

the whole country is now quiet from a political point of view, but it is the quiet resulting from exhaustion which followed the political orgy during the visit of the Commission, and partly from the tension caused by the belief that the decision of the Conference will be known shortly.¹⁰⁸

In the same letter French replied to an allegation made by Weizmann regarding 'artificial agitation' in Palestine:

It is the considered opinion of British officers, who know Palestine well that the opposition to Zionism, which is based to a certain extent on the national sentiment of the inhabitants, has grown stronger during the past months, and it is believed that is well known to the (Zionist) Commission, which has an efficient 'intelligence' service.

Colonel French's report was, in fact, a subdued version of what one of his staff at Haifa had to say about Weizmann's allegations:

The striking miscalculation of Weizmann's as to the general opposition to Zionism which he characterizes as 'artificial agitation that may still be prevalent' is startling. I found at Jerusalem the opposition still more strong than when I left there 4 months ago, and better organized, it is generally recognised that Jerusalem and Nablus are the political touchstones for Palestine, the latter place being if anything more fanatical and anti-Jew than Jerusalem. The Zionist Commission have in Jerusalem a very efficient counter-espionage service, and I suggest that their reports have either been sent home or ignored as alarmist.¹⁰⁹

Preparing for Revolt

The Zionist Intelligence records of that period – The Hagana Archives – corroborate what British Intelligence Officers in Palestine were reporting to their superiors in Cairo and London. Before we deal with the interesting and detailed reports of the Zionist Intelligence, it is necessary to refer to a highly informative report by Major Camp about the 'Arab Movement and Zionism'.¹¹⁰

The report gave an account of the leading Arab societies in Jerusalem: *el-Muntada, el-Adabi, el-Nadi el-Arabi, el-Akha we'l-Afaf, Muntada el-Dajjani* and *el-Feda'iyyeh*, the latter being a secret commando type body comprising many policemen and gendarmes.

The activities of these societies involved a comprehensive preparation for a revolt:

Arming of members with small arms; preparation of lists of prominent Jews and pro-Zionists among non-Jews, with place of residence of each; propaganda among the Bedouin of the trans-Jordan. . . effort to concentrate Palestinian officers at Amman, so as to be ready in case pro-Zionist policy is announced, learning of Hebrew by a few agents so as to follow Hebrew papers and conversation; appointment of agents to watch everything going on; effort to effect agreement with police and gendarmes to hand over arms or at least to put no obstacles in the way in case a revolt takes place; teaching of pan-Arab ideals to children, especially those in Reshidieh and Rawdte el-Maarif Schools.

The activities of three of these societies were described earlier in Weizmann's 8 February report. According to that report members of these societies were to

. . . try also to organise terrorists and secret corporations to fight later against the Jews by guerrillas. They try generally to create an 'etat d'esprit' very hostile against us. Many of them engage themselves in the Police service so that they might do much easier their work. Many of them are quite learned young men, having studied in Europe and several of them know perfectly well the Jewish question.¹¹¹

An undercover agent of the Zionist Intelligence reported a meeting of sixteen members of *el-Feda'iyyeh* on 27 August 1919, presumably in preparation for a revolt. Members reported on successful contacts with the chiefs of Trans-Jordan, the availability of arms, and on all the villagers around Jerusalem who 'wait impatiently for the first signal'.¹¹²

A speech delivered at that meeting, by one of the leaders of the secret commando organisation *Jawdat el-Halabi* illustrated the radical character of the *el-Feda'iyyeh* and the readiness of its members to draw the logical conclusions against the Anglo-Zionist alliance in Palestine:

We purchase arms as much as we liked and we shall receive more. Our principal action must be against the Jews who want to take our land, but if the Government will help them we shall also be against the Government. Many of our members, and friends are policemen