reasoning behind their decision to leave the country. This decreased the number of potential interviewees. Language might have been another issue but we were able to speak in Turkish and Spanish and one needed the assistance of a Hebrew translator with only one of the interviewees, upon his request. The interviewees were found with the help of the Jewish community in Turkey and the Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel based in Batyam, Israel. Another difficulty encountered was that the majority of the potential interviewees refrain from talking. This is a hesitation or fear caused by the historical learning that will be explained during the research.

Kenneth Waltz's levels of analysis approach will be used to explain the international level, the state level and the individual level. These three components will be explained as follows: First, the historical facts will be explained to give the necessary background to understand the global, national, and social climate of the time. Second, Turkish public reaction will be analyzed through newspapers and memoirs. Third, the Turkish Jewish community's feelings will be investigated through direct interviews with community members who decided to move to Israel around 1948, and by their written memoirs. All of these components will be unified in this research to show a comparative perspective of the public reflection on early Turkish-Israeli relations.

1.3. Literature Review

This research will use Turkish national press, Turkish Jewish press, and oral history consisting of narratives and memoirs as its primary sources. Academic papers and books

on Turkish-Israeli relations, Ottoman history, Turkish Jews, and history of Palestine and Israel will also be used to enrich the research.

During the literature review, one realized that the historical level of the events is very well explained and presented in detail. The difference of this research is that it analyzes the bilateral relations of Turkey and Israel with a special focus on Turkish public narrative rather than just the historical chronology of the events that led to establishment of the relations. How the Turkish elite reacted to the bilateral relations, how the politics affected the perception of the public, and how the developments affected the Turkish Jewish community will be presented to clarify the public opinion.

This research uses major studies to reach its aim. For the history of Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel one have used several books, studies, and publications, including Gudrun Kramer's *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), Ilan Pappé's *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Alan Dowty's *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), David W. Lesch's *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Mike Berry and Greg Philo's *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories* (London: Pluto Press, 2006). The works of Rifat N. Bali¹⁷, Avner Levi's *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), and Ayhan Aktar¹⁸ were essential to explore the untold truth about the negative effects of the

¹⁷ Rifat N. Bali, "Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi" *Ne idi? Ne değildi?* (Istanbul: Libra, 2014); *1934 Trakya Olayları* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012); *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005); *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003); *Cumhuriyet yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Devlet'in Örnek Yurttaşları (1950-2003)*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009); *Devletin Yahudileri ve "Öteki" Yahudi*. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010); *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013)

¹⁸ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, "Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project" *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December 1999); Ayhan Aktar, "Tekinalp" *Taraf*, February 6th, 2012; "Trakya Yahudi Olaylarını 'doğru' yorumlamak" *Tarih ve Toplum*

nationalist wave of the Republican era. Minna Rozen's *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945*, is another important demographic reference. For the Turkish-Israeli relations, the third part of the research, the PhD dissertation of George Emanuel Gruen¹⁹ and Ofra Bengio's²⁰ works is one's main guide. In addition to personal interviews with Turkish Jews who had immigrated to Israel during 1948, One was lucky to find some unpublished memoirs of Turkish Jews who immigrated during the 1930s and 1940s in the library of the Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel located in Batyam, Israel.

The lack of memoirs from Turkish diplomats was an important setback for the study. Another setback was the inefficiency of libraries in Turkey. For example, Atatürk Library, the major library in Istanbul with newspaper archives, lacked the necessary technological developments. The newspapers were not available on computer they were not even protected by a plastic cover. They were not in good condition. Some pages were missing and some pages were torn apart. The most important difficulty was the lack of some newspaper volumes from crucial dates such as 1947, 1948, and 1949. According to the library staff, the missing volumes were sent for reparation but one could not reach them during the entire period of research. The archive of *Şalom*, Turkish Jewish community's only surviving newspaper, was relatively better as there was the possibility of demanding the pdf version. However, the newspaper archives were in a similar condition and the first issue of the newspaper dated October 29th 1947 was missing. *Cumhuriyet* newspaper was

Dergisi, November 1996 No. 155. 45-56; *Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme Politikaları*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000)

¹⁹ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970

²⁰ Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears: Arab Perceptions of Turkey and Its Alignment with Israel" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 2001), pp. 50-92; Ofra Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship; Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders* (London: Palgrave, 2010)

a relief in this case as one has full access to its archives from its internet site. In the absence of newspapers representing the different opinions of the era, one decided to look through available newspapers and try to understand the spirit of the era.

1.4. Turkish Press

During the 1930s, there was no separate “world news” section in the newspapers. Important news was given as headline or in the first page and the rest could be found in several different pages. The events in the mandate of Palestine was not a major topic. There were some journalists who focused on the subject but in general Palestine was not one of the main concerns of the Turkish press during the 1930s. From this, one can conclude that the Arab cause in Palestine was not internalized. On the other hand, with the knowledge of the state pressure on the press, it may also be said that this was the reflection of the Turkish foreign policy of the one party era. The news about Palestine were mostly translated from the British press. There were not many original pieces by Turkish journalists based in Palestine. The news was given surprisingly impartially. It may be concluded that the negative image of the Arabs in the was still vivid in collective memory of the Turkish public, due to their uprising against the Ottomans.

The relationship between the Turkish Jews and the state was complicated and shifting policies towards the minorities can be clearly seen through the newspapers. While the Jews in Palestine and then of Israel were not criticized and had a relatively more positive image, the press was very critical of Turkish Jews. Israel was a Western country and ally of the United States, and there was an admiration for their dedication to create their own country and to the progress they made in Palestine. Yet the respectable image of the Israeli or American Jews was not applied to the Turkish Jews. Turkish Jews were criticized for their language, accent, and their loyalty was continuously questioned. Even

the German academics in the 1930s and the Jews in the refugee boats escaping the Nazi horror via Turkey in 1940s were subject to similar critiques and insults.

1.5. Two Critical Clarifications

In order to proceed with the research, one feels the urge to clarify two important concepts. In such a complex subject, Palestine and Zionism are most of the time used outside of their real meaning and thus create a misunderstanding or prejudice in different times and under different circumstances. For this reason, these two concepts are explained in this section to provide the reader with a better understanding.

1.5.1. Territorial Clarification

Such a polarized topic requires some clarification regarding to the toponymy and political geography of the territory called Palestine/Israel, which held different names throughout history. Naming the region, where the struggle of Israelis and Palestinians continues still today, is one of the major problems encountered in research. The name Palestine confuses the minds as it is at the same time the name given to the Arabs of the region; Palestinians. To clarify this confusion, this research would like to underline that Palestine is the name given to a geographical region and not to a sovereign state. This confusion led to perceive Palestine as an Arab state, and the Palestinians as the historical inheritor of the land. However, as explained in detail below, the name Palestine was not used during the Ottoman era and Palestine was the name preferred by the British during their mandate. Accepting Palestine as the land of the Palestinians meaning Arabs, led to deny the Jewish bond to the land causing the de-legitimization of the State of Israel. This research is not an attempt to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, this misunderstanding caused by the term Palestine affects the understanding of the history of Palestine, thus needed to be clarified. It is also noteworthy that in 1930s and 1940s, during

racist protests or in anti-Semitic articles, in Turkey and in Europe, Palestine was the address shown to the Jews with the slogan “Go to Palestine!”²¹

The word Palestine derives from ‘*Philistia*’, the name given by Greek writers to the land of Philistines, who occupied the southern coast in 12nd century B.C.E. Philistines were not Semites as Israelites and Arabs are, but of Greek origin.²² Bernard Lewis explains that the region originally denoted to the coastal region North and South of Gaza was occupied and settled by the Philistine invaders from across the sea.²³ He adds that the coast and its hinterland were known by different names in antiquity; Canaan, Eretz Israel, and finally Israel and Judah to designate the two kingdoms.

While the term Palestine refers to a narrow band of fertile territory between the desert and the Mediterranean Sea, inhabited since the earliest times,²⁴ the Arabs describe Palestine as the territory between Syria and Egypt and according to the Jews, it is from the Nile River (mainly modern Egypt and Sudan) to the Euphrates (modern-day Iraq).²⁵ In practice, both the geographical area corresponding to this term and the political status of it changed over the three millennia.²⁶ The frontiers changed at different times and with different rulers. We can border Palestine today, as the area between River Jordan, the Mediterranean and east of Jordan. It is a strategic piece of estate as it forms a land bridge between Asia and Africa, a connection route where many people have passed through. It

²¹ Detailed explanation and examples from the Turkish press is presented in chapter 3 and chapter 4.

²² “Palestine” The New Universal Library Volume 10, (London: International Learning Systems Corp. 1967,1968,1969)

²³ Bernard Lewis, “On the history and geography of a name” *The International History Review* Vol.2 No.1 (January 1980): 1-12.

²⁴ “Palestine” The New Universal Library Volume 10, (London: International Learning Systems Corp. 1967,1968,1969)

²⁵ “Palestine” *İslam Ansiklopedisi* Volume 4 (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1988)

²⁶ “Palestine” The New Encyclopedia Britannica 15th edition Volume 25 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1998)

is noteworthy that the first attempts to define the territory are in the Bible, which is represented as the Promised Land.²⁷ The land of Israel is promised by God to the descendants of Abraham and it is promised to Moses during the exodus from Egypt; it also means the return from the Babylonian exile.²⁸

The name Philistia for the region was revived by the Romans in the 2nd century C.E. to delegitimize the Jewish presence in the land. After the Arab conquest in the 7th century, the new rulers continued the administrative subdivision of the Romans. According to Lewis, the term Palestine was politically submerged, it disappeared from administrative usage, and then reappeared with the Crusades.²⁹ The Ottoman conquest of the land in 1516-17 divided the territory into six districts.³⁰ The Roman term was widely adopted by the Christian world and reappeared in the twentieth century.³¹

1.5.2. Zionism

Zionism³² is an important concept to understand the Jewish immigration to Palestine. Zionism, a concept emerging at the end of the 19th century, can be defined as the desire to establish a state for the Jewish people with political and religious freedom in the historical land of Israel. The belief that God promised this land to the Jewish people

²⁷ Bernard Lewis, "On the history and geography of a name" *The International History Review* Vol.2 No.1 (January 1980): 1-12.

²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ *Ibid*

³² 'Zion' (*Siyon* in Hebrew) refers to the citadel in Jerusalem during the biblical period. With the Zionist movement the term has been taken to mean the land of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people; David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25-35.

is shared by both religious and secular Jews.³³ Zionism is a secular political movement to achieve this goal. Still, it cannot be separated from Judaism and its religious history.³⁴

The birth of Zionism can be seen as a reaction to the growing anti-Semitism in Europe. Anti-Semitism had roots in Europe for a long time, but the French Revolution (1789-1799) is an important turning point for the Western European Jews. “The Declaration of the Rights of Man”³⁵ issued during the French Revolution of 1789 proclaimed equality to all people by citizenship. This meant that the Jews had the opportunity to enter the French society as individuals by assimilation; giving up their distinctiveness as a separate community and “the commitment to the idea of a return to Eretz Israel, a hope that had bound them together for centuries.”³⁶ In many Western European countries such as Germany, Austria, England, and France, assimilation progressed to achieve legal and social equality. “In Germany and in France, in Holland and in Britain, Jews came to feel that they had at least found a secure haven and were accepted.”³⁷ Despite all efforts, however, an open hostility toward the Jews remained. During the 1880s, a German author coined the term anti-Semitism to emphasize his antipathy.³⁸ The Dreyfus trial in 1894, in which a Jewish officer was falsely charged of treason for allegedly selling military secrets to the Germans during the Franco-Prussian

³³ The blessing “Next year in Jerusalem” always had a central role in Jewish rituals and prayers. Yearning for the return to the Promised Land (Palestine) is an unchanged ideal expressed for more than 2,000 years, through generations.

³⁴ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26.

³⁵ “The Declaration of the Rights of Man.” The Avalon Project, Yale Law School.
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (Accessed on April 18, 2015)

³⁶ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s. 2010), 27.

³⁷ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism, From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 27.

³⁸ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s. 2010), 27.

War in 1870, and the mass anti-Semite rallies following the trial disclosed that the roots of anti-Semitism were still present and that assimilation was not the solution to it.³⁹

The belief that the Jews would not be accepted as full citizens with equal rights and religious freedom led to find another solution. Russia and even the more liberal France were recent examples of the failure of assimilation. The idea of a nation state for the Jews, a state of its own in Palestine, started to rise in popularity during the 19th century. The Jewish experience of repression and the need to prevent the effects of modernization upon Judaism led to the acceptance of Zionism ideals.⁴⁰

Theodor Herzl, known as the father of political Zionism, was an assimilated and non-religious Jewish Austro-Hungarian journalist deeply affected by the Dreyfus trial. In 1896, he published ‘The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Issue of the Jews’.⁴¹ He argued that anti-Semitism is inevitable, assimilation was a failure, and a Jewish state was the solution.

Jews were facing the negative consequences of growing nationalism in Europe. Modern European nationalism supported the idea of national states and the right to self-determination. Herzl stated that Jews would enjoy equality with other nations not as individuals but through possessing their own independent state.⁴² European nationalism started to emerge at the beginning of the 20th century and in this context Jewish nationalism⁴³ prospered.

³⁹ French novelist Emile Zola played an important role in the defense of Dreyfus with his article published in the front page of the newspaper in January 1898, condemning the French officials; *J'accuse!* (I accuse!)

⁴⁰ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25.

⁴¹ Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Der Judenstaat, 1946), translated by Sylvie D'Avigdor e-book edition. <http://www.mercazusa.org/pdf/The-Jewish-State.pdf> (Accessed on March 24, 2015)

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ For more information on Jewish nationalism: Mitchell Cohen, “A Preface to the Study of Jewish Nationalism,” *Jewish Social Studies New Series*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1994): 73-93.

Chapter 2:

The Road Towards the Establishment of the State of Israel

2.1. Pre-First World War Palestine

Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1517 until the British Mandate, upon the signing of Sykes-Picot Agreement⁴⁴ just after the First World War. It was divided into districts according to the political requirements and administrative culture of the ruler. Under the Ottoman rule, Jerusalem (Al-Quds), Nablus, Acre (Acco), Khalil, Gaza, Jaffa, and Haifa were the major administrative districts of the territory.⁴⁵ Under the British mandate, the areas of today's Israel, West Bank, and Gaza became a single administrative unit known as Palestine.

2.1.1. Demography of Palestine

Arabs, Jews, Bedouins, Druze, Maronites, Copts, and Baha'is were contrasting ethnic groups in Palestine.⁴⁶ The official Ottoman Census of 1878 gives an insight of the population composition of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre⁴⁷; a small population of 15,001 Jews living among 447,400⁴⁸ Muslim and Christians⁴⁹ According to another source, by 1880, just before the first *Aliyah*, there were approximately 25,000 Jews out of a total

⁴⁴ Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 49-50.

⁴⁵ For further information on the term 'Palestine', its origins and its historical borders please see the Territorial Clarification in the introduction chapter.

⁴⁶ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 237-274.

⁴⁷ "Demographics of Historic Palestine prior to 1948," *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East*. Factsheets series no 7. (July 2004), (Accessed on December 30th, 2014) <http://www.cjpmo.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=18>

⁴⁸ 43,659 Christians and 403,795 Muslims; "Demographics of Historic Palestine prior to 1948," *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East*. Factsheets series no 7. (July 2004), <http://www.cjpmo.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=18> (Accessed on December 30th, 2014)

⁴⁹ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 1.

population of 450,000.⁵⁰ Although small in number, two thirds of the Jews lived in Jerusalem where they constituted the majority.⁵¹

The Jewish population increased to 94,752 compared with 640,000 Muslims and 76,194 Christians, totaling 820,259 in 1922. In 1931, there were 176,648 Jews, 777,403 Muslims, and 93,029 Christians totaling 1,057,214. The gap continued to diminish between the two major ethnic groups just before the creation of the State of Israel: 602,586 Jews, 1,175,196 Muslims and 164,567 others (including Christians) in 1946.⁵²

According to the immigration and emigration data of the Jewish population of Palestine from 1919 to 1931, 115,689 migrated to Palestine and 85,337, approximately 75%, remained there. It is assumed that during this time, another few thousand unregistered Jewish immigrants entered Palestine as well. When the increase of the community by births (some 30,000 between 1919 and January 1, 1932) is taken into consideration, it becomes evident that during this period the Jewish population has grown by about 120,000. By 1932 the population of the *Yishuv*⁵³ was 177,000⁵⁴

However, the exact figures are hard to define. One of the obstacles of studying Palestinian demographics is the difficulty of comparison during the Ottoman era and the British era. The borders of the British Mandate of Palestine were quite different from those of the Ottoman rule. The Ottomans divided the territory into several districts.⁵⁵ Istanbul ruled the *Sanjak* of Jerusalem directly, while the *Sanjak(s)* of Nablus and Acre were part

⁵⁰ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 29.

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 183.

⁵³ Name given to Palestine's Jewish community before the creation of the State of Israel.

⁵⁴ W. Preuss, "The Economic Effects of Jewish Immigration in Palestine," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 164, Palestine. A Decade of Development (November 1932): 108-115.

⁵⁵ Bernard Lewis, "On the History and Geography of a Name" *The International History Review* Vol. 2 No. 1 (1980): 1-12.

of the *Vilayet* of Beirut and the Jordan River was subject to the authority of the Governor of Damascus.⁵⁶ Palestine became a territorial unit with the British Mandate. Besides this administrative differentiation, some of the Ottoman administrative districts included areas outside of British Palestine.

Another challenge is the questionable figures given by travelers. Although Ottoman censuses provide the figures concerning the population during the 19th century, the Ottoman censuses were based on households (*hane*) rather than individuals. Only taxable males and military age men were included on censuses and non-Muslims were excluded. The information on non-Muslim inhabitants was taken from community leaders which this could be deceptive for a number of reasons: the leaders might have revealed the information based on their security concerns, numbers might be calculated in a different or incorrect way, and there was no mechanism or standards of control.

Even though towards the end of the 19th century priority was given to the establishment of a Western-modeled permanent registration system to record births, deaths, and marital status of the population, the existing system was inadequate to document the high rate of migration into the empire.⁵⁷

2.1.2. Historical Homeland vs. Nature of Population: Two People, Two Claims

Palestine is a territory locked in a conflict between the Jews and the Arabs over ownership of the land. Jews claim to the territory is historical. The Jews base their claim on a historical Jewish state, their uninterrupted presence in the land, and employ the existence of Jewish kingdoms as the proof of Jewish independence in this land.

⁵⁶ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 60.

⁵⁷ Kemal Karpat, "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82-1893," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1978): 237-274.

Additionally, that there never was an independent Arab State in this territory furthers the Jews claim to the territory. The belief that Palestine is the Promised Land to Jewish people adds a religious aspect to the issue. The saying “Next Year in Jerusalem,” after every prayer is a yearning that passes from generation to generation in Jewish tradition.

The Arabs claim to the territory is centered on the nature of the demographic composition. The Arab argument is based on the nature of the population. The majority of the Jews were European immigrants forced to move due to pogroms and widespread anti-Semitism. In contrast, the Arab population has deep and continuous presence in Palestine. Natural population increase by birth rather than immigration is the key to the Arab claim and struggle for nationhood.

During the Ottoman Empire as well as the British Mandate, the demographic composition played a major role in the events and policies regarding this territory. More than just figures or numbers of inhabitants, the demography of Palestine is a weapon that is still used in territorial inheritance and nationhood claims of both Jews and Arabs. Population composition and its nature is a major battle field in competing claims. The Palestinian population during the Ottoman era and the British Mandate was predominantly Muslim. However, the demographic composition of the area changed with the migration of Jews and Arabs to Palestine.

The Jewish immigration to Palestine and the capital, knowledge, and technology that accompanied it since the end of the 19th century prompted economic growth in the region. The creation of the British Mandate had a similar effect. These two events generated an economic boom starting from the 1920s in Palestine which attracted many

Arabs from neighboring countries that lacked this momentum and opportunity.⁵⁸ The British also preferred to recruit Arabs for low wage jobs from neighboring countries such as Syria and Trans-Jordan.⁵⁹ Arab immigration to Palestine caused by more favorable economic conditions affected the composition of the population.⁶⁰ This is important because while the Jews do not deny the immigration affect, the Arabs persist on only natural growth. It is difficult to estimate the number of Arab immigrants to Palestine during the Ottoman reign and the British Mandate as most of them were illegal and unrecorded, but it is important to note that both groups grew due to immigration, though the Jewish community far more than the Arabs.

For Israel, immigration has always been an important tool of empowerment. *Aliyah*⁶¹, a Hebrew word meaning “ascent” is used in reference to migration of diaspora Jews to Palestine or today’s Israel. The Law of Return [to the land of Israel] was one of the first regulations of the new country, meaning every Jew has the right to return back to

⁵⁸ “The Arab Palestinian population within sub-districts that eventually became Israel increased from 321,866 in 1922 to 463,288 in 1931. Applying the 2.5 per annum natural rate of population growth to the 1922 Arab Palestinian population generates an expected population size less than the actual population recorded in the British census. By imputation, this unaccounted population increase must have been either illegal immigration not accounted for in the British census and/or registered Arab Palestinians moving from outside the Jewish-identified sub-districts. Over 10% of the 1931 Arab Palestinian population in those sub-districts that eventually became Israel had immigrated to those sub-districts within 1922-31, is a datum of considerable significance. It is consistent with the fragmentary evidence of illegal migration to and within Palestine; it supports the idea of linkage between economic disparities and migratory impulses—a linkage universally accepted; it undercuts the thesis of “spatial stickiness” attributed by some scholars to the Arab Palestinian population of the late 19th and early 20th centuries;” Fred M. Gottheil, “The Smoking Gun: Arab Immigration into Palestine, 1922-1931,” *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2003): 53-64.

⁵⁹ “Demographics of Historic Palestine prior to 1948,” *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East*. Factsheets series no 7. (July 2004), <http://www.cjpmo.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=18> (Accessed on December 30th, 2014)

⁶⁰ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 182.

⁶¹ The term *Aliyah* referred not just a mere immigration but rather an “ascent” to the Jerusalem Temple. While immigration to Palestine was seen as an act that elevated the Jew to a higher form of living and existence, emigration from Israel was called *yerida* (descent); Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 104. and Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38.

his homeland from which his ancestors were forcibly removed thousands of years earlier. Every Jew has the right to immigrate to the country with full rights of citizenship. Eligible individuals are those “who were born from a Jewish mother, or have converted to Judaism and who are not a member of another religion.”⁶² The Law of Return was clearly explained in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel on May 14th, 1948;

“*Eretz-Israel* (the Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. (...) The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”⁶³

Allowing the Jews to return to their homeland was one of the fundamental goals of the Zionist movement. After the Holocaust, there were many Jews living as displaced persons in camps. The Jews living in Arab countries were endangered as anti-Semitic movements expanded rapidly in response to the creation of Israel. Israel became a refuge for all Jews escaping anti-Semitism.

⁶² “The Law of Return” <http://www.usy.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Law-of-Return-program-5-combined-files.pdf> (Accessed on March 30, 2015)

⁶³ “The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs* <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx> (Accessed on March 30, 2015)

2.1.3. The *Yishuv*⁶⁴

The assassination of Alexander II of the Russian Empire on March 1st, 1881 was a turning point in the Russian-Jewish history. Alexander II was a liberal leader and his reign from 1855 to 1881 was a period of many reforms. During this time, the status of the Jews in the empire was improved. Residence restrictions were loosened, higher education and posts in government were permitted, and Jewish integration to the society was encouraged. In contrast, the new Emperor Alexander III was conservative and opposed the liberal ideals of his predecessor. Within weeks, violent attacks started towards the Jewish community throughout the empire. The new emperor used anti-Semitism to divert popular discontent by blaming the Jews for “the anger of the people” and to justify his conduct towards them.⁶⁵ Jews were expelled from hundreds of villages, new laws prevented Jews to own or rent land, and restrictions were placed on their trade in cities. They were banished from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, and Kharkov.⁶⁶ Following the assassination of Alexander II, large numbers of Jews were murdered in Russia.⁶⁷ This led to four million Jews fleeing Russia over the four decades, just to survive.⁶⁸

Zionism started to emerge in Russia as a result of increased anti-Semitism and discriminatory laws. From 1830s onwards, influential Rabbi Judah Alkalai⁶⁹ (1798-1878)

⁶⁴ Jewish community in Palestine before the creation of the State of Israel. The term is derived from the Hebrew verb *yashav* meaning to sit, to settle; Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 101.

⁶⁵ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 32.

⁶⁶ Rita J. Simon, *In the Golden Land: A Century of Russian and Soviet Jewish Immigration in America* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1997), 3-11.

⁶⁷ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 1.

⁶⁸ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 32.

⁶⁹ He campaigned for political and diplomatic negotiations with the Ottomans and the Europeans; David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

and Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Kalischer⁷⁰ (1795-1874) stressed the idea of “return to the Promised Land”. By 1870, societies like *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) which promoted *Aliyah* started to be formed across Russia.⁷¹ Moses Hess (1812-1875), a German socialist intellectual influenced by Karl Marx and European nationalism, became one of the most influential Zionists in Europe. Opposed to the idea of assimilation, Hess supported the idea of a Jewish community in Palestine by diplomatic negotiations and by the assistance of wealthy Jewish families. His book ‘Rome and Jerusalem’ (1862) was not well received by religious Jews in Germany but became a handbook for Eastern European Zionists.⁷² There were five major *Aliyah* waves before the creation of the State of Israel.

2.1.4. The First *Aliyah* and the Jewish Settlements

The persecutions during the period 1881-1903 were the main motivation behind the escape of Russian Jews. According to the Russian census of 1897, the Jewish population was 5,189,400 or 1% of total Russian population.⁷³ By 1904, up to two million Jews had fled due to Russian pogroms.⁷⁴ During 1881-1903, the majority of Russian Jews emigrated to the United States⁷⁵ while another 25,000 went to Palestine.⁷⁶ According to the memories of one of the passengers who migrated to the U.S., the religious freedom⁷⁷ and

⁷⁰ In his book *Derishat Siyon* (The Search for Zion) Prussian Rabbi Zvi Kalischer proposed the colonization of Palestine by purchasing land for Russian, German and Polish Jews; David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

⁷¹ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 1.

⁷² David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

⁷³ Rita J. Simon, *In the Golden Land: A Century of Russian and Soviet Jewish Immigration in America* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1997), 3-11.

⁷⁴ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 1.

⁷⁵ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38.

⁷⁶ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 1.

⁷⁷ Russian Jewish immigration to the United States until the First World War: 1820-1870 7,500, 1870-1880 40,000, 1880-1900 500,000, 1900-1914 1,5 million; Rita J. Simon, *In the Golden Land: A Century of Russian and Soviet Jewish Immigration in America* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1997), 3-11.

the liberal, secular environment of the country appealed to the Russian Jews.⁷⁸ This group primarily traveled on a route from Dresden to a port in Norway and then to New York.⁷⁹ Another important immigrant group at the time were the Yemenis⁸⁰ driven by religious and messianic beliefs.⁸¹ The Ottoman reconquest of Yemen in 1872 as well as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 facilitated the travel of the Yemenite Jews to Palestine. They passed the Red Sea, sailed through Suez, walked to Alexandria, took a steamer to Jaffa, and arrived to Jerusalem.⁸² At the end of the 19th century, the large wave of immigrants⁸³ settled in areas where Jewish communities had lived for millennia and where Sephardic Jews had emigrated following the 1492 inquisition.

2.1.5. The Establishment of Agricultural Settlements

The main difficulty for these pioneers was the shortage of money. The newcomers were supported by international Jewish capital. Though he initially refused to assist Theodor Herzl,⁸⁴ Lord Rothschild, the richest man in Europe, was convinced to help by setting up farms and sending agricultural experts to Palestine.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁷⁹ Arrivals reported of Ship S/S Darmstadt in Norwegian newspapers June 1892.

http://www.norwayheritage.com/t_transatlantic.asp?month=06&year=1892 (Accessed on March 3rd, 2015)

⁸⁰ For further information on Yemenite Jews' Aliyah: Aviva Halamish, "A New Look at Immigration of Jews from Yemen to Mandatory Palestine." *Israel Studies* Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 59-78 and Ari Ariel, *Jewish-Muslim Relations and Migration from Yemen to Palestine in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Brill, 2013)

⁸¹ Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption of Israel.

<http://www.moia.gov.il/English/FeelingIsrael/AboutIsrael/Pages/aliya1.aspx> (Accessed on May 1st, 2015)

⁸² Tutor Parfitt, *The Road to Redemption: The Jews of the Yemen 1900-1950* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 51-53.

⁸³ For further details see on Jewish immigration to Palestine: Margalit Shilo, "The Immigration Policy of the Zionist Institutions 1882-1914" *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 30, No. 3 (July, 1994): 597-617.

⁸⁴ Theodor Herzl is a Jewish Austro-Hungarian journalist deeply affected by the Dreyfus trial, a Jewish officer falsely charged and the rise of anti-Semitism across Europe. His pamphlet *The Jewish State* (1896) proposed that the Jewish question was a political question to be settled by a world council of nations. In 1897, he established and became the first president of the World Zionist Organization. Although Herzl died more than 40 years before the establishment of the State of Israel, he is known as the father of political Zionism; "Theodor Herzl" *Encyclopedia Britannica*

<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/264012/Theodor-Herzl> (Accessed on March 25th, 2015)

⁸⁵ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 39.

The Jewish settlements were built on land purchased from the land owners. This led to resentment and violence among the locals who used to take care of the land. The former occupants were evacuated by the new owners, sometimes with the help of the Ottoman forces.⁸⁶ There were many dominant Muslim families in big cities such as Jerusalem, Khalil, Gaza, Nablus, Jaffa, Haifa and Acco during the late Ottoman rule. These families were influential in the social and economic life of the region. They received an excellent education in Istanbul and in European countries. In some cases, their influence was due partly to their familial bond to the Prophet Mohammad (*ashref*). Agriculture and the economy created by the pilgrims were their main revenues. These influential families controlled the religious institutions and gained large agricultural territories as gift. They deceived the peasants who lived upon and cultivated the land, acquiring these agricultural plots and in turn selling them to the Jews. The local peasants' reaction must be examined within this context. Land ownership issues aside, there was some level of understanding between the Jews and the Arabs as "the newcomers provided to the locals employment opportunities, medical care, loan of modern equipment and a market to produce."⁸⁷

New Jewish communities were mainly agricultural settlements that emerged from private farms and would come to serve as the foundation of future agricultural settlements

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 2.

known as *kibbutz*.⁸⁸ This trend differed strongly from the traditional settlement patterns of the older *Yishuv*, who tended to dwell in cities.⁸⁹

2.1.6. The Ottoman Reaction to the Jewish Immigration to Palestine

Starting from the end of 19th century, Russian Jews began to migrate to the *Sanjak* of Jerusalem. The Ottoman Empire did not welcome this massive influx of Jewish immigrants to its land and in fact the Ottomans banned the entry of these migrants even before 1881, perceiving them as a Russian plot to gain power in Ottoman territories.⁹⁰ The priority of Sultan Abdulhamid⁹¹ was to conserve the Arab population's loyalty. Arabs were the second biggest population in the empire after the Turks⁹² and the increase in Jewish population could have led to religious conflict in the area. On the other hand, the Jews were not banned from all the territories of the empire, but only from the *Sanjak* of Jerusalem. Historian Charles D. Smith explains this as follows; "Jewish immigrants will be able to settle as scattered groups throughout the Ottoman Empire, excluding Palestine. They must submit to the laws of the empire and become Ottoman subjects."⁹³ The main entrance to Jerusalem in Jaffa was secured. The Jews migrating to the empire were asked to be Ottoman subjects and give up their original country's protection. Even with these

⁸⁸ *Kibbutzim* (plural for *kibbutz*) are voluntary communities based on equal sharing regardless of effort and ability with the principle of self-labor. These are exemplary socialist organizations originally focused on agriculture but more recently have engaged in other types of industry as well. The first kibbutz, Degania on the shores of Lake Galilee, was established in 1910. For further details see: Ran Abramitzky, "The Limits of Equality: Insights from the Israeli Kibbutz," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* Vol. 123, No. 3 (August 2008): 1111-1159 and Tal Simons and Paul Ingram, "Organization and Ideology: Kibbutzim and Hired Labor, 1951-1965," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (December 1997): 784-813.

⁸⁹ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 41.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

⁹¹ Ottoman sultan who ruled the empire between the years 1876-1909.

⁹² Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 61-63.

⁹³ Charles D. Smith. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A history with documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 36.

limitations, many Jews found their way into the *Sanjak* of Jerusalem by posing as pilgrims, by entering through other *sanjak*(s), and by bribery.⁹⁴

2.1.7. Struggle to Survive

There was already a Jewish community⁹⁵ living in Palestine which was called the old *Yishuv*. These newcomers differed from the old *Yishuv* in that while the latter had followed religious leaders to Palestine driven by messianic beliefs, the former stood for a cultural and national replenishment of the Jewish people.⁹⁶ The old *Yishuv* was familiar to the Arab population and lived under the Ottoman *Millet* System. The Sephardic Jews⁹⁷ had their representation in the Ottoman system by a chief Rabbi, while the Ashkenazi Jews⁹⁸ newly migrated with *Aliyah* waves had no official status in the Ottoman land.⁹⁹ Most of them refused to become Ottoman subjects and pay taxes. They did not want to be part of the *Millet* system as their Sephardic co-religionists.

The newcomers had to struggle to survive and adapt to their new environment. The land was not well maintained or fertile, and the newcomers, mostly from urban backgrounds, lacked the necessary agricultural knowledge. Several disputes over water rights and border issues arose between neighboring Jewish and Arab settlements. Additionally, the need to provide security proportionally increased with the rise of

⁹⁴ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 45.

⁹⁵ In 1881, before the major Jewish immigration waves there were 400,000 Muslims, 42,000 Christians and 13,000 to 20,000 Jews in Palestine totaling 457,000. In addition, there were several thousand more Jews who were permanent residents in Palestine but were not Ottoman citizens; Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1998* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1999), 4.

⁹⁶ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 104.

⁹⁷ Jews from Iberian Peninsula. In 1492 Ottoman accepted the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal during the Spanish Inquisition to its territories.

⁹⁸ European Jews talking mainly in Yiddish; a Hebrew-German language.

⁹⁹ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 105.

immigrant numbers. Arabs were the major watchmen (*shomrim*) and they undertook the task of guarding the life and property of the Jewish villages.

A defining characteristic of this period is the regeneration of the Modern Hebrew language by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda.¹⁰⁰ Hebrew-language schools were established and language became a uniting factor for the newcomers migrating from different countries with different languages and cultures.

2.1.8. The Arab People of Palestine

The start of the first *Aliyah* in 1882 indicates an important turning point in the history of Palestine. From this date, the composition of the population changed dramatically and it can be viewed as the first step towards the creation of the State of Israel.

A dislike of non-Muslim foreigners was present as the memory of the Crusades was still vivid in the collective memory of the local Arab population.¹⁰¹ Just before the *Aliyah* waves, a large number of Christian pilgrims and missionaries had led a “Quiet Crusade” immigrating to Palestine and forming Christian colonies similar to Jewish settlements for the purpose of “reconnecting the old Eastern Christian Churches to the Western church.”¹⁰² The capitulations¹⁰³ was another leverage that the Western countries were using to preserve their power in the area.¹⁰⁴ The first political opposition to the Jewish immigration occurred when 8,000 Jews arrived in 1891 and 500 Arab notables in

¹⁰⁰ Eliezer Ben-Yehuda was a prime mover in the transformation of Hebrew from a dormant language of culture to a living, spoken language currently used by millions of Israelis and Jews worldwide. He used Hebrew in his personal life and he established The Hebrew Language Council (1889); he compiled seventeen-volume ‘A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew’ and launched several Hebrew newspapers; Mordechai Mishor and Dena Ordan, “Eliyezer Ben-Yehuda: Reviver of spoken Hebrew (1858-1922),” *UNESCO Heritage Project, The Academy of Hebrew Language* <http://hebrew-academy.huji.ac.il/hadarbenyehuda/Documents/Ben-Yehuda-2.pdf> (Accessed on March 31st, 2015)

¹⁰¹ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 61-63.

¹⁰² Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40-42.

¹⁰³ Preferential commercial privileges and extraterritorial rights (*imtiyaz*)

¹⁰⁴ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 61-63.

Jerusalem signed a petition to the Ottoman Sultan in order to control the Jewish immigration.¹⁰⁵ The Sultan responded in favor to the demand but a few years later the edict was rescinded with European pressure.¹⁰⁶ The large wave of immigrants was noticed by both the Ottoman administration in Jerusalem and the capital Constantinople, but the Ottoman decision makers in the capital were not always in harmony with the interests of the local authorities based in Jerusalem nor the Arab community in Palestine. The main concern of the Ottoman decision makers was to stop the European penetration into the *Mashriq*¹⁰⁷, as it was already experiencing independence struggles in the Balkans.¹⁰⁸

2.1.9. The Second *Aliyah* and the First Jewish Defense Organizations

During 1904-1914, the second *Aliyah* brought another massive influx of immigrants mostly from Russia. In addition, Yemenis continued to migrate to Palestine and joined the separate Yemeni communities already established during the First *Aliyah*.¹⁰⁹ During this period, the first Jewish political parties, Hebrew language newspapers, *kibbutzim*, and the first Jewish defense organizations were all established.

¹⁰⁵ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 6.

¹⁰⁶ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 36.

¹⁰⁷ *Mashriq*, a geographic region which includes the modern states of Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq; *Encyclopedia Britannica* <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/367870/Mashriq> (Accessed on March 25th, 2015)

¹⁰⁸ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 121.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of *Aliyah* and Immigrant Absorption of Israel

<http://www.moia.gov.il/English/FeelingIsrael/AboutIsrael/Pages/aliya2.aspx> (Accessed on May 5th, 2015)

Israel Zangwill's¹¹⁰ slogan¹¹¹ "A land without people for a people without land"¹¹² began at this time to attract attention.¹¹³ In reality the land was not empty per se, but the presence of the Arab population, both Muslim and Christian, was not perceived as a setback to the newcomers. The idea that the Jews will grow in number and prosper the not so 'land of milk and honey,'¹¹⁴ was their main motive. The international community backed the historical and religious ties of the Jewish people to the land. Many Europeans believed that the Arab population would also benefit from the economic development¹¹⁵, modernization, and the European liberal values that the Jews brought to the region. Importantly, the Jews identified themselves as Europeans in distinction from the deprived position of the Arab population.¹¹⁶

There was no group identity formation during the first tensions between the Jews and Arabs. For the Arabs the newcomers were strangers. The Jews encountered hostility mainly locally, from neighboring villages. The first Arab attacks began in Petah Tikvah

¹¹⁰ Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) is a novelist, playwright, and Zionist leader, one of the earliest English interpreters of Jewish immigrant life; Israel Zangwill, *Global Britannica* <https://global.britannica.com/biography/Israel-Zangwill> (Accessed on May 23rd, 2016)

¹¹¹ Some attribute this slogan to Theodor Herzl as well as to Israel Zangwill (1864-1926). According to Adam M. Garfinkle, it goes back to the philo-Semitic Earl of Shaftesbury who coined it in the 1840s; Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 165.

¹¹² "What it meant was not that there were no people in Palestine, but this people lacked a national identity, thus had no claim to national self-determination, let alone a state. The argument was politic and it could not defeat by demographic data" Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 166.

¹¹³ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 5.

¹¹⁴ "When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, He informed him that He would redeem the Israelites and bring them to a "good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey..." (Exodus 3:8) It means greater good from particularly fertile land. According to religious scholars, milk symbolizes superior quality, richness of taste, nourishment, honey represents sweetness http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/624194/jewish/Why-is-Israel-called-the-land-of-Milk-and-Honey.htm (Accessed on April 2nd, 2015)

¹¹⁵ W. Preuss, "The Economic Effects of Jewish Immigration in Palestine," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 164, Palestine. A Decade of Development (November 1932): 108-115.

¹¹⁶ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 45.

as early as 1886.¹¹⁷ The newcomers lived mostly in agricultural settlements and the Arabs provided the security of the villages. Failing to trust the Arabs for their security, young Jewish settlers formed security groups to protect their own territory. Those groups became the first Jewish underground defense organizations in Palestine. *Bar Giora*¹¹⁸ and *HaShomer*¹¹⁹ (The Watchmen) were the major secret societies founded by Jews to protect the settlements at that time. *Bar Giora* was a small initiative formed to gain the right to guard Jewish settlements from the Arabs. *Bar Giora* merged in 1909 to the new formed defense body with the same purpose: *HaShomer*. *HaShomer* started to protect several settlements, and played a critical role in developing new settlements.¹²⁰ Gershon Shafir¹²¹ states that the evolution of Jewish workers from agricultural farmers to militant nationalists was spurred by the struggle to create an all Jewish labor force ultimately with the mission to establish a homogenous Jewish society.¹²² According to David Hirst, a former Guardian Middle East correspondent, the newcomers of the second wave were inspired by the ideas of Theodor Herzl¹²³ and were determined to control the land and

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 65.

¹¹⁸ Simon Bar Giora was a Jewish warrior leading the war against Rome BCE 66-70. He was viewed as king by his followers; Richard A. Horsley, "Menahem in Jerusalem a Brief Messianic Episode among the Sicarii: Not Zealot Messianism" *Novum Testamentum* Vol. 27, Fasc. 4 (October 1985): 334-348.

¹¹⁹ For further details see on *Bar Giora* and *HaShomer*: Yaacov N. Goldstein, "The Jewish-Arab Conflict: The First Jewish Underground Defense Organizations and the Arabs" *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.31, No.4 (October 1995): 744-754.

¹²⁰ For further reading on *HaShomer*:

<http://jafi.org/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Eye+on+Israel/StruggleDefense/Struggle/Jewish+Defense+Organizations.htm> Accessed on January 10, 2015.

¹²¹ Gershon Shafir (born in 1947) is professor of sociology. HE is the author of *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹²² Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 5.

¹²³ His pamphlet *The Jewish State* (1896) proposed a political solution to the Jewish question; Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (New York: Dover Publication, 1988)

exclude non-Jews from the labor market. It is thus no coincidence that a decree by the Jewish National Fund¹²⁴ in 1901 prohibited the resale of land to non-Jews.¹²⁵

2.1.10. Theodor Herzl and The Zionist Congress

Theodor Herzl, known as the father of political Zionism, was a Jewish Austro-Hungarian journalist deeply affected by the Dreyfus¹²⁶ trial, in which a Jewish officer was falsely convicted and by the rise of anti-Semitism across Europe. Unaware of the first *Aliyah* and pioneer Zionists, he too concluded that assimilation was not a cure for growing anti-Semitism in Europe. Not religious himself, Herzl was an assimilated Viennese facing the negative consequences of growing nationalism in Europe.

In 1896, Herzl published *The Jews State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Issue of the Jews*¹²⁷ in which he argued that anti-Semitism is inevitable, assimilation was a failure, and a Jewish state was the solution. Herzl stated that Jews would enjoy equality with other nations not as individuals but through possessing their own independent state. Herzl's plan was to find a place to escape from the anti-Semitism and he did not have a hostile view concerning the native population of Palestine.¹²⁸ He concluded that to achieve this goal, international support was crucial. Herzl imagined this as a win-win solution for Jews, granted a new homeland, and for European countries like Russia who wanted to get rid of their Jewish populations.

¹²⁴ Institution formed to manage Jewish land purchases.

¹²⁵ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 2.

¹²⁶ Emile Zola, *Dreyfus Olayı, Adalet için bir Savaşın Öyküsü* trans. Muammer Tuncer (Istanbul: Yalçın, 1986)

¹²⁷ Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Der Judenstaat, 1946), translated by Sylvie D'Avigdor <http://www.mercazusa.org/pdf/The-Jewish-State.pdf> (Accessed on March 24, 2015)

¹²⁸ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 38.

The First Zionist Congress took place on August 30th, 1897 in Basel, Switzerland. The congress was attended by 200 people from 20 different countries.¹²⁹ Herzl acted as chairperson and was elected as President of the Zionist Organization. The Basel Program¹³⁰ stated the resolutions of the congress, summarized as; “Zionism seeks for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secured homeland in Palestine.”¹³¹

2.1.11. The Rise of Pan-Arabism

Pan-Arabism (*uruba*) promoting cultural and political unity among Arab countries started to influence the Middle East in the late 19th and early 20th century. This nationalist notion, aided by the unifying role of the Arabic language and culture, contributed to the political agitation of the Arab people and fired up nationalist agendas, which in turn led to the struggle of independence from the Ottoman Empire. The notion that the Arab peoples should form a nation state of their own started to flourish.¹³² Similar to Zionism, Arab nationalism derived from European nationalism. Rising Zionism in the Palestinian territories was seen as a clear danger. In 1914, Muslim intellectual Rashid Rida¹³³ argued that the Palestinians faced a decisive choice, to make a deal with the Jews or start an armed opposition;

“It is incumbent upon the leaders of the Arabs -the local population- to do one of two things. Either they must reach an agreement with the leaders of the Zionists to settle the differences between the interests of both parties (...) or they must gather all their forces to oppose the Zionists in every way, first by forming societies and companies, and finally by forming armed gangs which oppose them by force.”¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 3.

¹³⁰ Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 46.

¹³¹ Basel Program <http://www.herzl.org/english/Article.aspx?Item=544> (Accessed on May 14th, 2015)

¹³² David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

¹³³ Rashid Rida, editor of al-Manar newspaper, one of the preeminent Muslim thinkers of the 20th century.

¹³⁴ Rida cited in David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 32-33, in Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 6.

Interestingly, in Istanbul in 1913, a conference was scheduled between Arab and Jewish delegates to explore the possibilities of reconciliation, but the First World War broke out before the talks ever started¹³⁵

2.2. The First World War and the Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire

At the beginning of the twentieth century, two different nationalist movements emerged from Palestine: the Jewish immigrants with the idea of creating a nation in their historical motherland and the native Arabs hoping to get rid of the Ottoman rule and gain independence to form an Arab unity.¹³⁶

Until the outbreak of the First World War, Great Britain was not a major actor in Palestine.¹³⁷ British interests in Palestine during the 19th century were mainly strategic, as Syria and Palestine were at the important intersection of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia.¹³⁸ The British wanted to continue free trade with the advantage of its industrial superiority and naval control of the region was crucial to this aim. There was a competition between colonial powers at the time and the British increased their expansion into the Arab territories over time with the weakening and then disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, thus improving their own strategic position.

The First World War did not, in fact, ‘end all wars’ as promised. To the contrary, it changed the map and the future of the Middle East radically. The Great War ended the rule of the Ottoman Empire and new states were established in the Middle East according to Western interests. The era of the British rule started in Palestine while the nationalistic

¹³⁵ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

¹³⁶ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine: Competing Histories*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 5.

¹³⁷ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 139.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 152.

dreams of the Jews and Arabs were yet unrealized. It was a time of contradictory promises and competing ideologies.

2.2.1 The Outbreak of the First World War

With the outbreak of the First World War, Ottoman Sultan Mehmet Reşad proclaimed a *jihad* against the Entente powers and expelled the citizens of the enemy states. In response, many Jews finally accepted Ottoman citizenship while Russian and American Jews living in Palestine were transferred out of the territory by Ottoman military leader Cemal Pasha. In 1916, an Arab revolt was organized by the Sheriff of Mecca Hussein.¹³⁹ However for most of the part, the Jews and Arabs living in Palestine remained loyal to the sultan even after having survived the repression of Cemal Pasha.¹⁴⁰

In 1917, the British army under the leadership of General Edmund Allenby¹⁴¹ conquered Sinai, Negev, southern Palestine, Jaffa, and, on December 11st, Jerusalem. British officials held different views on Palestine, a reflection of the ambiguous policies and contradictory promises of Britain. Gilbert Clayton, a general serving Allenby, wrote a note to Mr. Sykes¹⁴² explaining the danger the Arab opposition might cause to British interests, stating: “I am not fully aware of the weight which Zionists carry, especially in America and Russia, and of the consequent necessity of giving them everything they may ask, but I must point out that, by pushing them as hard as we appear to be doing, we are risking the possibility of Arab unity becoming something like an accomplished fact and being ranged against us.”¹⁴³

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 151.

¹⁴⁰ Cemal Pasha, Ottoman governor and Commander-in-Chief in Syria and Palestine.

¹⁴¹ Britain’s succesful commander during the First World War (1861-1936)

¹⁴² Sir Mark Sykes, English politician and diplomatic adviser associated with Sykes-Picot Agreement.

¹⁴³ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

A line of dialogue opened in June 1918 and negotiations began between Arab and Zionist leaders Faisal Ibn Hussain¹⁴⁴ and Chaim Weizmann¹⁴⁵. On January 3rd of 1919 they agreed to work together to achieve Jewish aspirations in Palestine and to establish an independent Arab State. Faisal renounced any claim to Palestine as long as there will be a separate Arab State. The Jews would assist in economic difficulties, while Faisal will use his influence to calm the mounting anti-Zionist campaign in Syria.¹⁴⁶ The common ancestry, racial kinship and ancient bonds between the Jews and the Arabs were the key elements underlined with this agreement.¹⁴⁷ However the fate of Palestine was not in their hands but in the allies who won the First World War.

2.2.2. The Role of the Palestinian Jews in the First World War

The role of the Arabs in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and their relations with the British has long been discussed.¹⁴⁸ Among the Jews there was also a group, small in number, with a similar aim. During the First World War, a military unit within the British army was formed by 650 Jewish volunteers, an idea proposed by Vladimir Jabotinsky¹⁴⁹. The main aim was to liberate Palestine from the Ottoman rule.

¹⁴⁴ Faisal Ibn Husain, Son of Sharif Hussein (king of the Hejaz), key figure in the revolt against the Ottomans, later king of Iraq.

¹⁴⁵ Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) president of the World Zionist Organization and later president of Israel. He has the credit in the issuing of the Balfour Declaration. Born in Russia, he studied chemistry in Switzerland and Germany. In 1904 he became adviser to the British Ministry of Munitions and Admiralty. He was also co-vice president of the British Zionist Federation; Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 8.

¹⁴⁶ Neil Caplan, "Faisal Ibn Husain and the Zionists: A Re-examination with Documents" *The International History Review*, Vol. 5, No.4 (Nov. 1983): 561-614.

¹⁴⁷ Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 52-53.

¹⁴⁸ For further details see: T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Penguin, 2000) and Kral Abdullah, *Biz Osmanlı'ya Neden İsyân Ettik?* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2006)

¹⁴⁹ Vladimir Jabotinsky, Pre-state Zionist leader, soldier, activist, writer, founder of the *Betar* movement.

Army officer Joseph Trumpeldor¹⁵⁰ formed the Zion Mule Corps.¹⁵¹ It was formed mainly by non-Ottoman Jews living in Palestine, who were expelled¹⁵² to Egypt by Cemal Pasha.¹⁵³ The volunteers served as a detachment for mule transportation. Contrary to their intention, they did not serve in Palestine but instead on the Gallipoli front.¹⁵⁴

Meanwhile, Vladimir Jabotinsky pursued his dream of forming a Jewish military unit and in 1917 the Jewish Legion was designated as the 38th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. It included former Zion Mule Corps members, Russian Jews, and British volunteers. A year later, the Jewish Legion joined the 39th battalion formed mostly by American volunteers. They fought in the Palestinian front and in the Battle of Megiddo and helped to win in Damascus. In late 1919, the Jewish Legion was reduced to one battalion only and its name was changed to *First Judeans* (First Jewish Battalion) as part of the British army and later demobilized by the new British administration.¹⁵⁵

2.2.3. The Balfour Declaration vs. Hussein-McMahon Correspondence

Towards the end of the First World War, the British troops defeated the Turkish forces and ended Ottoman rule in Palestine. Under British rule, the territory became a political unit and the British made Jerusalem the capital of their new mandate. With a

¹⁵⁰ Born in 1880 in Russia, Joseph Trumpeldor volunteered with the Russian army. He is one of the first Jewish immigrants to Palestine. He helped organize the Zion Mule Corps and Jewish immigration to Palestine. Trumpeldor died defending the settlement of Tel Hai in 1920 and became a national hero. It is believed that his last words in his deathbed were; "Never mind, it is worth dying for the country." Amílcar Antonio Barreto, *Nationalism and Its Logical Foundations*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.

¹⁵¹ For further details see: Ben Ari N. and E. Kanaani, *His times and tasks, fifty years after the defense of Tel Hai*, Eds. Joseph Trumpeldor (Tel Aviv: Tarbut Vehinunch Publishers, 1970)

¹⁵² At the outbreak of the First World War, Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V Reshad proclaimed a Jihad against the Entente Powers and started to expel citizens of enemy states from Palestine; Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 151.

¹⁵³ Denis Ojalvo, "Siyon Katır birliđi nedir ne deđildir" *Şalom* Newspaper, September 22, 2012.

¹⁵⁴ "Zion Mule Corps" *Encyclopedia of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* volume 3, pp. 1682 ed. Cheryl A. Rubenberg. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010)

¹⁵⁵ Elena Govor, *Russian Anzacs in Australian History*, (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 176.

legal frame based on the League of Nations' article 22,¹⁵⁶ the British entrusted the administration of the territory to a mandatory. The mandatory was responsible to put in effect the Balfour Declaration¹⁵⁷ in 1917 that supports a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, recognizing the historical connection of the Jews to the land and facilitating Jewish immigration.¹⁵⁸ Britain was responsible for developing self-governing institutions and securing the establishment of a Jewish state, safeguarding the rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine. The Jewish Agency¹⁵⁹ was recognized as a public body to cooperate on all subjects that might affect the Jews. A special commission administered all religious rights and claims in connection with the Holy Places.¹⁶⁰

The British defeat of the Ottoman Empire was well received by the Arabs who had been promised their homeland in exchange for help in the defeat of the Ottomans, as shown in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence¹⁶¹. The Arabs soon realized, however, that the same area was promised to the Jews in the Balfour Declaration¹⁶². The Arabs

¹⁵⁶ The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments adopted to December, 1924) The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22 (Accessed on March 31st, 2015)

¹⁵⁷ On November 2nd, 1917, Foreign Secretary of Britain Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter to Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild and expressed the British government's support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It was the product of intense lobbying especially of Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann who later on became the first president of the State of Israel. For further information: Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration, The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010)

¹⁵⁸ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 169.

¹⁵⁹ The Jewish Agency was formed to represent the Jewish community in British Mandate of Palestine according to Article 22 of the League of Nations. David Ben Gurion, Moshe Sharett, Golda Meir and Levi Eshkol occupied various posts in Jewish Agency and later became prime ministers. Meir was born in Kiev in 1896 and migrated to the U.S. with her parents. She made *aliyah* with her husband in 1921. Eshkol was born in Kiev in 1895. He migrated to Palestine in 1914 and joined Jewish Legion in the British army; Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 10.

¹⁶⁰ "The Palestine Mandate of the Council of the League of Nations" *The Avalon Project*, Yale Law School. Accessed on March 31st, 2015 http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp

¹⁶¹ McMahon-Hussein Correspondence 1915-1916, Council on Foreign Relations. <http://www.cfr.org/egypt/mcmahon-hussein-correspondence-1915-1916/p13762> (Accessed on May 25th 2015)

¹⁶² The text of the Balfour Declaration: "Dear Lord Rothschild, I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet. "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best

were disappointed by the end result of the First World War; defeating the Ottoman Empire just to become a mandate of the European colonial powers. At the end, both the Jews and the Arabs felt betrayed by the British. On the political scene, Arab leaders promoted the Hussein-McMahon correspondence in order to render the Balfour Declaration null and void,¹⁶³ but Britain had still more agreements. Britain's secret arrangement with France in 1916 known as The Sykes-Picot Agreement¹⁶⁴ was the first step to divide the Middle East, known then as the Near East, into regions of influence between the French and the British.

2.2.4. Conflict Between the Arab and the Jewish Population of Palestine

The mandate treaty for Palestine gave full legislative and administrative power to the British high commissioner. When the British entered Palestine at the end of 1917, there was already tension and hostility between the Arab and the Jewish population. Besides the territory and labor force disputes, the existence of the Balfour Declaration was known to both groups and furthered hostility.

There was a clear differentiation between the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine in the eyes of the British officials. Jews were seen as 'European' while Arabs were perceived, even if they were educated and knew numerous languages, as 'Oriental'. In 1918, the Zionist Commission became a semi-independent body. Hebrew was chosen as official language in addition to Arabic and English. Jews could become government officials and

endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation. Yours sincerely, Arthur James Balfour"
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp (Accessed on March 25th, 2015)

¹⁶³ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 147.

¹⁶⁴ For further information on The Sykes-Picot Agreement: James Barr, *A line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011)

were granted higher salaries than the Arabs. Jews could fly the Zionist flag while Arabs were not permitted to fly their own.¹⁶⁵

Muslims lost the privileged status they enjoyed during the Ottoman Empire. The celebrations of Belfour Declaration's first anniversary in 1918 ended with several clashes between the Jews and the Arabs. Muslim and Christian Arabs formed the Muslim-Christian Association in 1918 in Jaffa and Jerusalem and became the leading Palestinian nationalist forum. British authorities encouraged the establishment of such an association in order to balance the Zionist activities.¹⁶⁶

From 1918 until 1920, Palestine was governed under the allied military government until British and French agreed upon the revised form of the wartime Sykes-Picot agreement. At the San Remo Conference, an understanding over the division of the Middle East between British and French mandates was reached in April 1920. In June 1920, the League of Nations approved the decision and the British mandate in Palestine started officially. By the end of the First World War, there were approximately 90,000 Jews and 800,000 Arabs in Palestine.¹⁶⁷

2.2.5. The Third and Fourth Wave of *Aliyah* and 1920 Riots

In 1919, with the end of the First World War, a third wave of *Aliyah* started. 30,000 to 35,000 Jews, mainly from Russia and Poland, immigrated to Palestine.¹⁶⁸ The main causes of the wave of immigration from 1919 to 1923 were social and political upheaval

¹⁶⁵ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 106-107.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁷ David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 100.

¹⁶⁸ Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption of Israel
<http://www.moia.gov.il/English/FeelingIsrael/AboutIsrael/Pages/aliya3.aspx> (Accessed on January 25th, 2015)

in Europe, sufferings in their country of origin, the nationalist sentiment increased by the Balfour Declaration, and the establishment of the British mandate in Palestine. The Arabs perceived the increasing number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine as a threat, but the economic growth and the new job opportunities created by the immigrants helped to quell Arab dissatisfaction with the newcomers. However, this precarious balance was broken when the newcomers preferred Jewish labor and refused to hire the Arabs. The economy created by the Jews continued to expand, which in turn increased antipathy toward the Jews culminating in the 1920-1921 Arab riots.¹⁶⁹ The Nabi Musa Festival initiated during the Ottoman rule was the largest Islamic festival in the region. It was a one-week celebration and pilgrimage to Moses' tomb near Jericho, just before Orthodox Easter. The tradition continued under British rule but in 1920, the festival became politicized when Muslim pilgrims rioted. The violence between Muslims and Jews continued for several days despite British attempts to stop it. Five Jews and four Muslims were killed and 251 people were wounded.¹⁷⁰ Arab riots continued in April 1920 in Jerusalem and in May 1921 in Jaffa. The conflicting ambitions of these two groups made a clash seemingly inevitable. At this point, the Arab resistance against the British and the Zionists grew stronger.

1924-1929 marked the fourth wave of immigration, mainly from Poland, Russia, Romania, Lithuania, Yemen, and Iraq. Polish Jews, prompted by economic crisis and extreme taxation, made the largest group of the 67,000 new immigrants. The United States' restrictive immigration laws of 1924 limited the options of these migrants, with

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁰ Awad Eddi Halabi, "The Nabi Musa Festival under British-Ruled Palestine" *ISIM Newsletter* 10/02, 27 https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/16797/ISIM_10_The_Nabi_Musa_Festival_under_British-Ruled_Palestine.pdf?sequence=1 (Accessed on April 5th, 2015)

most ultimately choosing to migrate to Palestine. Unlike previous periods of migration, this wave of immigrants largely belonged to the middle class and, contrary to the pioneers, preferred to settle in big cities. The cities developed rapidly with the new immigrants who established light industry, small businesses, and new infrastructure.¹⁷¹

2.2.6. The Establishment of *Haganah* and 1929 Riots

With the 1920 Arab riots, the Jews decided that it was not possible to depend solely upon British authorities or any other foreign authority in the defense of the *Yishuv* and felt the necessity to establish a stronger defense organization.¹⁷² A new underground military organization *Haganah* (Defense organization in Palestine) was formed on June 12th, 1920.¹⁷³ *Haganah* was designed primarily to protect Jewish settlements against Arab attacks until the arrival of the British forces. It was formed by the volunteers from Jewish units' members of the mandate army. *Haganah* increased its manpower by a periodical training program for the young Jewish immigrants making use of British intelligence.¹⁷⁴ *Haganah* had no political role in 1920s but instead defended the lives and property of the Jews in the insecurity they faced in Palestine. Though the organization was not officially recognized by the British, *Haganah* wanted to cooperate with the European power.¹⁷⁵

From the extensive and chaotic process of Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine arose the need for better organization. Born as a youth movement in 1923 in

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption of Israel.

<http://www.moia.gov.il/English/FeelingIsrael/AboutIsrael/Pages/aliya4.aspx> (Accessed on May 6th, 2015)

¹⁷² The Jewish Agency for Israel

<http://jafi.org/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Eye+on+Israel/StruggleDefense/Struggle/Jewish+Defense+Organizations.htm> (Accessed on February 6th, 2015)

¹⁷³ Yehuda Bauer, "Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1966): 182-210.

¹⁷⁴ The Jewish Agency for Israel.

<http://jafi.org/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Eye+on+Israel/StruggleDefense/Struggle/Jewish+Defense+Organizations.htm> (Accessed on February 6th, 2015)

¹⁷⁵ Yehuda Bauer, "Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1966): 182-210.

Latvia, *Betar* worked on Zionist education, teaching the Hebrew language and methods of self-defense. In the 1920s and 30s, the organization's primary mission was the creation of a Jewish state and the organizing of legal or illegal *Aliyah*. *Betar's* leader Vladimir (Zeev) Jabotinsky promoted a system of self-administration in *Yishuv*.¹⁷⁶

While the immigrants flowed into Palestine, a division within Zionism arose between the labor and the revisionist movements. Jabotinsky advocated for the revision of the borders of the future State of Israel and the integration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan, claiming the latter was also promised with the Balfour Declaration to the Jews. However, most labor Zionists supported the principle of establishing a Jewish state only in Palestine.¹⁷⁷ *Betar* was a revisionist movement and it was against an agreement with the Arabs which allowed for the creation of a predominantly Jewish state in Palestine. For Jabotinsky, only an 'iron wall' of a Jewish armed defense would be able to secure Jewish sovereignty over Israel. The authoritarian and militarist tendencies which Jabotinsky absorbed from the growth of the far right in Europe during the interwar period were transmitted to *Betar*. Jabotinsky was also a supporter of population transfer. In one of his letters in 1939 he wrote: "There is no choice: The Arabs must make room for the Jews in *Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel)*. If it was possible to transfer the Baltic peoples, it is also possible to move the Palestinian Arabs. Iraq and Saudi Arabia could absorb them."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Louis Gordon, "The Unknown Essays of Vladimir Jabotinsky" *Jewish Political Studies Review* 9:1-2 (Spring 1997): 95-104.

¹⁷⁷ Nur-ad-Din Masalaha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: the politics of expansion* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 55-62.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

2.2.7. The Fifth Wave of *Aliyah*

The fifth wave of *Aliyah* arose in 1929. A major rush of immigrants started to flow to Palestine with the beginning of the rise of National Socialism in Germany in 1933. Between the years 1933 and 1936 more than 160,000 immigrants arrived legally and thousands more illegally due to British immigration restrictions. From 1929 to 1939, with the outbreak of the Second World War, more than 250,000 immigrants from all over Europe came to Palestine. Among them were many academics, doctors, and musicians, most of whom settled in cities and contributed to urban development.¹⁷⁹

In addition to be spurred by territorial disputes, the Arab-Israeli conflict also had a religious element. The city of Jerusalem is important to Muslims, Jews, and Christians and many conflicts have arisen for control of this holy place. A dispute over Jewish religious rights at the Western Wall led to violence in August 1929, with¹⁸⁰ 133 Jews and 116 Arabs dead and many wounded in clashes between the two groups in Jerusalem, Hebron and Safed. At this point, the dispute was the bloodiest ever to occur between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine.¹⁸¹

Inside *Haganah* some arguments arose about self-sufficiency in defense. Some members expressed unease at relying on non-Jews for defense and supported developing *Haganah* into a real military force. In 1931, a group of *Haganah* commanders who were not satisfied with group's charter formed a new military organization: *Irgun Zeva' I Le'umi*

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption of Israel.

<http://www.moia.gov.il/English/FeelingIsrael/AboutIsrael/Pages/aliya5.aspx> (Accessed on May 6th, 2015)

¹⁸⁰ For further information on the Western Wall riots: Avraham Sela, "The "Wailing Wall" Riots (1929) as a Watershed in The Palestine Conflict," *The Muslim World*, Vol. M, No. 1-2 (January-April, 1994): 60-94.

¹⁸¹ Philip Mattar, "The Role of the Mufti of Jerusalem in the Political Struggle over the Western Wall, 1928-29," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan. 1983): 104-118.

(National Military Organization, or the *Irgun*). *Irgun*¹⁸² was ideologically linked to Vladimir Jabotinsky and opposed *Haganah*'s restraint policy (*Havlagah*). From 1936 to 1939 *Irgun* and its 3000 members led attacks against the Arabs.¹⁸³

2.2.8. The Arab Revolt of 1936, the Introduction of the White Paper in 1939

The Jewish immigration to Palestine increased intensely with Hitler's rise to power in Germany from 1933 onwards. This led to an immense discontent among the Arab population of Palestine towards both the Jews and the British. As a consequence, the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 broke out, in which thousands of Arabs from all classes participated. A nationalistic feeling united them against the enemy, and led to the first violent uprising of Palestinian Arabs in more than a century.¹⁸⁴

The riots began in May 1936 when the Arab Higher Committee¹⁸⁵ declared a general strike. The mass demonstrations attracted many people and became violent after the British forces opened fire on demonstrators. The British believed that a German-Italian sponsored anti-British movement was to blame for the magnitude of the demonstrations. For this reason, the British used all their forces in the area to suppress it. The assassination of Lewis Andrews in 1937, the most senior British official of Galilee, became an excuse

¹⁸² Irgun was an underground militia organization formed in 1931 and commanded from 1943 to 1944 by Menahem Begin who assumed the leadership of Revisionist Zionism with Jabotinsky's death in 1940. Irgun became closely associated with the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946, the hanging of British Army sergeants and the killing of Arabs at Dayr Yasin in April 1948. Born in Poland in 1913, Begin studied law in Warsaw. He became a Betar leader. He joined the Polish army and was sent to Palestine. He became Irgun leader in 1943 and Prime Minister of the State of Israel in 1977. He received Nobel peace prize for signing peace agreement with Egypt in 1979; Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 13-14.

¹⁸³ Yehuda Bauer, "Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1966): 182-210.

¹⁸⁴ Glenn Richard Bugh, "Palestine, The Arab Revolt" *Encyclopedica Britannica* <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/439645/Palestine/45069/The-Arab-Revolt> (Accessed on March 3rd, 2015)

¹⁸⁵ Representative of the Arab community in Palestine during the British Mandate. For further details see over Jewish and Arab presentation in British Palestine: Taysir Nashif, "Palestinian Arab and Jewish Leadership in the Mandate Period" *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer, 1977): 113-121.

to arrest and exile many Arab leaders while Arabs continued a guerrilla war against British targets.¹⁸⁶ This uprising changed the rules of the game in Palestine. The British had to ship more than 20,000 troops to the territory. It was only able to suppress the riots with the help of Jewish defense organizations.¹⁸⁷ In April 1937, *Haganah* was made up of 17,000 men, 4,000 women, 4,500 rifles, 10,000 small arms, and 230 light machine guns.¹⁸⁸ By the end of 1936, *Haganah* had started to change the policy of restraint under the pressure of military commanders and political leaders.¹⁸⁹ On April 26th, 1937 Jabotinsky agreed to rejoin *Haganah*. Half of the members of *Irgun* followed him. This merger was an important step in the battle against the Arab threat.¹⁹⁰

The cause for cooperation between the British and the Jews was the crucial need of manpower by the British and the need for military training by the Jews. The British took the risk of training Jewish militia to stop the riots, and consequently created an additional military power inside its mandate. This cooperation also helped the Jews stockpile arms to further their own nationalistic aspirations. The Jews maintained the hope, in vain, of being rewarded for their help with political independence.¹⁹¹

The Peel Report¹⁹² introduced by the Palestine Royal Commission on July 24th, 1937 proposed a partition plan. The Jews perceived it as a pro-Jewish orientation in British administration, but there was a deep suspicion about the British intentions within Jewish

¹⁸⁶ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105-107.

¹⁸⁷ Glenn Richard Bugh, "Palestine, The Arab Revolt" *Encyclopedica Britannica* <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/439645/Palestine/45069/The-Arab-Revolt> (Accessed on March 3rd, 2015)

¹⁸⁸ Yehuda Bauer, "Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1966): 182-210.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*

¹⁹² Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 69-79.

circles. Historian Yehuda Bauer states; “As early as December 1936 David Ben Gurion¹⁹³ have talked of the possibility of armed defense against the Arab countries and of ‘speaking to the English in a different language.’”¹⁹⁴ The Jews were correct in their suspicions. When the Arab uprising ended in 1939, the British decided to limit the Jewish migration to Palestine in order to prevent another Arab revolt. The British were also concerned about losing the Arab world support to the Axis powers.¹⁹⁵

On May 17th, 1939, the British issued The White Paper¹⁹⁶ limiting future Jewish immigration to Palestine as well as their land purchases in the mandate. For the British, the objective was “to maintain the status quo until the situation in Europe was clear.”¹⁹⁷ It promised the withdrawal from the Balfour Declaration as well, signaling an Arab majority state in Palestine. Historian Arie J. Kochavi explains as follows; “The decision of the Conservative Government to retreat from its support for partitioning Palestine into Arab and Jewish states and from its support for Zionism was manifested in the White Paper. Among other provisions, this document set an immigration quota of 75,000 Jews for five years, after which further immigration would be conditional upon Arab consent.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), born David Gruen in today’s Poland. Zionist statesman and political leader, became the first prime minister (1948–53, 1955–63) and defense minister (1948–53; 1955–63) of Israel. It was Ben-Gurion who, on May 14, 1948, at Tel Aviv, delivered Israel’s declaration of independence. He is revered as the Father of the Nation. He arrived in Palestine from Poland in 1906 at the age of twenty. Along with Moshe Sharett he spent a couple of years in Istanbul. He studied law and learned Turkish. He went to USA and returned to Palestine to join Jewish Legion of the British army. He was among the founders of Histadrut (Jewish Labor Federation). Both he and Sharett became part of the Jewish Agency which represented the Jewish community from 1923 until the end of the mandate.; David Ben Gurion, Global Britannica <http://global.britannica.com/biography/David-Ben-Gurion> (Accessed on May 14th, 2015)

¹⁹⁴ Yehuda Bauer, “Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1966): 182-210.

¹⁹⁵ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 300.

¹⁹⁶ Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 83-90.

¹⁹⁷ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 107.

¹⁹⁸ Arie J. Kochavi, “The Struggle against Jewish Immigration to Palestine,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (July 1998): 146-167.

The introduction of the White Paper on the eve of the Second World War was a clear gesture in favor of the Arabs in Palestine who saw the Jewish immigration as a direct threat. The British wanted to gain their support and prevent another Arab uprising, but the British gesture was not welcomed by the Arabs. In the eyes of the Arabs, the British have violated their promises several times and the brutal suppression of the 1936 revolt added to the feeling of betrayal.¹⁹⁹ Even after the introduction of The White Paper there was a hope among the Jewish leaders that the British would sooner or later annul this policy. The Jews wanted to prove to the British that a Jewish riot would be as dangerous as the Arab revolt and that the new policy will not bring peace to Palestine.

2.3. The Mandate of Palestine during the Second World War

The British had limited the Jewish immigration to Palestine after the deadly Arab revolts during 1936-1939 in a time when record number of Jews were escaping Nazi Europe. Zionist groups organized illegal immigrations to Palestine. During the first three years of Adolf Hitler's reign, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased dramatically. Between the years 1933-1936, more than 130,000 Jews arrived in Palestine and the Jewish community in Palestine grew by 80%.²⁰⁰ In 1939 close to 40% of Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine illegally; 11,156 out of a registered total of 27,561.²⁰¹ Zionist groups increased their efforts when news about the Nazi death camps reached Palestine in 1942. *Exodus*²⁰² became the symbol of the British bitterness toward the humanist situation when

¹⁹⁹ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 107.

²⁰⁰ Arieh J. Kochavi, "The Struggle against Jewish Immigration to Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (July 1998): 146-167.

²⁰¹ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 300.

²⁰² On July 17, 1947, the ship Exodus, with 4,500 Holocaust survivors, attempted to break through the British blockade to Palestine. Exodus was attacked by the British navy, and forced to go to port of Haifa, where the illegal immigrants were transferred to three deportation ships. "Exodus became not only the flagship of her 64 sister ships which sailed "illegally" between the years 1945 and 1948 into the coast of

the boat carrying 4500 Jewish refugees from Marseilles, France to Palestine was refused entry to Palestine and forced to turn back to camps in Germany in 1947.²⁰³ The world condemned the action.

The Jews viewed the introduction of the White Paper as a betrayal of the Balfour Declaration. The timing of the decree came at a time when life for European Jews was unbearable in countries under the Nazi regime. The White Paper also marked the end of the alliance between the Zionists and the British. For the first time, *Haganah* changed its restraint policy. In the spring of 1939, it began to take part in immigration, settlement and armed action.²⁰⁴ The introduction of the White Paper in 1939 was a turning point for the Jewish defense organizations which from that point on started to direct their activities against British authorities.²⁰⁵

The Second World War affected Palestine differently than the First World War in that rather than a war zone, Palestine became an army camp.²⁰⁶ The increased number of foreign soldiers and military personnel turned the territory into a logistic center. This dynamism also helped Palestinian economic development. New asphalt roads were built for the increased number of cars and trucks. New job opportunities were provided for both men and women. Arab immigration to Palestine increased.²⁰⁷

Palestine, with thousands of illegal immigrants on board, but also became a legend which summarized the courage and steadfastness of Holocaust survivors against the destroyers of His Britannic Majesty's Navy." Aviva Halamish, *The Exodus Affair: Holocaust Survivors and the Struggle for Palestine (Religion, Theology and the Holocaust)*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998): xiiiv.

²⁰³ "Exodus 1947" *Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Center*,

http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206306.pdf (Accessed on May 8th, 2015)

²⁰⁴ Yehuda Bauer, "Cooperation to Resistance: The Haganah 1938-1946" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April 1966): 182-210.

²⁰⁵ The Jewish Agency for Israel

<http://jafi.org/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Eye+on+Israel/Struggle+Defense/Struggle/Jewish+Defense+Organizations.htm> (Accessed on February 6th, 2015)

²⁰⁶ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 116-121.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*

The Jewish youth joined the British army against Germany and pro-Nazi Arab regimes.²⁰⁸ They gained military experience but faced a dilemma: should they help the British, the only army powerful enough to stop the Nazis, in spite of the fact that it was the same British authorities who introduced the White Paper and limited the Jewish immigration to Palestine during a time when the horror of the Nazi regime in Europe was more dangerous than ever? David Ben Gurion showed strong leadership when he addressed this dilemma: “We shall fight alongside the British army against the Germans as if the anti-Zionist White Paper of 1939 did not exist, and fight against the White Paper as if the war with Germany did not exist.”²⁰⁹ According to Times newspaper, ministers of foreign affairs of Arab countries met to find a solution to Palestine on March 1945. According to their reconciliation plan, the Arabs and the Jews of Palestine will have equal legal rights and accepts 200,000 to 300,000 new Jewish immigrants, and the British will leave their duty in the mandate to a news committee to be formed in San Francisco.²¹⁰ This was one of the unsuccessful plans to end the conflict in Palestine.

The Palestinian Arabs experienced leadership problems. Two rival leaderships were established in Palestine: The Arab Higher Committee dominated by the Husayni family and the National Authority supported by the Hashemites. Their political activities were ineffective and weak compared to the Zionist determination and organization. High ranking Arab Higher Committee members were flirting with the Nazis in Berlin. Their

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*

²¹⁰ “Filistin için yeni proje” *Ulus* newspaper March 12nd, 1945.

Nazi connection negatively affected the British plans for an independent Arab state in Palestine and became a major propaganda tool against the Arabs for the Zionists.²¹¹

As for the Jewish defense organizations, Jabotinsky's ideological legacy found expression in *Irgun* and also in *Lehi* (*Lohamei Herut Yisrael*, Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), known as the Stern Gang. *Lehi* broke away from the *Irgun* in 1940 and refused to cooperate with the British authority.²¹² The Jewish defense force *Palmach*²¹³ was founded in 1941 during the Second World War by the British as an elite Jewish striking force to defend Palestine from the Germans. The British trained its members for guerrilla warfare. *Palmach* was loyal to Great Britain who was the only army at that time fighting Nazi Germany. *Palmach* leaders arrested members of *Irgun* and *Lehi* who organized anti-British attacks and handed these individuals to the British or otherwise banished them to Africa. In the fall of 1942, following British decisive victory in Al-Alamein, Egypt, the British ordered the dismantling of *Palmach* but the leaders refused and continued to exist underground since then. When the British restricted the Jewish immigration to Palestine, *Palmach* organized 65 ships to Palestine with tens of thousands of Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors.²¹⁴

Haganah was the major military defense force of the *Yishuv* and the Zionist movement until the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. It operated covertly during the

²¹¹ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 116-121.

²¹² *Lehi* or Stern Gang was under the leadership of Avraham Stern. He was born in Poland in 1907. He made Aliyah in 1925 and continued his studies in Hebrew University. He was part of *Irgun* but disagreed to cooperate with the British and formed *Lehi* to continue to fight against the British. They robbed banks to finance their activities. He was killed by the British in 1942. From 1942 onwards, *Lehi* was commanded by Yitzhak Shamir, later to become Likud leader and prime minister of the State of Israel. Shamir had arrived in Palestine in 1935 and become chief of operations in *Lehi*. For further details see: Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 13-14.

²¹³ Abbreviation of *Plugot Mahatz*; meaning gangs

²¹⁴ "Palmach" <http://palmach.org.il/Web/English/InfoCenter/AboutThePalmach/Default.aspx> (Accessed on February 7th, 2015)

British rule and its volunteers totaled more than 60,000.²¹⁵ With the establishment of the State of Israel, most of the secret Jewish militia groups joined Israel Defense Force (IDF), but there was always some degree of rivalry between defense organizations, as reflected in the Altalena Affair on June 22nd, 1948. Altalena, an *Irgun* ship returning from France with full of arms was burned by *Haganah* and *Palmach*. 16 people were killed and all the arms crucial for the ongoing Independence War were destroyed. It was the most tragic event in the historical fight of the Labor Zionism against the Revisionist Movement of *Betar* and *Irgun*.²¹⁶

While the British worked on a solution to the Palestinian issue, the terror attacks against the British increased considerably. The 1946 bombing of King David Hotel, the British military headquarters in Jerusalem, was a major turning point for the British. *Haganah*, *Lehi* and *Irgun* collaborated to orchestrate the attack. After the bombing, the British decided to hand over the problem to the United Nations for a number of reasons: increased casualties caused by these type of attacks, the enormous burden of the large number of soldiers in Palestine and the strict attitude of the United States against the British debts.²¹⁷ In the aftermath of Second World War, Britain was too weak and too poor to soldier on.²¹⁸ A new era has started for the future of post-mandate Palestine.

Jewish immigration to Palestine has increased during the last years of the war. European Jews were escaping from a fate designed for them by the Nazi regime; racial

²¹⁵ *Ibid*

²¹⁶ For more information on the Altalena Affair: Yitshak Ben Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory: Memoirs from the Irgun* (New York: Shengold Pub, 1996) and Jerold S. Auerbach, *Brothers at War: Israel and the Tragedy of the Altalena* (New Orleans: Quid Pro Books, 2011)

²¹⁷ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 116-121.

²¹⁸ Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 38.

extermination. With the end of the war, the immense outcome of this policy came into light.

2.4. *HaShoah* (Holocaust)

The Second World War (1939-1945) differentiates itself from previous wars with its human cost and destructive warfare. Between 35 to 50 million people are estimated to have lost their lives during the war, over one-half of which were civilians. The main cause of this massive loss of life was the use of air power bombing of the enemy's cities. The war ended with the bombing of two Japanese cities with the atomic bomb, a new weapon of mass destruction. Most of Europe and Asia were in ruins. The Second World War is also called 'Hitler's War'. It is partly true as Germany's ambition started the war but Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the *Führer* (leader) of Germany, had planned a short, sharp war²¹⁹ and not the war that the world experienced which extended from Europe to the Pacific. Among the civilians who lost their lives there was a large group who was exterminated under Hitler's policies. 6 million Jews were systematically murdered, driven by racist ideology. While Hitler classified the extermination of the Jews as priority, he also targeted other groups for persecution and imprisonment including Romani people, the disabled, communists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals as well as all those who opposed the Nazi regime.

Nazi ideology was based on Social Darwinism (survival of the fittest) which classified the races. Accordingly, someone's abilities, characteristics, and behaviors were determined by their race and not by their own abilities or personal development. It was impossible for a human being to change the attributes of their race. The Nazis had defined

²¹⁹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation* (New York: Pearson, 2013), 121-140.

the Jews as a race instead of believers of a religion and affixed stereotypes about their personalities and appearance.

Discrimination against the Jews started in Germany and Nazi controlled areas. Jews were forced to wear yellow Stars of David and were denied some of the rights that other German citizens enjoyed. *Kristallnacht* (The night of broken glass) in November 9-10, 1938 was a pogrom attack against Jews performed in Nazi Germany, Austria, and Sudetenland. The store windows of 7500 Jewish shops were broken and their merchandises were looted. Jewish houses, schools and cemeteries were vandalized, 267 synagogues were demolished and set on fire. Many Jews were taken out of their houses and were humiliated, beaten, and raped. 91 were killed, 30,000 were arrested and transferred to concentration camps. A high number of suicides occurred after the events. This was the first instance in which the Nazi regime targeted Jews on a massive scale.²²⁰

Kristallnacht was the most brutal display of anti-Semitism in Germany. Prior to this event, Nazi policy were discriminative but nonviolent. After this date, the living conditions of German Jews deteriorated and the Nazis started to implement the so-called 'Final Solution to the Jewish Problem', systematic extermination of the Jews. 6 million Jews were taken out of their daily life, separated from their families, forced to work and live in the utmost inhuman conditions, experimented upon, and killed in concentration and death camps in a systematic way, using all of the possible technology of the time. In *HaShoah*, all Europe's Jews were targeted. The age, religion, profession, social or financial position, health, education was not significant. About two third of European Jews were killed. When the Second World War ended, six million Jews were dead including

²²⁰ "Kristallnacht" *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005201> (Accessed on April 14th, 2015)

1,5 million children. At first, the Nazi solution to ‘the Jewish problem’ was mass deportation, but this failed because there was no place for the Jews to go. Chaim Weizmann told the Peel Commission in 1936 that for the Jewish refugees the world “is divided into places where they cannot live and places they cannot enter,”²²¹ and the Nazis moved on to the final solution.

When the details of *HaShoah* were known, almost all Jews accepted that for their survival, the existence of a state of their own was an urgent necessity. The state of absolute helplessness and isolation throughout the Second World War forced the Jews to take the matters into their own hands instead of being passive actors as they used to be, under another’s governance. The Nazi genocide justified the Zionists’ tenet; Jews needed an independent state to prevent such a horror from reoccurring.

2.5. The UN Partition Plan and the Creation of the State of Israel

For the Western countries, the extent of the horror and organized brutality of the Holocaust was a big shock. The guilt prevailed as they were aware that they did not do enough to prevent this massacre.²²² Humanitarian sympathy arose for the Jews and the international support toward the creation of a Jewish state grew. *HaShoah* has remained as a massive trauma that still has a major role in political and cultural life for countries around the world.

On February 25th, 1947, the British decided to entrust the problem to the United Nations. The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed on May 15th, 1947 and the members visited Palestine to prepare a recommendation report.²²³

²²¹ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 85-88.

²²² Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 85-88.

²²³ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 305.

The Jews were helpful and welcomed warmly the committee members while the Arabs boycotted it;

“The members were warmly welcomed by their Jewish hosts, often with flowers and cheering crowds, and the Jewish Agency made sure that they met with settlers who spoke their languages (Swedish, Spanish, Persian, and so on). The Arabs, in contrast, displayed sourness, suspicion, or aggressiveness. Everywhere the Arabs refused to answer the committee’s questions: in a school in Beersheba, the teachers continued with their lessons when UNSCOP entered the classrooms, and the pupils were instructed not to look at the visitors; in the Galilee village of Rama, the inhabitants evacuated the village, and UNSCOP was “greeted only by a delegation of children who cursed them.”²²⁴

After intensive visits and meetings, the majority of the committee members decided in favor of partition into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. Jerusalem, where holy sites of the three monotheistic religions are located, would become an international zone. The two states were to be bound in an economic union.²²⁵ UNSCOP majority recommendations were converted into Resolution 181²²⁶. The UN General Assembly approved the resolution on November 29th, 1947. The partition plan was prepared according to the present majority of population. The Jews accepted the partition plan, while the Arab world rejected it and saw it as a betrayal. Immediately after the UN decision, fighting broke out between the Arab and Jewish populations of Palestine. Compared to the Palestinian Arabs, the Jews were more organized and experienced and secured control over their zone. The Arabs were without a plan. They rejected everything that was offered. They were against partition and against sharing the territory with the Jews. They were unorganized and lacked a military force or a leader. The Economist

²²⁴ Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 42-47

²²⁵ *Ibid*

²²⁶ “Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine” UN General Assembly.

<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253> (Accessed on May 1st 2015)

magazine explains the situation as follows; “They still refuse even to consider making plans to take over and administer their part of the country (...) So far as can be seen, there will be no authority, no administration, not even leaders, to whom the departing British or the United Nations Commission can formally deliver the deeds of Arab Palestine.”²²⁷

The mandate ended on May 15, 1948 and the British evacuated the territory. Jews proclaimed the State of Israel when the last British commander embarked the boat. The creation of the State of Israel was celebrated on the streets of the *Yishuv*. An existential war was approaching. As Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary, “In the country there is celebration and profound joy—and once again I am a mourner among the celebrants.”²²⁸

The new state received almost immediate recognition from the United States and the Soviet Union, the world’s two superpowers. The Zionist movement succeeded into statehood and it transformed itself from a non-state actor into Israel, a state with international recognition, controlling over 50% of the former mandate of Palestine.²²⁹

The Muslims of Palestine labeled that day as *Al-Nakba* (the day of the catastrophe). Neighboring Arab states including Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq declared war and invaded Israel the next day. Recommended by the Arab leaders, the Muslims of Palestine evacuated most of the cities during the conflict with the promise that they would be returned to their homes in few weeks.²³⁰ They believed and left everything behind, locked the door of their houses and took the keys with them. The promise was not delivered as

²²⁷ “Reactions to the 1947 UN Approval of Partition”, Perspectives on Modern World History: The Creation of the State of Israel, ed. Myra Immell (Miami: Greenhaven Press, 2010), 22-27.

²²⁸ Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 178-179.

²²⁹ Jørgen Jensenhaugen, Marte Heian-Engdal and Hilde Henriksen Waage, “Securing the State: From Zionist Ideology to Israeli Statehood” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 23 (2012): 280–303.

²³⁰ Reem A. Abu-Lughod, “Al-Nakba (the Catastrophe) and The Palestinian Diaspora: A Socio-Historical Account,” *National Social Science Journal* Vol. 35 Issue 2 (January 2011): 1.

the war ended with the victory of Israel and the Muslims of Palestine found themselves as refugees in neighboring Arab countries.

Some Arabs had started to flee even before May 1948. When a ‘civil war’ began with Jewish military organizations, wealthy and middle class Arabs living in urban areas were the first to leave the territory to more secure places like Cairo and Beirut. The second wave to flee Palestine consisted of the Arabs living in mixed Jewish-Arab cities and from Arab settlements next to Jewish settlements. Finally, with the escalation of fighting, poor villagers fled or were driven out by Jewish forces.

By May 1, 1948, 100,000 Arabs have left. When the armistice agreement was signed in 1949 there were 726,000 Arab refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, the West Bank, and Gaza.²³¹ In 1949, Israel had taken control of a large percentage of the territory while Egypt took over Gaza and Jordan occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 attracted more Jews to the territory. As stated in the declaration of independence, the *raison d'être* of Israel is that it is “open to Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles.”²³² A mass immigration started. The number of Jewish immigrants was 101,819 in 1948, 239,076 in 1949, 169,405 in 1950 and 173,901 in 1951. During the first years, half of the immigrants came from British detention camps in Cyprus, the displaced people’s camps all over Europe for Jews escaping the Nazi horror, and Middle Eastern and North African countries. Major countries of migration during 1948-1954 were Iraq, Romania, Poland and Morocco.²³³

²³¹ Michael R. Fischbach, *Records of Dispossession, Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1-7.

²³² Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 83-85.

²³³ *Ibid*

The 1948 War ended with the exile of 750,000 Muslim Arabs from Palestine into neighboring countries.²³⁴ Most of them continue their lives in refugee camps and they are not granted citizenship in their host country. The remaining Arabs in Israeli controlled territories were accepted as citizens of the State of Israel. While the demographics of Palestine changed in favor of the Jews, the demographics of the Arab countries also changed dramatically. Centuries-old Jewish communities disappeared because the Jews living in Arab countries were expelled or forced to flee as a reaction to the establishment of the State of Israel. 900,000 Jews were forced out of Arab countries, 650,000 of whom migrated to Israel.²³⁵ A discussion over the rights of these people is still going on as they did not gain the refugee status as the Arabs, they did not receive aid, and no UN resolution has passed for their benefit. The right of return issue in Israel-Palestinian negotiations focuses only on the Palestinian refugees and their rights are protected by United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). It is essential to note that the 1948 War become a corner stone in shaping the geo-political map of the Middle East for decades to come.

2.6. The Palestine Issue in the Turkish Press During the 1930s and 1940s

1929 and 1936 were vital years in the history of the British mandate of Palestine. In 1929, there was a dispute over Jewish religious rights at the Western Wall and it led to the worst violence between these two communities up to that point ²³⁶ In 1936, Arab rebellions against the Jewish immigration increased the tension between the two groups

²³⁴ Reem A. Abu-Lughod, "Al-Nakba (the Catastrophe) and The Palestinian Diaspora: A Socio-Historical Account," *National Social Science Journal* Vol. 35 Issue 2 (January 2011): 1.

²³⁵ Avi Beker, "The Forgotten Narrative: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries" *Jewish Political Studies Review* Vol. 17, No. 3/4 (Fall 2005): 3-19.

²³⁶ Philip Mattar, "The Role of the Mufti of Jerusalem in the Political Struggle over the Western Wall, 1928-29," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan. 1983): 104-118.

and had definitive results for the future of the British mandate. The British had to take security measures to prevent any further escalation.

Through the analysis of Turkish newspapers of the era, one found out that there was not much space attributed to this subject. The press seemingly did not give priority to this issue and most importantly, it gave the news neutrally. The events in Palestine were given without comments or taking sides between the Jews or the Arabs.²³⁷ In the reporting of the 1936 riots, the news was delivered objectively by Turkish papers: “It has been four months since the start of Arab strike in Palestine,”²³⁸ “Mufti of Palestine is challenging the British rule.”²³⁹ An article in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in 1936 is a good example to this trend; “10 thousand Jews have immigrated to Tel Aviv. The Jewish Agency has the necessary preparation to help the immigrants. On the other hand, the Arabs will start a boycott for Jewish goods in all Near East. Arab gangs set fire to many farms around Nasra and Deisana.”²⁴⁰ In 1945 *Ulus* newspaper gave the news about Palestine impartially as well; “There will be a big conflict in Palestine,”²⁴¹ “Abdullah from Jordan: There should be two states in Palestine”²⁴²

“Conflict started in Jerusalem,” “Egyptian Forces started to attack Tel Aviv,”²⁴³ “A Vatican for the Jews in Palestine,”²⁴⁴ were the titles of other *Cumhuriyet* article during 1948.²⁴⁵ These articles show the impartiality of the Turkish press on this issue, and the

²³⁷ While the neutrality of the press was attention grabbing for the Palestinian events, Turkish Jews were ridiculed and criticized in the Turkish press especially on their use of Turkish language.

²³⁸ Muharrem Feyvi Togay, “Filistin ve İngiltere” *Cumhuriyet* July 28th, 1936

²³⁹ “Filistin müftüsü meydan okuyor” *Cumhuriyet* November 19th, 1936

²⁴⁰ “Tel Aviv’e 10,000 Yahudi iltica etti” *Cumhuriyet* April 28th 1936.

²⁴¹ “Filistin’de büyük karışıklık çıkacağı tahmin ediliyor” *Ulus* October 1st, 1945.

²⁴² “Filistin’de iki ayrı devlet kurulmalıdır” *Ulus*, November 22nd, 1945.

²⁴³ Filistin’de harb tekrar başladı, Mısır kuvvetleri Tel Aviv’e karşı taaruzla başladılar.” *Cumhuriyet* July 8th, 1948

²⁴⁴ “Filistin’de bir Yahudi Vatikan’ı” *Cumhuriyet* July 13rd, 1948.

²⁴⁵ “Kudüs’te Çarpışmalar Başladı” *Cumhuriyet*, July 4th 1948

same neutrality can be seen in regard to the news of events affecting the Jews; “Arabs from Jerusalem set fire to a Jewish nursing home,”²⁴⁶ “Palestine in dismay! Jewish homes are burnt everywhere,”²⁴⁷ “Jews of Palestine are anxious due to ongoing talks between Arab leaders, excluding the Jewish nation.”²⁴⁸

This neutrality may be because most of the articles were not original but taken from foreign press and translated into Turkish, or because Palestine was not a priority. In response to a British newspaper asking in 1935 for the help of the Turkish army in the case of an attack on Palestine, Turkish *Cumhuriyet* newspaper responded; “Turks will not split their blood for lands other than theirs, this is a lesson learnt during the First World War”²⁴⁹. Articles in *Cumhuriyet* showed the indifference of Turkey to the future of the Arabs and Palestine during the 1930s; “We wish for Palestine, as any other state separated from the empire, prosperity and welfare,”²⁵⁰

It can be say that other concerns shadowed Palestine as a foreign policy issue. For example, Turkey has turned back the invitation to Islam Conference held in Jerusalem in 1931. Ankara refused to attend and also criticized the conference as it feared that the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin would attempt to revive the caliphate annulled in 1924 by Turkey.²⁵¹ Even in this atmosphere, Turkish Jews were criticized for their sympathy for their co-religionists in Palestine. According to an *El Tyempo* (a Jewish newspaper of Turkey) article published on September 4th 1929, there was a tendency among the Turkish

²⁴⁶ “Kudüs arabları bir bakımevini ateşe verdiler” *Cumhuriyet*, June 23rd, 1936.

²⁴⁷ “Filistin dehşet içinde!” *Cumhuriyet*, April 23rd, 1936.

²⁴⁸ “Filistin işleri gene kızışıyor, Museviler telaşa” *Cumhuriyet*, August 26th 1936.

²⁴⁹ “Hayal Mahsulu Haberler”, *Cumhuriyet*, September 20th, 1935; Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları (1920-1939)* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 163.

²⁵⁰ “Filistin Arapları Eski Türk Devrini Hasretle Arıyorlar”, *Cumhuriyet*, January 17th, 1937; Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları (1920-1939)* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 163-164.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 172-175.

Jews to aid the Jews of Palestine financially and an attempt to lobby in their favor.²⁵²

Cumhuriyet newspaper criticized this act and Chief Rabbi Becerano was forced to deny the accusations for the well being of the Turkish Jewish community.²⁵³

Though little space was given to the developments of Palestine in the newspapers, the press did follow the developments in the region. State owned *Ayın Tarihi* monthly magazine watched Palestine carefully, “at a time when Turkey have turned its back on the Middle East.”²⁵⁴ Muharrem Fevzi Togay, Ömer Rıza Doğrul, Ahmet Şükrü Esmer wrote on Palestinian events during the 1930s.²⁵⁵ Beside these columnists, the news about Palestine mainly originated from the British press. Newspapers started to have their own reporters in Palestine following the 1936 Arab rebellion.²⁵⁶

According to Celil Bozkurt, the neutrality of the Turkish press was due to the restrictions caused by the Law of Press. As the papers were seen to reflect official Turkish foreign policy,²⁵⁷ some sensitive issues were not covered in detail.²⁵⁸ In addition to this, the Republican elite had profound resentment against the Arabs who had cooperated with the enemy during the First World War in order to establish an independent Arab state, but

²⁵² Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 88.

²⁵³ “Yahudiler Filistin Yahudilerine Yardım Edeceklermiş”, *Cumhuriyet*, October 2nd, 1929; Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları* (1920-1939) (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 167.

²⁵⁴ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee Orientale et le Monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December 1999): 129-147.

²⁵⁵ Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları* (1920-1939) (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 156-158; Aykan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 129-147.

²⁵⁶ Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları* (1920-1939) (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 156-158.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*

²⁵⁸ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 129-147

who ultimately ended up under the European powers with unnatural borders drew over a map.

The press was neutral to the conflicts but when it came to a Jewish state in Palestine, the state was not. In 1937, Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Turkey, declared that Turkey was against the idea of a Christian or Jewish rule in Palestine. This declaration is seen as a precaution for forming an Islamic alliance in case of a need whilst the Second World War was approaching.²⁵⁹

Şalom, a Turkish-Jewish four-page weekly that still exists today, has been published since 1947.²⁶⁰ mostly in Judeo-Spanish while some political articles were in Turkish. Printing in both Judeo-Spanish and Turkish, *Şalom* may have tried to navigate the censorship of the press by printing delicate materials in Judeo-Spanish and non-dangerous articles in Turkish. Most of *Şalom*'s Turkish articles were political articles about Turkey's economic situation, elections, British mandate of Palestine, and most importantly responses to anti-Semitic articles in the Turkish press. Contrary to the national press, *Şalom* followed the developments in Palestine very closely. It is apparent from the articles that the reporters identified themselves as citizens of the Turkish Republic and praised the courage and dedication of their co-religionists in Palestine. The idea of having a Jewish national state in its historical homeland was a subject of pride and joy. At the same time there was a precaution. Izak Yaeş from *Şalom* wrote an opinion piece on the gratitude and loyalty of the Jews to Turkey²⁶¹ and there was no clear sign of a massive immigration.

²⁵⁹ Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları (1920-1939)* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 177.

²⁶⁰ For further information on Turkish Jewish press: Naim A. Gülerüz, *Türk Yahudi Basını Tarihi, süreli yayınlar* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 2015)

²⁶¹ Izak Yaeş, "Türk Musevileri ve Filistin Davası" *Şalom* newspaper December 11th, 1947.

Izidor Levi from *Şalom* newspaper compared the war of the Jews against the Arabs in Palestine to the Independence War of Turkey and to the war against the Nazi Germany and added; “the Jews have the most important weapon; God.”²⁶² Izak Yaeş also compared it to the Turkish Independence War; “I know you are not a coward cause you fought against the English army. Trust your people. We fought as well for the Turkish independence, men and women. And we succeeded because we fought for our own territory, we don’t want any others’ territory but our own. If someone puts an eye to Turkish land it will become blind. Jews from Europe and Palestine, I know we are alike. A state is establishing a nation is awakening.”²⁶³

From the tone of these articles one can conclude that the Turkish Jews identified firstly as Turks, and were as a whole very nationalist. They had sympathy for the Jews of Palestine fighting for their own state. *Şalom* was founded on the anniversary of the Republic; October 29th, 1947. This was not a coincidence. Those who knew Avram Leyon, the owner of the newspaper and chief editor of *Şalom*, tells that he was a Turkish nationalist. This can also be noticed in the red ink he used only on October 29th in his all black and white newspaper.

The excitement over the UN partition was very clear. Izak Şaul wrote a poem called; “A nation is reuniting with its ancient state.”²⁶⁴ Moiz Anav published an open letter to Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism, in which he wrote; “Open your eyes and look, your dream has come true. The Jewish state is born. Look at all the young people, men and women from all over the world, from all social classes are present there.”²⁶⁵ Izak

²⁶² Izidor Levi, “Yahudiler Neye Güveniyorlar?” *Şalom* newspaper December 11th, 1947

²⁶³ Izak Yaeş, “Bir Devlet Kuruluyor” *Şalom*, January 29th, 1948

²⁶⁴ İzak Şaul, “1947” *Şalom*, January 29th, 1948

²⁶⁵ Moiz Anav, “Herzl’e açık mektup” *Şalom*, January 29th, 1948.

Şaul wrote a poem as well to Herzl; “You were the first to scream I am a Jew and I don’t want to hide it. Your dream has come true. Your people realized it and will protect it today and tomorrow.”²⁶⁶ Daniel Maya saw the courage of the Jews in the conflicts with the British army and the Arabs of Palestine and in an article published in Turkish declared that it was unjust to say the Jews were coward,²⁶⁷ a common stereotype put upon the Jews universally.

An article by Sami A. Kasuto criticizes the reaction of the Arabs to the partition decision of the U.N. “The Jews have worked hard to develop this land and now they have to leave the most beautiful part of it to the Arabs. It is very hard to see this territory to be divided into pieces. But in contrast to the Arabs, the Jews are celebrating this decision. It is surprising to see the Arabs states united to protect the rights of the Arabs of Palestine knowing that they did nothing for them till now.”²⁶⁸

There was disappointment when the British supported the Arabs. Eli Şaul criticizes this choice by the British and concluded that Palestine was a new rivalry of the powerful states in the Middle East.²⁶⁹ Though it was too soon to understand the full consequences of the UN decision, it was understood to be a momentous event. *Şalom* published President of Jewish Agency and future president of the State of Israel David Ben Gurion’s speech in Judeo-Spanish. In it, Ben Gurion assured that the new country will be instrument of peace and prosperity,²⁷⁰ this was also the hope of the Turkish Jews for the new state. *Şalom*

²⁶⁶ Izak Şaul “Kurtuluş Kahramanı Theodorl Herzl” *Şalom* July 29th, 1948

²⁶⁷ Daniel Maya, “Yahudilere korkak demek acaba doğru mu?” *Şalom*, January 22nd, 1948

²⁶⁸ Sami A. Kasuto, “Birleşmiş Milletlerin Tarihi Kararı” *Şalom*, December 4th 1947

²⁶⁹ Eli Şaul, “İngilizler Filistin araplarını neden tutuyor” *Şalom*, January 29th, 1948

²⁷⁰ “El Nuevo Estado Cudio, instrument de paz I de prosperidad, tendra un lugar dinyo en las Nasyones-Unidas” *Şalom*, January 29th 1948

was pro-Jewish but at the same time it made some attempts to be objective on this issue and questioned the claims that the Jews threatened the Arabs ruthlessly.²⁷¹

In his articles, Leyon shared his concerns over a possible civil war in Palestine following the British withdraw. Praising the development in agriculture, industry, and infrastructure, he advises Arabs of Palestine not to fear the Jews. He stressed the new situation that would emerge following the UN partition vote will be beneficial to them as the closest neighbor of the Jews, adding that the Turkish Jews will be thankful to them when they see “these unfortunate people settled and happy.”²⁷²

Given the fact that the Arabs were portrayed as traitors in Modern Turkish history, *Şalom* writers were surprised by the sympathy in the Turkish press towards the Arabs during the conflict in Palestine following the partition plan; “Why they are defending the Arabs? We cannot understand.”²⁷³ While surprised by the Turkish reaction to the ongoing war between the Arabs and the Jews, they blamed the British for the result. They were explaining the reason of hostility “between two brothers” [Arabs and Jews] as the result of the British politics.²⁷⁴

Şalom was not indifferent to the situation in Palestine and was not neutral during the conflict, which was a reflection of most Turkish Jews position on those issues. *Şalom* published many pictures praising the Jewish soldiers²⁷⁵ and many news articles about

²⁷¹ Avram Leyon, “Filistin Yahudileri Hakikaten Araplara Karşı Vahşiyane Hareketlerde Buldukları Doğru Mu?” *Şalom*, May 22nd 1948

²⁷² Avram Leyon, “İngiliz ve Yahudiler” *Şalom*, November 13th, 1947

²⁷³ Avram Leyon, “Filistin Yahudileri Hakikaten Araplara Karşı Vahşiyane Hareketlerde Buldukları Doğru Mu?” *Şalom*, May 22nd 1948

²⁷⁴ Filistin meselesinde bütün zorluklar İngiltere’den geliyor *Şalom*, June 10th, 1948

“Küçük bir Havadis, Büyük bir Mana” *Şalom*, December 9th 1948

²⁷⁵ Photo of a Jewish soldier (*Şalom*, January 22nd 1948) Separation scene of a Jewish young man from his girlfriend; “-I am going to save the country. –Go and do whatever your Jewish soul orders you to do” (*Şalom*, March 4th 1948) soldiers from Hagannah (*Şalom*, March 18th 1948) Telecommunication officers of Hagannah (April 1st 1948) Male and female soldiers (*Şalom*, April 8th 1948) Armed female soldier (*Şalom*, August 12th 1948) Armed male and female soldier (*Şalom*, August 26th 1948)

Irgun, Haganah and the ongoing conflict between the Arabs and the Jews, always in Judeo-Spanish. The idea of fighting for Israel was given indirectly with these photos and articles; a secret propaganda that could influence the youth with Zionist ideals.

In April 15th 1948, *Şalom* published that the Jewish state will be reclaimed on May 15th 1948,²⁷⁶ but this also coincided with the start of the Arab-Jewish war. While *Haganah* declared general mobilization, the hostility between *Haganah* and *Irgun* was already known.²⁷⁷ On the issue of May 13th the headlines in Judeo-Spanish screamed the coming reclamation in two days.²⁷⁸ Eli Şaul declared that the Palestinian problem was soon to be finished.²⁷⁹ A cartoon showed a dejected and tired Arab boxer helped by the British referee and the victory of the Jewish boxer.²⁸⁰ On another cartoon there were two men who could not share the map of Palestine; one in modern clothes presenting the Jews and the other in traditional Arab clothing.²⁸¹ In both cartoons the Arab character was characterized as a black person, a common stereotype in Turkey.

With the creation of the State of Israel, one can feel the joy and excitement of the Turkish Jews via *Şalom*. Many poems and articles on liberty, of a dream coming true, on the awakening of a people, and of freedom can be found next to photos of Israel, the industry, and agriculture.²⁸² There were many headlines in Hebrew, not before seen, and this was especially the case during Jewish holidays. From 1947 till 1950 there was no

²⁷⁶ “El Estado cudyo va ser proklamado el 15 Mayo” *Şalom* April 15th 1948

²⁷⁷ “Dezakordo entre la Hagannah i el Irgun?” *Şalom* April 22 1948

²⁷⁸ “El Estado de Yisrael va ser Proklamado i enstalado en el 15 de Mayo” *Şalom* May 13th 1948

²⁷⁹ Eli Şaul, “Filistin Davası Bitmek Üzeredir” *Şalom* newspaper May 13th 1948

²⁸⁰ “Un maç onde el uno de los boksöres esta favorizado de el arbitro” *Şalom* May 13th 1948

²⁸¹ “Paylaşılamayan Miras!” *Şalom* July 1st 1948

²⁸² *Şalom* newspaper June 3rd, June 10th, June 17th 1948

article that expressed openly and frankly the desire to move to Israel. But some articles expressed the joy of making *Aliyah* to Palestine, secretly encouraging the immigration.²⁸³

The establishment of the State of Israel was announced in the Turkish press without any comments. As in the example of *Yeni Gazete* (former *Vakit*), it was announced as; “A Jewish state is established in Palestine, Arab armies attacked on several ways”²⁸⁴ *Cumhuriyet* announced it as “The declaration of the Jewish state” and “Arab armies entered to Palestine last night”²⁸⁵ On May 20th 1948, the creation of the State of Israel was announced in Turkish, from the first page of *Şalom*, yet the main headline, that the fight was still going on in Jerusalem was published in Judeo-Spanish.²⁸⁶ Though *Şalom* writers were joyous for the establishment of the Jewish state, the civil war preoccupied them severely. The choice between publishing in Turkish or in Judeo-Spanish is telling of which issues were considered open to criticism and which were too delicate to be printed for a larger audience. In the last case, the creation of the State of Israel was announced in Turkish only after it was a reality. Before that day, all news about the possibility of a Jewish state and the developments were in Judeo-Spanish. As the issue of Jerusalem was still a taboo, it was not printed in Turkish. This was a precaution of the Turkish Jews learnt from their experience and history in the Ottoman empire and the Republic of Turkey.

Palestine became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 and it remained under the Ottoman rule until the First World War. The history of Palestine is interrelated to the Ottoman Empire. As one of the major links between the State of Israel and Turkey is the

²⁸³ İzak Şaul “A Los Emigrantes de Yisrael” *Şalom* February 19, 1948

²⁸⁴ “Filistin’de Yahudi Devleti Kuruldu, Arap orduları bir kaç koldan taaruza geçtiler” *Yeni Gazete*, May 15th 1948.

²⁸⁵ “Yahudi devletinin ilan” “Arab orduları dün gece Filistin’e girdiler” *Cumhuriyet* May 15th, 1948

²⁸⁶ *Şalom* newspaper May 20th 1948

Turkish Jews, the next chapter will explore the history of the Jews in the land of the Ottomans and their Republican history following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.

Chapter 3:

The Jews of Turkey

Tolerance and loyalty are the words usually employed to explain the relation between the Ottomans and religious minorities. When the Ottomans conquered lands with non-Muslim populations, they made a pact in accordance to Islam that recognizes Jews and Christians as ‘People of the Book’. Ottomans guaranteed their protection and granted religious freedom as long as they did not interfere in governmental affairs and paid their taxes. In order to understand the relationship of the Turkish Republic with the Jews of the country that became equal citizens by law, one must first understand the Millet²⁸⁷ (nation) system of the Ottomans and its impact on the people of Turkey.

Another important aspect of the minority rights in Turkey was defined by the Treaty of Lausanne. Signed in 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne concluded the First World War and recognized the boundaries of the modern Republic of Turkey. The minister of Foreign Affairs Ismet İnönü was the head of the Turkish delegation and the only non-Muslim consultant was the Chief Rabbi of Turkey, Haim Nahum²⁸⁸. The Treaty not only defined the boundaries of the new state, but also aimed to protect the rights of non-Muslim citizens of Turkey. This caused a big setback for the Republican elite who tried to reconstruct a Turkish identity free of any distinctions or foreign involvement.

²⁸⁷ Administrative units organized on religious basis rather than ethnic origin.

²⁸⁸ Haim Nahum (1873-1960), a scholar, lawyer, linguist and diplomat who served as the last Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire. Born to a poor Jewish family in Manisa, he gained the title of Rabbi in 1897 in Paris where he became familiar with the leaders of the Young Turk Revolution, a movement which sought to modernize the Ottoman Empire. He was selected as the Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire in 1908. He was an adviser to the Turkish delegation during peace negotiations in Lausanne. He became the Chief Rabbi of Egypt in 1925 till his death; Ester Benbassa, *Haim Nahum. A Sephardic Rabbi in Politics, 1892-1923* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995) and Naim Güleriyüz, *Toplumsal Yaşamda Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 2012)

This chapter will attempt to explain the Treaty of Lausanne that guaranteed provisions to religious minorities and the Millet system that organized these rights and duties. By examining the minority policies of the Turkish Republic, this chapter will try to illustrate the factors that motivated the majority of the Turkish Jews to leave Turkey following the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. It is important to note that in modern Turkish history the emigration of the Turkish Jews to Israel after the establishment of the Jewish state is the second biggest immigration out of Turkey (after the labor emigration to Europe).²⁸⁹ It marks a crucial turning point in the history of the Turkish Jews and a radical change in the population composition of the Turkish Republic.

3.1. The Jewish Population of the Ottoman Empire

Having survived Byzantine persecution, Jewish minorities welcomed and contributed to the Ottoman victory expecting the same toleration and religious freedom previously received from the Abbasids of Baghdad and the Umayyads in Spain.²⁹⁰ The conquerors and the Romaniot Jews²⁹¹, as they were called, established strong relations.²⁹² They were free to practice their religion and culture. Even before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Ottomans encouraged Jewish immigration to the empire²⁹³ by practicing tolerance to religious diversity. European Jews expelled from Hungary (1376), from

²⁸⁹ Şule Toktaş, "Turkey's Jews and their Immigration to Israel." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (May 2006): 505-519.

²⁹⁰ Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 1-3.

²⁹¹ Besides Romaniots (Jews of Byzantium) there were also the Karaites originally emigrated from Crimea. Known as the followers of the Bible, Karaism is a branch of Judaism that rejects the divine origin of the Talmud (rabbinical traditions and laws) and only profess in its religious observances the Bible. They are excluded from the Orthodoxy; Walter F. Weiker, *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity: A History of the Jews of Turkey* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1992), 7-25 and Avram Galante, *Histoire Des Juifs De Turquie* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1985) Vol. I 306-313, Vol. II 177-200.

²⁹² Walter F. Weiker, *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity: A History of the Jews of Turkey* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1992), 7-25.

²⁹³ Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 47-49.

France (1394), and from Sicily, Bavaria, Salonika migrated to the Ottoman²⁹⁴ territories²⁹⁵.

With the acceptance of Sephardic Jews to the empire in 1492²⁹⁶, the Jewish population of the Ottoman Empire expanded. Sultan Beyazıd II tried to organize the Jews as a millet and appointed the last Chief Rabbi of Constantinople under the Byzantines Moşe Kapsali, as the Chief Rabbi of Constantinople.²⁹⁷ Sephardic Jews contributed to the Ottoman society, economy, international trade, and banking system with their knowledge and the technology they brought. Jews were prominent merchants and had preexisting European contacts. They knew European languages and were preferred in diplomacy as translators. Jews were loyal to the Ottoman state and largely lacked political ambition. These properties differentiated them from other millets under the Ottoman rule.²⁹⁸

The tolerance of the Ottomans attracted many Jews fleeing from Christian Europe. The Jews settled in different regions of the empire such as today's Hungary, Egypt, Cyprus, Thrace and Anatolia. The majority gathered in Istanbul, Edirne in Turkey, Thessaloniki in Greece, and Safed in Palestine. The Ottoman Jewish community became

²⁹⁴ A prayer called *Hanoten Teshua* is designated to show the gratitude of Sephardic Jews to the Ottoman Empire. This tradition still exists in Turkey; Berry Schwartz, "Hanoten Teshua - the Origin of the Traditional Jewish Prayer for the Government." *Hebrew Union College Annual* Vol. 57, (1986): 113-120.

²⁹⁵ Lucien Gubbay, "The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire" *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 59-69.

²⁹⁶ In 1492 the Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula after having lived there for 1,500 years. Spanish inquisition ordered the Jews and other non-Christians to convert to Christianity or leave the country. Ottoman Sultan Beyazıd II welcomed the Jews into his empire. 200,000 Jews left Spain and 40,000 of them settled in Istanbul, Edirne and Thessalonica. In 1497, Portugal issued similar restrictions and the Jews of Portugal moved to the Ottoman Empire. The immigration continued till 18th century as the Jews converted forcibly to Christianity escaped from Iberian Peninsula as well; Esther Banbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri* trans. Ayşe Atasoy (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014); Gilles Veinstein, "The Ottoman Jews: between distorted realities and legal fictions" *Mediterranean Historical Review*. Vol. 25, No. 1, (June 2010); Ahmet Hikmet Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Yahudiler* (Ankara: Andaç, 2003)

²⁹⁷ Naim Güleriyüz, *Toplumsal Yaşamda Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 2012), 197-201.

²⁹⁸ According to the governmental census of 1478, 10,460 Romaniot Jews lived in Istanbul. This number increased to 48,420 in 1535, in the first official census after the Jewish expulsion from Spain and Portugal. In 1688, there were 21,686 Jews in the city; Minna Rozen, *Istanbul Yahudi Cemaatinin Tarihi Oluşum Yılları* (1453-1566) trans. by Serpil Çağlayan (Istanbul: Yaylacılık; 2002), 52.

the largest Jewish community in the world in the 16th century.²⁹⁹ Besides offering the freedoms of religion and culture, Ottoman cities became centers of Jewish intellectuals and mystic scholars. The 16th to mid-17th century is known as the Golden Age of the Ottoman Jews.³⁰⁰ The 16th century was also the peak of the Ottoman Empire, which became one of the most advanced and best-administered states in the world.

3.1.1. The *Millet* System of the Ottomans

The Ottoman Empire was an Islamic Caliphate within which governors and statesmen were judges and supervisors with executive, administrative, and judicial powers. The only legislative power was Allah whose norms and rules for governing were enumerated in Islamic law; Sharia. As a result, there was a fusion of the religious and civil community. The state, and not the individual, is the political subject.³⁰¹ The term ‘nation’ is used to define a religion or sect forming a community. During the last years of the empire, “nation” evolved to mean ethnic community under the influence of nationalism.³⁰²

Ottomans achieved harmony between religious and ethnic communities within its borders through tolerance, at a time when toleration to other religions was very rare in Europe. Within this diverse setting in which, “the dual role of Islam as an institution and a system of beliefs”³⁰³ existed, the Millet system promoted religious toleration and facilitated the integration of non-Muslim communities. Historian Karen Barkey explains as follows; “Ottomans took pride in their cosmopolitan and pluralistic foresight on

²⁹⁹ Stanford J. Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler*, trans. by Meriç Sobutay (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), 57.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*

³⁰¹ Ventsislav Karavaltchev and Pavel Pavlov, “How Just was the Ottoman Millet System?” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 11, no. 3 (May 2011): 21-30.

³⁰² Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Tamya Yayıncılık, 2000), 12.

³⁰³ Karen Barkey, “Islam and Toleration: Studying the Ottoman Imperial Model” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* Vol.19 No.1/2 *The New Sociological Imagination II* (December 2005): 5-19.

rule.”³⁰⁴ Islam recognized the rights of believers in the monotheistic religions to remain at peace within the Muslim state and observe their faith, as long as they accept Islam’s political authority and paid their taxes.³⁰⁵ The Jews and Christians acquired a tolerated status of protected people (*dhimmis*). This ensured state protection for their lives and property on the condition that they did not insult Islam or attempt to convert Muslims.³⁰⁶ As *dhimmis*, Jews and Christians had to accept restrictions as second-class subjects.³⁰⁷ They were excluded from military service, were prohibited from carrying arms, riding horses, building new houses of worship or repairing old ones, public processions and worship, owning Muslim slaves, and building homes higher than Muslim ones, and were required to wear distinctive clothing.³⁰⁸

Ottoman subjects were divided into millets,³⁰⁹ or religious communities, which included Greek (*Rum*), Armenian, and Jewish groups. Under this system, religious identity came before the ethnic identity; Turk, Serb, Bulgarian, etc. The imperial order (*nizam*) incorporated a policy of ethno-lingual indifference in its administrative policies in a religiously determined context.³¹⁰ Religion and identity were interrelated, a legacy of the Ottomans that continued to exist in the future Republic of Turkey’s understanding of citizenship.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*

³⁰⁵ Ventsislav Karavaltchev and Pavel Pavlov, “How Just was the Ottoman Millet System” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 11, no. 3 (May 2011): 21-30.

³⁰⁶ Lucien Gubbay, “The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire” *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 59-69.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*

³⁰⁸ Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 100.

³⁰⁹ Karen Barkey & George Gavrilis, “The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and its Contemporary Legacy” *Ethnopolitics*, 15:1, (2016): 24-42.

³¹⁰ Ahmet İcduygu and B. Ali Soner, “Turkish Minority Rights Regime: Between Difference and Equality” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (May, 2006): 447-468.

All distinct groups had their own neighborhood (*mahallah*). Most of the time its members lived in their own neighborhood of the city up to their own preference. There was no strict legislation that forced the minorities to live in pre-determined places similar to the European Ghettos.³¹¹ “Cities were formed according to the religious and ethnic identities of its people. Every community lived in neighborhoods designated for them by the state. These neighborhoods were outlined by invisible walls.”³¹² This system separated the millets with different languages and traditions as much as possible, helping to prevent religious conflicts.³¹³ Every religious community had internal autonomy and their own administration. They had their own language, education system, courts, hospital, charitable institutions.³¹⁴ These communities collected taxes for their own expenses (*kizba* for the Jews) and for the demands of the state (*jizyah*). The community members did not have direct access to the sultan. The leaders were like ministers responsible for their community.³¹⁵ The duties of the millets were to pay their taxes, to keep order, and to observe their respective religious and cultural freedoms, under their own religious and lay leaders.³¹⁶

The rule of different communities within Ottoman borders was mainly based on social boundaries between religious communities and regulating their transactions.³¹⁷ Though they were separated by their religion, culture, and social life, these millets were

³¹¹ Lucien Gubbay, “The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire” *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 59-69.

³¹² Siren Bora, “İzmir’de Göçmenlere Yuva Olan Kortejolar” *Şalom* Newspaper, October 7th, 2015.

³¹³ Ventzislav Karavaltchev and Pavel Pavlov, “How Just was the Ottoman Millet System” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 11, no. 3 (May 2011): 21-30.

³¹⁴ Ali Güler, *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Tamyayayınçılık, 2000), 12-13.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*

³¹⁶ Ventzislav Karavaltchev and Pavel Pavlov, “How Just was the Ottoman Millet System” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 11, no. 3 (May 2011): 21-30.

³¹⁷ Karen Barkey, “Islam and Toleration: Studying the Ottoman Imperial Model” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* Vol.19 No.1/2, *The New Sociological Imagination II* (December 2005): 5-19.

decidedly ‘Ottoman’ as they were part of the larger society both economically and politically, unlike many other minority communities elsewhere in the world.³¹⁸

Each Jewish neighborhood was formed around a synagogue.³¹⁹ Each community was represented by a local religious leader whose responsibility was to regulate and administer his community.³²⁰ There was no central Jewish authority in the Ottoman Empire until the chief rabbinate³²¹ was restored in 1835³²² with the *Tanzimat* reforms³²³. Until then, Ottoman Jews had many different communities and each had a separate chief rabbi. The Sephardic Jews who constituted the majority of the Ottoman Jewish population had formed their own neighborhoods and synagogues according to the cities or regions from which they had originated. Due to this legacy of multiplicity of leaders and communities, “they did not want the administration of uni-chief rabbi, responsible to Ottoman, or else their own rabbi to be the chief rabbi.”³²⁴

3.1.2. A Revolutionary Change in Education; The *Alliance Israelite* Schools

The reign of Süleyman the Magnificent between 1520-1566 marked the peak of the Ottoman power and prosperity. After his death in 1566, the empire failed to produce strong leaders. Corruption multiplied, janissary revolts increased, European pressure on

³¹⁸ Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Tamya Yayıncılık, 2000), 13.

³¹⁹ Siren Bora, “İzmir’de Göçmenlere Yuva Olan Kortejolar” *Şalom* Newspaper October 7th, 2015.

³²⁰ Riva Kastoryano, “From Millet to Community; The Jews of Istanbul” *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry – Community and Leadership* eds. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 256.

³²¹ For further details see: Ülkühan Olgun, *Osmanlı Son Dönemi Yahudilik ve Hahambaşılık* (Istanbul: Giza, 2009) and Naim Güler, *Toplumsal Yaşamda Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 2012)

³²² Moşe Kapsali and Eliyahu Mizrahi were the last chief rabbis of Constantinople under the Ottoman Empire. The Jews had to pay a tax to have a chief rabbi. It is believed that the Jews stopped the payment after the death of Mizrahi in 1526 as the Sephardim did not want a Romaniot chief rabbi; Naim Güler, *Toplumsal yaşamda Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 2012), 197-201.

³²³ Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 233-236.

³²⁴ Canan Seyfeli, “Osmanlı Devlet Salnamelerinde Hahambaşılık (1847-1918)”, *Milel ve Nihal*, 7 (1): 95-136.

the Ottoman Empire was augmented. Ottomans were unsuccessful in competing with the industrial and economic advancement of European countries.

The decrease in economic revenues led to inflation and an increase in taxes. The worsened economic situation and the discontentment of the people negatively impacted the general attitude toward the rich communities of the empire. Researcher and author Lucien Gubbay explains with these lines; “As the Muslims masses suffered, so too did their tolerance of *dhimmi*s diminish.”³²⁵ The Jews suffered severely from the deterioration of the economy as their livelihood was based largely on trade. While the market shrunk, the revenue and the wealth of the Jews so too decreased. The deterioration of the economy weakened the quality of life of the Jews. Another important problem was that the quality of the education was outdated. A revolutionary change occurred with the opening of *Alliance Israelite Universelle*³²⁶ (AIU) schools in 1875 throughout the empire. These European style schools were firstly founded in France in 1860 by six French Jewish intellectuals, inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment and motivated by a genuine sentiment of solidarity. The Damascus blood libel affair in 1840 produced the idea to found these schools.³²⁷ The main mission of AIU was the emancipation of Middle Eastern and North African Jewries through western, modern, and secular education. As ‘Oriental’ (*Mizrahi*) Jews were considered backward compared to French Jewry, AIU established a vast network of schools in the lands of Islam in order to “help” their co-religionists “to

³²⁵ Lucien Gubbay, “The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire” *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 59-69.

³²⁶ Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990)

³²⁷ For further information on Damascus affair: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4862-damascus-affair> (Accessed on January 12nd, 2016)

transform themselves into enlightened, modern citizens, abandoning their particularistic habits and attitudes.”³²⁸

French was the primary language of instruction in all AIU schools. The curriculum included biblical and post-biblical history, religious instruction, French, Hebrew, Turkish, arithmetic, local and world geography, local and world history, physical and natural sciences, linear design and, for girls, sewing. Most of the schools were primary.³²⁹ AIU expected its teachers to come from France but very few wanted to live in the region. This problem created an opportunity for the Ottoman Jews. AIU³³⁰ invited its brightest students to study in Paris and later placed them as Alliance teachers.³³¹ Importantly, AIU was not a Zionist organization but rather worked for the assimilation of the Jews to the society in which they lived in and encouraged its students to become influential in the Jewish community.³³²

The German Jews also opened their own schools. One of the leaders of AIU, Simon Goldschmidt, opened the Goldschmidt school in 1890 in Galata, Istanbul. Ashkenazi boys learnt German there, while girls were taught French at the Galata Alliance school.³³³

³²⁸ Aomar Boum, “Schooling in the Bled: Jewish Education and the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Southern Rural Morocco, 1830-1962” *Journal of Jewish Identities* January 2010, 3(1) <http://boum.faculty.arizona.edu/sites/boum.faculty.arizona.edu/files/boumSchoolingBled.pdf> (Accessed on October 20th, 2015)

³²⁹ Frances Malino, “Teachers of Alliance Israelite Universelle, Jewish Women’s archive” *JWA Encyclopedia* <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/alliance-israelite-universelle-teachers-of> (Accessed on October 21st, 2015)

³³⁰ With the declaration of independence of former colonies, AIU lost its power in the region and in 1950s it started to fight against anti-Semitism; “150 yıllık bir tarihin izinden Alliance Israelite Universelle”, *Şalom* Newspaper, January 12nd, 2011 http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-76164-150_yillik_bir_tarihin_izinden_alliance_israelite_universelle.html (Accessed on October 21, 2015)

³³¹ Frances Malino, “Teachers of Alliance Israelite Universelle” *Encyclopedia JWA*. <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/alliance-israelite-universelle-teachers-of> Accessed on October 21st, 2015.

³³² Siren Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi 1908-1923* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1995), 210.

³³³ Metin Delevi, “Osmanlı ve Modern Türkiye’de Aşkenaz Yahudileri” *Şalom* Newspaper January 30th, 2013. http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-85660-osmanli_ve_modern_turkiyede_ashkenaz_yahudileri_.html (Accessed on October 21st, 2015)

Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden (Aid Association of German Jews, HDJ) also opened its own schools. Similar to the mission of AIU, HDJ³³⁴ established modern schools in the Balkans and Ottoman Empire to improve the social and political conditions of the Jews through modern and secular education. The instruction language was German, which would prove valuable as trade relations between Germany and the Ottoman Empire increased during the 19th century. HDJ was not as wide spread as AIU schools and, unlike AIU, it had a Zionist agenda in Turkey. There are few sources about HDJ and these do not give any direct reference to a Zionist agenda, but HDJ was founded as an aid agency³³⁵ for the persecuted Jews in Europe and it known to have promoted a state for the Jews.

Alliance schools were revolutionary because they helped create a well-educated middle class in the Jewish community which was able to challenge the rule of the religious leaders. For those who attended these schools, economic and political opportunities followed. Their social class changed as well as their profession. Middle class Jews moved from Balat³³⁶ to modern and prosperous neighborhoods like Galata³³⁷, the most European district of Istanbul inhabited by foreigners and westernized elite. These individuals improved their living standards while³³⁸ a social class division became apparent among

³³⁴ Erol Haker talks about a primary school in Karaağaç, Edirne belonging to *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* established in 1901 by German Jews that broke away from AIU; Erol Haker, *Edirne –Its Jewish Community and Alliance Schools 1867-1937* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2006), 51.

³³⁵ Formed in 1901 in Germany to help persecuted Jews from Russia and Central Europe and to find them new homes mainly in the U.S. After 1933, it became main channel to assist German Jews escape the country; John A. S. Grenville, *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg: The Destruction of a Civilization 1790-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 159.

³³⁶ In 1930s the Jews were in majority in Balat; there were approximately 20,000 people, ten synagogues and more than hundred rabbis. Most of the shop owners were Jews; Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 48-49.

³³⁷ Jews with professions such as banking and commerce preferred to live in districts such as Beyoğlu, Kadıköy, Kuzguncuk; Eva Groepler, *Islam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1999), 38-46.

³³⁸ Ilan Karmi, *The Jewish community of Istanbul in the nineteenth century – Social, legal and administrative transformations* (Istanbul: ISIS 1996), 117-124.

the Jews. One's neighborhood was a clear sign of his education and wealth. People preferred to speak French to show their upper status in society while Judeo-Spanish started to be perceived as the language of the poor and ignorant. Political Scientist Riva Kastoryano explains as follows; "Moving reflected an aspiration for upward social mobility and for modernity."³³⁹

The conservative Jews rejected modern, secular education and any kind of reform. They feared modernization and saw it as a threat to their authority. This group opposed the education of girls, the western influence, alienation from traditional Jewish roots and religious teaching.³⁴⁰ Modern education was also seen as precursors to "mixed marriage, conversion, abandonment of the ancient heritage, emigration to foreign countries, and the resulting shattering of family ties"³⁴¹ Due to such complaints, only a small portion of Ottoman Jewry attended these modern schools. It was difficult for AIU to penetrate poorer neighborhoods of Istanbul which were controlled by conservative rabbis. In early 20th century, only 120 Jewish children were enrolled in the modern schools in Balat while 700 children studied in religious colleges.³⁴²

European travelers described the poverty and obscurity of the Ottoman Jewry in the 19th century in their diaries: "It was the lowest point of the community."³⁴³ The situation of Anatolian Jews was worse. Many families lived together in small inner courtyards

³³⁹ Riva Kastoryano, "From Millet to Community; The Jews of Istanbul" *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry – Community and Leadership* eds. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 258.

³⁴⁰ Lucien Gubbay, "The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire" *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 59-69.

³⁴¹ Ilan Karmi, *The Jewish community of Istanbul in the nineteenth century – Social, legal and administrative transformations* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1996), 117-124.

³⁴² *Ibid*

³⁴³ Lucien Gubbay, "The Rise, Decline and Attempted Regeneration of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire" *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2000): 59-69.

called *cortijo* because they could not afford a house of their own.³⁴⁴ *Cortijo(s)* were also a practical way to continue the authority of religious leaders.

The international Jewish community also provided assistance through the establishment of new agricultural villages. In 1891, Jewish philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch established the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in London. Its first mission was to help oppressed Jews in Europe by aiding their immigration to Argentina. Baron Edmond de Rothschild³⁴⁵ was one of the groups supporters. JCA opened many agricultural villages in Ottoman territory to help the Ottoman Jews by giving them land to cultivate and a place to live: *Or Yehuda* (Judah's light) in Akhisar, *Mamure* in Eskişehir, Fethiköy in Silivri, *Tekfur* in Balıkesir in 1891. The persecution of the Russian Jews forced JCA to open an immigration office in Istanbul. In 1910, JCA bought new land to help this group; *Mesilla Hadasha* (new path) in Sultanbeyli, Istanbul was one of these villages.³⁴⁶

3.1.3. Nationalist Movements in the Ottoman Empire

The empire's weakening started in the late 17th century and accelerated in the following centuries. First it lost its territories in Central Europe and Caucasus region. Every loss was accompanied by the persecution of the Muslims in the area. Those who survived migrated to the empire's remaining territories. Similar to the aftermath of the French Revolution, nationalist feelings arose within the communities already confined

³⁴⁴ *Cortijo(s)* were big houses where every family lived in one of the small rooms; Siren Bora, "İzmir'de göçmenlere yuva olan kortejolar" *Şalom* Newspaper October 7th, 2015

³⁴⁵ Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934) entered the Paris banking house of de Rothschild Frères at the age of 23 following his father's death. He became interested in Palestine as he was roused by the pogroms in Russia in 1880. The early Jewish settlers in Palestine received generous financial and moral help from the Baron in the establishment of colonies between 1880 and 1895. It has always been the ambition of the Baron to create a Jewish farmer, who not only would be well off in the material sense of the term, but who could serve as a model to other farmers and who would be the heart and core of the Jewish settlers in the land of their ancestors; "Baron Edmond De Rothschild 86" *JTA* August 20th, 1931 <http://www.jta.org/1931/08/20/archive/baron-edmond-de-rothschild-86> (Accessed on May 21st, 2016)

³⁴⁶ Journalist Erol Güney from Russian origin stayed in this village when he was a teenager; Haluk Oral and M. Şeref Özsoy, *Erol Güney'in Ke(n)disi*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), 59-64.

with the *Millet* system. The rise of nationalism increased with the lost of territories in the Balkans during the 19th century.

As with most nation states, the Balkan states were founded on the idea of homogeneity based on religious affiliation as well as shared language, history, culture and experience. Balkan Muslims were no longer welcome. Soner Çağaptay explains this trend as a consequence of the administrative system that divided “the population into strict religious compartments, called millets. Over centuries, it had merged the ethnic identities of the Ottoman peoples into religious ones, making the millet identity dominant among many Ottoman subjects.”³⁴⁷ This assessment was true both for the Balkan states and the future Republic of Turkey.

Following the Balkan Wars, the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Komitesi, CUP) took control of the empire in 1913. It adopted radical steps to create a nation for their reformed state³⁴⁸, stressing Ottomanism to stop the threat of ethnic nationalism among Ottoman subjects and to promote the idea of living together in this multinational empire.³⁴⁹ Turkish became the only language of high school education and became a compulsory subject in non-Muslim community schools. Laws favoring Turks

³⁴⁷ Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey – Who is a Turk?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

³⁴⁸ Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam, Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 314.

³⁴⁹ Turco-Russian War of 1878 and 1912-1913 Balkan Wars has led to the immigration of Bulgarian Jews to Turkey. On the other hand, the change in the relations of the central power and minorities with the Tanzimat period, the beginning of compulsory military service for all Ottomans, economic factors and catastrophes such as fires played an important role in the decision of Jews to immigrate out of the Ottoman Empire; Riva Kastoryano, “From Millet to Community; The Jews of Istanbul” *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry – Community and Leadership* eds. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 256.

and Muslims in commerce and trade were introduced.³⁵⁰ These steps caused frustration among the Arab population³⁵¹, the largest ethnic population of the empire.

During the 19th century, the Zionist movement in Europe started to proactively work toward a Jewish state in Palestine, still part of the Ottoman territory at the time. At the beginning of the century, the Ottoman Empire encouraged persecuted European Jews to migrate to its territories while excluding Palestine with the understanding that a high concentration of Jewish immigrants to a single region could incite another nationalist movement.

Russian influence was another preoccupation of the Ottomans as most of the Jews coming to Ottoman land were escaping the pogroms in Russia. Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism and his aide Philipp Newlinski, a journalist from Vienna, proposed to Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamit II to pay all of the empire's foreign debt in return of a safe haven in Palestine for the Jews. Following the refusal of the Sultan, Herzl modified the wording of their offer from 'independent Jewish state, Republic' to 'autonomous vassal state.'³⁵² According to the proposition, the Jews would establish an autonomous state and an army but accept Ottoman reign and pay taxes. Sultan Abdulhamit II³⁵³ stressed the importance of the Jews to the economic progress of the empire and the trust he had in the Jews, but he reemphasized that there was no reason to establish a Jewish state.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey – Who is a Turk?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7-9.

³⁵¹ Kral Abdullah, *Biz Osmanlı'ya neden isyan ettik?* Trans. by Halit Özkan (Istanbul: Klasik, 2013)

³⁵² Stanford J. Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler*, trans. Meriç Sobutay (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), 339.

³⁵³ Ergun Göze, *Siyonizmin Kurucusu Theodor Herzl'in hatıraları ve Sultan Abdülhamid*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi, 1995)

³⁵⁴ Süleyman Kocabaş, *"Vaat edilmiş toprak" Filistin için mücadele, Türkiye ve Siyonizm* (Istanbul: Vatan, 1994)

Zionism was perceived as an imperialist movement similar to the expansionism of western powers in the Middle East.³⁵⁵ Most importantly, non-Jewish subjects of the empire opposed strongly to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine.³⁵⁶ Many Jews from Palestine also opposed to this plan as they did not want to lose their position as faithful Ottoman subjects and had no political ambition. This was not the case for the European Jews who started to migrate to Palestine at the end of the 19th century. This group did not want to become Ottoman subjects, forced to pay taxes in return for religious tolerance. New immigrants did not want to integrate to the Ottoman society. From their language to their way of dressing, they were outsiders; Europeans in the land of the Ottomans. Ottoman officials had increased suspicion that the newcomers had a nationalist agenda similar to the Greeks and Armenians.³⁵⁷

The invasion of the Ottoman Empire and the devastating conditions of the Treaty of *Sèvres* on October 30th of 1918³⁵⁸, led to the Turkish Independence War. Despite nationalist movements among other religious groups, Jews stayed loyal to the Turkish cause and shared their faith during and after the War of Independence.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 129-147.

³⁵⁶ Stanford J. Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler*, trans. Meriç Sobutay (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), 335-340.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*

³⁵⁸ Ottoman official census in 1830 showed that more than half of the capital’s population was non-Muslim.³⁵⁸ In 1918, at the end of the First World War, the non-Muslim proportion of Anatolia decreased dramatically from 20% in 1914 to 2.5%; Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve ‘Türkleştirme Politikaları*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000), 24.

³⁵⁹ The Jews were grouped mostly in areas where the War of Independence was highly effective. Greek forces burnt Jewish houses in Manisa, İzmir, Bursa, Edirne and killed a number of Jews loyal to Mustafa Kemal. 15,000 Jews living in Aegean cities had to move. 90% of the Jews lost their property and 25,000 Jews out of 35,000 living in İzmir had serious economic problems. A well known businessman Vitali Kamhi committed suicide because of his financial problems in 1924. The building of the Rabbinate was secured to a bank in order to get some loans. International Jewish Humanitarian Assistance Organization JDC, helped the community and by this mean 6,000 Jews had hot food. In 1922-1923 there were 1,500 Jewish orphans in Istanbul orphanage; Rifat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 34-36.; Avner Levi, *Türkiye*

3.1.4. The Treaty of Lausanne

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed in 1923, concluded World War I and recognized the boundaries of the modern state of Turkey. It also aimed to provide legal equality to all Turkish citizens, protecting the rights of non-Muslim citizens.³⁶⁰ Only three non-Muslim communities were accepted as minorities: the Jews, the Greeks, and the Armenians. Articles 37-45 assured these groups provisions to live in a mode similar to the Millet system.³⁶¹ The Treaty granted these people right to use their native language, political and legal equality, religious, travel, and migration freedom, and the right to establish educational, religious and social welfare institutions.³⁶² According to the Lausanne Treaty Article 42, the non-Muslim minorities could resolve their inner-community problems as family concerns and personal status such as marriage and divorce. The Turkish government need to grant full protection to the churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious establishments.³⁶³

Turkey promoted equal citizenship, and wanted to be independent and secular. These provisions in the Treaty jeopardized this aim. Turkey could not accept separate and non-secular legal systems for a portion of its citizens while it granted all citizens, regardless of their religion or race, equal rights and obligations.³⁶⁴ During the Lausanne conference, İnönü declared these provisions as foreign involvement. Giving the example

Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 14-18.; Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 60-64.; Siren Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi 1908-1923* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1995)

³⁶⁰ Articles 37-45 of the Treaty are about protection of minorities http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (Accessed on October 15th, 2015)

³⁶¹ Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 396.

³⁶² Şule Toktaş, "Citizenship and Minorities: a Historical Overview of Turkey's Jewish Minority", *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 18 No. 4 (December 2005): 394-429.

³⁶³ Lausanne Peace Treaty. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa (Accessed on March 24th, 2015)

³⁶⁴ The constitution of 1924, article 88: <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa24.htm> (Accessed on October 15, 2015)

of the Jewish community as a model minority, he said that they were untouched as they were not part of any foreign plot against the country's integrity.³⁶⁵ Jews were model minorities and worked hard to stay that way during the Republican era.

The framework of the Treaty was not protected by additional laws. The Treaty could not be enforced or controlled as the responsibility was given³⁶⁶ to the League of Nations³⁶⁷, a stillborn, unsuccessful international organization. Therefore, the actual practice differed from the legal responsibilities of Turkey.³⁶⁸

The Jews did not have a state of their own and, unlike the Armenians and Greeks³⁶⁹, had no Western guardian state. The Jews were added to the Treaty of Lausanne because of the political pressure of the economically powerful American Jews.³⁷⁰ It is difficult to assess the opinion Turkish Jews had on this matter. According to the minutes of the minority commission of the Lausanne Conference in December 15, 1922, Minister of Health Rıza Nur from the Turkish delegation stated that the Jews did not want any provisions like the Greeks.³⁷¹ Though he could have said this, it may not be the real sentiments of the majority of Jews.

³⁶⁵ Lerna Ekmekçiöğlü, "Yeni Türkiye'nin Üvey Evlatları" *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

³⁶⁶ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 68.

³⁶⁷ The League of Nations is an international organization established in 1920 according to the Wilson principles. Its mission was to maintain peace after the First World War through collective security, disarmament and ending the disputes between countries by negotiations. But even the U.S., the father of the idea, did not join the organization. The onset of the Second World War showed that the organization failed its main mission. It was later replaced by the United Nations in 1946. Wilson's Fourteen Points, 1918: U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/fourteen-points> (Accessed on October 15th, 2015)

³⁶⁸ Şule Toktaş, "Citizenship and Minorities: a Historical Overview of Turkey's Jewish Minority", *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 18 No. 4 (December 2005): 394-429

³⁶⁹ During 1923-1928, an exchange of population occurred among the Greeks (except the Greeks living in Istanbul before October 30, 1918 Mudros (Mondros) ceasefire) from Turkey and the Turks of Greece according to a decision made at Lausanne. 1,1-1,2 million Greeks from Turkey and 450-500 thousand Turks from Greece were forced to migrate; Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Tamyayayınçılık, 2000), 281-282.

³⁷⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 95.

³⁷¹ Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar* (Ankara: Tamyayayınçılık, 2000), 275.

The Jewish community declared that it would renounce from Article 42 on September 10th, 1925³⁷² and formally renounced in 1926.³⁷³ The Armenians and the Greeks followed their lead. This action is generally depicted as Jews renouncing of their own volition, but in reality the press had an important role in this decision with the Turkish media imposing pressure on the Jews through anti-Semitic articles.

According to the Turkish newspapers, on February 26th, 1926, three hundred persons from the Jewish community sent a telegraph to Spain to show their solidarity and loyalty to the country that had expelled them centuries ago. There were severe attacks against the Jews in the press. The headline of *Milliyet* newspaper was “Ungrateful” (*Nankörler*), while *İkdam* newspaper proposed the Jews buy three airplanes for the Turkish air force to demonstrate their loyalty.³⁷⁴ While the press covered the telegraph issue over and over again, there was no evidence that this telegraph even existed.³⁷⁵ It would have been irrational for the Jews to send a message of loyalty to Spain centuries after their expulsion. Rumor about the telegraph to Spain was not the only anti-Semitic event at this time. The attack to Kuzguncuk Synagogue in Istanbul that took place in April 1926, in which sacred *Torah* rolls³⁷⁶ were destroyed,³⁷⁷ was the last event that affected their decision. The Jewish community feared that the verbal attacks were becoming physical. There is no recorded reaction from the government to ongoing racist attacks in the press.

³⁷² Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 64-65.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 90-94.

³⁷⁴ Neşe Ozan, “Türkiye’de antisemitizm” seen on Eva Groepler, *İslam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge, 1999), 95-104.

³⁷⁵ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 70-74.

³⁷⁶ The ones attacking the synagogue targeted the *Ehal*, where the *Torah* scrolls are preserved. The scrolls were destroyed. It was not a common crime but a message of threat and fear to the Jewish community.

³⁷⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 81

The pressure from the press resulted with the renouncement of the Jews from the article 42. When the Jewish community officially renounced, Ahmet Cevdet from *İkdam* newspaper praised this decision as “Finally the Jews are becoming real Turks.”³⁷⁸ It was seen as a necessary condition to become a ‘full’ Turkish citizen. When the religious minorities gave away the provisions guaranteed by the Treaty, it was seen as a major foreign involvement was removed.³⁷⁹

The Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed education for minorities in their own language. While globally, Hebrew is the language of the Jews, Turkey was an exception. The majority of the Turkish Jews who were from Sephardic origin did not know Hebrew and communicated in Judeo-Spanish. After renouncing the privileges granted by the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkish Jews lost the right to demand schools teach in Judeo-Spanish, which the majority spoke, or French, which was the language of education resulting from the influence of AUI. The Jews could not resist the pressure of Turkish language campaigns and this was the first step in the disappearance of the Judeo-Spanish language. Finally, Turkish Jews lost the support of the American Jews³⁸⁰, who were unaware of the pressure they faced at home.³⁸¹ This was a serious loss, as the United States was an important international power with a great deal of influence.

³⁷⁸ Neşe Ozan, “Türkiye’de antisemitizm” seen on Eva Groepler, *İslam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge, 1999), 95-104.

³⁷⁹ Still today the Turkish Jewish Community try to gain the recognition of an official entity.

³⁸⁰ AJC (American Jewish Committee) President Louis Marshall criticized Turkish Jewish community leaders for their decision to renounce the minority rights secured under the Treaty of Lausanne. The Americans could not comprehend that the Jews did not take this decision by their free will, they did not have another choice; Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 95-102.

³⁸¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 95-102.

After renouncing the provisions of article 42 in the Treaty of Lausanne, the anti-Semitic campaign in the press stopped for a while.³⁸² This proved that the pressure of the press was an instrument employed to force the minorities to renounce from the Treaty of Lausanne. This instrument of pressure would be used several more times during the Republic era. The state, in control of the press, believed it could control the reaction of the public but, as demonstrated by the Thrace events in 1934, the effects of hate speech echoed longer than expected and led to unanticipated outcomes. An important change in this era was that the expression of hatred against the minorities became an acceptable behavior, seen openly in the press without any negative reaction from the state officers or the public.

3.2. Turkish Republic, a New Beginning Full of Hope

The Turkish Republic was established on the principle of embracing secularism in lieu of Islamism. Reforms were designed to transform the population and to create a new country that rejected its Ottoman heritage.³⁸³ The ideal of secularism, the firm target to reform the Turkish religious life and other social reforms presented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, were to achieve a modern and secular nation in the contemporary world, a nation that would be part of the western civilization. To this end, the Caliphate, which lately had been diminished to a symbolic institution, was abolished and all members of the Ottoman family were sent into exile. Islamic education and religious endowments were put under government control. All *Sharia* courts were

³⁸² Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 64.

³⁸³ Turkish nationalism rejected Ottomanism and Islamism but when necessary made reference to Turks' Islamic past to lend historical support to its claims, only this time in ethnic terms; Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam, Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 353.

closed. The government translated the Quran and the prayers into Turkish in order to start a religious enlightenment.³⁸⁴ The article “The religion of the state is Islam” was taken out from the constitution of 1928.

The Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi, RPP) dominated Turkey as the sole party until 1946 and set the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The nation building process initiated a vast social change in a very short period. A new national identity was the first step in the construction of the new state with a population largely made up of Turks and Muslims but with sizable and diverse ethnic and religious minorities. If successfully implemented, a shared Turkish identity could unify and create a shared feeling among all the communities that used to live independent from each other. To achieve that, nationalism was the essential tool. Nationalism was a modern concept seeking to establish an imagined national community within certain borders, creating the idea of unity creating internal and external ‘others’ when it felt necessary. In Turkey, while the ongoing social engineering promoted a common identity under ‘Turk’, non-Muslims were excluded. The roots of this suspicion and distrust is historical.

The experience of the Balkan Wars, the First World War and the Independence War strengthened the idea of homogenization of the country’s population. The Empire was torn apart by the wave of nationalism influenced by the French Revolution. Different ethnic and religious groups tried to create their own nation states throughout the 20th century. While attempting to reconstruct a common identity, these experiences intensified the idea of the ‘enemy within’, pointing directly to religious minorities. All other ethnic minorities were accepted under the umbrella of ‘Muslim’. Deportation in the case of the Armenians

³⁸⁴ M. Naim Turfan, “Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal”, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0083> Accessed on July 20th, 2015

in 1915, population exchange in the case of the Greeks in 1923 and in 1964 were the natural consequences of this ideology already started with CUP.

As much as the political elite wanted to neglect its Ottoman past, the Turkish Republic's view of citizenship was formed under the shadow of the Millet system. It preserved the Ottoman definition of minority: non-Muslim communities. Accordingly, there were no ethnic or linguistic minorities recognized in the country, a decision that affected the Kurds and the Alevis the most. With the establishment of the Republic in 1923 and the adoption of the constitution³⁸⁵ a year later, religious and ethnic minorities became equal citizens of the state. But the continuity of the socio-political and legal stratification of the Ottomans in the Republic era, withheld the equal citizenship desire of non-Muslim communities.

During the Ottoman Empire, assimilation became the primary tool of survival presented to ethnic and religious minorities under the 'Turk' umbrella. With the rebel movements during the War of Independence and their support to foreign armies, the Armenians and the Greeks were recognized as distinct from and outside of the "Turk" identity. The situation of the Jews, on the other hand, was different. They have been loyal to the Turkish cause, they did not have any separatist ambition, they did not have a state of their own, meaning that no major foreign involvement was expected, and most importantly the Jews were for the most part obedient to Turkish authority. They were

³⁸⁵ The constitution of 1924 provided Turkey with a representative and democratic government. Grand National Assembly had all the sovereign powers of the nation, executive and legislative. A bill of rights defined liberties of all Turkish citizens regardless of race and religion. Justice was free from political pressure; Edward Mead Earle, "The New Constitution of Turkey" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 40, Issue 1 (March 1925): 86-88.

easily enough assimilated into the new Turkish identity, though their religion and the shadow of *Millet System* was a setback to the process.

The first ten years of the Republic was marked by the rise of Turkish nationalism and the search for a Turkish identity. Turkish nationalism gave priority to the Turkish language, Turkish culture, reconstructed Turkish history, the national economy, and national education.

3.2.1. The First Decade of the Republic

The effects of the First World War and the War of Independence were devastating. The mortality rate was 20% of the population, meaning that about 2,5 million Anatolian Muslims died. The economy was strongly affected as well; foreign trade fell by about two-thirds between 1911 and 1923. The shortage of labor in agriculture led to famine, cholera, and typhoid.³⁸⁶ The acceptance of their defeat to European powers in the First World War was not easy. The conditions of the Treaty of Sevres was still vivid in public's collective memory. They once ruled the world. Now they had to accept the fact that they were not an undefeatable empire any more, but a regular nation state struggling with economic difficulties. Additionally, the Armenian rebellion during the Ottoman era and the support offered by the Greeks to the Allied forces during the First World War led to mistrust against all religious minorities without any distinction.

“Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries, the processes of nationalism and the process of reproduction of geography have worked hand in hand to the effect of creating a new homeland, on whose soil the Turks were to be the only rightful dwellers. The Republican state, established after the war of independence

³⁸⁶ Sanderson Beck, “Ottoman Fall and Turkey” *Mideast & Africa 1700-1950 Ethics of Civilization* vol. 16. <http://www.san.beck.org/16-2-OttomanFall&Turkey.html#a7> (Accessed on November 18th, 2015)

in 1923, was to exclude non-Turks, or at least Non-Muslims from both the material reality and the collective memory and imagination.”³⁸⁷

The modernization reforms were quick and absolute. There was a project of major society engineering, changing every aspect of the known and familiar. with a hope in the society for a better, brighter future. Everyone wanted to be part of the newly founded state. Jews were model minority citizens for the ruling elites and they tried to continue the close relations with the state as it had been during the Ottoman era. The official statements were very encouraging. During a statement in December 1922 in Geneva, Ismet İnönü, the future prime minister and president of Turkey, declared that minorities living in Turkey should see the Jews as an example in patriarchy and in the respect of law and order.³⁸⁸ During a speech in Izmir on February 2nd, 1923, Atatürk said: “Any non-Muslim citizen, who decided to live in the newly founded Turkish Republic, would be guaranteed that no harm would come to them.”³⁸⁹ Newspapers such as *Vakit* and *İkdam* praised openly the loyalty of the Jews during the War of Independence: “There is no difference between Ahmet, Mehmet and [Rabbi] Haim Nahum in the eyes of the state.”³⁹⁰

Turkish Jews³⁹¹ welcomed the establishment of the Republic enthusiastically³⁹².

David Fresko from *El Tyempo* wrote in 1922 “At the beginning of the new era we want to

³⁸⁷ Kerem Öktem, “Creating the Turk’s Homeland: Modernization, Nationalism and Geography in Southeast Turkey in the late 19th and 20th Centuries” *Paper for the Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Workshop 2003*. <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/13204.pdf> (Accessed on October 27, 2015)

³⁸⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 39-40.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*

³⁹⁰ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 22-23.

³⁹¹ In 1923, the number of the Jews was 81,454 and 47,035 of them lived in Istanbul; Riva Kastoryano, “From Millet to Community; The Jews of Istanbul” *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry – Community and Leadership* eds. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1994): 255.

³⁹² Rıfat N. Bali shares Grand Rabbi Haim Becerano’s statement toward the new Republic, Atatürk and against persecution accusations published in foreign press; Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 36-38.

see the progress of our sacred country that we love so much.”³⁹³ They were hopeful for the future. They stayed loyal to the Turkish cause throughout the war, they resisted the pressure of the rebellious Armenians and Greeks, shared the destiny of the Turks during the long years of war, and were supporters of the Republican reforms for modernization and secularization. Their expectations for the Republican era were positive and the hope of becoming equal citizens in the new country was prominent.

During the Republic era, the Jews were not deported as a state policy, but there were regular fluctuations in their relations with the state. The praise for their loyalty transformed suddenly to open expression of anti-Semitic beliefs, beginning with the rise of nationalism in the 1920s and continuing in the 1930s as an outcome of fascism in Europe. It was no coincidence that there were several waves of Jewish emigration from Turkey, with the first immediately following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the second in 1934 following the Thrace events, and a third with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

3.2.2. The Ideal of Turkism

The ruling elite of the Turkish Republic aimed to unite the popular and submerge their differences under the name ‘Turk’. All the reforms were based on the ideal of the Turk, the greatness of the Turk, the privilege to be a Turk. Everything, including the national history and the school books, were rewritten accordingly. All these contributed to the awakening of widespread Turkish nationalist feeling. Equal citizens of the Turkish Republic could call themselves Turk as long as they “shared the rich historical legacy, had a sincere desire to live together and [who] had a common will to preserve their shared

³⁹³ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 20.

heritage.”³⁹⁴ This definition of a Turk given by Atatürk included the non-Muslims but on the condition they adopted the Turkish language, Turkish culture, and the ideal of Turkism.³⁹⁵

The term Turkification was used to determine the process of creating a homogenous national state, assimilating the non-Muslims and non-Turks as much as possible. As all Muslims were seen as part of the Muslim *ümme*t (*umma*h)³⁹⁶ regardless of their ethnic origin, this project was targeted mainly at religious minorities. Even though non-Muslims were legally equal citizen who paid taxes and were subject to mandatory military service, the minority/majority classification continued to exist. “The imagined unity of the Muslims remained intact against the ‘other’ position of the non-Muslim”.³⁹⁷ ‘We’ were Muslims against ‘the others’ which were the non-Muslims. In the new identity formed by the shared Muslim faith, the position and future of the non-Muslims was unclear.

Turkish nationalism emphasized the Turkish language and the Turkish culture as a sign of one’s Turkishness,³⁹⁸ but religion still was the primary characteristic defining the identity. During the construction of the Turkish identity, there was a tendency to assimilate the minorities into the general public by forcing Turkish language upon them and standardizing the education, while at the same time discriminating against them for their faith. In this paradox, the Jews were seen as ‘eternal guests’ instead of equal citizens. This is why their differences were tolerated, but their lower status was restated when necessary.

³⁹⁴ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 95-96.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*

³⁹⁶ Denny Frederick Mathewson, “The Meaning of "umma" in the Qur’ān” *History of Religions* 15.1 (1975): 34–70.

³⁹⁷ Ahmet İçduygu and B. Ali Soner, “Turkish Minority Rights Regime: Between Difference and Equality” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (May 2006): 447-468.

³⁹⁸ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 57.

The minority groups were forced to renounce the provisions they gained with the Treaty of Lausanne but the main Turkification step was the introduction of the Code of Civil Law in 1926. Having lost the protection of European states and important lobbies, the minorities became ‘legally’ Turkified with this legislation. The foreign influence over the minorities diminished to zero.³⁹⁹

Ruling elites used three methods to Turkify the minorities: by putting pressure via the press; by trying to dismantle their centrally structural community organization; and by introducing laws aiming to weaken their dominance in the economy. The first two methods attempted to diminish religious identity and assimilate these groups into general society. The third and partially the second one were methods to weaken the non-Muslim communities economically and to force them to leave the country by their own will. Although some measures, such as the use of Turkish language, were adopted for the assimilation of minorities to the general public, ultimately these policies resulted in their exclusion.

Amid the ongoing projects of assimilation on the state level, the general public had concerns. There was widespread hope about the brightness of the future of the Republic, but the minorities did not match with this picture. They were perceived as foreigners regardless of their actions, language, or time invested in the country. The general Muslim, Turkish population had concerns about sharing the road with minorities. Public reaction to some events illustrates that it was not just the state that excluded the minorities. Many Turkification steps were supported eagerly by the public. The press has become an instrument of pressure while the public was the voluntary controller of it.

³⁹⁹ Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve ‘Türkleştirme Politikaları*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000), 110.

3.2.3. From Nationalism to Racism

During the first decade of the Republic, the relationship between the state and the Jews was extremely varied. Sometimes, Jews were praised; sometimes, punished. The Jews were unsure how to react. They tried to maintain good relations with the state officials and to create an image of themselves as ‘proper citizens’ to the ruling elites. They tried to live more modestly and discreetly as to not attract additional attention.

The Jews were shocked by an editorial published in 1922, a more openly anti-Semitic article never before being published in the empire. *Kanımızı Emenler* (Blood-suckers) was the title of the editorial in *İleri* newspaper. The text was a threatening summary of the attacks the Turkish Jewish community would face during the first decade of the Republic. According to the editorial, the Jews were hypocritical and their declaration of loyalty was a lie. They were accused of having cooperated with the enemy during the independence war. The article state that though Jews were gathering money for *Kızılay* (Turkish Red Cross), their real loyalty was to the Greeks during the war. Finally, they were said to have captured the properties of the Greeks and Armenians who left the country and of exploiting the peasants and the larger Turkish public.

Between the lines, this text also shows the pressure the Jews encountered. They had to make public loyalty declarations and prove it by large donations even though they have suffered as much financially from the war as the rest of the population. They had to donate much more than their Muslim counterparts.⁴⁰⁰ A community member expressed his feelings on the matter: “We prefer to stay silent and unseen. Whenever the Turks need our

⁴⁰⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 100.

money for donation or contribution they know where to find us.”⁴⁰¹ Even still, they were portrayed as the hypocritical exploiters of Turks.

The article ended with a plea; “Greeks and Armenians have departed, if only the Jews departed as well”. This was an open call to expel them. The Jews were treated as foreigners and traitors in the collective memory of the public because for them there was little difference between being a Jew, an Armenian, or a Greek. This reasoning praised the Muslim soldiers who fought in the War of Independence that brought the victory and independence; the Muslim *Mehmetçik*.⁴⁰² The rest was perceived as selfish, continuing to live their comfortable lives, making their fortunes as war profiteers. Minorities were potential spies and collaborators with the enemy. The fact that non-Muslims⁴⁰³ were forbidden to enter the war because of this distrust against them and that, in spite of this, there actually were some non-Muslim soldiers,⁴⁰⁴ are for the most part left untold.⁴⁰⁵ Alarmingly, the owner of *İleri* newspaper was Celal Nuri İleri, a politician and future director of the commission of constitution,⁴⁰⁶ making this editorial not only a mirror of *İleri* Newspaper’s approach but also one of the ideological frameworks at the core of the new constitution.

⁴⁰¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 49-50.

⁴⁰² The common name given to Turkish soldiers. The derivative of the popular male name Mehmet.

⁴⁰³ Rıfat N. Bali, *Gayrimüslim Mehmetçikler, Hatıralar-Tanıklıklar* (Istanbul: Libra, 2011)

⁴⁰⁴ With a new tax accepted in 1895, all non-Muslim males at military age should pay an exemption tax and not attend the military service. In 1910 Rabbi Hayim Nahum, in order to show their loyalty to the state, pressured to annul this decree. The tax was annulled and all non-Muslims started mandatory military service; Stanford J. Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler*, trans. by Meriç Sobutay (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), 244.

⁴⁰⁵ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Yeni Türkiye’nin Üvey Evlatları” *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

⁴⁰⁶ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 25.

This article accusing the Jews of double-dealing is considered to be the first openly anti-Semitic article in the Turkish press.⁴⁰⁷ It was not a coincidence that this editorial appeared in December 1922, following soon after a racist speech given by Mehmet Şükrü (Koçoğlu), a member of the parliament. During a parliamentary session concerning the situation of the religious minorities on November 3, 1922, just days before departing for the Lausanne Conference, Koçoğlu stated:

“...the religious minorities live comfortably in our country just because our religious beliefs order so. No other country in the world can provide this. But these malefic persons did every felony, every murder in order to destroy this nation. I think that if one asks them, they will say that we don't have a place in this country anymore. And in reality as well they don't have. These people, these traitors had a prosperous life in here. The art, the trade is in their hand. They are rich, they don't join the military service. Even though they became rich owing to the blood Mehmet had lost in these borders, they rushed to establish another country. Following this dream they are perished too and they have no place in this country anymore. There is only one thing left to do with them: population exchange.”⁴⁰⁸

The anti-Semitic propaganda started by *İleri* newspaper had many followers in the press. Ebüzziya Tevfik from *Tasvir-Efkar* newspaper conducted a humiliating interview with the Chief Rabbi of Izmir Moşe Melamed. The satirical magazine *Karagöz* published racist jokes about Jews. *Paşaeli* newspaper started to regularly publish stories about dishonest Jewish merchants who took advantage of peasants and started join the rest of Europe in warning against the “Jewish danger”. *Türk Sesi*⁴⁰⁹ (The voice of the Turk) newspaper started to publish articles claiming that the Jews hate the Turks and that they became rich by stealing the belongings of the Turks during the Greek invasion. *Arkadaş*

⁴⁰⁷ “This is the first open and rude attack to the Jews in the Turkish press” wrote David Fresko from *El Tyempo* newspaper; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 25.

⁴⁰⁸ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Yeni Türkiye'nin Üvey Evlatları” *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

⁴⁰⁹ *Türk Sesi* newspaper started an antisemitic campaign during the conference of Lausanne. Hostile to minorities, the newspaper published many articles on the danger the Jews presented for Turkey; Leon Kontente, *L'Antisemitisme Grec en Asie Mineure – Smyrne 1774-1924* (Istanbul: Libra, 2015), 175.

newspaper also stated that the Turks won the war against the enemy but became dependent on the Jews economically. *Piyasa* newspaper mentioned that the Jewish businessmen control the economy. *Tevhid-i Efkar* newspaper published several articles under the title “The Jewish Danger” and made a call to save the country from them.⁴¹⁰ The satirical magazine *Akbaba* described the Jews as “the most dangerous minority, even though it is believed to be the contrary”.⁴¹¹

3.2.4. Creating a Turkish-Muslim Middle Class

A Muslim bourgeoisie did not exist in the Ottoman Empire. The lack of a middle class and the strong presence of the minorities in the economy become the starting point of the Turkification of the economy. It was an idea promoted by the CUP who viewed the non-Muslim presence in the economy as alarming and, in response, tried to create a Muslim bourgeoisie.⁴¹² At the beginning of the Republic, middle class Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and European entrepreneurs dominated the banks, insurance companies, ports, and enterprises. The Muslim population started to request posts in trade and industry and there was also a need to give jobs to those who returned from the war and those who came with the population exchange with Greece. In response, the state began to reverse the role of the minorities in the economy, replacing them with Muslim businessmen.⁴¹³

In order to create a national economy, the key start was the Izmir Economic Congress on February 17, 1923. During the congress, one of the decisions taken was the use of Turkish as the language of trade.⁴¹⁴ In 1926, the use of Turkish became compulsory

⁴¹⁰ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim,1996), 24-29.

⁴¹¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 39-48.

⁴¹² Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 28-31.

⁴¹³ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim,1996), 200.

⁴¹⁴ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 206-228.

for all communication among corporations.⁴¹⁵ Non-Muslims from foreign or Turkish nationality were fluent in foreign languages and had commercial expertise but knew very little Turkish. A quota was imposed to limit the number of employees of foreign nationality. It was not a radical step toward the nationalization of foreign companies but rather a decision to oust non-Muslims from the economy. Following this change, non-Muslim Turkish citizens and foreigners lost their jobs with most of the governmental officials seeing little distinction between the two groups.⁴¹⁶ Additionally, the enterprises faced serious difficulties as there were not enough Muslims with expertise in trade.⁴¹⁷

The exclusion of the non-Muslims from public administration reached a new level starting in 1923, when it was declared that companies controlled by Muslims were not allowed to hire minorities and vice-versa.⁴¹⁸ The Ministry of Public Works Commissioner (*Nafia Vekaleti Komiseri*) Fevzi Bey stated in a press conference that not all Turkish citizens but Muslims should be employed. Non-Muslim minorities were fired or forced to resign from all public enterprises without any compensation.⁴¹⁹ In his memoir, Vitali Hakko explains that his father was one of the fired non-Muslim employees of Sirkeci train station in 1925:

“He came home early and said ‘We’ve been fired!’ The *Chemins de fer* (railway) corporation was purchased from the French and according to a law non-Muslims were dismissed from the State Railways.⁴²⁰ Israel Cohen, an American traveler who published his impressions in the *New Judaica*

⁴¹⁵ Senem Aslan, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13 (2007): 245-272.

⁴¹⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 102-104.

⁴¹⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 206-228.

⁴¹⁸ Laurent-Olivier Mallet, *La Turquie, Les Turcs et Les Juifs – Histoire, Représentations, Discours et Stratégies* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2008), 175-178.

⁴¹⁹ The Jews had important posts in the Ottoman ministries such as foreign affairs, finance, justice, refugees, customs, forest and mine; Moise Franco, *Essai sur l’histoire des Israelites de l’empire Ottoman, depuis les origines jusqu’a nos jours* (Paris: Collection El Mundo Djudeo-Espanyol, 2007), 257-265.

⁴²⁰ Vitali Hakko, *My Life: Vakko* (Istanbul: Libra, 2011), 23-24.

Encyclopedia, visited Istanbul and Izmir in 1924-1925. He was disappointed by the fact that there were no Jews in Izmir exchange market, municipality or in any other political and public institution.⁴²¹ Turkish Jews, Armenians and Greeks identified as ‘a group of employees’ replaced with a decree by Muslim staff, sent a letter of complaint to the League of Nations. Helmer Rosting noted to the complaint dossier; “How can we tell Turkey breached the Treaty when there is no law or legislation?”⁴²²

There were jobs that only the Turks (Muslim) could perform, including the professions of barber and building security guard.⁴²³ Following the Ottoman tradition, minorities preferred to live close to each other in the same neighborhoods. The state who wanted to control the communal life, wanted to gather information on these communities. This was the main reasoning in the ban of non-Muslim barbers and building security personnel as these type of professions was the main source of information. It was a precaution of the state to control minority quarters and to gather information.

Diana (Yıldız) Özonur⁴²⁴, a Turkish Jew, wanted to become a nurse’s aide at Admiral Bristol American Hospital in Istanbul. While she filled the application form with her classmates, there was a section asking if she is a Turk. She found out that the applicant must be of Turkish race. Since this condition was also stated very clearly in the newspapers, she tore the form into little pieces.⁴²⁵

The article no 88 of the Constitution of 1924 and the discussion over the definition of ‘Turk’ is a clear indication of Turkish elite’s perception toward the minorities. During

⁴²¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 49-50.

⁴²² Laurent-Olivier Mallet, *La Turquie, Les Turcs et Les Juifs – Histoire, Représentations, Discours et Stratégies* (Istanbul : ISIS, 2008), 175-178.

⁴²³ Neşe Ozan, “Türkiye’de antisemitizm” seen on: Eva Groepler, *İslam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge, 1999), 95-104.

⁴²⁴ Diana was a Jewish girl living with her family in a Turkish neighborhood in Izmir. All her friends were Muslim and asked her about her name. The meaning of Diana was Yıldız (star in Turkish) and they started to call her Yıldız. As she talked perfect Turkish, people get confused and did not believe at first that she was Jewish

⁴²⁵ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 54-55.

the discussions, “Those who live in Turkey regardless of their religion and ethnicity are called Turk,” was the first proposal, but was not accepted. Istanbul Deputy Hamdullah Supki Tanrıöver objected; “It is dangerous to erase by law the difference that exists in reality between the Turks and those who aren’t.” For him a Turk could not be Jew or Christian at the same time. He gave this radical example; “We ordered foreign companies the dismissal of non-Muslims. With this law, they can refuse to dismiss minorities saying that they are Turkish citizens.” The owner of *Ileri* newspaper Celal Nuri *İleri* defined the genuine (öz) citizens as Muslim, Hanafi, who speaks Turkish. Following the discussions, the word ‘citizenship’ was added to the article underlining the difference. The article was decided as follows: “Those who live in Turkey, regardless of their religion and ethnicity are called Turk by citizenship.”⁴²⁶

Law number 788 article 4a of the Law on civil servants on March 18th, 1926 stated that to become a civil servant one must be a Turk.⁴²⁷ This law remained in effect until 1965.⁴²⁸ The distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims in the economy and the deliberate ousting of the minorities from prestigious jobs into lower positions increased the emigration of Turkish Jews. Minorities were excluded from political parties, public services, and military. They could not attend military schools, they were obliged to join mandatory military service but they were not allowed to carry weapons.⁴²⁹ Additionally, distrust led to discrimination and as a consequence they were used in unpaid labor when the need arose. Eli Shaul vividly explains this issue in his memoir:

⁴²⁶ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Yeni Türkiye’nin Üvey Evlatları” *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

⁴²⁷ “Memuriyete kabul şartları”

<https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d02/c023/b071/tbmm020230710238.pdf>
(Accessed on April 16th, 2016)

⁴²⁸ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 55.

⁴²⁹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 56-58.

“In 1939, as soon as the war broke out, many non-Muslims were drafted. What was strange about that was this: the announcements in the newspapers referred only to non-Muslims.”⁴³⁰ Announcements like “Non-Muslims born in ’27, ’28, and ’29, report to the recruitment office” shows clearly that non-Muslims were treated differently.⁴³¹ As a matter of fact, these non-Muslims, including my older brother, were drafted and they all built roads and worked in construction. This was the easiest way to get unpaid manual labor.”

They were sent away from their families and jobs which added an extra burden to minority families.

These discriminatory legislations resulted in solidarity within minority communities, including the Jewish community. These practices destroyed the trust between state and its minority citizens. Minorities withdrew more and more from the public space, which resulted in the necessity for a stronger communal structure for the religious minorities. On the other hand, all children had to recite every day at school “How happy is the one who says I am Turkish” (*Ne Mutlu Türküm diyene*) without discrimination. One of members of the Turkish Jewish community, Stella Ovadia, interpreted this daily ceremony as follows; “Every child shouted that s/he was a Turk at school, but some of these children were treated as non-Turk in many aspects of life. Their difference was reminded when they wanted to forget, but their differences were forgotten when they needed to be remembered.”⁴³²

The law of citizenship passed in 1927⁴³³ had an article enumerating the legal justifications for the revocation of Turkish citizenship (*iskat kanunu*)⁴³⁴. According to this

⁴³⁰ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 33.

⁴³¹ *Ibid*

⁴³² Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Yeni Türkiye’nin Üvey Evlatları” *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

⁴³³ Law of citizenship:

https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc00601312.pdf (Accessed on April 16th, 2016)

⁴³⁴ For more information: Tuğrul Arat, Türk Vatandaşlığından İskat Edilen Kişilerin Mülkiyet ve Miras Hakları <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/38/312/2991.pdf> (Accessed on April 5th, 2016)

law, Ottoman subjects who did not participate to the War of Independence, stayed outside of Turkey, and did not return from July 24th, 1923 until the date of this law would lose their Turkish citizenship. This law targeted the non-Muslim population and many people lost their Turkish citizenship.⁴³⁵

French publisher Sam Levy observed the anti-Semitic atmosphere during his stay in 1924 in Istanbul and wrote a strong letter to Ismet İnönü. This letter was followed by a visit of a delegate from the Izmir Jewish community who voiced his concerns. The international image of Turkey was important and İnönü had to publicly praise the Jewish contribution to the society.⁴³⁶ This is became a trend that only magnified the gap between the statements and the actions of the state. These fluctuations caused concern amongst the Jews. There was pressure on everyone within Turkish society, but especially on minorities and on Jews more specifically.

The anti-Semitic campaigns in the press, the call for boycotts, the riots, and the overall discrimination came as a shock for the Turkish Jews who expected to become equal citizens under the law in the new secular Republic. Avner Levi explains this experience as something new for the community, something that was unthinkable during the Ottoman era.⁴³⁷ The pressure on the Jews could be explained by the increased visibility of the Jews as a minority. They were more visible because the Greek and Armenian population had diminished drastically while the Jews remained. With the expulsion of Armenians and Greeks, the total percentage of non-Muslim minorities decreased radically, mixed cities diminished, and most of the minorities were settled in Istanbul. Thrace and

⁴³⁵ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Yeni Türkiye’nin Üvey Evlatları” *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

⁴³⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 47-49.

⁴³⁷ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 26-27.

West Anatolian Jewish population were attracting attention with their language, names, and customs. Jews were prominent in trade and the richness of the Jews was attracting hostility as well. Jews lived in closed communities that tried to stay away from trouble. This traditional survival tactic of maintaining a low profile made it easier to target the Jews. The Turkish public blamed the minorities for violating their trust during the Independence War. It was thought that while the Greeks and the Armenians were punished for their behavior, the Jews were left untouched and were the profiteers of the war.⁴³⁸ On the other hand, the Jews were afraid that their turn would come as well.⁴³⁹

Nationalism had led to dangerous discrimination. Talking about the malice of the Jews became ordinary in the daily conversations. Some of the Jewish population preferred to migrate⁴⁴⁰ out of the country, while some moved to Istanbul as the city retained elements of cosmopolitanism and promised more security due to the larger Jewish community already living there.⁴⁴¹ In just a few years following the founding of the Republic, “the number of the Jews (in Turkey) diminished by half.”⁴⁴² For the remaining Jews, the anxiety grew but the absence of physical attacks made them stay. David Fresko from *El Tyempo* wrote; “Every citizen respects the laws of the Republic and promoting

⁴³⁸ Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 58-59.

⁴³⁹ Leon Kontente, *L'Antisemitisme Grec en Asie Mineure – Smyrne 1774-1924* (Istanbul: Libra, 2015), 175-176.

⁴⁴⁰ During 1922-1926, an immigration wave started to Europe, to the U.S. and Latin America. Agricultural workers from Thrace preferred to move to Palestine; Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 47-49.) Before the First World War there were 20,000 Ottoman Jews in the U.S. In ten years this number increased to 50,000; Leon Kontente, *L'Antisemitisme Grec en Asie Mineure – Smyrne 1774-1924* (Istanbul: Libra, 2015), 175-176.)

⁴⁴¹ Riva Kastoryano, “From Millet to Community; The Jews of Istanbul” *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry – Community and Leadership* eds. Aron Rodrigue (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1994): 256.

⁴⁴² Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 62.

enmity among the public is against the laws.”⁴⁴³ As the written attacks from the press continued, the Jewish community in Turkey preferred to keep a low profile and to avoid attracting attention.

Turkish Jewish press was preoccupied with publishing articles attempting to prove the loyalty of the Jews by giving the number of casualties during the War of Independence. Lawyer Kemal Ben Yosef from Bursa wrote a piece for *Ikdam* newspaper in which he explained that before the war, there were 2500 Jews living in Bursa and that 10% of Bursa’s Jewish population was lost during the War of Independence. Two Turkish students from Bursa published a reply to this article; “We are tired to hear the 2-3 cents that you donated, 3-4 volunteer soldiers that you lost [during the War of Independence]. You will become our slave or you will get out of here.” (*Teberru ettiğiniz 2-3 kuruşu, gönüllü verdiğiniz 3-4 askeri dinlemekten bıktık. Ya bize köle olacaksınız, ya da defolacaksınız*)⁴⁴⁴

3.2.5. Turkification of the Economy: Restoring the *Effendi*⁴⁴⁵ Class

The anti-Semitic press served as a major tool of pressure and was employed in the Turkification of the economy. It is note-worthy that many of the cities in which these newspapers were distributed had large Jewish communities, such as Edirne and Kırklareli in Thrace region. The owners of *Paşaeli* newspaper were at the same time merchants and they used the power of their newspaper against their Jewish rivals.⁴⁴⁶ Expressing racism and using discriminatory language was unpunished and it started to become provocative.

⁴⁴³ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 50.

⁴⁴⁴ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 41-42.

⁴⁴⁵ *Effendi* means an educated and respected (Muslim) man, usually governmental official with power.

⁴⁴⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 39-52.

Tevkid-i Efkâr newspaper claimed that Jews in Salonica tortured the Muslims and asked for retaliation. The newspaper also joined the anti-Semitic campaign against Dr. Sami Günzberg, an influential Turkish Jew.

The negative news about the Jews in the press also served to bring out the xenophobia or anti-Semitism in the Turkish public. Jews began to be seen as the major instigator of all the economic problems and other difficulties encountered. An economic boycott against the Jews started in most cities of Thrace and Anatolia. In Bursa, the press supported the boycott with headlines such as “We cannot keep these viruses among us.” *Türk Sesi* and many others stated that a Turk should not work under a Jewish boss. There were posters in Thracian cities advising not to trade with the Jews.⁴⁴⁷ Many protests started in Thrace after *Paşaeli* newspaper’s articles.⁴⁴⁸ “Here is not Palestine” was the title of *Paşaeli* in 1923 criticizing the use of Judeo-Spanish by the Jews in their daily life and asked openly “Are we in Palestine?”.⁴⁴⁹ References to Palestine for the Jews started immediately in the first years of the Republic.

As the majority of the Greeks and Armenians had left the country, the Jews attracted the majority of public attention and enmity. “It is your turn, leave the country” and “Jews, get out of Turkey” were the slogans bellowed during riots. The police hardly stopped the angry crowd from attacking Jewish businesses. Jews from Babaeski left for Istanbul for greater security. Jews from Urla and Izmir got threat letters. In December 1923, officers from Çorlu illegally tried to expel the Jews but were unsuccessful due to a last minute intervention of Ankara. However, Jews from Çatalca near Istanbul were expelled. They

⁴⁴⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim; 2005), 39-52.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*

had to leave behind all of their belongings as the porters overcharged them with transportation prices exceeding the value of the goods.

In 1926, the mayor of Kırklareli prohibited the *shechita* (Jewish religious method of slaughtering permitted animals for food) in order rid the city of Jews. The boycott calls against Jewish businesses were the first steps towards the Turkification of the economy, yet the Jews were invited to show their loyalty by giving donations to the Turks coming to Turkey after the Greek-Turkish population exchange.⁴⁵⁰ A Turkish Jew Eli Shaul, expressed his feeling on this continuous financial requests from the non-Muslims as follows; “Helping the Red Crescent, the Child Protection Agency, the Airmen’s Association, the Homeless Shelter, etc. is evidently a responsibility of all non-Muslims. I would even say that non-Muslims outdid Muslims in this sort of assistance work. ‘For heaven’s sake, let them find nothing to criticize about us non-Muslims,’ they said, we will not refrain from doing everything we can to help.”⁴⁵¹

Dr. Sami Günzberg was the first well-known victim of the discrimination against the Turkish Jewish community. In 1923, Ebüzziya Tevfik from *Tasvir-Efkâr* newspaper blamed Dr. Günzberg, who was also the dentist of Mustafa Kemal, of treason against the country.⁴⁵² He was accused of being a spy for the Germans. The irony in this matter is that Germany was an ally of Turkey during the war.⁴⁵³ Ebüzziya Tevfik used the expression “villainous Jew”⁴⁵⁴ instead of his name constantly during the court proceedings, which indicates the main motive behind his accusations. The lawsuit continued until 1928 when

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁴⁵¹ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 33.

⁴⁵² Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 40-41.

⁴⁵³ Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 59.

⁴⁵⁴ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 32-34.

Günzberg was proclaimed not guilty.⁴⁵⁵ Contrary to the accusations, he was presented as a patriot and nominated for the War of Independence Medal in 1929.⁴⁵⁶

The government was mostly silent on anti-Semitism until the Jewish community complained officially. Chief Rabbi Haim Bicerano complained about the provocative publications of *Ileri* newspaper to the Mayor of Istanbul Refet Paşa and then the mayor look after the issue.⁴⁵⁷ In Thrace, the community wrote a telegram to Atatürk and then the anti-Semitic publications were temporarily closed.⁴⁵⁸ While all this happened, there were also balanced voices in the press as well. *Müstakil* was one of the very few newspapers that warned about the increasing nationalism and asked for common sense.⁴⁵⁹

3.2.6. Turkish Language as a Unifying Element

Language was the main adhesive of the reconstructed Turkish identity. The Arabic alphabet was replaced with Latin script and later Ottoman-Turkish was banned from official and public spheres. It was a campaign to unite the nation with a common language. For minorities, this linguistic revolution presented a challenge as the state wanted all of its citizens to speak Turkish as their mother language. For 2 million of Turkey's population of 13,6 million, this was not the case and Turkish was not the native language of 28% of Istanbul's population in 1927.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Rıfat N. Bali, *Sami Günzberg* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2007)

⁴⁵⁶ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 86-88.

⁴⁵⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim; 2005), 40.

⁴⁵⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim; 2005), 42.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 47-49.

⁴⁶⁰ Senem Aslan, ““Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13 (2007): 245-272.

3.2.6.1. The Language of the Minorities

With the acceptance of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula into the Ottoman Empire in 1492, the majority of the Jewish population⁴⁶¹ became Sephardic and the most common language became Judeo-Spanish, the old Spanish language of their ancestors⁴⁶². Living in the same quarters, there was no need for Jews to learn Turkish as everyone from the market owner to the barber was Jewish and spoke Judeo-Spanish. Even if they wanted to learn, there were no institution that taught Turkish to Jews during the the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁶³ Moise Franco explains that “there were 80 to 100,000 Jews in the Ottoman Empire who knew French due to their education in Alliance schools. But without exaggeration we can say that it was impossible to find at least 1,000 who could use the language of the country; Turkish as well as the French.”⁴⁶⁴ In 1880 in Aydın, only two young men knew Turkish out of 3000 people. It is said that only 66 Jew children were taught Turkish in Istanbul in 1866.⁴⁶⁵ Turkish was known by businessman and people who had relations with government offices and other institutions. People living in Turkish or mixed neighborhoods also knew Turkish, but this was very rare. In fact, the Jewish community

⁴⁶¹ Sephardim spoke Judeo-Spanish, Jews living in Syrian border and Georgian Jews spoke in Arabic. The Ashkenazi community, migrated from Europe, communicated in a German-Hebrew language called Yiddish. There were also other communities such as Italian Jews. During research one wondered what language they used to communicate with each other. One have learned from Ashkenazi Jews that the majority of them have learnt Judeo-Spanish.

⁴⁶² The language has transformed since, with the influence of the different ethnic groups living in the Ottoman Empire. A lot of Turkish, Greek, Italian, French and Hebrew words entered the language with time. The language and vocabulary have changed but the grammar rules were conserved.

⁴⁶³ During the Ottoman era, the Jewish leaders tried to promote Turkish language. Chief Rabbi of Istanbul Moşe Fresko in 1840 recommended the community to learn Turkish. All modern Jewish school established after 1854 had Turkish classes, in some schools all the lessons were in Turkish. Most of them had to be closed for financial problems; Avram Galante, *Türkler ve Yahudiler* (Tarihi, Siyasi Araştırma) (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1995), 169-179.

⁴⁶⁴ Moise Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israelites de l'empire Ottoman, depuis les origines jusqu'a nos jours* (Paris: Collection El Mundo Djudeo-Espanyol, 2007), 249.

⁴⁶⁵ Eva Groepler, *Islam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1999), 43.

wanted to speak Turkish and fully integrate to the Turkish public. Knowing the language was beneficial for them as fluent Turkish was mandatory for many career opportunities.

The issue of the national language for the Turkish Jewish community is complicated. Universally, the national language of the Jews is Hebrew. When the Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed the usage of national languages to minorities, Hebrew was the language indicated for the Jews. However, Jews inevitably continued to use the language of their ancestors; Judeo-Spanish for Sephardic and Yiddish for Ashkenazi. The language of modern education on the other hand was mostly French due to the Alliance schools. The Turkish Ministry of Education was aware of the fact that Hebrew, the national language of the Jews was not largely used among the Turkish Jews and could impose Turkish language as the language of education for the Jews.⁴⁶⁶

Other minority languages survived this pressure as their teaching and national language was the same. However, the Jews wanted to integrate fully to the society and wanted to be part of the definition 'Turk' and it was only the Jews that abandoned their mother tongue. There are two reasons for this. First, the social classes among the Turkish Jewish community helped to bring about the demise of the language. Judeo-Spanish was perceived as the language of the lower classes while French was the language of the noble and educated few. Another reason might have been the urgent need to integrate to the society. It was seen as a solution to all of the discrimination they had faced. When they migrated from the Iberian Peninsula, the Jews continued to speak Judeo-Spanish because the Ottomans preferred the difference of language as an invisible fence among their subjects. When Turkish Republic asked them to learn Turkish, they accepted, even at the sake of

⁴⁶⁶ Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 59-60.

losing their mother tongue. Turkish-Jewish author Mario Levi told me that Jews always adopt the language of the land in which they live and gave the example of Spain. “Spanish was not the mother tongue of the Jews when they first migrated there. This is a typical pattern, now Turkish is the mother tongue of the Jews of Turkey.”⁴⁶⁷ Today, we can say that the mother tongue of the Jews of Turkey is Turkish.

From my grandmother I learned that there were many multilingual minorities in 1930’s. She was born in 1922 and she knew Judeo-Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Greek. Her Turkish was not perfect but with the birth of my mother in 1944 she placed greater importance on it so the child will be at ease in her everyday life. My mother speaks perfect Turkish and knows Judeo-Spanish, French, Spanish and enough English and Greek to communicate. From my mother’s generation, I know several people who can express themselves in Greek, Italian, and Armenian. There was solidarity between the non-Muslim population of Turkey due to the discrimination under which they all suffered. We had an Armenian-Greek family as our neighbor in Büyükada.⁴⁶⁸ Turkish supplemented by Judeo-Spanish, Greek, Armenian words was used in our summer house in the 1980s. When I was growing up, my parents used to speak between each other Judeo-Spanish at home only when they did not want us, the children, to understand. Otherwise, they always spoke to my brothers and me in Turkish. Most of my friends cannot understand even the most basic sentences in Judeo-Spanish. What remains of Judeo-Spanish in my generation is some bad words and the names of food.

⁴⁶⁷ Karel Valansi, “Ben bir Don Kişot’um” Interview with author Mario Levi. *Şalom Dergi* December 2013 issue.

⁴⁶⁸ The biggest of the Prince islands in the sea of Marmara, near Istanbul. The minorities preferred to spend their summers on these islands.

3.2.6.2. Unification of the e

The first step was the standardization of education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*) decided on 1924. All schools were united under the Ministry of Education with a common curriculum. All Jewish schools including the *Alliance Universelles Israelites* schools, became regular schools under the name of “*Musevi*” (Jewish) and were transferred to the authority of the ministry.

The education ministry appointed all teachers. The Jewish teachers had to pass Turkish language level tests to continue but as most lost their job and they did not speak Turkish. The Jewish students had to repeat their grade if their Turkish level was not advanced enough⁴⁶⁹. The law limited the number of teachers of foreign nationality. French teachers of the AIU schools lost their jobs and the classes were left without teachers. New teachers from Turkish (Muslim) origin and with higher salary than the rest were appointed by the state and it was mandatory to have a Turkish deputy director at schools.⁴⁷⁰

The school books had discriminatory teachings. In 1931, a mandatory book of nationalism described the “bad guys” as non-Muslims. They were moneylenders, middlemen, and profiteers according to this book.⁴⁷¹ This was another way to glorify the Turk and to encourage the rise of Turkish nationalism. With these practices the state excluded their own minorities who wanted to integrate to the society. A stereotype of the enemy as a foreigner was formed and the religious and ethnic minorities were perceived as a part of it. In his memoir, Ilya (Eli) Shaul explains that the teacher of the military class

⁴⁶⁹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 187.

⁴⁷⁰ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 38-49.

⁴⁷¹ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Yeni Türkiye'nin Üvey Evlatları” *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

in Eyüp Middle School (1931-1934) sent him out of the class; “God forbid, I might learn military secrets and sell them to foreign states.”⁴⁷²

In the first five years of the Republic, all Jewish schools were Turkified with the curriculum dictated directly by the ministry. In 1931, the state required all children to have primary education in Turkish schools.⁴⁷³ Jewish associations worked hard on this issue as Turkish language became the main test of one’s Turkishness. Some associations opened night courses on Turkish but it was very difficult to move away from a language used for centuries so rapidly. Historian Avram Galante explains with these lines; “With the AIU schools French became a mother tongue for Jewish kids. If Turkey have had opened schools with Turkish as the education language 50 years ago, today Turkish Jews’ mother tongue could have been Turkish. This is the result of the neglect of the Jewish community and the Turkish government as well.”⁴⁷⁴

3.2.6.3. ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’ Campaign

In January 1928, the Law Faculty Students Association of Istanbul University started a campaign to spread the usage of the Turkish language. They declared that speaking a language other than Turkish meant not recognizing Turkish law and that those who did could not be regarded as good citizens.⁴⁷⁵ The campaign “*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!*” (Citizen, Speak Turkish!)⁴⁷⁶ was supported by the mayor of Istanbul. The ministry of education offered 1000 Turkish Liras in support of the campaign.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 16-19.

⁴⁷³ Senem Aslan, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13 (2007): 245-272.

⁴⁷⁴ Avram Galante, *Türkler ve Yahudiler (Tarihi, Siyasi Araştırma)* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1995), 169-179.

⁴⁷⁵ Senem Aslan, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13 (2007): 245-272.

⁴⁷⁶ Avram Galante, *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!* Trans. Ömer Türkoğlu (Ankara: Kebikeç Yayınları, 2000)

⁴⁷⁷ Senem Aslan, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13 (2007): 245-272.

In 1931, Mustafa Kemal gave a speech in Adana in which he stated that it was not possible to believe a person's claims of belonging to the Turkish nation and culture if he does not speak Turkish.⁴⁷⁸ Many Jewish communities throughout the country started their own speak Turkish campaigns by general statements, fining those speaking other language than Turkish. They rightfully feared that if they did not speak Turkish they would be perceived as foreigners⁴⁷⁹ and would lose their jobs, as there was pressure to fire foreign staff from companies.

The press issued many articles about "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" The Jews were called ungrateful because they preserved the language of the country that expelled them four hundred years ago.⁴⁸⁰ Not using Turkish was a clear sign of disrespect and one could be condemned for this 'insult to Turkishness'.⁴⁸¹ Yahya Halit from *Vakit* criticized the accent of the Jews⁴⁸² and spoke out against not using the language of the state.⁴⁸³

The "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaign spread to major cities where minorities lived and gained large support from the public. This is evidence that it was not only the state that promoted this type of differentiation campaign. In this case, the state even had to take steps to prevent the widespread boycotts and violence that erupted from the public

⁴⁷⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 97.

⁴⁷⁹ Nuran Savaşkan Akdoğan, "The 'Speak Turkish campaigns' and the Jewish Community During the Reformation and Nation Building Process of the Early Turkish Republic, 1928-1938" Eds. Raniero Speelman, Monica Jansen & Silvia Gaiga *Italianista Ultraiectina 7* (Utrecht: Igitur Publishing, 2012), 89-108.

⁴⁸⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 105-109.

⁴⁸¹ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, "Yeni Türkiye'nin Üvey Evlatları" *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015): 50-77.

⁴⁸² "Signs with the words 'Citizen, Speak Turkish!' were posted in public places like stations, streetcars, ferries, movie theaters, etc. (...) Many of the humorous papers focus on non-Muslim subjects; ridiculing their languages, their speech, and their customs. I can state that if there were no non-Muslims in Turkey, these papers would have nothing to write about and stop publishing."; Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 32-33.

⁴⁸³ Neşe Ozan, "Türkiye'de antisemitizm" seen on Eva Groepler, *İslam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge, 1999): 95-104.

in response to the forced assimilation of the non-Muslims. On the other hand, there was a toleration for the non-Turkish speaking Muslims. Muslim identity was a definite sign for one's loyalty.⁴⁸⁴ Jews were the main target of the campaign as they were powerful in commerce and finance.⁴⁸⁵ There was serious pressure from the street. Violent events erupted among Muslim and other ethnic and religious groups. Tensions led to fights and to legal cases claiming 'assaults on Turkishness.'⁴⁸⁶

“...There were “Citizen, Speak Turkish” signs everywhere. One day my father came home, his face full of blood. They have beaten him in the bazaar yelling ‘dirty infidel!’ He said ‘I am Turk as much as you are! No one can call me infidel.’ But nobody listened to him. He was such a good man... But there was an illness in the public about speaking Turkish. He was beaten. Even our close neighbors did not help. Nobody said anything to stop it. He was frustrated. It was hard to be labeled as infidel...”⁴⁸⁷

Avram Galante⁴⁸⁸, Professor of Ancient Near Eastern History in Istanbul University, defended the community's linguistic choice and isolation in its historical context with his book “Citizen Speak Turkish!” (1928). He tried to moderate public reaction to Judeo-Spanish in the public sphere.⁴⁸⁹ He explained the initiatives taken by the Jewish community starting from the 19th century to show that the Jews really wanted to speak Turkish and integrate to the society. He also gave recommendations to encourage the learning Turkish. Another Jewish intellectual Moise Cohen, who changed his name to

⁴⁸⁴ Senem Aslan, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 13 (2007): 245-272.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁸⁶ Nuran Savaşkan Akdoğan, “The ‘Speak Turkish campaigns’ and the Jewish Community During the Reformation and Nation Building Process of the Early Turkish Republic, 1928-1938” eds. Raniero Speelman, Monica Jansen & Silvia Gaiga *Italianista Ultraiectina 7* (Utrecht: Igitur Publishing, 2012), 89-108.

⁴⁸⁷ Işıl Demirel, “Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!” *Şalom* Newspaper April 17th, 2014.

⁴⁸⁸ Albert Kalderon, *Abraham Galante, A Biography* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1983)

⁴⁸⁹ Nuran Savaşkan Akdoğan, “The ‘Speak Turkish campaigns’ and the Jewish Community During the Reformation and Nation Building Process of the Early Turkish Republic, 1928-1938” eds. Raniero Speelman, Monica Jansen & Silvia Gaiga *Italianista Ultraiectina 7*. (Utrecht: Igitur Publishing, 2012), 89-108.

Munis Tekinalp⁴⁹⁰, was a true believer of Turkification. In 1928, he published “Turkification”. He believed that all the minorities should speak in Turkish in order to deserve their Turkish citizenship. In a chapter dedicated to the Jews, he listed the ten commandments of Turkification⁴⁹¹;

1. Turkify your names,
2. Speak Turkish,
3. Read your prayers in Turkish at the synagogues,
4. Turkify your schools,
5. Prefer state schools,
6. Interest yourself in Turkey’s affairs,
7. Socialize with Turks,
8. Eliminate community spirit,
9. Contribute to the national economy,
10. Know your constitutional rights.

A draft proposed in the National Assembly made speaking Turkish compulsory. There were similar campaigns and pressure until the 1940’s aiming to turn Turkish into a spoken language by every citizen. The proposition was not accepted but the minorities started to speak their mother tongues only at home and carefully avoided using it outside.⁴⁹²

In 1927, a year before the campaign ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’, 84.5% of the Jews⁴⁹³ said that their mother tongue was Judeo-Spanish. In 1935, this dropped to 70.3% while

⁴⁹⁰ Moïse Kohen (Munis Tekinalp), (1833-1961) political writer and ideological exponent of Ottoman and Turkish nationalism. He was a supporter even when Ottomanism transformed to a strict Turkish nationalism. He is a Turkified Jew himself and known for urging the Jewish community to use Turkish. He was influenced from Ziya Gökalp, an important nationalist of the pre-World War I era. For Gökalp, Turkism was a cultural norm, Islam was a moral code; Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve ‘Türkleştirme Politikaları*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000), 103-108; Jacob M. Landau, *Tekinalp, Turkish Patriot 1883-1961* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1984) and Rifat N. Bali, *Bir Günah Keçisi: Munis Tekinalp* 3 vols. (Istanbul: Libra, 2012)

⁴⁹¹ Rifat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 95-99.

⁴⁹² Nuran Savaşkan Akdoğan, “The ‘Speak Turkish campaigns’ and the Jewish Community During the Reformation and Nation Building Process of the Early Turkish Republic, 1928-1938” eds. Raniero Speelman, Monica Jansen & Silvia Gaiga *Italianista Ultraiectina 7*. (Utrecht: Igitur Publishing, 2012), 89-108.

⁴⁹³ Male jews. For female Jews, it is approximately the same results.

23.5% said Turkish was their mother tongue. This trend continued and in 1960, 48% said Judeo-Spanish and 44.5% said Turkish.⁴⁹⁴ This campaign and the accompanying desire of the Jews to satisfy the state request resulted in Turkish becoming the mother tongue of the Turkish Jews.

On November 27th 1947, Şalom Newspaper conducted an interview with Tekinalp about the Turkish language. He said that the Jews did not need any more language campaigns as the new generation of Turkish Jewish children speak, write, and think in Turkish. “The progress in democracy that we are witnessing today will accelerate this process and I believe the abnormalities will disappear in the near future,” he said.⁴⁹⁵ In another interview on December 25th 1947, Avram Leyon asked him; “It has been 18 years since the publication of your book on *Türkleştirme* in 1928. Do you still think the same way?” Tekinalp was very sure of his decision; “There is no need for extra effort, it is following its natural path.” The increased use of the Turkish language was not his only source of optimism. He said that “History will give the responsible persons of the Capital tax their conviction. But at the same time he added that the consequences in the country is always temporary.⁴⁹⁶ A bizarre statement from someone personally affected by the tax.⁴⁹⁷ The pressure from the state, the press, and the public toward the minorities for the

⁴⁹⁴ Walter F. Weiker, *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity: A History of the Jews of Turkey* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1992), 303-304.

⁴⁹⁵ “Bay Tekin Alp ile Mülakat, Türkiye Musevilerinin vaziyeti” *Şalom* Newspaper November 27th, 1947

⁴⁹⁶ “Bay Tekin Alp ile 2. Mülakat, Türkiye Musevilerinin vaziyeti” *Şalom* Newspaper December 25th, 1947

⁴⁹⁷ Munis Tekinalp could not pay the tax amount and was sent to Sirkeci Camp in order to be sent to Aşkale. He took credit from Emlak Bank by putting in pledge his house for 12,000 TL. He paid his tax debt but could not pay the credit. He had to sell his house to pay his bank debt; Ayhan Aktar, “Tekinalp” *Taraf* Newspaper February 6th, 2012 <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ayhan-aktar/tekinalp/19826/> (Accessed on May 6th, 2016)

usage of the Turkish language was successful. The results of this research shows a trend in Turkish Jews on the choice of language.

The legal Turkification of the minorities was already achieved with the introduction of the civil code, and now the Turkification of the Jews through language was completed. In forty years, half of the Turkish Jews had changed from their two thousand year old mother tongue Judeo-Spanish to Turkish as the state demanded. If a study was conducted today, undoubtedly near 100% of the youth would say that their mother language is Turkish.

3.2.7. Steps for Dismantling the Community Structure

A crucial step of Turkification was to create a common culture where no communal organization and leadership would be powerful. As Tekinalp mentioned in his ‘Ten Commandments for Turkification’, the state expected its non-Muslim population to eliminate their community spirit. This is why even when the pressure toward the Jewish population diminished, as a community their status did not ameliorate. The state used several steps to dismantle the centrally structured community⁴⁹⁸ organization.⁴⁹⁹

With the renunciation of the Treaty of Lausanne Article 42 in 1926, Turkish government decided to tax the charitable institutions as commercial institutions. A deep financial crisis started as the revenue of the community diminished considerably. A distrust toward the charitable institutions grew and the donators had hesitations. They preferred to withdraw their contribution with the knowledge that a large sum would be deducted as tax and their donation would not reach the poor but the state.

⁴⁹⁸ Even today, the problem continues in an undemocratic nature. The law of election for the minorities’ foundations is cancelled in 2013 and is not replaced yet. New elections can not be held and as a consequence exiting members of boards have to continue to work in order to support the institutions.

⁴⁹⁹ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 100-102.

The Law of Foundations accepted in 1936 severely limited the activities of the rabbinate. The law gave to the state the right to appoint a director to the non-profit organizations running schools, synagogues, hospitals. It also froze the acquisition of new property, ultimately weakening the cash flow of these institutions.⁵⁰⁰ All Jewish property was in the hands of charitable institutions and the government banned their governance by a board of trustees. Many Jewish charities were forced to close its doors and the community lost the control of governance as an entity.⁵⁰¹ Based on this law, the minorities were asked to declare their immovable to the deeds office in six-month period. The legal entities which submitted declaration were defined as community foundations by laws. With these declarations, minorities were both named as foundations and had the chance to register their real estates to land registry.⁵⁰² Minorities had concerns over the real aim of this law and they did not register all their immovable out of fear that it would be confiscated.

An interview with an unidentified former member of the secular council of the rabbinate shows the problems encountered by the community. The Law of Foundation did have the necessary arrangements for the election of the members of the chamber (*Meclisi Umumi*) who dealt with all of the charities. The secrecy shows the delicacy of the subject. The member of the community preferred to stay anonymous while criticizing the government on a subject that affects all the Jewish community negatively.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 100-102.

⁵⁰¹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 132-133.

⁵⁰² Regulations Related with the Community Foundations,
<http://www.vgm.gov.tr/duyurudetay.aspx?Id=42> (Accessed on November 20, 2015)

⁵⁰³ “Una Entrevista kon un Vyejo myembro del konsilyo laiko del grand rabinato” *Şalom* Newspaper April 8th, 1948.

S. Adatto wrote before the introduction of the new Law of Foundation in 1936 that the charities could govern themselves but now the government had the right to take control and tax 5% of the income. The new resolution presented on March 3rd, 1948 tries to give more control back to the minorities over their foundations.⁵⁰⁴

Besides financial measures, the leadership of the communities was also challenged. The Rabbinate did not have a precise job description. With the death of the Chief Rabbi Moşe Becerano in 1931, the community did not have the permission to appoint another religious leader until 1953 because of the state's reluctance to approve a new chief rabbi among appropriate candidates.⁵⁰⁵ These laws can be understood as steps for the secularization of the country; the government wanted to control all types of religious communities and communion. The introduction of these laws left the Jewish community in chaos. As there was no way to select a leader, the ones already in governance continued their job as long as they could.

3.2.8. Two Positive Steps on Turkification Process; the Law on Headgear and Dress, (Hat Revolution) and the Law of Surname

Among the Republican reforms, there were two that facilitated the integration of the minorities to the society: Hat Revolution and the Law of Surname. The clothing and headgear in the Ottoman era showed the religious grouping, rank, profession both civil and military of the person. With the introduction of the Hat Revolution, traditional Ottoman attires, religious symbols, and dresses were banned and the minorities become undistinguishable from the rest in public space. This reform helped the minorities to

⁵⁰⁴ "Las Enstituciones Komunales de las minoridades" *Şalom* Newspaper May 6th 1948.

⁵⁰⁵ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 88-93.

integrate physically to the society without facing prejudice on the street just by the dress distinguishing them.

The Law of Surname adopted in June 21st, 1934 made mandatory for every citizen to take a family name. The minorities were already using surnames. This law was especially targeting the Muslim majority who used only first name and titles such as *hodja*, *bey*, *effendi*, pasha. According to the law, the use of names derived from foreign languages or culture as well as tribal names were forbidden and Turkish names were favorable. Many ethnic and religious minorities changed their family names. Some preferred the Turkish translation of their original name, or changed to similar sounding names.⁵⁰⁶ Many Jews preferred to Turkify their first names as well. Poet Abraham Naon became Ibrahim Nom, Journalist Moise Cohen became Munis Tekinalp.⁵⁰⁷ Surnames with ‘*Türk*’ in it was preferred to hide one’s religious identity; many Jews choose surnames such as Türkmen, Türkkan, Öztürkkan.

The names and the dresses were the first barrier encountered in public life. Adopting western attires and choosing a Turkish name could help to eliminate the discrimination. Under pressure, these two laws offered a unique chance to integrate into the society, which was especially important in an era when the language you use was the main indicator of one’s loyalty to the country. Though Ottoman style titles were prohibited, the minorities were named differently than the Muslims; *madame* and *monsieur* in French was used for the minorities while the Muslims were named *hanım* and *bey* in Turkish. Calling a Muslim *madame* or *monsieur* was perceived as an insult.

⁵⁰⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 287-288

⁵⁰⁷ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 130-131

3.2.9. A milestone in the History of the Jews of Turkey; the Murder of Elza Niyego

The murder of Elza Niyego is an example of the dangerous outcomes of the press' anti-Semitic campaign. It was also the first and the last mass demonstration of Turkish Jews against the many injustices they suffered in silence.

Osman Ragıp bey, a 42 years old married man fell in love with a Jewish girl, Elza, but the 22 years old girl was indifferent to his affections. He killed her in the middle of the street on August 27th,1927 when he found out that she was engaged to another. Her corpse laid on the street for hours until the forensic specialist came. Her mother was forbidden to cover her daughter's body. The Jewish community was outraged by the murder scene and by the fact that her murderer was sent to a mental institution and not to prison because of his reputable family background. Elza Niyego's funeral became an emotional demonstration of the discontentment of the Jewish community.⁵⁰⁸ Many Jews attended the funeral and chanted "We want justice!" This was a brief moment of revolt for the Jews against the discrimination they faced since the beginning of the Republic.

In this event, the change of tone in the newspapers is eye catching. The day after the murder the newspapers gave the news as it was. The religion of the victim had no importance. But the day after her funeral the tone of the newspapers reversed.⁵⁰⁹ The press attacked the community harshly; "You already have justice you don't need to demonstrate and chant." *Son Saat* newspaper called the Jews 'unlawful citizens' and told them to leave the country; "Go to Palestine!"⁵¹⁰ This was also an important as Palestine was the address shown to the Jews since the beginning of the Republic. During the protest, the Law for

⁵⁰⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 109-131.

⁵⁰⁹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 75-85.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*

the Maintenance of Public Order (*Takrir-i Sükun*) which gave the government exceptional powers, was in effect. This shows that the protest was not planned but started as a reaction. The state had to react strongly to show its power⁵¹¹ which explains the change of tone of the newspapers. There were openly anti-Semitic verbal attacks towards the Jewish community for over a month in Istanbul.⁵¹² The implications of the Elza Niyego affair were severe. On August 27, 1927, a free movement ban in Anatolia was imposed on Turkish Jews.⁵¹³ This ban was in effect until November 1927.⁵¹⁴ Following this event, the Jewish community became less vocal. This demonstration was one of the rare and most crowded protests in the history of the Jews of Turkey. There were approximately 200,000 Jews in 1923 at the establishment of the Republic. This number decreased to 80,000 in 1927 according to the official census.⁵¹⁵ From 1923 till 1929, 70,000 Jews migrated from Turkey because of the pressure of Turkification.⁵¹⁶

1920s were marked by increasing nationalism and Pan-Turkism. Still, 1930s would be scene to the rise of fascism and the Nazi ideology that affected all Europe. Turkey, a new country itself struggling with inner rebellions, modernization reforms and social engineering, was highly affected by the political climate in Europe and had to adjust its policies in order to be actively neutral during the Second World War.

⁵¹¹ The critical accusations of the press resulted with the arrest of Jews identified as protestors. Some of them were not even on the funeral. The lawyers proved that the police officers added these claims three days after the funeral. Jak Pardo, the school teacher of İsmet İnönü was among the arrested. He was accused of treason because of a letter he wrote about the dangers the Jews faced, to his former student in French. With the involvement of İnönü, his case was dismissed and all the arrested were free; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 75-85.

⁵¹² Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 64.

⁵¹³ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 109-131.

⁵¹⁴ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 86.

⁵¹⁵ Neşe Ozan, "Türkiye'de antisemitizm" seen on Eva Groepler, *İslam ve Osmanlı Dünyasında Yahudiler* (Istanbul: Belge, 1999), 95-104.

⁵¹⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 231.

Chapter 4:

Changing Balance in International System Affects Turkey

In 1929, the New York Stock Exchange collapsed, resulting in a worldwide economic depression and by bankruptcies all over the U.S. The stock market crash especially affected Germany, which had to approve the severe terms imposed by allied forces after its defeat in the First World War.⁵¹⁷ The high unemployment and the call for the payment of all foreign loans by the U.S. was a major step towards the destruction of the fragile Weimar Republic.⁵¹⁸

In Germany, the economy was in a dire situation. There were 6 million Germans unemployed in 1932. The anger and discontent of the people to the ongoing economic crisis was rising. At the same time, the feeling of inferiority caused by the punitive measures of the Treaty of Versailles and the fear of communism led to the rise of the Nazi Party. Its leader Adolf Hitler was seen as the savior who could overturn the terms of the Treaty. Historian Geoffrey Pridham explains the rise of the Nazi Party as follows; “The majority of Nazi voters in the elections of 1930-32 were probably little influenced directly by the racialist ideology, as they were primarily voting for a change in circumstances.”⁵¹⁹

By 1933, the Nazis had begun to introduce discriminative measures against the Jews, including prohibiting them from practicing a large numbers of professions. In Nuremberg in 1935, Hitler announced discriminatory racial laws prevalent in Nazi ideology excluding German Jews from citizenship, depriving them from their political

⁵¹⁷ Germany had to accept to limit its military and to pay an important sum as the only responsible of the war causing a huge financial burden.

⁵¹⁸ Francis L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 22-32.

⁵¹⁹ Geoffrey Pridham, “Hitler's Rise to Power” seen in Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, *Towards the Holocaust: the social and economic collapse of the Weimar Republic* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 71.

rights, and prohibiting their intermarriage with individuals from the German (Aryan) race. The national socialist measures were based on the superiority of the Aryan race over Jews and other ‘inferior’ races. Hitler’s racial ideas and obsessions had already been published in his infamous book *Mein Kampf*⁵²⁰ in 1926.

4.1. Rise of Fascism, Nazi Ideology

The rise of Nazism in Germany and its expansionist policies shifted the power balance in Europe. Its discriminatory policies and the consequences it had on surrounding countries affected marginalized minorities throughout the continent. Many discriminative legislations were accepted in Nazi occupied territories. Pogroms against the Jewish population in Eastern European countries started even before their occupation by Nazi Germany. For Leni Yahil, “The legend of a secret Jewish organization that aspired to control the world by means of war, revolution, and economic ruin merged with the nationalistic and racist doctrine.”⁵²¹ Centuries old European anti-Semitism was combined with Nazi’s biological and blood related racist discrimination. With the rise of the Nazi party as the sole power of Germany, the world headed towards a political crisis and the Second World War. These radical developments would ultimately lead to *HaShoah* (Holocaust) which resulted in the death of 6 million Jews all over Europe.

4.1.1. Turkey during 1930s, under the Shadow of Nazism

The first decade of the Republic was not calm or silent. In 1925, the Sheikh Said Rebellion was led by the religious leader Sheikh Said and the Kurdish nationalist soldiers

⁵²⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Kavgam* (Istanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1998)

⁵²¹ Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust, The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 41.

from the *Azadi*⁵²² group. There are numerous assumptions about the nature of this major Kurdish rebellion; to revive the caliphate or a Kurdish nationalist movement. For the perspective of the state, it was seen as counter-revolution and immediate military action started. The rebellion was held back, its leaders were hanged, and many Kurds fled to Syria. The ‘Law for the Maintenance of Public Order’ (*Takrir-i Sükun*) which gave the government exceptional powers was passed on March 1925 and was in effect until March 1929.⁵²³ The opposition was silenced with this new legislation.

On one hand, the state was fighting against rebellions and on the other it tried to continue with the reform agenda necessary to enter the Western political system. When the Sheik Said Rebellion was held back, the state gained confidence about the safety of the one party regime, the security of the reform agenda and started positive steps toward the religious minorities, a step necessary to Westernize the country. For the first time in 1929, the state budget relocated funds for Jewish schools in Istanbul, Izmir, Edirne, and Kırklareli.⁵²⁴ In one of his speeches, Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya emphasized that the Jews were equal citizens of the state.⁵²⁵ The government tried to integrate the Jews into society as they were the only religious minority who could fit their citizenship description, and also the only group that was interested in full integration. The relatively positive atmosphere continued with the permission given to the construction of a new synagogue in 1951; *Neve Shalom* (oasis of peace), which is still the main synagogue in Istanbul. The

⁵²² Azadi (Freedom) is a Kurdish nationalist group founded in 1923 mainly by Kurdish military officers (who served in the Ottoman and Turkish armies) and intellectuals; David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105.

⁵²³ Baskın Oran, “Şeyh Sait ayaklanması” Baskın Oran ed. *Türk Dış politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı’ndan bugüne belgeler, yorumlar Cilt 1 1919-1980* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 248, 266.

⁵²⁴ *El Tyempo* Turkish Jewish newspaper, January 23rd, 1929; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), 86-88.

⁵²⁵ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), 86-88.

government's permission to build a new synagogue in Galata was also proof of the increased Jewish population in the neighborhood.⁵²⁶ The politicians and the press continued to urge Turkish Jews to learn Turkish and integrate to the society but it was not brutally pushed as before the renouncement of the article no 42 of the Lausanne Treaty. Contrary to the present situation of their co-religionists in Nazi Europe, the full integration of Jews into Turkish society was expected. Unlike the situation of the Jews in Europe, the full extent of their discrimination from society had not yet started.

After a few years of tranquility, a new wave of anti-Semitism began in 1930s. Cevat Rıfat Atilhan and Nihal Atsız were the two main journalists of this trend. They used the 'pure blood' ideology of the Nazi leaders to define the real Turk, the pure race. They condemned the Jews for their betrayal during the War of Independence, for their lack of Turkish blood, and for their hegemony in commercial activities.⁵²⁷ The loyalty of the Jews who did not speak Turkish in public was questioned. Accumulating wealth through illegal means was one of the major accusations against Turkish Jews.⁵²⁸ To counter act these claims, Jewish communities in different cities started Turkish learning courses and established Turkish Culture Unions. In 1934, Izmir Jewish community even decided to recite the prayers in Turkish instead of Hebrew.⁵²⁹ These efforts proved that they still wanted and had hope to be integrated to Turkish society at any cost. However, the Jews were distressed as they could not anticipate the state's ever shifting minority policies which directly affected them.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*

⁵²⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 243-244.

⁵²⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews*, (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 188.

⁵²⁹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 244.

4.1.2. Press Freedom in Turkey during the First Four decades of the Republic

There was limited press freedom in Turkey until the one party regime and the reform program were secured in the 1930s. Events such as the Sheik Said and Menemen rebellions led to extraordinary measures such as Independence Tribunals (*İstiklal Mahkemeleri*) and the ‘Law for the Maintenance of Public Order’ (*Takrir-i Sükun*). The opposition was silenced and the state pressure over the press increased.⁵³⁰ In 1931, with the Law of Press (*Matbuat Kanunu*) the pressure over the press expanded. This law gave the cabinet the right to temporarily close the publications seen as counterproductive to the state’s policies and agenda.⁵³¹ *Cumhuriyet* and *Ulus* newspapers were the main spokesmen of the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi*, RPP) government. *Akşam*, *Tan*, *Vakit*⁵³² newspapers were the main daily newspapers of that time.⁵³³ The restriction of the press increased with the changes in the Press Law in 1938. According to veteran journalist and writer Hıfzı Topuz, there was no apparent reason for this decision other than the government growing too powerful.⁵³⁴ This new legislation obliged a guarantee letter from a bank of 1000-5000 Turkish Lira; a big sum for the era, to establish a new newspaper. Another restriction was the introduction of a press license which gave the control of new publications to the government. The names on the state’s ‘black list’ could not publish a newspaper or magazine nor could they even work for a newspaper.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁰ Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Basın* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1992), 64-65.

⁵³¹ Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları (1920-1939)* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 31-32.

⁵³² Atatürk wrote 5 op-eds for *Vakit* during January 22-26, 1937 about the issue of Alexandretta (Hatay) under the name Asım Us; Hıfzı Topuz, *100 soruda Türk Basın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1973), 155-160.

⁵³³ Hıfzı Topuz, *100 soruda Türk Basın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1973), 155-162.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid*

Journalist Sami Kohen recalls that his father Albert Kohen, owner of a Jewish newspaper, was called to Ankara many times and even the name of his newspaper *La Boz del Oriente* (voice of the orient) was changed to *La Boz de Türkiye* by press officer (*Matbuat Umum Müdürü*) Selim Sarper with the claim that Turkey was not part of the Orient. With this new press legislation, it was now compulsory to have a ‘Turkish’ chief clerk (*sorumlu yazı işleri müdürü*). Kohen explains; “There was a man, friend of my father, who came just to receive his monthly salary. It was a clear indication of the mistrust of the government against minorities. The press was under the control of the government. Every week a subject was sent to all minority newspapers. This could be an article about the importance of speaking Turkish or asking for donations from the world Jewry for Turkey. My father’s newspaper was in Judeo-Spanish, French and Turkish. We had many readers from South America and they did sent money especially during the Erzincan Earthquake in 1939.”⁵³⁶

When the Second World War broke out, the government used the security pretext to further control the media. As the government gained unchallenged authority, any excuse could be used to close down a publication. The press became an instrument of the government. Radio of Ankara became the main news provider in that era.⁵³⁷ Although the newspapers were under pressure, the newspapers’ foreign policy inclinations were easily identifiable; *Cumhuriyet* and *Tasvir-i Efkar* were pro-Nazi Germany, *Akşam*, *Vatan*, *Tanin* were pro-Allied powers, and *Tan* was pro-Soviet.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ Interview with Turkish Journalist Sami Kohen, Istanbul May 20th, 2015

⁵³⁷ Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Basın* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1992), 67.

⁵³⁸ Hıfzı Topuz, 100 soruda Türk Basın Tarihi (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1973), 163-171.

The press regained its freedom in 1946 with the multi-party system. The RPP had to accept to giving up the government's right to close newspapers.⁵³⁹ A radical change occurred for a short period of time in the Turkish press. Almost everything could be written and criticized. *Ulus* became the spokesman of RPP, the party in power, while *Vatan* was for the Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti, DP), the opposition.

As for the Turkish Jews, the 1930s and 1940s was marked with anti-Semitic opinions in Pan-Turk periodicals, often influenced by Nazi race theories. Such anti-Semitic propaganda became more apparent in Turkish publications under Islamist influence especially in the 1950s and on.⁵⁴⁰ Turkish Jews still had to fight to be accepted as equal Turkish citizens in the eyes of the public. An article by Izak Yaeş on February 12th 1948 named 'Turkish citizen is called Turk in Turkey' was an open expression to that necessity.⁵⁴¹

4.1.3. German Academics, 1933

In 1933, Nazi Germany was firing its Jewish professors,⁵⁴² as was consistent with its racial policies. At the same time Turkey was working on university reform to modernize the educational system based on the Western model. Turkey invited some German Jewish professors and their families to take part in the university reform. With this attempt, for the first time since its establishment, Turkey became a Jewish immigrant receiving country.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁴⁰ Jacob Landau, *Muslim Turkish Attitudes towards Jews, Zionism and Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 291-300.

⁵⁴¹ Izak Yaeş "Türkiye'de Türk Vatandaşına Türk Denir" *Şalom* newspaper February 12th, 1948

⁵⁴² Led by Albert Einstein, *Notgemeinschaft Deutscher Wissenschaftler* (Emergency Assistance Association for German Scientists) was established in Zürich, Switzerland in March 1933 to find jobs for Jewish professors fired from German and Austrian Universities after the empowerment of the Nazis; Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993)

They were many well-known and even Nobel Prize winners on this list of newly emigrated German Jews.⁵⁴³ Most of the German academics were appointed to Istanbul University (established as *Dar-ül Fünun* in 19th Century), where there was a lack of qualified professors, and to newly-founded Ankara University. Others were given the opportunity to found research institutes.⁵⁴⁴

This invitation was not extended to European Jews from other professions. Beside academics invited during the university reform, doctors, pharmacists, and Jews from other professions were not invited to Turkey⁵⁴⁵ as the employment legislation limited some professions to non-Turks. The rigid requirements for knowing Turkish also prevented a major influx from Nazi Europe.

European Jewish academics who came to Turkey suffered from discrimination as did their Turkish co-religionists. Due to anti-Semitism and the enforcement of the usage of Turkish language, they did not extend their stay in Turkey for long⁵⁴⁶. Additionally, there was mistrust of foreigners and rumors that the professors were actually spies.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴³ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 98.

⁵⁴⁴ Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim,1996), 99.

⁵⁴⁶ The professors were hired on short term contracts of five years; They were required to learn Turkish, and to write textbooks and manuals. The German government officially revoked the citizenship of all the Jewish refugees in Turkey and demanded their return. Turkey resisted to such demands; Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*. (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Kader Konuk, "Eternal guests, mimics, and dönme: The place of German and Turkish Jews in modern Turkey" *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 37 (2007), 5-30; Fritz Neumark, *Boğaziçi'ne Sığınanlar* (Istanbul: Neden Kitap, 2008); Albert Eckstein, *Anadolu Notları 1937*, eds. Nejat Akar, Pelin Yargıç (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 2008); Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yahudileri II* (Istanbul: Bilgi, 2010)

⁵⁴⁷ General Kazım Karabekir's speech on April 2nd, 1940: Today I saw the work of the German academics. Some of it is not translated to Turkish yet. They said they made research in Anatolia and Ankara but what they wrote is very detailed that they did not forget to add even a little river or house. They made such a preparation that when Germany enters the country, they will feel home!" Kazım Karabekir, *Ankara'da Savaş Rüzgarları II. Dünya Savaşı CHP grup tartışmaları* (Istanbul: Çağaloğlu, 1995), 182.

In one of his letters, Professor Rudolf Nissen wrote that he would not return to Turkey because the injustice and disrespect that he endured there was intolerable.⁵⁴⁸

On the other hand, German Jews assumed that the rise of Nazism in Germany would soon end and maintained the hope of returning in the near future, which encouraged them to keep their German citizenship.⁵⁴⁹ One of the German academics in Turkey named Fritz Neumark shared his thoughts as follows: “I thought Hitlerism was a nightmare that will would last 2-3 years.”⁵⁵⁰

Nazi ideology was spread to Turkey through Germans living or working in the country. Nazi ambassadors and German journalists in Istanbul were actively working to undermine Turkish faith in the loyalty of the Jews. They were cooperating with Christian merchants to eliminate Jewish competition. The group tried to take advantage of the wartime tension in Turkey “to drive the Jews out of Turkey once and for all.”⁵⁵¹

German academics did not have close relations with the Jewish community in Turkey. In an academic panel⁵⁵² about the Jewish academics of 1933, researcher Rita Ender explained that these academics did not have a relation with the Jewish community and preferred to socialize in *Notgemeinschaft Deutscher Wissenschaftler*'s (Emergency Association of German Scientists) events⁵⁵³. They were bound by the unjust treatment in their native country and their common experience in Turkey. Rita also added that, she

⁵⁴⁸ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 89-90.

⁵⁴⁹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 97-100.

⁵⁵⁰ Fritz Neumark, *Boğaziçi'ne Sığınanlar* (Istanbul: Neden Kitap, 2008), 59.

⁵⁵¹ Standford J. Shaw, *Turkey & the Holocaust* (New York: New York University, 1993), 14.

⁵⁵² The conference was held at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul in November 2013.

⁵⁵³ Fritz Neumark compared this way of life to a ghetto. From his memoirs, he had only one Turkish Jewish friend; Adil Gobay an engineer who had a German born wife; Fritz Neumark, *Boğaziçi'ne Sığınanlar* (Istanbul: Neden Kitap, 2008), 179-183.

could not find birth, death, marriage, circumcision registration⁵⁵⁴ of these people in the archives of Turkish Jewish Community.⁵⁵⁵ Their choice of staying away from the local Jewish community may be explained by the fact that most of the German Jews were assimilated at that time and identified themselves as German rather than Jewish.

As the number of the European Jews who came to Turkey was very limited in number, we cannot call the university reform an opportunity of salvation for the European Jews suffering under the Nazi⁵⁵⁶ regime. Turkey did not accept German academics for humanitarian reasons but as a pragmatic decision aiming to reform its outdated academia. Turkologist Corry Guttstadt claims that Turkey invited 130 academicians and their families, which totaled 600 German Jews. It is believed that there were also 300-400 illegal Jewish migrants to Turkey during the same period. Guttstadt adds that until the ban of travel for the Jews in October 1941, 400,000 Jews emigrated from Nazi controlled countries. Turkey was not one of the Jewish refugee receiving countries. Turkey does not even enter to the statistics.⁵⁵⁷ On the other hand, even though small in number, Turkey accepted Jewish immigrants from non Turkish origin when no other country did. The ongoing war in Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews seriously challenged the British

⁵⁵⁴ On the other hand, the community had some information about them. According to a letter she found, the community gave the residence information of one of the academics upon the request of his family; “Boğaziçi Üniversitesi: 80. yılında Türkiye’nin Yahudi profesörlere kucak açtığı söylemi tartışıldı” *Şalom* Newspaper, November 6th, 2013.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁵⁶ As a neutral country, Turkish passport was a ticket of salvation. There were Turkish Diplomats who saved Turkish Jewish lives acting primarily by their own initiative and not as a state policy. There is an ongoing discussion about the reluctance of the Turkish government to take back its Jewish citizens living in Europe; *Emekli Diplomat Selahattin Ülkümen’in anıları, bilinmeyen yönleriyle bir dönemin dışişleri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1993), İzzet İ. Bahar, *Turkey and The Rescue Of Jews During The Nazi Era: A Reappraisal Of Two Cases; German-Jewish Scientists In Turkey & Turkish Jews In Occupied France*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. 2012. <http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/11785/> (Accessed on June 30, 2015); Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012)

⁵⁵⁷ Karel Valansi, “Holokost’ta daha fazla Yahudi Türkiye’ye dönebilirdi” Interview with Turcologist Corry Guttstadt.; *Şalom* November 20th, 2013.

rule there. Turkey made the decision to accept German Jewish academics when there was a growing sympathy towards the Germans in the Arab countries due to the unjust British and French policies in the Middle East.

4.2. The Settlement Law of 2510 and the Exodus of the Jews of Thrace

European Jews suffered under the discriminative policies of the Nazi regime in Europe. Turkish Jews also started to suffer from the fascism from which their European co-religionists were trying to escape. In a climate where an intensive economic and cultural Turkification was on going, Nazi propaganda acquired many supporters. Anti-Semitism in Turkey was influenced by Nazi ideas such as pure blood, pure race, and pure Turk. Anti-Semitic publications intensified in the 1930s. The Jews were portrayed as potential traitors, foreigners in the country who did not speak Turkish, and as having monopoly on Turkish economy, while their so called betrayal during the Independence War was often recounted.

Articles by Cevat Rıfat Atilhan⁵⁵⁸ from *Milli İnkılap*⁵⁵⁹, Mustafa Nermi⁵⁶⁰ from *Vakit*, and Hüseyin Nihal Atsız⁵⁶¹ from *Orhun* newspapers were the main sources of

⁵⁵⁸ Cevat Rıfat Atilhan stayed with Nazi party member and historian Julius Streicher during his visit to Germany. When he returned to Istanbul he started to publish *Milli İnkılap* newspaper using the anti-Semitic caricatures of Streicher's *Der Stürmer* magazine which was a self-proclaimed anti-Semitic. "The Jews are a disease, a germ in the social structure of Turkey and the world. Not only Germany but the whole world is suffering from this social plague, from this parasite." This is an excerpt of his article published in *Milli İnkılap* in June 1st, 1934; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 100-114.

⁵⁵⁹ The magazine started to publish in 1933 under the name of *İnkılap* and then changed its name to *Milli İnkılap*; Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 245. This newspaper distributed pins with the photo of Hitler on it, to university students, just an example to prove its admiration to the Nazi regime; Rıfat N. Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 76.

⁵⁶⁰ Mustafa Nermi is one of the ideologue of Turkish racism. He believes the ethnic and religious minorities betrayed the generosity of the Turks. He was living in Germany and he was supporter of the Nazi regime; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 106-108.

⁵⁶¹ Hüseyin Nihal Atsız is an ideologue of Turkish racism. For him the Jews and the communists were two main enemies of the Turks. He identified a 'Jewish problem' and praise Germany for being the first country to solve it. On May 25th, 1934, just before the Thrace events, he published a warning to the Jews;

provocation against the Jews.⁵⁶² Thrace was a favorable place to cultivate negative Nazi type anti-Semitic beliefs as people were familiar with anti-Jewish ideology expressed by a large population of Greeks for centuries. Rumors that Turkish Jews were seen as foreigners by the Thracians and that they were plotting against the Republic spread. Anti-Semitic ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’⁵⁶³ was translated to Turkish in Germany and it was widely distributed in Thrace.⁵⁶⁴

The state decided to evacuate ‘foreigners’ from strategic border cities. On June 14th 1934, the Settlement Law no 2510 was approved. Its goal was to change the demographic structure of some regions in favor of Muslim Turkish citizens. There were also assimilative measures in this law; it promoted the use of Turkish⁵⁶⁵ language to those who remained away from the Turkish culture.⁵⁶⁶ The law relocated some Kurdish speakers from the east of Turkey to the west in order to force them to integrate to the general society and to assimilate to the Turkish culture.⁵⁶⁷ The phrasing of the law; “Turkish race, blood,

Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey – Who is a Turk?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 142.

⁵⁶² A month before the acceptance of the law, Jewish community complained about the anti-Semitic publications of Milli İnkılap to the prime ministry. The officials assured their safety but nothing was done to guarantee it. Milli İnkılap continued to target the Jews. Jewish leaders filed another unsuccessful complaint just before the start of the pogroms. Economic boycott toward the Jews started in Çanakkale in June 1934. A pogrom against Izmir Jews were planned but stopped at the last minute by RPP in June 13th, 1934; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 110-111 and Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 244-246.

⁵⁶³ Invented by Tsarist secret police in the late 19th century to provide a pretext for the pogroms; Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey & the Holocaust* (New York: New York University, 1993), 15.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁶⁵ Erol Ülker, ‘Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization in Interwar Turkey: The Settlement Law of 1934’, *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, N°7, (2008): 4-5.
<http://www.ejts.org/document2123.html> (Accessed on June 29, 2015)

⁵⁶⁶ During Parliamentary discussions prior the adaptation of the law, the deputies expressed their concern. Sadri Maksudi, “Turkification of the language is among the greatest devices for assuring the future of the Turkish race and the living of Turk as Turk.” Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya, “This law will create a country speaking with one language, thinking in the same way and sharing the same sentiment.” *Ibid*

⁵⁶⁷ Senem Aslan, “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”: A Nation in the Making” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 13:245-272, 2007.

descent” shows the influence of the nationalistic ideology of the Nazis. With this law those who were not perceived as Turk could be resettled for economic, political, or military reasons. The Law focused on the Eastern provinces, but Thrace and the relocation of the Jews were on the program as well.

A new and powerful administrative post was created for Thrace. The first general inspector of Thrace İbrahim Tali (Öngören) made a four-week inspection tour of the region, then prepared a detailed report⁵⁶⁸ which he published just before the Thrace events. His report concluded; “We have a Jewish problem”, a message that echoes Nazi ideology. Tali’s report was full of classical Jewish stereotypes and he blamed the Jews; “their intentions are to turn Thrace into Palestine.”⁵⁶⁹ The reference to Palestine for the Jews started immediately in the first years of the Republic and continued to spread. There were many posters in Nazi Europe during 1930s and 1940s demanding the Jews to go to Palestine, and the same was true for Turkey as well.

A Turkish Jew Eliezer Kaneti recalls the situation in Thrace: “We lived in Uzunköprü. My father was in the leather business. In the 1930’s, anti-Semitism was increasing in all Europe. We read newspapers full of anti-Jewish articles. Some nationalists started the same propaganda in our city. There were some life threatening events and restrictions for the Jews. My father was an associate with a politician this is why we were seen as ‘from us.’ Every day the idea of migrating to Palestine was more and more appealing. A year before the Thrace events, we moved to Istanbul and then to

⁵⁶⁸ Berna Pekesen, “Umumi Müfettiş İbrahim Tali Öngören: Müfettişlik icraatları ve 1934 Trakya Teftiş Gezisi Raporu” *Tarih ve Toplum* No 7 (Spring-Summer 2008), 145-179.

⁵⁶⁹ Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 146-150.

Palestine.”⁵⁷⁰ Working for a local politician somehow allowed him to join the “we” rather than the “other” but this did not change their urge to immigrate.

Two weeks following the approval of the Settlement Law no 2510, pogroms started in many Thracian cities. “İsmet Pasha and the government want all the Jews out of Thrace, to an exile in Istanbul,” was the excuse used during the events.⁵⁷¹ Starting from June 21st simultaneously in Edirne, Çanakkale, Kırklareli the threats became evident. Looting and violence continued until July 4th. Just a day prior to July 4th, Gad Franko and Mişon Ventura, leaders of the Turkish Jewish community, had a meeting with Atatürk on the events occurring in Thrace. On July 5th, a day after the end of the events, İnönü said “Anti-Semitism is not a Turkish ideology” in the National Assembly, but this statement came too late. Thousands of Jews left all their possessions and escaped to Istanbul. These events did not occur gradually, but rather emerged so suddenly that the Jews from Thrace had no time to take any precautions. This is why they called these events *Fortuna* (*firtına*, storm) in Judeo-Spanish. Many people never returned to these lands, left their possessions behind and preferred not to talk of it as they felt pain, resentment, and also fear.⁵⁷² The Thrace events⁵⁷³ occurred between June 21st and July 4th, 1934 and resulted with the migration of 10,000 out of 13,000 Jews from Thrace⁵⁷⁴ to Istanbul⁵⁷⁵ and to Palestine in order to escape violence, rape, and death in their villages and cities.

⁵⁷⁰ Yaakov Barha, *Kfar-Saba'nın onursal ve değerli üyesi Kaneti Eliezer*. ND, NP. Found in the library of the Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel; Batyam, Israel.

⁵⁷¹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), 115.

⁵⁷² Işıl Demirel, “Trakya’da *Fortuna*” *Şalom* newspaper April 2nd, 2014.

⁵⁷³ Rıfat N. Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları* (İstanbul: Libra, 2012); Ayhan Aktar, “Trakya Yahudi Olaylarını ‘doğru’ yorumlamak” *Tarih ve Toplum Dergisi*, November 1996 No. 155. 45-56; Naim A. Gülerüz, *Tarihte Yolculuk, Edirne Yahudileri* (İstanbul: Gözlem, 2014), 205-211.

⁵⁷⁴ With the Thrace events, Jews kept arriving to Istanbul, having abandoned their property and fled. “The Red Crescent didn’t even give them these wretched people the proverbial five liras of assistance to relieve their misery.” Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (İstanbul: Libra, 2012), 34.

⁵⁷⁵ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), 125-126.

On the international level, the Thrace events were a reflection of the government's foreign policy and security concerns. Turkey continued its political and economic relations with Germany⁵⁷⁶, and closely watched Russia, but it was Italy that was perceived as a major threat. In March 1934, Italian leader Benito Mussolini proclaimed his intention to expand in the direction of Asia and Africa.⁵⁷⁷ These statements appeared as a direct threat to Turkish policymakers and according to them, Thrace, a region demilitarized in 1923, was the primary target.

It is generally agreed that the Turkish government gave impetus to the events but could not control the crowds provoked by the intense anti-Semitic propaganda. It is said that there were many trains in stations in Thrace, ready for departure to Istanbul. After the incidents in Thrace, the Jews of Turkey were concentrated in one place, in Istanbul as with any other religious minority in the country. At this time, however, most Turkish Jews preferred to migrate to Palestine.⁵⁷⁸

During the events there was a total silence in the press. Jewish journalists were not courageous enough to criticize and publish what was happening in Thrace. During the Thrace events not only Turkish press but, as historian Avner Levi stated, Jewish press in Palestine was also silent.⁵⁷⁹ In 1935, JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency) published a report summarizing the alerting situation of the Jews in Turkey;

⁵⁷⁶ “Although Turkey developed economic, military, diplomatic relationships with Britain and France, she acted very carefully to avoid harming its relations with Germany. Leaders such as Chief of the General Staff Fevzi Çakmak were in favor of a pro-German attitude. By 1938, 44% of Turkish exports were bought by Germany and 11% of Turkish imports came from Germany; Hakan Özden, “The Diplomatic Maneuvers of Turkey in World War II”, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları* Spring 2013 No. 37 Page 94.)

⁵⁷⁷ Mustafa Aydın, “1939-1941: Savaşın tarafların Türkiye rekabeti” eds. Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan bugüne belgeler, yorumlar Cilt 1 1919-1980* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 415.

⁵⁷⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), 249.

⁵⁷⁹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), 114-115.

“Reports from Turkey indicate that the Jewish position there, is becoming more and more serious. It seems that the authorities have embarked on a definite policy to start trouble for the Jews there. Though no official censorship exists in Turkey, the press there, is not in a position to report all the discrimination which has been introduced against the Jews during recent weeks. Briefly, however, these discriminations can be summed up as follows:

1. Persecution of the Jews by the local authorities in Turkish Thrace.

The persecution in Thrace consists of continued terror which forces the Jewish population to leave this territory. Several months ago the Jews of Thrace still had an opportunity to sell their property. Now even this privilege is no longer enjoyed by them. Under the pretext of protecting Jewish property from being sold for a trifle, the Turkish government has issued a law prohibiting the Jews in Thrace to sell their belongings to the non-Jewish population. The result is that the Jews, being forced to leave the territory because of the continued terror, are not in a position to realize any cash at all for their immovable property which they leave behind them.

Jewish Shechita is officially prohibited in Thrace and the Turkish press is not permitted to report the fact. Because of this prohibition the entire Jewish population of Thrace, which is extremely religious, has not been able for weeks to taste meat. The Jews dare not complain to the central authorities because such complaints would only result in greater trouble for them.

2. Persecution of Turkish Jews desiring to emigrate to Palestine.

Zionism being prohibited in Turkey the Turkish authorities have begun a campaign in all parts of the country against those Jews who are registering themselves for emigration to Palestine. Two hundred Palestine emigration certificates were granted by the Zionist Executive to the Jews of Turkey to be distributed through the offices of the Jewish Colonization Association in Istanbul, but the Turkish government has indicated that no Jew who is a Turkish citizen will be permitted to make use of these certificates. The 200 Palestine visas will have to be utilized by Jewish residents in Turkey who are not citizens of the country, the government insists. It is in connection with this policy towards Palestine that the recent raid on the Jewish Colonization Offices in Istanbul was made. In the same connection Saadia Cherniak, head of the J.C.A. in Turkey, was kept under arrest for several days.

3. Discrimination against German-Jewish professors who were invited by the Turkish authorities to settle in Turkey.

The German-Jewish professors and doctors who had been invited by the Turkish government to occupy chairs in the Turkish universities were recently given to understand that they had better not indulge in private practice. Many of them are now popular with the inhabitants who seek their medical advice, considering them superior to the Turkish doctors. The Turkish press, however, has started a campaign against the refugees,

declaring that they are only “guests” in Turkey, and that it would be advisable for them to restrict their work to teaching in the universities only and not competing with Turks in medical practice.”⁵⁸⁰

4.3. Turkey’s Foreign Policy During the Second World War

In the 1940s Turkey was still struggling with economic problems and the Second World War affected the country even though it attempted to stay neutral. Bread, sugar, meat, and many other commodities were distributed by voucher or were extremely expensive. Businessman Vitali Hakko explains his childhood; “In Istanbul, people started drinking their tea with raisins instead of sugar. Coffee addicts drank roasted chickpeas instead.”⁵⁸¹ Author Altan Öymen adds that it was forbidden to transfer more than 5 kg of rice.⁵⁸²

Turkey was a neutral state until the end of the Second World War, and it was under the direct threat of Nazi invasion. In his memories, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu explains that only İnönü and Prime Minister Refik Saydam believed that the West coalition would win the war.⁵⁸³ İnönü though that the victory would be Britain’s as it had naval superiority,⁵⁸⁴ though this did not stop him from having close contacts with Germany. The collective memory of the First World War remained vivid. Turkey chose a proactive policy aiming to stay away from the war at any cost.

During the Second World War, Turkey’s foreign policy was vital for the Jews in three ways. First, Turkey could be a possible refuge for European Jews escaping the

⁵⁸⁰ “Between the lines” *JTA* July 1st, 1935 <http://www.jta.org/1935/07/01/archive/between-the-lines-167> (Accessed on March 14th, 2016)

⁵⁸¹ Vitali Hakko, *My Life: Vakko* (Istanbul: Libra, 2011), 57-58.

⁵⁸² Altan Öymen, *Bir Dönem Bir Çocuk*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2002), 330.

⁵⁸³ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 139.

⁵⁸⁴ İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Dış Siyaseti ve Askeri Stratejileriyle İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye’si* Vol. I (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013), 655.

Holocaust and the pogroms in Eastern Europe, but with few exceptions this was not the case, even for those of Turkish heritage. On the other hand, for a Turkish Jew⁵⁸⁵ in Europe there were only two choices; concentration camps in Europe or labor camps in Aşkale, Turkey.⁵⁸⁶

Second, the Jewish Agency⁵⁸⁷ was active in Turkey. The former sea route to Palestine starting from France or Italy via the Mediterranean Sea was no longer accessible due to the war.⁵⁸⁸ For this reason, Turkey has become an important transit country to Palestine via Bulgaria, across Turkey, and then Syria, or by sea from Romania, through the Black Sea. As long as the refugees did not stay in Turkey, the government permitted them to cross its borders.

Third, there was the cases of refugee boats that were not permitted to disembark to Turkey. The major cases were *Parita*⁵⁸⁹ in 1939, *Salvador*⁵⁹⁰ in 1940, *Struma*⁵⁹¹ in 1942, and the Turkish rescue boat *Mefkure*⁵⁹² in 1944. These boats were forced to continue on

⁵⁸⁵ There were thirty thousand Turkish Jews residing in Europe before the Second World War; Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 12.

⁵⁸⁶ The minorities who could not pay the Capital Tax were forced to work in labor camps in Aşkale near Erzurum at the east of Turkey.

⁵⁸⁷ The Jewish Agency for Palestine (*Sochnut*) represented the Jewish community in Palestine during the British mandate; Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012): 193-196.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁸⁹ In August 1939 the refugee boat *Parita* was denied permission to the port of Izmir. *Parita* waited for one week off the coast of Izmir without coal, water, food with 800 Jewish refugees on board from Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. It was forced by Turkish authorities to continue its journey; Rifat N. Bali, *Devletin Yahudileri ve "Öteki" Yahudi*. (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010): 233-226.

⁵⁹⁰ In December 1940, *Salvador* traveling from Varna, Bulgaria stopped in Istanbul for a short period of time and continued its journey. It shipwrecked during a heavy storm off the coast of Silivri near Istanbul. 204 refugees from Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria drowned, 123 were saved. They stayed in Istanbul until they got their entry visas to Palestine. In both cases Jewish relief organizations provided assistance to the refugees; Esra Danacıoğlu, "Yahudilere Mezar Olan Gemiler", *Popüler Tarih*, June 2000, No:2

⁵⁹¹ In February 1942 *Struma* reached Istanbul with its 796 passengers and a defective engine. It was anchored in quarantine in Istanbul harbor. Turkish authorities denied entry to most of the refugees as they lacked visa for Palestine. After more than two months with a banner 'save us', *Struma* was towed to the open sea lacking a working engine. The next day it was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine. Only one survived; Esra Danacıoğlu, "Struma" *Şalom* Newspaper February 29th, 2012.

⁵⁹² In August 1944, one of the few Turkish vessels in refugee crisis set sail from Constanta, Romania with two other boats. They were sailing at night with no navigation lights because it was restricted to travel after sunset, *Mefkure* was hit with gunfire and torpedoes near İğneada, Turkey and went down with its 300

their way. It was not just the policy of the state, but the negative feelings the public felt towards the refugees that led to this policy of deterrence. Satirical magazines such as *Akbaba* and *Karikatür* ridiculed the refugees.⁵⁹³ *Ulus* newspaper announced the departure of Parita with the headline “Vagrant Jews have finally left Izmir (Serseri Yahudiler nihayet İzmir’den ayrıldılar)”. On the other hand, *Son Telegraf* and *Tan* newspapers had a more humanist approach and published interviews⁵⁹⁴ with the refugees, explaining their histories with the headline; “Unfortunates who cannot find a country (Vatan bulamayan bedbahtlar).”⁵⁹⁵

4.4. Jewish Immigration to Palestine

Since 1933, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased parallel to the persecutions of the Nazis and the pogroms in Poland and other Eastern European countries. The Jewish immigration prompted mass Arab protests in Palestine. Britain, which administrated the mandate of Palestine, tried to curb Jewish immigration in order to gain the support of the Arabs and stop them from taking up arms in support of Nazi Germany. Britain set the maximum number of certificates to be issued and strictly controlled the process of Jewish immigration to the country.⁵⁹⁶

While Britain enforced this new restriction, so too did the Turkish government out of fear that the transit refugees would choose instead to stay in Turkey. According to the restrictions, transit refugees had to leave Turkey in two weeks, and could not stay in

passengers. Only 11 survived; Esra Danacıoğlu, “Unutulmuş Bir Trajedi: Karadeniz’de batırılan Mefkure I” *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* No 44, 6-14; Esra Danacıoğlu, “Unutulmuş Bir Trajedi: Karadeniz’de batırılan Mefkure II” *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* No 45, 13-19.

⁵⁹³ Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012): 199-205.

⁵⁹⁴ Rıfat N. Bali, *Devletin Yahudileri ve “Öteki” Yahudi*. (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010): 226-245.

⁵⁹⁵ *Son Telegraf* newspaper, August 9th, 1939; seen on Celil Bozkurt, *Türk Kamuoyunda Filistin Problemi, İlk Arap-Yahudi Çatışmaları (1920-1939)* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2008), 180-181.

⁵⁹⁶ Corry Guttstadt, *Türkiye, Yahudiler ve Holokost* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012): 193-198.

Istanbul or some other cities for more than 24 hours, which was almost impossible. The export of currency was not permitted and violation of these rules or illegal entry into Turkey was punishable with deportation and long prison sentence.⁵⁹⁷ A decree accepted in 1938 restricted the entry of Jewish refugees, transit or not, to Turkey if they came from a country with anti-Jew laws.⁵⁹⁸ For the European Jews it was almost impossible to cross Turkey or to escape to Turkey legally.

As obtaining a legal permit to Palestine was very difficult, most of the refugees were illegal and their journey ended in death. They traveled in inhuman conditions just to escape from their certain fate in Europe. Displaced people's camps in Cyprus and Mauritius were one of the solutions the British found to prevent Jewish immigration to Palestine.⁵⁹⁹ As Chaim Weizmann, President of the Zionist organization and later the first president of the State of Israel, said during his testimony before the Peel Commission in Jerusalem on November 25th, 1936: "There are in this part of the world [Eastern and Central Europe] 6,000,000 Jews... for whom the world is divided into places where they cannot live and places where they cannot enter."⁶⁰⁰ It was Jewish organizations such as Haganah and Irgun who organized and facilitated the immigration of illegal refugees to Palestine.

The Jews from Turkey suffered from the distinctive nationalist agenda of the era in Turkey. Turkish Jews numbered approximately 75,000 at that time feared for their future. It was not because of the Nazi pressure, as Turkey rejected any kind of patronizing

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰⁰ Chaim Weizmann, *The letters and papers of Chaim Weizmann: series B*, Vol. II December 1931-April 1952. Ed. Barnet Litvinoff (Jerusalem: Transaction Books, 1984)

treatment from European powers including the Nazis, but because of the anti-Semitic sentiments that arose during the 1940s. Greece was invaded by the Nazis and there were rumors that death camps and ‘ovens’ were ready for Turkish Jews in Polonezköy, Balat, or near the embassy of Germany in Istanbul. A prominent Turkish Jewish community member Jak Kamhi spoke of the fear experienced by his father with these lines; “Our families were afraid of the anti-Semitic developments in Germany. My father bought a farm in Adapazarı. If the Germans entered Istanbul, we would go and hide there. He has heard that the Jews who hide in farms had escaped from the Nazis. He was taking precaution. We have heard what was going on in Europe from the Germans and French both Jew and Christian who had fled to Istanbul.”⁶⁰¹

4.5. Discriminatory Policies Concerning the Minorities during the Second World War

The ideal to create a national state with a homogenous population of a common culture and language forced the ruling elite to Turkify⁶⁰² the elements in the population which were seen as ‘not Turk enough.’ The speech made by General Kazım Karabekir (August 21st, 1940) is a good example of the mistrust of the Jews:

“Friends, wherever there are non-Turks you can be sure that it is a home of spies. For example, *Anadolu Kulübü*⁶⁰³ in Büyükkada is full of Jews. (...) When two CHP members go there, speak of politics of course. They hear it or they have special instruments to record it and they succeed in their job of spying. There is a need to think about necessary civil and military precautions for the future.”⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰¹ Jak Kamhi, *Gördüklerim, Yaşadıklarım*, (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2013), 71-74.

⁶⁰² General Kazım Karabekir on March 11st, 1941: “In Edirne and Kırklareli there are many non-Turks. Thousands of spies can give information to the other side.” Kazım Karabekir, *Ankara’da Savaş Rüzgarları II. Dünya Savaşı CHP grup tartışmaları* (Istanbul: Çağaloğlu, 1995), 265.

⁶⁰³ Anadolu Kulübü (Anatolian Club) is a private club in Büyükkada and Ankara. Many Turkish Jews are members to it.

⁶⁰⁴ Kazım Karabekir, *Ankara’da Savaş Rüzgarları II. Dünya Savaşı CHP grup tartışmaları* (Istanbul: Çağaloğlu, 1995), 225.

The combination of nationalism, fascism, and the Nazi ideologies of pure blood and racial superiority resulted in explicitly discriminatory legislations. Historian Minna Rozen explains that during the Second World War the state ceased trying to express and believing in the equality of its citizens: “The heads of state did not repeat their vigorous declarations of earlier years that equality of rights also applied to the Jews, that there was no Jewish problem in Turkey, and so forth.”⁶⁰⁵ This shift in attitude can be explained by Turkey’s alignment with Axis powers, Turkey’s need to maintain its neutrality, and the distrust felt by many against the minorities.⁶⁰⁶

4.5.1. The Conscription of the Twenty Classes (*Yirmi Kur’a İhritiyat*) 1941-1942⁶⁰⁷

In 1941, following the expansion of Nazi occupation to the Balkan countries, it was at the border of the Turkish territories. The Turkish governing elite was afraid that, as had happened previously during First World War and the Independence War, the country’s minorities would support the opposition in the case of a war.⁶⁰⁸ In April 1941, non-Muslim men living in Istanbul aged between 27 and 39 were called to do reserve military service in the Turkish Army. Then with a new decree in March 1942, all minorities were called to do reserve military service.⁶⁰⁹

During war times it is customary to call for reserve service, but Muslims were not sent to these labor battalions. Labor battalions were exclusively for Armenians, Greeks,

⁶⁰⁵ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 357-359.

⁶⁰⁶ In 1941, the minorities were not accepted to military schools, those serving in the army were not given weapon and worked in public service projects as road construction.

⁶⁰⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *II. Dünya Savaşı’nda Gayrimüslimlerin askerlik serüveni, Yirmi Kur’a Nafia Askerleri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2008)

⁶⁰⁸ Starting from 1941, there were many articles underlining the mistrust to the minorities. Especially Vatan newspaper and its owner Ahmet Emin Yalman published many articles concerning the ‘fifth column’, warning the cosmopolite Istanbulites; Rıfat N. Bali, *Devletin Yahudileri ve “Öteki” Yahudi.* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010), 299-319.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*

and Jews of Turkey. In reality, they were not even true soldiers and were not provided with a uniform or weapon. No exemptions were made for handicapped people or those with mental disorder⁶¹⁰ They were sent to labor battalions for the construction of roads and airports. These minority groups were used as a free labor force. Former Turkish Jewish Community Leader Bensiyon Pinto explains this legislation as a method to limit the economic activities of the non-Muslims; “I saw my father crying for the first time in my life when he left my mother alone with me and my baby brother in the army offices in Sirkeci, Istanbul. He did not know why he had to do military service a second time, he did not know when he will return. My mother cried all the time in secrecy and prayed for his safe return. I was left without a father at my young age without knowing the reason. I was not sure if I would see him again. One day all of a sudden he returned. He had to walk all the way from Ilgın to Şile, then to Kandıra and finally to Istanbul.”⁶¹¹

With this recruitment, the entire non-Muslim male population in Turkey was gathered and placed under the army’s firm control. They were separated from their families and professions, which further served to weaken the economic status of minorities. Death and diseases were common because of the poor conditions in the camps. After a one-year long mandatory service, the minorities started to seriously question the dream of equal citizenship.

Jewish businessman Vitali Hakko was fortunate as he sat next to Stefo effendi, the Greek head chef of Tokatlıyan Hotel. Stefo settled for ten liras and Vitali became his assistant. He spent his second military service in Hadımköy near Istanbul making all sorts

⁶¹⁰ Ruben Melkonyan, “On some problems of the Armenian national minority in Turkey” *21st Century* No.2 (8) 2010, 64-70.

⁶¹¹ Bensiyon Pinto, *Anlatmazsam Olmazdı, Geniş Toplumda Yahudi Olmak* ed. Tülay Güler (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008), 32-36.

of salads. The third time, he was not so fortunate. One week after his discharge, the police came to his store and he was immediately sent to Selimiye Barracks near Üsküdar, Istanbul for his third term in the army. He could not even notify his family. It was the Twenty Classes. He was surprised to see 60 years old, white haired Greeks, Jews, and Armenians among the crowd and not a single Muslim Turk. He writes: “The fact that none of our Muslim Turkish fellow citizens was there especially added to our worries.”⁶¹²

4.5.2. The Capital Tax 1942-1944

The Republic failed to deliver the promised transformation of social status of all of its population into full citizens. Nationalizing the economy required the replacement of foreign and minority in control over the economy with Muslim Turks. The Capital Tax was the last and most radical step taken to Turkify the economy. This legislation was a clear proof of the inequality and discriminative policies toward minorities in the country.

In 1942, Şükrü Saraçoğlu become the new prime minister. Saraçoğlu described Turkish nationalism as a combination of race and culture. It was the first time that ‘race’ was publicly specified as the main ingredient of nationalism by such a high level statesman.⁶¹³ Saraçoğlu summarized his feelings about the minorities using the words ‘foreigners’ and ‘guests’:

“We are now before an opportunity by which we can win our economic independence. We will in this way eliminate the foreigners who control our market and give the Turkish market to the Turks.” “This law will be enforced strictly on those, who taking advantage of the hospitality of this country grew rich, but despite this they avoid performing their duties in this hard time”⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² Vitali Hakko, *My Life: Vakko* (Istanbul: Libra, 2011), 61-62.

⁶¹³ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 141.

⁶¹⁴ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 239-252.

The Capital Tax law was unanimously passed on November 11, 1942⁶¹⁵ in the General Assembly. Normally, the aim of this type of legislations is to tax the excessive profits gained during difficult wartime conditions, through black market dealings and price speculations.⁶¹⁶ Turkey decided to tax these profits. However, the amounts directed at Muslims were much lower than the minorities.

The law differentiated among Turkish citizens according to their religious affiliations which was against the principle of equality protected by law. The Capital Tax divided the taxpayers into four groups in accordance with their religious affiliations; Muslims, Non-Muslims (*Gayri-Müslim*), Converted (*Dönme*⁶¹⁷), and Foreign nationals⁶¹⁸ (*Ecnebi*). Muslim taxpayers were subject to a much lower Capital Tax assessment than non-Muslim taxpayers even with similar incomes or wealth. *Dönme*(s) had to pay twice and non-Muslims had to pay ten times as much as Muslims.⁶¹⁹ For instance, for the farmers who were mostly Muslim, a tax of 5% of their earnings was levied to landowners. The exporters, merchants, and suppliers were generally minorities and they had to pay 50-75% of their earning.⁶²⁰ The Jews were mainly tradesmen and this word became like a synonym for Jew, black marketer, or profiteer as this law was presented as aiming to repair

⁶¹⁵ “Büyük Millet Meclisinde hararetle müzakereler” *Cumhuriyet* newspaper November 12nd, 1942.

⁶¹⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 239-252.

⁶¹⁷ The descendants of the Jewish followers of Shabatai Sevi in 17th century, a rabbi who self-proclaimed as messiah. He had publicly converted to Islam but it is believed that he continued to practice secretly Judaism. The same suspicion was addressed toward his followers who also converted to Islam; Cengiz Şişman, *Transcending Diaspora: Studies on Sabbateanism and Dönmes* (Istanbul: Libra, 2016) and Cengiz Şişman, *Sabatay Sevi ve Sabataycılar, Mitler ve Gerçekler* (Istanbul: Aşina Kitaplar, 2008)

⁶¹⁸ Non-Muslims of foreign nationality with permits to live and work in Turkey were also subject to the Capital Tax. The U. S. and several European embassies intervened on behalf of their citizens and they were successful in reducing the sum assigned to them. They also extended credit to help them pay their taxes; Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 239-252.

⁶¹⁹ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 359-362.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid*

an ‘injustice’.⁶²¹ In his memoirs, businessman Vitali Hakko explains the despair of the Jews: “I saw the people around me beating their heads against the wall, banging on the cash registers in their stores, wailing. If it hadn’t been for the war, maybe they would have left the country. But Hitler’s armies had occupied all of Europe. There was nowhere to go.”⁶²²

According to the legislation⁶²³, there was no way to object legally to the tax amount. The tax amount often exceeded the property value. In his memoir, a Turkish Jew Leon Kontente talks about this injustice: “Father of five, a Jewish clerk at the stock market in Izmir, had to pay 10,000 liras in 15 days. This was a total of 19 years of salary!”⁶²⁴ Bensiyon Pinto summarizes this legislation as an event that changed the destiny of the religious minorities in Turkey.⁶²⁵

In the 1940s, the Jews had invested in different sectors such as textile, rubber, cotton, silk, yarn, and glass. There were many factories all over Turkey owned by the Jews.⁶²⁶ According to the law, the taxpayer had to liquidate all of its property; merchandise, house, and real estate in four weeks.⁶²⁷ It was almost impossible to liquidate all of these assets, in such a short time and during harsh war conditions that affected everyone. They had to sell what they could at very low prices. If a taxpayer was not able to pay the amount, his property was auctioned off. Even in that case, the sum was generally

⁶²¹ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 141-142.

⁶²² Vitali Hakko, *My Life: Vakko* (Istanbul: Libra, 2011), 66-67.

⁶²³ Capital Tax legislation:

https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc024/kanuntbmmc024/kanuntbmmc02404305.pdf (Accessed on May 3rd, 2016)

⁶²⁴ Leon Kontente, *L’Antisemitisme Grec en Asie Mineure – Smyrne 1774-1924* (Istanbul: Libra, 2015), 180.

⁶²⁵ Bensiyon Pinto, *Anlatmazsam Olmazdı, Geniş Toplumda Yahudi Olmak* ed. Tülay Güler (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008), 34.

⁶²⁶ Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1999), 191-197.

⁶²⁷ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 239-252.

not enough to cover the tax amount. A Turkish Jew David Kohen tells his story: “My father was an insurance broker and he had to pay 60,000 liras. He sold everything he owned and could paid 35,000. But they sent him to Aşkale anyway. My father returned to Istanbul ten months later, broke. I could finish high school with the financial help of the Burla family.”⁶²⁸ When a non-Muslim insurance broker had to pay 60,000, the richest man of Ankara and one of the leading businessman of Turkey Vehbi Koç had to pay 600 thousand liras.⁶²⁹

Bensiyon Pinto remembers the day he was having breakfast with his mother and baby brother Daryo at their neighbors, the Mendas. This couple did not have kids and liked Bensiyon and Daryo very much. The Pinto family had to send their father to the Twenty classes. That day, officers entered the living room and shouted to Mr. Menda, “Jew! Why you don’t pay your debt?” It was the first time that Bensiyon heard the use of “Jew” as an insult, and he was very afraid. They took the rug in the living room and forced Mr. Menda to sign papers for the sale of his houses. Days later, officers visited Pinto’s house as well, but his father’s tax debt was pardoned as he was already in the reserve army.⁶³⁰

Businessman Ishak Alaton was 14 years old when the Capital Tax was passed. He explained it was “a crushing tax, a turning point in our lives.” The Eminönü tax office had imposed a tax of 16,000 TL and the HocaPaşa tax office had imposed a tax of 64,000 TL to his father, Hayim Alaton. His father had to pay both. He sold all the goods in the

⁶²⁸ Birant Yıldız, *Sigortacılığın Duayeni David Kohen, Sigortacı bir ailenin beş nesillik serüveni*, (Istanbul: Literatür, 2015), 17.

⁶²⁹ Altan Öymen, *Bir Dönem Bir Çocuk*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2002), 344.

⁶³⁰ Bensiyon Pinto, *Anlatmazsam Olmazdı, Geniş Toplumda Yahudi Olmak* ed. Tülay Güler (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008), 34-35.

warehouse and could pay just the first tax. Unable to pay the second tax, he was detained in Sirkeci and then sent to Aşkale camp. All of the family's household goods were confiscated. They were left with a violin that a neighbor agreed to hide and a telephone that was left behind the door under an old towel that nobody noticed. "These were the toughest, the hardest years of my life. I started working before I finished the high school. When my father returned from Aşkale in December 1943, he had become an old man. My father never embraced life like he did in the past, his hopes had died and he lived as a broken man," Alaton writes.⁶³¹

The taxpayers who could not pay the amount assessed were exiled to labor camps to work and pay the owed tax. They were sent to Aşkale, a province in Erzurum in the east of Turkey known for its cold weather. The lists of Aşkale consisted only of non-Muslim names,⁶³² further evidence of the discrimination minorities faced. They were obliged to shovel snow, construct roads, and live in poor conditions.⁶³³ David Kohen tells the story of one of the richest Jewish families of Turkey: "Burla [Biraderler] was a very successful corporation. They were representatives of big companies such as German AEG, American Frigidaire. Burla and Koç established Arçelik together. When [the] Capital Tax was

⁶³¹ Mehmet Gündem, *An essential man Ishak Alaton, a biography* (Istanbul: Alfa, 2013), 49-69.

⁶³² Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 101-134.

⁶³³ Yıldız (Diana) Özönur explains her story; "my father sold shoes at a tiny little store in Arasta, İzmir. One day my dad came home weeping. They had assessed us 7,000 liras. We had to pay the money right away, or else there'd be arrest, prison, concentration camp, Aşkale. Two days later another tax. This time 2,000 Liras. My dad was bewildered, practically tongue-tied. I went to the Revenue Office, nothing could be done. A few days later the confiscation started. We tried to sell the house, there were no takers. We send a telegram to my brother, but he could not help us either. He had to pay 1500 Liras as Capital Tax when his pay was fifty liras per month. My father run away to Istanbul but they found him. We could not say good bye to him when he was sent to Aşkale. The security chief told us; 'why are you weeping, your father went to Aşkale for a change of air.' We think of Atatürk every day. If Atatürk had been alive, these troubles would not have befallen us." Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 95-100.

introduced, *Osmanlı* (Ottoman) Bank⁶³⁴ helped the Burla family, they could pay their tax and were not obliged to go to Aşkale.”⁶³⁵

In general, the press supported the tax. Paying the tax was represented as a duty of every citizen, as a necessary precaution of the state to ameliorate the war time weak economy. The first week following the announcement of the tax there were many informative articles about the Capital Tax, especially in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper. On November 12nd, 1942 the tax was explained with four different articles.⁶³⁶ This trend continued until November 18th and all of a sudden all news about the Capital Tax disappeared. The first article about the tax reappeared on December 8th and from that point continued daily. The articles continued to promote the tax. The state even tried to encourage the payment of the tax by announcing a reward to the highest taxpayer.⁶³⁷ There are also many articles about cities announcing the taxpayers list, Edirne being the first city.⁶³⁸ For those who did not pay their tax amount, the places they would have to work was also announced.⁶³⁹ December 23rd, 1942 was the deadline to pay the Capital Tax. *Cumhuriyet* newspaper announced that the taxpayers have started to disburse.⁶⁴⁰ Then there was another pause about the news on the Capital Tax. Then seven months later, on July 1st, 1943, news about the Capital Tax resurfaced. The format of the news has changed

⁶³⁴ The Ottoman Bank was founded in 1856 with the capital of Queen Victoria of England and managed by a British-French consortium. It was the only institution to issue currency until 1935 when the control of national currency was transferred to Central Bank of Turkey; Adrian Streater, *Monsieur Bernar Nahum, A Pioneer of Turkey's Automotive Industry*, Istanbul: Çitlenbik, 2011), 35.

⁶³⁵ Birant Yıldız, *Sigortacılığın Duayeni David Kohen, Sigortacı bir ailenin beş nesillik serüveni*, (Istanbul: Literatür, 2015), 16.

⁶³⁶ "Büyük Millet Meclisinde hararetli Müzakereler" "Hükümetin yeni aldığı tedbirler" "Varlık vergisinin esasları" "Büyük kazançlı vatandaşlardan vergi alınacak" *Cumhuriyet* November 12nd, 1942.

⁶³⁷ "En yüksek Varlık Vergisi ödeyecek olanlara mükafat" *Cumhuriyet* December 17th 1942.

⁶³⁸ "Edirne'de varlık vergisi mükellefleri ilan edildi" *Cumhuriyet* December 12nd, 1942

⁶³⁹ "Vergi borçlarını ödemiyenler için Yol ve köprü inşaatında çalıştırılacakları yerler tesbit edildi" *Cumhuriyet*, December 16th, 1942.

⁶⁴⁰ "Mükelleflerin bir çoğu tediye başladı", *Cumhuriyet* December 23rd, 1942

considerably. There were many articles about impoundage and selling list of goods and real estates.⁶⁴¹ There was also news about those who could not pay the tax amount and had to go Aşkale labor camps.⁶⁴² The long pauses on the news about the Capital Tax demonstrates the pressure placed by the state on the press. On this issue, the newspapers did not and probably could not publish any information during the most critical months of the law's implementation. Most of the minorities were not able to pay this extraordinarily high tax and the press used this to blame them with infidelity. The articles by Ahmet Emin Yalman from *Vatan* newspaper is a good example of this trend. He was accusing the minorities for not paying their debt to the state and trying to be greedy.⁶⁴³ Some newspapers and satirical magazines ridiculed the minorities suffering from the tax.⁶⁴⁴

In September 1943, The New York Times published a four-part series about the tax and highly criticized its application, thus creating an international negative image of Turkey. At this point, the imminent defeat of the Nazis was clear and Turkey agreed to enter the war on the sides of the allies; the democratic countries. This tax caused problems in the international arena for Turkey. Just before the Cairo Conference in 1943 with the U.S. President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill, all labor camps were evacuated and three months later a legislation forgiving the unpaid Capital Tax was passed

⁶⁴¹ "Varlık vergisi yüzünden satışı çıkarılan mülkler listesi" *Cumhuriyet* July 1st, 1943; July 2nd, 1943; July 4th, 1943; July 5th, 1943; "Haczedilen Plakalar" *Cumhuriyet* July 6th, 1943; "İstanbul defterdarlığı ilanları, pul meraklılarına" *Cumhuriyet* July 8th, 1943.

⁶⁴² "34 mükellef daha Aşkaleye gönderildi" *Cumhuriyet* July 3rd, 1943; "Yeniden erzuruma gönderilecek varlık vergisi borçluları, 9 mükellef daha" *Cumhuriyet* July 15th, 1943; "Şehir haberleri: varlık vergisi mükellefleri, borçlarını vermiyen 43 kişi daha sevkedildi" *Cumhuriyet* August 7th, 1943.

⁶⁴³ Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Vatan*, May 19th, 1942; May 30rd, 1942; September 2nd, 1942; February 9th, 1943 seen on Rıdvan Akar, *Varlık Vergisi, Tek parti rejiminde azınlık karşıtı politika örneği* (Istanbul: Belge yayınları, 1992), 44-48.

⁶⁴⁴ Rıdvan Akar, *Varlık Vergisi, Tek parti rejiminde azınlık karşıtı politika örneği* (Istanbul: Belge yayınları, 1992), 131-136.

after remaining in effect for sixteen months.⁶⁴⁵ The international pressure was effective in canceling this unjust legislation.⁶⁴⁶

It is not surprising that the Capital Tax could not be criticized in the Turkish press even after it ended. *Vatan*, *Tasvir-i Efkar* and *Tan* newspapers were closed indefinitely in September 1944 by the government led by İnönü due to their criticism of the Capital Tax law.⁶⁴⁷

4.5.3. Republican Party and Minority Report

The Capital Tax was a formulation based on racism to compensate the budget deficit. The trade volume between Germany and Turkey and the closeness of Republican People's Party (RPP) leaders to the Nazi ideology during war times allowed this discriminatory legislation to pass and it succeeded in its hidden goal of diminishing or eliminating the economic power of the minorities.⁶⁴⁸ This aim was declared in one of the speeches of Prime Minister Saraçoğlu, and was told in the memoirs of Deputy Prime Minister Faik Ahmet Barutçu; "This law is a revolution. This is a chance to gain our economic independence. We are going to dispose of non-Turks from the market and replace them with Turkish merchants and Turks. The real estate in Istanbul will also pass to the hands of the Turks."⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁵ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 239-252.

⁶⁴⁶ The Capital Tax failed to produce the foreseen revenues. According to Faik Ökte, the government collected 289,656,246 liras from minorities, 34,226,764 liras from dönme, and 25,600,409 liras from Muslims; Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 361.

⁶⁴⁷ Hıfzı Topuz, *100 soruda Türk Basın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1973), 165.

⁶⁴⁸ Rıdvan Akar, *Varlık Vergisi, Tek parti rejiminde azınlık karşıtı politika örneği* (Istanbul: Belge yayınları, 1992), 128.

⁶⁴⁹ Altan Öymen, *Bir Dönem Bir Çocuk*, (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2002), 336.

Minorities were badly affected by the merciless nature of the Capital Tax. Many religious minority groups including the Jews has visited state officers to encourage a modification of this legislation

In his memoirs, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir from the industry ministry shared his conversation with Jewish leaders Behor Gomel and Avram Galante who visited him to intervene to the implementation of the law; “For centuries the Turks fought in wars, spilling blood while the Jews increased, made commerce, become wealthy. What happens if they gave some money? They replied to me with ‘you are right’⁶⁵⁰ The Capital Tax was presented and even justified as a price the Jews had to pay for being safe during the Second World War. “The Jews have lost their fortune during the war, but they did not lose their lives.”⁶⁵¹ It is said that when Avram Galante visited Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu to complain about the tax, he responded; “Everyone else is killing you, we are only taking your money.”⁶⁵²

The Turkish government never apologized for its actions and no compensation was given to the victims of this law. While Saraçoğlu insisted that he would not hesitate to pass a similar law if he faced the same situation and financial conditions, the Director of Finance (*Istanbul Defterdarı*) Faik Ökte was the only statesman who publicly acknowledged that it was a mistake.⁶⁵³ He was criticized bitterly by the press.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁰ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 144.

⁶⁵¹ Leon Kontente, *L'Antisemitisme Grec en Asie Mineure – Smyrne 1774-1924* (Istanbul: Libra, 2015), 180.

⁶⁵² Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 360-361. The author also has some suspicions on the reality of this quotation.

⁶⁵³ Faik Ökte, *Varlık Vergisi Faciası* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu, 1951)

⁶⁵⁴ Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews* (Istanbul: Libra, 2013), 239-252.

In 1944⁶⁵⁵ RPP prepared a minority report. This report repeated the already known prejudices about the minorities; “They don’t see themselves as Turks, they did not have any contribution to the Ottoman Empire and don’t have any historical brotherhood with the Turks. They were never loyal to the country they lived in. The state was very tolerant to these groups who mostly betrayed.” The report also suggested a solution to it; “Even though the population of the minorities is not so large (250.000), we have to find a solution to this problem for the sake of our national politics. For the Jews, we have to stop their emigration to Turkey, we have to facilitate their immigration from Turkey, and limit their economic power.” The word ‘facilitate their emigration from Turkey’ will be the key to understand the policy of Turkey during the huge wave of immigration from Turkey to Israel following its establishment.

There is no information on the public’s reaction to this report, but it can be taken as evidence that discriminatory events towards minorities were planned by the state during and after the one-party regime in Turkey.⁶⁵⁶ The Thrace events, Twenty Classes, Capital Tax, and the Minority Report provoked disarray among the minorities of the country. These were all legislations or decisions aiming to force the minorities to leave the country for good. As was intended, minorities lost their faith in the Republic. The brutal effects of the Capital Tax marked the beginning of a new wave of immigration for the Jews from Turkey, with the establishment of the State of Israel few years later. In the end, the capital in Turkey had changed hands and a Muslim bourgeoisie was created. The bankrupt non-Muslim businessmen were replaced by the nouveau riche Muslims as was intended.

⁶⁵⁵ There is no date of issue on the report. Researchers have different opinions on the date. Rıdvan Akar which had important role in the publication of this data and Rıfat Bali believes that it is published in 1944 while for historian Ayşe Hür and Dilek Güven the date is 1946.

⁶⁵⁶ Rıfat N. Bali, “*Azınlıkları Türkleştirme Meselesi*” *Ne idi? Ne değildi?* (Istanbul: Libra, 2014), 65-75.

4.6. Survival tactics: *Kayadez*

According to philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), language and action, meaning what people say and do, cannot be understood in isolation from their cultural context. Philosopher Peter Winch (1926-1997) adds that language and the world are inextricably intertwined.⁶⁵⁷ Wittgenstein declaration, “The limit of my language means the limit of my world”⁶⁵⁸ provides insights about the relationship between the Jewish community and the society in which they live. What people experiences deeply affect their language. Looking at Judeo-Spanish⁶⁵⁹ expressions, which are still used by the community members today, a lot can be said about their fears and survival tactics.

“At an age when you don’t even understand exactly what this is about, you start carrying a heavy burden,”⁶⁶⁰ says Ishak Alaton about the main teaching in Jewish houses; hide that you are Jewish. It is taught at a very young age in order to protect the children from the outer world. “Be careful, don’t reveal who you are, speak Turkish and speak it perfectly, use a Turkish name if necessary” were some of the main daily suggestions heard at home. Of course, the discrimination and alienation they faced in Turkey have taught them to be defensive and to not publicly voice their complaints. This resulted with a tendency to turn inwards, looking for a solidarity with their co-religionists as an unspoken defense mechanism. The fear they felt deep inside revealed a need to transfer this negative teaching to the new generation. Every time an unfair legislation or discriminative policy

⁶⁵⁷ David Stern, “Sociology of science, rule following and forms of life” *History of Philosophy of science, new trends and perspectives*. Ed. Michael Heidelberger, Friedrich Stadler (Dordrech: Kluwer Academic Punlishers, 2002)

⁶⁵⁸ T. R. Martland, "The Limits of My Language Mean the Limits of My World" *The Review of Metaphysics*, 29(1) (1975): 19–26. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20126734> (Accessed on December 5th, 2015)

⁶⁵⁹ Sometimes referred as *Yahudice* in Turkish, it is the ancient Spanish used by Sephardic Jews.

⁶⁶⁰ Mehmet Gündem, *An essential man Ishak Alaton, a biography* (Istanbul: Alfa, 2013), 33-34.

is faced, the Jews chose to face its consequences in private, not to reveal their feelings of revolt. They chose not to speak about their experiences to the end that the new generation does not know their own history in Turkey and continue to live in this way even though they felt alienated and not equal citizens. This is a continued teaching in order to protect the new generation from any harm the knowledge of the history may bring.

There are many expressions that could be seen to explain this phenomenon. *Kayadez* is a Judeo-Spanish expression that literally means silence. In reality it means don't be vocal, don't criticize, don't oppose, stay silent. Why would someone ask from their children to stay silent? Because if one stays silent and does not oppose, the problem will pass, and most importantly it will not repeat itself. *No te karışeyez a los eços del hükümet* (Do not interfere in governmental affairs) is another expression that suggested staying away from trouble and also staying silent as an inferior member of the society. The aim of this expression was to prevent the meddling of the youth in governmental issues. The community thought that no good would come from angering the state, and the state officers. With this expression, the Jewish community wanted their members to be safe from the authoritarian pressure of the government as it was already accepted that they lacked the power to change the situation. *Ni a fuego, ni a pleto* (Neither to a fire, nor to a quarrel) was another way to express the need to stay silent and almost invisible.

It was not only the political issues that the Jews had to stay away from. Simple, daily incidences could end with severe consequences, as was the case in Elza Niyego's funeral. *Si te dan toma, si te ajarvan fue* (If they give to you, take; if they hit you, run) is a classical Sephardic expression meaning to be aware, that one day you can be expelled from here too. It was a reminder that no where is entirely safe and it was important to not be too late to make the crucial decision of leaving. Turkish Jews had emigrated from Turkey

following major negative events throughout much of the Republican era, but this trend increased significantly with the creation of the State of Israel. Here was a state, at last, in which no one could discriminate or expel the Jews. Mass immigration to Israel was a clear reaction to all the injustices faced by the Jewish community, especially during the Second World War.

El Turco no aharva al Judio, si lo aharva? (A Turk won't hit a Jew, but what if he did?) was a Judeo-Spanish expression that showed gratitude but also a warning for the future which suggests a state of alert. Avram Galante explains this expression as follows; "The Jews are grateful that the Turks welcomed them to their land after their expulsion from Spain. However we had some dark days as well."⁶⁶¹ 'Keep a low profile' is a widely used expression in English, especially in the last two decades. It means do not lead a way of life that can attract attention, provoke envy, or enmity. The expression warns to hide your fortune, dress modestly, and celebrate or mourn without exaggeration. This warning dates back to the beginning of the Republic. During a sermon at an Istanbul synagogue in September 1923, Chief Rabbi Becerano recommended to the Jewish community to not to attract attention with their dress and not to create jealousy.⁶⁶² As the anti-Semitic attacks of the press became increasingly common in the 1920s, *Kayadez* became the main survival tool and being low profile was recommended directly by the Chief Rabbinate. These experiences led the community to close in on itself and bond even more with solidarity. The Jews felt that they could only trust each other and preferred to socialize within community. The communal institutions served to integrate and continue their survival. These tactics resulted in the Jews being portrayed as a closed community. Their timidity

⁶⁶¹ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 68.

⁶⁶² Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), 35.

was the reason they were called cowards, as they did not prefer to interfere to any major event and tended to stay silent.

On the other hand, the long time relationship between the Turks and the Jews reflects itself in expressions widely used in Turkey as well. There are some expressions that comes directly from Jewish tradition such as “Don’t interfere to meat nor diary” (*etliye sütlüye karışma*) referring to *kashrut*⁶⁶³ rules. This also shows that through living together for centuries, the two groups formed a common culture. Unfortunately, there are more negative sayings about Jews than positive in Turkish; “Don’t yell. You are turning this place into a synagogue” (*Bağırma. Burayı havraya çevirdiniz*), “Eat a Jew’s food but don’t sleep in his house” (*Yahudi’nin yemeğini ye, evinde yatma*). In addition to these expressions, in Turkish society and the press there is an impression that *Yahudi* is an insult and it is used when a negative thing about the Jews will be said, while *Musevi* is used when one wants to be polite. For Turkish Jews, these two terms are used interchangeably while the first expresses ethnicity and the latter the religion. During the rebirth of *Şalom* newspaper following the death of its founder Avram Leyon in 1984, the writers of the newspaper decided to challenge this distinction by using all the time *Yahudi* and not *Musevi*.

These expressions are a good way to understand the life philosophy of Turkish Jews which can be summarized as: stay apolitical, obey, and do not oppose. This was the survival tactic learnt from their shared experience and history during the Ottoman era and the Republic of Turkey. One may ask why this group remains in Turkey or why they identify themselves as Turk even living in Israel or other countries. Another expression in

⁶⁶³ The body of Jewish religious dietary laws concerning the suitability of food.

Judeo-Spanish provides a useful clue; *La vida en Turkia es komo el sigaro para un tiryaki; Aun ke saves ke te puede matar, el plazer es tan grande ke no lo pedes deşar*; Life in Turkey is like a cigarette for an addicted; even though you know it may kill you, the pleasure is so immense that you cannot leave. Turkish Jews live in a constant state of alert. They have never felt calm and security in full. A change in the relation of Turkey and Israel or the intensification of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians always extend to the Turkish Jewish community.

Chapter 5 Turkish – Israeli Relations and Turkish *Aliyah* of 1948

The Second World War resulted in two significant developments with regard to British policy in Palestine. First, the issue of Palestine was internationalized in 1947, as the British decided to hand over it to the United Nations (UN). The second development was the increased international pressure on Britain, arising especially from the U.S. with the Truman Doctrine, which supported Jewish immigration to Palestine as *HaShoah* (Holocaust) survivors were heading from Europe toward Palestine. Zionism was the main catalyst for the immigrations to Palestine.

5.1. *Zionism* in Turkey and the Turkish *Aliyah* to British Palestine

With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish Jews were eager to continue their relations with the state, based on loyalty in return for their safety. But with the First World War, the world had changed; there were nation states instead of empires and they were based on nationalism. This caused a radical shift from being subject to become citizen. During the nation state building process in Turkey, the ruling elite aimed to unite and merge the differences within the population under the name ‘Turk’. The reforms were based on Turkism, Westernization, and strict secularism. The government aimed to control all type of religious communities. The centrally structured community of the minorities was rejected while citizenship was promoted, a reflection of the goal to create one culturally united nation. Zionist organizations were against this goal. There were Zionist organizations in the Ottoman Empire⁶⁶⁴ but were closed as they were prohibited during the Republican era.

⁶⁶⁴ For further information on Zionism during the Ottoman era; Esther Banbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri* trans. Ayşe Atasoy (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014) 267-334. and Siren Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi 1908-1923* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1995), 206-253.

For the European Jewry, Zionism was a final solution to all the repression and pogroms they had faced. However, for most Turkish Jews, Zionism and a state of their own was nothing more than a utopia. They still wanted to be part of the Turkish society according to the rules and limits presented by the Republic. They preferred to continue being exemplary Turkish citizens and not risk their future in Turkey. This caution postponed the development of Zionist activities in Turkey. Turkish Jews were never expelled from the country as a result of a state legislation, which may be the major reasoning behind their will and hope to be a part of Turkish society.

It was in 1929 that limited correspondence started with the few Zionist devotees in Istanbul and Zionist leadership in Palestine and Britain.⁶⁶⁵ In a letter dated from 1929, Zionists in Istanbul declared that they could not engage publicly in Zionist activities.⁶⁶⁶ The correspondence between the two parties continued until 1933 but no measurable progress was recorded. The majority of the Turkish Jews were not eager to embrace the Zionist ideal openly, and in response the World Zionist Organization was reluctant to invest in Turkey.⁶⁶⁷ Turks were reluctant to accept Zionism both because of their desire to continue to live in Turkey and the pressure they faced with the Turkification process. These steps forced religious minorities to repeatedly make declarations of loyalty to the Turkish state. In this atmosphere, Zionism would be perceived as dual loyalty in the eyes of the state and the public, who already had serious difficulties accepting non-Muslims as equal citizens of the country. Even if the Jews had some Zionist sentiments, they may have preferred to hide it.

⁶⁶⁵ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 227-229.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid*

During the Republican era, the heavy toll of the Thrace events in 1934 led to the establishment of secret Zionist organizations⁶⁶⁸ for the first time.⁶⁶⁹ Sabetay Dinar, Moiz Nacar, Reuven Armal, and Eli Shaul formed a secret Zionist organization in Balat. *Ne'emanei Zion*'s (Faithful of Zion) mission was to teach Hebrew, the history of Judaism and Zionism, and to follow the news of Palestine.⁶⁷⁰ This is an important turning point as it shows the despair they felt in regards to the state. They were not accepted as native citizens and that would not be changed easily. They tried to empower the inner community bond by creating an imaginative identity structure based on religion. Teaching Judaism and Jewish history was part of this target. Hebrew was a uniting language for all of the Jews migrating to Palestine from around the world. Turkish Jews tried to be a part of this new identity by learning the national language of the Jews and following the developments in the Mandate of Palestine.

During the Second World War, different Zionist organizations were established such as *HaHalutz* (the Pioneer), *HaMitnadev* (the Volunteer), *HaNoar HaTzioni* (Zionist Youth), *Tel Hai* (Hill of Life), *Ne'emanei Zion* (Faithful of Zion), *Aliyat HaNoar* (Youth Aliyah), and *Betar*.⁶⁷¹ These were secret organizations as the formulation of any ethnic minority organization was outlawed. These groups organized their meetings at homes in secrecy as the propaganda of Zionism and the teaching of Hebrew was prohibited in secular Turkey. All these secret meetings awakened Zionist feelings within a portion of the youth. This shift contradicted the survival tactics of their parents who had raised them

⁶⁶⁸ In 1945 the Zionist organization split up to different organizations due to ideological reasons; Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 92-96.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 88-89.

⁶⁷⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 259.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*, 403.

to be financially powerful, well educated, and strictly apolitical. The teenagers participating in Zionist meetings began to question this strategy of assimilation promoted by their families. Some were afraid that the ongoing Turkification process was changing the character of the community and causing them to forget their Jewish identity. Additionally, it was clear that the Republic would not accept the Jews as equal citizens. To stay silent and to focus only on economic activities were no longer acceptable as they had long ago been proven unsuccessful. At the same time, Turkish Jewish youth started to compare themselves with the faith of the German Jews who were already assimilated to the German society, but were executed in death camps.⁶⁷²

Their families have faced severe discrimination since the establishment of the Republic just to be accepted as equal citizens after suffering from being Ottoman *dhimmis*. All this pressure has created a new generation with Zionist ideals; a country of their own in their historical land, a chance to rule themselves without being discriminated or persecuted because of their faith. The dream of Republic has faded for them with the Capital Tax in 1942. Their parents had envisioned for them a safe future in Turkey with economic empowerment but the Capital Tax had shattered this illusion. The tax was a major turning point for Turkish Jews as most of them realized with this unjust and legally discriminative law that they would not be accepted into the narrowly defined ‘Turk’ identity. The Jewish community realized that the commitment of equal citizenship of the Republic will not be realized. It was also an important turning point because it occurred during the Second World War, a moment when they feared for their security in Turkey but had no where else to go. They feared sharing a fate similar to the European Jews under

⁶⁷² Interview with I.S. Istanbul, Turkey on June 12th, 2015.

the Nazis as there were many pro-Nazi articles in the press, especially in pro-state newspaper Cumhuriyet. All of these developments made the idea of migration more appealing to Turkish Jews.

5.2. The Idealist Pioneers

There were immigration waves from Turkey to Palestine throughout the Republican era, the first of which was due to developments in Palestine such as the 1929 and 1936 Arab revolts. Some Turkish Jews migrated to Palestine to support the Jewish community there. Secondly, a wave of immigrants fled to Palestine from Turkey as a result of the strict Turkification steps in Turkey that had resulted in pogroms, looting, discrimination, and forced expulsion from their homes.⁶⁷³

Consequently, we can identify two major immigration waves from Turkey to Palestine throughout the British rule; first group as a result of the Thrace events in 1934-1935, and second group as a result of the Capital Tax in 1942-1943, totaling 9.000 Turkish Jews.⁶⁷⁴ A Turkish Jew Shlomo Yahini explains in his memoir the fear he felt; “Germans were in the border of Thrace. We had to go to Palestine to survive.” He was born in 1919 and decided to move to Palestine in 1934, joining *Betar* to get help for his journey. At the age of 15, he traveled from Istanbul to Haifa via Piraeus and Lebanon, without his family.⁶⁷⁵

The immigration wave of 1942 is distinct as it was made up largely of the youth educated with Zionist ideals, who would later become the foundation of the future State

⁶⁷³ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 88-89.

⁶⁷⁴ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 363.

⁶⁷⁵ Memoirs of Shlomo Yahini written by his daughter Simha Yahini, 2013, NP. Found in the library of the Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel; Batyam, Israel.

of Israel. These young men and women were strongly encouraged to emigrate as young, strong people were needed for the creation of the new state. There were also some elderly and sick people who migrated, but they would become an extra burden for the Jewish Agency in Palestine.⁶⁷⁶ The Zionist organization had its stronghold in Izmir in 1940s, resulting in a large immigration wave from Izmir to Palestine. The Nazi threat in Greece frightened the Jews of the region. Benjamin (Abouaf) Ben-Shlomo born to a Jewish family of Izmir in 1923 explains his feelings; “During the early years of the Second World War, the Nazis have reached the doorsteps of Turkey when they occupied the Greek islands. There was uneasiness amongst the Jewish community of Turkey. What if Turkey joined the German camp as it did in the First World War?” These thoughts led Ben-Sholmo and his friends to form a secret organization, *Ne’emanei Zion*, in order “to try to escape to Palestine before it was too late.” It was almost impossible to leave Turkey, let alone enter the British mandate of Palestine afterwards. The first group was arrested in Aleppo, Syria and was sent to jail after being beaten. Ben-Shlomo, in the second group, was nineteen years old in 1942 when he began his dangerous journey to Palestine: “I volunteered with a friend, kissed my mother goodbye and left for Mardin.” He was jailed many times before he reached Palestine, where he volunteered for the Jewish battalion of the British army and then joined *Haganah* and fought in the War of Independence of Israel in 1948.⁶⁷⁷

Aliyat HaNoar (Youth Aliyah) was one of the secret organizations that prepared the Turkish Jewish youth for their final destination in Palestine. The main aim of this organization, besides alleviating some of the cost of travel, was to teach Hebrew and

⁶⁷⁶ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 363.

⁶⁷⁷ Unpublished memoirs of Benjamin (Abouaf) Ben-Shlomo, courtesy of his family. ND, NP

Judaism. Akiva Levinsky, the leader of this organization in Turkey, which coordinated the transit of European Jews through Turkey to Palestine, taught a group of young men and women Hebrew. They became Hebrew teachers and in turn taught others the language. Through this method, the number of young Jews that knew Hebrew increased in Turkey. According to Levinsky, in 1944 there were 1,700 young Jews who wanted to immigrate to Palestine. *Aliyat HaNoar*, Levinsky helped approximately 2,500 people immigrate during the period 1942-1945.⁶⁷⁸ Yitshak Levi was one of them. Levi was born in Izmir in 1928. He immigrated to Palestine in 1943 with *Aliyat HaNoar* at the age of fifteen, alone. In Palestine, Levi expressed his feeling with these lines: “I was very sad because I missed my family and because I had to quit school. I was sent to a kibbutz as I did not know Hebrew.” He joined *Palmach* and formed a new unit with the Turkish Jews. With the creation of Israel, he joined the army and worked as professional soldier.⁶⁷⁹

These Zionist organizations most probably had a connection with the Jewish Agency in Palestine. They taught what was necessary for survival in Palestine; basic Hebrew and the history of Judaism and Palestine, but most importantly they emphasized their shared Jewish identity and their disappointment in Turkey to promote the creation of Aliyah. The second duty of these organizations was to coordinate, organize, and facilitate the voyage of the youth, mostly teenagers migrating without their families. When compared to other migrations, it was easier to immigrate from Turkey to Palestine as there was an overland route.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 91-92.

⁶⁷⁹ Memoirs of Ofira and Yitshak Levi and family, 2002, NP. Found in the library of the Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel; Batyam, Israel.

⁶⁸⁰ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 363.

Those who immigrated to Palestine in 1942-1943 became known as the pioneers and were called ‘the idealists.’ Once in Palestine, some of the idealists got rid of their Turkish passport and never came back.⁶⁸¹ Both the youth and the adults were affected by the Zionist groups, but their reactions differed. The older generation did not prefer to make Aliyah but gave financial support to these organizations or helped them to find the necessary equipment, people, or boats for their illegal journey.⁶⁸²

While visiting Israel, one had the chance to meet one of the Turkish Idealists. Mordehay Behar was born in 1925 and lived in Tepebaşı, Istanbul. His father supported his family with his furniture store and they had a high quality of life. When the Capital Tax was passed in 1942, four people from the same sector came and offered to pay his father’s tax in return of his store and on the condition that he continued working in the store, as he knew the job very well. His father accepted. Over time, only one of the associates kept the job. His father rebought the shares of the other three and became the owner of half of his own store. The injustice of the Capital Tax deeply affected Mordehay Behar. He joined *Betar* and immigrated to Palestine alone in 1944, at the age of nineteen. In 1944, the Jews had to cross Syria illegally to go to Palestine, but Behar was lucky. He had worked as an aide to a journalist from Palestine whose job was to coordinate the flow of the Jewish refugees from Bulgaria to Palestine and this journalist helped him to secure a Palestine visa. His parents objected to his decision but in the end they bought him a ferry ticket to Palestine. When he came to Haifa in 1944, Palestine was still a British mandate.

⁶⁸¹ Fasih Inal, “İrticanın daniskası İsrail’de”, *Hürriyet*, February 5th, 1987; seen on Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 89.

⁶⁸² Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 403-404.

Behar's first days were easier than many immigrants because he had an uncle already living in Haifa. He stayed with his relatives and went to an agricultural school, which was his dream. Agriculture was also one of the tenets of the Zionist ideal. The central aims of Zionism were to create a state and increase the Jewish population by promoting immigration, pro-natal policies, and by laying claim in land by *Kibbutzim*. These territorial settlements of the land by agriculture was a national goal for the continuation of the Jewish presence in the land.⁶⁸³ Behar has understood the essence of Zionism. Then, he joined *Irgun*. At that time, there was a fight between rival organizations *Irgun* and *Haganah*. *Haganah* wanted to work in coordination with the British while *Irgun* was against the British rule. *Haganah* members betrayed *Irgun* members to British authorities. Leadership in *Irgun* hoped that because Behar was new, he could be used in a plot and *Haganah* would not recognize him. He was accepted into the Jewish settlement police under the patronage of the British police and sent to Tiberias. When all the underground groups joined the IDF in 1948, he became a soldier and retired as a sergeant major. He participated in most of the Arab-Israeli wars. Now, he has a son from his first wife, who he met in Israel, and a grandson, both in the army. He lives with his second wife. He was not a part of the Turkish society in Israel and was therefore quite willing to share his story. He became an Israeli the day he put his foot on Israeli land. He contributed to the creation of the state of Israel and became a part of it.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸³ Clive Lipchin, "Water, agriculture and Zionism: Exploring the interface between policy and ideology" *Integrated Water Resources Management and Security in the Middle East* (New York: Springer Press, 2007) 251-267

⁶⁸⁴ Interview with Mordehay Behar on April 23th, 2015 in Tel Aviv, Israel

5.3. The UN Partition Plan, 1947

The UN partition plan increased the number of immigrants to Palestine from all over the world. In Turkey, there was speculative news about Turkish Jews' immigration to Palestine. Starting from that date, news sources, and especially *Hergün* newspaper, published repetitive articles about the immigration of Turkish Jews to Palestine. Without any reliable information, these articles began with the phrase "We heard that" 200 Turkish Jews are moving to Palestine. *Şalom* newspaper felt obliged to reply to this news which could affect the opinion of the state and potentially jeopardize the status of Turkish Jews. It was also troubling as may reveal the ongoing illegal immigration.⁶⁸⁵ It is unknown if the state demanded that *Hergün* reports such news or if the Jewish community administration asked *Şalom* to answer. Izak Yaeş from *Şalom* began a war of words trying to end the publication of these factually baseless stories, to no avail. Yaeş asked for clarification to the report that a mass immigration to Palestine would start soon. He accused the newspaper of trying to deteriorate the Turkish-Jewish brotherhood.⁶⁸⁶ In his article named 'Enough!' Yaeş criticized *Hergün* for its anti-Jewish standing and accused the newspaper of distressing the Turkish Jews and trying to damage the harmony of the Turkish population: "There is democracy and press freedom and we are proud of it but this newspaper accuses 80 thousand people.⁶⁸⁷ Why is this newspaper not closed?" he asked.⁶⁸⁸ Another *Şalom* columnist Izidor Levi criticized on several occasions the articles of *Hergün* newspaper as well as the anti-Semitic articles of Ömer Rıza Doğrul from

⁶⁸⁵ Izak Yaeş, "Hergün gazetesinin asılsız yazılarına bir cevap" *Şalom* newspaper, December 11th, 1947

⁶⁸⁶ Izak Yaeş, "Soruyoruz" *Şalom* newspaper, December 25th, 1947

⁶⁸⁷ Izak Yaeş quits *Şalom* following his quarrel with *Hergün* newspaper. His departure was announced in Turkish on February 19, 1948 and in Judeo-Spanish on February 26 1948. Later he moved to Israel and continued journalism.

⁶⁸⁸ Izak Yaeş, "Yeter Artık!" *Şalom* newspaper January 8th 1948

Cumhuriyet newspaper. As an answer to Doğrul's accusations, Levi responded; "I know that you are against the partition plan, but criticizing the Turkish Jews for not supporting Turkish foreign policy decisions and condemning them as potential traitors, is duplicity and at the same time hilarious."⁶⁸⁹ To end this discourse, Şalom conducted an interview with Hanri Soriano, the secular president of the Jewish community about the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine in December 1947. Soriano rejected the claim that the Jews of Istanbul were moving to Palestine. Soriano also added that "There are very few who went to Palestine for business purposes or to see their families. These trips are similar to those to New York, Paris, or London. There is no immigration commission in Turkey. There is no reason to move to Palestine."⁶⁹⁰ He was trying to hide the immigration to Palestine as it would be perceived as the betrayal of the Jews. These measures proved unsuccessful as even in October 1948, months following the creation of the State of Israel, there were newspapers publishing news about Jews immigrating and *Şalom* was again fighting back to deny it. Avram Leyon, owner of Şalom newspaper accused *Son Dakika* newspaper of sending spies to Jewish neighborhoods in order to get information about immigration and publishing false reports such as "The Rabbi Rafael from Kuledibi has visited Italian communist party leader Togliati to ask for help."⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁹ Reply to Ömer Rıza Doğrul's articles on *Cumhuriyet* December 9th and 12th 1947 by Izidor Levi.

"Ömer Rıza Doğrul'a imzalı ve adresli açık mektup" *Şalom* Newspaper December 18th 1947

⁶⁹⁰ Avram Leyon "Un entrevista kon el muy onoravle Prezidente del Judaismo de Turkiya Sinyor Hanri Soriano *Şalom* Newspaper December 11th, 1947.

⁶⁹¹ Avram Leyon, "En Son Dakika gazetesi hakikatı söylemiyor" *Şalom* October 28th 1948

5.4. Urfa Massacre 1947

A turning point in the history of the Turkish Jews was the massacre of the seven members of the Sorkaya family in their house in Urfa in 1947. Ultimately, it led to the emigration of the whole Jewish community in Urfa, mostly to Israel, in 1948.

Until the 1920s, Urfa, a city in the southeast Turkey, was a polyglot town with Muslim, Armenian, Syriac, and Jewish communities. There were 191 Jewish families (approximately 1000 Jews) in 1906 in Urfa.⁶⁹² In history, the Urfa Armenian rebellion⁶⁹³ and the Deportation Law of the CUP are important milestones. Following these events, the city's ethnic and religious composition dramatically changed in favor of the Muslim and Kurdish population. Most of the properties such as the houses, fields, and gardens of Urfa's Christian population had been transferred to Muslims.⁶⁹⁴

The Urfa events occurred in December 1947 when the indecisive manner of Hayim Haymun Sorkaya (Ahmet Kemal),⁶⁹⁵ who first converted to Islam and then changed his mind, attracted the anger of the Muslims of the city. One night, seven members of his family were murdered in their own house. The murderers shouted "Jews killed the Jews" on the streets of Urfa and disappeared. The police took all the Jewish men for questioning and interrogated them under torture for 45 days. The interrogation of five of them continued and the rest were freed. Rabbi Azzur Aka confessed under duress that the Jews committed the murders. It is believed that this confession was made in order to protect the

⁶⁹² Rıfat N. Bali, *Devletin Yahudileri ve "Öteki" Yahudi*. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 415.

⁶⁹³ Some Jews migrated to Jerusalem after 1895-1896 Armenian events in fear for their security; *Ibid*, 416-147

⁶⁹⁴ Kerem Öktem, "Creating the Turk's Homeland: Modernization, Nationalism and Geography in Southeast Turkey in the late 19th and 20th Centuries" *Paper for the Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Workshop 2003* <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/13204.pdf> (Accessed on October 27, 2015)

⁶⁹⁵ For further information on the Urfa Massacre; Rıfat N. Bali, *Devletin Yahudileri ve "Öteki" Yahudi*. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010): 413-460; Harun Bozo, *Centropa Project on Memoir, Preserving Jewish memory* <http://www.centropa.org/biography/harun-bozo> (Accessed on October 27, 2015)

Jewish community from any more harm. At the same time, a boycott against all Jews started in the city; they could not even go out of their houses because of fear. The entire Jewish community migrated from Urfa mostly to the newly established State of Israel in 1948.⁶⁹⁶ The murder attracted the attention of the international media.⁶⁹⁷ The president of the World Jewish Congress met the ambassador of Turkey to Washington on this subject. This put pressure on the governor of Urfa. All of the Jews were freed on April 1950.⁶⁹⁸ The leader of the boycott against the Jews, Cemil Hacıkamiloğlu, explained this event as follows: “This is the result of our unity. The Jews left the city. There is no single Jew in Urfa. The Turks dominate Jewish trade now.”⁶⁹⁹

The Urfa massacre is another important milestone in Turkish Jewish history. This event occurred following the Thrace events. Intriguingly, there was no foreign threat, as was the case in Thrace. An old Jewish community disappeared without leaving a trace in the collective memory of the Turkish Jews or the general population.

⁶⁹⁶ Kerem Öktem, “Creating the Turk’s Homeland: Modernization, Nationalism and Geography in Southeast Turkey in the late 19th and 20th Centuries” *Paper for the Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Workshop 2003* <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/13204.pdf> (Accessed on October 27, 2015)

⁶⁹⁷ An article in Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) published on April 8th, 1947: Turkish Government Terms “fabricated” Report of Massacre of Jews in Urfa Ankara (April 7th) The Turkish Government today denied a report in a New York newspaper that a pogrom in which “hundreds of Jews were massacred” had taken place in Urfa, a Turkish town on the Syrian frontier. “There is no truth whatsoever in the fabricated report alleging that a pogrom took place in Urfa, or that hundreds of Jews were murdered there,” an official statement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency said. Authoritative Turkish sources stated that on the night of Jan. 31, a Jewish family in Urfa which had converted to the Moslem religion four months earlier was found murdered. “The police are still continuing their investigation to discover the murderers who will be placed on trial, but no other incident has taken place at Urfa,” the same sources told the JTA. But the family perform Jewish ritual on the night of the murder. It is believed that the information about the conversion of all the family to Islam was just a way to support the idea that the Jews committed the murder. <http://www.jta.org/1947/04/08/archive/turkish-government-terms-fabricated-report-of-massacre-of-jews-in-urfa> (Accessed on October 28th, 2015)

⁶⁹⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Devletin Yahudileri ve “Öteki” Yahudi*. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 413-460.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 452.

5.5. The Creation of the State of Israel and Turkey's Position

On February 25th, 1947, the British decided to entrust the problem of Palestine to the United Nations. Following the internationalization of the issue, The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed on May 15th, 1947. The members visited Palestine to investigate the situation and to prepare a recommendation report on September 3rd, 1947.⁷⁰⁰ The UNSCOP report was in favor of the partition.

Turkey tried to pursue its neutrality in the Palestinian issue. Initially, the idea of a Jewish state in the middle of an Arab region was not supported by Turkey. The continuation of the British Mandate was preferable to a new state who showed traces of communist life in its Kibbutzim.⁷⁰¹ Turkey evaluated all its foreign policy decisions in terms of the Soviet threat and communism was perceived as the main enemy. Turkey preferred the side of the Western countries during the Cold War years. Turkey feared that the Soviet Union would use this new state, established in a strategic location, to spread its ideology and operations in the region. Turkey also feared that the ongoing war between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine would transform into a regional conflict and even possibly to a broader war in response to the partition plan, which would result in greater Soviet influence in the Middle East.⁷⁰² Turkey also weighted the reaction of the Arab world and did not want to break off from them completely.

Overall, Turkey saw the issue as a “struggle between two communities, as the contest of two nationalisms.”⁷⁰³ This idea was reflected in the press as well. On May 1939,

⁷⁰⁰ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 305.

⁷⁰¹ Voluntary collective communities who played an essential role in the creation of Israel.

⁷⁰² Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 132-137.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid*

Ömer Rıza Doğrul from Cumhuriyet newspaper, the most persistent observer of Palestine remarked: “The reason why this issue appears so intractable and why it constantly generates confrontation is the attempt to squeeze into a tiny land two peoples who detest one another, whose interests are incompatible.”⁷⁰⁴

At the UN General Assembly in November 1947, Turkey voted against the Resolution 181; Future Government of Palestine⁷⁰⁵ like the Arab countries. The partition resolution achieved the necessary two-thirds majority on November 29, 1947, introducing Resolution 181.⁷⁰⁶ On December 4th, the British cabinet approved the withdrawal plan unilaterally; British forces and administration would only stay in Palestine long enough to help coordinate Jews and Arabs through a limited transition period, until May 15, 1948.⁷⁰⁷ When the last British commander left Palestine, Jews proclaimed the State of Israel. The new state received almost immediate recognition from the United States and the Soviet Union, the world’s two superpowers. The next day, neighboring Arab states including Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq declared war and invaded Israel.

Turkey has rejected the ‘two state solution’ but remained mostly neutral during the war between Israel and the Arab states. It restricted the travel of Turkish citizens to the

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁰⁵ Resolution 181 Future Government of Palestine
<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253> (Accessed on May 18th, 2016)

⁷⁰⁶ The resolution recommends that the United Kingdom (as mandatory power for Palestine) evacuate; armed forces should withdraw no later than August 1, 1948; independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem administered by the United Nations should come into existence; the City of Jerusalem should preserve the interests of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths; “UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (II), Palestine” <http://www.cfr.org/international-organizations-and-alliances/un-general-assembly-resolution-181-ii-palestine/p11191> (Accessed on May 18th, 2016)

⁷⁰⁷ Benny Morris, *1948: A history of first Arab-Israeli war* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

region⁷⁰⁸ to fight in either side.⁷⁰⁹ Its contribution to the Arab cause was limited to some supplies and a small training team in Syria.⁷¹⁰ Turkey was determined not to become involved in this conflict and gave no assistance to the Arabs.⁷¹¹ Turkey became a part of the Palestine Conciliation Commission created by the UN in order to mediate the Arab-Israeli war on December 11, 1948 together with France and the U.S. The commission established its office in the demilitarized area in Jerusalem and organized the Lausanne Conference in 1949. The commission did not achieve much, but being a member of this commission was crucial as it marked Turkey's first participation on an international platform following the Second World War. It also marked the first difference in opinion in the UN between Turkey and the Arab states.⁷¹²

On March 19, 1949, Turkish and Israeli ministers got together in Ankara for the first time. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel Moshe Sharett⁷¹³ and Minister of Trade of Turkey Cemil Sait Barlas discussed the potential economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries.⁷¹⁴ To ward off Arab criticism, Turkey did not grant official

⁷⁰⁸ An article on *Şalom* newspaper talked about the possibility that Cevat Rifat Atilhan is organizing an army of volunteers ready to go to Palestine; "Cevat Rifat Atilhan va formar el un kuerpo de voluntarios para la Palestina?" *Şalom* Newspaper February 5th 1948

⁷⁰⁹ Atay Akdevelioğlu, Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "İsrail'le ilişkiler" *Türk Dış Politikası* Volume I 1919-1980. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 640

⁷¹⁰ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's quest for recognition and acceptance in Asia* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2005), 5.

⁷¹¹ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis *Columbia University*, 1970, 46.

⁷¹² *Ibid*, 79.

⁷¹³ Born as Moshe Shertok in 1894 in Ukraine moved to Palestine part of the Ottoman Empire in 1906 with his family. He studied law in Constantinople (Istanbul) and attended the Ottoman army during the First World War. Then he attended London School of Economics during which he became involved in the Zionist movement. He returned to Palestine in 1933 as head of the political department of the Jewish Agency. He is the first foreign minister of the State of Israel. He died in Israel in 1965; *Britannica Encyclopedia*, <http://global.britannica.com/biography/Moshe-Sharett> (Accessed on May 20th, 2016)

⁷¹⁴ "Türkiye İsrail'i nasıl ve neden tanıdı?" *Yeni Dünya Gündemi*, August 2nd, 2003 http://yenidunyagundemi.com/haber/turkiye_israili_nasil_ve_neden_tanidi-30.html (Accessed on November 09, 2014)

recognition to the newly established Jewish state until Israel applied for the United Nations membership. Turkey abstained during the voting.

When Turkey trusted that Israel was part of the West camp, she recognized the Jewish state. The fact that it was permanent and the benefits that could produce to Turkey were important factors in this decision.⁷¹⁵ Turkey tried to gain Israeli confidence as Deputy Prime Minister Nihat Erim have pointed out; “Israel can be our most appropriate ally.”⁷¹⁶ There were two processes at work in Turkish-Israeli relations: the formal recognition of Israel by Turkey and the economic relations between the two that started even before the creation of the State of Israel.

5.6. *Aliyah* Boosted with the Establishment of the State of Israel in 1948

Jews started to migrate to the State of Israel from all over the world. Their main impetus was the need for a Jewish state for their security, but they were also motivated by the dream to return to the Holy Land from which, according to Judaic tradition, they were exiled two thousand years ago. Turkish Jews were not an exception in this immigration trend.

By September 1948, the war between the Arab states and Israel has lost its intensity and Turkey lifted the restriction to the area.⁷¹⁷ The national radio channel (Ankara Radyosu) announced that Turkish citizens could migrate to whichever country they wanted. Before, the state had strictly controlled the immigration. These unconventional announcements were perceived as a green light for Turkish Jews to move to Israel.⁷¹⁸ This

⁷¹⁵ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 70.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

⁷¹⁷ Atay Akdevelioğlu, Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, “İsrail’le ilişkiler” *Türk Dış Politikası* Volume I 1919-1980. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 640

⁷¹⁸ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 64.

liberal move was like a prerequisite of the U.S. led western bloc. It can also be considered one of the steps taken to achieve homogeneity in the Republic itself. With the collaboration of the Turkish Republic, the Jewish Agency assisted the immigration of Turkish Jews to Israel. No one anticipated that such a large exodus would occur. In 1948 alone, 4,000 Turkish Jews immigrated to Israel.⁷¹⁹

Turkish Jews had an extraordinary demand for passports but the state did not accept all of these demands. While they applied for passports they tried to hide their intention of migration to Israel. This secrecy was a precaution in case the state shifted its policy to issue passports to Jews. For this reason, when asked their reason of travel, the Jewish girls said that they were going to get married while boys said they wanted to go to visit Israel, as a tourist. According to *Şalom*, in November 1948, only 400 out of 6,000 Jews could get a passport.⁷²⁰ The number of passports issued was very low and there were extra restrictions for those who could get their passports. In their passports a stamp indicating “not valid for travel to Israel” was added. Besides its shifting policies against the minorities, the state also continued its hostile approach by an additional decision. The state wanted to get rid of the Jews but at the same time it did not want them to take all their valuables with them. To this end, the government issued only tourist visas to the Jews.⁷²¹ It was a precaution for not having economic loss. One could also add that these restrictions were a precaution not to offend the Arab states at war with Israel. This decision was a largely an economic one, because as tourists, there was a restriction to the amount that

⁷¹⁹ Minna Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond – The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans, 1808-1945* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 2005), 363.

⁷²⁰ “La emigrasyon por la Palestina fue enterempida” *Şalom* newspaper November 4th 1948.

⁷²¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 132-135.

they could carry with them. Turkish officers allowed some clothes, food produced in Turkey not exceeding the value of 100 TL (approximately 35 USD), 100 TL in cash, a gold watch, and a wedding ring.⁷²² There were lines in bakeries as immigrants prepared some sort of cheap, long lasting sweet bread.⁷²³ All of these restrictions did not stop the flow to Israel and the immigration continued legally and illegally. In 1949, some of the restrictions were eased and the passport officers worked eagerly to issue new passports, something peculiar for the Republican mentality.⁷²⁴ In 1949, there was a pressure on Turkey for its recognition of the state of Israel. The open American support to Israel forced Turkey to ease its migration policies.

There was not much information about Jewish immigration to Israel in the Turkish press. Limited information can be obtained as a trace of the on going process. Changes in *Şalom* newspaper offer some clues. Firstly, the publications of shipping advertisements to Palestine increased. There were advertisements of direct ferry lines from Istanbul to Haifa in *Şalom* newspaper⁷²⁵ and in *Cumhuriyet*.⁷²⁶ Following the formal recognition of Israel in 1949 and until 1953, the national Turkish shipping company (*Denizyolları İdaresi*) also inaugurated direct lines from Izmir and Istanbul to Haifa.⁷²⁷ Secondly, there were announcements from the rabbinate in Judeo-Spanish asking for the donation of furniture in the case “it will be abandoned due to major reasons.”⁷²⁸ Thirdly, some of the prominent writers of *Şalom* moved to Israel, such as Izak Şaul, and continued to contribute from

⁷²² *Ibid*

⁷²³ *Ibid*

⁷²⁴ *Ibid*

⁷²⁵ Advertisement of ferry lines to Haifa in *Şalom* newspaper; May 24th, June 2nd 1949

⁷²⁶ Announcement of Vivaldi tourism agency” Istanbul, Hayfa ve İskenderiye arasında devamlı seyahatler yapılacaktır” *Cumhuriyet* February 4th, 6th, 8th, 1947.

⁷²⁷ “Fuar Münasebetiyle Vapur Seferlerinde Tenzilat” *Cumhuriyet* July 14th, 1951.

⁷²⁸ “Komunikado del Gran Rabbinato” *Şalom* newspaper January 6th 1949

there, writing about life in Israel. Fourthly, there were discussions in the paper over the need to learn Hebrew, how to learn Hebrew, and why Jewish school graduates did not know enough Hebrew. Once seen as a language of only religious practice, it had become a necessity with the reality of *Aliyah*.⁷²⁹

There was still negative opinion towards Jewish refugees. Following the end of the Second World War, Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine increased. *Şalom* newspaper reported this period as the one with the largest immigration to Palestine, with two refugee boats *Pancresept* and *Panyork* carrying approximately 6000 people each passing through the Bosphorus in January 1948.⁷³⁰ *Hergün* newspaper expressed its discomfort caused by the two refugee boats with the words: “We had to shout to hear our voices because of this “loud of Synagogue caused by these,” (*Sesimizi bu havra gürültüsüne iştirmek için gırtlaklarımızı patlatırcasına bağırarak konuşuyoruz.*) Izak Yaeş from *Şalom* criticized this negative expression: “We did not expect the use of this discriminatory expression by educated people. Synagogue is a house of God and there, the Jews pray for God.”⁷³¹

While *Şalom* headlined the immigration to Israel from different countries, it did not indicate the Turkish Aliyah. The general information about the life and developments in Israel as well as the massive international immigration may have encouraged the Turkish Jews as well. Turkish Jews that had settled in Israel sent their families in Turkey letters praising the new country as Israel has given them housing, free education, and found them

⁷²⁹ Some of *Şalom* newspaper articles on Hebrew language; Daniel Maya, “El Ebreo, lingua de unyon para el Puevlo de Yisrael” December 11th, 1947; Sami Reytan, “Filistin Dışındaki Yahudilerde Görülmesi Beklenen Değişmeler” September 9th 1948; Izak Izrael, “‘Etoile du Levant’ gazetesinin nazarı dikkatine: İbraniceyi yanlış öğretmiyim!” September 23rd 1948

⁷³⁰ “La mas grande emigrasyon cudiya verso la Palestina” *Şalom* newspaper January 1st 1948.

⁷³¹ Izak Yaeş, “Ayıptır, Baylar!” *Şalom* Newspaper January 1st 1948

a suitable job. All of this caused admiration for Israel and encouraged those who had second thoughts.

Journalist Sami Kohen explains that time as follows: “The integration project of Israel was very successful. It attracted the Turkish Jews from lower-middle class to Israel. Most of them were not educated and had no future in Turkey. It was an economic migration, but one should not forget that almost 34 thousand moved to Israel because it was Israel. There was a religious/traditional attraction as well. And it was only Israel who had this open door policy towards the Jews.”⁷³² Professor of International Relations George E. Gruen also supported this claim: “In mid-September 1948 there began a wave of Jewish emigration from Turkey to Israel, consisting mainly of the poorer and more religious elements.”⁷³³

Israeli Minister of Labor Golda Meir announced in June 1949 that no Jew immigrating to Israel would be refused entry.⁷³⁴ This announcement encouraged Turkish Jews, as did the economic boom in Israel. With news that Israel had the biggest economy in the Middle East⁷³⁵ and that the living conditions in Israel were very high, Turkish Jews were further interested in the possibility of immigration.⁷³⁶

There were two types of immigration from Turkey to Israel. The immigration with Zionist ideals started long before the creation of the State of Israel. That group supported Jewish rights in the Mandate of Palestine against the Arabs and the British, helped build the new country, and later participated in the Independence War of Israel against the Arab

⁷³² Interview with Turkish Journalist Sami Kohen May 20th, 2015, Istanbul.

⁷³³ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 64.

⁷³⁴ “La emigrasyon libera” *Şalom* Newspaper June 20th, 1949

⁷³⁵ “İsrail hükümeti orta şarkın bütün ticaret ve sanayiini eline alıyor” *Şalom* newspaper August 18th, 1949

⁷³⁶ Jak Azikri “Egenin İstanbul- İsrail seyahatinden notlar” *Şalom* newspaper August 18th, 1949; Izak yaş “İsrail devletinde kibuts” *Şalom* newspaper August 25th, 1949

states. The immigration with economic character started later, following the UN partition plan. The group was made up mostly of the economically disadvantageous members of the community, as Israel gave them the opportunity to start a new life. Israel opened its doors to all Jews promising a new beginning with the financial support of the new state. Turkish Aliyah can be summarized as economic rather than Zionist in character as most of them immigrated to Israel after the creation of the state. The data given by Esther Benbassa justifies Sami Kohen's opinion. According to Benbassa, only 1% of the Turkish Jewish community was part of the Zionist activities in Turkey. Walter F. Weiker concluded that the first immigrants from Turkey were Zionist youth with good education, and mostly people from low economic social class. American consul to Israel also described the first Turkish immigrants as persons from the lowest social and economic classes.⁷³⁷

While researchers stress that economic situation of the migrants as the major reasoning behind their Aliyah decision, those interviewed in Israel said that they immigrated because it was Israel, homeland of the Jewish people. The common Jewish identity should be considered as well as an important reason affecting their decision to leave Turkey. A Turkish Jew Yehuda Adiri summarized his reasons of immigration as: "To have a nation of our own, live in dignity, have a national language, and have a land."⁷³⁸ It is also important to note that events like the Thrace pogroms in 1934 and Capital Tax in 1942 changed the economic situation of all of the minorities. It is very difficult to generalize the victims of these events simply as rich and poor.

⁷³⁷ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, "Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project" *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 144.

⁷³⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 267-270.

One had the opportunity to interview several Turkish Jews who migrated following the establishment of the State of Israel. Yosef Altaras is from Tekirdağ, a city in the Thrace region. Born in 1931, he finished primary school there, then immigrated to Israel alone at the age of 17, in October 1948. His family joined him in 1949. In Tekirdağ, his father had a store of grains. Altaras does not know much about the Thrace events as nobody in his family ever spoke of it, but he remembers the Capital Tax vividly as his father was sent to labor camps in Erzincan (instead of Aşkale) because he could not pay the tax amount. When he moved to Israel by boat from Istanbul, he did not want to join the army so he went to a kibbutz instead. He explained his decision to come to Israel as idealism, as a longing to have a state. He said that he was persuaded to come to Israel by bulletins promoting Aliyah. “We were young, we were unexperienced. We did what they told us to do. We did not have time to follow what was going on in Turkey, or even what was going on outside the kibbutz.” He got married to a Turkish Jew from Istanbul and got remarried to a Jew from Çanakkale after the death of his first wife. He explains his reluctance to talk about his life in Turkey with this line; “I always look ahead. Nothing good comes from the past.”

Another Turkish Jew interviewed was Rina T., born in Istanbul. She was a child when her family moved to Israel. In 1948, her brother immigrated to Israel at the age of sixteen and all the family followed him because her mother did not want to stay away from her son. In Israel her father could not find a proper job as the priority was given to Holocaust survivors, Rina explained. In Istanbul, he worked in a factory as a clerk. In Israel, he worked as laborer in construction sites but was unhappy and he returned alone to Turkey after six months. Rina stayed with her mother for another two years to be close to her brother and then she and her mother returned to Turkey as well. Years later her

brother also returned to Turkey. She also explained the difficulties her family had faced during the Capital Tax. Her father could not pay the tax amount. He was supposed to go to labor camp in Aşkale but he was rescued with the help of his employer who was a minister. She did not remember his name. Today, her brother still lives in Istanbul but did not want to meet. Rina lives in Batyam with her husband, and together they made Aliyah following his retirement.

5.7. Reactions to the Immigration

The young men and women who immigrated to Israel with Zionist ideals were mostly discreet about their voyage. They were trying to protect those who stayed in Turkey. Few of them stated openly that they were migrating to Israel in order to help their co-religionists who were fighting against Arab countries. Some immigrants stated openly that the social guarantee of the Israeli state was the main attraction; “I have two sons one is 16 the other is 14 years old. Israel will give me a job with 90 Dollars (approximately 257TL) salary per month and free education for my sons until age of military service. This is why I am going.”⁷³⁹ The leaders of the Turkish community were not happy about any of these statements. Jews remaining in Turkey created a new survival tactic with the Aliyah wave. They denied the immigration, tried to minimize the number of the immigrants, and tried to use the Aliyah to their advantage, as a way to secure their place in Turkey. With the pressure, especially from the press, that they had to overcome, the Jews who stayed in Turkey tried to stay indifferent to or even against the Aliyah wave. The Democratic Party (DP) Istanbul Deputy Salamon Adato,⁷⁴⁰ tried to show this

⁷³⁹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 143.

⁷⁴⁰ In a disclaimer published in *Şalom* newspaper, Adato said that their words were changed and will go to court in case of need. “Salamon Adato’nun Tekzibi” *Şalom* newspaper, October 28th 1948.

movement as the immigration of few poor Jews who were persuaded by bad propaganda. Businessmen Eli Burla also minimized the immigration and said that he had no idea about a mass movement, that Turkish Jews had no reason to migrate as their living standards were good. Some other businessmen who talked to the press repeated similar statements concluding that the Jews who decided to move to Palestine were poor, adventurous people with no job, while those who stayed were patriotic Turks.⁷⁴¹

The majority of the Jews in contact with the state and the ones in the administration of the Jewish Community had to openly oppose Zionism. Of course the community leaders and businessmen also suffered from discrimination and knew that the living standards of the Jews were not good as was proclaimed. With no modern education and no permanent jobs, the future of the Jews from the lower-middle economic class was unhopeful. Their burden on the community was also high as most of them received financial assistance. The community members that stayed in Turkey were pleased that the immigrants may have a brighter future in Israel which welcomed the world Jewry and gave them some economic advantages. They were also relieved as a significant economic burden would be lifted from the community. As discussed earlier in chapter two, spoken language was a major indicator of one's wealth, education, and social status among the Turkish Jews. For Turkish Jews, Judeo-Spanish was the language of the 'ignorant,' while French was the language of educated and westernized. As the low-middle class who preferred to speak Judeo-Spanish immigrated, those that remained were hopeful that the image of the Jews would improve with French speakers.

⁷⁴¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 144-149.

Apart from their approach to Zionism, Turkish Jews were not indifferent to the war between Israel and the Arab states. It was found out that Jews from Adana and Antalya were collecting money for Israel in June 1948 and that they were happy about the success of the Israeli army.⁷⁴² Şalom newspaper was extensively populated with articles about the ongoing war, more than any other Turkish national newspaper. There was news about the victories of the Jews, pictures of the soldiers, and poems about Zionism. The democratic atmosphere and the short lived freedom of the press encouraged Şalom columnists to openly respond to anti-Semitic articles published in the press. In 1947 and 1948, Columnist Ömer Rıza Doğrul and the articles in *Hergün* newspaper were the most criticized.

The articles in the Turkish press openly express the surprise over the large wave of immigration of the Turkish Jews. The newspapers condemned the decision of the Turkish Jews to leave for Israel. They were angry against those who decided to leave the country. It was perceived as an insult against the Turkish people who gave the Jews the permission to continue to live in the new Turkish Republic as well as an insult to the Turkish people who gave the Jews citizenship and all the necessary support required for them to become economically successful. The Democratic Party government and the press did not attempt to understand the discriminative policies that the Jews had encountered since the establishment of the Republic. They did not objectively question the reasons of their mass departure; they blamed them. They called the Jewish immigrants ‘ungrateful’ to the ‘tolerance’ they had received during the Republican era. This would be further

⁷⁴² Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 130.

justification for the argument that the Jews were not equal citizens of the country but rather a heritage of the Ottoman Empire, once protected as *dhimmis*.

In October 1948, Sadun S. Savcı from *Vatan* newspaper stated: “We waited sincere fidelity, Turkishness from our minorities.”⁷⁴³ Nurettin Artam from *Ulus* newspaper wrote; “They had fortune, they had prosperity, they had everything but they are leaving anyway. Good bye.”⁷⁴⁴ Nusret Safa Coşkun from *Son Posta* newspaper said; “The reality is that the Jews living in Turkey, our citizens, just think of here as a place to gain money, to live comfortably, and leave it in the first opportunity.”⁷⁴⁵ At the same time, Hanri Soriano, the secular president of the Jewish community still rejected the news about the immigration in May 1949: “The community has nothing to do with this illegal and wrong immigration.”⁷⁴⁶

5.8. Turkish Jews in Israel

In the first years after its establishment, Israel absorbed 684,201 Jews from all over the world between 1948-1951.⁷⁴⁷ Israel was dealing with the rescue of the Holocaust survivors in Europe, the Jewish refugees detained in British camps in Cyprus and elsewhere, and the Jews from the Arab countries at war with Israel who were expelled or had to escape as they were facing existential danger. The mass immigration from Turkey following the establishment of Israel in May 1948 came as a surprise to Israeli authorities

⁷⁴³ Sadun G. Sadun, “Gidenlere, güle güle!” *Vatan*, October 21st, 1948; seen on Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 149-156.

⁷⁴⁴ Nurettin Artan with his pen name T.I., “Gidiyorlarmış” *Ulus*, October 23rd, 1948; seen on Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 149-156.

⁷⁴⁵ Nusret Safa Coşkun, “Türkiye’den Filistine Yahudi Akını” *Son Posta*, October 21st 1948; seen on Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 149-156.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 149.

⁷⁴⁷ Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel 1948-1967* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 83-85.

as well. Such a large number of immigrants was not expected from a country where the Jews were considered citizens and were not expelled or faced an existential threat. By the end of April 1949, the total number of Turkish Jews who reached Israel was from 10 to 12 thousand.⁷⁴⁸ By the end of 1951, a total of 34,547 Jews – making up nearly 40 per cent of the Jewish community in Turkey at the time – emigrated from Turkey to Israel.⁷⁴⁹ Not ready and organized for the Turkish Aliyah, Israel tried to control the flow. Since September 1948, Israeli authorities demanded to have an official in Turkey to control the large Turkish immigration. The Aliyah of the Turkish Jews were mainly organized by Zionist organizations before that. Turkey accepted this demand almost a year later, in July 1949. Victor Eliachar became the representative in Istanbul of the Israeli Ministry of Immigration.⁷⁵⁰ This was even before the opening of the Israeli consulate in Istanbul on October 16th, 1949 and before Turkey's diplomatic representation realized in January 1950.

For new immigrants, life in Israel was not easy. Leaving behind their houses with electricity and running water in Turkey, they had to live in tents on bare land. There was critical food and water shortages. Most of the Turkish Jews settled in urban areas or moved to urban areas from transit camps that they were settled in upon their arrival. A small minority preferred the agricultural settlements which were the essence of the Zionist ideal.

⁷⁴⁸ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 144.

⁷⁴⁹ Şule Toktaş, “Cultural Identity, Minority Position and Immigration: Turkey's Jewish Minority vs. Turkish-Jewish Immigrants in Israel”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44:3 (2008): 511-525.

⁷⁵⁰ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 99.

Some moved to or built settlements called *Moshav*⁷⁵¹ or *Kibbutz* and constructed their own houses.⁷⁵²

The poverty and misery experienced by the first wave of Turkish immigrants continued with the difficulties encountered finding jobs. It was believed that the Holocaust survivors had priority. The transition was smoother for those who had qualified educational backgrounds and some economic capacity. For the majority, lack of education and being unqualified was a major handicap. They worked in any job they could find, in construction or low end jobs. For the Zionists, the kibbutz or the army were their first choice.

The poverty and lack of basic needs led the Turkish Jews to question their decision. Some of them were indecisive about their future. Unlike other immigrants trying to adopt to the realities of Israel, Turkish Jews had chosen this path by their own will and they had the rare luxury to decide where to head from there. Some moved back to Turkey due to unbearable living conditions including poverty, lack of hygiene, diseases, lack of food, and basic necessities. Most of them stayed and shared the destiny of the newborn state which was trying to deal with a massive flow of immigrants from all over the world and already engaged in war with Arab armies.

⁷⁵¹ A "*moshav*" is a unique type of cooperative farmers' village in 1920s. As opposed to the more communal kibbutz, the members of the moshav preserve a relatively large degree of economic autonomy, but they do share various elements of mutual assistance;

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Maps/Pages/Kibbutz-and-Moshav.aspx> (Accessed on May 19th 2016)

⁷⁵² HaGoshrim, Bet Netef, Burgata, Geva Hakarmel, Gazit, Tel Şahar, Kfar Zeharia, Olesh, Tzuba, Bet Jubri, Nahsholim, Gevulot, Nir Eliyahu, Kerem Ben Zimra; Rifat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yillarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 130.) Burgata was one of the agricultural settlements established by a group of Turkish Jews. For more information on Burgata; Rahel- Lika Czerniak (Hayon), *The immigration and integration of Turkey Jewry in Newborn Israel, Burgata- a case study*, Thesis submitted for M.A. degree of humanities, Tel Aviv University School of education, teaching and curriculum of teaching history 1999.

For the Turkish Jews in Israel another mission was given. They were seen as ambassadors of peace between the two countries. Eli Shaul, a Turkish Jew and writer for Şalom newspaper, stated that friendship between Turkey and Israel was essential for peace and progress in the Middle East and that Turkish Jews had some duties. Reminding this group that they were Turkish citizens and therefore Turks even in Israel he said that, “Turkish Jews have to encourage the friendship and cooperation between these two countries. The duty of every Turkish Jew who goes to Israel is to make good publicity for Turkey and endear it to outsiders, fomenting economic, cultural, and political cooperation.”⁷⁵³ From Şaul’s advice, the most important point is the fact that the Turkish Jews saw themselves as Turks, even after their migration to Israel, and that they had a duty to their native country, Turkey. Turkish Jews encountered many discriminatory measures and economic pressures but far from harboring hostility towards Turkey, they still like the country and Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. As mentioned in many interviews conducted with the Turkish Jews who moved to Israel in 1948, their Turkish identity persevered decades following their Aliyah. Batyam became a little Turkey in Israel.

5.9. The Recognition of Israel – 28 March 1949

Israel received almost immediate recognition within minutes in its declaration day on May 15th, 1948 from the United States and two days later from the Soviet Union. Israel needed balanced relations with both sides and adopted a policy of *i-hizdahut* (non-identification) based on non-engagement with any bloc during the Cold War. Both sides

⁷⁵³ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 205-207.

thought that they could persuade this new country with its very strategic location to join their bloc and continued their support in the diplomatic arena.

Turkey was following the developments in the world very closely but according to *Şalom* newspaper it was caught by surprise with Israel's immediate recognition. In an article published in *Şalom* newspaper on May 20th, 1948 this was clearly stated: "Turkey believed that only Soviet Union will recognize Israel and will send soldiers and arms. The immediate recognition of the United States surprised Ankara."⁷⁵⁴

During the Cold War, Turkey evaluated all its foreign policy decisions in terms of the Soviet threat. On February 26th of 1948 Eli Şaul from *Şalom* newspaper felt the necessity to write an article about the differences between Zionism and Communism, which was the main enemy according to the Turkish public. The majority of the news in the Turkish press related both: "There are American and British originated news about how Palestine is the volcano of the Soviet Union, how they send real communists with Russian immigrants to Palestine. It is like Zionism equals communism."⁷⁵⁵

For Turkey, establishing good relations with the powerful United States was the main reason to recognize Israel because "the policy of active neutrality that served Ankara well during the course of the war, appeared insufficient in the post-war era to resist Soviet expansionist demands."⁷⁵⁶ However, there was caution employed in establishing diplomatic relations with Israel as Turkey feared the Arab reaction. Turkey's tendency to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel despite accusations of betraying the Arab cause was due primarily to Israel's alignment with the West.

⁷⁵⁴ "La Opinion de Ankara sobre la Palestina" *Şalom* Newspaper May 20th 1948

⁷⁵⁵ Eli Şaul, "Siyonizm ve Komunizm" *Şalom* Gazetesi February 28th 1948

⁷⁵⁶ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, "Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project" *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999), 134.

Turkish-Israeli relations were formalized on March 28th, 1949. Turkey was the first Muslim majority state to recognize the newly established Jewish state after the country's independence on May 14th, 1948. Turkey was a unique example of a Muslim majority country recognizing Israel until 1979 when Egypt, the first Arab country, signed a peace treaty with Israel.⁷⁵⁷ Importantly, during the Shah regime, Iran, another Muslim majority country, de facto recognized Israel and started economic and technical cooperation.⁷⁵⁸ The official recognition of Israel by Turkey was announced as follows, "The immediate recognition of the state of Israel is decided in a Foreign Ministry meeting held on March 24th, 1949 with the minutes numbered 35870/115"⁷⁵⁹ which was read on the council of ministers decree signed by the President of the Republic Ismet İnönü.⁷⁶⁰ The decision of the council was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey on April 1, 1949.⁷⁶¹

Turkey was the first country in the Middle East and Asia to recognize Israel, but at the same time it was one of the last European countries to do so.⁷⁶² Eli Shaul from Şabat newspaper wrote a column titled "What are we waiting for to recognize the state of

⁷⁵⁷ "Israel" *İslam Ansiklopedisi* <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/ayrmetin.php?idno=d230188> (Accessed on November 9th, 2014)

⁷⁵⁸ Ofra Bengio, *Türkiye İsrail, Hayalet İttifaktan Stratejik İşbirliğine* (Istanbul: Erguvan, 2009)

⁷⁵⁹ Minutes numbered 35870/115; <http://www.odatv.com/n.php?n=icimizdeki-israil-0509101200> (Accessed on November 9th, 2014)

⁷⁶⁰ Other signatories: Prime Minister Şemsettin Günaltay, Minister of state and vice prime minister Nihat Erim, Minister of state Nurullah Esat Sümer, Minister of state Cemil Sait Barlas, minister of Foreign affairs Necmettin Sadık Sadak, Minister of defense Hüseyin Hüsnü Çakır, Minister of interior Mehmet Emin Erişgil, Minister of finance İsmail Rüştü Aksal, Minister of education Hasan Tahsin Banguoğlu, Minister of public affairs Hasan Şevket Adalan, Minister of economy and trade Vedat Dicleli, Minister of health Kemal Bayazıt, Gümrük ve Minister of Tekel Fazıl Şerafettin Bürge, Minister of agriculture Ali Cavit Oral, Minister of transportation Kemal Satır, Minister of labor Reşat Şemsettin Sirer, Minister of trade Mustafa Münir Birsel

⁷⁶¹ Official Gazette, 1 April 1949, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/default.aspx#> (Accessed on 16 May 2016)

⁷⁶² George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 94.

Israel?” He stated that 35 nations including the entire western block have already recognized Israel; “Israel is becoming a member of the United Nations. Even the Arab states may recognize once the Rhodes discussions results in an affirmative decision.” He warned about the economic opportunities for Turkey, as Israel was an exporter country: “According to the Prime Ministry’s statistics, in 1947, Turkey sold all the Arab countries a total of 40 million liras worth of merchandise, while sales to Palestine alone totaled about 46 million liras.”⁷⁶³

Cumhuriyet newspaper announced the news as: “We decided to recognize the State of Israel. We hope this country will not be an element of expansion and violate the rights in the Middle East, but an element of peace and tranquility.” *Cumhuriyet* explained the delay in the decision to recognize Israel as the importance it gave to the reaction of the Arab world.⁷⁶⁴ *Hürriyet* newspaper announced the news on its front page as well. The headline was about the future of Turkish-American relations and a potential arms aid bill in the U.S. Congress.⁷⁶⁵ This choice showed clearly what Israel signified for Turkey. *Yeni Gazete* newspaper announced the news with the headline; “We recognized the State of Israel” and the flag of Israel⁷⁶⁶ This newspaper and its columnist Asım Us⁷⁶⁷ have severely criticized the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Then the newspaper changed its tone and talked about possible economic relations between the two countries.⁷⁶⁸ Even Asım

⁷⁶³ Eli Shaul, *From Balat to Bat Yam* (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 199-200. (In the book it says December 11, 1949. One thinks the date is wrong as Turkey recognized Israel before that date.)

⁷⁶⁴ “İsrail Devletini tanıdık” *Cumhuriyet* Newspaper March 29th, 1949

⁷⁶⁵ “Türkiye İsrail’i tanıdı” *Hürriyet* Newspaper March 29th, 1949

⁷⁶⁶ “İsrail devletini resmen tanıdık” *Yeni Gazete* newspaper March 29th, 1949

⁷⁶⁷ Asım Us, “Arap-Yahudi davasında biricik hal şekli” *Yeni Gazete* May 19th, 1948; Asım Us, “Filistin’i Filistinlilere bırakınız!” *Yeni Gazete* May 23rd, 1948;

⁷⁶⁸ “İsrail’i tanıma kararı piyasada ümitler uyandırdı” *Yeni Gazete* March 30th, 1949.

Us⁷⁶⁹ wrote that the recognition of Israel by Turkey was delayed.⁷⁷⁰ One can conclude that even though a Jewish state in Palestine was not preferred, Israel was accepted when it became an internationally recognized reality and Turkey changed its policy in a pragmatic way. This could be clearly seen in the Asım Us' articles.

On the other hand, for the Arabs, Turkey was the first 'Muslim' country to recognize Israel and betrayed the Arab cause and their religious solidarity. Turkey had to address this issue on several occasions. At the opening ceremony of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TBMM) on November 1st, 1949, İsmet İnönü explained the decision to recognize Israel as follows:⁷⁷¹ "Political relations with the newborn state of Israel are established. We hope that this state will be an element of peace and stability in the Near East. Peace and trust in the Near East is an important desire for all of us." Şükrü Esmer's article "Recognition of Israel" in *Ulus* newspaper restated that Israel was an established fact and that this was the first condition to solve the problem in Palestine. He also added that the Arab states de facto recognized Israel with the truce agreement.⁷⁷² Similar to Esmer, Turkey's Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak defended Turkey's decision to recognize Israel against Arab criticism by saying that Israel was a reality which more than 30 countries had already recognized. In response to critics who accused his government of betraying the Arab cause, he argued that the Arabs themselves had already recognized the new state, as they negotiated with Israel in Rhodes.⁷⁷³ Foreign

⁷⁶⁹ Knowing that Asım Us was the pen name of Atatürk, one wonder if this tradition was continued by presidents coming after him.

⁷⁷⁰ Asım Us, "Türkiye'nin İsrail devletini tanınması" *Yeni Gazete* March 31st, 1949.

⁷⁷¹ Tarihe düşülen Notlar-1: Yasama yılı Açılışlarında Cumhurbaşkanlarının Konuşmaları -1 (1 Mart 1924-14 Aralık 1987) ed. Hasan Yılmaz NP, ND

⁷⁷² George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 58-59.

⁷⁷³ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's quest for recognition and acceptance in Asia* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2005), 5.

Minister Necmeddin Sadak explained the decision to recognize Israel as a necessity in order to be impartial in their work in the Palestine Conciliation Commission.⁷⁷⁴ He also supported Turkish foreign policy on Palestinian issue: “Turkey as a faithful and honorable member of the UN, cannot dissociate itself from the decisions adopted.”⁷⁷⁵ ‘Betrayal of Islam’ became the major Arab accusation of Turkey.⁷⁷⁶ Ömer Rıza Doğrul from Cumhuriyet newspaper emphasized that the recognition of Israel had nothing to do with Islam since Turkey was a secular state.⁷⁷⁷ In the state archives⁷⁷⁸ of the prime ministry of Israel, the beginning of Turkish-Israeli relations is explained as a pragmatic foreign policy decision of Inönü:

“On 29 November 1947 the UN General Assembly voted to partition Mandatory Palestine and to establish a Jewish state alongside an Arab state there. The Arab states opposed the resolution and Turkey was among the 13 countries that voted against the proposal out of Muslim solidarity. However, after the state of Israel became a fact, and after democratic elections were held for a constituent assembly, which became the first Knesset, the then Turkish president, İsmet İnönü, who conducted a pragmatic foreign policy, decided to

⁷⁷⁴ Atay Akdevelioğlu, Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, “İsrail’le ilişkiler” *Türk Dış Politikası* Volume I 1919-1980. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 641

⁷⁷⁵ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 38.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 95.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 94.

⁷⁷⁸ One checked the foreign ministry web pages of both countries to find out how they explain at the present the beginning of the formal relations. Turkish Foreign Ministry explains its decision to recognize Israel as follows: “Turkey, following its principle ‘Peace at Home, Peace in the World’ and within the framework of its ‘zero problems with its neighbors’ approach, follows a policy aiming at developing a zone of stability, security and prosperity in the surrounding region and at expanding its relations and its cooperation with all the countries in the region, and particularly with its neighbors. With this understanding Turkey recognized Israel on March 28th, 1949 and was thus among the very first states to do so after the country’s independence on May 14th, 1948. Turkey established with Israel bilateral relations based on mutual interest. At the same time, Israel’s policies adversely affecting peace and stability in the Middle East have caused problems in bilateral relations from time to time. The foreign ministry of Israel, Israel’s virtual embassy in cyberspace as they call themselves, does not provide detailed information on bilateral relations. The site directs the user to the Israeli embassy in Ankara which has a very limited explanation: “Israel and Turkey are democracies with similarities in terms of democratic principles and human values. The two countries share the same geographical region, history, and culture.” Formal relations between Israel and Turkey 1961-1967, Prime Minister’s office Israel State archives. Accessed on 30.10.2014 http://archives.gov.il/archivegov_eng/publications/electronicpirsum/israel-Turkey/israel-Turkeyintroduction.htm and İsrail Büyükelçiliği Ankara, İkili ilişkiler: İsrail ve Türkiye. Accessed on 30.10.2014 <http://embassies.gov.il/ankara/Relations/Pages/ikili-iliskiler-ve-anlasmalar.aspx>

recognize the new state and established diplomatic relations with it on the level of ministers.”⁷⁷⁹

5.10. An Historical Date: The Opening of the Israeli Consulate in Istanbul

Following the official recognition of the State of Israel, the Israeli Consulate in Turkey was opened on October 16th, 1949 at Siraselviler Avenue, Taksim, Istanbul.⁷⁸⁰ A big crowd including some 27,000 members of the Turkish Jewish community were present at the inauguration of the Israeli Consulate.⁷⁸¹ According to Rifat Bali, the numbers varied from 15 to 20 thousand. Out of fear of public reaction to a Jewish crowd in Taksim, the community leaders warned the Turkish Jews not to go to the inauguration ceremony; this warning was ignored and a crowd of historical proportions was present for the event. There was not any negative reaction or incident that day.⁷⁸²

The Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Abraham Elmaleh was present at the ceremony. The Israeli flag was hoisted by the daughter of the chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi community of Turkey; “The street was very crowded. I was there very early. There were many Jews in one place as never seen before. There were also many Muslims forming the crowd who waited the opening ceremony of the Israeli consulate. There was a little balcony in the flat and the flagpole was there. There was not any speech, I think because there was no place to do so, the balcony was very small. Bella Şapoşnik hoisted the flag

⁷⁷⁹ Formal relations between Israel and Turkey 1961-1967, *Prime Minister's office Israel State archives*. http://archives.gov.il/archivegov_eng/publications/electronicpirsum/israel-Turkey/israel-Turkeyintroduction.htm (Accessed on October 30th, 2014)

⁷⁸⁰ Rifat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 273.

⁷⁸¹ Alon Liel and Can Yirik, *Turkish-Israeli relations 1949-2010* (Istanbul: İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesi, 2010), 29-30.

⁷⁸² Rifat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 273.

toward the sky slowly and the national theme of Israel, *Hatikva*⁷⁸³ (Hope) played at the same time. Everybody was very emotional; it was like a dream coming true.”⁷⁸⁴ Israeli Consul Victor Eliachar held a press conference after the flag hoisting ceremony and visited the Atatürk monument in Taksim to lay a wreath, later the same day. The Atatürk monument, with the blue and white wreath symbolizing the flag of Israel, and the consulate building became a place of pilgrimage for Jews. The wreath was taken the same night to stop the crowds from coming there. This decision upset the Jews.⁷⁸⁵

The press attacked the Jews who attended the inauguration ceremony. Hakkı Süha Gezgin from *Vakit* newspaper questioned the meaning of the crowd. “It is normal to have a foreign ambassador when the state recognizes another state. What is with the crowd? It is like all the Jewish community was present in the ceremony. It is said that 30-40 thousand Jews from Balat, Ada, Moda... all the Jews of Istanbul were there. What represents this consulate other than a country established in Palestine? We gave them Turkish citizenship, they have all the rights in this country like we do, they control all the economy, get the crème of the gain, they live happily here. But we have never seen from them any generosity for Turkey and in spite that, we never changed our policy towards them. So what is the meaning of this crowd? Are they taking this consulate as the consulate of the Jews of Istanbul? This is how we found out the truth under their masks.”⁷⁸⁶

As a result of consultations between the two countries, Turkey’s first diplomatic mission to Israel was officially opened in Tel Aviv with the presentation of the Letter of

⁷⁸³ Adapted from a poem of Ukrainian poet Naftali Herz Imber dated 1877, *Hatikva* reflects the hope of moving to the Land of Israel and declare a sovereign nation.

⁷⁸⁴ I. S. Interviewed on September 17th, 2014 Istanbul.

⁷⁸⁵ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 275-277.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid*

Credence of Seyfullah Esin, the first *chargé d'affaires*, to the President of Israel Chaim Weizmann on January 7th, 1950.”⁷⁸⁷ Four days later, on January 11, 1950, it was Israel’s first *chargé d'affaires* to Turkey Eliyahu Sasson who submitted his credentials to the President of the Republic of Turkey Ismet İnönü. On June 14th, 1950, days after the Democrats came to power, Turkey raised the level of Ankara’s representation in Israel from *chargé d'affaires* to envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary.⁷⁸⁸ This was part of a pro-Western policy aimed at enabling Turkey to join NATO. During the Cold War, Israel served as a Western ally to counter Soviet alliances in the Arab countries. Relations between the countries were low profile while in reality a ghost pact was decided.⁷⁸⁹

5.11. Turkish Foreign Policy During the Cold War

In the context of the Cold War, Israel was a U.S. ally, while Arab states tended to be closer to the Soviet Union. At the same time, the U.S. was the new leader of the Middle East after Britain left its position following the end of the Second World War. This facilitated Turkey’s stance toward the new country. American financial support was crucial for Turkey’s struggle with economic problems after the Second World War. The Truman doctrine had placed Turkey as an important country and included it in the Marshall Plan that would come to help Turkey overcome some of its economic woes. Ankara also wanted to be part of the international security organization NATO in order to

⁷⁸⁷ “Türkiye – İsrail Siyasi İlişkileri” <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-israil-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa> (Accessed on October 30th, 2014)

⁷⁸⁸ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 144.

⁷⁸⁹ Ofra Bengio, *Türkiye İsrail, Hayalet İttifaktan Stratejik İşbirliğine* (Istanbul: Erguvan, 2009)

guarantee its membership in the bloc against the Soviet threat. This desire was the natural and predictable result of the western policies Turkey had chosen.

During the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Turkey did not give the Arabs much of a chance of victory.⁷⁹⁰ Israel's military victories strengthened its position as "vital to any effective Middle East defense system" among the Turkish military and it supported Israeli control of the strategic Haifa port; "Israel was the only power able to assure its security in case of war."⁷⁹¹ According to Turkish ruling elites, the presence of strong and stable Israel in south of Syria deterred Syria from attacking Turkey.⁷⁹²

Turkey tried to find a balance in its foreign policy toward Israel with whom it shared common strategic interests and toward Arab countries with whom it shared mutual cultural, historical bonds. Turkey and the Arab world could be seen as having a love-hate relationship. A cultural rift started between Turkey and the Arabs with the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The change in the Turkish written language from Arabic script to Latin and purification of Turkish language from Arabic (and Persian) words was interpreted as an anti-Arab move raising a psychological barrier between the two nations. Territorial disputes with Syria and Iraq for Mosul, Kirkuk, and Alexandretta raised a threat to Arab solidarity and were perceived as a Turkish imperial move similar to the Ottomans. Turkey's recognition of the State of Israel, undermined the economic embargo imposed by the Arab states. Its passive stance on the Palestinian issue was perceived by all Arabs as a betrayal. In a war that was ongoing between the Arabs and Israel, Turkey was seen as

⁷⁹⁰ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, "Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project" *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999): 138.

⁷⁹¹ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 72.

⁷⁹² *Ibid*, 113.

siding with Israel.⁷⁹³ The Arab uprising during the Ottoman era was still very fresh in the minds of Turkey's elites. Arab oriented policies received criticism as Arabs were viewed as those who "stabbed us in the back"⁷⁹⁴ during the First World War.⁷⁹⁵ The recognition of Israel was explained by some as a reprisal against the Arabs, and by some as anti-Arabism.⁷⁹⁶ "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" can be another explanation of the decision to recognize Israel.⁷⁹⁷

Besides having the support of the United States, some hoped that direct diplomatic relations between Israel and Turkey would facilitate a relationship between Turkey and the U.S. with the help of powerful American-Jewish communities. This hope was fulfilled. Israel supported Turkey's candidacy for the UN Security Council Middle East seat in 1950. Israel played an active role sending emissaries to Latin America and Western Europe to support Ankara and Turkey won the seat against Lebanon, which was supported by the Soviet bloc.⁷⁹⁸

For Turkey, Turkish-Israeli relations were a projection of Turkish-American relations.⁷⁹⁹ Turkey tried to foster its image as a democratic, tolerant, and western state.⁸⁰⁰ This required Turkish support to Jewish migration to Palestine despite its Republican ideal

⁷⁹³ Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears: Arab Perceptions of Turkey and Its Alignment with Israel" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 2001), pp. 50-92

⁷⁹⁴ Sabah Can, *Ulus*, May 15, 1948 seen on George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 7.

⁷⁹⁵ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 2000)

⁷⁹⁶ Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, "Old Grievances, New Fears: Arab Perceptions of Turkey and Its Alignment with Israel" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 2001), pp. 50-92

⁷⁹⁷ Atay Akdevelioğlu, Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "İsrail'le ilişkiler" *Türk Dış Politikası* Volume I 1919-1980. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 641

⁷⁹⁸ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 157-161.

⁷⁹⁹ Deniz Tansi, *Turkish-Israeli relation: new perspectives*. http://www.academia.edu/459781/TURKISH-ISRAELI_RELATIONS_NEW_PERSPECTIVES (Accessed on October 30th, 2014)

⁸⁰⁰ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 11.

and the opposition of the Arab states. As such, it is not surprising that Turkey facilitated the immigration to Turkish Jews during the Aliyah wave starting in 1948. However, the American Jewry did not forget the discriminative policies such as the Capital Tax and at first resisted cooperation with Turkey.⁸⁰¹ In 1950, Turkey sent a Turkish brigade to aid UN forces and to strengthen its ties with the U.S. The importance Israel gave to the development of bilateral relations with Turkey and the military support it provided during the Korean War increased the trust Turkey had for the new country.⁸⁰²

Turkish-Israeli relations depended on many external factors. The history of Turkish-Israeli relations is marked by numerous high and low points. Pragmatism and flexibility marked Turkish foreign policy in that era.⁸⁰³ As a protégé of the U.S., Israel gained a positive position in the Turkish press. Consequently, an admiration for Israel and its achievements in the desert started. There were still some anti-Semitic articles in the press but they were mostly marginalized. There was positive news about the U.S. and Israel in the press. There was curiosity toward this new state which was victorious in a fight against several Arab countries. Journalist Sami Kohen explains; “Israel was a brand new country; it did not have any negative reputation. There was not anti-Israel movement in Turkey. On the contrary there was an admiration to this tiny country who created a heaven from desert.”⁸⁰⁴

Until 1950, the press was still under the rigid control of the state as there was no opposition.⁸⁰⁵ In the multi-party era, RPP was “not as insulated from popular sentiments

⁸⁰¹ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999) 139.

⁸⁰² George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 139.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid*, 2

⁸⁰⁴ Interview with Sami Kohen, May 20th, 2015.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid*

as it had been before,⁸⁰⁶ and in the mid-1950s a clear distinction among political parties' Middle Eastern policy was seen and open criticism began.⁸⁰⁷

5.12. Turkish *Aliyah* expanded

Turkish Jewish immigration to Israel continued legally and illegally following the recognition of the state of Israel in 1949. Though legal, it was still a difficult process. The ships were not permitted to dock in Istanbul. They waited far from the pier, in the Marmara Sea. A Turkish Jew I.S. who agreed to be interviewed but did not want to reveal his name explains his story: "In 1935, following the Thrace events, my parents were afraid and tried to move to Palestine with me as a baby. But even after we got a family visa for Palestine, our entry was rejected by the British and we had to come back to Istanbul. In my youth I joined Betar. My plan was not to migrate to Israel but to help the ones who wanted to go. There was a big white boat in the Bosphorus. Everything was legal but the Turkish government did not give permission to debark. The passengers had to be transferred with small boats. We were there as guards, controlling, trying to protect the passengers. I have never tried to make *Aliyah* again but my father did. He moved to Israel in 1978, almost forty years following his first attempt, and a few years later he died there."⁸⁰⁸

One tried to collect the memories of the ones who moved to Israel with the Turkish *Aliyah* of 1948. The following memoirs and interviews are the results of this aim:

Tulumbacılar (former name given to fire brigade): A group of young Turkish Jews tried to escape to Palestine illegally. Their leader rented a boat and they began their

⁸⁰⁶ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, "Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project" *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, J(June-December, 1999): 137.

⁸⁰⁷ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 14.

⁸⁰⁸ Interview with I.S. June 12, 2015, Istanbul.

dangerous journey. Six of them had shared their story to my colleague in 1997: “We were part of the secret group *HaHalutz*. From 1943 this organization tried to facilitate Turkish immigration to Palestine. We met at homes and learn Hebrew, Jewish history and follow the news about Palestine. Some of us were part of *Tel Hai*. It was impossible to get a passport for Palestine. Some got their passport for Italy and then went to Palestine. We wanted to go to Palestine. We heard of many young people trying to go through Syria or by boat through Iskenderun. Yaakov Krudo, our leader organized a boat in Haliç, Istanbul. On February 29th, 1949, 69 young men from age 18 to 20, including myself, sailed for Palestine in secrecy with only the clothes we had on us. It was a very dangerous journey. We had to stop in Greece because our engine was broken. After 10 days, we were expecting an orchestra to welcome us to Haifa because we made it, but instead the officers ran to help the Bulgarian refugee boat with 3500 people. Some of us went to kibbutz, some of us joined the army.”⁸⁰⁹

Turkish Jews were different from the others Jews coming from the death camps and detention camps in Europe of the Nazi era or the ones escaping from the Arab countries. Turkish Jews has made Aliyah without any existential danger. This is why even though theirs was a dangerous journey and they had encountered many discriminations throughout the Republican era, priority was given to the Jews escaping death. In March 10th, 1949 Şalom conducted an interview with the captain Nazım Aynacıoğlu of the boat *Demirhisar*, one of the first boats carrying Turkish Jews to Israel. The interview was very short and published in Judeo-Spanish. The captain told of his twelve trips to Israel. He

⁸⁰⁹ Suzanne Tarablus, conference notes on ‘*Tulumbaçılar*’ based on her interviews with six of them. May 1997. NP (Courtesy of Tarablus)

was astonished by the developments in Haifa and stated that it was pity this new state was at war.⁸¹⁰

In Israel, one had the chance to listen the stories of Turkish Jews who made Aliyah following the recognition of Israel by Turkey. S.G. was one of them. He did not want to talk about his past in Turkey, he began our conversation by explaining, “I don’t talk politics and don’t ask me how I came to Israel.” These were the preconditions given by S.G., who did not want to reveal his name. S.G. was born in 1930, to a family living in Balat. He had a twin and 6 brothers and sisters. His father was a cook and had his own restaurant, which he had to sell to pay the Capital Tax. The tax severely affected the living standards of the family. His father became a cook in a hospital and all the family had to work because his salary was very low. S.G had to drop out of secondary school in order to work as well. His sister got married and moved to Tel Aviv in 1948 to start a new life. He immigrated to Israel in April 1949 during a ceasefire with his twin brother. They left Istanbul on boat; “There was a war and Israel was alone against all the Arab countries attacking her. I had to go there. I wanted to go in 1948 but my mother convinced me not to.” “There was nothing in Israel and life was very hard,” he recalled, “everything was given with vouchers.” On their third day in Israel he and his twin entered the army. He participated in four wars including Yom Kippur in 1973. “I could have died,” he explained. Once discharged from the army in 1951, he worked in all kinds of jobs, including as laborer in construction projects: “It was a job unimaginable for me in Turkey.” He closely followed news about Turkey; “I recall the recognition of Israel by Turkey. I felt pride when I heard it.” He did not return to Turkey until 1956, when his

⁸¹⁰ “Un entrevista kon el kapitan del vapor Demirhisar” *Şalom* Newspaper March 10th 1949

father was in his death bed and returned again in 1966 to see his family. His mother and two brothers immigrated to Israel as well in 1969. He got married to a Turkish Jew he met in the army and had two children. The children identify themselves as Israelis. They do not speak Turkish, nor are they interested in learning it, and they visited Turkey only once or twice as tourists. He explained that loneliness was the main feeling he recalls from that era. Everybody was fighting for their own survival. "If I had my present experience, maybe I would not have come to Israel," he said adding that he does not regret his decision.

Yusuf C. immigrated to Israel in December 1949 with his family when he was 11 years old. He went to primary school in Turkey and his Turkish is still fluent. They spoke in Judeo-Spanish at home because his mother did not know Turkish. They immigrated to Israel because his 17-year-old brother had joined Betar and wanted to go to Israel. His mother did not want to leave her son alone and persuaded her husband to sell their house in Kadıköy and their store in Eminönü. They moved to Israel on a boat called Etrusk.

When they first came to Israel they had to live in a tent over bare land. It was snowing for the first time in years. It was very cold. Then they moved to a village. Yusuf joined a kibbutz for two years while his brother joined the army. He recalls the sadness of his father, who had not wanted to come in the first place. It was hard to find a job. His father had to work in 40°C degree heat on road construction and whatever job he could find. He was unhappy and wanted to return to Istanbul, but could not. He was a heavy smoker and died of its consequences. "We were not rich but we were okay in Istanbul. We lived in Kadıköy in a nice apartment with four bedrooms, running water and electricity. My father was a tradesman; he was the employer of 5-6 people. Moving was very hard, especially for him. He was not happy here. He regretted his decision. I miss Turkey. I used to play with Muslim kids. We were a group against the Greeks in the neighborhood. My

wife is a Turkish Jew from Balat. She cooks Turkish-Sefarad cuisine at home. My children define themselves as Israelis and they don't know Turkish.”

Yitshak Nae born in Istanbul, immigrated to Israel alone in 1949 at the age of 13, a week after the celebration of his *Bar-Mitzva*.⁸¹¹ He was a member of Betar. “From the age of nine I had a group of friends with whom I discussed the developments in Israel. Some teenagers took us to the forests or empty land to practice shooting and basic exercises.⁸¹² It is hard to believe that a child of 9 years old would be part of such an organization. It seems likely that the group started as a play or basic religious teaching group and later evolved into its Zionist program. Nae continues; “In 1949, they said to us ‘If you love Israel, if you are a Zionist, you should go there. So we went. 100-150 teenagers; boys and girls aged from 13 to 17. We were part of *Aliyat HaNoar*.” 13 was a very early age, when asked about his parents, he told that they did not know anything until the last minute. He had signed on their behalf the documents to get a passport. “It was prohibited to talk about our journey. They helped me get my passport. They told me to go to Bankalar Avenue with a photo. That was all I did.” He remembers the storm during their trip. What should have been a three day journey lasted two weeks. “We, 25-30 *Turcanos* (Turks), went to a kibbutz where we spent a half day in school and a half day working in the field. We did not know Hebrew. We stayed first in tents. It was snowing for the first time.” “From the *Turcanos* there were only eight of us left in the kibbutz two years following our arrival. They others returned back to Turkey. I stayed. I never regret my decision to migrate to

⁸¹¹ Religious celebration of maturity of a Jewish boy at the age of 13. For the girls it is called Bat-Mitzva and it is held at the age of 12.

⁸¹² It is possible that they used the agricultural villages of JCA in Sultanbeyli, Istanbul to practice (The village where Erol Güney stayed according to Haluk Oral and M. Şeref Özsoy, *Erol Güney'in Ke(n)disi*, (Istanbul Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), 59-64.

Israel. I had to resist many difficulties; I was all alone, I had to go fishing at night to gain some pocket money, during holidays I had no where to go, I was the youngest of our group.” He got married to a local Jewish lady whose family lived in Safed for at least seven generations. He learned Arabic to communicate with her family. After the kibbutz, he joined the army as a marine. “I had to leave my wife on the night of our wedding to go for a secret mission, we had to live in a room of an apartment with four other families as a married man with two children. There was nothing in Israel, we had to buy food and other basic necessities with voucher.” He still have the vouchers and shows them to his grand children to explain the progress of Israel. Following the army, he worked as laborer in constructions and in any job he could find. He entered Bank Leumi as a courier, finished high school and got the necessary degrees to become a bank clerk and left the bank as deputy branch officer. He has four children. He understands Turkish but prefers to speak in Judeo-Spanish. He went to Istanbul for the first time in 1973 to visit his mother. He became an Israeli citizen and left his Turkish identity behind. He does not have much contact with the Turkish community in Israel.

Sara was born in Balat, Istanbul and moved to Israel in 1949 with her family. They could not make it and returned back. She does not remember the reasons of their immigration as she was very little. Then she moved to Israel again in the 1960s. When she wanted to visit Istanbul she learnt that her passport was not valid as her citizenship was revoked. She did not want to talk about this subject, nor the reasons of her decisions to leave Turkey. She was still very upset and offended. She was happy to hear Turkish in the cosmetics store that she was working. She was the one who approached and started to talk, but later she was unreachable with the phone number she gave, and I could not learn more of her story.

Another witness was T. who did not want to reveal her name. T. was part of a Muslim family living in Hasköy, a predominantly Jewish quarter. She was a child when the immigration of the Turkish Jews to Israel changed the demography of Istanbul and the neighborhood she lived in with her family. Born in 1941, She recalls the Jews as a hardworking community. She remembers vividly the fathers and brothers of her friends going to work early in the morning, dressed very chic with a portable food container at hand prepared by their mother or wife. She recalls them as very clean and polite. She and her other Muslim friends switched their light buttons on once a week during Shabbats, as it was prohibited to religious Jews. She remembers the sorrow during the good byes in the neighborhood and how sad it was to see them leaving their homes for Israel. Following their departures, Muslim families replaced the Jews in Hasköy but the harmony and friendship disappeared. T. and her family felt alienated in their neighborhood and moved to Maçka, a cosmopolitan quarter of Istanbul.

There are many stories that remain untold from the Turkish Aliyah of 1948. The most fascinating common property of all the interviewees was their love and nostalgia for Istanbul, for Turkey, and pride for being part of Israel. Walter F. Weiker conducted a research on various Jewish communities from different origins in Israel. He tried to analyze how these communities perceive each other. The Israeli population had difficulties in expressing their feelings about the Turkish Jews in Israel. They answered as “nothing” most of the time when asked to describe Turkish Jews in Israel. They did not know them. On the other hand, they could express easily their feelings about Jews coming from other countries, even if it was pure stereotype. Weiker called the Turkish Jews as ‘the un-seen.’ He says that their lack of presence in politics, lack of involvement in cultural activities, and lack of interaction with the general public were the main reasons for this.

Some of the Turkish Jews explained this result with their history and their collective memory of survival in Turkey.⁸¹³ This result was not surprising as the negative teaching continued to be in effect even in the Jewish state. Turkish Jews living in Israel searched solidarity with other Turks, become a closed community and Turkish language became the main determinant of a common identity.

5.13. Cultural and Economic Relations

Israel was eager to have close relations with Turkey, a non-Arab country in its vicinity. A member of the Liberal Party Baruch Uziel delivered a series of lectures before the establishment of the State of Israel. In these lectures, he stressed the danger for the Jewish state as “the imperialistic idea behind the Arab League, aimed at forming a large Arab Confederation, or empire.” He suggested seeking strong allies among ethnic groups living under the same political conditions and facing the same dangers; Jews in the land of Israel, the Maronites in Lebanon, the Alawites in Syria, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Assyrians, and Persians. This minority alliance could equal the Arabs in number and exceed them in cultural and military power. Uziel was seeking a balance in the region against the Arabs while aware of the difficulties such a minority alliance would face, such as political conflicts between Turks and Kurds or Persians and Kurds, and Islamic bonds that tied these peoples to the Arabs.⁸¹⁴ Turkey’s importance to Israel was not only its geographical location and the strategic value of Turkey in the emerging East/West rivalry, but also its proximity to the Arab world, which made it easier to develop undercover

⁸¹³ Walter F. Weiker, “The Un-Seen Israelis: The Jews from Turkey”, *The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, 1988. Trans. Netsi Kasuto for Tel Aviv Türkiyeliler Derneği Kültür Komisyonu Yayın dizisi, 2.

⁸¹⁴ Ofra Bengio, *Türkiye İsrail, Hayalet İttifaktan Stratejik İşbirliğine* (Istanbul: Erguvan, 2009), 59-65.

contacts at all levels.⁸¹⁵ As historian Ofra Bengio explained; “Israel did not consider Turkey to be within its scope of threat, which was initially limited to the Arab World.”⁸¹⁶ Israel developed foreign policy principles and expanding economic relations was one of them.⁸¹⁷

Turkey had economic relations while Palestine was still under the British Mandate and these have continued ever since. The exports from Turkey to Palestine were valued at 18 million dollars during the years 1946-1949 and Palestine was the third largest foreign market for Turkey.⁸¹⁸ Most of the economic activities were performed by the Jews represented by the Jewish Agency.

The first economic relations between Turkey and Israel started much earlier than the formal recognition in 1949, even before Israel’s establishment. Turkey in practice had already recognized the Jewish Agency in Palestine when it participated in a fair in Tel Aviv in 1936⁸¹⁹ with a Turkish pavilion.⁸²⁰ The Jewish Agency participated in the Izmir International Fair in 1938. The same year, the Foreign Trade Institute founded by the Agency established a branch in Turkey.⁸²¹ The Zionist flag was flown in Izmir during the “Fair of Jewish Industry in Palestine” in 1945.⁸²²

⁸¹⁵ Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece, Uneasy relations in the East Mediterranean* (New Jersey: Frank Cass & Co, 1987), 4.

⁸¹⁶ Dan Arbell, “The U.S. – Turkey – Israel Triangle” *Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings* Analysis Paper No 34, October 2014.

⁸¹⁷ Ofra Bengio, *Türkiye İsrail, Hayalet İttifaktan Stratejik İşbirliğine* (Istanbul: Erguvan, 2009), 59-65.

⁸¹⁸ Atay Akdevelioğlu, Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, “İsrail’le ilişkiler” *Türk Dış Politikası* Volume I 1919-1980. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 643.

⁸¹⁹ “Tel Aviv (Filistin) Şark Panayırı” advertisement in *Cumhuriyet* April 4th, 1936.

⁸²⁰ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 10.

⁸²¹ George Gruen, “Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence” Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 22-23.

⁸²² *Ibid.*

Just a month after the creation of the State of Israel, on June 30, 1948, Turkey and Israel signed a postal agreement. There was a need for this service as stated in an article published in *Şalom* on April 29th 1948.⁸²³ The agreement was severely protested by Arab countries. Turkey defended its decision by the fact that there were more than 100,000 Turkish citizens living in Israel and the decision was made out of humanitarian concerns.⁸²⁴

Turkey's Prime Minister Celal Bayar met with Israeli President Chaim Weizman and the head of the Jewish Agency political department Moshe Shertok in 1948 to discuss export opportunities for Turkey to the U.S. with the help of American Jews. They reached an agreement on a direct Turkish Maritime Line to Haifa and Tel Aviv. Turkey also authorized representatives of the Jewish Agency to facilitate the migration of the European Jews to Palestine via Turkey.⁸²⁵

The Turkish intention to cultivate economic relations had already begun with the Jewish community in Palestine.⁸²⁶ Another commercial transaction that angered the Arabs was the Turkish agricultural exports to Israel. Turkey became an important resource for Israel, a state that could not produce enough for its population which increased rapidly due to an influx of Holocaust survivors from Europe and immigrants from the Middle East.⁸²⁷ To secure the imports from Turkey, Israel sent for the first time a plane with the

⁸²³ "Posta anlaşması" *Şalom* newspaper, April 29th, 1948

⁸²⁴ Atay Akdevelioğlu, Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "İsrail'le ilişkiler" *Türk Dış Politikası* Volume I 1919-1980. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 640.

⁸²⁵ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 23-24.

⁸²⁶ In 1946 Palestine ranked third largest importer of Turkish goods. In 1947 Palestine bought five times as much as it sold to Turkey. Israel had become a major market for surplus Turkish commodities; George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 61-62.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid*, 66.

Israeli flag to Istanbul in August 1948. Turkey permitted the plane to land without diplomatic recognition saying that the crew had valid British Palestinian passports.⁸²⁸ After the recognition of Israel on March 28th, 1949, official agreements increased gradually.⁸²⁹ According to *Şalom* newspaper dated August 1948, *Son Saat* newspaper declared that Israel had demanded to export melon, watermelon, and eggs from Turkey. Eggs were already exported to Israel but the fruits were added as their prices were decreased.⁸³⁰

In November 1950, El-Al started regular weekly flights to Istanbul.⁸³¹ An air transport agreement was signed in Ankara on February 5, 1951 with Israel, but Turkey did not invite any journalists not wanting the agreement to be publicized.⁸³² This was a typical example of the future relations between Turkey and Israel; cooperation in secrecy. Relations between the countries maintained a low profile publicly, while inside closed doors a secret cooperation, especially in intelligence, was going on since 1958. That year, a secret meeting was held between Prime Minister of Turkey Adnan Menderes, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, Prime Minister of Israel David Ben Gurion and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel Golda Meir in Ankara.⁸³³

Following the recognition of Israel by Turkey, many friendship encounters were organized. In March 1950 Fenerbahçe soccer team visited Israel⁸³⁴ and in June 1950, the Israeli soccer team Hapoel visited Istanbul for friendly soccer matches. On October 28,

⁸²⁸ Ibid, 67.

⁸²⁹ Avram Leyon, "Türkiye-İsrail Ticaret anlaşması" *Şalom* June 9th, 1949

⁸³⁰ "Relasyones komersiyales entre la Turkiya i Yisrael" *Şalom* newspaper August 19th, 1948.

⁸³¹ George Gruen, "Turkey, Israel & The Palestine Question: A Study in the Diplomacy of Ambivalence" Unpublished PhD thesis Columbia University, 1970, 148.

⁸³² Ibid, 149.

⁸³³ Ofra Bengio, *Türkiye İsrail, Hayalet İttifaktan Stratejik İşbirliğine* (Istanbul: Erguvan, 2009)

⁸³⁴ Fenerbahçe Preparatory matches 1950 <http://www.fenerbahcem.gen.tr/Hazirlik-maclari-1950-1959.html> (Accessed on October 30th, 2014)

1950, the two countries for the first time had an international soccer match in Tel Aviv and then in Istanbul. After the match in Istanbul, technical director of Israeli national team Laszlo Szekelly became Fenerbahçe's technical director for the years 1951 to 1953.⁸³⁵

In 1952, Israel erected a monument in honor of the Ottoman pilots whose plane crashed in 1914 in Kibbutz Haon. On January 5, 1953, a new forest named after the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was planted in Mount Carmel, Israel. The president of Israel Yitzhak Ben-Zvi was present in the inauguration ceremony together with Turkey's *chargé d'affaires* to Israel Şefket İstinyeli.

Israel participated in the Izmir International Fair in the summer of 1952. Turkish President Celal Bayar, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Turkish Ministry of Economy and Commerce Fethi Çelikbaş, and Israel's commercial attaché Moshe Gali were present at the inauguration ceremony of the Israeli stand at the exhibition.⁸³⁶ A day after a 7.4 magnitude earthquake hit Kütahya, Israel sent relief aid in an Israeli force cargo plane on March 18, 1953.

Three vessels of the Israeli navy visited Istanbul on July 7, 1954. Şalom Newspaper announced the arrival of the Israeli navy with the headline: "Friendly Israeli navy came to Istanbul and saluted the city with 21 artillery fire."⁸³⁷ The cooperation between naval forces started with the meeting of Israeli Colonel Shlomo Ereil and Turkish Admiral Rıdvan Korol. Navy officers visited Atatürk Monument in Taksim, Istanbul and marched down Taksim Square saluting the public.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁵ Technical directors of Fenerbahçe. <http://www.turkfutbolu.net/tarih/teknik.html> (Accessed on October 30, 2014)

⁸³⁶ Alon Liel and Can Yirik, *Turkish-Israeli relations 1949-2010* (Istanbul: Istanbul Kültür Üniversitesi, 2010), 42-43.

⁸³⁷ "La Vijita de la flota Israelyana" *Şalom* Newspaper July 13rd 1954

⁸³⁸ Alon Liel and Can Yirik, *Turkish-Israeli relations 1949-2010* (Istanbul: Istanbul Kültür Üniversitesi, 2010), 52-55.

Until the Suez crisis in 1956, the bilateral relations between the two countries developed rapidly. Turkey opened a valuable alternative to Israel facing economic boycott from the Arab states. On April 29, 1955, President Ismet İnönü attended Israel's Independence Day reception in Ankara. At the same time, the relations with World Jewry developed in a way that World Jewish Congress (WJC) deputies visited Turkey in September 1952. Turkish Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü said to the representatives of WJC that there was no discrimination among Turkish citizens on the basis of their religious belief or racial origin.⁸³⁹

5.14. The Life in Turkey for the Ones who Stayed

During the large scale immigration of Turkish Jews to Israel, the members of the high and middle classes preferred to stay in Turkey. The faith in the Republican dream of becoming equal citizens was already destroyed with the Capital Tax but they tried to do the best in the present conditions. There was a liberal trend in the country as members of minority groups were already elected to the parliament; a democratic atmosphere had started in the country. The election of the Democratic Party in 1950 created an atmosphere of hope as freedom of expression and democracy prevailed. The DP supported a liberal economy. There was an expectation that the government would support the private sector. Equality of all the citizens was one of the major points in the DP's election commitments. The DP was supported by minorities and *dönme(s)* which balanced the Islamic movement inside the party and gave hope to Turkish Jews about the future of Turkish-Israeli relations as well. There was also discussions about returning the losses suffered under Capital Tax

⁸³⁹ "No religious discrimination in Turkey, minister tells WJC aides" *JTA*, <http://www.jta.org/1952/09/24/archive/no-religious-discrimination-in-Turkey-minister-telis-w-j-c-aides> (Accessed on January 14th, 2016)

but this expectation did not realize.⁸⁴⁰ This sentiment can be seen in the bold articles of Şalom.

The establishment of the State of Israel gave confidence and security to Turkish Jews as they were feeling that they were no longer alone in the world. Now they had a place that welcomed them no matter who they were, as the right of return was one of the first legislations of the newborn state. Turkish Jews were also feeling secure as Israel was an advocate and guarantor of Jewish rights in the world. Fighting for the rights of the Holocaust survivors and Nazi hunting were indicative of this. On the other hand, Turkish Jews still suffered from the accusation of dual loyalty. Their positive sentiments toward Israel was perceived as a betrayal to Turkish Republic.

Democratic Party victory was also one of the reasons that encouraged the Turkish Jews to come back from Israel.⁸⁴¹ Geographical proximity and the fact that they had go by their own will made the decision to return easier. It was like a trial period for those who could not make it in Israel. There were 34,647 Turkish immigrants to Israel from 1948 to 1952. 8.6% of them later returned to Turkey, meaning 2980 people.⁸⁴² Those returned were happy to do so, saying that they could not bear the hard living conditions of Israel.

The press condemned those who migrated and those who returned back as well. Nationalist newspaper *Hür Adam* (Free Man) criticized them as ungrateful and disloyal to Turkey. They asked the government not to give them permission to enter. Sedat Simavi

⁸⁴⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Devlet'in Örnek Yurttaşları (1950-2003)*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009), 12-27.

⁸⁴¹ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 319.

⁸⁴² *Ibid*, 312.

from Hürriyet newspaper said “Jews expelled from Europe found a state of their own in Palestine and did all they could to go to Tel Aviv. Turkish Jews forgot that their real country is where they have lived for centuries and there is nothing to compare with European vagabonds.”⁸⁴³ Another critique came from Izak Yaeş, a Turkish journalist who started to publish *La Verdad* (the truth) newspaper in Israel; “Those who prepare to return to Turkey, don’t forget the families who came before you and lost their children in the Independence War. You may have food, job, apartments there but you will not find freedom.”⁸⁴⁴ Journalist Sabetay Leon from *El Tiempo* newspaper wrote, “Those who returned to Istanbul are the reasons for the articles degrading the Israeli people and the great project of Zionism.”⁸⁴⁵ For the Foreign Ministry of Israel, those who returned were people with weak characters.⁸⁴⁶

After the Aliyah wave, the demographic composition of the Jewish community in Turkey changed. There were 76,965 Jews in Turkey according to 1945 census. This number was reduced to 45,995 in 1955.⁸⁴⁷ The overall income average has increased and the financial burden of the community declined with 1948 Aliyah wave, but the community lost its energy as the idealist youth as well as the intellectuals had moved to Israel; the Jewish press lost important pens. With their diminished population, Turkish Jews worked harder to Turkify themselves, affecting their Jewish identity. It was easier for the Jews to assimilate now because in general the bourgeoisie in the community that

⁸⁴³ Ibid, 320-324.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid, 325.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid, 326.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid, 327.

⁸⁴⁷ Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, “Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project” *Cahiers d’etudes sur la Mediterranee orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999):142.

was in favor of it stayed in Turkey, while the religious and conservative left for Israel.⁸⁴⁸

While many Jewish communities in Anatolia disappeared and the Jewish population concentrated in Istanbul, the Turkish Jewish community became more homogenous; secular, middle class, speaking Turkish as its mother tongue.

⁸⁴⁸ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 369.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The Second World War was a ruthless war that lasted from 1939 to 1945 and extended across Europe, Eastern Asia, and the South Pacific. The causes of the war were rooted in the aftermath of the First World War and the effects of the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the war. In Italy, Benito Mussolini emerged as a powerful leader who promised the people that he would make Italy a well-respected state again. He promised to create a well-organized, efficient, and militaristic state that promoted nationalist pride. Adolf Hitler watched Mussolini's rise to power and employed similar strategies himself as Germany was one of the big losers of the First World War as well. He built up a strong police force and the largest army in Europe. Hitler's rise was assisted by the chaos created from the global economic depression. Hitler's National Socialist (Nazi) Party and Mussolini's Nationalist Fascist Party gained support for their opposition to Communism and their militaristic nationalism. Hitler claimed that the German people were stronger and more intelligent than any other race and that Germany could survive only if it got rid of the weak people. Jews and many other minority groups were considered to be inferior. In the course of the war, the Nazis killed over 6 million Jews and invaded most countries in Europe.

Fascism, a political system in which the state has all the power, there is no freedom of speech, and a powerful person is the head of the state with strong army and police force to keep order, also appeared in Japan, Spain and Argentina. The rise of a Communist state in Russia, on the other hand, paralleled the rise of fascist regimes. Joseph Stalin created a totalitarian regime that collectivized agriculture, focused on industrial growth, and emphasized the central control of the government. The regime's control over its citizens was total; 8 to 12 million citizens died under Stalin for treason or other reasons before the

Second World War.

The political atmosphere in Europe deeply affected Turkey. In 1923, when the Republic was established, European countries have stepped back from democracy under the influence of fascist and socialist ideology. The new country took the statist and centralized economic management and its understanding of politics became more authoritarian. Following the Second World War, the multi-party system was introduced in Turkey, but this was not enough for true democratization as during the Cold War expressions of dissent were regarded as separatism.⁸⁴⁹

Since the establishment of the Republic, Turkey was fighting against rebellions, continued with the reform agenda necessary to enter the Western political system, and persisted with assimilative measures to create a unique national identity. When the Second World War broke out, the government used the security pretext to further increase its control and gain unchallenged authority. The securitization of daily life and the economic measures taken by the state was felt strongly by the Turkish public. The fascist wind over Europe and the Soviet threat created fear and extreme pressure in Turkey, a neutral state during almost all war.

For Turkey, the ongoing fight in Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews was a struggle between two communities. Following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Turkey tried to be neutral during the war between Israel and Arab states. The State of Israel received almost immediate recognition from the United States and the Soviet Union. Due to Arab criticism, Turkey did not grant official recognition to the Jewish state

⁸⁴⁹ Kemal Özden, "Local Government Reforms in Turkey: Administrative and Political Background" *New Public Management in Turkey: Local government Reform*. Ed. Yüksel Demirkaya (New York: Routledge, 2016), 24-51.

until Israel applied for the United Nations membership. Turkey also feared that the Soviet Union would use this new state to spread its ideology in the region. When Turkey recognized the new state in 1949, it defended its decision to recognize the Jewish state by saying that Israel is a reality which more than 30 countries had already recognized.

Israel was eager to have close relations with Turkey, a non-Arab country with strategic value in its vicinity. For Turkey, Israel was a gate to the Western world. Establishing good relations with the powerful United States, to join NATO and gain American financial support was the main reason to recognize Israel.

Turkey had economic relations with the Jewish Agency while Palestine was still under the British Mandate and these relations continued ever since. Turkey and Israel have signed a postal agreement and Turkey has permitted an Israeli commercial plane to land even before the formal recognition. Following Turkish recognition, cultural and economic relations expanded rapidly. The visit to Istanbul of the Israeli navy in 1954 is a significant event. Israeli marines marched down Taksim Square saluting the curious crowd. Even though the Turkish public had a history with its Jewish minority, they did not react to this incident. Israel was a new country with a clean record, Turkish public did not have any prejudice against it.

Until the Suez Crisis in 1956, the bilateral relations between the two countries developed rapidly. Turkey offered a valuable alternative to Israel facing economic boycott from the Arab states. However, relations between the countries maintained a low profile publicly due to Arab criticism, while behind closed doors a secret cooperation in intelligence, was established on the secret meeting between the prime ministers of both countries in 1958.

As for the Turkish Jews, the anti-Semitic articles influenced by rising nationalist feelings during the 1920s led, in the 1930s and 1940s, to anti-Semitic opinions in Pan-Turk newspapers, often influenced by discriminative Nazi race theories. While assimilative measures of economic and cultural Turkification were in full effect, Turkish Jews were struggling between trying to be accepted as equal citizens and questioning their future in Turkey. They were repeatedly forced to express their gratitude and loyalty to the state. The Jews tried to stay apolitical and maintain good relations with the state. However, with the rise of fascism and the Nazi influence, Thrace became a scene of pogrom for the Jews in 1934. While some emigrated from Turkey, the rest did not lose hope and tried to become financially secure and strictly apolitical. However Turkish Jews suffered from discriminative legislations; the conscription of the twenty classes and the Capital Tax. Another survival tactic of the Turkish Jews disappeared with this crashing tax. It was a definitive moment for the Turkish Jews when they realized that a safe future in Turkey with economic empowerment was impossible to achieve. With this unjust and legally discriminative law, Turkish Jews realized they would not be accepted as equal members of the Republic. This occurred during the Second World War, at a time when they had nowhere to go and they feared for their security in the case that Germany entered Turkey. All of these developments motivated Turkish Jews to migrate.

With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish Jews were eager to continue their relations with the state, based on loyalty in return for their safety and be part of the new Republican ideal. The discrimination and alienation they faced in Turkey taught them to be defensive and to not publicly voice their complaints. This resulted with a tendency to turn inwards, looking for a solidarity with their co-religionists as an unspoken defense mechanism. The fear they revealed a need to transfer this negative

teaching to the new generation. However, the heavy toll of the Thrace events led to the funding of secret societies. Their despair against the Republic led to a Zionist movement in Turkey. These organizations tried to form a new identity based on religion and promoted the immigration to Palestine. The teaching Hebrew, the history of Judaism and the following of news from Palestine intensified.⁸⁵⁰ The main duty of these organizations was to prepare them to their life in Palestine, to organize and help them immigrate and to protect each other. Jewish identity become more important.

During interviews with Turkish Aliyah of 1948 and while reading memoirs, one found out that the *Betar* (Revisionist) Movement was very powerful in Turkey. No one in the Turkish Jewish Community talks about these secret groups openly and there is no archive for their program. One could conclude if Betar members were more numerous which one doubts, or the influence of education the youth received was more powerful. Unfortunately, one could not deliberate an answer to why Betar, the Revisionist Zionist Movement was powerful in Turkey.

Jews from all over the world were pulled to Israel, a new actor established with its own difficulties in a predominantly Arab region. Israel, established as a state based on ethnicity, was isolated in its region even though it had international support. Strength, power, and courage was needed to create this new country and sacrifice was required to maintain it. Zionists promoted the word *sabra* (the fruit of a Mediterranean cactus) to reflect this. Sabra, a nick name for Israeli born generation, was first used to distinguish the native Jews of Palestine from the newcomers. Then it transformed into the image of an Israeli Jew who fights for his or her rights and is willing to die if necessary, who is

⁸⁵⁰ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri – Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), 259.

ready for the hard work necessary to build the country. A *sabra* is at the same time friendly and loyal to his/her community. Being a *sabra* was a privilege and an open call of migration for the youth. Sacrifice itself for the state was an important attribute for a society building process based on security and self defense.⁸⁵¹

There was a wave of nationalism and of patriotism that the youth of the Turkish Jewish Community was influenced. Youth from every social class left Turkey. The idea of a state of their own was alluring. They were strongly persuaded to the cause and generally disregarded their parents who would ask them to stay, separating many families with this decision. Some of these parents moved with their children or moved to reunite with their families.

Besides the Zionist youth, the ones who migrated to Israel were trying to start a new life there. The lower middle class decided to move, as there was little security in Turkey. It is said that when they heard that the State of Israel was established, there were people who ran home, gathered their things, and immigrated immediately as they did not have many possessions to liquidate. The Jewish state declared that it welcomed all the world Jewry. For the most part, they had little reason to stay in Turkey, sold their properties at a cheap price and left.⁸⁵² Turkish Jews went mostly to Batyam and created a little Turkey there, where they continued to live as they used to in Turkey. The majority of the first generation did not become 'Israeli' but stayed as 'Turkish Jews living in Israel.' A similar trend can be seen in the Turkish Jews recently moved to Israel. They prefer to be together in the same neighborhood. Ra'anana became the new Batyam for them.

⁸⁵¹ Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: a Critical analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press,2006), 486.

⁸⁵² Ayhan Aktar and Soli Özel, "Turkish Attitudes vis-a-vis The Zionist Project" *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no.28, (June-December, 1999):142.

During the interviews, one realized that those who left the Turkish Jewish Community in Israel defined themselves as Israeli, and were more willing to speak about their life in Turkey and the reasons that made them leave. On the other hand, those who stayed inside the Turkish Jewish Community in Israel and married another Turk, which make up the majority, tended to hide their names and were reluctant to discuss their experience in Turkey and instead preferred to talk about their success in Israel. They were proud of Israel and their achievements there, but at the same time they had nostalgia for Turkey. They continue to get together in Turkish locals, eat Turkish food, or host Turkish music nights. Turkish language became more and more important for them in Israel as it was a bond to their familiar life back in Turkey. A Turkish Jew from Heybeliada in Istanbul expressed his feelings as; “We could not speak, write, or read in Hebrew. We felt nostalgia for our life, our friends in Turkey.”⁸⁵³

Those who stayed as part of the Turkish Jewish Community in Israel were eager to talk about their success in Israel; how they overcame all the difficulties and how they started a new life in Israel. One had to ask in many different ways about their life in Turkey, if their families were affected by the Thrace events in 1934 or Capital Tax in 1942 and their reasons to move to Israel. They did not answer directly. They had a simple answer to all these questions; the State of Israel was born and they wanted to be part of this new Jewish country who welcomed them. Another similarity was that they were all affected deeply from the Capital Tax. They have suffered from all the Turkification steps of the Republic and wanted to start a new life in Israel which gave them many advantages including free education and job opportunities.

⁸⁵³ Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 308.

Their desire to discuss their success in Israel was reminiscent of an ongoing discussion between the Turkish Jews living in Turkey and the Turkish Jews who immigrated to Israel. Those who live in Israel criticize those who stayed in Turkey in almost every major negative event; this can be anti-Semitic statements or issues such as freedom of expression, democracy. Turkish Jews in Israel respond by stating that those that remain in Turkey should either immigrate or face the consequences of their decision to remain, suffering as unequal citizens. This is a deep rift between the two communities.

The common, insensitive explanation is that the Jews from lower economic classes and those who were jobless moved to Israel. The Turkish Jews living in Israel find this generalization offensive. However, this conclusion is widespread, as almost every Turkish Jew I interviewed in Turkey spoke about the porters and prostitutes that moved to Israel. They were portrayed as ignorant and as a financial burden to the community. However, it is very difficult to label a minority who suffered from discriminative measures of the Republic as poor or ignorant because the Thrace Events, Twenty Classes, and most importantly the Capital Tax affected them deeply and undermined their economic security. From these interviews, it is apparent that those who chose to emigrate to Israel continued to feel the need to justify their decision and do not fit entirely within Israeli society.

The *kayadez* that dominated as a survival strategy of the Turkish Jews is still vivid, even today, more than 60 years following their immigration. The idea that ‘something may happen to my beloved still living in Turkey could be the main reasoning as most of them defined Israel as a democracy, underlining the freedom of expression that exists there. In both cases, the third generation define themselves as Israeli. They did not know Turkish but were very familiar with the Turkish-Sephardic cuisine.

It was not easy to convince those who stayed in the Turkish Jewish Community in Israel to speak about their life back in Turkey, the difficulties they encountered and their reasons for migration. Even though they remembered vividly, they were unwilling to express them openly. It seems that their protection shield developed in Turkey of ‘staying low profile and not criticize the state’ migrated with them to Israel. They may have concerns for their family members still living in Turkey. As one will find out in this research, the first generation that immigrated to Israel was unknown to the general Israeli public. They formed a close community of Turkish Jews in their new country. The Turkish Jews preferred to stay mainly in Turkish Jewish Community, trying to retain their Turkish culture and identity. They continued to follow Turkish news and drama series. Judeo-Spanish and Turkish are still living in this community. They formed various immigrant associations to help the new immigrants coming from Turkey. There are 100,000 Turkish Jews in Israel today, including the first generation born there. The *Aliyah* number differs each year, but in average it is 100 individuals per year, a relatively low number.⁸⁵⁴ There is no official census on the Jewish population in Turkey but it is usually said to be around 18,000.

Following the Second World War, a new state was established in the Middle East. During the Cold War, the Soviet threat led Turkey to recognize the State of Israel. Following its creation, a surprisingly high number of Turkish Jews immigrated to this new country. The aim of this study is to investigate the first three decades of the Republic for its public including the religious minorities of Turkey, Turkish public reaction to the establishment and recognition of the State of Israel by Turkey and the reasons of the mass

⁸⁵⁴ Information from Nesim Güveniř, deputy chairman of the Union of Jews from Turkey in Israel; April 14th, 2015.

Jewish immigration out of Turkey. To reach this aim one had investigated memoirs of governmental officials and Turkish Jews both in Turkey and Israel, checked the Turkish press between 1936 and 1956, and conducted interviews with Turkish Jews who migrated to Israel during 1940s. This research to this historical period shows that the formation of the Turkish Republic and the establishment of the State of Israel had big impacts on Turkish and Israeli public opinion.

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