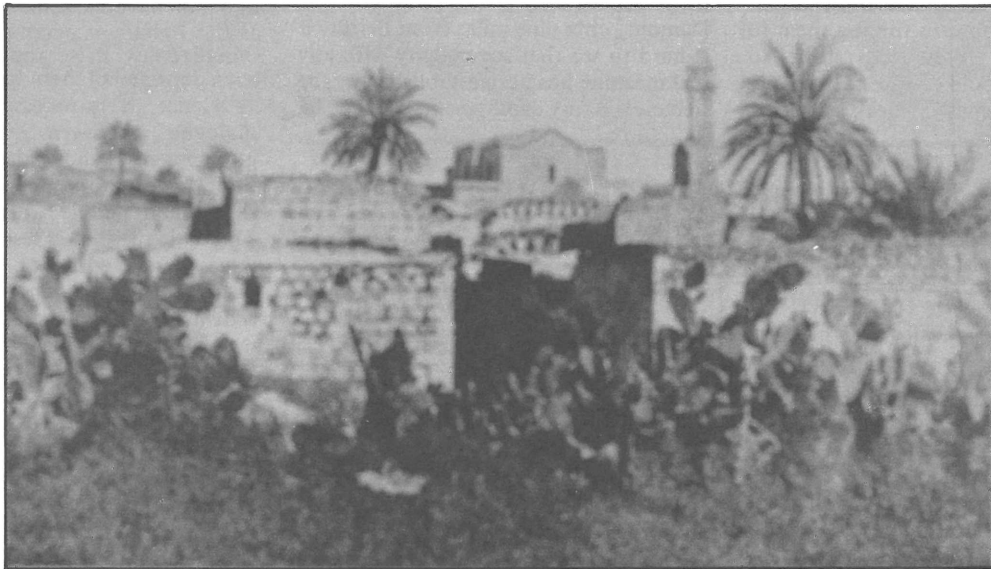

Palestinian Literature 1900 – 48

Part III

This is the third – and last – of a series of articles on pre – *nakbah* Palestinian literature. The previous article dealt with the period 1920 – 39. This one deals with the period 1939 – 48, the saddest chapter in the history of the Holy Land.



Lydda, pre –
1948 Palestine

by Mohamed Idris

During World War II the sympathies of Arabs lay with the Axis powers, for no other reason than that the opposing powers, the Allies, had fragmented and occupied the Arab World, thus betraying the promises they had made to the Arabs during World War I, when these were strongly pro – Allied. The rift between the Arabs and the Allies was deepened by the latter's strong support for Zionism.

Meanwhile, Zionism itself was deepening and making utmost use of that rift, «convincing» the Allies that the Arabs were untrustworthy and hostile to strategic Allied interests. Worse, the Arabs were made to appear as pro – Hitler and, therefore, pro – Nazi; and Arab opposition to Zionism was interpreted as an Eastern version of anti – Semitism. Likewise, in an effort to actualize its master dream, the seizure of Palestine, Zionism exploited and even contributed to Nazi persecution of Jews.

The course of events during World War II was extremely favorable to the Zionists, who succeeded in channelling the world's understandable sympathy with the Jews into their vicious, already powerful campaign for the seizure of Palestine – a calculated effort to exploit a *human* tragedy for the achievement of unjust *political* objectives. To this end, Zionism took part in further persecuting Displaced Persons, as were called the Jewish survivors of Nazi persecution, and pressuring them into leaving their countries and immigrating to

Palestine. Whereas the British government had already curbed the influx of Jewish immigration, other Allied governments, especially that of the USA, gave full support to the Zionist project. It became obvious that the West was determined to solve the «Jewish question» at the expense of the Arabs, who became scapegoats for a sin they hadn't committed.

The weakness of the Arab world (the regional sponsor of the cause of Palestine) under Allied military occupation, stood in sharp contrast to the strength of Zionism and its sponsors, especially the USA. It was then that the Zionists, with full Allied support, achieved absolute military superiority over the Arabs of Palestine, who, in contrast, were denied minimum military organization and equipment. Whereas the British Mandate authorities in Palestine turned a blind eye to the smuggling of huge quantities of arms and other military equipment to the Zionist paramilitary organizations, the mere possession by an Arab of an antique rifle was outlawed and the owner severely punished.

Against this grim background, Palestine seemed to be standing on the verge of a fatal disaster, and Palestinians were overwhelmed by a mixed feeling of bitterness apprehensiveness, helplessness and, worst of all, desperation.

1939 – 48: The Poetry

That sense of despair was now and then interrupted by reports of German military success, and these occasional outbursts of hope were reflected in the writings of this period. In the preface to his volume of poetry entitled *Fire Mountain*,