THE GRAND MUFTI

HAJ AMIN AL-HUSSAINI

Founder of the Palestinian National Movement

Zvi Elpeleg

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translated by
David Harvey
and edited by
Shmuel Himelstein

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To NAOMI
and to our children
ORLY and OFFER

Foreword

The rise of the Palestinian national movement after the First World War was a continuation of the pan-Arab national movement that had crystallised before and during the war. The common denominator of the two movements was the fact that both had arisen primarily as responses to external challenges.

The background to the emergence of the pan-Arab movement was the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, and the tyrannical regime of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid the Second in the last quarter of that century. Tension increased between the regime in Istanbul and groups of Arab intellectuals, primarily in Damascus and Beirut, after the 'Young Turks', who seized power in 1908, turned out to be zealous supporters of pan-Turkism, which they sought to impose on all the Empire's ethnic groups.

Criticism of the regime took on an organised character during the last years of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of clandestine groups in Lebanon.[1] The first to organise themselves were Christian intellectuals. There were two reasons for this. First, they were steeped in the political ideas brought over from Europe by missionaries active in the region. Second, it was only within the framework of the Arab nationalist idea that they could equate their status to that of the Muslim Arabs. Although this activity caused no immediate echoes outside Beirut, harassment at the beginning of the twentieth century by the regime of those suspected of 'deviating' from Turkish nationalism led to the growth of the Arab nationalist idea in other Arab provinces. What had begun as a demand for cultural autonomy for the Arab provinces developed, at well-attended conferences of regional political bodies, into a demand for independence,[2] and, eventually, in 1916, into the declaration of the Arab revolt by Sharif (later King) Husayn Ibn 'Ali.

It should be stressed that in the period preceding the First World War and during the war itself, only a few Arabs joined the nationalist movement. Religious considerations deterred Arabic-

speaking Muslims from subversive action against the Muslim state, and these groups further viewed the association with the Muslim Sultan's Christian enemies as a grave sin. Many others preferred to withhold their support from either side until it became clear who would win.

Representatives from the 'District of Palestine' constituted part of the general national movement, and they participated in its various conferences, including the Arab Congress in Paris in June 1913. As in the general movement, so too in the Palestinian faction; the early activists were Christian intellectuals, particularly from Nablus and Acre. Unlike their colleagues from other countries, however, the Palestinian Arabs were concerned with the Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Long before the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917), and many years before the outbreak of the First World War, the Palestinian Arabs faced the challenge posed by the Zionist movement, which itself greatly influenced the emergence of the Palestinian national movement. The increasing immigration of European Jews, who could now be seen in different parts of the country, the land purchase and the establishment of new settlements, all caused concern among the Palestinian political public. This concern, which was based partly on reality and partly on political propaganda, found expression in the Palestinian press published in the years preceding the First World War.

Arabic newspapers appeared in various parts of Palestine before the war, and expressed hostility to Zionism. They published exaggerated figures about the number of Jewish immigrants and land acquisitions. Especially anti-Zionist were *al-Karmil* (founded in Haifa in 1908), and *Filastin* (founded in Jaffa in 1911).[3] The publishers of both these newspapers, and of a number of others, were Christians. In addition to distributing anti-Zionist propaganda, they took part in organising political and economic campaigns against the Jewish Yishuv.

During the course of the First World War, the nationalist political organisations made great efforts to enlist Palestinian Arabs from among the Arab towns of Palestine into an anti-Turkish front. None the less, the majority of the Palestinian public and its leaders were not swept away by the nationalist propaganda, and remained faithful to the idea of the integrity of the Empire. Moreover, even among those who wished to be liberated from the tyrannical regime, there were some who preferred to wait for the outcome of the war. In any case, during the war itself, there was

very little opposition to Turkish rule. In contrast, the opposition to Zionism was widespread and encompassed all of the Palestinian political factions.

Toward the end of the war, reports began to reach Palestine of both the Sykes–Picot agreement* and the Balfour Declaration. These reports greatly worried the Arab political and religious communities in Palestine. The Palestinian leaders launched a propaganda campaign in towns and villages, with the aim of arousing the masses to an anti-Zionist struggle. Within a short time, before the British had even completed the conquest of Palestine, nationalist organisations intended to fight Jewish immigration and land purchase had sprung up all over the country.

Zionist activity in Palestine increased after the British conquest, reaching a zenith with the arrival of the committee led by Haim Weizmann. On the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the committee organised a procession and celebrations to mark the event, which caused a storm among the Palestinian Arabs. The latter began to establish Muslim–Christian Societies, which were to struggle against both the Zionist enterprise and the pro-Zionist policy of the British.

The Palestinian Arabs looked to Damascus to rescue them from their political distress. At the beginning of October 1918, Amir Faisal Ibn Husayn entered the city at the head of his 'Desert Army' and within a short time had announced the establishment of an independent Arab government. Palestinian leaders then issued declarations that Palestine was the southern part of Syria and that, accordingly, the government in Damascus was their government. In March 1920, the second Pan-Syrian Congress (the first had been held in July 1919, and both were attended by Palestinian activists) decided to crown Faisal king of 'Greater Syria'. This decision strengthened the Palestinian Arabs' adherence to the idea of 'Southern Syria', aroused a great deal of enthusiasm, and led to outbreaks of violence. At this stage, the Palestinian national groups enjoyed the support of those senior officials in the British military administration who viewed the Zionist policy as an obstacle to be removed.[4]

Even had the Arab independence in Damascus lasted and the competition between Britain and France been prevented, it is

* 1916: The agreement between France and Britain (and Russia) concerning the division of the Ottoman Empire after its collapse. The agreement was named after the chief representatives of Britain and France at the talks.

unlikely that the Palestinian Arabs could have brought about a change in the British commitment to the Zionist movement. In fact, neither of these conditions ever materialised, since, in light of the uncompromising position of the nationalist groups in Damascus, King Faisal was unable to reach an agreement with the French. As a result, the French army invaded Damascus, putting an end to the national government, and imposing the Mandatory regime by force. Faisal, who had lost his crown, left Damascus, but not long afterwards the British helped him to win another – that of Iraq. The Palestinian Arabs, who had pinned their hopes on the national regime in Damascus, were surprised and greatly disappointed. In place of the vision of a 'Greater Syria', they now adopted the idea of an 'Independent Palestine'.

At this stage, it became clear to the Palestinian Arabs that they were a separate national entity. Their national movement now began to crystallise round three challenges:

1. the British Mandatory regime in Palestine, which was committed to realising the Balfour Declaration;
2. the neighbouring Arab states, which had won their independence, if under the temporary supervision of the Mandatory powers;
3. the Jewish national movement in Palestine, which enjoyed the massive support of world Jewry.

The last-minute efforts of the Palestinian leadership to prevent the ratification of the British Mandate ended in failure, as did its attempts to alter the status of Palestine by pressuring King Husayn Ibn 'Ali, who was conducting prolonged negotiations over the British–Hejaz contract (1920–24). The king was uncompromising, partly as a result of the Palestinian demands, and the negotiations failed.

The neighbouring Arab states, which had only recently gained their independence, were concerned with safeguarding their own interests, and did not concern themselves with the question of Palestine. The Palestinian leadership was thus left to face alone challenges which were beyond its capacity. The Palestinian movement was not only disadvantaged when dealing with external opposition; it also suffered discord within its own leadership. The Mufti of Jerusalem, Shaikh Kamil al-Husayni, attempted to calm tempers and moderate the expressions of hostility toward the British; in return, the authorities granted him honours and material benefits. The rivalry which had obtained between the

leading families in the previous century went on and even worsened, as the new British administration was constituted and the various families competed to gain its favour. The winners of this competition were the Nashashibis, who received the office of mayor of Jerusalem from the British Governor at the beginning of 1920. Shortly before, the office had been taken from the head of the Husayni family, Musa Kazim al-Husayni, because of his nationalist activities.

Aside from the internal rivalry from which this competition sprang and from the scope of the challenges which it faced, the traditional leadership in Jerusalem lacked both the resources necessary to conduct the struggle, and any organisational ability. There was dissatisfaction in the provincial towns about the way in which the Jerusalem notables were conducting the struggle, and resentment increased among the young; all felt a lack of direction and a sense of hopelessness. This, then, was the background to Haj Amin al-Husayni's arrival on the Palestinian political platform.

Introduction

The political career of Haj Amin al-Husayni, the founder of the Palestinian national movement and the Mufti of Jerusalem, stretched over almost sixty of the eighty years of his life, from the end of the First World War until his death in 1974.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Haj Amin fashioned the Palestinian national movement, founded its organisational frameworks and imbued them with his political ideas. During this period, he also strengthened his status at home, conducted the struggle against the British Mandate and Zionism, and did his utmost to turn what was then a local conflict into a regional one, by involving the masses in the Arab states in the Palestinian cause.

Between the years 1939–41 he played a part in the confrontation in Iraq between the regime of Rashid 'Ali al-Qailani and the British Army. After the failure of the Iraqis, he travelled to Italy and Germany, from where he worked to enlist the support of the Arab states for Nazi Germany. After the war he returned to the Middle East and became involved in the struggle that had already begun over the political future of Palestine. The results of this struggle, in 1948, included the establishment of the State of Israel, the creation of the refugee problem, and the annexation of Palestinian territories to the then Kingdom of Transjordan.

This marked the end of the first period of Haj Amin's political career. During the next period, he remained far from enjoying the status which he had attained previously, and was never able to come to terms with the new situation. During this period he continued to claim that he was the leader of the Palestinian Arabs, and tried to influence the fate of his people. He opposed every attempt to settle the refugees in the Arab states; he continued to persuade the masses in the Arab world that they faced danger from Israeli expansionism, and, as a result, maintained a consciousness of the regional character of the conflict; he was active in exploiting inter-Arab tensions to further the Palestinian cause and to strengthen his personal status; and he set up Palestinian units and demanded that they be integrated into the war against Israel.

Although they would never admit to it, the present leaders of the PLO are in fact continuing the struggle that Haj Amin began. Moreover, they make use of his political doctrine and the idiomatic expressions which he coined. A study of Haj Amin's political life is thus helpful in understanding the sources which nourish the present-day Palestinian national movement.

This book, the result of research undertaken at the Shiloah Institute–Dayan Centre at Tel Aviv University, is an attempt to outline both parts of Haj Amin's political biography. My intention was to present an overall picture of his political activities, while avoiding both excessive detail and the non-objective nature that has characterised a large part of the treatment of Haj Amin by both sides.

The 1948 defeat took Haj Amin away from the centre of the Palestinian and Arab political platforms. Within the Arab camp, he was both blamed for the defeat and turned into its symbol. For their part, the Arab media and Arab historiography have made little reference to Haj Amin, preferring to ignore his memory. This is explained by their desire to suppress this low point of Palestinian history and the Arab failure to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel.

This obviously hinders research into the second period of the Mufti's life. While there are numerous sources dealing with the first period, research on the second period is based on archives within Israel and abroad, and particularly on Haj Amin's own writings, published in the 1950s in the Egyptian press and some years later in his Beirut-based journal, *Filastin*.

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ZVI ELPELEG

1

Haj Amin – Maker of the Palestinian National Movement

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY STAGES

Muhammad Amin al-Husayni (subsequently Haj Amin) was born in Jerusalem at the end of the nineteenth century. There are those who maintain that he was born in 1895, while others prefer 1896 or 1897.[1]

The Husayni family of Jerusalem attributes its origins to Husayn, son of the Caliph 'Ali, and his wife, Fatma, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. For decades, however, it was accepted, especially by Jewish writers and Amin al-Husayni's Palestinian opponents, that the Husayni family is not really descended from the Prophet's family. According to widely published reports, including a number of scholarly works, Amin al-Husayni was a descendant of the al-Aswad family. Family members claim that this family emigrated from Yemen to Palestine in the sixteenth century, and settled in a small village outside Jerusalem. At the end of the eighteenth century, one of Amin's ancestors married a daughter of the distinguished Husayni family, and, contrary to the accepted custom, the family adopted the wife's family name. From this point on, Amin's ancestors claimed to be descended from the Prophet.

In recent years, this version of events has been entirely refuted. Shlomo Ben-Elkanah discovered the family register at the East Jerusalem home of a Husayni family notable, Ibrahim Tawfiq al-Husayni. The register shows that the family is indeed descended from Husayn, the Prophet's grandson.[2] This disclosure ended claims made by its rivals about the inferior lineage of the Jerusalem Husayni family. As a result, Jewish writers, too, have stopped repeating the claim.

'Abd al-Latif Ibn Abdullah al-Husayni, who was born in 1694, was responsible for building the Husayni family's power base in Jerusalem. In 1745, he was appointed by the Istanbul *Naqib al-Ashraf* (head of the Sharif class) to serve as Jerusalem's *Naqib al-Ashraf*, and he held the title of *Shaikh al-Haram al-Qudsi*. When he died in 1774, the important religious offices were in the hands of his sons, and one of them, Haj Hasan al-Husayni, was appointed Mufti of Jerusalem in 1789.

In 1791, rivals of the Husayni family unsuccessfully attempted to wrest the office from Haj Hasan. However, the Husayni family succeeded in keeping it in its possession, after sending gifts to Istanbul. This shaikh died in 1809, and, since his children were still young, the office was inherited by Shaikh Tahir, the son of 'Abd al-Samad Ibn 'Abd al-Latif. In 1834, the positions of Mufti of Jerusalem and *Naqib al-Ashraf* were in the hands of two members of the Husayni family. These two, 'Umar al-Husayni and Shaikh Tahir, were involved in the revolt against Ibrahim Pasha. As a result, they were exiled by Muhammad 'Ali to Cairo, where they remained until Ibrahim Pasha's withdrawal from Syria. This exile brought about a decline in the status of the Husayni family in Jerusalem, and a rise in the power of the al-Khalidi, al-'Alami, and Jarallah families, which assumed the important offices in the city.[3]

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Muhammad Fadil Jarallah, died in 1856, and the Husayni family, with the aid of the Ottoman governor, managed to reclaim the office. Marriages at the time between the Husayni and Jarallah families also undoubtedly helped. Muhammad Amin's grandfather, Shaikh Mustafa Ibn Tahir al-Husayni, held the office of Mufti of Jerusalem from 1856 until his death in either 1893 or 1894 (the 1,311th year of the *Hegira*). The office then passed to his son, Shaikh Tahir, who had two wives. The first, Mahbubah, bore him seven daughters and one son, Kamil, and the second, Zaynab, bore him two sons, Fakhri and Amin. Tahir died in 1908, and his son, Kamil, was appointed Mufti by order of the Ottoman authorities. Amin's mother died during the First World War.[4]

During his youth, Amin al-Husayni studied in a *kuttab* (religious elementary school for the study of the Koran), and at the *I'dadi* pre-high school in Jerusalem. In addition to his school studies, which included Turkish, his father, Tahir, hired private tutors to teach him French and Arabic. At the age of seventeen, he travelled to Cairo to continue his studies at *Dar al-Dawa wa al-Irshad*, a well-known institution managed by Muhammad Rashid Rida in *al-*

Azhar. According to Biyan al-Hut, he also studied in the humanities faculty of the Egyptian University (subsequently, Cairo University).[5]

Haj Amin was later to rely on his studies at Cairo's *al-Azhar* in order to base his claim for recognition as an *'alim* (Muslim religious sage) and for his worthiness to hold the office of Mufti.[6] His stay in Cairo lasted only two years, since in 1914, when the First World War broke out, he was visiting his family in Jerusalem and was prevented from returning to Egypt. By now he already held the title of Haj, as he had travelled to Mecca with his mother the previous year, apparently during the first vacation from his studies. Because of his short stay in Egypt, Haj Amin never completed his studies in any educational institution, and obviously never received any diploma. Had he remained in Egypt, he would probably have continued his studies, but when the war broke out he enlisted in the Ottoman army. He was sent to a training camp in Astama, and, after completing an officers' course, was stationed with the 47th Brigade in the Izmir district, later serving in bases in the Black Sea area. It seems that Haj Amin never reached the front, and it is not known which position he held in the units in which he served.

A Palestinian colleague who served with him recalls that Haj Amin would express his opinions in front of the soldiers about the difficult situation of the Arabs under the Ottoman Empire, and would even speak out in favour of a struggle for Arab independence. Haj Amin himself described his relations with the division's Turkish commander, Asif Ishtif, as tense, because of his opposition to the discrimination against Arab soldiers in the distribution of food, and their inferior status in comparison with Turkish soldiers.[7]

His period of army service also lasted no more than two years. According to his diary, in November 1916 he was hospitalised in Istanbul with dysentery. With the aid of someone whom he met in the hospital, Haj Amin received three months' leave and left for Jerusalem. At the end of the three months, he remained at home and never returned to his unit.[8] Whether Haj Amin was officially discharged from the army is not known. As far as can be determined, it seems that members of his family who occupied important positions in the Ottoman administration in Jerusalem and Istanbul succeeded in persuading the authorities not to compel him to return to military service. At the beginning of 1917, as the war continued without respite, Haj Amin remained on sick leave

in Jerusalem. By then, it was already clear that the Allies had the upper hand, and it was probably this factor, along with his experience of the discrimination against the Arab soldiers, which was responsible for Haj Amin's decision to leave the Ottoman military service, and not, as has been claimed, reasons of health. Indeed, not long afterwards he witnessed the British army's conquest of Palestine.

After the conquest, Haj Amin was employed by Gabriel Pasha Hadda'ad, the Arab assistant to Ronald Storrs, the military governor of Jerusalem. During the course of 1918, he occupied different positions in Hada'ad's office and helped to recruit youngsters from among the country's Arab population to Faisal's army. For a short period, he also worked as a clerk in the British military administration in Qalqilya, north of Jerusalem. At the beginning of 1919, Hada'ad was appointed director of the security department in Damascus, and Haj Amin became his assistant.[9] While in Damascus, Haj Amin became involved in nationalist groups centred around Faisal, and took an active role in the organisation of the Pan-Syrian Congress held in Damascus in July 1919. He was especially active in organising the participation of Palestinian representatives.[10]

At the end of 1919, he was dismissed from his position in Damascus by Ahmad Laham, who had replaced Hada'ad. He returned to Jerusalem where he began teaching at the *Rashidiyyah* high school, and also became a partner in the *Rawdat al-Mar'arif* school. Over the years, this institution gained a reputation as an educational centre for Arab nationalism, and as a focus for the Husayni family's struggle against Zionism.

After his return from Damascus, Haj Amin's activities were a combination of educational work and political activity. In this framework, he cooperated with his friend 'Arif al-'Arif, who was the editor and part-owner of *Suriyyah al-Janubiyyah* (Southern Syria), a Palestinian newspaper. He was also president of *al-Nadi al-'Arabi* (the Arab Club). This institution, established in 1918, included youngsters, among them members of the al-Husayni, al-'Alami, Abu al-Sa'ud, and al-Budairi families; religious leaders; and former soldiers who had served in Amir Faisal Ibn-Husayn's units. Outwardly, it functioned as a social club, although in fact, like other clubs in the years 1918–20, it was a centre of intensive nationalist activity. The club stood for the idea of Arab unity, the total rejection of Zionism, and the striving for the return of Palestine to Syria. Its central slogan was 'Our Land Is Ours'.

In addition to *al-Nadi al-'Arabi*, a literary club, *al-Muntada al-Adabi*, was established in Jerusalem in 1918. Like the club that Haj Amin headed, this club also campaigned vigorously against Zionism, and expressed the aspiration for unity with Syria. Its slogan was 'In the name of the Arabs we shall live and in the name of the Arabs we shall die'.[11] Its activists belonged to the al-Nashashibi, al-Dajani and al-Khatib Jerusalem families, which were later to constitute the opposition to Mufti Haj Amin.

Although the two clubs cooperated in their dealings with outside bodies (for example, the King–Crane Committee sent from the United States in 1919 to discuss the political future of Palestine), relations between them were tense, and there was competition to influence the Palestinian public.[12] Apart from the different family composition, the two clubs were also distinguished by the fact that *al-Nadi al-'Arabi* inclined to the British, and its leaders sought to achieve Arab unity under the British Mandate, while *al-Muntada al-Adabi* strove to achieve this same goal within the framework of the French Mandate. Under the pretext of cultural and sporting activities, the latter established secret contacts with French intelligence agents.

From the end of 1919, the opposition to Zionism and the aspiration for unity with Syria cemented the Muslim–Christian Societies. These bodies, composed of separate Christian and Muslim organisations and the two clubs mentioned above, conducted propaganda among the Palestinian population, and sent memoranda to the governors of the British military administration. Those who took part in the different delegations and contacts with representatives of the authorities were the veteran leaders, who headed the Muslim–Christian Societies, and organisations such as the club of which Haj Amin was president. However, in order to join the front rank of Palestinian leadership, Haj Amin had to wait for an opportunity to prove himself.

This opportunity came following the disturbances of April 1920 during the al-Nabi festivities. These festivities were an annual event involving Palestinian delegations from all over the country who took part in a pilgrimage to a mosque outside Jericho. According to Muslim tradition, this mosque is situated on the grave of Moses. The origin of the celebration dates back to Sala'ah al-Din's defeat of the Crusaders. After his victory, Sala'ah al-Din granted permission to the Christians to visit the holy sites during their religious holidays. Again, according to Muslim tradition, because the Muslims were afraid that the Christians would exploit

the Easter pilgrimage in order to re-conquer the holy sites, they introduced processions and rallies involving thousands of Muslims in order to prevent a renewed Crusader takeover.[13] This tradition was preserved over the generations in the form of an Easter procession from Jerusalem to the grave of al-Nabi Musa.

In 1920, as in previous years, thousands of Muslims gathered in Jerusalem. From there, they set off in procession in the direction of Jericho, carrying the flags of the various delegations that had arrived from all over the country. At the end of the seven-day-long celebrations, the Muslims returned to Jerusalem for the prayer marking the completion of the celebrations. Against a background of political tension, and incited by rousing speeches, the procession turned into a demonstration against the Jews. In the acts of violence that followed on 4–5 April, five Jews were murdered and 211 injured, including women and children. The procession had been directed by Kamil al-Husayni, Haj Amin's step-brother. Kamil had cooperated with the British and had hoped that the procession would end peacefully, but two youngsters did their best to create trouble. The two were 'Arif al-'Arif, who incited the crowd by means of his newspaper, *Suriyhah al-Janubiyyah*, and Haj Amin, who roused the marchers and turned the procession into a violent demonstration.[14] The fervour among the Palestinian Arabs was increased by the fact that Faisal had been made king of Syria a short time before the celebrations.

The coronation, along with rumours that the British military administration in Palestine supported the country's subordination to Faisal, served as powerful material for Haj Amin and his colleagues in *al-Nadi al-'Arabi*, in their attempts to inflame those gathered for the al-Nabi Musa festivities. The authorities issued a warrant for the arrest of Haj Amin and 'Arif al-'Arif, but the two escaped to Transjordan, and from there they made their way to Damascus. A British military court sentenced them *in absentia* to ten years' imprisonment.

Meanwhile, the military administration was replaced by a civil one and, on 1 July 1920, Sir Herbert Samuel became the first High Commissioner of Palestine. On 7 July, he announced a general amnesty for all political prisoners, although Haj Amin and 'Arif al-'Arif were excluded since they had fled before being brought to trial.

The arrival of Haj Amin and 'Arif al-'Arif in Damascus soon became known to Palestinian Arabs living there, and encouraged them to renew their activities. On 31 May 1920, Palestinian

activists in the Syrian capital held a meeting, where they decided to found the Arab Palestine Society (*al-Jami'ah al-'Arabiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*). Those elected to the society's executive included 'Izzat Darwaza, Rafik al-Tamimi and Mu'in al-Madi, as well as Haj Amin and 'Arif al-'Arif. Haj Amin was appointed the association's representative for foreign relations. Apparently the reputation that he had in Damascus as having been responsible for the riots in Jerusalem during the al-Nabi festivities earned him a senior position among his fellow Palestinian Arabs. Those involved in the society saw it as an umbrella organisation for the Muslim–Christian Societies and other clubs and organisations that were active in Palestine. The association issued a protest against the San Remo decisions, and against the appointment of a Jew, Herbert Samuel, as High Commissioner. The new association also sent a memorandum to the Pope in Rome, with a request for help against the plan, contained in the Balfour Declaration, to make Palestine 'Jewish'.[15]

In August 1920, the High Commissioner visited Transjordan. In the city of al-Salt, he met notables and tribe leaders who asked him to include the two Palestinian exiles in the general amnesty. Samuel agreed to their request, and the two were indeed pardoned. Haj Amin returned to Jerusalem a hero.[16]

The Balfour Declaration, the arrival of official representatives of the Zionist movement in Palestine, the debates in the British Parliament regarding the country's political future, and the failure of the Palestinian leaders to influence the course of events, created a sense of frustration and helplessness among the Palestinian political community. Haj Amin's appearance as the hero of the attacks of April 1920 – an event which the Arabs regarded as truly heroic – his escape to Transjordan, and his prison sentence, had turned him into a national symbol. The Palestinian Arabs saw him as the first leader to have dared to fight the British and the Jews, and as the redeemer of their impugned honour. Great opportunities had presented themselves, and Haj Amin was to utilise them to the full.

APPOINTMENT AS MUFTI OF JERUSALEM

The first opportunity came when the Mufti of Jerusalem, Kamil al-Husayni, died on 21 March 1921. Known as the Grand Mufti, Kamil had achieved a position of seniority with the British military

authority, and the question of who would replace him now arose. In contrast to the ideological unity that generally existed within the Palestinian community at this time, there was a constant struggle between the distinguished families of Jerusalem for power. The Jarallah family saw in the death of Kamil al-Husayni an opportunity to regain the office of mufti, and put forward as a candidate Shaikh Husam al-Din Jarallah. Two other shaikhs, Khalil al-Khalidi and Musa al-Budairi, also announced that they were standing for the position. Shaikh Husam Jarallah was an *'alim*, an *al-Azhar* graduate, and inspector of the religious courts. Shaikh Khalil al-Khalidi was a well-known Islamic researcher, and president of the Shari'a appeal court in Jerusalem. The third candidate, also an *'alim*, and an *al-Azhar* graduate, held the position of religious judge. All three candidates were older men and were considered suitable for the office.[17]

In contrast to these three, Haj Amin was young and had only a limited religious education. Even among his own family, there were those who were more obvious candidates for the office of mufti. The fact that the Husayni family stood behind him and was active in securing his election would seem to show that, in this period of nationalist struggle, the political aspect took precedence over religious considerations. Politically, this enthusiastic young man had attained a strong position, which served to obscure his disadvantages. Haj Amin himself was determined to attain the office. Immediately following the death of his brother, he adopted the haj headcovering (the *'amamah*), grew a beard, and began to act as if the position was already his.[18]

However, in order to achieve office, Haj Amin had to be appointed by the High Commissioner. The commissioner had inherited the authority of the Mutasarrif of Jerusalem who, in accordance with Ottoman law, had to appoint the mufti from a list of three candidates chosen by a college of electors comprising Jerusalem *'ulama*, imams of the mosques, and the Muslim representatives of the regional council and municipality. The elections took place on 12 April, and the three candidates chosen were Shaikhs Jarallah, al-Khalidi, and al-Budairi. Haj Amin emerged at the bottom of the poll. The results were a complete surprise to the government, and obviously, to the Jerusalem Husaynis as well. The Husaynis immediately mounted a vigorous campaign aimed at preventing the loss of the office to the family. Government offices were inundated with protests and memoranda. *Qadis*, imams, religious organisations, Bedouin tribe shaikhs, *mukhtars* and even Christian religious leaders were directed by the Husaynis to

demand that the High Commissioner appoint Haj Amin as Mufti. Many of them had, in fact, already made such a recommendation to the authorities when the Mufti Kamil died, and now they applied even greater pressure. They had three main arguments: first, the elections that had been held were null and void since the composition of the electoral body did not meet the requirements of Ottoman law; second, Haj Amin possessed the qualities necessary to carry out the duties of this important office; third, the majority of the Muslim population supported his appointment. A number of senior members of the British administration also supported Haj Amin's campaign, including Ernest T. Richmond, the First Secretary's political assistant, and Storrs, the Governor of Jerusalem. Both were impressed by the power of the Jerusalem Husayni family, and believed that this family, and not its rivals, was likely to reward the appointment by maintaining law and order.

The High Commissioner was inclined to support the appointment of Haj Amin, after being persuaded by Richmond and Storrs that this was the way to maintain peace in Jerusalem. He was also impressed by a conversation that he had had with Haj Amin at the time of the election. In a memorandum dated 11 April 1921, Samuel wrote:

> I saw Haj Amin Husseini on Friday and discussed with him at considerable length the political situation and the question of his appointment to the office of grand Mufti. Mr. Storrs was also present, and in the course of conversation, he declared his earnest desire to cooperate with the Government and his belief in the good intentions of the British Government towards the Arabs. He gave assurances that the influence of his family and himself would be devoted to maintaining tranquillity in Jerusalem and he felt sure that no disturbances need be feared this year. He said that the riots of last year were spontaneous and unpremeditated. If the Government took reasonable precautions, he felt sure they would not be repeated.[19]

The wave of memoranda and petitions demanding his appointment created a strong impression that Haj Amin did indeed enjoy wide public support. There was also another reason to prefer Haj Amin over the other candidates. The British sought to preserve the balance between the Husaynis and Nashashibis (the two important Jerusalem families) and the head of the Husayni family, Musa

Kazim, had been dismissed from his position as mayor of Jerusalem following the disturbances in 1920 and replaced by Raghib al-Nashashibi.

The authorities thus had good reason for wanting the office of mufti to remain in the hands of the Husaynis. The fact that the extended family stood behind and supported this young man derived from the custom of keeping the position in the immediate family. More than this, however, it would seem that the reputation that Haj Amin had already acquired among the Palestinian Arabs (and elsewhere) influenced this support. He was already regarded by the Palestinian political community and people as a representative of, and fighter for, the national cause. Although the office was a religious one, in the prevailing circumstances it had clear political significance, and it was undoubtedly Haj Amin's proven political talents that formed the basis of the wide support for his campaign to become Mufti of Jerusalem.

The High Commissioner, who by the end of April 1921 already saw Haj Amin as the preferred candidate for the office of mufti, had to contend with the election results. One of the three nominees would have to be persuaded to withdraw his candidature, thus making way for Haj Amin.

Richmond and Storrs were helped by the mayor of Jerusalem, Raghib al-Nashashibi (who was later to become Haj Amin's enemy) and by the Shari'a appeal court judge, 'Ali Jarallah – brother of the first-placed candidate. These two worked to persuade Shaikh Husam Jarallah to resign from the list.[20] This he did, and the High Commissioner was therefore able to inform Haj Amin on 8 May 1921 that he would be the next Mufti of Jerusalem. The announcement was made in person, and Haj Amin, in fact, never received an official letter of nomination, nor was his appointment ever gazetted. This did not prevent the new Mufti, at the age of twenty-six, from quickly establishing himself in this important office which was to be only the first stage in his leadership career.

PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME MUSLIM COUNCIL

Haj Amin's success cannot be explained without mentioning the support of members of the administration's top echelon who favoured the Arab cause, and the popularity Haj Amin gained as a result of the riots of April 1920. Although the riots had been little more than indiscriminate attacks on Jewish passers-by and their

property, they were seen by the Palestinian population as defiance of British rule. After the relative quiet that had prevailed during military rule, largely as a result of the policy aimed at maintaining the calm pursued by Haj Amin's brother, the Mufti Kamil al-Husayni, and of the established Husayni leadership, Haj Amin seemed a champion of national heroism. The sympathy felt for him by the country's Arab population brought him to the attention of senior officials in the government. In their opinion, handing over the office to Haj Amin was a reasonable price to pay for ensuring future law and order. The future was to prove that their approach was partly justified: not only did the Husaynis prevent an escalation of tension during the 1921 al-Nabi Musa festivities, but the calm was also maintained during the following years. Referring to this, Herbert Samuel wrote that, 'with the exception of a small affray in Jerusalem in the following November, for a period of eight years no disturbances occurred anywhere in Palestine'.[21]

What lay behind the new Mufti's moderation in his dealings with the authorities was not only the promises he had made. He needed the authorities in order to consolidate his position as mufti, and to introduce into it an element of national political leadership. He demanded that the title Grand Mufti, which had been granted to his brother by the British for cooperating with them, also be given to him, and that his salary be higher than that of the other muftis. Richmond and Storrs supported this claim, arguing that since, from the spiritual and religious points of view, the status of Jerusalem was superior to that of other regions in Palestine, the Mufti of Jerusalem should be considered head of the country's Muslim community. With the establishment of the Supreme Muslim Council in January 1922, the government acceded to these demands.[22] Haj Amin's salary was increased, and he received the same status that his brother had enjoyed. He was not satisfied, however, with a position that was primarily religious in character. His ambitions went beyond this, to the accumulation of political power through the control of manpower and economic resources.

The situation created when the Christian British regime replaced the Muslim Ottoman one gave Mufti Haj Amin the opportunity to achieve his next objective: control of the Muslim community's endowments (the *waqf*), the court system, and other religious institutions that, during the Ottoman period, had been possessed by the Muslim state. The sultan, also known as the caliph, had been the supreme authority in these matters until the revolt of the Young Turks in 1908. According to a law promulgated