

the National Party and the Executive Committee brought about a meeting between delegates from the two parties, but failed to create national unity. An offer made by the leaders of the Muslim Christian Association to the National Party to send five representatives to sit on the Executive Committee, and also that its leader Sheikh Suleiman al-Taji be appointed Vice-President of the Committee, in return for the dissolution of the National Party was rejected.<sup>17</sup> No progress was made in the reconciliation of the conflicting parties until the presence of a prominent foreign visitor reminded them of their common interests.

#### Balfour's Visit

During the first two months of 1925, the prospect of Lord Balfour's visit to Palestine, with the object of opening the Hebrew University, became the dominating political topic.<sup>18</sup> Numerous articles appeared in the Press and several meetings were held by the Executive Committee to decide upon a course of action during Balfour's tour. The Executive Committee declared Balfour's day of arrival a day of mourning and called for a general strike throughout Palestine on this occasion. Furthermore, a complete boycott of the British statesman, who epitomised the Anglo-Zionist convergence, was to be observed throughout his visit. 'The Arabs see in Lord Balfour the personification of British interest in Zionism and consider him not only the initiator but the faithful supporter of the policy'.<sup>19</sup>

The day Lord Balfour set foot in Palestine, a general strike (shops, schools, cabs etc.) was observed by Muslims and Christians throughout Palestine. Black flags were raised and *Falastin* published a special English edition. Khalil Sakakini, an educated Christian, delivered a patriotic speech from the platform of the *Haram-ash-Sharif*, where

A motion, none too politely phrased, inviting Lord Balfour to leave the country which he had entered against the wishes of the inhabitants, was passed and communicated through the District Governor to the High Commissioner.<sup>20</sup>

The only Palestinian Arabs who failed to observe Balfour's boycott were the Mayor of Jerusalem and three officials in addition to few Beduin Sheikhs who were present at the inaugural ceremonies at the Hebrew University. The Mayor's attitude on this occasion was a subject of adverse comment and protest among Arab nationalist circles in Palestine.<sup>21</sup>

The Mayor's defiance of the generally observed instructions to

boycott Lord Balfour did not, *prima facie*, aggravate the antagonisms between the Executive Committee and the National Party. When the new Colonial Secretary, L.S. Amery, visited Palestine, he received a Palestinian Arab deputation which comprised representatives of the Executive Committee, the National Party and the Peasants' Party. After introducing the members of the deputation, Musa Kazem requested the Colonial Secretary to allow the President of the National Party to speak on their behalf. The central theme of Sheikh Suleiman al-Taji al-Farouki's speech was the willingness of the Palestinians to cooperate loyally with the British on the basis of friendship and mutual interest.<sup>22</sup> Arab hopes and aspirations, Farouki stressed, were not incompatible with British interests, but were in fact the *sine qua non* of the achievement of British interests and influence in the area.

Eventually, Farouki predicted, Britain would reach the conclusion that the Zionist policy is 'inapplicable'. He then went into the specific Palestinian Arab grievances such as excessive taxation, which to some Arabs seemed to be a deliberate measure calculated to force the inhabitants to sell their lands and leave the country, lack of participation in the legislative process, and being forced by the Government to build roads leading to Jewish colonies in the interests of Jewish colonisation. He concluded by reiterating the demand for a National Government 'representative of all elements in the country and responsible to the inhabitants... as the Mandate provides that the civil rights of the people of the country be safeguarded'.<sup>23</sup>

#### Signs of Weakness

The Executive Committee's unprecedented acquiescence in allowing a member of a rival party to speak on behalf of all the Palestinians on an important official occasion was indicative of their weakened position and thus their desire to cover that weakness by a semblance of national unity before the public and the Government. When Field Marshal Lord Plumer of Messina came to Palestine to take over as High Commissioner from Samuel, the Palestinian political mood was totally different from that which prevailed in the summer of 1920:

The various Arab parties would like to present to the new High Commissioner a united but friendly front, and appear to be convinced that the time for a purely negative policy is over.<sup>24</sup>

This more conciliatory approach to Government was reinforced by