

that the Mandate was unworkable. The Higher Committee demanded that the British Mandate be replaced by a *Palestinian* independent state, treaty-bound with Britain, guaranteeing reasonable British interests and minority rights of the Jews.<sup>81</sup>

Petitions of protest were submitted from all parts of Palestine but the strongest reactions were those voiced in Galilee, which was included in the Jewish State, where the Report was received 'with shock and incredulity'. According to an official report:

Christians, Moslems, Fellahin and landowners are probably more united in their rejection of the proposal than they have ever been before. Their common feeling in this district is that they have been betrayed and that they will be forced to leave their lands and perish in some unknown desert.<sup>82</sup>

As a result new local National Committees of a large size were formed in which the rural population was represented by a majority of two-thirds.

Aware of the logical implications of Arab opposition to the partition scheme, the British unsuccessfully attempted on 17 July to arrest the elusive Hajj Amin, in order 'to prevent his making further appeals and preventing his giving any support to those who may wish for disturbances'.<sup>83</sup>

#### The Bludan Pan-Arab Congress

Having narrowly escaped arrest Hajj Amin kept within the sanctuary of the *Haram* from where he managed to keep in touch with the rebel leaders and political activists. Unable to arrest him in the *Haram* area, Wauchope initiated measures for Government control of the administration of the *Shari'a* Courts and the *waqf* funds to curtail the power of the Mufti. Emulating the example of Zionist Congresses, the Higher Committee applied for permission to convene a Pan-Arab congress in Palestine to study the situation and take the necessary measures to protect the rights of the Palestinian Arabs but the Administration refused to grant permission on the grounds that the proposed congress would lead to excitement. Thereafter, the 'Committee for the Defence of Palestine' in Damascus undertook to convene the congress in Bludan, a Syrian summer resort. On 8 September, over four hundred delegates<sup>84</sup> from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine elected Naji Sweidi, an ex-Prime Minister of Iraq, for the Presidency of the Congress, 'Alluba Pasha, Shakib Arslan and Bishop Krayke for the Vice-Presidency and

Darwaza for the Secretariat. The Congress asserted that Palestine was part of the Arab homeland and that the Arabs had the right and were duty-bound to defend Palestine. The proposed Jewish state was viewed as a grave threat and a foreign base against the Arab world.<sup>85</sup>

The Congress proposed that the Balfour Declaration should be abrogated, the Mandate annulled, and an Anglo-Palestinian treaty concluded whereby independence was recognised and a stop put to Jewish immigration.<sup>86</sup> In the event of British insistence on the partition of Palestine, British and Jewish goods should be boycotted by the Arab States.

In his report on the Congress the British Consul in Damascus cabled that 'contrary to expectation general tone was not anti-British-although vehemently anti-Zionist'.<sup>87</sup> This moderation was imposed by politicians eager 'to stand well' with the British Government led by Sweidi, the President of the Congress. Thoroughly dissatisfied with what they described as the insipid resolutions of the Congress about a hundred Palestinian and Syrian nationalists held a secret meeting, on 12 September for the purpose of discussing more effective measures that could and should be taken to fight British proposals for partition.

The method most favoured was the continuance of attacks on the persons of Arabs friendly to the British authorities and on Jews, with the idea of preparing the ground for more direct action later against the Mandatory should this dangerous course be necessary.<sup>88</sup>

Simultaneous with these secret meetings Palestinian activists were in touch with the Syrian rebels who had taken a leading part in the revolt of 1936 and arrangements were made for the immediate departure of thirty rebels and a rallying point somewhere between Beisan, Jenin and Nablus was fixed.<sup>89</sup> Considerable accumulation of arms and ammunition were stated to have been made around Nablus under the direction of the Mufti.

#### The Rebellion's Second Phase

Anticipating an outburst of violence in Palestine the British took two parallel measures to contain and suppress Arab reactions. In September 1937 the League Council met to approve a recommendation submitted by the Permanent Mandates Committee to accept the principle of partition in Palestine. But instead of asking for approval to proceed with partition, the British Foreign Secretary, Mr Anthony Eden, requested approval for sending a commission to Palestine to work out