

two factors that played a dominant rôle throughout Plumer's tenure of office. The first was the sharp decline in Jewish immigration and the temporary inability of the Zionists to overcome the difficulties thereof. In 1927 immigration was represented by a negative figure and in 1928 immigration and emigration balanced one another.

The second factor was the overriding predominance of factionalism, the ascendancy of personal rivalries and self-interest among the Palestinian political notability in the period under discussion.

Political factionalism found its greatest scope in the fight for the control of the Supreme Muslim Council between the Husseinis and the Nashashibis. The Council attracted universal attention and interest among the Muslims of Palestine as it appealed to their eagerness for participation in the process of self-government,<sup>25</sup> which the Mandatory government denied them to prevent obstruction to its Zionist policies.

In the heat of the electoral battles for the Council, the struggle against Zionism was overshadowed by the determination to acquire power within the Muslim community. As a result the contenders for power sought the favour of the Government, and consequently the Arab National Movement throughout Palestine was considerably weakened. Although Hajj Amin's grip on the Council was not seriously shaken, the ferocity of the campaign and the reluctance of the Government to antagonise him, must have reinforced his resistance to any call for a direct confrontation with the British Government as a means of fighting Zionism in the early thirties.

Hajj Amin's national leadership and his direct appeal to the populace threatened the position of the local notables and their intermediary role. It was this factor that enabled the 'Moderates' to score their success at the Municipal elections in 1927, where local vested interests had the upper hand.

The weakness of the Arab position was conducive to a conciliatory Arab attitude towards the Government. In July 1926, a group of Arab politicians from the two major parties entered into negotiations with one of the major British officials in Palestine with the purpose of working out an arrangement that would facilitate Arab participation in the Government. These politicians pointed out that the basic source of difficulty was the insertion of the Balfour Declaration in the Mandate. The Palestinians were eager to see that this international obligation did not frustrate the Arabs' civil, religious and political rights, including their participation in the administrative and legislative setup in the country: an elected Constitutional National Government. Furthermore, they requested that the Mandate should include a statement to the

effect that HM Government did not consult the Palestinians when it accepted the Mandate and the Zionist clauses thereof.<sup>26</sup>

However, nothing came out of these overtures, and two years later Plumer had no intention of raising the issue of a democratic parliamentary system before the end of his tour of duty in Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the decline in Zionist activities between 1925 and 1928 the Zionist Organisation was anxious to acquire more agricultural and State lands for Jewish settlement. The Colonial Secretary regarded the Zionist Organisation as having first claims on the lands suitable for agriculture, and the Palestine Government were active in procuring these for them.<sup>28</sup> Another bone of contention between Arabs and Jews, which came to the fore once more towards the end of 1927, was Jewish labour's organised opposition to the employment of Arab workmen from proceeding to the groves at Petah-Tikvah to pick oranges bought by Arab merchants led to clashes and racial conflict.<sup>29</sup>

A religious grievance was added to the political and economic ones, when the International Missionary Council held its first Conference at Jerusalem during the first two weeks of April, 1928. Protests from various districts and bodies were lodged against the Missionary Conference, expressing fear of 'Evangelising Moslems on a large scale'. In Gaza the police fired at the excited crowds wounding three persons, and 'all telephonic and telegraphic communications with Gaza were cut off to prevent repercussion in Jerusalem and elsewhere during the Nebi Musa processions'.<sup>30</sup>

It was not until June 1928, that the Seventh Palestine Arab Congress was convened. The flagging (Arab) Executive Committee succumbed to pressure brought to bear by other political forces to make it an all-embracing hodge-podge of a Conference comprising every shade of opinion and interest in the country. It was the weakest of all Congresses and came near to passing a resolution demanding a National Government under the existing Mandate system, had it not been for the efforts of a few members who advocated the appealing alternative of adopting the resolutions of all previous Congresses. The composition of the Congress was inevitably reflected in the Executive Committee which had to be enlarged to forty-eight members in order to accommodate the various groups, districts and interests represented in the Congress. Disunity and personal rivalries reduced the new Executive Committee to complete impotence.