

and establish branches all over the Muslim world. They declared the sanctity of the *al-Aqsa* Mosque and its surroundings the *Buraq*, and the central importance of Palestine to the Muslim world and denounced Zionism and British policies in Palestine. Furthermore, they proposed to build an Islamic University — The Aqsa Mosque University — and an Islamic Land Company to save Arab Lands from falling into Zionist hands. During their last session the conferees denounced Western (including British) imperialism in all Muslim lands, whereupon, British indifference to the Congress gave way to resentment.

The euphoria created by the Congress was somewhat deceptive as no great material advantage was reaped by the Palestinians later on. The Executive Committee relapsed, through the negligence and selfishness of its members, into an honorary inactive body. A trip by Hajj Amin to collect money for the University and the Land Company was a failure owing, according to Darwaza, to British influence on the rich Muslims.⁴⁰

The Arab National Charter

The Islamic Congress comprised a large number of the leading members of *al-Fatat* and *al-'Ahd* (1908-1918), the pillars of Faisal's regime in Damascus, known as the *Istiqlalists* (Independents). They held Arab nationalist rather than Islamic political views and availed themselves of the opportunity to discuss the affairs of the Arab world and to devise a plan for concerted action. A day or two before the Islamic Congress came to an end around fifty members met at 'Awni 'Abdul Hadi's house and drew up an 'Arab national charter'.⁴¹

In this remarkable document, the Arab nationalist leaders pointed out the evil political effects of the division and fragmentation of the Arab world and resolved to fight imperialism and to struggle for independence and unity for all the Arab countries. An Executive Committee, most of whose members were Palestinians, was elected mainly to propagate the 'national charter' and prepare the ground for a general conference comprising delegates from all Arab countries to devise the means and lay the plans for the implementation of the 'national charter' on a popular Pan-Arab level.

The Executive Committee lost no time in conducting the necessary contacts. In particular they were eager to obtain Faisal's backing for their conference as he was their old associate and friend, and as a monarch of an 'independent' neighbouring Arab state. At first Faisal welcomed the idea of an Arab nationalist conference in Baghdad and promised non-governmental interference. Later, however, Faisal

reneged, after the British High Commissioner had advised him not to involve Iraq with Arab problems.⁴² The idea collapsed to the chagrin of its sponsors and the Palestinians among them in particular.

The Islamic Congress dealt a *coupe de grace* to the Arab Executive as it led to public mutual recriminations and denunciations between the Nashashibi and Husseini factions. The formation of the Arab Liberal Party constituted another step towards the disintegration of a largely ineffective political front.

The Arab National Conference and the 'national charter' of 13 December 1931, boosted the Palestinian *Istiqlalists* and a new level of activity became evident. The new attitude towards the British was demonstrated in the country-wide celebrations on the anniversary of Saladin's victory over the Crusaders at Hattin and in the anti-British speeches delivered on that occasion. Concurrently, the director of the Arab Executive office Subhi al-Khadra wrote a fiery article in *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya* attributing the calamities of Palestine and the Arabs to British policies. Other articles by Darwaza in the same paper exhorted the Arabs to fight British policies, to unite in the face of growing dangers and to renew their drive to attain freedom and independence.

The Arab Independence Party

This anti-British agitation was prelude to the emergence of the Arab Independence (*Istiqlal*) Party, of which Darwaza and al-Khadra were founding members. Before they announced the establishment of their party in August 1932, the *Istiqlalists* held several talks with the Mufti urging the necessity of opposing British policy and the Mandate head-on. For reasons closely connected with his official positions and personal interests Hajj Amin declined to commit himself to an openly anti-British political platform. The Palestinian *Istiqlal* Party leaders were prominent members of the old *Istiqlal* movement of 1919-1925.

In their first manifesto the *Istiqlalists* attributed the lamentable disarray in the ranks of the national movement to the egocentric and self-interested political notables who were subservient to the imperialist rulers.⁴³ The party founders vowed to struggle against imperialism face-to-face and fight against Jewish immigration and land sales and to endeavour to achieve a parliamentary Arab government and work for the attainment of complete Arab unity.⁴⁴ Their attacks against the political notability were followed by a call to abolish the feudal Ottoman titles of *Pasha*, *Bey*, and *Effendi*. Their public meetings and conventions sought to propagate the principles and slogans of the Party as well as to invite wider Palestinian participation in the political