

1 Framing the Arab Revolt

The Deaths of Zvi Danenberg and Israel Chazan, 15 April 1936

The Arab revolt from 1936 to 1939 – *al-Thawra al-Kubra*, ‘the Great Revolt’ in Arabic – was a popular uprising by Palestinians battling British Mandate rule in Palestine and Jewish immigration to the country.¹ An intense counter-insurgency pacification campaign and an immense deployment of British troops crushed the rebellion. This is the subject of the book. The spark for the revolt came on the evening of 15 April 1936 when Arab gunmen stopped a convoy of vehicles on the Nablus–Tulkarm road and shot three Jews in one of the vehicles, two of whom died. This was another outrage in the cycle of attacks and counter-attacks between Jews and Palestinians stretching back to 1920 but these deaths ignited a three-year nationwide rebellion. *Kufiyyat* hid the faces of the gunmen at the roadblock who demanded money and stole £P.275 and so it seemed that they were bandits there to rob the convoy.² In the cab of one truck there were two Jews, Zvi (or Tzvi) Danenberg (or Danenburg) in the driver’s seat accompanied by Israel Chazan (or Hazan). Along the row of halted vehicles the gunmen asked who was Jewish, adding for the benefit of their victims: ‘Go and inform the police and the press that we are robbing this money to purchase arms and take vengeance for the murder of the Holy Sheikh, Izza Din El Kassam.’³ The gunmen were Qassamites (*Qassamiyyun*) of the Palestinian Black Hand band (*‘Isabat al-Kaff al-Aswad*) proclaiming their allegiance to the late Muslim cleric, nationalist, and insurgent leader, Shaykh ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, shot dead by British Palestine police in a gun battle at Ya‘bad village near Jenin in November 1935. The armed band seized a Jew in a car, a man called

¹ The Army awarded the campaign clasp ‘Palestine’ to the medal ribbon for the General Service Medal (1918) for service, 19 April 1936–3 September 1939.

² *al-Liwa’ [The Province]* (Jerusalem) (16 April 1936).

³ The Murder of Chazan and Danenburg, pp. 1–2, S25/22765, CZA. This record informs the account here of the killings.

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Nafchi, who was travelling with Knoll, a German Christian, and they forced Nafchi into the cab of the truck with Danenberg and Chazan. They left Knoll behind after he protested that he was not Jewish; in other such robberies, Jews had escaped by pretending to be Arabs.⁴ The gunmen then shot point-blank the three Jews in the truck, Danenberg and Chazan fatally but neither died at once.⁵ There is no record of what happened to the wounded Nafchi. The two fatally wounded men were taken to local hospitals and Chazan appears to have died the next day. The Palestinian press recorded the attack not as a bandit outrage but the work of anti-Jewish Qassamite fighters who killed three Jews.⁶ Chazan's funeral was set for 17 April but the day before it was held gunmen shot two Arab workers occupying a hut on the highway between Petah Tikva and Yarkona. One of the two men, Hasan Abu Ras (Hassin Abu Ruz in Jewish files), died on the spot; the assassins mortally wounded the other man, Salim al-Masri, who died on the 17th. When the two men heard knocking at the door of their abode, Hasan Abu Ras 'had a premonition of ill and was afraid to open the door,' said al-Masri before he died.⁷ The Arabic press suggested that the murders were Jewish *Etzel* revenge action for the earlier murders of Danenberg and Chazan. Jews argued that al-Masri thought the attackers to be Christians as they were bareheaded and dressed in khaki shorts and European jackets, or they could have been Arabs. The 'only basis for the suggestion that the assailants were Jews was apparently the fact that they were dressed in khaki shorts and jackets. It is submitted that this form of dress is not uncommon amongst the Arab workingmen of this particular neighbourhood.'⁸ Jews pursued the defence that the attack was the work of fellow Arabs, pointing to Abu Ras being a 'notorious thief' known to the police who had informed on other Arabs a few days before being shot.⁹ At Chazan's funeral in Tel Aviv on the morning of 17 April, as the cortege passed the Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue on Levinsky Street,¹⁰ tempers flared when rumours spread

⁴ Police HQ Haifa to DC Haifa, 28 March 1938, Scrivenor Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 377, p. 136, WL.

⁵ Chazan died on the spot in some accounts: Abigail Jacobson and Moshe Naor, *Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2016), p. 151.

⁶ *al-ʿjamiʿa al-Islamiyya* [*The Islamic Community*] (Jaffa) (16 April 1936).

⁷ The Murder of Chazan and Danenburg, p. 3, S25/22765, CZA; Matiel Mogannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (London: Herbert Joseph, 1937), p. 293.

⁸ The Murder of Chazan and Danenburg, p. 3, S25/22765, CZA.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ According to the current list of the Central Rabbinate there are five synagogues called Eliyahu Hanavi in Tel Aviv, one of which is at 44 Levinsky Street or at 13 Zevulun Street at the crossroads of the two roads.

that Danenberg had also died. Jewish hotheads at the funeral shouted, 'let us go to Jaffa' to attack Palestinians there, some sang the Zionist (and later Israeli national) anthem *Hatikva*, and some raised flags, at which point the police intervened forcefully to disperse the crowd, injuring fifteen in the ensuing mêlée. Official accounts detailed three Jews killed in the first ambush and three more murdered in rioting on 17 April at one of the funerals.¹¹ Jews attacked Palestinians and vice versa in and around Tel Aviv during and after the funeral, and by 19 April 1936 a countrywide disturbance prompted by the killings on the 15th had erupted amongst Palestinians. Curiously, Chazan's grave in Tel Aviv's Trumpeldor Old Cemetery records that he died on 19 April while Danenberg's tombstone in the same place dates his death to the 20th, suggesting that they died as the revolt started.

The revolt symbolically started on 19 April 1936. It was the moment when Palestinians escalated and sustained countrywide attacks on the British and Jews, and began a general strike, organised by local National Committees, and directed centrally from 25 April by an Arab Higher Committee (AHC) standing for the six Palestinian political parties and the Husayni and Nashashibi family blocs, and whose composition is detailed in Appendix E. The British responded rapidly and decisively, forewarned by earlier outbreaks of violence between Jews and Palestinians in 1920, 1921, and 1929, and anti-British Palestinian riots in 1933, which presaged a recrudescence of inter-communal and anti-British trouble. On the same day, 19 April 1936, the British Palestine High Commissioner, General Sir Arthur Wauchope, using the powers vested in him by Article IV of the Palestine (Defence) Order in Council of 1931 issued the Emergency Regulations 1936 that formed the repressive legal basis for British counter-rebel measures, as will be seen in the next chapter.¹² The British also flooded the country with soldiers, mobilising and moving in troops to supplement Palestine's permanent garrison of two infantry battalions and RAF-manned armoured cars, as detailed in the order-of-battle appendix (Appendix A). The British called first on their Egyptian garrison, but the scale of the fighting forced them to marshal regiments from across the empire. The revolt endured in its first phase to 12 October 1936 when a ceasefire paved the way for a British mission to Palestine headed by Lord Peel to decide the country's future,

¹¹ *A Survey of Palestine, Prepared in December 1945 and January 1946 for the Information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry* [1946] (Washington, DC: IPS, 1991), i, p. 35.

¹² Emergency Regulations 1936 in Supplement No. 2 to the *Palestine Gazette Extraordinary* No. 584 of 19 April 1936 in *Ordinances, Regulations, Rules, Orders and Notices. Government of Palestine. Annual Volume for 1936. Volume 2* (Jerusalem: Government Printing Press, 1937), pp. 259ff.

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the British Palestine Royal (or Peel) Commission of 1937. Palestinians adamantly opposed the conclusion of the Peel Commission on 22 June 1937 to partition the country into Arab and Jewish areas and this prompted renewed action from Qassamite hitmen who ignited a second phase of the revolt by shooting nine times and killing British District Commissioner Lewis Andrews on his way to church in Nazareth on 26 September 1937. The assassins killed alongside Andrews his bodyguard, British Constable Peter McEwan. Palestinians hated Andrews for his support for Jewish settlements in Galilee: 'one of the strongest enemies of the Arabs,' notes an Arab author, while a Jewish fighter interviewed in 1950 recalled how 'he wanted us to organize a Jewish defence organization quite openly.'¹³

The police assiduously tracked down the Black Hand Qassamites responsible for Andrews' death and they arrested hundreds of terrorist suspects as an immediate punishment, while others exacted unofficial reprisals for the killing of Andrews and this book devotes a closing chapter to the extra-judicial dirty war to suppress rebellion in Palestine. Andrews, an Australian, had ridden into Palestine as a soldier with the Australian Light Horse during the First World War and an Australian friend working in the Mandate Government, 'another Light Horseman, was so distressed at Andrew's death that blind drunk and in full evening dress, he staggered about the old city of Jerusalem with a brace of revolvers shooting at every Arab he could see. The Australian was sent home and the matter hushed up.'¹⁴ At the same time, police CID – there was no dedicated Special Branch in Palestine although CID had a political division – tortured suspects arrested after Andrews' death in an empty senior police officer's house and in police cells, what were euphemistically called 'rough measures' where police 'smartened up' prisoners until blood 'spurt' from their noses and ears, elsewhere described euphemistically as 'gentle persuasion,' 'Turkish,' 'Black and Tan,' or 'third degree' methods.¹⁵ This included sexual violence, which

¹³ Subhi Yasin, *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra (fi Filastin) 1936–1939* [*The Great Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–1939*] (Damascus: Shafa 'Amr Haifa, 1959), p. 92; Haganah Member, interviewed 23 March 1950 in Haifa, Alice Hay of Seaton Papers, JRL; Ghassan Kanafani, 'Thawrat 1936–1939 fi Filastin: Khalfiyyat, tafasil wa tahlil' ['The 1936–1939 Revolt in Palestine: Background, Details and Analysis'], *Shu'un Filastiniyya* [*Palestinian Matters*] 6 (January 1972), p. 67.

¹⁴ John Bierman and Colin Smith, *Fire in the Night: Wingate of Burma, Ethiopia and Zion* (New York, NY: Random House, 1999), p. 73; Typed Memoir, Pieces of War, p. 54, Simonds Papers, 08/46/1, IWMD.

¹⁵ High Commissioner to Shuckburgh (CO), 20 October 1938, FO 371/21865, p. 197, TNA; Letter, Burr (Inlying Piquet Haifa) to Father, n.d. [late December 1937], Burr Papers, 88/8/1, IWMD; Jack Binsley, *Palestine Police Service* (Montreux: Minerva, 1996), p. 39; David Smiley, *Irregular Regular* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 1994), pp. 15–16;

was muted, and is discussed further in Appendix C on women and violence, including stories of how some peasant women such as Fatma Ghazzal fought and died in battle against the British.¹⁶ Prison guards tortured and molested one naked female detainee in Bethlehem women's jail and threatened that they would have her raped but as she recounted, 'it seems that they had an order not to rape me.'¹⁷ One rebel, Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, told this author of the rape of male prisoners by Arab guards in British-run prisons, as also allegedly happened in Kenya in the 1950s where askaris sodomised prisoners.¹⁸ Such brutality vividly illustrates the terror of imperial pacification but it was a less powerful repressive tool than the attritional wearing down of the insurgents through legally enforced non-violent or non-lethal punishments of the population, as this book will argue.

The revolt symbolically ended with Britain's White Paper of 17 May 1939 – or 'Black Paper' as the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin (Palestine)* put it – that once the British had crushed the rebellion largely conceded rebel demands to halt Jewish immigration but as many Palestinians never accepted its conclusions sporadic rebel attacks carried on into late 1939 and beyond.¹⁹ The campaign officially ended for the British Army on 3 September 1939. The White Paper was the end point to Britain's adroit diplomatic track to outflank the rebels politically that ran alongside Army counter-rebel tactics that could be 'political' in that they were population-centric and less obviously violent, such as establishing security zones, and favouring certain villages and individuals, but which were not concerned with understanding the political basis for the revolt. The afterword to this book touches on the diplomatic track to isolate rebels, notably the collaboration of Arab rulers in Transjordan, Iraq, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia with the British. British diplomatic moves to

Martin Kolinsky, 'The Collapse and Restoration of Public Security,' in Michael J. Cohen and Martin Kolinsky (eds), *Britain and the Middle East in the 1930s: Security Problems, 1935–39* (London: Macmillan-King's, 1992), p. 157; Letter, Burr (Central Police Billet Box 523 Haifa) to Mother and Father, n.d. [c. May–June 1937], Burr Papers, 88/8/1, IWMD.

¹⁶ This is not to relegate women's role to a footnote but reflects the author's wish to concentrate exiguous source material on women and combat, a pertinent subject considering the focus here on methods of pacification. Ellen Fleischmann's study of urban middle-class women in *The Nation and Its 'New' Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 126 for Ghazzal.

¹⁷ Case of RL, Arrested 15 May 1936 in J&EM Papers, GB165-0161, Box 65, File 5, pp. 7–8 (pp. 122–23 in overall file pagination), MEC.

¹⁸ Author interview, Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, Amman, 21 June 2009, and subsequent e-mail correspondence; Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), pp. 136, 157, 208.

¹⁹ *Filastin [Palestine]* (Jaffa) (17 May 1939), p. 1.

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defeat the rebels evolved alongside the flood of officially sanctioned violence that roiled the country after April 1936 and coerced Palestinians into submission.

**The Death of Shaykh ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam,
 20 November 1935**

The Qassamites who ambushed the vehicle convoy and killed Danenberg and Hazan had been fighting the British and the Jews long before April 1936 and their violent history points to a different periodisation for the Arab revolt. The death of al-Qassam in November 1935 could mark the start of the revolt, or the Qassamite bomb attack on the Jewish settlement of Nahalal in 1932, as could the ‘year zero’ of the 1929 Palestinian–Jewish rioting, or one could go back further to the League of Nations’ assignment of the British Mandate in 1922 or to the Balfour Declaration of 1917.²⁰ Other armed resistance groups such as ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni’s Holy War band (*‘Isabat al-‘Jihad al-Muqaddas*) and the anti-Jewish Green Hand fighters (*al-Kaff al-Akhdar*) were also active before April 1936. This study of the mechanics of the British pacification of Palestine starts on 19 April 1936 as this was the moment when Palestinian resistance peaked to a level demanding an unprecedented deployment of British troops, the activation of repressive legislation, and the establishment of new forms of military rule in Palestine to beat the rebels. Jewish immigration to Palestine, the social and political evolution of the Palestinians, and forms of British colonial rule, which all predate April 1936, are the backdrop to the revolt and explain why it happened; this study focuses on pacification after April 1936, not why the revolt erupted then.

Al-Qassam’s tomb stands in a small walled compound in the derelict Muslim cemetery on the edge of the Israeli town of Nesher near Haifa, what in 1935 was the Palestinian town of Balad al-Shaykh. The dramatis personae appendix (Appendix E) to this book records his full epitaph. The faded inscriptions on the tomb are hard to read, made worse by the original stone having been badly vandalised and later repaired with a new headstone, the broken memorial laid flat and cemented in behind the replacement. Inscribed are Muslim (1354 so 1935–36 in the Christian calendar) and Christian dates for al-Qassam’s death on the broken headstone, the latter placed incorrectly to 19 November 1935. The inscriptions record variously al-Qassam’s death as a Muslim martyr

²⁰ Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab–Israeli Conflict 1929* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015).

(*shahid*), that he was the first to raise the flag of holy war (jihad) for the victory of Islam, and 'may his name be written in history ... together we will be united on al-Qassam's path'; indeed, his band had set off with the slogan 'This is jihad, victory or a martyr's death!'²¹ Carved on al-Qassam's tombstone is the Arabic phrase *husn yaqin* – a clear act of grace or firm conviction. This was the resting place of someone who had led a good life and had had a fitting death. Two of the men who died with al-Qassam on 20 November 1935 are buried alongside him, Ahmad Shaykh Sa'id and Sa'id al-Masri, although one cannot easily decipher their names from the remaining inscriptions.²² It is not clear how many men died with Qassam. The local English-language press reported four 'brigands' killed; other accounts recorded two dead in addition to al-Qassam; Arabic-language newspapers noted a six-hour battle in dense trees with the police (and not the usual cave where police purportedly killed al-Qassam) that left five of the 'jihadist' gang dead and four captured.²³ Before the British trapped al-Qassam and his eight-strong band (up to eleven men in some accounts) near the village of Ya'bad, his unit had shot dead Jewish Palestine police Sergeant Moshe Rosenfeld on 7 November 1935. Rosenfeld is buried in the Gidona Jewish cemetery near Ein Harod with a plaque marking the spot where he died.²⁴ Police CID chief Harold Rice hovered overhead in a light plane for the final gun battle on 20 November 1935 to make sure that his men terminated this existential threat to British power, during which al-Qassam's band fatally shot British police Constable R. C. V. Mott through the lung.²⁵ Mott succumbed to his wound an hour later. Mott was posthumously awarded the King's Police Medal for his bravery at Ya'bad and he is buried in the Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Interred alongside Mott are Lewis Andrews with the epitaph 'Who gave his life for this land' and Andrews' bodyguard, Peter McEwan. The last battle with

²¹ Fieldtrip visit, Neshar Muslim cemetery, 2010; Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), p. 98; for meaning of jihad see Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam: A Reader* (Princeton, NJ: Wiener, 2005), pp. 1–8, 115–16.

²² Mark Sanagan, 'Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Martyr: Rethinking 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam,' *Welt des Islams* 53/3–4 (2013), p. 316.

²³ *Filastin* (21 November 1935); 'British Constable Killed, 1 Hurt, in battle with bandits near Jenin,' *Palestine Post* (21 November 1935); Bruce Hoffman, *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2015), p. 48.

²⁴ Yasin, *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubra*, pp. 27–28; Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion. Volume 2, 1929–1939* (London: Cass, 1977), p. 136. *Filastin* (21 November 1935) reported twenty-two men in al-Qassam's band.

²⁵ 'British Constable Killed, 1 Hurt, in Battle with Bandits near Jenin,' *Palestine Post* (21 November 1935); Correspondence, Ted Horne to Author, 28 September 2016 for Rice in aeroplane.

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al-Qassam's band raged from 5 am to 10 am, during which Qassamites shot Mott as he and fellow officers closed with the enemy. Mott was

endeavouring to close with the gang and in doing so came under fire at point blank range. British Constable Mott in a courageous effort to get still closer exposed himself to fire and he was mortally wounded. He died one and a half hours later ... Mott with his knowledge of the country was in advance of his companions and was actually within 15 metres of the bandits when a bullet through the lungs brought him down. He lay for fully half an hour while his comrades were engaged with the bandits before it was possible to go to his aid.²⁶

Aftershocks of the battle with al-Qassam rippled through Palestine, with the surviving Qassamites captured at the battle in November 1935 getting fourteen-year jail sentences for murder when they finally came to trial in October 1936; Qassamites simultaneously targeted Arab police officers and prosecutors who had helped challenge al-Qassam's band.²⁷

The life and death of al-Qassam prove that there was continuity to Palestinian resistance. His passing also makes us think about the nature of Palestinian resistance and rebel leadership and this helps us to understand the successful British counter-insurgency campaign after 1936. The death of the popular al-Qassam was a potent mobilising national symbol for the Palestinians, comparable to that of the one-armed Jewish fighter Joseph Trumpeldor who was killed in 1920 by Arabs in a battle at the Jewish settlement of Tel Hai. However, while the Jews made the most of Trumpeldor's death and mobilised it for the cause of Jewish self-defence and for the Zionist struggle for a Jewish state, the response from the Palestinian elite nationalist leadership to al-Qassam's death was 'underwhelming'.²⁸ Palestinians were divided between a populist rebel willing to die for their cause and an elite, notable leadership willing to ignore him and so preserve its 'black skin, white masks' comprador power base alongside the colonial authorities.²⁹ Al-Qassam had demanded armed struggle of the Palestinians, proclaiming from the pulpit, 'You are a people of rabbits who are afraid of death and scaffolds and engaged in prattle. You must know that nothing will save us but our arms.'³⁰ The Palestinian nationalist *Istiqlal* (Independence) Party founder Akram Zu'aytir excoriated the elite leadership following al-Qassam's death,

²⁶ *The Palestine Police Force. Annual Administrative Report, 1935*, p. 13; *Palestine Police Magazine* 3/12 (December 1935), p. 6.

²⁷ CID, Jerusalem, by Deputy IG Rice, Periodical Appreciation Summary, 18/36, 7 November 1936, p. 3, L/PS/12/3343, IOR (also in FO 371/20018, TNA).

²⁸ Sanagan, 'Teacher, Preacher, Soldier,' p. 347.

²⁹ As described by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952 in French] (London: Pluto, 1986) but without specific reference to Palestine.

³⁰ In Hoffman, *Anonymous Soldiers*, p. 47.

questioning on 22 November 1935, 'Why did the nation stand on one side regarding the death of al-Qassam' while the mainstream leadership 'stood on the other? Why did you not attend the funeral? Where were the goodwill messages from the Grand Mufti [Hajj Amin al-Husayni], from Raghīb al-Nashashibi ... and Husayn al-Khalidi?'³¹ Zu'aytir might not have had all the facts as other sources record that Raghīb Nashashibi of the National Defence Party (connected to *al-Mua'rada*, the Nashashibi-family-backed Opposition) sent his condolences, as did Jamal al-Husayni of the Palestine Arab Party (linked to *Majlis*, the Husayni-family backed Council), and the leader of the Palestine Youth Congress Party, Ya'qub al-Ghusayn.³² (Al-Qassam may have been a member of *Istiqlal*.³³)

The British echoed Zu'aytir and criticised Palestinian political elites as an effendi class there to control rather than represent the people and 'entirely without courage and will follow any movement that promises a material gain to themselves.'³⁴ Mark Sanagan reinforces this view in his recent account of al-Qassam's death where he puts sharply the case against the notable leadership:

The Palestinian leaders were frightened that al-Qassam's revolt was the beginning of a populist nationalist movement that would no longer look to the traditional leadership who derived power from membership in the notable class or an important family. This was borne out a week later, when the five heads of the Arab parties met with High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope. They made what reads like a last-ditch attempt to convince the Mandate authorities to concede something concrete that might legitimize their leadership in the eyes of a discontent population ... There was good reason for the traditional leadership and the Mandate authorities to be concerned. Al-Qassam's unique blend of a populist syncretic Islam coupled with his charismatic activities made his death a significant moment in the development of Palestinian Nationalism.³⁵

Al-Qassam stood for something, not just himself. Later Palestinian activists such as the Marxist Ghassan Kanafani – killed by a car bomb in Beirut in 1972, allegedly by Israeli agents – saw al-Qassam's potential

³¹ In Sanagan, 'Teacher, Preacher, Soldier,' p. 347. All three men cited were notable Palestinian leaders, Husayn al-Khalidi leading the Palestinian Reform Party and later sitting on the AHC.

³² Samih Hammudah, *Al-Wa'y wa-al-thawrah: dirasah fi-hayah wa-jihad al-Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam 1882–1935 [Awareness and Revolution: A Study in the Life and Struggle of Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam 1882–1935]* (Jerusalem: Arab Studies Association, 1986), p. 88.

³³ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, pp. 137–38.

³⁴ Nazareth Town, Political, Agitators, Gang Leaders and Terrorists, Palestine Police Force: Report from Tiberias: M/4212/8, ISA; Summary of Intelligence, Palestine and Transjordan, 4 November 1938, by Wing Commander Ritchie at GHQ [22/38], CO 732/81/10, TNA.

³⁵ Sanagan, 'Teacher, Preacher, Soldier,' pp. 348–49.

and highlighted his appeal to the masses as a charismatic populist leader who had exposed the reactionary traditional leadership, and whose slogan to 'die as martyrs' was revolutionary in a 'Guevarist' sense; he was the 'initiator of an advanced revolutionary focus,' and wanted to build rebel base areas as a precursor to revolt.³⁶ Al-Qassam was undoubtedly a revolutionary with 'clear political and military aims,' and his movement a 'complete novelty' in how it encompassed lower strata of Palestinian society and gave expression to their discontent.³⁷ But he was an Islamic revolutionary and comparable to the Latin American Marxist Che Guevara in that both men excited people for a political cause, and that security forces thus saw them as existential threats and so hunted them down and killed them. Al-Qassam had 'clearly touched a deep chord in the popular imagination, and was much more closely in tune with Palestinian sentiment than was the elite leadership,' in the words of a contemporary Palestinian academic.³⁸ The Palestinian notable-religious Husayni-family leader Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the 'Grand Mufti' above and uncle to 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, had rejected a call from al-Qassam to coordinate resistance as conditions were 'not yet ripe,' and only the poor supported al-Qassam and attended his funeral: 'The leaders adopted an indifferent attitude, which they soon realized was a mistake. For the killing of al-Qassam was an occurrence of outstanding significance,' notes Kanafani.³⁹ Hajj Amin's position on the Government payroll complicated any overt support he might have had for al-Qassam. The Palestinians were split between Qassamites who wanted jihad-led armed combat and political-religious mobilisation of the peasantry, but who had lost their leader, and elite nationalist notable leaders who believed in political negotiation with the British and peaceful demonstration, and who invoked religion only when it might help the nationalist cause.⁴⁰ The Palestine Communist Party (PCP) never bridged the gap, instead preferring to link up with the left wing of the *Istiqlal* Party and to leave the fighting to others. The populist Islamism of al-Qassam tinged with rural-style socialism was more influential than communism in the 1930s. Only later in the 1960s did Palestinian nationalists in the PLO

³⁶ Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestine: The 1936–1939 Revolt* [1972 in Arabic] (London: Tricontinental, n.d., c. 1982), p. 15.

³⁷ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement*, p. 137; Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 97.

³⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 189. Nephew to Husayn al-Khalidi of the Palestinian Reform Party.

³⁹ Kanafani, *Palestine: The 1936–1939 Revolt*, pp. 15–16.

⁴⁰ Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, pp. 98, 103.