Immigration, Urbanization and Crisis:  
The Process of Jewish Colonization in Palestine during the 1920s.  

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In this article we discuss the growth, occupational composition and socio-economic differences of Jewish urbanization in Palestine during part of the first decade of the British mandate, and their meaning in regard to the process of Jewish colonization. More specifically, we are concerned with the years 1924-26 when a large immigration wave (aliyah), mainly of Polish Jews, entered the country. In contrast with the earlier waves of modern Jewish immigration into Palestine, the 4th aliyah (commonly dated 1924-31) and the 5th aliyah (1932-38, which we do not discuss here) brought about both a rapid increase in population and, perhaps more outstandingly, extensive urban growth.

In 1919, during the initial period of the British military administration, Jewish population in Palestine was approximately 60-65,000. (A decrease of some 20,000 from that of 1914, the result of emigration and death during the War). Arab population in 1919 was approximately 500,000. 84.6% of the Jewish population was in towns, 15.4% was rural.

The Jewish urban population was mainly orthodox-religious, centered in the holy cities of Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron, Tiberias; that is, an outgrowth of the Old Yishuv, the Jewish community before the new national immigration to Eratz-Israel (Palestine) that began in 1881-82. A small percentage of the urban population, part of the New Yishuv of the 1st and 2nd immigration waves, was also to be found in these cities as well as in Jaffa, Tel-Aviv, Haifa.

The Jewish rural population of 1919 was an outgrowth of a) colonization that began in 1881-82 with the establishment of the private farm colonies (moshavot) such as Petach Tikvah, Rishon-le-Zion, etc., of the 1st aliyah (the total immigration of which is estimated as between 20-30,000, mainly from Czarist Russia, Rumania), and b) groups, conquest groups, and collective groups (kvutzoth), the members of which formed out of the 2nd aliyah, the

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Workers' Aliyah of the years 1904-14 (the total immigration of which is estimated as between 35-40,000, most of whom came from Czarist Russia).  

The 3rd aliyah (1919-23), of approximately 35,000 persons, mostly from Russia and Poland, was termed the Pioneering Aliyah. We cannot deal here with its outstanding characteristics and patterns other than to say that its representative group, about one-fifth of its number, was composed almost entirely of young people. Most of the latter were organized in political-idea groups such as Hechalutz, the purpose of which was to train young people both ideologically and practically for a pioneering life in Eretz-Israel, and most of whom, when they came to the country, took on pioneering tasks in agricultural settlement, road and building construction, land reclamation. The Jewish population according to the 1922 census stood at 83,794; 68,627 urban, 15,167 rural. Jews were approximately 11% of the total population.

This process of growth, cutting across, as it did, four decades of Jewish colonization and two regimes, the Ottoman and the British Mandatory, contained within it, from its inception, a circumstantial, historical conflict: how to make existing means (national funds) meet desired (colonizatory-settlement) ends. In other words how to combine national ends with the immediate requirements of livelihood for new immigrants in a country that could not be considered an immigration country. The 1st aliyah was supported by funds of Diaspora associations and subsidized by the Baron de Rothschild; the 2nd aliyah's colonizatory support came from the Jewish Colonizatory Association; the Jewish National Fund and other Jewish national funding institutions purchased the land which the workers and pioneers of the 2nd and 3rd aliyot reclaimed and settled, etc.

The Colonizatory Means-Ends Conflict on the Eve of the 4th Aliyah

We characterize the circumstances and meaning of Jewish colonization on the eve of the 4th aliyah as follows:

1. Although there were colonizatory premises there did not exist a colonizatory plan whose scale of preferences (e.g. who is to immigrate, how many, etc.), or the stages of which (e.g. from development projects to cooperative and collective agricultural settlement, to urban settlement) had gained the approval, confirmation of, or for that matter obliged the (world) Zionist Movement, its local (Palestine) administration, or all of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine).

2. There was no binding colonizatory plan since its two main elements, the mobilization of manpower and the accumulation of national capital, were two separate processes. The limited financial means present did not, in any case,