

**THE LETTERS AND PAPERS OF CHAIM WEIZMANN**

**October 1918 – July 1920**

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Introduction: Jehuda Reinharz

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THIS volume spans the period between October 1918, when Chaim Weizmann, the head of the Zionist Commission, had just returned to England from Palestine, and July 1920, the month in which Herbert Samuel began his tenure as High Commissioner for Palestine and in which the Zionist Conference took place in London. These twenty-one months are of crucial importance for the history of Zionism and for the Jews in Palestine (the Yishuv). It is a period in which Weizmann's ascendancy to the leadership of the World Zionist Organization becomes undisputed. With unbounded energy Weizmann emerges as the prime mover and decision-maker concerning all important issues: the relations of the Zionists with the Palestinian Arabs and with Faisal, son of the Shereef of Mecca and Britain's wartime ally; the relations of the Zionists with the British in Palestine and London; the presentation of the Zionist case at the Peace Conference; the plight of Eastern European Jewry; cooperation among Zionists in Europe, Palestine and America; the dispatch of experts to Palestine; the future of the boundaries of Palestine. As a consequence Weizmann travels a great deal, pursuing these issues from London (October—December 1918; July—October 1919; January—February 1920 and May—July 1920) to Paris (January—June 1919) and Palestine (October—December 1919; March—April 1920).

Upon his return to London in October of 1918, Weizmann was convinced that he would be back in Palestine within a few weeks, but events thwarted him. He defined as one of his first priorities the reorganization and expansion of the Zionist Bureau in London. For this task he requested that Julius Simon, a member of the Greater Actions Committee, come to London in October 1918 in order to improve the London office. Simon rented the house at 77 Great Russell Street, which for many years was to be the

Zionist headquarters. By the spring of 1919 the Bureau had become the Central Zionist Office: Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow headed the political department, while Simon, Victor Jacobson, Berthold Feiwel and later Samuel Landman handled administration. In October 1918 Weizmann formed the so-called Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Herbert Samuel, and including figures outside the Zionist Organisation such as Sir Lionel Abrahams, Sir Alfred Mond and Robert Waley Cohen, as well as Lord Bryce and William Ormsby-Gore. The purpose of this committee was to assist in formulating Zionist demands at the Peace Conference. The creation of this committee is an example of Weizmann's constant effort to draw non-Zionists closer to the Zionist Organization.

Another organizational concern for Weizmann was the leadership of the movement. Since the outbreak of World War I, the members of the Smaller Actions Committee were dispersed throughout Europe, leaving Sokolow the sole member of this executive body in London. Weizmann believed that the impending Peace Conference required a strengthening of Zionist leadership in general and of his own position in particular. De facto Weizmann had become the leader of the Zionist Organization, but de jure he was merely a member of the Greater Actions Committee and President of the English Zionist Federation. After long and stormy discussions (especially between Weizmann and Sokolow), Weizmann was co-opted to the Smaller Actions Committee on 22 January 1919 as a replacement for Yehiel Tschlenow, who had died the previous year. It was not until July 1920 that Weizmann was formally installed as President of the W.Z.O.

The first post-war Zionist Conference, which met in London in February and March 1919, had confirmed Weizmann's co-option to the Smaller Actions Committee. This conference was attended by delegates from all Allied and neutral countries, but none from the countries of the Central Powers. (However, Weizmann's status had also been confirmed by the German Zionist leaders Otto Warburg, who was still the President of the World Zionist Organization, and Arthur Hantke, a member of the Smaller Actions Committee.) At this conference Sokolow reported on the political situation in Palestine and on the proposals that had been submitted to the Peace Conference. In addition to matters of internal organization, delegates discussed the position of the Jews in Central

and Eastern Europe. A resolution was adopted which called on these countries to grant their Jewish inhabitants all the rights of citizenship and of national minority status. It was also decided to support the demands of the various Jewish National Councils at the Paris Peace Conference (Zionist Executive, Organization Report to the 12th Zionist Congress). With the approaching Peace Conference, Weizmann delineated three main tasks: educating British parliamentarians, cabinet members and their aides as to Zionist aims and aspirations, and encouraging their fruition under a British Mandate; improving relations with Faisal; and preparing the proposals of the Zionist Organization concerning the future of Palestine.

In a letter to Justice Louis Brandeis, Weizmann complained: Politically, there is no substantial advance made here towards the clarification of ideas about the National Home'. The Sykes-Picot Agreement had become a matter of great concern to the Zionists; Weizmann feared that the British and the French would treat it as a 'fait accompli. This Agreement consisted of an Anglo-French memorandum ratified by both sides in mid-1916 which called for the complete dismemberment of Palestine: Upper Galilee to be incorporated in a French-controlled zone; Hauran, to be a part of an Arab state under French protection; Transjordan and the Negev, incorporated within a British-protected Arab state; Haifa Bay area, under British control; and the remainder of central Palestine (from Nazareth to Hebron), an Anglo-French-Russian condominium. The Zionist leaders sharply protested both the condominium and the radical dismemberment of the country. The Zionists in London, Weizmann in particular, wanted Palestine to be in British hands. Weizmann set out to demonstrate the identity of interests between the British and the Zionists in this matter.

With the encouragement of the Foreign Office, the Zionists continued in their attempt to improve relations with the Arabs via the Emir Faisal. Weizmann's meeting with Faisal near Ma'an in June 1918 was the first direct contact between the two. In time, the British, Faisal and Weizmann concluded that their interests coincided. For his part, Faisal was primarily interested in technical and financial help from the Zionists, but in November 1918 Weizmann wrote to General Clayton, Chief Political Officer of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, that 'after very careful consideration and discussion with the authorities, we came to the following conclusion: that it is not desirable at present to

advance any money to Faisal, as it may seriously prejudice our good relations'.

Nevertheless, the contact between the two leaders was maintained. En route to the Peace Conference, Faisal met with Weizmann in London on 11 December 1918 and reiterated previous statements concerning cooperation between the Zionists and the Arabs. They met again, in the company of various politicians, at a dinner party given by Lord Rothschild in honour of Faisal on 22 December 1918.

The immediate result of these talks was an agreement between Weizmann and Faisal, on behalf of their respective movements, which was signed on 3 January 1919 (for full text, see reproduction of the original draft of the agreement between pp. 86-87). On 6 February 1919 the Emir Faisal appeared before the Council of Ten at the Peace Conference and made a formal presentation of his case. Still loyal to the agreement with Weizmann, Faisal excluded Palestine from his demand for hegemony over Asia Minor. Within weeks of Faisal's signature of the agreement, however, an interview appeared in *Le Matin* in which Faisal opposed the notion of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. Weizmann and Felix Frankfurter pressed for a denial, and in a letter to Frankfurter (3 March, 1919) Faisal reaffirmed his original position that the Arab and Jewish national movements had common interests which permitted friendly cooperation (see *Trial and Error*, 1949 edition, pp. 307-08). These pronouncements by Faisal did not materialize in practice. By the summer of 1919 he succumbed to the pressure of Arab extremists. Colonel French, a British intelligence officer in Egypt, wrote to Lord Curzon on 26 August 1919: 'Dr. Weizmann's agreement with Emir Faisal is not worth the paper it is written on or the energy wasted in the conversation to make it' (see Howard M. Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East 1914-1924*, New York 1969, p. 387). Although French's analysis was borne out by later developments, Faisal's statements did encourage the Zionists at the time to hope that the national aspirations of Jews and Arabs would prove to be compatible.

Zionist aims at the Peace Conference were twofold: first, to receive international approval for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine with secure and economically sound borders in which a Jewish community could develop; second, that Britain have the Mandate for Palestine. The Zionists expressed their position through a memorandum, and a delegation appearing before the Council of Ten. The final

memorandum was presented on 3 February 1919 after two previous memoranda had been revised.

The first draft was outlined by Samuel in his capacity as chairman of the Advisory Committee. A second draft was composed in late 1918 by Harry Sacher, Leon Simon, Victor Jacobson and Julius Simon. This maximalist draft incorporated suggestions by the American delegation and Palestinian Jewry and demanded a Jewish governor and the expropriation of all lands held by absentee landowners (Julius Simon, *Certain Days*, Jerusalem 1971, p. 85). Weizmann presented this draft to Ormsby-Gore and was told that it would be unacceptable to his government (Ormsby-Gore to Weizmann, 19 November 1918). Before long it was realized that discussion of the provisions of the Mandate was premature. The Zionists therefore decided to present a short document to the Peace Conference as an intermediary step between the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.

In January 1919 Julius Simon, Ahad Ha'am, Benjamin V. Cohen, Jacobson and Sacher met to formulate the proposals for the Peace Conference. This meeting produced the more moderate fourteen-page official "Statement of the Zionist Organization regarding Palestine." The proposals on the boundaries contained in this document were revised at the last minute by Aaron Aaronsohn in Paris in late January 1919 (see Eliezer Livneh, *Aaron Aaronsohn, His Life and Times*, Hebrew, Jerusalem 1969, pp. 346ff.).

Predictably, the Jewish delegation from Palestine, whose members arrived in London, a few weeks later, denounced the document as minimalist. Simultaneously with the drafting of the proposals, the Zionists opened a bureau in Paris (November 1918), headed by Sokolow, to disseminate information to the delegates at the Peace Conference and to coordinate Zionist efforts. Weizmann, however, was at odds with Sokolow and did not trust his diplomatic manoeuvres. By contrast, he trusted Aaronsohn who had just returned from the United States and had gone to Paris at Weizmann's request. Weizmann, valued Aaronsohn's connection with President Wilson's circle and was confident of his sound judgment: 'What Sokolow is doing I am not quite clear yet . . . You know that I fully trust you and you may have to act without having time to ask for instructions'.

The Zionists were not the only group presenting Jewish demands to the Peace Conference. Parallel with their endeavours, energetic efforts were made to secure the rights of the Jewish national minorities in those states created as a result of the post-

World War I peace treaties. Jewish representatives from East and West Europe, joined by delegates of the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress, had this matter under their charge. All these delegates joined to form the Comité des Delegations juives auprès de la Conférence de la Paix (March 1919) whose purpose was to protect the rights of Jewish minorities. Leo Motzkin, dedicated equally to Diaspora autonomy and to Zionism, was the initiator and secretary of the *Comite*.

The question of minority rights became acute as news arrived of pogroms in Poland and in the Ukraine. Weizmann expressed deep concern about this situation: 'Terrible news is reaching us from Poland. The newly-liberated Poles there are trying to get rid of the Jews by the use of an old and familiar method which they learned from the Russians. Heartrending cries are reaching us. We are doing all we can, but we are so weak!' Weizmann worked to save Galician refugees from being expelled from Bohemia, to which they had fled (see letter from Sokolow to Masaryk, 14 Dec. 1918, C.Z.A. L8/361). He appealed to governments throughout Europe to intercede on their behalf. The persistent news of the pogroms provoked the British government into issuing a warning against further outrage. Despite the warning, messages arrived of continued serious attacks against the Jews in Galicia. The leaders of the Zionist Organization in London thereupon resolved to send a special commissioner to investigate the situation, and on 6 December 1918 Israel Cohen departed for Poland.

In other ways too the Zionist Organization was actively involved in Jewish minority rights. On 28 October 1918, the Copenhagen Bureau of the W.Z.O. issued the Copenhagen Manifesto, which set forth the demands of the Jewish people before the impending Paris Peace Conference. The basic demands included the following: confirmation of Palestine within its historic boundaries as the national home of the Jewish people; the granting of complete equality to Jews in all countries; and the granting of national autonomy to the Jewish population in countries either with a high Jewish density or merely where the Jewish population might demand it. Despite this public appeal and despite Weizmann's concern for the fate of East European Jewry, he was not involved personally in this issue. Contrary to the view of Sokolow, Judge Julian Mack, Jacobson and Menahem Ussishkin, Weizmann feared that demands for Jewish rights in the Diaspora might detract from the Zionist effort in Palestine. He did not consider the

struggle for such rights an integral part of the aims of the Zionist Organization, because he was convinced that only in Palestine would East European Jewry find relief: 'I am quite sure that the position of Jewry in Central and Eastern Europe after this war will be worse than ever and the emigration will simply be enormous, with the difference, I'm afraid, that America and England will be less ready to receive Jews than before. This points to one very fundamental fact — that we must have Palestine, and a big Palestine too if we are not going to be exterminated at all'. See also Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, (New York 1949), p. 308. For a more detailed analysis see: Eviatar Friesel, *The Initial Period of Weizmann's Leadership of the Zionist Movement, 1917-1921* (Hebrew, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Hebrew University, 1970).

As the Peace Conference approached, Weizmann communicated frequently with Brandeis, urging him to send a strong American delegation. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Bernard Flexner and others arrived in London in December 1918. Brandeis remained in the United States but Frankfurter came in February 1919, followed by the delegation of the American Jewish Congress headed by Mack, president of the Zionist Organization of America. Mack was accompanied by his secretary, Benjamin V. Cohen, who remained in Europe until early 1921.

Weizmann and his colleagues were in Paris, anxiously waiting their turn to appear before the Council of Ten: 'I am living like Moses on Mt. Sinai . . . "on fire." Every nerve, every scrap of attention, every thought is concentrated on one point only—the Peace Conference'. On 26 February, Weizmann was informed by the French Foreign Ministry that those who were to appear before the Council of Ten the next day were himself, Sokolow, Jacob de Haas (who however was detained in London), Andre Spire (the French Zionist leader), and Sylvain Levi, as a representative of French Jewry in general. Weizmann was outraged at the inclusion of Levi, with whose anti-Zionist attitudes he was familiar: 'Sylvain No.44 Levi has proved to be a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is trying to spoil (29Nov. 1918) everything for us.

On 27 February 1919 the Zionists appeared before the Council of Ten. It was an historic occasion for them: the first opportunity to present the Zionist argument before an international forum. Sokolow opened with a description of the importance of Jews among the Entente Powers and in the United States, as citizens who had contributed toward

winning the war. At the same time he drew attention to the condition of East European Jewry, whose plight could be remedied only in a Jewish national centre. 'From where I stood,' relates Weizmann in his memoirs, 'I could see Sokolow's face, and without being sentimental, it was as if two thousand years of Jewish suffering rested on his shoulders' (Weizmann, op. cit., p. 243). Weizmann, who followed, outlined the tragedy of the Jews in Eastern Europe. In Palestine, he claimed, five million Jews could be settled without encroaching on the legitimate interests of the inhabitants. A million Jews in Eastern Europe were awaiting the signal to move. Ussishkin addressed the Council in Hebrew in the name of the National Assembly representing three million Jews of South Russia. Spire did not claim that all French Jews were Zionists, but assured the Council that France had nothing to fear from the Zionist movement.

The concluding speaker was Sylvain Levi, who praised some Zionist achievements while severely attacking Zionist aims. He portrayed the East European immigrants as 'people who would carry with them into Palestine highly explosive passions conducive to very serious trouble in a country which might be likened to a concentration camp of Jewish refugees.' (Prods-Verbal of the 46th session of the Supreme Allied Council). After Levi's speech, Robert Lansing, one of the American members of the council, asked Weizmann the meaning of the phrase 'Jewish national home'. Weizmann seized this opportunity to negate Levi's statements. He defined the Jewish national home' as an administration which would fit the social conditions of Palestine, safeguarding the interests of non-Jews, and ultimately becoming a nationality 'as Jewish as the British nation is British'. Weizmann later described Lansing's question as 'a miracle.' He came away from this Conference with the impression that the Zionists' presentation had been a great success: 'I think that the God of Israel is with us! . . . The only thing you must know is that it was a most brilliant victory!' The Peace Conference did not produce a treaty with Turkey nor indeed any decisions regarding the future of the former Turkish territories. In July 1919 Weizmann commented: 'Paris is almost empty, and it looks as if the Peace Conference is going to die a natural death'. He could now concentrate on the internal organizational matter of strengthening and broadening the authority of the Zionist Commission in Palestine. The representation of the yishuv in late 1918 consisted of the Provisional Council (Va'ad HaZmani). Only in



October 1920 did the Elected Assembly (Assefat Haniuharim) convene for the first time and elect its representative organ, the National Council (Va'ad Leumi). For all practical purposes the Zionist Commission represented both the Zionist Organization and the yishuv, vis-a-vis the military administration in Palestine. Weizmann recognized the importance of bolstering this body, which in late 1918 included Jacob Thon, Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hacoheh, Commander Angelo Levi-Bianchini, G. Artom, E. Lewin-Epstein and Vladimir Jabotinsky, with Dr. David Eder deputising for Weizmann as chairman. By mid-February 1919, Weizmann notified Ormsby-Gore that the Smaller Actions Committee had reconstituted the Zionist Commission, whose executive now included: Weizmann (chairman), Dr. Harry Friedenwald (acting-chairman), Lewin-Epstein, Eder, Levi-Bianchini and Robert Szold. The major change in this body was the addition of the Americans, Szold and Friedenwald.

In October 1919 Ussishkin assumed leadership of the Zionist Commission and proceeded to unite the Palestine Bureau with the Zionist Commission. He transferred each department, except immigration, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. By the time he assumed office, the credibility and authority of the Zionist Commission had been seriously weakened by constant shifts in its composition. Between late 1918 and October 1919 the chairmanship had been transferred from Weizmann to Eder, Lewin-Epstein, Friedenwald, Szold, Eder once more, and Ussishkin.

Throughout 1919 and 1920 Weizmann remained in constant touch with the Zionist Commission, and was largely responsible for providing it with a continuous flow of funds from America and Europe. Financing of Zionist work after the war began with the Preparation Fund in January 1918. In July 1919 this was renamed the Palestine Restoration Fund (Keren Hageulah). During the years 1918-19 the Zionist Commission received some £983,000 for its activities in Palestine, most of which came from the Fund. Weizmann also provided the Commission with experts in such fields as agriculture, industry and land surveying. Throughout 1919 he interceded with the Foreign Office to issue permits for these experts to conduct their surveys in Palestine. Their recommendations to the Zionist Organization were intended to create guidelines for future work in Palestine. Special efforts were made on behalf of Arthur Ruppin, who for a long time was

denied a permit to return to the country because of his German nationality. He finally arrived in March 1920, as director of urban and agricultural settlements.

Another issue related to the work of the Zionist Commission was immigration. At the end of World War I some 56,000 Jews lived in Palestine; by 1920 their numbers had increased to 67,000. At the same time the limited economic opportunities resulted in a high rate of unemployment and inflation: in May 1919 approximately 1,200 Jews were unemployed, their numbers being augmented each month by those returning from the exile imposed on them by the Turks during the war. Health conditions were extremely poor as a consequence of epidemics and a shortage of doctors. (Sanitary work was performed primarily by the American Zionist Medical Unit.) These conditions attracted only a trickle of immigrants. The Third Aliyah began early in 1919 with a small group that arrived via Siberia and Japan; on 8 March 1919 a group of 115 pioneers came from Russia and Rumania; in April, 150 arrived from Poland and Galicia ; and in December, 620 refugees from the Ukrainian pogroms came on the "Russian." These immigrants defied the policy of the military administration and did not even receive encouragement from the Zionist Organization, whose immigration department, established in London in February 1919, wanted to delay immigration to Palestine until economic conditions improved there. In April and August 1919 Weizmann signed circulars issued by the London office warning against unorganized immigration. This policy, together with other issues, brought a confrontation between the Zionist Commission and workers' leaders in Palestine openly calling for immigration.

These disagreements between the Zionist Commission and the yishuv were not the sole internal problem affecting the Zionist Organization. The latter part of 1919 saw the beginning of a rift between Weizmann and some American leaders. The first rumblings of American Zionist disenchantment with Weizmann were voiced by Wise and de Haas in early 1919 and erupted into open conflict in 1920-21. This split between Weizmann and Brandeis was foreshadowed in August 1919 in their discussions of the ' Jewish Council.'

The two first met in London on 21 June 1919 and immediately took a liking to each other. In a letter to his wife, Weizmann wrote: 'Brandeis makes an excellent impression; it's a pity he's 63 years old already, and only came to us after he had given his

strength to others, to strangers'. From London Brandeis travelled to Palestine for three weeks, returning to London in critical mood for further talks with the Zionist leadership. The official meetings commenced at the beginning of August 1919 for the purpose of formulating a response to the draft presented by the Foreign Office on 15 July. In general, the European Zionists were more moderate in their demands and formulations than were the Americans.

The main issue revolved around the 'Jewish Council'. In their 'Statement' to the Peace Conference of 3 February 1919, the Zionists had declared that 'A Jewish Council for Palestine shall be elected by a Jewish Congress representative of the Jews of Palestine and of the world ... ' On 26 August 1919, however, the American delegation pressed for the exclusion from this ' Jewish Council' of non-Zionists or non-Zionist bodies, lest they weaken the Zionist Organization. The London leadership, on the other hand, preferred to include all non-Zionists who were willing to cooperate in the development of Palestine. Weizmann for his part wished to include also the Jewish Minority Councils of Eastern Europe. Brandeis believed that such a conglomeration would be an unworkable entity. In his opinion the Zionist Organization represented the Jewish people and was the single agency which could act effectively in Palestine. By a vote of five to four the American position was adopted at the meeting of 27 August. Julius Simon formulated the decision: 'The Zionist Organization is to be recognized as the Jewish Agency, but it is to secure the cooperation of all Jews who are willing to assist in the establishment of the Jewish National Home.' (See Julius Simon, *op.cit.*, pp. 93-96). The proposals submitted to the Foreign Office on 24 September 1919 reflected the American position and for the first time used the phrase ' Jewish Agency' rather than 'Jewish Council.' This formula was embodied verbatim in the Mandate; the Zionist Organization was recognized as the Jewish Agency until the Jewish Agency should be established.

Weizmann expressed his anger over defeat in a passionate letter to Frankfurter, written the day on which the final formula was decided: 'You have "scored" a vote today and you have obtained a "majority" on a question which to you appears an irrelevant issue and to me a fundamental question in Zionism . . . We shall never forget this vote . . . ' After lecturing Frankfurter on the basic principles of Zionism, Weizmann mocked the Americans' detached and practical approach to Zionism: 'Brandeis could have been a

prophet in Israel. You have the making of a Lassalle. Instead, you are choosing to be only a professor in Harvard and Brandeis only a judge in the Supreme Court.' Nevertheless, Weizmann agreed to abide by the decision, thereby demonstrating that the need for unity among Zionists and among Jews was his paramount concern: 'Now, we have bowed our heads and bent our stiff necks only because we cannot afford an open breach today . '

Similarly, on 18 August 1919, in anticipation of difficulties with the Americans, Weizmann wrote to his close friend Bella Berligné that despite No.202 the profound differences between the European and the American conceptions of Zionist problems, there must not be a split in the movement: 'I shall do all in my power to prevent an aggravation of the situation.'

While engaged in internal problems and disputes, Weizmann concurrently devoted considerable energy to negotiations with the Foreign Office with regard to the Mandate and the future boundaries of Palestine—matters which profoundly affected the economic and political viability of the Jewish national home. The first Zionist draft on the Mandate was composed in March 1919 (see David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Peace Conference, New York 1924-26, Vol. VII, pp. 369ff.* for full text). Throughout the year new drafts were prepared. In June 1920 the British government presented its draft, recognizing the 'historic connection of the Jewish people to Palestine.' On 6 December 1920 Balfour submitted the final draft of the Mandate to the League of Nations for ratification and it was published as an official document of the British government. In addition to acknowledging the 'historic connection,' the British also defined the purpose of the Mandate as a means in 'the development of a Jewish "self-governing Commonwealth".' In all, it was a most favourable document from the Zionist point of view. (For details of all stages of the Mandate drafts see Esco Foundation for Palestine, *Palestine, A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies, New Haven 1947, Vol. I, pp. 164-77*).

With regard to the problem of the future boundaries of Palestine, the Zionists sought broad economic frontiers. The borders as conceived included a point on the Mediterranean just south of the port of Sidon, continuing northeast up the slopes of the Lebanon, including the greater part of the Litani River and the whole of the Jordan catchment area up to its northernmost source near Rashaya. From there the frontier was

to run along the crest of the Hermon then, turning due east, along the northern watershed of the Yarmuk tributaries towards the Hejaz railway at a distance of some twenty kilometres south of Damascus. The eastern border would run parallel to and just west of the Hejaz railway to the Gulf of Aqaba. The frontier in the southwest was to be determined by negotiation with the Egyptian government. (Heinz Felix Frischwasser-Raanan, *The Frontiers of a Nation*, London, 1955, pp. 107-08). The Zionists, however, were unable to exert influence on the issue of borders, a matter which was ultimately decided between the French and the British.

In late November 1918 the French Prime Minister, Clemenceau, came to London where Lloyd George, in return for European concessions, demanded and received control over Mosul and Palestine 'from Dan to Beersheba' (Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, London 1938, p. 1038). Although the French did agree to alter the Sykes-Picot line, the Zionists were dissatisfied by the vagueness of the arrangement. In addition, the Lebanese delegation to the Peace Conference, with encouragement by the French, presented demands which conflicted with those of the Zionists. In a crucial meeting on 20 March 1919 the French Foreign Minister Pichon endorsed the Lebanese position and rejected a British appeal to revise the Sykes-Picot boundaries, insisting that northern Galilee with its Jewish settlements remain in French hands.

In response to the Zionists' urgent requests, Balfour sent memoranda to Lloyd George on 26 June and 11 August supporting Zionist claims to the water resources of the Upper Jordan and the Litani and to an eastern border running just west of the Hejaz railway. However, the French were adamant. In September, General Allenby and Lloyd George proposed drawing the northern border of Palestine well south of the water resources requested by the Zionists. Weizmann attempted to intervene by meeting with Robert de Caix, the French chief adviser on the question of Syria, and with General Allenby. Following this meeting, Allenby sent a telegram to the cabinet supporting Zionist territorial demands for security reasons. A fortnight after his talks with Weizmann, however, Allenby met with the French commander of Syria, General Gouraud and agreed instead that British troops would evacuate northern Galilee to the line running from Achzib to Lake Huleh. This agreement left all the water resources and

the Jewish colonies of Upper Galilee in French hands. Allenby emphasized, however, that this line had no implications for future political boundaries.

Weizmann protested vehemently but unsuccessfully against the Franco-British territorial agreements. Britain had decided to press for the earliest possible settlement in the Middle East, and was less concerned with antagonizing the Zionists than with appeasing the French. Consequently, at the San Remo Conference in April 1920 the British government agreed to a comprehensive Middle Eastern settlement by which Britain obtained the Mandate for Palestine and Mesopotamia, while France obtained the Mandate for Syria. On 21 June 1920 the French government proposed that Palestine's northern boundary stretch from Ras en-Naqura, the southern point of the ladder of Tyre, to point on the Jordan sources just north of Metullah and Baniyas Dan to the northern shore of Lake Huleh, running from there along the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee to the Yarmuk. Although this proposal retained all existing Jewish colonies within the proposed borders of Palestine, it simultaneously allocated to Syria all the water resources required for Jewish economic development. The demarcation of the borders remained unsettled even when the civil government took office in Palestine. Despite strenuous efforts by Weizmann and his colleagues, the French and the British signed an agreement in late December 1920 which incorporated the French plan of June 1920 without any significant alterations. This was confirmed in March 1923.

Throughout this period Weizmann directed all Zionist political activities in Paris, London and Palestine. In Palestine the Zionist Organization and the Yishuv were faced with a hostile British military administration and a hostile Arab population. Throughout 1918-20, until the civil administration was installed in Palestine, Weizmann exercised considerable diplomatic skill in Europe and Palestine to reach a *modus vivendi* with them both. His efforts were complicated by the interdependence of British and Arab attitudes in Palestine and by the contradiction between the policies of the British administration in Palestine and the cabinet in London. Accordingly, Weizmann was continually frustrated by the fact that diplomatic gains achieved in London did not necessarily bear fruit in Palestine.

Between December 1917 and July 1920 Palestine was designated O.E.T.A.(S.)—Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (South). Administration was in the hands of

the military, under General Edmund Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and High Commissioner of Egypt from 1919 until 1925. Allenby was responsible for the entire area occupied by Britain. Under his command a succession of generals served as Chief Administrators for Palestine: Major-General Arthur Wigram Money (March 1918-July 1919); Major-General H.D. Watson (August-December 1919) and Major-General Louis Bols (January-June 1920). In addition to the Chief Administrator directly responsible to Allenby, Brigadier-General Gilbert Clayton served as Chief Political Officer (C.P.O.) until July 1919. (He had been responsible for administration, before the creation of the post of Chief Administrator.) In July 1919, Colonel French became Acting C.P.O. and was replaced in September by Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, who resigned, however, in April 1920 as a result of the Jerusalem riots. Subsequently, General Bols assumed responsibility both as C.A. and C.P.O. until June 1920. The top echelon of city governors comprised senior British officers with experience in Egypt, the Sudan or India. The lower cadres were composed of Palestinian Arabs, Syrians and a few Jews.

Relations between the military on the one hand, and the yishuv and Zionist Commission on the other, were strained from their inception and deteriorated throughout 1919-20. In his memoirs (see *Orientalism*, London 1945, Ch. XV), Ronald Storrs, the then governor of Jerusalem, claims that most British officers had no understanding of Zionist aspirations and that most of his friends in Egypt and Palestine had never heard of the Balfour Declaration. Indeed, to avoid irritating the Arabs, the Declaration was not officially published in Palestine. In a letter to Weizmann, dated 12 November 1918, Jabotinsky remarked sarcastically: 'the official approach is to apologize to the Arabs for a slip of the tongue by Mr. Balfour.' Ignorance on the part of the British officers was compounded by forthright hostility to Zionism. As an example of the British attitude Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hacohen cites the refusal of the officials of the O.E.T.A. to include Hebrew with Arabic and English as an official language on railway tickets, tax forms and other documents. (See his 'The Land of Israel under British military rule,' *Hashiloah*, Hebrew, Nos. 241-46, 1924.) Zionist efforts in Palestine were beset by more significant difficulties. The policy of the military government derived from the status quo ante as stipulated at The Hague in 1907, which forbade instituting changes in occupied lands

prior to the signing of a peace treaty. Similarly, immigration was forbidden. While adhering to these conventions, the military administration still developed policies to enhance its political position, e.g., giving key governmental positions to Arabs hostile to the Yishuv, and attempting to reverse the pro-Zionist stance of Whitehall.

In November 1918 the British military administration prohibited dispositions of immovable property such as land transfers, Waqf endowments, or enforced payments on mortgages due. Since much of the land registry documentation had been removed from Palestine by the retreating Turkish armies, local land registry offices were unable to function. The commercial classes in Palestine who wished to collect debt payments were prevented thereby from foreclosing mortgages. Benefitting from these circumstances, however, were agriculturists, who had suffered considerable economic dislocation during the war but could not be evicted. In 1919 the Zionist Commission favoured keeping the registries closed. It wished to obviate land speculation in anticipation of major Jewish land purchase, to prevent occupants from acquiring official title deeds which rightfully belonged to landowners, and to prevent the conversion of Arab-owned land into religious domains (Waqf) that would exclude it from potential purchase.

The British delegation in Paris in July 1919 did not oppose reopening the registers if Zionists received preferential considerations. Nevertheless the registries remained closed until much of the documentation was restored. After several revisions, Samuel signed the Land Transfer Ordinance in October 1920. In order to prevent land speculation the Ordinance fixed limits to the value and the location of transferable land. The small owners and tenants were protected by retaining an undefined subsistence area if the land they tilled was sold. Palestinian Arab landowners, however, feared that the Ordinance was a legal ruse whereby the Zionists would acquire large areas of land. The Arabs' protest to the High Commissioner led to a Land Transfer Amendment Ordinance (December 1921) which removed the area and value limitations and opened the door to speculation. As a consequence of the amendment, Arab landowners received high prices for their land, while Jewish purchasers were not compelled to provide compensation in land, and the British looked on quietly at a self-nourishing drama. (See Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1929-1936*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, The University of Michigan, 1976 . )



As mentioned above, the attitudes of the British and the Arabs in Palestine were intimately linked. Weizmann had been aware of possible difficulties which the Arabs might create for the Zionists. His meetings with Arab leaders in Cairo and Palestine in 1918 and his frequent contacts with Faisal were intended to forestall apprehensions that the Zionists intended to dispossess the Arabs. From the start of these negotiations through 1919, Weizmann considered Arab-Zionist relations in economic terms. He was convinced that 'the Arab peasant will fare better under a new, just administration than he has under the Turk or would even under a retrogressive feudal Arab regime. The Jewish Commonwealth is bound to be a democratic organization'. In a letter to his colleagues Weizmann wrote: 'The Arab is genuinely frightened of our immigration, not because he is anti-Jewish, but because he was told that we are coming to take away his land'. To Samuel, Weizmann argued that Arab nationalism in Palestine was superficial and a mere offshoot of affairs in Damascus.

This assessment failed to recognize the increasing strength of Arab nationalist sentiments after the war. The Zionist Commission's celebrations in Palestine on 2 November 1918, marking the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, provoked the Arab population into sending a delegation to Ronald Storrs protesting the founding of a Jewish national home. On the same occasion the Arab delegation announced the establishment of the Moslem-Christian Association, a Palestinian nationalist group encouraged from its inception by anti-Zionist British officers. In January 1919 leaflets were distributed in Jerusalem and Jaffa urging Arabs to resist the Zionists. In the same month the Moslem-Christian Association held its first national convention and called for complete opposition to Zionism.

Events in Palestine were strongly influenced by the centre of the Arab nationalist movement in Damascus. In the summer of 1919 Palestinian Arabs participated in the first Syrian Congress, which proclaimed the Arabs' desire to form a united Syria (including Palestine and Lebanon), and rejected both the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. The Palestinian Arabs were further encouraged in their nationalist aims by the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918, which affirmed the Allies' support of Arab independence. In March 1919 President Woodrow Wilson, confronted with the conflict of interest between France and Great Britain concerning the territories of the

Middle East, and subjected to pressures from anti-Zionist groups including Christian missionaries, suggested that an Inter-Allied Commission study the wishes of the various peoples of the Middle East regarding their political future and needs. Since Britain and France opposed such a mission, Wilson assigned the task to two Americans, Henry C. King and Charles R. Crane, who arrived in the Middle East in June 1919 and issued an anti-Zionist report. It was at this time that Filastin biladna ('Palestine our country') became the slogan of Palestinian Arabs. In another slogan they showed their awareness of the British authorities' encouraging, or at least non-obstructing attitude: ad daula ma'na ('the government is with us').

With few exceptions, officials of the military administration in Palestine supported the Palestinian Arabs' rejection of Zionism. They included the three Chief Administrators. On 2 May, 1919 Clayton telegraphed to London the text of Money's memorandum advising the British government to rescind the Balfour Declaration and substitute a declaration supporting the wishes of the Arab majority in Palestine (Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, London 1961, p. 645), while Watson wrote on 16 August 1919 to the Foreign Office that 'the great fear of the people is that once Zionist wealth is passed into the land all territorial and mineral concessions will fall into the hands of the Jews whose intensely clannish instincts prohibit them from dealing with any but those of their own religion, to the detriment of Moslems and Christians'. The letter concluded with the suggestion that Zionist aims in Palestine be curtailed (P.R.O.-F.O. 371/4171). And Bols and his chief of staff, Colonel Waters Taylor, urged Allenby and Curzon in March 1920 to publish a declaration favouring Arab national aims in Iraq and Palestine (Palin Report P.R.O.-F.O. 371/5121). Furthermore, in April 1920, after the Jerusalem riots, Bols requested that the Zionist Commission be abolished (P.R.O.-F.O. 371/5117). Members of the Zionist Commission and friends in the Foreign Office kept Weizmann informed of developments in Palestine. At first Weizmann retained a basic-faith in the military administration: 'the Administration's attitude undoubtedly lacks understanding of the Declaration, and is in many instances simply hostile.

The English act slowly, they are empirical, and it is difficult to bind them down to a formula ... And so I started to preach patience in Palestine and am continuing here'. At times Weizmann seemed to rationalize the attitude of the British officers in Palestine: 'on

the whole the British administration—especially in the lower ranks—prefers the native to the Jew not out of any reason of unfairness or antisemitism, but simply because the native is a much simpler proposition than the Jew in Palestine. The Jew is bristling with problems—social, political, cultural, etc. . . . The administrator is used to handle natives and he finds difficulties ... with the highly differentiated types like the Palestinian Jews'. Weizmann's sympathetic understanding of the British administrators was coupled with his criticism of the Palestinian Jews' aggressive attitude toward the administration and the exaggerated pronouncements of Zionists in Palestine and Europe concerning a future Jewish state: statements which aggravated the tense situation in Palestine. In response to a query by Balfour (P.R.O.-F.O. 800/216) he expressed his regret for these sources of irritation: 'Undoubtedly some Zionists both inside and outside of Palestine have been talking with undue exuberance'. Zionist behaviour notwithstanding, Weizmann blamed the British for the unfavourable situation in Palestine on the following grounds: lack of a well-defined policy and of instructions from London; the prejudice of British officers against Jews; false conceptions about Zionism; and inadequate information about the economic potential of the country. Full blame, however, did not rest with the British: 'You must bear in mind,' Weizmann wrote to London, 'that the Jewish population has not been free from blame all this time. Much could have been avoided if the Jews would have shown more tact, more tolerance and more savoir faire in their dealings with the British authorities'.

To a certain degree Weizmann's gains in the London political arena served to counteract the hostility of British officials in Palestine. His efforts were largely responsible in the summer of 1919 for the appointment of Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, a fervent pro-Zionist, as Chief Political Officer in Palestine, in succession to General Clayton. In addition, on 4 August 1919 the British Foreign Office sent instructions to the military administration clearly stating that His Majesty's Government intended to accept the Mandate for Palestine and that the Mandate would include the Balfour Declaration. The instructions required that the Arabs be impressed with the fact that this must be accepted as a *chose jugée*. Finally, on 27 February 1920 Bols was ordered to proclaim officially and publicly that Britain intended to carry out the Balfour Declaration (Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary*, London 1959, pp. 69-70).

Weizmann was less successful with other political and economic proposals. He understood the significance of visible achievements in Palestine in preparation for the civil administration. The inflexible policy of the military administration, however, resisted constructive Jewish projects. In a letter to Louis Mallet dated 18 June 1919 Weizmann suggested practical projects which the Zionists in Palestine could undertake. Mallet responded evasively on 1 July 1919: 'It [Mallet's letter) does not promise anything, it does not refuse anything definitely'. As a countermeasure to British obstructionism, Weizmann repeatedly attempted to forestall those economic and political measures proposed by the British in Palestine which discriminated against the Jews and favoured the Arabs. He continued to propose plans for the future development of the country. In a lengthy memorandum to Curzon, he outlined Zionist aims in Palestine. This outline became a blueprint for Zionist work under the civilian administration; for the time being, though, the Foreign Office remained noncommittal.

Because-of the political uncertainty about the future of Palestine, the Zionists were interested in the continued presence in the country of the war-time Jewish Legion. The Zionists hoped that the Legion would become the militia force of the Mandatory Power and thus enhance the political strength- of the Jewish National Home. On 1 January 1919 David Eder telegraphed Weizmann in London with news of the initial demobilization of the Legion. On 4 February Weizmann wrote to Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, suggesting the retention of the 5,000-man Jewish Legion as a Jewish militia in Palestine. Sir Henry responded positively, as did General Macdonogh. But on 21 April Allenby wrote from Palestine opposing the scheme. In addition, the sceptical attitude of Curzon, now Foreign Secretary, influenced the Foreign Office whose assent to the plan was required (P.R.O.-F.O.371/4182). Sir Ronald Graham, Acting Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, and Forbes Adam, responsible for Middle Eastern affairs at the Foreign Office, refused to act prior to a decision on the Mandate. Weizmann was able merely to postpone the disbanding of the Legion until 31 March 1921. This was achieved with the direct intervention of Winston Churchill and the help of Samuel. In the interim the Legion's morale sagged to the point of voluntary demobilization. On 31 July 1920 most of the remaining group of 400 soldiers of the first battalion of the Judeans went home, thus marking for all practical purposes the end of the

Jewish Legion-. The target date of complete demobilization of the Legion was 31 March, 1921. On that day thirty-four men were still under the command of Colonel Eliezer Margolin. Pressure was exerted again by the Zionists in London that these men be retained to form a nucleus for a Jewish force under the Mandate. During the riots in Tel Aviv in May 1921, however, Margolin and his men defended the Jewish neighbourhoods against Arab attack, without authorisation. As a result, Margolin was forced to resign and his men were discharged. (For a detailed history of the Legion see Yigal Elam, *The Jewish Legion in World War I*, Hebrew, Tel Aviv 1973.)

Weizmann spent two months in Palestine from mid-October 1919, and although the attitudes of the British and the Arabs gave him concern, his reports to London assessed optimistically the impact of the Foreign Office's directives of 4 August: 'The open hostility which has existed before is dying out now. Meinertzhagen is stamping it out very energetically . . . Weizmann devoted his energies to planning housing, education and agriculture, and to the Hebrew University to be built on Mount Scopus. He believed that the British military administration would now cooperate with these endeavours: 'I am satisfied that the British Administration, even the present military administration, is willing to give us the possibility to begin work of reconstruction'. It was at Weizmann's suggestion that the British government invited Samuel to Palestine in early 1920 to prepare a report on the country's future administration and economic potential (P. R.O.-F.O. 371/4226).

Within three months of his departure from Palestine Weizmann was informed that his modest gains had eroded, in the face of renewed British hostility and Arab unrest. On 27 February 1920, following Bols' announcement concerning the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, the first Arab demonstration took place, in several urban centres, against Zionist intentions. On 8 March violence occurred, and attacks on isolated Jewish settlements in Upper Galilee became frequent. In addition, friction had increased between the leaders of the yishuv and the Zionist Commission. These problems led Weizmann to return to Palestine, with his twelve year-old son Benji, in late March 1920.

Shortly before Weizmann's arrival, and following the British surrender of Damascus and Upper Galilee to the French, the Jewish settlements of Metullah, Kfar Giladi, Tel Hai, Hamra and others, became vulnerable to Arab marauders who in the

process of rebelling against the French looted and murdered Jews without intervention by the army. During the months of January and February 1920 the Provisional Council held heated debates concerning the fate of these northern settlements. Jabotinsky advised abandonment of the indefensible settlements, whereas David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Tabenkin and Berl Katznelson favoured maintaining them at all costs. The latter position prevailed and a delegation was sent to investigate the needs of the settlements. But it was too late. On 1 March Tel Hai had fallen, with the loss of Joseph Trumpeldor and five other men and women. Two days later the Jews evacuated Kfar Giladi and Metullah. Weizmann's report to London reflected the gravity of the situation: 'I hasten to send up my first reports and to warn you of the very serious position which I have found here on arrival and which does not stand in any relation at all to what I have left a few months ago . . . We shall be severely tried in the next few months . . .' The increase of Arab violence was doubtless inspired by the proclamation of Faisal on 7 March as king of 'Greater Syria', including Palestine, Lebanon and Transjordan. These areas were to constitute a single sovereign independent state. The tacit support of Faisal's designs by the British military administration contributed to the agitation among Palestinian Arabs. On 1 April, a few days before the Jerusalem riots, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, later Mufti of Jerusalem, returned to Palestine from Damascus to announce British support of Faisal's sovereignty over Palestine. His assessment of the British position prompted his incitement of the Arab crowd at the Nebi Musa festival.

Riots began on 4 April during these celebrations (coinciding with Passover) and proceeded unrestrained by the army or the police. Six Jews in the Old City of Jerusalem were killed and more than two hundred wounded. After organizing a Jewish defence force, Jabotinsky was arrested on 7 April, together with other members of the Hagana, for possession of arms, and on 19 April was sentenced to fifteen years with hard labour. Weizmann was consumed with rage against the administration for failing to take proper preventive measures. A Commission headed by Major-General P.C. Palin subsequently conducted an investigation and confirmed Weizmann's accusations (P.R.O.-F.O. 371/3121). What disturbed Weizmann most was that this had been possible under the British: *tout comme chez nous!* [i.e., Russia].

Immediately after Jabotinsky's trial Weizmann left Palestine for San Remo where the Entente Powers had convened to determine the fate of the Ottoman Empire. On 25 April the Supreme Council granted England mandatory authority over Palestine, incorporating the Balfour Declaration into the Peace Treaty (see Stein, *op. cit.*, pp. 652-63). The British delegation (Lloyd George, Curzon, Balfour and others), thereupon began establishing a civilian administration and appointed Samuel as the first High Commissioner for Palestine. The Balfour Declaration of 2 November, 1917 received added political significance with the San Remo decision, -and Weizmann could proudly inform the twenty-first Annual Conference of the English Zionist Federation: 'We stand before you with a declaration of independence in our hands, the independence of Eretz Israel and the Jewish people . . . '

The period between San Remo and Samuel's induction brought new tasks for Weizmann. News arrived from the Zionist Commission that Jabotinsky was agitating in prison against Weizmann for his compromising attitude toward the British, his neglect of the Jewish Legion and his abandonment of a comrade. Despite Weizmann's efforts to free him, Jabotinsky accused Weizmann of inviting an anti-Zionist policy on the part of the military administration. Rumours reached the latter that soldiers of the Jewish Legion planned to free Jabotinsky by forcibly entering Acre prison. Weizmann feared that such an act would jeopardize the entire NO33o Zionist enterprise precisely on the eve of Samuel's arrival in Palestine. On 8 June Weizmann vented his bitterness and frustration (1920) toward the yishuv: 'One could have expected that there would No.335 be more patience and more self-control at a time like this, but apparently personal ambition and petty vanity are taking the upper hand. They seem to excel in a game of showing cheap heroism and fictitious martyrdom, and candidly I am beginning to sympathize with the British Administration more now than I ever did before'.

This volume closes with two events of far-reaching historic significance for the yishuv and for the Zionist movement On 30 June 1920 Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner, arrived in Palestine to receive from Major-General Louis Bols the formal transfer of the administration. Bols had prepared for Sir Herbert a humorous typewritten receipt for 'one Palestine taken over in good condition,' which Sir Herbert duly signed, adding 'E. and O.E.' A few days later in London, on 7 July 1920, for the first time since

the outbreak of World War I, a Zionist *Jahreskonferenz*—the biennial conference held between Congresses was convened.

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