

CONCLUSION

The emergence of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century coincided with the rise of nationalism in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. From the outset the Arabs of Palestine viewed Zionism as a territorial colonialist movement which threatened their national existence. They fought it as a community by all peaceful means available to them under Ottoman rule. In this fight the educated classes played an important role in mobilising public opinion through newspapers, petitions and the formation of anti-Zionist societies, while the notables played an innocuous patriotic role as an intermediary between the populace and the Government.

After the revolution of the 'Young Turks' in 1908, the rulers of Constantinople pursued a more oppressive attitude towards the Arab elements of the Ottoman Empire in the Fertile Crescent lands thus giving rise to bolder Arab secret movements which called for Arab autonomy and independence. This feeling of rebelliousness was enhanced in Palestine itself by the leniency the Government displayed in checking Zionist immigration and land sales to Jews.

The outbreak of World War I carried the promise of independence for the Arabs of Syria, of which Palestine formed the southern part. A number of Palestinians were hanged for joining the ranks of the Allies and Sharif Hussein's Arab Revolt against the Turks. Instead of the desired independence, the defeat of Turkey brought British rule, committed, through the Balfour Declaration, to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

On hearing of the Balfour Declaration, the Palestinians protested to their new rulers in every peaceful way possible. Without surrendering their intermediary role the political notability sought to deflect what in their view was the convergence of British and Zionist interests in Palestine by pointing out to the British the importance of maintaining Arab good-will and the futility of the Zionist dream.

As the nature of the British firm commitment to Zionism became clearer, the Palestinians were faced with two alternatives: revolution or acquiescence. The older notability opted for acquiescence to preserve their vested interests which depended on the good-will of the Government. The younger generation and the lower classes were both harder hit by the implementation of the Zionist schemes and were

more determined to resist what they considered a foreign invasion that would culminate in their eviction or subservience. The young activists depended on the rural masses for their plans of armed resistance against Zionism and the British Administration. They succeeded in staging two short-lived anti-Zionist uprisings in 1920 and 1921, that involved defiance of British authorities, but failed to persuade the British to withdraw from Palestine or to rescind their pro-Zionist policies. The collapse of Faisal's Arab Government in 1920 in Damascus and America's endorsement of the Balfour Declaration militated against effective external pressure in favour of Palestinian national demands.

Even before the final ratification of the Mandate in September 1923, most of the Palestinian notables including some of the younger generation had succumbed to a policy of co-operation with the Government in one form or another. Yet at no point did the Arab national movement in Palestine recognise the British Mandate as this implied the acceptance of the Balfour Declaration and the right of the Jews to a national home in Palestine. It was this factor that prevented their acceptance of Churchill's Legislative Council and later the Arab Agency offer. The notability, however, were exercising their intermediary role by using their influence to suppress insurrectionist tendencies among the 'lower strata' of the Palestinian Arabs.

The period of political relaxation and stagnation between 1924 and 1929 saw a decline in Jewish immigration and land settlement. During this period the struggle for power between the Husseinis and Nashashibis exposed the factiousness and the inadequacy of the notables to measure up to the grave Zionist challenge.

The British attitude during the clashes of 1929 between the Arabs and the Jews over the *Buraq*, or Wailing Wall, convinced the Palestinians that Britain was the real sponsor and defender of Zionism in Palestine. As a direct consequence, the first Arab guerrilla bands emerged in the vicinity of Acre and Safad to fight the British Mandate as well as the Jewish colonists. On the political plane the advocates of co-operation with the Government were discredited and the younger generation among the educated classes, which formed the *Istiqlal* Party, challenged the traditional leadership of the notables. The *Istiqlalists* defined their aim as the attainment of Palestinian independence within the framework of Arab unity and boldly called for a policy of non-co-operation with the British Government which they viewed 'as the root of evil'.

Revolutionary as *Istiqlal's* aims were, it nevertheless failed to create the vehicle of revolution, namely, a mass peasant organisation capable of waging armed resistance. Yet despite the fact that the *Istiqlalists*