

protagonist. The National Defence Party comprised a number of rich powerful notables and mayors who vowed

To endeavour to achieve independence for Palestine with full Arab sovereignty, and not to recognize any international obligation which is calculated to culminate in any foreign predominance or influence.<sup>88</sup>

The Palestine Arab Party, which was a popular party with numerous branches throughout Palestine was more unequivocal in its determination to fight Zionism and the Mandate at one and the same time.<sup>89</sup> Unlike the Nashashibi-led rival, the Arab Party was in favour of Arab unity and engaged themselves in practical efforts to prevent sales of Arab lands to Jews.

A month later the second meeting of the Arab Youth Congress was convened. The discussions were devoted to social and economic self-improvement and the mobilisation of the younger Arab generation in sports clubs and youth organisations dedicated to fighting Zionism in a down-to-earth practical manner.<sup>90</sup> Though not politically antagonistic to either party the upshot of their second conference was to establish the Youth Congress as another political body in Palestine. Two other political parties were founded before the end of 1933, the Khalidi-led *Islah* (Reform) Party and the National Bloc led by Abdul Latif Salah, a well-known lawyer from Nablus, both of whose declared aims were close to those of the Palestine Arab Party.

The personal and selfish motives behind the proliferation of Arab parties were apparent to all Palestinians, and the ceaseless bickering between these parties exposed them to public derision.<sup>91</sup>

#### Eviction of Arab Peasants

While the politicians and notables were promoting their respective personal and family interests and adding to internal dissensions, the bulk of the Palestinian Arabs were growing increasingly bitter and desperate. The spectacular increase in Jewish immigration exerted additional pressures on the Zionist organs to acquire new lands for Jewish settlement. Out of 673 land transactions effected in 1933, most of which were from Arabs to Jews, 606 were in respect of areas each less than 100 *dunums* in extent. In the following year the number of sales increased to 1,178 including no fewer than 1,116 for areas each less than 100 *dunums* in extent.<sup>92</sup> The vendors were either rendered landless or left with lands not adequate to provide subsistence level income for

the peasant landlords. The landless Arabs were becoming a major political issue because of the rapid increase in their numbers and the fears this engendered among the Palestinian rural population. The implementation of eviction orders (by the Courts) could no longer be effected without the efforts of large numbers of Police. The Arab peasants were showing greater determination in resisting the execution of eviction orders. During January 1935, the Hartieh Lands eviction was resisted by the tenants, 'Arab *el-Zubeidat*, and the battle between them and forty-three British and Palestinian Police ended with seven British Police and five Palestinian Police injured by the stone-slinging villagers.

Facing an increasingly delicate and precarious situation, Hajj Amin had to adopt a stronger public stand against Zionism. While endeavouring to avoid direct personal involvement in the mutual recriminations of the newly formed parties, he involved himself in public efforts to mobilise the Islamic religious machine in the fight against Zionism. On 25 January, Hajj Amin, as President of the Supreme Muslim Council, convened a meeting of some five hundred religious functionaries, mostly *qadis*, Sheikhs and 'ulamas at Jerusalem to discuss, principally, the sale of land to Jews, brokerage and Jewish immigration. The Mufti, however, confined himself to threatening with religious penalties Muslims who sell their lands or act as land brokers, without advocating more violent methods to fight Zionism.<sup>93</sup>

In his relations with the British the Mufti continued to display a friendly disposition. In the course of denying allegations levelled against Hajj Amin by the Nashashibi faction that the Mufti was intriguing with the Italians, Wauchope reported:

I have noticed no change in Hajj Amin's attitude towards this Government — his attitude for the last two years and now is definitely friendly, and especially so towards me, as you already know. The Mufti is always troubled by the thought he may lose influence on this account, but I see no signs of his power waning or of his adopting a hostile attitude towards this Government.<sup>94</sup>

The Mufti, as a matter of fact, had asked the CID chief for police protection and obtained a bullet-proof jacket as he feared hired assassin.

The bullet-proof jackets were not the only hedge Hajj Amin had against extremists. According to Emile Ghoury, a secret youth organisation in Jerusalem formed after the October-November events of 1933, was turned into *Munazzamat al-Jihad al-Muqaddas* (The Organisation for