

difficulty.<sup>59</sup>

Another indication of the role played by the notables was their attitude towards the reactions of the Palestinian populace against the Jewish boycott of Arab traders in May 1921. The notables were bound to be discredited in view of their failure to play the role the majority of Palestinians demanded of them:

During the month a boycott of all Jewish goods broke out. The notables are stated to have done their best to stop it but met with much difficulty; such a step being interpreted by the people as having been prompted by the Jews and tended consequently to decrease the prestige of the notables in the eyes of the public.<sup>60</sup>

Samuel proposed to deport Bolsheviks, to suspend Jewish immigration temporarily,<sup>61</sup> to regulate immigration on stricter grounds, and to look into 'the very early' establishment of representative institutions'.<sup>62</sup> Lastly, Samuel informed Churchill that he viewed with favour the impending visit of a Palestinian delegation to Europe and London and thought that efforts should be made to promote an understanding between them and the Zionist organisation. In another report Samuel recommended to Churchill that Article 4 of the Palestine Mandate, which recognised the Zionist Organisation as an advisory body to the Administration, should be watered down or rendered unobjectionable to the Arabs by the insertion of a similar article providing for the parallel recognition of a non-Jewish body.<sup>63</sup>

#### Who Opposed Democracy?

Unlike Samuel, Churchill was not willing to conciliate the Palestinian leaders by means of political concessions, even after they had demonstrated a cooperative attitude under tense conditions and trying circumstances. He was particularly averse to giving way to Palestinian Arab demands regarding elected representative institutions.<sup>64</sup> When the Zionists got wind of what Samuel was contemplating, they hastened to convey their strong opposition to any form of representative institutions, stressing once more the identity of British and Zionist interests.

Such a body as appears to be contemplated would at the present time in all probability prove to be unfriendly to British policy in general and the Jewish National home in particular.<sup>65</sup>

The events of the spring of 1921 demonstrated that the notables were in need of reestablishing their leadership in the country. A show of political solidarity, on a wide scale was necessary, and the Fourth Palestine Arab Congress was convened in Jerusalem in May 1921, under the traditional chairmanship of Musa Kazem. About a hundred delegates attended and reaffirmed the resolutions passed by the Haifa Congress and nominated a Palestine Arab Delegation to plead the Palestine Arab case in Europe and London. Pending the departure of this Delegation and its discussions in London, instructions have been given that all disorderly movements are to be avoided'.<sup>66</sup>

During June 1921, a more peaceful mood in Palestine prevailed. There were two major reasons for this change, although, as Samuel observed, the 'causes of unrest remain'.<sup>67</sup>

The first reason was Samuel's important speech at an Assembly of notables on the occasion of the King's Birthday, 3 June, when he reinterpreted the meaning of the Balfour Declaration in a way designed to allay the fears of the Palestinian Arabs and promote tranquillity in Palestine. Samuel promised the Palestinians that Britain 'would never impose upon them a policy which that people had reason to think was contrary to their religious, their political and their economic interest'.<sup>68</sup>

Samuel's pronouncement had an unfavourable reception in Zionist circles. Its effect on the Palestinian Arabs was more difficult to gauge. The 'extremists' were not appeased, as nothing less than the withdrawal of the Balfour Declaration or even the abolition of the British Mandate would satisfy them. The greater public, though reassured, 'feel very suspicious of the Administration's intention or ability to carry them out'.<sup>69</sup> Samuel admitted that the Palestinians had expected a declaration more far-reaching and more specific in its terms.

The second factor was the impending departure of the Delegation to Europe, and the deliberate cooling-off policy adopted by the political leadership of the Palestine Congress:

...if the leaders of the opposition to Zionism were at any time to set themselves to fan the ambers, they would soon begin to glow, and perhaps burst into flame. Their influence is being exerted, for the time being at least on the side of tranquility.<sup>70</sup>

#### The Weapon of Passive Resistance

Samuel was aware of the precarious position of the Palestinian political leadership. He pointed out to Churchill that latest events revealed the great interest in public affairs in the minds of the population in general