The opening of this volume finds Chaim Weizmann in the United States, facing two urgent tasks: the rallying of American Jewry into a single, united front behind a Zionist platform; and the winning over of the Roosevelt Administration to the Zionist position.

Following the breakdown of talks between Zionists and non-Zionists in the autumn of 1942, the Bnai Brith organization was asked by the Zionists to set up a preliminary meeting of American Jewish organizations that would prepare for a democratically-convened conference. This body would then appeal to the American Jewish community over the heads of its established leaders. The preliminary meeting took place in Pittsburgh in January 1943, and the conference proper duly met in August 1943. At the latter, overwhelming support was given to the Biltmore platform which, it will be recalled, had demanded the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth. The conference represented a major advance for the Zionist movement within the American Jewish community, and furnished its protagonists with a powerful political weapon against the highly-placed non-Zionists who had hitherto claimed to represent American Jewry, and whom Weizmann had termed the 'self-perpetuating group of plutocrats of the American Jewish Committee.'

Difficulties with the Administration in Washington derived from the hard core of pro-Arab sentiment in the Near Eastern Division of the State Department. In talks initiated in January 1943 its officials revealed particular concern lest the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine necessitate the use of force. Weizmann believed that the Arabs could be brought to accept such a state, but only if they could be convinced that the Great Powers—i.e., Great Britain and the United States—supported its creation and were prepared to underwrite its continued existence.
However, faced with conflicting reports from its own experts, the Near Eastern Division of the State Department, like its counterpart at the Foreign Office, preferred a stance which it regarded as more compatible with American interests. Colonel Harold Hoskins of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, despatched by the President on a fact-finding mission, returned from the Middle East with a report that warned of strong Arab opposition to a Jewish State.
in Palestine where, he claimed, a situation bordering on civil war was developing. Hoskins advised 'defusing' the situation with the issue of a Joint Declaration by the United States and Great Britain that would in advance rule out Allied support for either 'Zionist or Arab Nationalists.' His recommendations were adopted by the State Department, which in June 1943 approached London on the matter.

The British Cabinet, already apprehensive lest Zionist propaganda in the United States drive a wedge between the two Allies, seized upon the American initiative with undisguised relief. The proposed Declaration would have muted all public discussion (and lobbying) of the Palestine question until the end of the war and would make any ultimate settlement dependent upon Arab-Jewish agreement.

Weizmann's memory was still fresh from the experience of the Zionists' last 'consultations' with the Arabs, at St. James's Palace in London in 1939. He had now relinquished all hope of reaching a negotiated agreement with them on any minimal Zionist platform. In his view, only Great Power pressure would gain the Zionists their State. Since Churchill had long been converted to the cause, it remained for Weizmann to win Roosevelt over, both through his own diplomatic efforts—possibly reinforced by his scientific contribution to the Allied war effort—and through the harnessing of American Jewish sentiment into unified expression by such assemblies as the American Jewish Conference due to meet in August. Any limitation of the Zionist debate until after the war, any doctrine that predicated the Great Powers' decisions in the Middle East upon Arab consent, would thus deal a mortal blow to Zionist strategy and aspirations.

The Zionist lobby succeeded in August 1943 in persuading the State Department to withdraw its initiative, much to the chagrin of the Foreign Office. However Weizmann had now become totally disillusioned with officialdom on both sides of the Atlantic. He was more than ever convinced that only through the personal determination of the three men whom he considered the leaders of the Western world, Churchill, Roosevelt and Smuts, could Zionist goals be achieved.

Already in June, 1943, during an interview with Roosevelt, he had discovered that the President still clung (as did apparently Churchill also) to the ill-conceived, anachronistic idea of
'buying' Ibn Saud's acceptance of a Jewish State in Palestine with a Jewish loan of some £20 million.' American support for this scheme may have drawn encouragement from Weizmann himself, who seems to have indulged in thoughts of resuscitating the stillborn Agreement he had signed with the Emir Faisal in 1919; perhaps an Arab-Zionist entente could be accomplished with the successor to Faisal's family in the Hejaz. This unrealistic approach was to prove unfortunate for Zionism, since it encouraged western diplomacy to proceed along sterile paths, leaving the Allies without any concrete, positive proposals at the end of the war.

Despite the efforts of Moshe Shertok to quash the scheme when he joined the Zionists' talks at the State Department in February 1943, and notwithstanding the apparent concurrence of officials there with Shertok's analysis, Roosevelt in July 1943 again despatched Hoskins to Saudi Arabia, in order to gain first-hand reactions to the scheme. The Saudi ruler reacted angrily against the notion of a Zionist bribe, and took the proposal as a personal affront on Weizmann's part. Thus the Allies' sole war-time initiative was virtually placed into cold storage for the rest of the war, to be revived by the Allied leaders in March 1945, when, following the Yalta Conference, both Churchill and Roosevelt met with Ibn Saud. Neither succeeded in moving the desert king, and upon his return to the United States Roosevelt informed Congress that he had learned more about the Muslim problem and the Jewish problem during five minutes' conversation with Ibn Saud than he could have learned in an exchange of two or three dozen letters. A wave of Zion protest ensued, whereupon Roosevelt, in an interview with the American Zionist leader, Stephen S. Wise, confessed that his meeting with the Saudi ruler was 'the one miserable failure' of his trip. Only then, on the eve of death, did Roosevelt turn to other conceptions, to the idea of submitting the complex problem to United Nations arbitration.

Efforts were also made to win Soviet support for Zionism, but contacts during the war period did not go beyond ambassadorial level. Dealings with the Soviet authorities focussed primarily on attempts to secure the release of Zionists imprisoned in the Soviet Union, and the repatriation of Polish Jews from territories occupied by the Red Army. Weizmann sought an interview with Stalin after the Yalta Conference, via British mediation, but Churchill shied from the idea of sponsoring Soviet-Zionist relations. Pending some positive gesture towards the Jews under Soviet jurisdiction, or a definite pro-Zionist declaration by the Soviet authorities,
Weizmann remained cool towards the Communists.

As it happened, progress was being made in London towards a solution of the Palestine problem acceptable to the Jews. Churchill's agreement to retention of the status quo in Palestine until the end of the war had been given reluctantly, and he never lost his contempt for the 1939 White Paper, nor for the doctrines that had conceived it. Rommel's armies were driven from North Africa in the spring of 1943, and in July the Prime Minister appointed a new Cabinet Committee on Palestine, hand-picked by himself. It was to consider a long-term solution, taking as its terms of reference the 1937 Peel plan for partition. Weizmann now expressed the hope that 'the rapidly changing situation' would enable him to 'see clearer' within a few weeks. Indeed, the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, assured the Zionist President that the scheme under consideration would be more generous to the Jews than the Peel proposal.

Notwithstanding Weizmann's retort to the Colonial Secretary—'too little, too late'—there can be little doubt that his long-standing faith in Great Britain now drew fresh inspiration, and he sought the advice of Professor Reginald Coupland ('father' of the Peel Plan) in drafting a Zionist memorandum for presentation to the Cabinet. For its part, the Government may possibly have leaked its new thinking to Weizmann deliberately, in order to strengthen the moderate against the activist stream in Zionism. At a luncheon at which the Labour leader Clement Attlee was also present, in October 1943, Churchill explained to Weizmann that whereas he had originally been against partition, the Government had now to produce an alternative to the White Paper, and he hinted at a 'generous' Jewish State, possibly on both sides of the River Jordan, for the Zionists had a 'wonderful' case. Hence Weizmann's faith that the leaders of the Western world would eventually attain for the Jews a just settlement in Palestine.

However, in its initial report of November 1943, the Cabinet Committee proposed a plan that would have awarded the Jews less even than Peel. Galilee was to be allotted to the Arabs, and the proposed Jewish State would embrace a narrow coastal strip from Haifa to a point south of Jaffa, and include the fertile plains of Jezreel and Beisan running south-east from Haifa, as well as the Huleh Basin.' The Committee also proposed that the partition of Palestine be considered as part of a general plan for establishing a Greater Syrian State, to comprise Syria, Transjordan and the Arab areas of the Lebanon and Palestine. Churchill approved the scheme,
but agreed to delay implementation until Germany was defeated, or at least until after the U.S. Presidential election of November 1944.

The Foreign Office gave notice of its intention to oppose partition, to which end it proceeded to alert its ambassadors and the military command in the Middle East. In consequence, when the Cabinet Committee resumed its deliberations in September 1944, its second report contained modifications to its earlier recommendations. Whereas the Greater Syrian scheme had been dropped, due to French opposition, a new 'Southern Syria' State was proposed, with its capital in Amman and incorporating Galilee and the Arab areas of Palestine. The proposed Jewish State would now be without Mount Tabor and the Dead Sea potash works. (It was assumed that Transjordan would allow the Jewish owners to continue working their concession.) The future of the Negev was left open, pending an investigation into its economic and agricultural potential. Special prominence was now given to a new creation, the proposed 'Jerusalem State.' Britain would stress its responsibility for the safekeeping of the Holy Places situated there, and at the same time secure for itself the continued use of the strategic installations west of Jerusalem, in the Lydda area.

The Foreign Office case—that, partition would lead to a conflagration in the Middle East—was strengthened by the escalating wave of Jewish terrorism that swept Palestine during 1944. This reached its apex in November 1944, with the assassination in Cairo of the British Minister Resident, Lord Moyne. Only three days earlier, the Secretary to the Cabinet had summarised the Palestine Committee's voluminous documents for Cabinet consideration.' But Churchill now postponed Cabinet confirmation of partition, and on 17 November issued the following warning in the House of Commons: 'If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past. '

In Palestine itself, the new High Commissioner, Lord Gort, was instructed to warn Weizmann that any further acts of terrorism would lead automatically to a suspension of immigration into Palestine, and Weizmann confided to Gort that he feared opening the newspaper each morning, lest he learn of some fresh outrage.
The solitary achievement of Zionist diplomacy during this period was British assent, in September 1944, to raising a Jewish Brigade to join in the final campaigns against the Germans in Europe. This was all that resulted from the Jewish Division scheme that had been rejected by Cabinet in November 1941—through deference to Arab susceptibilities, which could not apply to a Jewish Fighting Force in Europe." Cabinet did not discuss the issue until July 1944, when the scheme encountered the vigorous opposition of the War Office. Apart from the usual difficulties envisaged—shortage of training facilities and equipment for the new Force—the principal objections, as might have been expected, still related to Palestine. The War Office feared that the Force would be exploited by the Haganah to obtain training at British expense and be turned against Britain herself should Zionist demands not be met in full after the war. Thus a brigade, rather than a division three times its size, was allowed, and by explicit provision it would neither serve nor be demobilised in Palestine.

In the period covered by this volume the Nazi destruction of European Jewry gathered to its climax, and Weizmann was involved in desperate efforts of rescue. All overtures that might perhaps have resulted in salvation for tens of thousands were declined by Great Britain. In February 1943 one such proposal, reputed to have come from the Roumanian Government and published in the New York Times, indicated a readiness to transfer 70,000 Jews, in Roumanian ships, to any refuge selected by the Allies, preferably Palestine as the most convenient. Weizmann, still in the United States, pleaded for some response from London.

The British Government, however, feared that acceptance of such an offer would let loose on the West a flood of immigrants who would exert an unacceptable strain upon resources, with grave political repercussions because of the White Paper quotas on immigration. The Allies continued to restrict themselves to dire public warnings of retribution for genocide to the Nazi regime, and British policy regarding the wartime rescue offers remained essentially as formulated in the reply received by Weizmann in March 1943: If the Roumanian offer was meant to be taken seriously—which the Government doubted—then it was clearly a piece of blackmail which, if successful, would open up the endless prospect for Germany and its satellites to unload all their unwanted nationals on overseas countries, at a given price: 'The blunt truth is that the whole complex of humanitarian problems raised by the present German domination of
Europe, of which the Jewish question is an important but by no means the only aspect, can only be dealt with completely by an Allied victory, and any step calculated to prejudice this is not in the real interests of the Jews of Europe.'

The transportation of European Jewry to the camps was proceeding, but this attitude persisted as in May 1944 when Joel Brand, a Zionist official in Budapest, brought to the West an even more remarkable offer from Hungary. Brand claimed that the Germans were prepared to halt the wholesale liquidation of European Jewry, and to evacuate one million Jews, in return for 10,000 motor lorries and quantities of tea, coffee, cocoa and soap. Once more, the Foreign Office retreated behind its fear of exceeding the decreed current immigration levels into Palestine. In addition, there were military and strategic implications, as well as a reluctance to create a precedent. Brand was thereupon detained by the British authorities, ostensibly on suspicion of being a Nazi agent, and released only after the time-limit on the Nazi offer had expired. In the event, large numbers of Hungarian Jews were transported to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

In July 1944, a further offer was received from the Hungarian ruler, Admiral Horthy. Anxious to win the goodwill of the advancing Allies, he undertook to release some 20,000 Jews. But this offer, too, met with British equivocation, despite American pressure. However, London's dilemma was solved by events in Hungary itself, where the Nazis now assumed full control and countermanded Horthy's offer. Public outcry in England against Government inaction in the face of the extermination of Hungarian Jewry had forced a debate in the House of Commons the previous month. The Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, studiously avoiding allusion to the Brand mission, still secret, or to proposals to bomb the death-camps, repeated there what had by now become a platitude: 'The principal hope of terminating this tragic state of affairs must remain the speedy victory of the Allied nations.'

It will be recalled from the previous volume how Weizmann, as President of the Jewish Agency, was under pressure from David Ben-Gurion, its Chairman, over the character of his leadership and the alleged lack of determination with which he pursued Zionist aims. According to Ben-Gurion, Weizmann should be removed from office, on the grounds that his 'gradualist' Anglophile policies were proving disastrous. The two continued to be at odds, each in turn indulging in threats of resignation, despite attempts at mediation by Moshe Shertok. However, in
the interests of the cause their marriage of convenience continued. This leadership crisis had its repercussions in the United States, where Nahum Goldmann (head of a new Political Office established by Weizmann in Washington) clashed with Abba Hillel Silver, who in 1944 joined Stephen Wise as co-chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council.

During that year Silver pressed actively in Washington for the adoption of a bi-partisan pro-Zionist resolution in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. It appeared that this would have an easy passage, given the imminence of the Presidential Election, and despite the advice of the War Department to defer action. But when hearings began before the Senate Committee on 11 December 1944, the Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, intervened in person to secure the resolution's withdrawal. This was a slap in the face for its Zionist promoters, and support for the resolution rapidly dwindled. In their disagreement over the episode, both Wise and Silver resigned their posts as co-chairmen of the Zionist Emergency Council. Again as in the Weizmann–Ben-Gurion conflict, a modus vivendi was temporarily established, with Wise resuming office as sole chairman, and Silver remaining merely as a member of the Council.

Here were two distinct schools of thought: the 'Weizmannist', which believed in piecemeal diplomatic progress to be achieved by cooperation with the Great Powers, particularly Great Britain; and the 'activist' school, directing its hopes toward the United States rather than Great Britain and devoted to the creation of 'facts' that would become faits accomplis to be acknowledged without debate in the future councils of the Great Powers. The Weizmannist school believed that justice would ultimately prevail and that the Great Powers would present the Jews with a State in Palestine. Ben-Gurion, having become totally disillusioned with Great Britain on rejection of the Jewish Division scheme in 1941, had placed his faith more in the power of American Jewry to force Washington's hand. BenGurion did not share Weizmann's idealised view of Great Power diplomacy. He believed that the Powers' material interests determined their foreign policy. Thus in Palestine itself Ben-Gurion continued to prepare for the foundations of the future Jewish State, clandestinely when necessary. However, for as long as Churchill and Roosevelt held out vague promises to be redeemed at the close of the war, neither school was able to achieve exclusive domination. The conflict would be settled at the next Zionist Congress, in 1946.
Weizmann's first war-time visit to Palestine, in November 1944, coincided with his seventieth birthday, and may have given him a foretaste of what was to come. Not only had his 'constituencies' in London and New York grown out of touch with the mood there, and the undeclared state of war between the yishuv and Mandatory administration under Sir Harold MacMichael, but he himself had apparently not hitherto realised how far he had been left behind in the political melee of Palestine. Notwithstanding the widespread, spontaneous welcome he received from the yishuv as a whole, he felt estranged from its ebullient political life. As he wrote to Justice Felix Frankfurter: 'It has become almost a sport for every little group to form its own party and publish its own newspapers . . . The concentrated intelligence and the untapped energies have not sufficient outlet, and politics serves as a convenient hand-maiden for these people . . . the five hundred and fifty or six hundred thousand Jews of Palestine seem to be made up of ex-presidents and ex-secretaries of Zionist societies from all parts of the world and . . . on any given issue, political, economic or otherwise, each one has a view, and a very determined one at that.'

Weizmann confessed further to Meyer Weisgal: 'I am still trying to fathom the various difficulties with which one is confronted here by the innumerable party divisions, and the more I study them the less happy my stay becomes here.' His endeavours to build a central political bloc upon the General Zionists, the party with which he had been associated in the 1920s, met with little success. Deprived of a political base in Palestine, without roots in its political life, Weizmann would remain at a severe disadvantage in the future struggle with Ben-Gurion.

As to his scientific interests, always precious to him, he had seen his chemical processes achieving world-wide adoption commercially, though he had abiding disappointment when significant discoveries relating to synthetic rubber and high-octane fuels failed to attain governmental sponsorship. Weizmann now had to concern himself with problems resulting from his long absence from the Daniel Sieff Research Institute at Rehovot. Relations among the staff had deteriorated, and friction had arisen over their share in the benefits when their research reached the stage of commercial application. Protracted correspondence with the Institute's Acting Director, Benjamin M. Bloch, in this and the previous volume, testify to his general displeasure at the situation. The finances of the Institute, long in poor state, were however given
hope of recovery as its work in pharmaceuticals was turned to industrial exploitation.

Physical and mental stress had become almost a part of Weizmann's daily routine, and was taking its toll. Eighteen months after the loss in action of his younger son, he was to write: ‘Vera is not very well and I fear she will never recover properly from the terrific shock and sense of deep grief. As for myself I'm trying to carry on my work both in the field of Zionism and chemistry. That is the only thing to do; sometimes one is overcome by a sense of futility but I'm trying desperately to ward it off.’

Weizmann had entered a cycle of periods of intensive, exhausting activity alternating with attacks of lung trouble that incapacitated him for weeks, often at times of vital political negotiation. During the summer of 1943, when London and Washington were discussing their potentially damaging Joint Declaration, he was recuperating from the after-effects of his strenuous American tour. It was the Zionist lobby in Washington, rather than Weizmann's own efforts, that brought about the suspension of the proposed statement.

His condition was further complicated by a recurrence of the eye trouble from which he had lung suffered, and which was to develop into glaucoma and all but reduce him to blindness. He could not involve himself in preparation of the Zionist case for submission to the first United Nations Conference at San Francisco, and the memorandum sent to Churchill under Weizmann's signature in May 1945 had to be composed by the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem.

In summary, what had Weizmann's brand of 'diplomatic Zionism' achieved during the last critical years of the war? Churchill himself remained a self-professed Zionist, but his Government adhered to the 1939 White Paper for the duration of hostilities. Following the assassination of Moyne, a close friend, Churchill avoided frequent meetings with Weizmann, who somewhat self-consciously felt that he constituted 'a reproach' to the Prime Minister. In November 1944 Churchill condemned to oblivion the report of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine, which he had himself fostered, and partition was never again seriously considered by a British Cabinet.

Neither had Weizmann succeeded in winning over Roosevelt entirely to the Zionist position. The combined forces of the oil lobby at Washington and the Near Eastern Division of the State Department had achieved an uneasy stalemate in their struggle against the powerful
lobby of the Zionists. Weizmann was taken by surprise by the American initiative on the Joint
Declaration, for Roosevelt had evinced understanding for the cause during their discussion of
June 1943. Roosevelt's enthusiastic report to Congress on his meeting with Ibn Saud in March
1945, and his subsequent retreat in the face of Zionist protests, well illustrate his ambivalent
position.

As for General Smuts, his friendship found its final expression in a concept totally out of
key with the Zionists and with Weizmann himself. In April 1945, Smuts informed the Zionist
leader that he favoured the continuation of the British Mandate in an undivided Palestine, with
Britain perhaps sharing responsibility with the United States. The Jewish and the Arab
communities should receive equal positions in the administrative and legislative institutions of
the country, with immigration to be decided upon by the two Great Powers. Following his long
cultivation of Smuts, Weizmann was so shocked that he was tempted to believe that Smuts was
deputed to propose the idea just to 'sound out' the Zionists. When Smuts visited the United States
to attend the San Francisco Conference, Weizmann urged Wise to 'leave no doubt in the mind of
a man like Smuts ... a good friend for so many years, that such a policy can lead only to
considerable trouble.'

Weizmann was discharged from yet another spell in hospital in May 1945, by which time
Churchill was campaigning in an election that he was destined to lose, while Roosevelt was
dead. Thus were lost the two war-time leaders who had unofficially committed themselves to the
Zionist cause, but had yet publicly to redeem their undertakings. Would their inexperienced
successors, burdened by the complicated mass of postwar problems, feel an obligation to redeem
the vague commitments of their predecessors?

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