

were invited to the London conference. On the other hand they were dismayed that immigration and land sales were to be excluded from the discussions. The Jews wanted the British to crush the rebellion first and foremost and then hoped that the disunity of the Arabs of Palestine would prevent them from sending a delegation to the conference. They were apprehensive that the proposed London conference would lead to concessions to the Arabs regarding immigration and land sales in return for an early end to the rebellion. The Zionist leadership regarded the participation of the Arab States as an undesirable precedent and 'they wished the United States of America to participate actively'.<sup>126</sup>

From the outset it was clear that Iraq and Ibn Sa'ud would be 'ready to use their influence (whatever it may be) with Palestine leaders to bring insurrection to an end and also to make the conference a success'.<sup>127</sup> When British objection to the participation of the Mufti in the Palestinian Arab delegation became known, MacMichael reported that the majority of the Palestinian Arabs were disappointed,<sup>128</sup> and that the anti-Mufti faction began to show signs of life. Less than a week after the British statement of Policy was published, Fakhri Nashashibi published an open letter to the H.Cr. in which he claimed to be writing on behalf of many moderates. In this letter he challenged the Mufti's leadership claiming that the moderate anti-Mufti leaders represented 75 per cent of the interests of the country and that their followers represented more than half of the Arabs of Palestine. In view of the strong hostile reaction to Fakri's letter Ragheb Nashashibi, then in self-exile in Egypt, issued an immediate *dementi* disavowing his cousin's views. MacMichael reported that the controversy was possibly a 'stage battle'. As for Fakhri's initiative MacMichael stated, 'I think it more than probable than Fakhri was induced by local Jewish politicians to write his letter'.<sup>129</sup>

It soon became evident that all efforts to discredit the Mufti had backfired. On 29 November, MacMichael reported to MacDonald that he had received more than 180 telegrams expressing confidence in the Mufti and the Higher Committee 'many of which bear a considerable number of signatures. They have come from all parts of Palestine and bear the names of persons in different walks of life ranging from Mayors, Municipal Councillors, Christian and Moslem religious dignitaries to shopkeepers'.<sup>130</sup>

#### The London Round Table Conference

The Nashashibi Party did not carry sufficient weight to replace the Mufti and on 23 November MacDonald announced in the House of

Commons that the Palestine Arab delegation would represent all the leading groups in the country. Early in December it was announced that the Seychelles deportees would be unconditionally released to give them an opportunity to being chosen to represent the Arabs at the proposed London conference. After their arrival in Cairo, the British announced that they had no objection to consultations between the deportees and the Mufti before deciding on the membership of the Palestine Arab delegation to London. Together with Jamal Husseini they proceeded to Beirut to confer with the Mufti and come to an agreement with him so that no settlement would be agreed to at the conference without his approval.

It was agreed that the Palestine Arab delegation would put forward the demands of the Palestine Arab 'national charter' including the demand for an independent Palestinian state with an Arab majority. The Arabs were not to sit with the Zionists, and later events indicated that the leaders agreed 'that it was essential to intensify terrorism rather than modify it, both before and during the discussions. . . to inform world opinion of what would happen if the Arab demands were not met'.<sup>131</sup> It was agreed that Jamal Husseini would lead the delegation as the Mufti's representative and that Hussein F. Khalidi, Alfred Rock, Musa Alami would be members of the delegation with George Antonius and Fuad Saba as secretaries.

The Higher Committee had earlier approached Ragheb and had invited him to accompany the delegation to London. At that time Ragheb gave no reply. Later, however, the Palestine Administration encouraged Ragheb, as did Tawfiq Abu el-Huda, 'Abdullah's Chief Minister, and prodded him to name a rival delegation composed of Defence Party leaders, which he did.<sup>132</sup> The Mufti refused to compromise at the beginning but he was induced by Arab statesmen to accept Nashashibi and Farraj, both ex-members of the Higher Committee, as members of the delegation.

Before the London Round Table Conference opened on 7 February 1939, the situation in Palestine began to show signs of renewed rebel initiative.

Haining's campaign against the rebels bands in the hills and villages had the effect of shifting terrorism to the cities where sabotage, bomb-throwing and assaults increased sharply. By late December a number of prominent band leaders were in Damascus to discuss plans and obtain rest and supplies. These leaders returned in January and were able to intensify their attacks against British and Jewish personnel and property, as well as collect levies in the cities. Severe restrictions on