

The Jerusalem outbreak of April 1920 attracted the attention of the San Remo Conference to the Arab-Zionist conflict in Palestine. Far from bringing about a review of Britain's JNH policies, the Conference nominated Great Britain as Mandatory in Palestine whose duties were defined by a verbatim repetition of the Balfour Declaration.

It was not until April 1920 (three days after the Mandate nomination), that the Declaration itself was officially disclosed by the Military Administration to the people of Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Five days later, the San Remo decisions were announced to the notables of Nablus. Despite Allenby's grave warnings<sup>2</sup> and despite legal considerations arising from the delay in the ratification of the Peace Treaty, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet approved a Zionist suggestion that Herbert Samuel be the first High Commissioner in Palestine<sup>3</sup>.

Between the San Remo nomination in April 1920 and September 1923 when the Palestine Mandate was brought into full operation, the respective attitudes of the three parties to the Palestine problem hardened and crystallised. The Mandate provisions transferred the British-Zionist accord – as embodied in the Balfour Declaration – from a love affair built on mutual interest into an internationally sanctioned Catholic marriage, where Britain was committed to a JNH policy in return for Zionist cooperation and backing in Palestine.

Following the official announcement of the Balfour Declaration and the San Remo decision, a wave of Palestinian Arab protests against these policies and against the separation of Palestine from Syria swept Palestine<sup>4</sup> and manifestations of anxiety and restiveness abounded. Several major clashes between Arab tribes and the British garrisons along the Beisan-Samakh frontier with Syria took place, where heavy casualties on both sides were inflicted.

On 6 May *Fata al-'Arab* of Damascus, reported that 'Muslims and Christians are convening more political meetings which may result in protestations against the British policy that helped divide Syria'.

Four days later *al-Karmal* reported that 'delegates were sent to Galilee and Acre to urge the inhabitants to assist in the Jerusalem Conference'.

Indignant as the Palestinians were at British pro-Zionist policies, the Palestinian political notability sought with energy and determination to

avoid a head-on collision with the British authorities in the course of the fight against Zionism. The Palestinian leadership aimed at bringing about a change of British policy (in Palestine) through a show of (peaceful) determination and friendly persuasion.

In an article on the composition and purpose of the proposed Congress, *al-Karmal* reflected the prevalent strategy of the Muslim-Christian Associations' leadership *vis-à-vis* the Anglo-Zionist convergence in Palestine. 'The British Government is strong and therefore it is difficult to fight it. We must confine our revolt against our opponents'.<sup>5</sup>

Conciliatory gestures notwithstanding, the British authorities prohibited the convention of the Palestine Second Congress for security reasons.

A minority of the political notability went to the length of co-operating with the Zionists. In accordance with a secret Zionist programme drawn up by Weizmann,<sup>6</sup> Dr Eder of the Zionist Commission concluded a deal with the editor of *al-Akhbar* for £P 125. He also concluded deals for larger sums of money with Sa'id Bey Nablusi and Rashid Abu Khadra of Jaffa and Haidar Bey Tuqan of Nablus. This particular Zionist drive failed and Palestinian protests against the collaborators were reported by Eder's liaison officer.<sup>7</sup> It was this episode that prompted *al-Karmal's* call on 14 May 1920, for national unity 'in order to influence public opinion to see that landowners do not sell their land to the Jews'.

The announcement of Samuel's appointment as High Commissioner came as a severe shock to the Palestinians. Following a comprehensive tour in May, General Bols recorded:

'They are convinced that he will be a partisan Zionist and that he represents a Jewish and not a British Government'.<sup>8</sup>

In the same report Bols spoke of 'definite signs of Bolshevik propaganda and ideas'. However, neither the *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) nor the Socialist Workers' Party (Communist Party) had any great following among the Arab proletariat workers and peasants. A pamphlet by the *Poale Zion* accused the Zionist leaders of 'poisoning the soul of the Jewish workers against the uncultured fellah and of waging economic war against those who have nothing'.<sup>9</sup> The Socialist Workers' Party 'remained exclusively Jewish up to late 1920 and the Communists had great difficulty in finding, not only Arab candidates for party membership but even sympathisers and potential allies'.<sup>10</sup>