

The Moslem and Christian population were practically unanimous against Zionism, usually expressing themselves with great emphasis.<sup>100</sup>

The Commission also noted that

The feeling against the Zionist program is not confined to Palestine, but shared very generally by the people throughout Syria, as our conferences clearly showed. More than 72 per cent — 1350 — in all — of all the petitions in the whole of Syria were directed against the Zionist program. Only two requests — those for a united Syria and for independence — had a larger support.<sup>101</sup>

Before the Commission left Palestine they began to hear consistently about a forthcoming congress in Damascus. 'For the first time the Arab delegations were sounding the note that the problem of a mandatory power should be left to conference shortly to assemble in Damascus'.<sup>102</sup> The change from the insistence on independence to the acquiescence in a mandatory system was a significant one. Colonel Cornwallis, Deputy Political Officer at Damascus, attributed this change to

A letter received from Rustum Bey Haidar, the Arab representative in Paris, saying that it will be fatal to ask for complete independence, as the Powers have decided that there must be a mandate.<sup>103</sup>

Cornwallis further reported that Faisal had by that time dissolved both *Hizb al-Istiqlal* (The Independence Party) and *al-Ittihad as-Suri* (The Syrian Union) and had announced that there will be no more political societies in OET East. However, the Hashemite Prince began

to realise the difficulties which he will have in reconciling the Palestinians and Zionists, and no longer treats the question as a minor one... Meanwhile Palestinians here are vehement, and Mohamed-es-Saleh-al-Husseini of Nablus has been advocating the defence of Arab independence in Palestine by the sword.<sup>104</sup>

The Palestinians did not share Faisal's tendency to bow before the powers and their political schemes. According to Clayton the opposite was true.<sup>105</sup>

### The General Syrian Congress

The General Syrian Congress finally held its meetings in Damascus during the first week of July,

comprising representatives from the three zones viz. the Southern, Eastern and Western, provided with credentials and authority by the inhabitants of our various districts, Moslems, Christians and Jews.<sup>106</sup>

A delegation chosen by the Congress presented to the Commission a statement signed by the members of the Congress, known as the Damascus Programme, which called for 'immediate complete independence for Syria without protection or tutelage, under a civil constitutional monarchy'. As far as Palestine was concerned, the Damascus Programme voiced Palestinian feelings in the seventh, eighth and tenth resolutions of their statement:

7. We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish commonwealth in the southern part of Syria known as Palestine and oppose Zionist migration to any part of our country, for we do not acknowledge their title but consider them a grave peril to our people from the national, economical and political point of view. Our Jewish compatriots shall enjoy our common rights and assume the common responsibilities.

8. We demand that there shall be no separation of the southern part of Syria known as Palestine from the Syrian country, and desire the unity of the country to be guaranteed against partition under whatever circumstances.

10. The fundamental principles laid down by President Wilson in condemnation of secret treaties impel us to protest most emphatically against any treaty that stipulates the partition of our Syrian country, and against any private engagement aiming at establishing Zionism in the Southern part of Syria, thus we demand the annulment of these conventions and agreements absolutely.<sup>107</sup>

The Palestinian members of the Congress, who came from all the major towns of Palestine, played a conspicuous part in it and 'Iszat Darwaza' was its secretary.

A report on the political situation by Colonel French, Chief Political Officer, EEF, in the wake of the departure of the King Crane Commission stated: