

attention. Furthermore, Samuel declared that he was prepared to recognise any body of 'gentlemen' representing any important section of the community, in the same manner as he had already given recognition to the Jewish National Assembly and under the same conditions, namely, that no resolutions should be adopted or submitted that were contrary to the conditions of the Mandate.²⁷ While the Palestinian leaders refrained from accepting Samuel's proposals, they responded favourably to the prospect of a friendly personal relationship with the High Commissioner and the political implications thereof.

A Feeling of Unsettlement

The revival of political agitation in the wake of the Haifa Congress owed much to a prevalent feeling of unsettlement in the area. The victories of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) inspired the belief that Turkey would probably refuse to ratify the Peace Treaty thus bringing the issue of the Mandate under fresh consideration. Then, there was the feeling that an attempt will be made by the Arabs to expel the French from Syria. In mid-January 1921 Deedes reported that even 'responsible' Palestinian Arabs firmly believed 'that there is still a chance of getting the Mandate changed; and that many British Statesmen and a portion of the British Public desires that change'.²⁸ In view of the many imponderables and the ample room for agitation Deedes expressed his apprehensions regarding the immediate political prospects:

I do not feel that there is much reason to fear the responsible members of the discontented party; but the words and actions of the irresponsible members are apt to be dangerous in an atmosphere always more or less charged with electricity, especially at this time of the year when we are approaching Easter.²⁹

This same feeling persisted after the text of the draft mandate was reported in the local newspapers.³⁰

The February Report gave an account of a movement to collect signatures as a protest against the separation of Palestine from the rest of a region to which, it was contended, the country belongs geographically as well as ethnographically and historically. This movement, among other things, reflected, 'a renewed effort on the part of Arab Nationalists in Egypt, in Palestine and in Syria to achieve their ends by cooperation'. The Report also gave accounts of increased interest in the question of Jewish immigration into Galilee brought about by the attempts of the Haifa Congress to gain support for their resolutions.

In the neighbourhood of Beisan some anxiety and apprehension have recently been expressed by the Arab population owing to an unfortunate and unfounded impression having gained ground that the Government intends to further the settlement of Jews in a manner detrimental to the interests of the Arab population.³¹

The ownership of the *Jiftlik* (Imperial) Beisan lands issue had a direct bearing on the involvement of the *fellahin* in the political fight against the pro-Zionist policy of the Government. The fears of the *fellahin* were genuine in view of the complications involved in their rights to ownership and tenancy of the lands under question.

Churchill's Cairo Conference

On assuming responsibility for the Middle East Department,³² the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill,³³ summoned his lieutenants and key British military, political and administrative staff in the area to a Conference in Cairo.

The Conference's main aim was to review the British position and lay plans for future policy in the Middle East in the light of the French occupation of Syria and the unsettled conditions of Trans-Jordan and Mesopotamia.

As far as Palestine was concerned the Conference considered that HMG was responsible under the terms of the Mandate for establishing a national home for the Jewish people. In a 'Memorandum drawn up by Middle East Department' presented to the Cairo Conference, it was observed that the Palestine Administration was being conducted 'in strict accordance with the terms of the Mandate, and has been attended by the happiest results'.³⁴

The Conference recommended that Trans-Jordan should be constituted an Arab province of Palestine under Prince 'Abdullah, Faisal's brother, responsible to the High Commissioner. It would not be included in the administrative system of Palestine, and therefore the Zionist clauses of the Mandate would not apply. In return for all this and the promise of financial assistance, 'Abdullah pledged — after interviews with Churchill in Jerusalem — to respect British international commitments: to the French in Syria and to the Zionists in Palestine.³⁵

Soon after Churchill's intention to visit Egypt, and perhaps Palestine, became known, the Executive Committee of the Haifa Congress announced the appointment of a deputation that would proceed to Egypt and lay before Churchill the grievances of the Palestinian Arabs. Despite the Administration's advice to await the