

discontent and disaffection amongst the Arab population of his district was circulated to the Cabinet by Churchill. Symes rightly noted that economic conditions have a powerful influence on politics and that the former were most unsatisfactory in his district. The villagers were responsive to incitements and anti-Government agitation from the towns and the mass of the 'non-Jewish' population was thoroughly disgruntled:

At Acre and Shefa Amr business is at a standstill. At Haifa nearly all trades which are profitable to the Arabs show a decline. . . The Customs barrier with Syria is evidently killing transit trade. . . the non-Jewish shopkeeper is being 'frozen out' of the retail business. Even porters and other casual labour are beginning to be affected by the preference shown by Jewish firms and employers towards immigrant labour. . . all classes of townspeople suffer from the high cost of living. . . Higher up in the social scale the merchants and the effendi class are in a state of mind bordering on despair; they find it increasingly difficult to live by the proceeds of trade or other employment. . . many of them are faced with the alternatives of bankruptcy or emigration. The case of the large landed proprietor is little better; he is heavily in debt, and can obtain no more credit; the price of cereals is low; foreign markets, for one reason or another, are practically closed to him, he is even finding it difficult to dispose at a fair price of lands he may have to sell.

To the Arab dweller in a town, his disabilities and distress appear to be the direct consequence of the present British policy and its corollary the Jewish immigration.

The bedouin, of course, will have either to become fellahin or quit the country as it becomes settled and populated.¹⁰²

The only hope for the Administration, in Symes's opinion, was to show practical concern for the welfare of the fellahin which may enable the Administration to prevent their 'total alienation' and thus secure the fulfillment of British policy in Palestine. British policy, Symes admitted, was 'anathema to the large majority — including the most enlightened elements'. Even then, 'only [by] a wonderful combination of firmness, tact and good luck, can we hope to execute it by pacific means'.

Jewish immigration and Jewish smuggling of arms brought forth a general protest from the Muslim-Christian Societies in the early months of 1922. An additional cause for Arab protest against the Administration's policies was the loan it extended for the construction of the

Richon-Rehoboth Road. The exclusive employment on the road of Jewish immigrants — at higher wages than corresponding Arab labour — coupled with the fact that the road would mainly benefit Jewish colonies were a source of bitter criticism and accusations of clear discrimination in favour of the Zionists.

According to Deedes,

The terms of the proposed Constitution have been very unfavourably received by Moslems and Christians throughout the country. The main points of their objection are the recognition in the Constitution of the Balfour Declaration, the official and nominated majority in the Legislative Council, the excessive centralisation of power in the Hands of the High Commissioner and the exclusion of the people of the country and 'their representatives from, as is alleged, any real power either administrative or legislative in matters which profoundly affect the destinies of Palestine and its people.'¹⁰³

A more positive note was struck by the visit of Lord Northcliffe the powerful newspaper magnate, to Palestine which gave the Palestinians an opportunity to gain a sympathiser with influence at the right place in London. In a further effort to gain the sympathy of foreign visitors the Muslim-Christian Society were distributing copies of their propaganda publications in English. Samuel viewed Arab public relations and propaganda efforts as an alternative to the use of violence and as a means of drawing attention to their cause. He informed Churchill that

The principal leaders in the country cooperate in this policy, and are not slow to use their influence whenever necessary to prevent or suppress disorder.¹⁰⁴

Absence of a Revolutionary Organisation

The inclination to resort to disorder and violence, Samuel added, was characteristic of the lower strata of the population in the towns and villages.¹⁰⁵

During March, a feeling of nervousness throughout Palestine was reported, and rumours of impending trouble were widely discussed. The growth of political consciousness in various districts, and in the relatively inarticulate districts of Beersheba and Gaza in particular, become more marked and