THE LETTERS AND PAPERS OF CHAIM WEIZMANN

October 1930 – June 1933

Volume XV, Series A

Introduction: Camillo Dresner

General Editor Barnet Litvinoff, Volume Editor Camillo Dresner, Transaction Books, Rutgers University and Israel Universities Press, Jerusalem, 1978

Volume XV of the Letters of Chaim Weizmann opens with the Zionist leader in an ambiguous situation: although he has resigned the Presidency of the Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency in protest against the Passfield White Paper of October 1930, which restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine and the acquisition of land there, no successor has been selected. Weizmann in fact is still the head of the movement, and this situation continues until he finds himself formally replaced as President by Nahum Sokolow at the Seventeenth Zionist Congress the following year.

We are henceforth re-introduced to Weizmann the scientist, and would-be academic. But politics are never far away, especially with the advent of Adolph Hitler in Germany. In surveying the path Weizmann took through these events, we find that, whatever his official position, his role as Jewish leader remained virtually unaltered. Condemnation of the British Government's policy in Palestine was not confined to the Jews alone. All three sections of the British political community, and such overseas figures as Jan Smuts, voiced their severe censure, describing the White Paper as contradictory to several articles of the Mandate and a breach of confidence on the part of Great Britain to the Jewish people. Criticism was not absent from the ranks of the Cabinet itself and, indeed, the fragile parliamentary base of Ramsay MacDonald's Government was in jeopardy.

These cumulative pressures began to show results. On 31 October 1930, the Prime Minister invited Weizmann to meet him, pleading that their differences were largely a matter of semantics and misunderstanding. Contacts were at first conducted through the Prime Minister's son, Malcolm MacDonald. But the Government had to be reminded by Weizmann that his

leadership and authority in the Zionist movement were not as hitherto: 'During my Presidency, the Jewish Agency has received a staggering blow which my own past cooperation with His Majesty's Government and my endeavours have failed to avert, and which, therefore, in the eyes of World Jewry, has thrown most serious doubts on the wisdom and correctness of my policy.' The problem was more basic than merely interpretation of the White Paper. And despite his reservations, and without in any way committing the Jewish Agency, Weizmann declared his readiness to continue the contacts 'as a private individual.'

On 6 November the Cabinet charged a committee headed by Arthur Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, to maintain contact with Jewish Agency representatives and to submit proposals as to the attitude the Government should adopt in view of reactions to the White Paper. The Prime Minister conveyed the Cabinet's decision to Weizmann at a meeting between the two men on the same day. MacDonald admitted that mistakes had been made in the policy document and that it was the Government's intention to publish a new statement after consultation with Weizmann. He rejected any possibility of revoking the Passfield White Paper. The Government, said the Prime Minister, could not retract a published declaration of policy. He asked Weizmann to consult with his friends in America, and the two agreed that within twenty-four hours Weizmann would submit the Agency's decision as to whether it would open talks with the Cabinet Committee.

It soon became clear that Weizmann's intimation of his diminished authority in the Zionist movement had by no means been exaggerated. During the fifteen months since the August 1929 disturbances, opposition to Weizmann's leadership and policies had mounted considerably, and not only among his traditional adversaries, the Radical Zionists and the Revisionists. In July 1930 the group led by Justice Louis D. Brandeis returned to the leadership of the American Zionist movement and the past feuding between the two sides was not forgotten. In Palestine Weizmann was opposed by the powerful personality of Pinhas Rutenberg, President of the Va'ad Leumi. The American Zionists supported Rutenberg in insisting on retraction of the White Paper as an a priori condition to talks with Whitehall. The Government tended to extend consideration to American Jewry alone in the Jewish world, and Weizmann sought therefore to strengthen his bargaining power in his discussions by co-opting one of its representatives. But

the Americans were in no haste to initiate real negotiations, and preferred Weizmann to emphasize the limitations of his own responsibility at this stage.

Meanwhile, at meetings with the Foreign Secretary, Weizmann agreed on the text of an announcement to be made by the Prime Minister concerning the opening of Government-Jewish Agency talks. This spoke of reconciling doubts concerning 'the compatibility of some passages of the White Paper of October 21st with certain articles' of the Mandate, and to clarify those passages which gave rise to misunderstanding. Negotiations began with an historical survey by Weizmann of the Jewish problem. The Agency was asked to submit to the Cabinet Committee its views on the policy statement in writing. The committee would then reply.

While the Agency was awaiting the Government's response to its own rebuttal of the White Paper, incorporated in a memorandum by Leonard Stein,' voices were being raised by opponents of the negotiations. Termination of the talks was demanded by the Zionist Organization of America. Rutenberg labelled the readiness of the Agency Executive in London to enter into discussions before retraction of the White Paper as 'criminal', and the Va'ad Leumi supported him in a formal resolution despatched to the Executive. The Va'ad Leumi authorised Rutenberg personally to represent this attitude in London. Zionist and Jewish Agency leaders in America, notably Brandeis and Felix Warburg, cabled Weizmann to delay his reply to the Government until receipt of their views and those of the rishuv's leaders. It was left to the Marquess of Reading, with whom Weizmann often consulted during this period, to dwell upon the impracticality of the demand to retract the White Paper. He was of the opinion that the Government wished to extricate itself from its implications, and was prepared for reconciliation.

The Cabinet Committee's reply was submitted on 29 November. This took the form of a letter signed by Arthur Henderson, the committee chairman, and was the first of five drafts that led to what came to be known as the MacDonald Letter.

Acting upon the suggestion of Lewis Namier, Political Secretary of the Jewish Agency, who played a major role in the negotiations with the Government, especially in the preparatory work and formulations, the Agency proposed to the Cabinet Committee on 5 December that the Henderson draft be divided into three parts. Issues involving questions of principle should be separated from issues relating to the interpretation of the Mandate, both to be made subjects of

detailed individual discussion by sub-committees, while major policy questions—land, immigration, development scheme—should be raised by Weizmann at the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee.

That meeting agreed to the Agency's procedural proposal, and Weizmann set forth the main political claims. Principally, he wanted the declaration on policy following the conclusion of the negotiations to have equal status with the White Paper. Henderson saw the point, but noted that the committee had so far not determined the legal status of the document. He also showed understanding of the other requests brought up by Weizmann. These related to immigration, employment of Jewish labourers in public works, and State lands. Weizmann also raised the question of the development of Transjordan as a solution for the scarcity of available land in Western Palestine, as specified in the report by Sir John Hope Simpson, on which the White Paper had been based. It was agreed that the constructive proposals presented by the Agency representatives be submitted as a working paper to the next meeting. . Preparation of this paper occasioned conflict between Weizmann, supported by his colleagues on the Executive, and a Special Political Committee elected at the Zionist General Council session of November 1930. While Weizmann insisted that the working paper discuss only those matters raised at the Cabinet Committee meeting on 5 December, the others sought to include other issues, such as the development programme and the request that immigration control be handed over to the Agency. Weizmann threatened to withdraw from the talks with the Government unless his views prevailed, and his position was accepted.' The working paper was lodged with the Cabinet Committee on 16 December.

Nevertheless Weizmann did raise other matters with the Cabinet Committee: the development scheme, and a proposal to convene a Round-Table Conference between Jewish and Arab representatives. Lord Passfield, the Colonial Secretary, objected to the inclusion of the development plan in the talks, for the Government had not yet discussed it, so Weizmann addressed himself to the Prime Minister in an interview on 24 December. The latter pointed out that these matters were not within the terms of reference of the Cabinet Committee, but he undertook to empower it to deal with them on conclusion of the current negotiations. Weizmann's intention was to remove the handling of Palestine affairs from the Colonial Office

and to have the Cabinet Committee made a permanent body in the Agency's contacts with Whitehall. This of course incurred the strong displeasure of Passfield and his principal advisers, who regarded the appointment of the Cabinet Committee as an infringement upon the authority of the Colonial Office.

The second draft of the Henderson Letter, submitted to the Agency on 30 December, contained the conclusions of the subcommittees. The text was examined by Craigie Aitchison and Malcolm MacDonald for the Government,. and Stein and Namier for the Agency. This resulted in a new draft, presented to the Cabinet Committee at its session on 8 January 1931. However, Passfield was dissatisfied with paragraphs dealing with purchase of land and with agricultural and industrial development. Further discussion ensued, and a fourth draft. This, on being approved by the entire Cabinet Committee, was then sent to the Jewish Agency leaders in America and to the Zionist General Council, which had convened in London. The final version of the Henderson Letter was approved at a meeting between the Cabinet Committee and Agency representatives on 30 January.

At this meeting Weizmann requested that the talks be continued on a broader basis. He wished to include these subjects: the Development Commission's intention to implement plans for agricultural development ; the Agency's proposal to extend the scope of the Development Commission to Transjordan; and the problem of the Legislative Council, which should be established only after a Jewish-Arab dialogue on the matter.

He also repeated the desirability of a Round-Table Conference at the initiative and under the Government's auspices. Both the development plan and the establishment of a Legislative Council had been included in the White Paper, but not in the Henderson Letter. Weizmann also urged that the relationship of the Jewish Agency to the Administration in Palestine be clarified. Henderson agreed to transmit the proposals for a Cabinet decision.

On 4 February the Cabinet ratified the final draft of the letter, but at Passfield's insistence it was decided that the Prime Minister sign it.4 A minor crisis developed before the letter was issued for publication. In the House of Commons, Ramsay MacDonald stated on 11 February that the legal-political status of the letter was not equivalent to that of the White Paper in which the Government's policy had been outlined. The purpose of the new document was to explain

`certain expressions and statements which, on further examination, were perhaps not as clear as they might be.' He added: 'I am very unwilling to give this the same status as the dominating document.

This brought Weizmann post-haste to Westminster, where he protested to two members of the Cabinet Committee. They advised him to inform the Prime Minister that in the light of the interpretation given to the letter it was valueless, and unacceptable to the Jewish Agency. Weizmann telephoned MacDonald accordingly, urging him to consult with Aitchison, legal expert on the Cabinet Committee, as to the text of the statement that could be announced in Parliament the following day.

The last session of the Cabinet Committee with Jewish Agency representatives was held on 12 February. Weizmann brought up the question of MacDonald's statement in Parliament, and Henderson rejoined that the Prime Minister would correct the unfortunate impression he had created. Harold Laski, who attended the meeting as an observer on behalf of the American Zionist leadership, also remarked that the derogation of the legal-political status of the letter vis-a-ins the White Paper would be considered by the American Zionists as a breach of confidence by the British Government. Laski had already reported to the Agency Executive that the Prime Minister had given him an undertaking 'that the law of Palestine will be governed by this document.'

At the Cabinet Committee meeting Weizmann raised a number of technical points in order to safeguard the status of the proposed letter: it should be addressed to him as President of the Jewish Agency; it should be submitted to the League of Nations Council as an official document, and an announcement made to that effect; it should be sent as an explanatory dispatch with the effect of an official instruction by His Majesty's Government to the High Commissioner in Palestine; and this version should be recorded in the official Parliamentary Debates.

Henderson accepted these requests and promised to convey them to the Prime Minister. In fact, MacDonald at once described the letter in the House of Commons as the authoritative interpretation of the White Paper concerning the matters with which it dealt, and would be communicated as an official document to the League of Nations; it would also be included in a dispatch to the High Commissioner as a valid directive. On 13 February the Agency's request

that the document become part of the recorded proceedings of Parliament was complied with when the Prime Minister read out the text in the House.'

The opening sentence of the letter defined its legal status: 'the authoritative interpretation of the White Paper on the matters with which this letter deals.' This formulation signified that the letter would now be the basis for British Government policy without discarding the White Paper in its totality.

The letter expressly reaffirmed Great Britain's obligation by virtue of the Mandate towards the Jewish people, and not to the Jewish population of Palestine alone, thereby reaffirming the historic link of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel. It negated the charges made in the White Paper against Zionist settlement policy—insistence upon Jewish labour, no leasing to non-Jews of lands acquired by the national institutions. The Article of the Mandate concerning the rights and status of the non-Jewish population should not be interpreted as freezing existing economic conditions in Palestine. On the contrary, `to facilitate Jewish immigration and to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land, remains a positive obligation of the Mandate,' an obligation that could be fulfilled without harm to the rest of the population of Palestine.

Significant qualifications to the White Paper were also inserted in the letter regarding lands and settlement. The definition by the White Paper concerning the non-availability of State lands which could be assigned for Jewish settlement was deleted, and substituted by a provision for a comprehensive inquiry to ascertain 'what State and other lands are, or properly can be made, available for close settlement by Jews,' while taking into account the obligations towards the non-Jewish community. It was not the Government's intention to prohibit the purchase by ‚Jews of additional lands. The Government also accepted the Jewish Agency's premise on the question of landless Arabs—a definition of the term and an estimate of how many of them had been displaced by Jewish settlement. 'Landless Arabs . . . were such Arabs as can be shown to have been displaced from the lands which they occupied in consequence of the lands passing into Jewish hands, and who have not obtained other holdings on which they can establish themselves, or other equally satisfactory occupation.' Their number would be a matter for careful enquiry.

With regard to immigration, the MacDonald Letter repeated the formulation given in the White Paper of 1922—the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine as a basis for immigration policy. However, the Government reaffirmed its decision to maintain control over immigration. It recognised the right of the Jewish Agency to pursue the principle of Jewish labour in its undertakings or in those which it supported, but if as an outcome Arab workers were to be displaced or existing unemployment be aggravated, the Government would feel obliged to express its views on that policy.

Though there were strong misgivings within the Zionist movement over the practical value of the MacDonald Letter, and its inferior status to a White Paper, Weizmann looked upon it as the restoration of the status quo ante, and as such it constituted an achievement of real magnitude.

Some twenty years later he assessed the significance of the MacDonald Letter in the light of subsequent developments. Writing in Trial and Error, he affirmed that 'it was under MacDonald's letter to me that the change came about in the Government's attitude, and in the attitude of the Palestine administration, which enabled us to make the magnificent gains of the ensuing years.' The large immigration of the 1930s was in fact the result of several elements, but the importance of the MacDonald Letter lay in its removing obstacles that were likely to obstruct a sizable immigration.

Testimony to Weizmann's role in the negotiations with the British Cabinet was given in an appreciation by Laski, who told a meeting of American Jewish Agency and Zionist leaders that members of the Cabinet held Weizmann in high esteem, and his prestige with them was tremendous. Laski added that Weizmann alone among the Zionists who sat and negotiated with the Government commanded respect and was fully aware of how to conduct talks with the other side. It was frightening to think, he added, that someone other than Weizmann would be called upon to negotiate with the Government.' A similar judgment was expressed by the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Drummond Shiels, when he learned of Weizmann's imminent withdrawal from the Presidency of the World Zionist Organization. The support of personages such as David Lloyd George, Smuts and Baldwin, among others, he emphasized, was due to the magnetic personal charm of the Zionist leader rather than to any intellectual backing for

Zionism, and this would be lost to the movement if he were to depart.' But, of course, large sections of the Zionist movement did not share that assessment.

While contacts were proceeding concerning a second round of talks with an interdepartmental committee replacing the Cabinet Committee, which had been dissolved upon publication of the MacDonald Letter, and the Zionist differences were rising to the surface, Weizmann left for Palestine. He was bent on a dialogue with the Arabs, but they regarded the MacDonald Letter, to quote their Press, as 'the black frame for the White Paper.' The Palestine Arab Executive Committee published a manifesto urging the Arab public to reject Weizmann's attempts to hold talks, and a meeting arranged with the Emir Abdullah at Amman was cancelled by the latter for fear of violent reaction by nationalist groups.

Nevertheless, Weizmann met a number of Arab notables. He recounted his impressions and assessment of the character of future relations with the Arabs in a letter to Warburg. While the Mufti of Jerusalem continued to wield great influence, opposition to his leadership was mounting. The Mufti's power, in Weizmann's view, lay in the Arab belief that they had Government support. Had the Palestine Administration shown neutrality, the rishuv could have fostered the formation of a moderate and cooperative Arab political party. Nevertheless it was up to the Jews to formulate a definite Arab policy and make it clear, not only in Palestine but throughout the Arab and Muslim world, that they did not aspire to political domination, even if they became a majority in Palestine, and this irrespective of extremism on both sides.

As far as concerned the Palestine Administration, there had been no perceptible change for the better. Nor had there been any softening in the hostile attitude of Sir John Chancellor, the High Commissioner, who was proceeding to implement the recommendations of the Hope Simpson Report while ignoring the provisions of the MacDonald Letter. Weizmann was therefore compelled on his return to London to act to bring about a translation of the letter into practical terms, and so obviate its supersession by the Hope Simpson proposals.

The first meeting between Jewish Agency representatives and the Government's interdepartmental committee was held on 22 April, and was devoted to the development plan proposed by Hope Simpson. The Palestine Arab Executive had declined a Government invitation to participate in discussions on the development programme, setting conditions unacceptable to

the Government. Now differences of viewpoint arose between the Colonial Office and the Agency on implementation of such a scheme. The Government delegation sensed urgency, and deemed the creation of a Development Authority as the first priority. The Jewish Agency, in an effort to stave off basing the programme on the Hope Simpson recommendations, proposed that both parties first reach agreement on the fundamental principles of the plan. The core of the dispute was over its objectives. The British conceived the main purpose to be finding land for landless Arabs. The Agency deputation rejected Hope Simpson's estimate of the number of displaced Arab fellahin, for it would restrict the area left available for Jewish settlement. Moreover, the Agency opposed confining the plan to settling landless Arabs.

At the second meeting, on 29 April 1931, the Government group presented four objectives: registration of displaced Arabs and their resettlement ; ascertaining the availability of land for Jewish settlement; investigating possible improvements to Arab cultivation; and finally, to submit the development plan to the Government for detailed discussion with the Agency. Weizmann rejected this scale of priorities out of hand, as well as the Government proposal that talks on the plan be held in Palestine rather than London.

It was apparent that the Colonial Office was anxious to conclude the negotiations with the Agency and resume the handling of Palestine affairs. Contacts on the development plan extended throughout May, whereupon the Palestine Government published a new ordinance protecting tenant farmers, the aim of which was to restrict Jewish purchase of land. On the other hand, a seeming concession to the Agency position was contained in a statement by Shiels to the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission that the provisions of the Hope Simpson Report would not serve as a basis for the Development Commission. Despite this Weizmann saw that the Colonial Office and the High Commissioner were deliberately ignoring the MacDonald Letter, and that 'the attitude of the administration in Palestine towards the National Home and the Mandate is more hostile now than it ever was.'

Meanwhile the Seventeenth Zionist Congress was approaching. The Revisionists' strength had been growing, especially in Eastern and Central Europe, and they could now send 52 delegates to the Congress compared to 21 in 1929. The rise was particularly impressive in Poland, where the pro-Revisionist vote had risen from some 7,000 to nearly 30,000. Vladimir

Jabotinsky, the party leader, announced that his movement was out to 'conquer' the Zionist Executive. The General Zionists, largest of the parties and Weizmann's traditional `parliamentary' base, dropped from 145 delegates to 84, with the majority (59 delegates) now ranged against him. The adherence of most of the American Zionist delegates to this opposition was particularly significant in the Congress proceedings. The Labour faction, which drew the mainstay of its strength from the rishuv, maintained its position (75 delegates as against 81 at the Sixteenth Congress). While favouring Weizmann's continued leadership, it did not rule out the possibility of forming an Executive without him." The Mizrachi party was divided, its Polish constituent opposing him, its German constituent remaining loyal.

In the light of these defections, Jabotinsky's ambition to win the Zionist leadership, unrealistic though this might seem in retrospect, was not an idle dream. Even outside his own ranks feeling ran high that an Executive would be elected on a programme close to the views of the Revisionists.

The deterioration in Weizmann's position and authority exposed him to constant and insistent intervention by the Executive, the Special Political Committee and the American Zionist leaders during the Anglo-Zionist talks preceding the MacDonald Letter. This frustrated his freedom of action and unnecessarily protracted the negotiations. His strength was undermined and total withdrawal seemed a welcome course. He himself wished to devote time to his personal affairs, and to improving his economic prospects. Close political associates counselled him temporarily to surrender leadership of the movement. Others, however, both Zionists and people outside the movement, urged him to carry on, lest his withdrawal plunge the movement into a crisis endangering its very existence. Grave concern at Weizmann's possible retirement was voiced by Ramsay MacDonald, who claimed that, in his view, it would be scandalous at an international level.'

In the face of all these considerations, Weizmann vacillated. He initiated overtures to be appointed Academic Head of the Hebrew University and to engage in part-time scientific work in Jerusalem. He also had plans to develop commercial interests in chemical research with his brother-in-law Joseph Blumenfeld. In his memoirs Nahum Goldmann tells of a gentlemen's agreement with Weizmann that he would retire of his own free will," and the letters published

here indicate that his resolve to do so was firm. On the other hand, his political colleagues gained the impression that he could be persuaded to change his mind . if the demand for him would be substantial and come from substantial men'."

When the Congress opened, at Basle on 30 June 1931, Weizmann did not deliver his customary opening address. This was allocated to Nahum Sokolow. The following day Weizmann surveyed Zionist policy, calling it his 'farewell address'—a summing-up of 13 years (1918-31) as head of the Zionist movement.

His introduction evaluated the history of the Zionist movement from the time of the Balfour Declaration. The British Government, he stated, was motivated more by sentimental and ethical reasons than by political and strategic considerations. The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate in Palestine presented a unique opportunity—and a great challenge—to the Jewish people. Weizmann disagreed with those of his adversaries who claimed that he had turned his back on Herzl's policy, the ideal of a Jewish State. It was not clear, he said, that Herzl intended his, Jewish State to be in Palestine; and political realities changed Herzl's programme. There were now two approaches diametrically opposed: that which focused on economic problems and that which envisioned a Jewish State without heed to the realities of the situation. He himself preferred the middle path of not ignoring the economic realities or the political potentialities.

Weizmann refuted the accusation that he had ignored the Arab problem. It was he who had placed it in the forefront of Zionist policy, even during the war, and he considered it a primary Zionist duty to establish direct contact with Arab leaders, and to explore all possible avenues of cooperation. But it had been assumed in earlier years that the national sentiments of the Palestinian Arabs would find satisfaction in the Arab kingdoms which resulted from the Peace Treaty settlement in the Near East, and that all that was required by the Arabs of Palestine was assurance that their civil and religious rights would not be impaired by the Jewish National Home.

At the present time of great bitterness, he stated, it was difficult to speak of the paths by which peaceful cooperation with the Arabs could be achieved. It was, however, clear that the Arabs must be convinced, by word and by deed, that the Jews did not want political domination,

nor would they ever submit to Arab domination. The basis for a political settlement between the two nations must be parity within the bounds of the Mandate. Two national cultures could exist side by side in their common homeland, he declared. To advance the cause of a common undertaking, he proposed that a special department for Arab relations be established, under a man of great authority in the Zionist movement. Among its tasks would be encouragement of the study of Arabic and of the participation of Arabs in economic undertakings—not only in Palestine, but also in the surrounding Arabic-speaking countries. He envisaged the possibility of at least a further 50,000 Jewish families in agricultural settlement in Palestine."

In his discourse Weizmann avoided all mention of the issue which had been commanding the attention of the Zionist movement since the meeting of the Zionist General Council in August 1930—the final aim of Zionism. His concept could of course be surmised from his remarks on the idea of a Jewish State and his support for the principle of political parity. Now the question was raised by Jabotinsky, to become a central issue of the Congress. The term 'National Home', he argued, was not moored in legalistic tradition and had more than one meaning. The term 'State' similarly had several meanings: a broad interpretation of full sovereignty, as of countries in Europe, or a limited signification of a state within the frame of a federation, as in the United States of America. Consequently, of the two components of the term Jewish State'—a Jewish majority and self-government—decisive importance attached to the first. The immediate aim of Zionist activity must be to attain a majority. At the close of his speech Jabotinsky proposed: 'The aim of Zionism . . . is the formation of a Jewish majority in Palestine on both banks of the Jordan'.

Weizmann's response to Jabotinsky was given in an interviewwith Jacob Landau of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. He is reported to have said: 'I have no understanding nor sympathy for the demand of a Jewish majority in Palestine. A majority does not guarantee security, a majority is not essential for the development of a Jewish civilisation and culture. The world will interpret the demand for a Jewish majority that we want to achieve it in order to drive the Arabs from the country'.

The interview caused a furore at the Congress, arousing consternation and opposition even among Weizmann's own followers. Chaim Arlosoroff, speaking on behalf of the Labour

Party, expressed reservations concerning the latter part of the interview and urged Weizmann to clarify his statement. The latter protested that his words had been given 'an unfortunate formulation', but he did not refute the substance. After a stormy debate, the plenary session decided to refer the discussion to the Political Commission. Here too Weizmann refused to retract his statement. Consequently the majority of the Commission submitted the following motion: 'The Congress expresses its regret at Dr. Weizmann's statement in a J.T.A. interview and regards his reply as inadequate'.

The motion was adopted as a resolution by the plenary session by 123 votes to 106, the Noes comprising the Labour party and a scattering of General Zionists. 'I sat through the whole performance, until the last man had voted', Weizmann said in his autobiography. `When it was finished, and some tactless person applauded my so-called downfall, the feeling came over me that here and now the tablets of the law should be broken, though I had neither the strength nor the moral stature of the great lawgiver'.'6 The balloting was in fact a vote of non-confidence in Weizmann and cancelled any prospect of his re-election as President of the Zionist Organization. The office went to Sokolow.

Representatives of the Labour party, Arlosoroff and Berl Locker, now joined the Executive for the first time. Joshua H. Farbstein, Mizrachi leader in Poland, an adversary of Weizmann, and Emanuel Neumann, the American General Zionist, similarly anti-Weizmann, joined them. Only Selig Brodetsky remained from the former body.

Weizmann later described what had transpired at the Congress as a 'nightmare . . . It was all so tricky and treacherous and beastly'. It was a victory for 'the enormous demoralization in the movement'. In his eyes, demagogy and the lust for revenge and pettiness had made common cause. His first reaction to the defeat was to turn his back on all political activity.

But inaction had never been compatible with Weizmann's temperament. One week after leaving Basle he was visited by leaders of the Zionist Labour movement—Berl Katznelson, Chaim Arlosoroff, Joseph Sprinzak and David Ben-Gurion—who urged him to embark immediately upon a campaign and re-organize those forces within the Zionist movement which shared his views, in anticipation of the next Congress, two years away. They desired his cooperation with the Political Advisory Committee which was being established to assist the

new Executive. Weizmann delayed his reply. He may have been swayed by the advice of friends to abstain from political activity for a while.

Nevertheless he retained close contact with the Labour leaders. He regarded Arlosoroff, head of the Political Department in Jerusalem, as his successor in the leadership of the movement: 'I am now happy to feel that there is someone who will ... be able to continue the true and unsullied policy.' Weizmann found in Arlosoroff a correspondent of equal status, and his letters to the younger man, cut short by the latter's assassination in Tel Aviv in June 1933, are among the outstanding documents in this volume.

The affinity between Weizmann and the Labour movement leaders was formed by a common political interest. With the split in the General Zionist party, the Labour faction remained as the sole political force capable of returning him to the presidency of the movement. On the other hand, they needed him in their anticipated political struggle to halt tendencies which they believed to constitute a grave danger to Zionism. In the past his attitude towards the Labour movement, whose contribution towards Jewish settlement he recognised as decisive, had been one of admiration, but it had not lacked a certain touch of patronage. Now, however, he was their principal political ally. He was also close to them at the ideological level.

The violent ideological polarisation at the Congress, which Weizmann paralleled with tendencies in the world at large, and the rise of extreme nationalist currents, accentuated his affinity with Labour Zionism. The Jewish bourgeoisie, in contrast, he felt was 'demeaning itself by imitating the Western bourgeoisie element, without having either the traditions, or the ability, or the power, of the communities which it copies.' And he inveighed against those who were ready to immigrate to Palestine only after chatutzim had guaranteed their security and safety. Thus his relations with the non-Labour members on the Executive were cool. He harboured resentment against the new President of the Zionist Organization, and was scornful of his ability to lead the movement. Sokolow, for his part, refused to co-opt Weizmann to the Political Committee." Nevertheless, Weizmann's counsel and intercession were available, both to save the Jewish Colonial Trust from bankruptcy and to assist the Executive in its contacts with the new National Government formed in Great Britain at the end of August 1931.

During the months subsequent to the Congress he suffered another disappointment. In

May 1931, he had raised in a letter to Einstein the possibility of being appointed Academic Head of the University in Jerusalem. Weizmann had hoped to combine the post with scientific research on Mount Scopus, and to divide his time during the ensuing three years between Jerusalem and London. Einstein supported the appointment, but his approach to the University did not receive an acknowledgement. It was hinted to Weizmann that the absence of a positive response was due to financial reasons. He himself suspected that his plan had been balked by the opposition of certain persons to whom his presence in Jerusalem was likely to be embarrassing. As it happened, the suggestion was not given serious consideration.' He therefore resumed his scientific pursuits in London, and simultaneously began gathering material for his memoirs.

Weizmann's laboratory work was soon to be interrupted once more. He left on a three-month tour of South Africa on behalf of the Palestine Foundation Fund (Keren Hayesod). The campaign met with great success, and was of special significance in view of the economic slump and the scanty results of the campaign in the United States. His acceptance of an invitation by the South African Zionists made a deep impression on the Zionist world, enhancing his stature as a man who could rise above petty personal grievances for the benefit of the cause.
Political work was now put aside, though he felt on occasion impelled to answer appeals for help from the Executive. His election as President of the English Zionist Federation enabled him to maintain official contact with Government representatives.

Still, there were moves to persuade him to return to the leadership at the Eighteenth Congress in the summer of 1933. He himself was reluctant, as he explained in a letter to Arlosoroff and Ben-Gurion. The two Labour leaders were urging his intervention to bring about a fundamental change within the Zionist movement. To return with only a small majority, he replied, would deprive him of sufficient authority to be able 'to carry on the work with dignity and tranquillity.' He did not believe a far-reaching change could be effected with the given balance of forces within the movement. There was the reactionary bloc of Mizrachi and the Revisionists, and they were likely to be joined by the majority of the General Zionists, which was an amorphous and unreliable body. True, it was likely and possible to achieve a combination at the next Congress which would ensure political victory. 'But such an achievement has no attraction for me. More than a political victory is needed for the cleansing of the Zionist

Movement; what is required is a complete transvaluation of all values at present current in Zionist thought, and this is not merely a matter of votes. A change of heart and of opinion is required, and that cannot be brought about in a day, or from outside; it must develop slowly from within, if it is to come at all.'

Weizmann was 58 years of age at this crossroads in his life. He was not ready to waste the remainder of his strength on a fruitless struggle, when he could utilise it in a direction which, in the course of time, could be of immeasurable advantage to the movement. He assessed his scientific work not only from the personal point of view but as something beneficial to the Zionist enterprise itself.

He took increasing interest in the affairs of the Hebrew University. He had held the post of President of the University since its establishment, but refrained from playing an active role. Weizmann's abstention was due more to lack of time than to his reservations concerning the manner of the University's administration or his opposition to the Chancellor, Judah Leon Magnes. True, he had supported Einstein in his dispute with Magnes that began in 1928, when the physicist insisted upon the appointment of an Academic Head of the University with proper competence and practical experience in university administration. Einstein's proposal was turned down by the majority of the Board of Governors, bringing his resignation from that body and withdrawal from all University activities. Weizmann had been fully in accord with Einstein's views in the matter, but because of the opposition by most members of the Board he fell short of giving Einstein's proposal his vote, nor did he relinquish his own post as President, as he had threatened."

Another aspect of University policy with which he was dissatisfied was the propensity to establish new departments before their academic level was assured. Weizmann feared that the University would become a degree-awarding establishment determined on rapid growth, when his vision was of a research institution engaging, apart from Jewish studies, in the fundamental sciences—mathematics, physics and chemistry. 'Thus he criticized the resolve to set up a Department of Biology, which he felt could only harm the development of such basic subjects as chemistry.

With Weizmann's closer involvement with the affairs of the Uni- versity, a plan he had

nurtured became feasible. This was to establish a School of Agriculture in association with the Agricultural Experiment Station of the Jewish Agency at Rehovot. Weizmann was elected to head the School, which was scheduled to be opened in October 1933, and he expended much effort in the preparations. Another facet of this dedication to a true scientific base for agriculture and related subjects was to persuade his friends Rebecca and Israel Sieff to perpetuate the memory of their son Daniel, who died in his youth, by establishing a second, more ambitious research institute, under his direct control, at Rehovot. Building began in April 1933.

His activities on behalf of these institutions on Mount Scopus and at Rehovot acquired a new importance with the beginning of anti-Jewish repressions under Hitler, who came to power in Germany in January 1933. Refugees began to stream out of that country, and concern for its Jewry became one of Weizmann's main preoccupations.

The Reich Government began at the beginning of April that year to enact systematic legislation designed to evict the Jews of Germany from the economic sphere, and from society generally. The first of these laws was the 'Act for the Re-Establishment of the Career Civil Service', in the wake of which more than two thousand scientists and academics at the universities, many of them with worldwide reputations, were dismissed. The following month Jewish physicians and dentists were forbidden to treat 'Aryan' patients.

In an address to Parliamentary supporters of Zionism, Weizmann dwelt on the plight of the Jews of Germany. He made the point that the Jews there, and those in other countries suffering antisemitic persecution, should know they were not alone, and that enlightened public opinion in civilised countries, especially Great Britain, was ranged against the forces of reaction. Before delivering the address Weizmann showed this passage to the British Foreign Secretary, Sir. John Simon, and reports from Germany indicated that the speech had great influence, and that as a result the Jewish situation was somewhat alleviated. But the extent to which these reports were wishful would be clear a month later.

Events in Germany activated Jewish organizations throughout the world. The Jewish Agency planned relief measures, and prepared to absorb Jewish refugees in Palestine. It was widely held within the movement that Weizmann was the most appropriate personality to lead the political and financial action on behalf of German Jewry. A resolution in this vein was

adopted by the Executive in Palestine and the Va'ad Leumi. But it met with the resistance of a number of Executive members, including Sokolow, who feared the re-instatement of Weizmann, albeit indirectly, as leader of the movement.

Weizmann dedicated himself to the assistance of refugee Jewish scientists, urging them to choose the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, rather than scholastic institutions elsewhere, as their new academic home. He was only partially successful, and in particular Einstein's unwillingness to come to Jerusalem wounded him. Weizmann believed that Einstein's presence on Mount Scopus would enhance the University's status and attract other distinguished scientists there. It is on this note, that the European Jewish tragedy would bring Palestine into the centre of Jewish hopes for their rehabilitation that this volume of the Weizmann Letters concludes.

CAMILLO DRESNER