

tranquillising effect on the Arabs. The agitation against the Government continued, albeit in less violent forms, and sums of money were being collected in Egypt and elsewhere to subsidise the pro-Mufti elements and the *Istiqlal* groups.

Zionist efforts to fight the Government's Legislative Council proposals were instrumental in bringing about a change of policy. In February a debate in the House of Lords took place, followed by a debate in the Commons in March which revealed the existence of 'serious doubt in all parts of the House as to the desirability of proceeding with the proposals'.³

The impact of the Commons debate on the Arabs was predictable. It reminded them of the Zionist efforts that preceded the publication of the 'Black Letter'⁴ and justified the radicals' call for a total boycott of all negotiations with the Government.

Despite the setback represented by the Commons debate and the hostile public mood, the National Defence Party displayed a singular eagerness to accept the proposals of the Legislative Council. On 29 March the National Defence Party officially declared their acceptance of the proposals and two days later Ragheb Nashashibi urged the leaders of the other parties to do likewise. Jamal Husseini refused to comply as it was the responsibility of the Arab Party's Executive Committee to determine the attitude of the Party on major issues.

On 2 April 1936, the High Commissioner summoned the leaders of the Arab parties and told them that the Colonial Secretary had extended an invitation to representatives of the five Arab parties to send a deputation to London to lay their views before him. After a short discussion the Arab leaders agreed that it was their unanimous wish to accept the Secretary of State's invitation. Twelve days later, however, the Arab Party issued a manifesto in which it declared its rejection of the Legislative Council proposals as these were not in consonance with the aspirations of the country for complete independence and Arab unity.⁵ The decision was a shrewd move calculated to enhance the popular standing of the Arab Party and embarrass all the other parties which had already accepted the proposals. The objection to the Legislative Council scheme was not accompanied by a withdrawal from the membership of the delegation.⁶ The disputes over the membership of the delegation delayed the departure of the Arab leaders and, before they could reach agreement, events had overtaken them yet again.

Tension between Arabs and Jews had been steadily rising since the beginning of autumn 1935, as a result of Zionist opposition to self-

governing institutions. Continued Jewish immigration on a large scale and further land acquisition did not relax the prevailing tensions. In February 1936, the Government awarded a contract to build three Arab schools in Jaffa to a Jewish contractor who refused to employ a single Arab labourer. An Arab Labour Garrison was formed to picket the site of the school and racial animosity ticked like a time-bomb ready to explode at any moment.

The incident which triggered the violent events was trivial yet enough to throw the country into turmoil and revolution. On 13 April, one Jew was killed and two Jews were seriously wounded in the course of a general hold-up by Arab bandits on the main roads between Nablus and Tulkarem. The following night two Arabs on the main road north of Petah Tikvah were murdered in their huts, as an act, so the Arabs believed, of Jewish reprisal. The funeral of the Jew killed in the hold-up on 17 April led to angry Jewish demonstrations where the demonstrators attempted to penetrate into Jaffa but were turned away by the Police whom they stoned.⁷ A series of assaults on Arab vegetable merchants began in Tel Aviv and on 19 April following the circulation of rumours that more Arabs had been killed by Jews, clashes occurred between Arabs and Jews on the border between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, and a number of casualties on both sides were inflicted.

A curfew was imposed on Tel Aviv and Jaffa and the Palestine (Defence) Order in Council and the emergency regulations thereunder were brought into force throughout Palestine.

Spontaneous Reactions

During the clashes of 19 April, scores of Arabs were injured and many Arab houses were burnt. Arab reaction to the news in all parts of Palestine was spontaneous and violent.⁸ On 20 April an Arab National Committee was formed at Nablus, where it was resolved that a general strike should be declared throughout the country and maintained until such time as the Government had conceded the demands put forward in the previous November.

On the following day National Committees led by *Istiqlalists*, young students and activists were formed in Haifa, Jaffa and Gaza which declared themselves in sympathy with the national demands and the national strike declared by the Nablus Committee. Wauchop admitted to the Colonial Secretary that 'the strike was begun independently and spontaneously in various places by various committees and groups'.⁹

The Arab parties were quick to react. The National Block and the Youth Congress associated themselves, without hesitation, with the