

Palestinian Arab demands for self-determination and to their appeals against Zionism was bound to lead to friction. One reason why Palestine was denied self-determination was explained in a letter from the Foreign Minister, Balfour, to the Prime Minister which no amount of Arab petitions against Zionism could alter.

'The weak point of our position of course is that in the case of Palestine we deliberately and rightly decline to accept the principle of self-determination. If the present inhabitants were consulted they would unquestionably give an anti-Jewish verdict. Our justification for our policy is that we regard Palestine as being absolutely exceptional, that we consider the question of the Jews outside Palestine as one of world importance.<sup>84</sup>

As the Peace Conference dragged on the Palestinians became more restless as their worst fears were confirmed by Zionist public statements. Towards the end of March Clayton reported:

Anti-Zionist propaganda has increased considerably in Palestine lately and feeling is now running very high among Moslems and Christians who fear that political and economic advantages may be given to Jews in peace settlement. This feeling is increased by the rash actions and words of the Jews themselves and by pronouncements which appear by leading Zionists in the Press in England and America and elsewhere. There are considerable grounds for belief that anti-Jewish riots are being prepared in Jerusalem, Jaffa and elsewhere. Precautions are being taken but an announcement that Jews will be given any special privileges might precipitate outbreaks.<sup>85</sup>

On the 28 March, the Muslim-Christian Committee of Jerusalem proposed to hold a demonstration on 1 April to protest against the Zionist Programme. When permission was denied, the Mufti and the three ex-deputies of Jerusalem acquiesced but elaborate precautionary schemes were prepared to provide against trouble in the cities and the more exposed Jewish colonies lest the more extreme Arab elements decide to act on their own. Towards the end of April the Zionist Organisation informed the Foreign Office that 'they were perturbed by the most recent advice they had had from Palestine which represented the Arabs as preparing to make trouble and as secretly arming'.<sup>86</sup>

The Palestinian situation was aggravated by the confusion that

dominated the discussions of the Paris Peace Conference on the future of the Near East. In April the Peace Conference decided to send an Inter-Allied Commission to Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia to ascertain the sentiments of the people with regard to the future administration of their affairs. The departure of the Commission was delayed because the French were unwilling to name their members for the Commission. The British too were apprehensive lest the findings of the Commission prove detrimental to their plans and policies in Palestine. London's worst fears were unequivocally confirmed by the Palestine Chief Administrator's report on the likely results of the findings of the Inter-Allied Commission, and on the potentially explosive situation in Palestine:

In the present state of political feeling there is no doubt that if Zionism's programme is a necessary adjunct to a mandatory the people of Palestine will select in preference the United States or France as the mandatory, or as the protecting power of an Arab administration.

... The Palestinians desire their country for themselves and will resist any general immigration of Jews, however gradual, by every means in their power including active hostilities. . . recent events in Egypt have greatly impressed the people of Palestine.

In conclusion, the idea that Great Britain is the main upholder of the Zionist programme will preclude any local request for a British Mandate and no mandatory power can carry through Zionist programme except by force.<sup>87</sup>

Clayton considered the report 'a true appreciation of the situation. Fear and distrust of Zionist aims grow daily and no amount of persuasion or propaganda will dispel it'. Furthermore, he reported that, 'There was recently a danger of serious disturbance in which Arabs from East of Jordan were to take part'.

In accordance with the Faisal-Weizmann agreement of January 1919,<sup>88</sup> Faisal tried to reconcile the Palestinian Arabs to Zionist policy. On 11 May 1919 Clayton reported that,

"Faisal has... informed an Arab delegation in Damascus that he did not consider Arab and Zionist aims to be incompatible and delegation seemed favourably impressed. Members of Zionist Commission are being invited to visit Faisal who may also ask a few leading Palestinian Arabs to attend with a view to rapprochement."<sup>89</sup>