

British bayonets, and it was therefore necessary to fight Britain if the struggle against Zionism was to achieve its goals.⁵⁶ The second concerned the cowardice of the Palestinian notables and their inadequacy to lead the Arabs in the struggle against Zionism and British policy in Palestine.

A further blow in this direction was meted out by J. Chancellor (the H.C.) who issued on his return to Palestine an angry proclamation in which he accused the Arabs of committing atrocious acts and announced that in view of recent events he was going to suspend those discussions with His Majesty's Government on the subject of constitutional changes in Palestine.

No Arab Atrocities

On top of Chancellor's general accusations there were Zionist allegations of Arab atrocities at Hebron on 24 August. When the Arabs denied that any acts of mutilations had taken place, a formal request by the Palestine Zionist Executive was made to the High Commissioner to authorise the exhumation of bodies of Jews who had been killed at Hebron.⁵⁷ Thereupon, Chancellor instructed the Director of Health to appoint a special committee, composed of British doctors, to examine the exhumed bodies with a view to ascertaining whether they had been mutilated or not, in the presence of Jewish and Arab representatives.

The special committee submitted a report on 13 September in which it stated that the charges of 'mutilation' were not substantiated in the cases of the twenty bodies which were exhumed, four of which were referred to them by the Jewish representatives.⁵⁸ The report of the medical committee was looked upon as a political and moral victory for the Palestinian Arabs who, in their turn, had insisted that the exhumation should be carried out.

In their turn the Arabs complained that the Attorney-General Norman Bentwich was pro-Zionist and demanded his dismissal.⁵⁹

There were other complaints as well: 'the severity of the Police which had reached a limit that they thought was unheard of in a civilised country', in addition to the rigorous suppression of the Arabic papers 'for trivial reasons'.⁶⁰

The High Commissioner was anxious that the Executive should use their influence to prevent incitement by boycott:

There was a serious danger at the present time when public opinion was inflamed that some small incident connected with boycotting might develop into a disturbance on a large scale. They must bear in

mind that there was a large number of troops in the country now, and any disturbance might lead to bloodshed.⁶¹

Chancellor's insinuation that any disturbance would soon develop into a clash between the Arabs and British troops was hardly necessary, as the Arab Executive were already advising moderation and were only looking for Government help that would strengthen their hands.⁶² Far from offering the Arab Executive any concessions, Chancellor affirmed the extension of the application of the much hated Collective Punishment Ordinance over the whole country.

The Mufti's Attitude

While a growing anti-Government militant mood was making itself felt all over the country, Hajj Amin was assuring Chancellor, in a private interview on 1 October, that 'there could be no doubt that the mass of the Arab population were amicably disposed towards Great Britain'.⁶³ The Mufti's statement implied that he still believed it possible to confine Palestinian opposition to Britain's Zionist policies and to the Zionists themselves and thus avoid a direct clash between Britain and the Arabs. During the latter part of September, Police sources stated that:

Shekib Wahab, Syrian revolutionary leader, in conversation with the Grand Mufti, offered to organise bands for a guerrilla campaign to last not less than a year. The Grand Mufti reported to have considered this unnecessary at present.⁶⁴

Hajj Amin sought to impress Chancellor of his loyalty when he told the High Commissioner that he considered himself 'as one who was, in a sense, an officer of the State'.⁶⁵ A week later:

The Mufti said he promised to help in the maintenance of order and to cooperate with the Government. He had always held this attitude and he held it still and should continue to hold it even if Government did not listen to his representations. He regarded this as his duty not only to the Government but to God and the people and also to his own conscience.⁶⁶

The Mufti pointed out to the High Commissioner the difficulties involved in his pro-Government position which was particularly unpopular in view of the Government's refusal to abolish the Collective Punishment Ordinance: 'during the last few days he had been charged himself with being in league with the Government in this matter'. On