

fellahin who lived on these lands. Arab nationalists directed their efforts towards reconciling partisan and family differences. More important still, it was reported that

At a meeting of the Nadi al Arabi the possible advantages of an insurrectionary movement at the present juncture were referred to; Jemil el Shehabi considered that news from the Delegation should be awaited.<sup>128</sup>

#### The Idea of a 'Moderate Party'

At this stage Samuel adopted a new attitude toward the Palestinian opposition, when he advocated encouraging the emergence of the Moderate Party. In a comprehensive survey of the political and economic conditions in Palestine, Samuel urged the Duke of Devonshire, the new Colonial Secretary, to maintain his predecessor's Palestine policy as a means of bringing about political stability, in addition to strengthening the hands of the pro-Government elements among Arab ranks.<sup>129</sup>

When Devonshire received the Palestinian Delegation in January 1923, he informed them that the new Conservative Government did not propose to repudiate the Balfour Declaration or to change the policy enunciated in Churchill's White Paper.

Back in Palestine the Arab National Movement energetically campaigned in favour of the boycott of the Legislative Council elections. At the instigation of the preachers, Palestinians swore an oath in their places of devotion to boycott the elections,<sup>130</sup> and numerous meetings harped on the theme that accepting a Constitution based on the Balfour Declaration was tantamount to national suicide.

Beside boycotting the Legislative Council the Palestinian national movement was engaged in an effort for economic self-betterment and for the protection of the Arab agriculturalists. On 1 February 1923, the Arab Economic Agricultural Conference held its first meeting. An Executive Committee was elected and attached to the Executive Committee of the Arab Congress with which it was charged to cooperate in economic and political matters. It was resolved to demand the abolition of certain agricultural taxes and dues, to encourage the plantation of tobacco and trees, and to request the Government to institute an agricultural school. However, the most important resolution was

To demand from the Government the enactment of a law forbidding the Fallah to sell his land if it is less than 200 dunoms in order that it provides means of livelihood on the lines of the Egyptian Law of the 5 feddans.

As the boycott campaign gathered momentum both Samuel and the pro-Government forces found themselves in a tight spot. The pro-Government party sought to extract certain concessions as a means of justifying its inclination to work with the Government. Samuel favoured the granting of some concessions to the Moderates as a means of strengthening their hand and mitigating public opinion in Palestine. On 11 February, Samuel reported to Devonshire that he had received an overture on behalf of important sections of Arabs who would be prepared to abandon opposition to the Balfour Declaration and come forward to cooperate with the Government at elections on certain conditions:

- (One) annual immigration to be limited numerically.
- (Two) Election to Legislative Council of Arab members by High Commissioner from lists submitted by local bodies in such number as to constitute a majority with elected members.
- (Three) British officials to retain the substance of executive authority but number of Palestinians in important positions in the Administration to be largely increased.
- (Four) An Arab Emir to be appointed in Palestine the High Commissioner remaining with present functions.<sup>131</sup>

While Samuel found that last condition objectionable and had other reservations to make he proposed to carry on with the conversations awaiting a positive decision by the Colonial Secretary.

Devonshire's reply was discouraging and nothing could be done to save the patriotic pretences of the pro-Government Party. The boycott of the elections by the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians provided a clear victory for the Arab Executive Committee over the Government's policies and the pro-Government elements who dared nominate themselves. It bolstered the Committee's position in the country. On 12 March 1923 it issued a proclamation advising stoppage of work and closing of shops on 14 March in honour of the attitude adopted by the 'Arab Nation' at the elections.<sup>132</sup> It was also decided to extend a popular welcome for the returning Arab Delegation. During