

Waging Holy War) under the leadership of a young revolutionary, 'Abdul-Qader Husseini, son of Musa Kazem and an associate of the Mufti.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Hajj Amin was in touch with Sheikh 'Izzeddin al-Qassam.

Qassam's Revolt

The Syrian-born Qassam immigrated to Haifa in 1921, after the failure of the Syrian revolt against French occupation in which he was a prominent leader. As a man of immense religious learning and as an eloquent orator, he had no difficulty in joining the staff of the Islamic School at Haifa. He later joined the Muslim Young Men's Association⁹⁶ and became its President in 1926. As an ardent Muslim and a patriot, he stood against Zionism and British rule, and in 1929 he started roaming the villages of the North as an employee of the Shari'a Court of Haifa. His contacts with the *fellahin* in the villages and the prayers in the *Istiqlal* mosque in Haifa enabled him to recruit some revolutionary elements which he organised in secret groups not exceeding five members.⁹⁷ He preached to them the necessity of revolt against subservience to the alien infidels — Jews and Britons alike. In 1932, he joined Haifa's *Istiqlal* Party branch. After the events of 1933, he started collecting contributions to buy small quantities of arms in preparation for a revolt against the Government, the real sponsor of Zionism in Palestine. His preparations were managed with the utmost degree of secrecy.

Qassam's stronghold was the shanty-town of Haifa where 270 poor peasants who had moved to the bustling harbour-town were compelled to live as they were unemployed or poorly paid. He showed genuine concern for their welfare and started a night school to fight illiteracy among these worker-peasants. His frequent visits to the villages and his personal decency endeared him to the peasants of Northern Palestine.

By 1935, Qassam had organised five committees: propaganda, military training, supply, intelligence and foreign relations. It was not unlikely that Qassam was in touch with the Italians, whose interests in Palestinian affairs was enhanced by their Ethiopian campaign and the ensuing tension with Britain over the matter.⁹⁸ This secret contact with the Italians was solely motivated by a practical need to cooperate with the enemies of Britain.

Although Qassam had recruited two hundred members and organised 800 sympathisers, he had no real contact with the peasants and workers — on which he depended — in Southern or Central Palestine. According to Subhi Yasin, a Qassamite, the Sheikh had actually sent one of his

followers, Mahmud Salem, to the Mufti asking him to declare a revolt in the South simultaneous to Qassam's declaration of revolt in the North. Hajj Amin reportedly answered that he was working for political solution rather than an armed revolt.⁹⁹

A number of events that took place during 1935 forced the hand of Qassam and his fellow *Mujahidin* to initiate an armed revolt against the British and the Zionists in November of that year.

Before the end of 1935 Wauchope reported to the Colonial Secretary that one-fifth of the Arab villagers were already landless, the number of Arab unemployed workers in the towns was rising, and resentment against the Government was growing day by day.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, no hopeful developments were anywhere in sight as the immigration figure for 1935 approximated a record number of 60,000 and the rise in unemployment compelled Wauchope to conclude that this figure was 'beyond the absorptive capacity of the country'.¹⁰¹

Zionist provocations, such as open military drilling and assaults on Arab villagers by the Revisionists, enraged Arab public opinion. The discovery of a considerable consignment of arms to the Zionists confirmed the Palestinians' worst fears. As there was no hope that the Government would respond to Arab demands over immigration, land sales and Parliamentary Government, armed uprising was the only alternative left to the Arabs to prevent Zionist hegemony in Palestine.

While the Palestinian politicians were exposing their compromising and faint-hearted attitudes towards the Government, Qassam and twenty-five of his armed associates left Haifa on the night of 12 November and headed towards the vicinity of Jenin to call on the peasants to take up arms against the British and the Zionists. Before they could propagate their message and capture Haifa by surprise, an accidental clash with the Police alerted the Authorities to the presence of an armed band, and Police and troops were quick to cordon off the area.

Inspired by the Islamic duty of *Jihad* (Holy War), Qassam refused to surrender and urged his followers to fight and die as martyrs for the sake of God and the Homeland. On 19 November, Qassam and two of his comrades were killed, five others were captured and the rest disappeared in the mountains.

The news of Qassam's heroic death had a tremendous impact throughout Palestine. He soon became the symbol of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, and his funeral at Haifa was a great national demonstration against the Government and the JNH during which the Police were stoned. The political leaders declined to attend his funeral and their