

It is common belief among Arabs and Jews that if the report of the Royal Commission and His Majesty's Government's decision thereon are unfavourable to the Arabs, disturbances will break out again.⁶²

An article published on 21 December in *al-Difa* 'reflected the prevalent Arab resentment of Britain when it declared that 'The Arabs of Palestine are looking at the Government with an eye of hate'. The responsibility for all the trouble fell 'first on the Government and then on the Jews' and hinted that more sacrifices might be needed to save Palestine from 'the madness of imperialism'.

These feelings of resentment and hostility were reflected, slowly but surely, in Hajj Amin's relations with the Government. By the end of the summer the British were anxious that the Mufti was firmly backing the strike and providing 'relief' funds, which were collected in Palestine and the neighbouring countries towards the upkeep of the armed bands and the purchases of arms.⁶³ Both the High Commissioner and the Colonial Secretary were determined to remove the Mufti from the political scene. Wauchope, however, warned Ormsby-Gore against an exaggerated impression of the role of Hajj Amin.

... it would be the height of folly to imagine that by the removal of the Mufti or this Committee the danger of a fresh Arab rising will be ended or even greatly reduced. Compare the tenacity of villagers who have opposed us for six months with little pay and no loot, with the feebleness and a lack of any great qualities of leadership among the Committee of Ten. Remember Arab genuine fear and deep hatred of Zionism.⁶⁴

The High Commissioner rightly pointed out that the fear of imminent Jewish domination was felt by all from the highest to the lowest and was the mainspring of the disturbances and that the bodies which organised the strike and the rebellion 'sprang up locally and spontaneously'.⁶⁵ In view of the fact that the bands were not disarmed and the National Committees were still in close touch with the population and with the rebels, the British expected a renewal of serious disturbances after the Royal Commission submitted their report and recommendations.

Aware of the opportunities provided by the explosive situation, the Jews pressed for further concessions from the British. During the first week of January 1937 Dr Brodetsky informed the Colonial Office that the Arabs were collecting funds in preparation for future disorders and

suggested a tougher policy with the Mufti and his associates. He added that although the Jews 'appreciated the action of the High Commissioner in authorising the formation of the Jewish Constabulary', they wanted a large Jewish force that would enable them to hold their own in any future disturbances.⁶⁶

Although Wauchope fully expected the renewal of disturbances following the publication of the Peel Commission Report, he availed himself of the opportunity provided by the 'interlude' to use the influence of the Higher Committee in the interest of moderation. In particular, he was anxious to restore respect for law and order and stop the continuing campaign of political assassinations, which was renewed after the Royal Commission's departure.

For their part the Higher Committee were willing to show a more friendly attitude towards Wauchope, although for reasons connected with the state of public opinion they could not agree to the presence of a Palestinian at the coronation of the King. In the course of an interview with Wauchope, Hajj Amin (and 'Awni 'Abdul Hadi) stated that the sooner friendly relations with the British were re-established the better for the Arabs.⁶⁷

Wauchope attributed the Mufti's more conciliatory attitude to the influence of Ibn Sa'ud and the influence of moderate Arabs outside Palestine:

But I fear under certain circumstances that the influence of local Shabab and the Istiqlal Party may later on bring pressure to bear against satisfactory co-operation with Government and counsels of moderation which the Mufti now preaches and, as regards his Sheikhs and Qadis at present practices.⁶⁸

Factors Against Moderation

The influence of the Shabab and the *Istiqlalists* was not the only factor militating against moderation. In addition to the landless Arabs, which according to Government estimates constituted one quarter of the Arab rural population,⁶⁹ there was the question of Arab unemployment, which Wauchope described in the report as 'most serious problem and is neither temporary nor local'. This problem was raised 'in every town and village' he visited and threatened to loom larger both in the political as well as in the economic field. The Government's discrimination against Arab labourers in favour of the Jews added fuel to Arab resentment: 'On many roads the Arab receives little more than half the wage for equal output'.⁷⁰