

fall of the 'Arab regime' in Damascus in July 1920 was a severe blow to the Palestinian Arab national movement that had repercussions on the orientation and outlook of that movement. The sense of identity was irreparably damaged, and an important source of backing was suddenly cut. The Palestinians were left alone in an arena where the balance of power was hopelessly tipped in favour of their determined enemies. The proposed Conference was charged with the arduous task of devising a strategy for the new situation.

The Third Palestine Arab Congress was held in Haifa on 13 December 1920, and was attended by representatives of the Muslim-Christian Associations and Societies from almost every part of Palestine, under the presidency of Musa Kazem Husseini. In the resolutions of the Congress the participants affirmed that Palestine was included in the Arab Kingdom which Britain promised to recognise in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. They declared their dissatisfaction with 'the present form of government in that it does not satisfy their wishes and fails to safeguard their interests'. The manifesto of the Congress pointed out, in a somewhat circumspect manner, that the Government was illegal since it exercised 'the power of legislation without a representative Council and before the final decision of the League of Nations is given'.²³ They objected to the Government's recognition of the Zionist Organisation as an official body, of Hebrew as an official language and of the use of the Zionist flag, and to admitting Zionist immigrants. The Advisory Council was condemned as 'a false attempt to show that there exists in Palestine a council with legislative powers representing the population'. Furthermore, the Congress contended that too many Zionists were appointed to various offices of Government. The manifesto concluded by spelling out the three 'doctrines' or 'National Charter' of the Arab National Movement in Palestine:

- (i) The condemnation of the Zionist policy which embodies the establishment of a National Home for the Jews, based upon the Balfour Declaration.
- (ii) The non-acceptance of the principle of Jewish immigration.
- (iii) The establishment of a National representative Government.

The Congress elected an Executive Committee of moderate Palestinian notables, headed by Musa Kazem, and entrusted it with the execution of the resolutions until the following Congress was convened.

The Congress, although clearly anti-Zionist, was quite moderate

vis-à-vis the British government. The three 'doctrines' did not challenge the Mandate outrightly, but rather concentrated on objecting against the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in its articles.

A state of excitement and agitation in Palestine prevailed during December and early January. As a Congress of the Muslim-Christian Societies it was representative of the elements that had assumed the leadership of these Societies from 1918 onwards; namely, town and village propertied notables,²⁴ merchants and a minority of middle class intellectuals. National unity meant the lowest common denominator in the anti-Zionist camp, and the composition of the Executive Committee was bound to reflect that. The absence of any mention of independence and unity with Syria was a significant omission that can only be explained in the light of the French occupation of Syria.

The demands of the Congress were not spared criticism by the younger and more vigorous elements. An article by 'Isa al-'Isa on the Haifa Congress concluded by saying that the demands of the Congress were not radical enough.²⁵

Moderate as the resolutions and the leadership of the Haifa Congress were, the government maintained that the delegates were appointed by small groups of people and refused to acknowledge them as being representative of the population. Thereupon, the organisers of the Congress felt compelled to vindicate their representative character and launched a wide-spread successful campaign to demonstrate general endorsement of the resolutions and leadership of the Congress.²⁶ The agitation which ensued, with public meetings and leaflets, etc., helped stimulate renewed daily interest in politics and concern for the future among the Palestinians, which inevitably resulted in the revival of tension in the country.

In an attempt to allay growing apprehensions, as well as to establish personal relations with the leaders of the opposition, Samuel invited Musa Kazem and five of his political associates to Government House to discuss with him — in a private capacity — 'the questions about which their minds were exercised'. Musa Kazem mentioned the fears of the community in regard to Mr Balfour's statement and Jewish immigration. He also raised the question of representative government'. In the course of his reply Samuel made it clear that it was not within his competence to discuss the policy laid down by HM Government and the Balfour Declaration, but rather it was his duty to carry out these policies. However, Samuel pointed out, it was within his competence to give effect to the second part of the Balfour Declaration. The question of the election of municipalities was already receiving his close