

Many of the new formations were named after the early leaders of Islam. Contact between Headquarters and the various formations was conducted through messengers and occasional visits by rebel leaders to Damascus. The precarious authority of Headquarters was maintained through financial and medical aid and the supply of arms to rebel bands.<sup>99</sup> Al-Maktab al-Arabi al-Qawmi (The Arab National Bureau) in Damascus acted as the propaganda organ of the rebellion.

### The Rebels Gain the Upper Hand

The rebels were not totally or even mainly dependent on assistance from Damascus, which collected contributions from various Arab and Muslim countries as they were able to exercise authority in a large number of villages. In their headquarters in the hills the rebels established rebel courts, administrative offices and intelligence centres. In view of the breakdown of civil government the villagers frequently and often freely resorted to these courts, and the rebels were able to levy taxes and quotas of volunteers on the villages.

The rebel leaders in the hills were also able to maintain contact with activists and terrorists in the towns and cities. The activists collected contributions in the cities and provided information for the rebels while the terrorists attacked British and Jewish targets inside their cities. The terrorists also intimidated the Arab collaborators through threats and assassinations. A number of educated Palestinians acted as consultants and advisors to the rebel leaders and were particularly useful in the Courts established by the rebels.

In addition to the Palestinian peasants and town activists the rebellion attracted parties of young men with vague pan-Arab enthusiasms<sup>100</sup> who formed themselves into small bands and acted as guerrillas on the frontiers of Palestine. They affected a kind of uniform resembling that adopted by the late King Faisal's followers in 1918. They received no payment, but obtained ample supplies of arms when they got into Palestine.<sup>101</sup>

The dramatic growth of the rebels' strength and activities brought about a change in the British military leadership. Sir Harold MacMichael, the New High Commissioner, and Lieutenant-General Haining, the new GOC, took a number of drastic measures to wrest the initiative from rebels. A wire-fence along the northern and north-eastern frontier was erected with police posts and fortifications in the Jordan Valley to isolate the rebels and cut their supply routes across the Jordan. In view of an expected 'enhancement of triumphant lawlessness amounting to insurrection', the High Commissioner contemplated the arming of Jews

by Government, for active operations and not merely for static as at present.<sup>102</sup>

Following his arrival, General Haining launched a number of offensives, in which the RAF and armour units took an active part. These operations proved to be 'disappointing' and as the armed bands were no longer offering battle voluntarily Haining and his assistant adopted a plan for a prolonged occupation of a large number of villages in Galilee and Samaria, with the object of denying basis to the bands.<sup>103</sup> The result was a decrease of incidents in the occupied areas, and an increase in sabotage on the roads, railways, telephone lines, IPC pipeline and increased attacks on military patrols and half-hearted attacks — to use Haining's description — on isolated Jewish colonies.

The intensification of the military effort against the rebels was accompanied by heavy-handed actions against the civil population. Wholesale arrests, long curfews, extensive demolitions and collective fines did not enhance the popularity of British rule. In the cities the situation was getting out of hand as strikes, demonstrations, Arab-Jewish reprisals and curfews became almost daily occurrences.<sup>104</sup> Haining took the success of the rebel courts and their system of tax collection as a symptom of rural hostility to government which 'produced a more united front'.

### Alternative to Partition

It was at this point, when the rebellion was gathering momentum that Jamal Husseini attempted to articulate the Palestinian Arab national demands in a manner calculated to appeal to the hard-pressed British Government. In a private letter to Malcolm MacDonald, Husseini offered an alternative to partition:

We are prepared to take in the present Jewish population in Palestine and give them full and equal rights and proportionate seats in all Government institutions with Municipal and communal autonomy in strictly Jewish settlements.<sup>105</sup>

Nothing came out of this initiative as the Zionists were determined to have a Jewish State and, as the British were equally determined to crush the rebellion before entering into any negotiations with the Arabs.

The initiative, however, remained in the hands of the rebels in the country and with the activists in the cities. The increase in sabotage and bombing incidents led to streets fighting in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa. On 6 July, a bomb planted by extremists Jews<sup>106</sup> exploded in the