

19 October, Hajj Amin despatched Jamal Husseini, Secretary of the Supreme Muslim Council, to London to conduct political discussions at the Colonial Office.

The Government and the Colonial Office proved that they were alive to the importance of maintaining Hajj Amin's friendly attitude because of his opposition to a direct Arab-British confrontation in Palestine. In deference to the Mufti, the Colonial Secretary eliminated any mention of whether the 1929 outbreak 'may be regarded as having been pre-concerted or due to organised action'<sup>67</sup> in the final terms of reference of the Shaw Commission of Enquiry.

By 12 October Chancellor felt compelled to convey to Passfield his alarm at the evolution of Arab political attitudes following the disturbances of 1929:

The feeling of the Arabs against the Jews is still bitter. Boycott is being enforced and instigators are working clandestinely and avoiding detection. There is amongst the Arabs a growing feeling of hostility to the Government which is being fermented by skilful propaganda conducted by Arab leaders. I am informed that this feeling is not as previously confined to political circles, but also now extended to lower classes of the population and to the villagers.<sup>68</sup>

This process of radicalisation posed a threat to the Arab Executive and the traditional leadership:

A full meeting of the Arab Executive had been summoned for 12th October to consider the question of calling a general strike as a protest against the Regulations and other alleged acts of partiality and injustice. Younger Moslems declare that the strike will be held whether the Executive approve it or not.<sup>69</sup>

Though successful in calling the strike off, 'Awni' Abdul Hadi told Chancellor in the course of an interview on 14 October, that 'the Executive Committee in their actions are not always their own masters, but have to yield to the pressure of their followers'.<sup>70</sup> The Committee 'were following a policy to do all they could to win over public opinion and to avoid estrangement'. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee assured Chancellor that 'The principle that guided them was that there should be no difference between them and the British Government',<sup>71</sup> as they believed they could not attain their rights otherwise.

### A State of Desperation

Though speaking on behalf of the majority of the notables and the propertied classes, the views expressed by the Executive Committee were not universally embraced by all the members of these classes. According to a Police Report some participants in a meeting of leading Muslim and Christian merchants at the offices of the Arab Executive, spoke openly in favour of revolution:

That a general rising is the only means to save the country is common talk among all classes of the population; also that the people have become desperate and unmindful of the risks; further villagers are stated to have become affected by political propaganda and by the economic depression, influence by purchase of lands by Jews and resultant ejection of Arab farmers.<sup>72</sup>

Nor was this militancy presumed to be of a transient character, as Chancellor was of the opinion that it would not be possible to reduce British troops below two battalions even after the crisis was over.

A week later Chancellor reiterated that 'the Moslem population appear to be approaching a state of desperation on account of Government's failure to meet their wishes in any way. This feeling is not confined to the leadership only but has spread to the lower classes and to the rural population'.<sup>73</sup>

Among other factors, the spread of agitation against Zionism and British policy in Palestine to the neighbouring countries, the smuggling of arms to Palestine and the possibility that volunteers from Syria, Transjordan and Lebanon might join the Palestinians in any future uprisings added to the anxieties of British Authorities in Palestine.

During the third week of October police sources reported that money was being collected, and 400 Arabs selected to form an armed force. A week later Police Intelligence reported that 'gangs of Criminals to attack Jews and British officials have been formed and will first function in areas at Haifa and Nablus'.<sup>74</sup> Intelligence summary of the 19th October from Trans-Jordan Frontier Force reported that

experienced bandits are being consulted as to the best means of carrying out guerrilla warfare which may commence after the Commission from London arrives and completes its report. Committees are being formed in many parts of Palestine for the purpose of helping these bands.<sup>75</sup>