

THE SECOND LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND PALESTINE, 1930-1931

by

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ABSTRACT

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The establishment of the "Jewish National Home" was perhaps the principal aim of the British Mandate of Palestine, granted by the League of Nations in 1920. The Arab riots of 1929, however, acted as occasion for the repudiation of this obligation. In 1930, a policy to this effect was developed by Colonial Office officials, and urged upon Lord Passfield, the Colonial Secretary. The outcome of their efforts was the Palestine White Paper of October, 1930. The controversy generated by this policy statement gave rise to grave domestic and international difficulties for Ramsay MacDonald's minority Government. As a result, the contentious provisions of this White Paper were re-interpreted, and thereby rendered inoffensive, in an official letter sent in February, 1931 by the Prime Minister to Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader.

PRECIS

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La raison d'être pour le Mandat Britannique en Palestine, autorisé par la Ligue des Nations en 1920, fut l'établissement du "Foyer National Juif." Les émeutes arabes de 1929, cependant, ont servi de catalyseur à la répudiation de cette obligation. Quelques fonctionnaires supérieurs ont pris l'initiative de développer cette politique en 1930. Ils ont influencé Lord Passfield, le Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires Coloniales, pour assurer l'approbation de cette tentative. Le point culminant de leurs activités fut le livre blanc à l'égard de la politique gouvernementale face à la Palestine d'octobre 1930. La controverse, qui s'est créée, a posé un grave problème domestique et une crise internationale au gouvernement minoritaire de Ramsay MacDonald. Comme résultat, les stipulations litigieuses du livre blanc furent modifiées dans une lettre officielle envoyée par le Premier Ministre au Dr. Chaim Weizmann, le leader sioniste, en février 1931. Effectivement, ce document a neutralisé la politique du livre blanc.

FOREWORD

Over the past six years that I have worked on my thesis, I have received assistance from a number of individuals and organizations, for which I am grateful.

To begin with, Professor P.D. Marshall, currently at the University of Manchester, has supervised my thesis with good humour and infinite patience throughout this period of time. Professor B. Ravid, presently of Brandeis University, has kindly aided this project by providing me with helpful advice. I acknowledge their particular contributions with thanks.

Among the organizations whose co-operation I consider to have been invaluable are the Inter-Library Loan Department of McGill University, the National Library of Canada, the British Museum, the Library of the London School of Economics, the Labour Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, and the Public Record Office, London. (In acknowledging the assistance of the Public Record Office, I should note that documents cited CAB, CO, FO, and Premier are Crown-copyright records that are quoted by authority of the Keeper of Public Records). With the help of these institutions, I was able to conduct my research effectively.

I wish to take this opportunity also to thank the Canadian Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of McGill University for grants that financed a portion of this undertaking.

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In concluding, I wish to express my gratitude to my wife, Sharon, who has put up with this diversion over the years.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAB	Correspondence of the Cabinet Office, Public Record Office, London.
Chancellor Papers	The Papers of Sir John Chancellor, Rhodes House Library, Oxford.
Cmd.	Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Command Paper.
CO	Correspondence of the C[olonial] O[ffice], Public Record Office, London.
<u>Commons</u>	Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, <u>Debates</u> .
C.P.	C[abinet] P[aper]. Documents presented to the Cabinet, held in the Public Record Office, London.
FO	Correspondence of the F[oreign] O[ffice], Public Record Office, London.
H.M.G.	H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment].
Labour Party Papers	Correspondence of the Labour Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Transport House, London.
<u>Lords</u>	Great Britain, Parliament, House of Lords, <u>Debates</u> .
P.M.C.	P[ermanent] M[andates] C[ommission] of the League of Nations.
Premier	Correspondence of the Prime Minister, Public Record Office, London.

INTRODUCTION

From 1917 until 1948, the problems revolving around Palestine consistently plagued successive British Governments. In the inter-war period, perhaps the Government faced with the greatest difficulties in attempting to administer this Mandate was the Second Labour Government of 1929-1931. I intend to examine the topic of the Second Labour Government and Palestine because the 1930-1931 era was one of intense activity. The five white papers and one official letter are indicative of the importance of Palestine as a pressing issue of the day.

The subject of the British Mandate in Palestine is one fraught with controversy because of continuing political events in the Middle East. Moreover, until recently, the inaccessibility of official documents has prevented authoritative interpretations of this 1917-1948 era of British rule. This lack of documents may explain the superficiality of monographs dealing with this segment of history. In attempting to account for the vagaries of British policy, historians were required of necessity to rely on conjecture. As a result, the discussion of important issues has tended to be inconclusive for lack of substantive evidence.¹ Now with the reduction of the fifty-year limit on the confidentiality of British state papers to thirty years that was

¹See: Esco Foundation for Palestine, Inc., Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab, and British Policies, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1947); Paul L. Hanna, British Policy in Palestine (Washington, 1942); J.C. Hurewitz, The Struggle for Palestine (New York, 1950); Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956 (Baltimore, 1963); and Christopher Sykes, Cross-Roads to Israel (London, 1965).

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enacted in 1967, the documentation has become available, and the assessment of this general period of history has become possible. Except for the amendment to shorten the closed period of state papers, the landmark 1958 Public Records Act, which had brought official British archival policy into the Twentieth Century, has remained unchanged.²

This Act had enabled individual ministries "...to make arrangements for the selection of those records which ought to be permanently preserved..." and to destroy those records "...not required for permanent preservation..." under the nominal authority of the Lord Chancellor. This provision clearly had been intended to permit the disposal of ephemeral material. In addition, the 1958 Public Records Act had provided discretionary power for the continued classification of documents to protect "the security of the state or the national interest."³

Despite these guidelines for the withholding of sensitive or embarrassing information, a great proportion of state papers relating to Palestine for the 1930-1931 period was "destroyed under statute" or otherwise removed from appropriate locations before they were opened to public inspection on January 1, 1968. As a result, a large

²Great Britain, Laws, Statutes, etc., The Public Records Act, 1967, 15 & 16 Eliz. 2, ch. 44; The Public Records Act, 1958, 6 & 7 Eliz. 2, ch. 51.

³Ibid., Sections 3.(1), 3.(6), and 5.(1). This criterion was provided by Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Commons, January 19, 1967, vol. 739, cols. 128-129.

number of files or even individual papers from files are not available at the Public Record Office in London. Very few documents have been classified as closed for additional periods of time. The selective nature of this destruction and/or classification will become subsequently apparent.⁴

The recent destruction, classification, or unaccounted for disappearance of state papers illustrates the phenomenon of solidarity among British public servants in their maintenance of confidentiality concerning the performance of their duties. One of the rationales for the fifty-year closed period of the 1958 Public Records Act had been the protection of "...the quality of unselfconsciousness..." of British civil servants. It had been felt that this attribute "...might be impaired if an official knew that what he wrote would be made available for public inspection during his lifetime."⁵ In view of the extremely candid comments expressed by officials in minutes or observations on specific documents or issues, this comment is valid.⁶ However, with

⁴A list of significant Colonial Office and Foreign Office political papers pertaining to Palestine for 1930-1931 that are currently unavailable at the Public Record Office appears as an appendix to this thesis.

⁵Explanation by Sir Elwyn Jones, Attorney-General, speaking on the draft Public Records Bill of 1967, Commons, June 26, 1967, vol. 749, col. 26.

⁶At the Colonial and Foreign Offices, items such as correspondence, documents, and press cuttings were circulated with appropriate files among officers in a particular division for comment and recommended action. Beginning at the junior level, a file would percolate upwards according to the urgency of the issue at hand. The more important the question, the higher a file would be circulated. Only matters deemed to be of great consequence were passed to the Permanent Under-Secretaries or Secretaries. Because of the detail and candour expressed in them, the minute sheets on a file provide great insight into the decision-making process of the day in these two departments.

one or two exceptions, all of the officials involved with Palestine affairs in 1930-1931 were dead when the papers for this period were released.

Nevertheless, this effort at censorship was not totally successful. While researching this thesis, copies of important destroyed, classified, or missing documents were indeed found elsewhere in the files of other ministries. Duplicates of destroyed or classified Colonial Office papers were found in Foreign Office and Premier files; copies of missing Foreign Office correspondence were located in Colonial Office or Premier papers; while documents not extant in the Premier papers were discovered in Colonial Office files. As a result, I have been able to put together events and circumstances that otherwise would have remained unexplained, like pieces in a jig-saw puzzle.

Using facts gleaned from these recently released state papers, other primary sources, and secondary material, I intend to discuss the development and nature of British policy in Palestine during the 1930-1931 period and to evaluate the interrelationship between British civil servants and politicians in the events of Palestine politics. To place this era in perspective, it is necessary to outline the events and circumstances that entangled the destinies of Great Britain, the Zionist movement, and the Arabs of Palestine.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 stated that Britain did then:⁷

⁷See Leonard Stein, The Balfour Declaration (London, 1961).

...view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine...

The significance of this pronouncement was of inestimable value to the Zionist movement. As a result, Zionism, the political expression of Judaism, received international legitimacy and encouragement for its goal to re-establish the Jewish homeland in Palestine.⁸ At the time of this proclamation, Palestine was an integral part of the Turkish Empire, which was at war with Great Britain. In late 1917, however, Palestine was conquered by Britain, and administered by the British Occupied Enemy Territory Administration under the supervision of the Foreign Office until 1920.

With the evolution of the League of Nations, the problem emerged of how to dispose of colonial territory occupied by the victorious states, particularly since colonialism and annexation had become unfashionable. The transformation of occupied colonies into protectorates was out of the question because of the association of this form of administration with de facto annexation. The Wilsonian mandate system emerged to resolve this dilemma. The concept of trusteeship involved the nominally altruistic administration of a territory by a power under international supervision to prepare it for autonomy.

At the San Remo Conference of 1920, the Mandate of Palestine was assigned to Great Britain. Civilian rule was promptly established

⁸The Governments of France, Italy, and the United States formally supported the Declaration. See ibid., pp. 660-663, 592-593, and 598-599.

with the appointment of Sir Herbert Samuel as the first High Commissioner of Palestine.⁹ Moreover, jurisdiction for Palestine was transferred from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office in 1921. Winston Churchill, Colonial Secretary, had reorganized the administrative structure of Near East affairs with the formation of the Middle East Department within his ministry. The terms of the Mandate ~~were~~ completed by the British Government only in 1922, and were quickly ratified by the League Council.¹⁰

In establishing the terms of the Mandate, the British Government modified the Balfour Declaration in order to persuade the Arabs of the Middle East to accept a growing Jewish presence in Palestine.¹¹ An additional White Paper, issued in 1922, changed the intent of the Declaration in three major ways.¹¹ First, on the question of territory,

⁹Sir Herbert Samuel (1870-1963) had held office in several Liberal Governments. He served as the first civilian High Commissioner of Palestine from 1920 until 1925. Samuel returned to the Home Office in 1931, with the formation of Ramsay MacDonald's First National Government.

¹⁰Winston Churchill (1874-1965) had served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1906 until 1908. Although he occupied the post of Colonial Secretary for a brief time from February, 1921 until October, 1922, the consequences of his administrative and political decisions lingered for the duration of the British Mandate of Palestine. See Draft Mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine as submitted for the Approval of the League of Nations, Miscellaneous No. 3 (1921), Cmd. 1176 (London, 1921) and Mandates. Final Drafts of the Mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine for the Approval of the Council of the League of Nations, Cmd. 1500 (London, August, 1921).

¹¹Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation, Cmd. 1700 (London, June, 1922), cited below as the Churchill White Paper, pp. 17-21. For a selection of official correspondence dealing with British policy at this time, see Doreen Ingrams, ed., Palestine Papers 1917-1922 Seeds of Conflict (London, 1972).

the Balfour note was interpreted to limit the area of the Jewish National Home with the statement that "such a home should be founded in Palestine." Secondly, in dealing with the essential issue of the "national home," the Churchill White Paper rejected outright the idea of a Jewish majority status for Palestine that had been prevalent from the time of the issuing of the Declaration. Winston Churchill, instead, offered the Zionists a vague form of cultural, communal, and religious autonomy under an internationally guaranteed trusteeship: in reality, this amorphous entity would exist under British tutelage. Thirdly, the development of the Jewish presence in Palestine was qualified economically. The expansion of the national home through immigration would be tied to the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine.*

Nevertheless, the aim of the Mandate still favoured the Zionist cause. Britain was to "...be responsible for placing the country under such...conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home..." while "...safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine..."¹² The right of the Zionists to have an "...appropriate Jewish agency...for the purpose advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such...matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home..."¹³ remained. However, this provision was qualified to preclude the Agency from sharing "...in any degree in its Government...."¹⁴

¹²Article 2 of the Mandate, Cmd. 1500.

¹³Article 4 of the Mandate, ibid.

¹⁴Churchill White Paper, p. 18.

Moreover, the Zionists were encouraged to broaden their base to include the active support of sympathizers outside Palestine by reiterating this aspect of the Mandate terms.

The terms of the Churchill White Paper and the Mandate were presented to both the Zionists and the Arabs as a non-negotiable fait-accompli. While they were reluctantly accepted by Dr. Chaim Weizmann on behalf of the Zionist movement, Moussa Kazim el-Husseini, on the other hand, categorically rejected them on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine.¹⁵ Following up this policy, the British Government, in September, 1922, officially sought the exclusion of the area of Palestine east of the Jordan from the terms of the Jewish National Home.¹⁶ This was done to

¹⁵See ibid., pp. 21-29.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) was the President of the World Zionist Organization. With the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, he served as its first President.

Moussa Kazim el-Husseini was President of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Congress, a political organization formed in 1920. The Executive Committee was also known as the Arab Executive. A delegation from the Arab Executive was then present in London to promote its cause. For a recent account of politics within the Arab community of Palestine at this time, see Y. Porath, The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929 (London, 1974), pp. 127 ff.

¹⁶See Mandate for Palestine. Letter from the Secretary to the Cabinet to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations of July 1, 1922, enclosing a Note in reply to Cardinal Gasparri's letter of May 15, 1922, addressed to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, Miscellaneous No. 4 (1922), Cmd. 1708 (London, 1922) and League of Nations. Mandate for Palestine, Together with a Note by the Secretary-General Relating to its Application to the Territory Known as Trans-Jordan under the Provisions of Article 25, Cmd. 1785 (London, December, 1922).

enable the British Government to reconcile the presence in this region of Abdullah, an Arab chieftain allied to Britain, with its undertaking to establish the Jewish National Home. This course of action had been contemplated for over a year since Abdullah had been installed there temporarily by Winston Churchill as Emir in March, 1921. Provision had been made for this separation in the terms of the Mandate. The British request was granted by the League Council. The Mandate, as approved in July, 1922 and amended in September, 1922, became effective in September, 1923.

The decision to divide Palestine was most significant. The administrative unit of Palestine, as it had existed under Turkish rule, was split. Land to the east of the Jordan became the distinct entity of Trans-Jordan; while the remaining territory retained its former designation. Legally, Palestine and Trans-Jordan remained two segments of the Palestine Mandate. While Palestine would be administered directly, Trans-Jordan would be ruled indirectly through the emirate. The autonomy of the emirate was merely nominal because the essential areas of administration, finance, foreign affairs, and defence were to remain under British control.¹⁷ Both areas would be controlled by the same administration.

The Arab repudiation of the terms of the Mandate and the Churchill White Paper involved the rejection of the provision that called for a legislative council with a Moslem majority of unofficial seats in an

¹⁷See Agreement Between His Majesty and the Amir of Trans-Jordan signed at Jerusalem, February 20, 1928, Treaty Series No. 7 (1930), Cmd. 3488 (London, 1930).

attempt to obtain further political concessions. Despite this response, Sir Herbert Samuel ordered elections organized for early 1923. However, resistance and apathy among Arabs to the election brought about the suspension of this provision of the Mandate.¹⁸

The British Government then vainly attempted to again reconcile the Arabs to the Mandate by granting them the privilege of an Arab Agency that would be comparable to the Jewish Agency. By doing so, the British Government further interpreted the Balfour Declaration as constituting a "two-fold obligation" to Jews and Arabs. This concept represented a significant modification.¹⁹ The concessions given to the Arabs at this time, despite their policy of non-co-operation, established a precedent for future British attempts to reconcile them to the Mandate. It has been argued that this pattern of conciliation was subsequently maintained consistently throughout the British presence in Palestine. Certainly, events demonstrated that Arab leaders realized that they could obtain political advantage by remaining adamantly opposed to the Mandate.²⁰

They had induced the government to accelerate its plans for the establishment of representative institutions, had secured in the Churchill Paper an official denouncement of efforts to create a Jewish state, and had obtained an offer of an Arab Agency, all through non-co-operation. Adhering to this apparently successful policy they therefore unanimously rejected the government's proposal.

¹⁸See Palestine. Papers Relating to the Elections for the Palestine Legislative Council, 1923, Cmd. 1889 (London, June, 1923).

¹⁹Devonshire to Samuel, cable, October 4, 1923, cited in Palestine. Proposed Formation of an Arab Agency. Correspondence with the High Commissioner for Palestine, Cmd. 1989 (London, November, 1923), p. 4.

²⁰Hanna, op. cit., p. 85.

While Arab notables had achieved substantial gains by 1923, they maintained their obstructionist policy towards the Mandate. This position exasperated the British Government to such a degree that it abruptly terminated the policy of conciliation. The Duke of Devonshire publicly rejected the idea of giving further concessions to the Arabs specifically because of their intransigence. Referring to the Arab rejections of proposals such as the legislative council elections and the Arab Agency offer, Devonshire informed Samuel:²¹

Towards all these proposals Arabs have adopted same attitude, viz., refusal to co-operate. His Majesty's Government have been reluctantly driven to the conclusion that further efforts on similar lines would be useless and they have accordingly decided not to repeat the attempt.

The possibility of Arab agreement to the Mandate and the Jewish National Home had been seriously impeded from its beginning primarily because of the appointment of the extremist Haj Amin el-Husseini as Grand Mufti, or Moslem religious leader, of Jerusalem in 1921 through the intervention of Sir Herbert Samuel. An active participant in the 1920-1921 anti-Jewish riots, he had been inexplicably pardoned by Samuel from the ten-year prison sentence that he had received.

Exploiting his position as Mufti of Jerusalem, el-Husseini managed to obtain a financial base for his political activity as a result of his election as President of the Supreme Moslem Council of Palestine in 1922. This body had been established by the Palestine Government to administer the Moslem community in Palestine. As President, he not only controlled all properties owned by the Moslem community with the income

²¹ Devonshire to Samuel, cable, November 9, 1923, cited in Cmd. 1989.

from them; but also, all appointments to Moslem communal and religious positions. Consequently, the Mufti was able to build a formidable political machine with Moslem communal income and patronage appointments. With his religious and financial base, he dominated Arab politics in Palestine throughout the 1920's. The fact that Moussa Kazim el-Husseini and Jamel el-Husseini, his kinsmen controlled the Arab Executive made his influence all the more extensive. The Mufti had participated actively in the opposition to the legislative council elections and the Arab Agency offer. He continued to exert a pervasive influence on the political scene of Palestine.²²

While the Arabs resisted the Mandate, the Zionists under Weizmann's leadership co-operated actively with the British Government. From his association with the preparation of the Balfour Declaration, Weizmann had encouraged an Anglophile policy within the Zionist movement. The ideal of Zionist co-operation with Britain in the establishment of the Jewish National Home was to him, paramount. Even with the unsympathetic redefinition of British goals, most Zionists agreed with this position throughout the 1920's.

After the Churchill White Paper, Weizmann played down his movement's earlier theme of the goal of Jewish political sovereignty. Instead, he reoriented Zionism towards the material achievement of Jewish autonomy in Palestine. Weizmann believed in the concept of constructing the Jewish National Home through infiltration. Until 1930, he refused to define publicly the ultimate aim of Zionism

²²See Palestine Royal Commission Report, Cmd. 5479 (London, July, 1937), pp. 52-54 and 174-181 and Porath, op. cit., pp. 184 ff.

while he marshaled diverse elements for the practical construction of the Jewish enterprise in Palestine.²³

Weizmann's major achievement of the 1920's was the reconstitution of the Jewish Agency to represent, at least nominally, the efforts of a broad spectrum of Jews in this massive building project. The reorganization had been imposed on the Zionist Organization by the terms of the Mandate.²⁴ This effort was concluded at the 1929 Zionist Congress in Zurich. The major implication of this action was the participation of influential Jewish personalities, Zionists and non-Zionists, such as Louis Marshall,²⁵ Felix Warburg,²⁶ and Lord Melchett.²⁷ Weizmann had managed to involve them directly in this scheme, thereby adding credibility to Zionism as a movement supported by World Jewry. Moreover, the Zionist Organization stood to benefit from increased financial and political assistance. It should be stressed that even with

²³See Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error, The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann, 1st Paperback Edition (New York, 1966), pp. 290-329.

²⁴See Article 4 cited above.

²⁵Louis Marshall (1856-1929), a prominent American Jewish lawyer and philanthropist, was chosen Chairman of the Agency's Council; however, he died shortly after.

²⁶Felix Warburg (1871-1937), a well-known American banker, became the leading spokesman for non-Zionist Jews following the death of Marshall. He was elected Chairman of the Jewish Agency Administrative Committee.

²⁷Lord Melchett (1868-1930), born Alfred Mond, was a noted figure in the Anglo-Jewish community. A wealthy industrialist, Melchett first served as Associate Chairman of the Agency's Council, and succeeded Marshall as Chairman. Before his appointment to the peerage in 1928, he had participated actively in British political life first as a Liberal and later as a Conservative M.P. since 1906. He had held office as First Minister of Works (1916-1921) and Minister of Health (1921-1922).

the addition of non-Zionist elements, the reconstituted Jewish Agency retained its Zionist orientation of the early 1920's.

Concurrently, the Zionist Executive in Palestine was transferred to Jewish Agency control. With the establishment of the British Mandate, Dr. Weizmann had created machinery to implement the Zionist building programs. In Palestine, an entire para-governmental structure concerned with political affairs, settlement, education, and social welfare had evolved under Zionist auspices. The Palestine Executive dealt directly with the Palestine Government. Internally, the Jewish settlement or Yishuv was run on a parliamentary basis with a representative assembly and elected executive council, the Va-ad Leumi. The Jewish community enjoyed a corporate status inherited from the Turkish regime and recognized by the Mandate.

Dr. Weizmann had established a pattern of competent representation in London. As in Palestine, this apparatus handled questions such as political matters, publicity, finance, and immigration. The London office supervised the Jewish National Home project in Palestine. The most important personalities in London, besides Weizmann, included Leonard Stein,²⁸ Lewis Namier,²⁹ Dr. Selig Brodetsky,³⁰ and Israel Cohen.³¹ This office dealt directly with British officials and politicians.

²⁸ Leonard Stein (1887-1973), an English barrister, served as Political Secretary of the Zionist Organization from 1921 until 1929. However, he participated actively on behalf of the movement in the 1930-1931 period.

²⁹ Lewis Namier (1888-1960) succeeded Stein as Political Secretary in 1929. During the First World War, Namier had served with the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, and had established personal contacts that he exploited on behalf of the Jewish Agency, to the annoyance of officials. A noted historian, Namier's employment with the Agency provided a livelihood for him during the 1920's when he was establishing himself in this discipline. Although he left his position with the Agency in May, 1931 to become Professor of Modern History at the

The Arabs of Palestine lacked the formidable lobbying strength of the Jews. Having rejected the offer of an Arab Agency, Arab leaders chose to ignore the Mandate. In Palestine, the Arab Executive and the Supreme Moslem Council refused to come to terms with the Government of Palestine as the Va-ad Leumi had done. To promote their interests, the two major Arab bodies did not adopt the sophisticated organizational and operational structure of their Jewish counterpart. In London, the Arabs chose not to advocate their position in an organized fashion comparable to that of the Jewish Agency, at least throughout the 1920's.

While the Arab leadership of Palestine spurned the opportunity for effective representation in London, their English sympathizers did not. A small, but vocal, organization known as the National League promoted the Arab cause in Britain. This group was composed almost exclusively of British supporters of the Arab position, together with a few Arabs resident in the United Kingdom. Although the National League was active, for lack of Arab leadership it could not advocate the Arab cause as credibly as the Jewish Agency encouraged the Zionist position. Lacking the same level of awareness and commitment to its cause as the Jewish Agency commanded, the National League represented a weak counterpoint to the Jewish Agency.³²

University of Manchester, he maintained an active interest in Zionism throughout the 1930's.

³⁰Dr. Selig Brodetsky (1888-1954), a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, was involved in the political affairs of the Agency throughout 1930-1931.

³¹Israel Cohen (1879-1961) was General Secretary of the World Zionist Organization in 1930-1931. In addition, Cohen regularly contributed articles on Jewish matters to The Manchester Guardian as a freelance journalist.

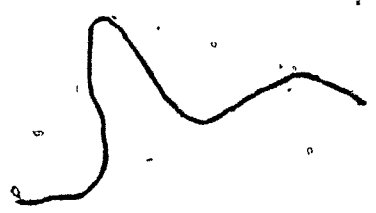
³²For an account of this lobby, see J.M.N. Jeffries, Palestine: The Reality (London, 1939).

Evaluating the events of the decade, it can be observed that Weizmann's infiltration policy had achieved dramatic results. Jewish immigration increased substantially throughout most of this decade. The development of Jewish settlements and industries was no less impressive. While the crash of the Polish zloty in 1927 created difficulties among the large number of immigrants holding this currency, the adverse situation terminated by 1928.³³ However, with this increase in Jewish prosperity and growth, there developed a progressive deterioration in the political status of the Jewish community in Palestine. This situation became more pronounced during the administration of Sir John Chancellor, High Commissioner of Palestine from 1928 until 1931.³⁴ While his two predecessors, Sir Herbert Samuel and Lord Plumer,³⁵ had acted impartially, Chancellor clearly exhibited an anti-Jewish bias.

³³For a detailed survey of Jewish development during the 1920's, see Joint Palestine Survey Commission, Reports of the Experts, Submitted to the Joint Palestine Survey Commission (Boston, 1928). This study had been sponsored by prominent non-Zionist Jews as a preliminary step to their participation in the reconstituted Jewish Agency. One of the consultants was Sir John Campbell (1874-1944), a retired India Office official and former Vice-President of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission. During 1930-1931, Campbell occupied the senior position of Economic and Financial Adviser to the Colonial Office.

³⁴Originally a career soldier with the Royal Engineers, Chancellor (1870-1952) previously had held several political appointments. He had served as an Assistant Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence and Governor of Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, and Southern Rhodesia.

³⁵Field-Marshal Lord Plumer (1857-1932) had served in the British Army before embarking on a career as a colonial administrator. Prior to his appointment as High Commissioner to Palestine in 1925, he had been Governor-General of Malta from 1919 to 1924.



Beginning in late 1928, the Jewish community of Palestine was beset with a number of irritants. Anti-Jewish discrimination became more apparent in the recruitment of officials for various mandate positions. In addition, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism became prominent features of the thinking of mandatory officials. An examination of three such civil servants will bear this point out. It should be stressed that these individuals, who served in Palestine at the time, are among the few to have expressed these thoughts in writing.³⁶

Joseph F. Broadhurst, Superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Palestine Gendarmerie, termed the Balfour Declaration "notorious." As far as he was concerned, the Jews robbed the Arabs of their land.³⁷ Alec Kirkbride, a District Commissioner, compared his experience in Palestine unfavourably with his earlier service in Trans-Jordan, commenting that he "...missed the courtesy of the Arabs" in his later posting because it involved contact with Jewish settlers.³⁸

Humphrey Bowman, Director of Education, also took a jaundiced view of the Jewish National Home. In stressing the existence of strong British-Arab sympathy in Palestine, Bowman claimed that this rapport was due to a common "love of freedom, daring, and adventure" shared by

³⁶For balanced assessments of this prejudice by an official then on the scene, see Douglas V. Duff, Sword for Hire (London, 1934), pp. 155-157; Bailing with a Teaspoon (London, 1953), pp. 112, 171, 187-189; and May the Winds Blow (London, 1948), p. 207. Duff was an Inspector in the Palestine Gendarmerie until 1929. See also Cmd. 5479, pp. 163-164.

³⁷Joseph F. Broadhurst, From Vine Street to Jerusalem (London, 1936), pp. 213 and 243.

³⁸Sir Alec Kirkbride, A Crackle of Thorns (London, 1956), p. 102.

Britons and Arabs:³⁹

It is true to say that the majority of British officials considered the policy underlying the Balfour Declaration an injustice, not because they were out of sympathy with the idea of a National Home for the Jewish people, but because they believed that it did not take into sufficient account the interests of the Arab population...as the years went by and as immigration increased, the British official, in his capacity of watchdog, began to share the Arabs' fear of Jewish domination.

Mandate officials permitted the Moslem religious hierarchy, led by the Mufti, to disturb the status quo of Jewish worship at the Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.⁴⁰ Legitimate Jewish Agency land acquisitions were often halted by the Mandate Administration.⁴¹ These annoyances were obvious. Reading them as definite signs of British support for the Arab goal to terminate the Jewish National Home, the Mufti organized a series of bloody anti-Jewish riots in August, 1929.

³⁹Humphrey Bowman, Middle East Window (London, 1942), pp. 328 and 329.

⁴⁰See Duff, Sword for Hire, op. cit. and Cmd. 5479, pp. 66-67. This controversy occurred despite the recent adjudication by the British Government of the claims of both communities to the Wall. See The Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Cmd. 3229 (London, November, 1928).

⁴¹A case in point was the Wadi Havereth land sale of 1929 to the Jewish National Fund, the land-purchasing branch of the Jewish Agency. Although the Zionists had provided ex-gratia compensation to Arab tenants, the Government of Palestine used the extensive legal means at its disposal to hinder the transaction. See Lt.-Col. Frederick H. Kisch, Palestine Diary (London, 1938), p. 347. A retired British army officer who had served with distinction during the First World War, Kisch (1888-1943) was Political Secretary to the Palestine Executive of the Jewish Agency from 1922 until 1931.

The co-ordinated disturbances posed an unprecedented challenge to the British Mandate of Palestine.⁴² As such, the riots can be considered a watershed in the history of the Mandate. Basically, the newly formed Labour Government⁴³ had three options from which to choose in order to cope with the manifestation of hostility to both the Jewish National Home and British domination in the region: First, it could have broken the power of the elitist faction led by the Mufti, and encouraged the emergence of a moderate Arab leadership. Secondly, the Government could have restored the status quo by dispatching British forces to mop up the remaining vestiges of the disturbances and by ensuring that the Palestine Government implemented established Mandate policies. Thirdly, it could have resurrected the still-born policy of conciliation to reduce Arab opposition, despite the obvious intransigence of the incumbent Arab leadership.

Before deciding on these long-term options, the British Government acted decisively to restore order in Palestine. Warships from the Mediterranean Fleet were sent to augment the land and air forces. In attempting to resolve the difficulties in Palestine, the Government decided to delay any far-reaching policy decision pending the receipt of additional information. A commission of inquiry was appointed to investigate the immediate causes of the disturbances. Led

⁴² Arab rioting in 1920-1921 had flared before Britain modified the terms of the Jewish National Home and formally began to administer Palestine as a Mandate.

⁴³ The Second Labour Government had taken office in June, 1929 under the leadership of James Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937). MacDonald had presided over the ill-fated First Labour Government of January to November, 1924.

by Sir Walter Shaw, this body conducted hearings in Palestine and London. Its report, issued on March 30, 1930, had a profound impact on British policy in Palestine in 1930-1931.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Government announced its intention to establish an international committee to adjudicate the claims of both communities to the Western Wall.⁴⁵

In accounting for the direction of British policy concerning Palestine in the 1930-1931 period, it must be noted that the political department responsible for its administration was the Colonial Office. During this interval, the course of British policy for Palestine was determined primarily by the interaction among the officials and politicians within this ministry. The Colonial Office had assumed control of Palestine affairs in 1921. Throughout the 1920's, the Middle East Department, the division responsible for its administration, had continued to function as a separate department of the ministry, with Sir John Shuckburgh, Churchill's original appointee, as head official.⁴⁶ Shuckburgh held the rank of Assistant Under-Secretary of State. He

⁴⁴Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929, Cmd. 3530 (London, 1930), cited below as the Shaw Report.

⁴⁵The report of this Commission was released in June, 1931. Jerusalem (Wailing Wall), Report of the Commission appointed by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with the Approval of the Council of the League of Nations, to determine the rights and claims of Moslems and Jews in connection with the Western or Wailing Wall at Jerusalem, H.M.S.O. 58.9096.0.0. (London, December, 1930).

⁴⁶Shuckburgh (1877-1953) originally had been seconded from the India Office presumably because of his background in dealing with two diverse religious communities: the Moslems and the Hindus. He had never served abroad on behalf of either department.

reported directly to Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State.⁴⁷ Other senior officials in the Middle East Department active in the affairs of Palestine at this time included Owen Gwyn Roger Williams⁴⁸ and Harold Beckett.⁴⁹ Norman L. Mayle was the junior member of the department who dealt with Palestine matters in 1930-1931.⁵⁰

In addition to managing the Palestine Mandate, which consisted of Palestine proper and the Emirate of Trans-Jordan, the Middle East Department was responsible for the administration of the Mandate of Iraq. Moreover, this division represented the ministry's interests in "the Arab areas under British influence."⁵¹ Because of Britain's dominant position, this meant the entire Middle East, with the exception of Syria and Lebanon, which were mandates of France.

⁴⁷Brigadier Sir Samuel Wilson (1873-1950) was appointed by the previous Government in 1925. His background was both military and political. Originally a military engineer, Wilson had served as an Assistant Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence and as Secretary of the Overseas Defence Committee. In 1921, he moved to the Colonial Office. Before his appointment as Permanent Under-Secretary, he had succeeded Chancellor as Governor of Trinidad and Tobago. As a former sapper and colonial governor, Wilson was well acquainted with Chancellor.

⁴⁸Williams (1886-1954) had served as Leopold Amery's Private Secretary when Amery was Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office in 1919-1920. Williams had never been posted abroad.

⁴⁹Beckett (1891-1952), like Williams, had been based exclusively in London.

⁵⁰Norman Mayle (b.1899) subsequently became Private Secretary to Sir Samuel Wilson in 1932.

⁵¹Great Britain, Dominions Office and Colonial Office, List (London, 1930), p. xvi.

With the formation of the Second Labour Government in June, 1929, the Colonial Office obtained a new political master. As Colonial Secretary in the new administration, Sidney Webb was politically responsible for Palestine. At sixty-nine years of age, Webb had been elevated to the peerage to occupy this position as Lord Passfield.⁵² In 1930-1931, Dr. Drummond Shiels, M.P., was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. He had been transferred from the position of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India in December, 1929. While only a Junior Minister, Shiels retained the important responsibility of representing the ministry in the House of Commons.⁵³

⁵²Sidney Webb (1859-1947), the Fabian Socialist, had participated with his wife, Beatrice, in the formation of the Labour Party. He had been President of the Board of Trade in the First Labour Government. Until June, 1930, Passfield was also Secretary of State for the Dominions.

⁵³Dr. Drummond Shiels (1881-1953), had been a member of the Special Commission on the Ceylon Constitution of 1927. A physician by profession, he was the Member of Parliament for East Edinburgh from 1924 until 1931.

CHAPTER 1

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLONIAL OFFICE

POLICY INITIATIVES

Sir John Chancellor's Dispatch

Despite the firm measures taken by the British Government to quell the riots and its decision to establish two inquiries, within Government circles the situation in Palestine was considered highly volatile. Indeed, throughout the autumn of 1929, the High Commissioner believed that an Arab revolt was imminent. Chancellor and his officials were convinced that the inspiration, funding, and leadership for such a rising would be furnished by the Grand Mufti. In a steady stream of dispatches, the High Commissioner reported extensively on the illegal importation of arms and munitions into Palestine, the formation and training of irregular bands, and the intense activity of subversive individuals and organizations. As far as Chancellor was concerned, the only policy open to the British Government to prevent the pending revolt was to conciliate the Arabs at the expense of the Jews.¹

¹Chancellor to Shuckburgh, letter, October 18, 1929, cited in C.P. 343 (29), CAB 20/207.

I hope that the Arabs will remain quiet during the inquiry; but I am quite certain of this, that unless, as the result of the inquiry of the Commission, they obtain some concessions and the ambitions of the Zionists are curbed, there will be a rebellion.

That is the opinion of the people who know the country best.

The extract cited was among twenty-five items of correspondence that were included in a background paper circulated to the Cabinet in November, 1929. This collection consisted of personal assessments by the High Commissioner, reports of mandate officials, secret intelligence appraisals, and press summaries. The general tone of the correspondence was alarmist. Despite the pessimistic views expressed in them, Passfield took a somewhat restrained view of this material, at least before his Cabinet colleagues:²

It is not easy to estimate their [the warnings in telegrams from the High Commissioner, included in the Cabinet Paper] precise weight.... It should also be noted that some, at any rate, of the information received has the appearance, in the absence of exact knowledge as to the reliability of the informants, of being little better than "bazaar rumour," and further that both Jews and Arabs (especially Arabs) have shown a tendency to exploit alarmist reports as levers for forcing the Government to make concessions to their demands... Nevertheless, after making all allowances, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the situation is one of great delicacy and not without some danger.

Correspondence of this nature from the High Commissioner impressed Colonial Office officials in Whitehall. Nevertheless, the Colonial Office seriously began to consider the policy of conciliation as a solution to the Palestine question when presented with detailed options by Sir John Chancellor. In a brief intended for the Shaw Commission,

²Memorandum by Passfield, November 28, 1929, ibid.

the High Commissioner bluntly recommended three drastic measures, which involved the repudiation of the pro-Zionist features of the Balfour Declaration, the reinterpretation of the Churchill White Paper in a manner unfavourable to Zionist interests, and a halt to the growth of the Jewish National Home enterprise.³

It is only by taking measures on the lines suggested...by showing the Arabs that Great Britain is no less mindful of her obligations to them than of her obligations to the Jews and that she is equally solicitous for their interests and welfare, that true peace can be restored in Palestine and the sympathy and co-operation of the Arab population secured...

As a short-term measure, he urged the British Government to seek from the League of Nations the deletion of provisions in the terms of the Mandate that ensured special status for the Jewish National Home project and for the instrument of this undertaking, the Jewish Agency: "The privileged position so accorded to the Jewish Agency," he stated, "is embarrassing to the Government of Palestine, since it excites the suspicion and resentment of the Arabs."

Chancellor sought to eliminate the high level access of Zionist leaders to Whitehall through the Jewish Agency's London Office. His motivation was clear; Chancellor wanted a situation in which he alone as High Commissioner would be the final arbiter of Zionist grievances against British policy, and his interpretation of it. He intended this curtailment to result in a reduction of Zionist criticism by restricting the Agency to Palestine.

³Chancellor to Passfield, dispatch, January 17, 1930, C0733/182/77050/A. Despite the "Confidential" classification that the High Commissioner gave his dispatch, the highly coloured personal views presented in it were well known in Palestine. See The New York Times, January 29, 1930.

Exercising appropriate provisions of the Mandate terms, the Jewish Agency was forcefully representing Zionist interests in both London and Jerusalem. This practice was anathema to Chancellor as it undermined his authority in Palestine. Decisions taken in Palestine were often not final since Zionist leaders frequently appealed against policies unfavourable to their interests directly to Whitehall through their London office. In addition, the fact that the Arabs of Palestine had no comparable structure upset Chancellor. The Arab leadership of Palestine was still consciously boycotting the 1923 offer of a parallel Arab Agency. Despite this, the High Commissioner believed that the Zionists possessed an unfair advantage over the Arabs by being able to appeal grievances directly to London.

Not only did Chancellor advocate the political emasculation of the Jewish National Home; he also recommended the additional curtailment of Jewish land rights and immigration by further restricting land transfers to the Jewish Agency. Using the 1922 principle of economic absorptive capacity, Jewish immigration to Palestine could, as a consequence, be cut. To justify his proposal, he claimed that the Agency's acquisition of land had prejudiced the Arab population. In doing so, he provided a personal assessment of the economic situation by painting a bleak picture of Arab unemployment and landlessness. Perhaps the most significant feature of this appraisal was the fact that the High Commissioner presented it without furnishing specific details to support it. So general was his evaluation that no concrete evidence such as statistical data was cited.

Chancellor based his views concerning Arab unemployment on a conception that the Jewish community was chauvinistically exclusive. For ideological reasons, the Jewish National Fund, the settlement branch of the Agency, consistently had opposed the use of cheap hired labour to implement its development plans. The Zionist Organization considered the establishment of the Jewish National Home by Jews to have been a spiritual necessity. Moreover, the economic absorptive capacity requirement for Jewish growth, dictated by the Churchill White Paper, had forced the Zionists to justify increased Jewish immigration in those terms. The vehicle used to develop this absorption was agricultural expansion. During the 1920's, the majority of Jewish immigrants to Palestine was integrated by the Jewish National Fund into agriculture.⁴ The continued acquisition of arable land, therefore, was an imperative for progressive Jewish expansion in Palestine.

As the desired end of his political scheme, Chancellor envisaged the growth of an independent Arab entity under British tutelage with moderate safeguards for minorities such as the Jews on the model of Iraq. Great Britain had been granted the Mandate of Iraq in 1920. From the beginning of this administration, the Middle East Department had striven to establish self-government under an emirate designated by Britain and favourable to British interests. By 1930, Iraq was on the verge of independence. To pacify the strenuous

⁴See Jewish Agency, The Development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, Memorandum Submitted to His Majesty's Government by the Jewish Agency for Palestine (London, May, 1930), cited below as the Namier Memorandum, pp. 21 ff.

objections on the part of the 'sizable Kurdish' minority to Arab domination, protective provisions had been included in the constitution imposed by Britain on the emirate.⁵

Such a situation would constitute a complete reversal of the Balfour Declaration. In advocating this, Chancellor admitted that he had been influenced by Arab demands that had been submitted to him. His attitude on this issue was synonymous with the position maintained by the Arab leadership of Palestine. The High Commissioner noted that he also had been impressed by Arab representations on the related question of constitutional development. By late 1929, the Arab leadership had reversed itself on this provision of the Churchill White Paper. In his dispatch, Chancellor forcefully urged the establishment of a legislative council.

Chancellor rationalized this drastic change on two grounds. The first rested on vague undertakings given by Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner to Egypt, to Hussein, Sherif of Mecca, during World War I. McMahon had promised Hussein an ill-defined segment of the Middle East, as well as the Moslem Caliphate, in exchange for his active support against the Turks. Chancellor strongly believed that the Balfour Declaration was incompatible with these

⁵For Article III of this constitution, see 'Iraq. Treaty with King Feisal, 10th October, 1922, Cmd. 1757 (London, 1922). See also Policy in 'Iraq. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Cmd. 3440 (London, November, 1929) and Treaty of Alliance Between His Majesty in respect of the United Kingdom and His Majesty the King of 'Iraq, with an Exchange of Notes Baghdad, 30th June, 1930 together with Notes Exchanged embodying a separate Financial Arrangement, Treaty Series No. 15 (1931), Cmd. 3797 (London, 1931).

promises, and felt that the British Government should admit its error, and set the record straight by implementing his recommendations. This suggestion was presented despite the fact that the Churchill White Paper had interpreted this correspondence as having excluded the area of Palestine west of the Jordan from the grant to Hussein.⁶

The second basis for this proposed change revolved around the High Commissioner's belief in the power of Pan Arabism and Pan Islamicism. Chancellor maintained that British support for the Jewish National Home posed a danger to the Empire. He was obviously concerned by the spectre of an anti-British Arab and/or Moslem monolith. Because the number of Arabs and Moslems exceeded that of Jews, Chancellor had written off the Zionist enterprise as expendable. This particular rationale was considered seriously by department officials at the time as the mere possibility of Arab and Moslem unity against British interests in their opinion represented a threat to the Empire. Strategically, British communications required access to India through the Suez Canal. Moreover, there was a persistent fear that hostile Arab and Moslem anti-British feeling in the Middle East could create catastrophic disturbances in India with its large Moslem population. While Colonial Office officials were aware that hostilities against Turkey, the centre of the Caliphate, had created no unrest in World War I, they, nevertheless, believed that this represented a possible source of grave peril to British interests.

⁶ Churchill White Paper, pp. 20 ff. The revolt had taken place in 1917.

Chancellor's unexpectedly detailed dispatch was received most sympathetically by Colonial Office officials mainly because they shared his beliefs. Their antipathy towards the Jewish National Home project was indicative of the lack of appreciation and sensitivity on the part of civil servants in Britain and Palestine to the unprecedented mandate conception which Palestine entailed. The formalized criticism of Colonial Office policies by a body such as the Jewish Agency was a novel phenomenon. Accustomed to ruling without question, civil servants deeply resented the innovation of accountability. As a defensive reaction, officials in Whitehall favoured policies intended to limit the watchdog role of the Jewish Agency.

An important factor that also influenced official thinking on the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Home project, and Zionism in general was the existence of strong anti-Jewish prejudice among civil servants in London as well as in Palestine. It is, therefore, worth citing the following comment by Sir John Shuckburgh, concerning his appointment as Head of the Middle East Department, in order to appreciate this prevalent attitude that underlay the administration of British policy for Palestine:⁷

...In point of fact I had, at that time, had no previous official connection with Palestine, knew nothing of the Zionist policy & its difficulties, & had no opinion on the subject one way or the other apart from a vague instinct of dislike for anything with a Jewish label.

⁷Minute, January 9, 1930, CO 33/182/77050/A. A former Middle East Department colleague describes Shuckburgh as having been "...saturated with Hebraphobia...." See Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, Middle East Diary 1917-1956 (London, 1959), pp. 95 and 110.

Nevertheless, although Colonial Office officials strongly supported the High Commissioner's findings, they were reluctant to promote the adoption of his plan of action as a viable policy option, for the short-term at least. Colonial Office opinion was opposed to Chancellor's request for the immediate circulation of his brief to the Shaw Commission. Three factors can account for this reluctance. The first was the realization that the use of this dispatch to justify a drastic shift in the orientation of the Mandate in its report would harm the credibility of the Shaw Commission as an examination of the immediate causes of the 1929 Arab disturbances. The second reason was the recognition that Britain's position as guarantor of the Jewish National Home, with all the strategic benefits that had accrued because of the British presence in Palestine, would be called into doubt with the implementation of Chancellor's proposals. The third was the fear of intense objections on the part of the Zionists to such a change and their possible repudiation of Britain's role in relation to the Jewish National Home project.⁸

In dealing with this memorandum, O.G.R. Williams proposed an alternative to Chancellor's more direct recommendations. He suggested that the land question could be exploited as a lever to quietly obtain a reversal of the tenor of the Mandate and thereby "conciliate Arab and

⁸ Minutes by Harold Beckett, January 29, 1930; Williams, February 3, 1930; Shuckburgh, February 3, 1930; Wilson, February 5, 1930. CO733/182/77050/A. In his comments, Williams referred to the strategic value of Palestine to British imperial interests, noting that this consideration had increased in importance as the result of recent British difficulties with the Egyptian Government.

pro-Arab opinion!" In advocating this option, he stressed that "careful investigation" was required to substantiate Chancellor's claims:

The Jews will find it very hard to charge H.M.G. with breach of faith as regards the various consequences which would follow, including the drastic restriction of immigration and control of land transfers. To base our policy on other than economic grounds would at once land us in more serious difficulties.

Williams was well aware of the correlation between increased land acquisitions and the continued growth of the Jewish presence. He recognized that the curtailment of Jewish Agency land purchases would freeze potential economic absorptive capacity and bring about the subsequent reduction in the rate of Jewish immigration. This situation would halt the growth of the Jewish National Home project. The essential point of Williams' strategy was its sheer subtlety. Through the judicious use of economic pressure, dramatic political changes covertly could be implemented for Palestine. With the concealment of these drastic political alterations in the guise of economics, controversy generated by the Zionist movement could be countered quite readily. The British Government could alter its obligation to establish the Jewish National Home without suffering the embarrassment of a formal application to the League of Nations.

The land issue had emerged earlier in January, 1930 during private conversations between Passfield and members of the Shaw Commission. Commission members had informed Passfield of their opinion that there was a severe land shortage in Palestine, and had indicated that they intended to deal with this matter in their forthcoming report. O.G.R. Williams had received more detailed information than Passfield concerning the findings of the Commission before he presented his major

proposal. He minuted that the Shaw Commission planned to discuss land and other policy issues in its report, with a view to recommending the halt of the Jewish National Home project. Therefore, he was well aware that the outcome of the report would support his policy alternative prior to its official presentation to the Colonial Secretary.⁹

When Chancellor's dispatch reached the highest levels at the Colonial Office, Sir John Shuckburgh and Sir Samuel Wilson concurred with the recommendations that it be withheld from the Shaw Commission and that a copy of it be sent to the Foreign Office for review. However, they did not comment immediately in departmental minutes either on the theme of Chancellor's thesis or on Williams' alternative suggestion. It is worth noting that while hedging in official minutes Shuckburgh privately viewed Chancellor's dispatch "with admiration." Drummond Shiels was non-committal with his impressions as well. He merely summed up the report as stating that: "...the two parts of the Balfour Declaration are incompatible, and, administratively, almost impossible of application." In addition, he foresaw suggestions similar to Chancellor's in the pending Shaw Report.¹⁰

Passfield offered no remarks whatever on Chancellor's proposals. He merely approved Williams' suggestion to send a copy to the Foreign Office for comment.¹¹ This taciturnity constituted a

⁹Minute by Williams, January 18, 1930, C0733/185/77072/I.

¹⁰Shuckburgh to Harry Luke, letter, February 22, 1930, Chancellor Papers 16/4. Minute by Shiels, February 7, 1930, C0733/182/77050/A.

¹¹Minute, February 17, 1930, ibid.

prominent feature of his administration of Palestine affairs. Although personally an anti-Zionist, Passfield played an inactive part in the formulation of decisions, merely ratifying suggestions made by his senior civil servants. The initiative, development, and direction for Palestine policy during his administration came not from Passfield as Colonial Secretary but from his officials. This account will indicate the role of Passfield as a pawn in the hands of his officials. Passfield rarely questioned the accuracy of reports, assessments, and proposals that were to serve as the basis of contemplated changes in policy. Moreover, he seldom debated policy suggestions. During his administration, policy recommendations on the part of departmental officials tended to be one-sided. The fact that Passfield accepted these opinions at face-value undoubtedly encouraged civil servants to maintain and strengthen their role in decision-making.

In evaluating his career as a Minister, The Scotsman noted: "Thus though he administered his Departments with an excessively official competence, he was a complete failure as a Minister."¹² Kingsley Martin, a noted Labour Party supporter, assessed Passfield in similar terms:¹³

...Webb was not very successful as a Minister; his presence never inspired awe in the Lords or the Commons; his beard was the subject of jest and his voice was too weak to impress. He found it difficult to make up his mind. He had written so many superb memoranda in the past, weighing up pros and cons, that he had not acquired the habit of final responsibility; he was the ideal Civil Servant and not used to the job of deciding on a policy...

¹²Obituary of Sidney Webb, Lord Passfield, The Scotsman, Edinburgh, October 14, 1947.

¹³Kingsley Martin, "The Webbs in Retirement," an essay included in Margaret Cole ed., The Webbs and their Work (London, 1949), p. 287.

Drummond Shiels provided a somewhat comparable but restrained description of Passfield's inadequacies as a Minister:¹⁴

...It has been asserted that he was dominated by his Civil Servants. This is not accurate, though the effect of the real position may seem to have been somewhat similar. He had spent the first ten years of his career in the Colonial Office and during these impressionable years, he, no doubt, got into a civil service way of looking at things. This was not entirely a disadvantage to him in Ministerial office, more especially in his relations with his staff, but it may have made it difficult for him, sometimes, to regard matters from the more detached position appropriate to a Minister.

Another influence which affected him was his great respect for the individual whom he believed to be an expert...He regarded as experts most, if not all, of the senior men in the Colonial Office and was, perhaps, inclined to accept their judgments without always applying the same critical examination which he gave to other matters. And, in those days - it is different now - quite a few of the senior men had never visited the territories with the administration of which they were concerned.

On the other hand, the inconsistency of Dr. Drummond Shiels was the predominant feature of his contact with the Palestine question. His mercurial personal sympathies on this issue were so indicative of this factor. Shiels' fervent support for the Zionists and Arabs alternated throughout 1930-1931. He carried little weight in the policy-making processes relating to Palestine, at least. Like Passfield, Shiels frequently was amenable to assessments and policy options formulated and evolved by Colonial Office civil servants. In a remarkably perceptive assessment, Beatrice Webb, Passfield's wife, described Shiels as follows:¹⁵

¹⁴Dr. Drummond Shiels, "Sidney Webb as a Minister," essay in ibid., p. 206.

¹⁵Margaret Cole ed., Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-1932 (London, 1956), cited below as Beatrice Webb's Diaries, entry for December 2, 1929, pp. 232-233.

He is well read and tough-minded...A great contrast to the polished deference of the Colonial Office Staff to the Chief...Unfortunately, D.S.'s opinions, tho' held with a stiff obstinacy, do not show much coherence...

Herbert Sidebotham, a prominent journalist of the day and Zionist sympathizer, viewed Shields in a similar light:¹⁶

...the clumsiness of Mr. Drummond Shields, Under-Secretary of the Colonies, in defending the new policy [of October, 1930, to be discussed below] in the Commons, revealed that there was a complete lack of sympathy in certain parts of the Civil Service with either the original and political, or the later cultural and economic, interpretation of the National Home. This lack of sympathy came out under a Labour Government, presumably because the Labour Ministers were weaker and more dependent on the Civil Servants for their views on foreign and colonial administration.

Meanwhile, a final decision on the ultimate disposition of Chancellor's report was postponed pending advice from Gerald Clauson and Henry Bushe, two departmental officials. Clauson was responsible for League of Nations affairs as a member of the General Division; while Bushe was the Assistant Legal Adviser. Both individuals opposed the suggested revisions of the Palestine Mandate as requested by Chancellor. Clauson stated: "...the Government can find good authority somewhere in the Mandate for either refusing to do [or to do] almost anything it wants & it seems to be that it wd. be a thousand pities to upset the equilibrium." Bushe commented:¹⁷

¹⁶Herbert Sidebotham, Great Britain and Palestine (London, 1937), p. 172.

¹⁷Minutes by Clauson, March 4, 1930 and Bushe, March 6, 1930 CO733/190/77162. Gerald Clauson (b.1891) was the James Mew Arabic Scholar of 1920 at the Colonial Office and a former member of the Middle East Department. He had served as a departmental representative on various British delegations to meetings of the Permanent Mandates Commission since 1926. Henry Bushe (1886-1961) became Legal Adviser to the Colonial Office in 1931.

...The High Commissioner, I know, says that his proposals are only designed to bring the terms into accord with the real meaning of the Balfour Declaration, but obviously, there is going to be some difficulty in alleging that for a great number of years we have misinterpreted that Declaration.

If it is proposed to consider seriously an alteration of the terms, this side of the question ought to be first considered more carefully...indeed, it wd. be desirable to consult the Legal Adviser at the Foreign Office.

The Foreign Office expressed lukewarm interest in even providing unofficial advice on this report. As George Rendel candidly explained to Harold Beckett of the Colonial Office, "more urgent work" prevented a prompt review. However, the interesting feature concerning the Foreign Office views was their unanimity. Foreign Office political officers - in this case - Rendel, Monteagle, and Cadogan, were of the same mind, and, perhaps more interestingly, were in agreement with their counterparts at the Colonial Office in considering the practicability and consequences of an alteration of the Palestine Mandate.¹⁸

William Beckett, the Second Legal Adviser at the Foreign Office, echoed Gerald Clauson's views on this issue. In an opinion written without knowledge of Clauson's comments, Beckett noted:¹⁹

...It is clear that the issues raised belong pre-eminently to the realm of high politics, and not of law

¹⁸Minutes by Rendel, March 22, 1930; Monteagle, February 28, 1930; Cadogan, March 11, 1930. FO371/14485/E1313/44/65. Lord Thomas Monteagle (1887-1946) headed the Foreign Office Eastern Department. With his resignation in August, 1930, George Rendel (b.1889) succeeded him. For one of the few personal accounts of the Palestine question at this time written by an official involved with it, see Sir George William Rendel, The Sword and the Olive (London, 1957), pp. 48 ff. Alexander Cadogan (1884-1968) held a senior appointment as Adviser on League of Nations Affairs. He later served as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office from 1938 to 1946.

¹⁹Minute, March 6, 1930, FO371/14485/E1313/44/65.

...The terms of the Mandate are so elastic that they are certainly capable of being applied in a manner which is consistent with any possible view of...the Balfour Declaration...Consequently my strong impression is that it would not be feasible to go to the League and ask for the amendment of the Mandate on the quasi legal grounds suggested by Sir John Chancellor.

The opinion given by Clauson, as supported independently by William Beckett, significantly influenced the nature of Palestine policy in 1930-1931. This policy, as developed by the Middle East Department, revolved around the reinterpretation of the existing mandate terms to reverse the British obligation to establish the Jewish National Home. Both officials had provided authoritative backing for this policy with their assessments of the mandate terms as being malleable enough to enable almost any interpretation. Armed with their opinions, the Middle East Department embarked on Williams' proposal to actively exploit the land question as a viable alternative to the formal amendment of the Mandate at the League of Nations.

At a departmental meeting held on February 27, 1930, officials began to work for the implementation of this reversal policy. Participants included Clauson, Bushe, Williams, and Harold Beckett. All were civil servants. The consensus of those present accepted Chancellor's assessment of the situation at face value. All agreed that the remaining ingredient required to inaugurate this revised policy was formal substantiation of the High Commissioner's claims.²⁰

²⁰ Minute by Harold Beckett, February 27, 1930, C0733/182/77050/

The events surrounding this episode are indicative of the decision-making process of the Colonial Office during the inter-war period. While the department placed great credence on the assessments of Chancellor, the man on the scene, it gave even greater attention to the views of its officials in London. In assessing the consideration given to this dispatch by Colonial Office officials, it can be observed that the necessity for consistency of policy was an imperative in their thinking. No matter how untenable the Jewish National Home project seemed to civil servants, they retained the notion that an overt alteration in the mandate terms, as recommended by Chancellor, would damage the prestige of the ministry.

Thus, officials were reluctant to take the initiative to drastically alter the fabric of past policy as demanded by Chancellor. While civil servants favoured change, they chose to wait upon events. The 1929 riots and subsequent establishment of the Shaw Commission had provided sufficient break in the status quo of previous policy to enable them to have a chance to alter it. Although extant Colonial Office documentation does not bear out the suggestion that there was a premeditated master plan to change policy, circumstantial evidence suggests that civil servants were waiting for the appropriate moment to amend policy quickly and quietly.

Chancellor's dispatch and the speculation on the nature of the Shaw Commission provided opportunities for officials to give policy suggestions in the guise of objective comment on specific issues. The change in policy, to be evolved in 1930, was based on the land question as raised by Williams in his assessment of the Chancellor dispatch.

Throughout these deliberations, apart from contact on Chancellor's report with the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office operated independently.

Final conclusions were postponed pending the release of the Shaw Commission Report. With this report as confirmation, the Colonial Office envisaged the immediate publication of a white paper based ostensibly on its findings but actually on Williams' plan of action.

The Shaw Commission Report
and its Impact on Policy

When established, the Shaw Commission had been given strict terms of reference limiting it to an examination of the immediate causes of the 1929 Arab riots. However its subsequent report was a criticism of the whole nature of the British commitment to establish the Jewish National Home. This blue book reinterpreted the intent of the Palestine Mandate. Instead of the construction of the Jewish National Home, according to the mandate terms, the Shaw Report preferred its halt. The rationale behind this position was to prevent "apprehensions" among the non-Jewish population.²¹ The Report made no pretensions to provide impartial advice in calling for this drastic shift in British policy towards the Zionists. Recommending substantial political changes for Palestine, the majority of the Commission favoured the eventual grant of Arab self-government on the Iraqi model.²²

²¹Shaw Report, pp. 111-112, 121, 123-124, 162, and 165.

²²Ibid., pp. 124-131.

In dealing with the land question, the Commission asserted that an acute shortage had created unemployment among the Arabs. However, no statistics were furnished to substantiate this point. According to the Commission, this situation had been exacerbated by the nature of Jewish land tenure. The inalienable status of free-hold purchases by the Jewish National Fund was, therefore, attacked. Concluding its evaluation of the land problem, the Report called for an additional inquiry to improve agricultural methods.²³

Assessing the sensitive issue of Jewish immigration, the Commission urged the radical redefinition of the economic absorptive capacity policy on which Jewish immigration was based to limit expansion. The Jewish Agency and the Histadruth, the Jewish labour union and exchange, were castigated for placing immigrant Jews in positions specifically created to justify their presence in accordance with the British-imposed requirement of economic absorptive capacity.²⁴

The Report, moreover, accused the Zionist Executive of breaking the agreement contained in the Churchill White Paper by claiming a share in the administration of the Mandate. The Commission conceded that the Arab Executive had never agreed to it in the first place. To remedy this alleged abuse, the further limitation of Article 4 of the Mandate that had given the Jewish Agency special status was recommended.²⁵

²³Ibid., pp. 113-124.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 97-112.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 136-144.

Investigating the causes of the 1929 riots, the purpose of its inquiry, the Commission concluded that both communities were equally culpable. The Grand Mufti was vindicated of responsibility for having fomented the unrest. On the other hand, chauvinism on the part of prominent Zionists was alleged to have been provocative. The Commission also recommended certain improvements in public security.²⁶

However, not all Commission members concurred. Harry Snell²⁷ issued a minority statement which criticized the major findings of the Report. On the basic issue of the intent of the Mandate, Snell refuted the attacks made against the Jewish National Home and the Jewish Agency. Dealing with the question of the goal of the Mandate, Snell envisaged a bi-national state. Commenting on the land question, he urged the creation of a more comprehensive investigation which would also determine the amount of available land and the number of allegedly evicted Arabs. On the issue of immigration, he opposed any change in policy which might prove unfavourable to the Zionist interest. Evaluating the majority assessment of the disturbances, Snell objected strongly to the vindication of the Mufti. He bluntly accused him of fomenting the disorders. Attacking the criticism of noted Zionists, Snell repudiated the charge that their activities had contributed to the riots.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 42-59 and 82. In reply to a Parliamentary Question concerning the veracity of testimony given by the Mufti before the Shaw Inquiry, Drummond Shiels stated that no action was contemplated to prosecute him for perjury. Commons, April 16, 1930, vol. 237, cols. 2885-2886.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 172-183. Harry Snell (1865-1944) as a Labour M.P. was especially perturbed by the Commission's attack on the Histadruth. Created a peer, he served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India from March, 1931 until the collapse of the Second Labour Government in August, 1931.

"In assessing the reaction of Colonial Office officials to the Report, it can be observed that there was neither doubt as to its general credibility nor objection to its broadened scope. The few qualms that existed were kept within the Colonial Office. For example, O.G.R. Williams wrote that Colonial Office officials privately supported Jewish Agency assertions concerning the active involvement of the Mufti in leading the 1929 riots. However, he recommended that no action should be taken on the grounds that:²⁸

To suggest any doubts as to the soundness of their [the Commissioners'] conclusions on this point in a public statement would, of course, have unfavourable reactions in our negotiations with the Arabs.

The Colonial Office maintained that the terms of reference of the Commission were wide enough to cover the matters reported. Word of the extent of the Shaw Report leaked out prematurely, however. Walter Elliot, a Conservative M.P. and Zionist sympathizer, closely questioned the Prime Minister on this issue.²⁹ In a note drafted to assist in the reply, the Colonial Office claimed that MacDonald's previous Parliamentary statement, to the effect that major political and economic questions lay outside the realm of the investigation, was still valid. On December 23, 1929, Ramsay MacDonald had informed the House of Commons that: "The subject [of major questions of policy] ... is clearly outside the terms of reference of the Shaw Commission."

²⁸ Minute, April 26, 1930, C0733/183/77050/B.

²⁹ Walter Elliot (1888-1958) had been Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland from 1926 to 1929. He later served as Secretary of State for Scotland (1936-1938) and Minister of Health (1938-1940). Following advice from the Colonial Office, the Prime Minister provided Elliot with a vague reply. Commons, March 24, 1930, vol. 237, cols. 27-28.

and cannot be made a part of its report." Despite this clear statement, the Colonial Office commented:³⁰

It is not easy to find a wholly satisfactory reply. What are the major questions of policy? And who is to decide whether the Commission's report does or does not invade that ill-defined province? I submit that the best course is to avoid definition and to keep our hands as free as possible.

The Prime Minister was dissatisfied with the Report. Before publication, he demanded that certain anti-Zionist segments be toned down.³¹ Moreover, he made it quite evident to Passfield that the ultimate implementation of key recommendations depended on his personal consent.³² Privately, Ramsay MacDonald rejected the major findings of the Shaw Inquiry except those relating to public security. His opposition to the Report was so great that he intended to repudiate it following its presentation to the House of Commons. Obtaining an advance copy of this speech, Colonial Office officials prepared drastic amendments on the grounds that the statement as it stood, with the Prime Minister's personal opinions, would embarrass

³⁰ Commons, December 23, 1929, vol. 233, col. 1902. Unsigned memorandum entitled: "Colonial Office Departmental Minutes 19th March, 1930," Premier 1/102.

³¹ Minute by Neville Butler (b.1893), the Prime Minister's Assistant Private Secretary, March 11, 1930, *ibid.* H.G. Vincent (b.1891), the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, immediately contacted J.A.P. Edgcumbe (b.1886), Passfield's Principal Private Secretary, to obtain changes to the draft report on an "urgent" basis. Edgcumbe had served as Private Secretary to Leopold Amery when he was Colonial Secretary from 1924 until 1929. Edgcumbe submitted the amendments to Vincent on March 13, 1930. Edgcumbe to Vincent, letter, March 13, 1930, *ibid.* Basically, the changes involved moderating the attack on the Zionist movement. For example, the final version referred to the "dispossession" as opposed to the "eviction" of Arab farmers by the Jewish Agency. See Shaw Report, p. 120.

³² Ramsay MacDonald to Passfield, letter, March 19, 1930, C0733/183/77050/B.

Britain politically. J.A.P. Edgcumbe claimed that "an attempt has... been made to retain the sense of your wording, without giving such a handle [source of criticism] to the Commission, the Zionists or to the Arabs."³³

In his note to MacDonald with the galley-proofs of the Shaw Report, Passfield had suggested that the main implication of the Report was the necessity for a redefinition of the Mandate as constituting a dual obligation. This element, as opposed to MacDonald's proposed repudiation of the Report itself, set the tone of the subsequent statement of policy which MacDonald made in Parliament on April 3, 1930. While the Prime Minister bowed to Colonial Office pressure on this issue, he clearly did so with the greatest reluctance. This concession was undoubtedly galling to the Prime Minister. Ideologically, Ramsay MacDonald disliked the proposed curtailment of the Jewish National Home project. His 1924 administration had amplified established policy on Palestine. The Labour Party, as were the Liberal and Conservative parties, was unequivocal in its support of Zionist development in Palestine on a gradual basis.³⁴

It should be stressed that Ramsay MacDonald was presiding over a minority government. Keenly aware of the problems that any course of action intended to limit the Jewish National Home could cause his Government, he was anxious to avoid political confrontation. With

³³Edgcumbe to Ramsay MacDonald, note, March 28, 1930, Premier 1/102.

³⁴Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, March 10, 1930, ibid. Commons, April 3, 1930, vol. 237, cols. 1466-1467. For his sympathetic views on the Jewish National Home, see A Socialist in Palestine (London, 1922).

the completion of the Shaw Inquiry, the Prime Minister saw that two options were open to his Government. The first choice was another inquiry; the other, immediate publication of a white paper based on the findings of the Report. In choosing an alternative for his Government, MacDonald was swayed by Lord Balfour, who continued his active interest in Palestine affairs until his death on March 22, 1930. In a letter to The Times of December 29, 1929, Balfour had urged the establishment of an authoritative inquiry to investigate the administration and policies of the Mandate with a view to upholding the British obligation to establish the Jewish National Home. The letter was also signed by David Lloyd George³⁵ and General Jan Smuts.³⁶

To avert a misunderstanding that could have led to the collapse of his Government, the Prime Minister sought the support of the opposition parties for the notion of holding an additional inquiry. This practice was not unprecedented. In November, 1929, Ramsay MacDonald had met with Stanley Baldwin³⁷ and Lloyd George to formulate a mutually acceptable policy intended to grant greater independence to the Dominions.³⁸ Before tabling the Shaw Report, MacDonald conferred with Baldwin, Lloyd George, and Sir Herbert Samuel on the results of the

³⁵As Prime Minister in 1917, David Lloyd George (1863-1945) had fostered the Balfour Declaration. Lloyd George was leader of the Liberal Party.

³⁶General Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1950), former Prime Minister of South Africa, had served in the Imperial Cabinet during the First World War. His views were widely respected.

³⁷Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947), Leader of the Opposition and head of the Conservative Party, had been Prime Minister twice during the 1920's. He later served as Prime Minister for a third time from 1935 until 1937.

³⁸See Beatrice Webb's Diaries, entry for November 18, 1929, p. 229.

Inquiry and his Government's options. All present agreed that further study was necessary to substantiate the economic and political claims of the Shaw Commission.³⁹

Consulting with a reluctant Colonial Office immediately following his meeting with the opposition leaders, Ramsay MacDonald resolved to seek another inquiry. To the dismay of the Colonial Office, he selected General Jan Smuts to conduct a one-man investigation because he believed that Smuts was the man "whose views would carry a maximum of weight."⁴⁰ The Prime Minister's intervention had caught the Middle East Department by surprise. Sir John Shuckburgh miscalculated the Prime Minister's intentions. He had confidently predicted the early publication of a white paper to implement the policy of restricting the Jewish National Home. Shuckburgh did not foresee that Ramsay MacDonald would consult with the opposition to sound out the possibility of a withholding policy for Palestine pending the outcome of an additional inquiry. In view of the Prime Minister's stiff resistance to the Shaw Report, this overconfidence represented a serious misjudgment on Shuckburgh's part; an attitude that was shared at the Colonial Office.⁴¹

Anticipating the immediate publication of a policy statement, the Colonial Office had drafted a background paper for the Cabinet meeting of April 2, 1930 at which British policy in Palestine was to be discussed.⁴² In it, the Middle East Department outlined Britain's

³⁹ See Commons, April 3, 1930, vol. 237, cols. 1466-1467.

⁴⁰ Ramsay MacDonald to Smuts, cable, March 27, 1930, Premier 1/102.

⁴¹ Minutes by Shuckburgh, March 18, 1930; Wilson, March 23, 1930; Bassfield, March 24, 1930. C0733/183/77050/B.

⁴² C.P. 109 (30), dated March 27, 1930, CAB 24/219.

past, present, and future policy towards Palestine. This memorandum was both subtle and invidious. The great emphasis placed by Williams on the interrelated questions of land and immigration was not prominent; the second-to-last paragraph of the report briefly noted a tie between the two. In recommending qualifications to the Churchill White Paper, the Colonial Office merely stated that Article 3 of the Mandate, which dealt with British opposition to "the disappearance or subordination of the Arab population, language, or culture," should be reaffirmed. In addition, the report suggested a reiteration of the principle of economic absorptive capacity with a vague "machinery" to prevent another miscalculation of "excessive immigration" comparable to that of 1925-1926 which had created much Jewish unemployment. The memorandum, it should be noted, neither described the nature of this "miscalculation" nor mentioned that this crisis had resolved itself by 1928.

The Colonial Office was ostensibly non-committal in this Cabinet paper. It used the Shaw Report and impersonally expressed views to advance its policy proposals. The Shaw Commission was cited obviously to promote the impression that the Arabs were suffering grievously because of the Mandate obligation to establish the Jewish National Home: "The report of the Commission... refers to apprehensions entertained by the Arabs..." and "The Commission's report draws attention to the unfortunate position in which agricultural tenants are placed..."

Impersonal remarks, unattributable in nature, were prominent in the rest of the report. These comments were intended to impress the idea that the Palestine Mandate was not operating satisfactorily. For example, statements such as "There has been much recent agitation against the Balfour Declaration" and "Misunderstanding still persists on the subject of the 'special position' accorded under the Mandate to the 'Jewish Agency'..." clearly shrouded actual Colonial Office opinion from the scrutiny of Cabinet.

Having diagnosed the alleged symptoms of the malaise of the Mandate, the Colonial Office went on to offer suggestions to remedy the complaint. This report recommended a reaffirmation of the Balfour Declaration. However, while the draftsmen of this paper wrote that the edifice of the Jewish National Home "...has still to be completed....," they called for the restatement of Arab rights. Moreover the Colonial Office suggested the renewal of constitutional discussions on a legislative council, while conceding that "The Arab representatives refused to accept this [the 1922] proposal, and, by boycotting the elections, prevented its realisation." It should be stressed that no reference was made to the recent Arab about-face on this question. The bluntest comment in the memorandum stated that the Jewish Agency "...have not been, and will not be, admitted to any...share [in the government of Palestine]."

The Colonial Office wanted this paper to serve as the basis of a policy statement to be published immediately after the release of the Shaw Report. At this point, an attempt was made to manipulate the Cabinet into accepting the views expressed in this seemingly innocuous

background document. Departmental officials chose that particular moment to circulate Chancellor's dispatch of January 17, 1930 together with the memorandum to the Cabinet.⁴³ At the Cabinet meeting, Passfield stressed that he wanted a new statement of policy along the lines of the memorandum. The Colonial Secretary assured his colleagues that this statement would amount to a reaffirmation of existing policy with a few minor qualifications. While Passfield was emphatic in his desire for the immediate release of a white paper without further investigation, he did provide terms of reference for an inquiry. In doing so, he was clearly keeping his ministry's position protected by maintaining the initiative for recommending Government policy. Because of their restrictive nature, Passfield's suggested guidelines were aimed at achieving his department's ends in the event of an additional investigation. These proposed terms of reference were:⁴⁴

- (i) The Arab demand for some form of representative institutions;
- (ii) The regulation of immigration;
- (iii) The protection of evicted cultivators.

The fact that Passfield suffered serious set-backs at this meeting is attributable to the influence of Ramsay MacDonald. The Cabinet accepted only those recommendations of the Shaw Report that dealt with police and security. Moreover, it approved the Prime

⁴³C.P. 108 (30), ibid.

⁴⁴Cabinet Conclusions 18 (30), April 2, 1930, CAB 23/63. The minutes of Cabinet meetings were concise. Controversial matters were reported succinctly without any of the drama inherent in them. Indeed, opinions expressed during Cabinet meetings were usually not attributed to particular members. Recorded votes were unheard of. Instead, problems were invariably settled on the basis of consensus.

Minister's proposal for a one-man inquiry, and rejected outright Passfield's objections to this recommendation as well as his restrictive terms of reference for it. Instead, the Cabinet delegated an investigator:⁴⁵

...to visit Palestine, confer with the High Commissioner, and report on the economic questions involved, e.g., Land Settlement, Immigration and Development, and, to such extent as might be deemed desirable, on the political questions in the background.

The selection of this individual was left to Passfield and MacDonald. The Prime Minister originally had favoured the appointment of General Jan Smuts, and had invited him to head this inquiry. However, intense pressure from the Colonial Office convinced him that this choice would prove a liability because of the General's known Zionist sympathies. As a result, MacDonald withdrew his offer to Smuts. After much deliberation, Sir John Hope Simpson, a retired India Office civil servant acquainted with Sir John Shuckburgh, was offered the position. He quickly accepted this invitation and was officially appointed on May 1, 1930.⁴⁶

Prior to the Cabinet meeting, Ramsay MacDonald had consulted with Zionist leaders to inform them of the contents of the Shaw Report and his proposed statement to the House of Commons. Privately, the Colonial Office opposed the March 28th meeting on the

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶ Sir John Hope Simpson (1868-1961) was then Vice-President of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission. His predecessor on the Commission had been Sir John Campbell, the Economic and Financial Adviser to the Colonial Office. Hope Simpson had served as a Liberal M.P. from 1922 to 1924. After his assignment in Palestine, he became a member of the commission that administered Newfoundland following its bankruptcy.

grounds that "the Jews" would leak the report and statement prematurely. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister's initiative proved beneficial. Zionist reaction to the Shaw Report was restrained. Although senior Colonial Office officials did not expect the Zionists "to acquiesce with a good grace,"⁴⁷ Chaim Weizmann kept down the force of Jewish protest. His criticism of the Shaw Report, published in The Times on April 3, 1930, was moderate in tone.

The most significant reaction to the Shaw Report, however, was another letter to The Times, dated April 2, 1930. Its signatories included Malcolm MacDonald, Lord Robert Cecil, Archibald Sinclair,⁴⁸ and John Buchan.⁴⁹ Aside from being the Prime Minister's son, Malcolm MacDonald was a backbench Labour M.P.⁵⁰ Lord Robert Cecil had played a significant role in the formulation of the Balfour Declaration

⁴⁷Minutes by Shuckburgh, March 21, 1930 and Wilson, March 23, 1930, CO733/183/77050/B.

⁴⁸Sir Archibald Sinclair (1890-1970), later Viscount Thurso, was Chief Liberal Whip. Before entering Parliament in 1922, he had been Private Secretary to Winston Churchill, as Colonial Secretary, in 1921-1922. Following the collapse of the Second Labour Government, he held office as Secretary of State for Scotland in 1931-1932.

⁴⁹John Buchan (1875-1940) was a Conservative M.P. As Baron Tweedsmuir, he occupied the post of Governor-General of Canada from 1935 until his death.

⁵⁰First elected to Parliament in 1929, Malcolm MacDonald (b.1901) became Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Dominions in 1931, with the formation of his father's First National Government. His subsequent offices included appointments as Secretary of State for the Dominions (1935-1938), Secretary of State for the Colonies (1935; 1938-1939), Governor-General of Malaya, Singapore, and North Borneo (1946-1948), and Governor of Kenya (1963).

as Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in 1917.⁵¹

All had expressed misgivings and unease over the findings of the Shaw Commission: While Cecil, Sinclair, and Buchan had little influence, Malcolm MacDonald possessed great power as the Prime Minister's son and mentor, at least on Palestine affairs. This letter can be said to mark the debut of Malcolm MacDonald in shaping British policy in Palestine during 1930-1931. Throughout this period, opposing forces attempted to gain the favour of Ramsay MacDonald in the formulation and implementation of policy in Palestine. While the anti-Zionists of the Colonial Office were marshaled behind Passfield, the Zionists now had a champion in the person of Malcolm MacDonald.⁵²

⁵¹Lord Robert Cecil (1864-1958) had subsequently been appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1918), Minister of Blockade (1916-1918), Lord Privy Seal (1923-1924), and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1924-1927).

⁵²The active involvement of Malcolm MacDonald in an issue of concern to the Colonial Office was not unprecedented. In 1929, MacDonald had enabled Dr. Joseph Oldham (1874-1969), Secretary of the International Missionary Council, and Lord Frederick Lugard (1858-1945), a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission and former British Colonial Governor, to lobby the Prime Minister on the issue of native rights in East Africa. Oldham and Lugard, and Malcolm MacDonald for that matter, were interested in the welfare of the Africans. See Robert G. Gregory, "Sydney Webb and East Africa, Labour's Experiment with the Doctrine of Native Paramountcy," University of California Publications in History, Vol. 72 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), pp. 98 ff. See also Margery Perham, Lugard (London, 1960), vol. 2, pp. 687 ff.

To complicate matters, an Arab delegation from Palestine, led personally by the Mufti, arrived in London on March 30, 1930.⁵³ Basically, the Arabs had come to lobby for the abrogation of the Balfour Declaration, the establishment of parliamentary government, and the end of Jewish immigration. Colonial Office policy towards this group focused on the conciliation of all Arab demands, except one: the Middle East Department would not allow the repudiation of the Balfour Declaration.

On May 1, 2, and 6, three formal meetings took place between British officials and the full Arab delegation.⁵⁴ These sessions were characterized by formlessness. There were no agendas for the three encounters. Discussion, as a result, was diffuse. In addition to the repudiation of the Balfour Declaration, Arab leaders called for the immediate halt of Jewish immigration, the imposition of strict controls on land transfers, the speedy establishment of a legislative council on the 1922 model, and the removal of Norman Bentwich, a Jew, from his post as Attorney-General of Palestine.⁵⁵ The mood of the

⁵³ Upon their arrival in London, members of the Arab delegation were greeted by the National League, the pressure group dominated by English sympathizers of the Arab cause. During the stay of the delegation, the National League organized a number of functions to publicize the Arab position. See The Times, March 31, April 4, and April 11, 1930.

⁵⁴ A verbatim account of these meetings is available only in the Premier papers. Premier 1/102.

⁵⁵ Norman Bentwich (1883-1971) was forcibly retired from this position in 1931 at Passfield's insistence. See C.P. 67 (31), dated March 12, 1931, CAB 24/220. In securing the dismissal of Bentwich, Passfield encountered resistance from his Cabinet colleagues. Cabinet meetings of March 18, March 31, April 15, and April 22, 1931. Cabinet Conclusions 18 (31), 21 (31), 22 (31) and 24 (31), CAB 23/66.

Arab delegation was truculent. Encouraged by the Mufti, who dominated the proceedings, the Arabs showed no readiness to tolerate the Jewish community under any conditions.

British response to this extreme position was restrained. Only the Prime Minister, who was present at the first two meetings, reacted in an outspoken manner to the Arabs' provocative demands and inflammatory manner of presenting them. Apart from its firm refusal to consider the abrogation of the Balfour Declaration, the British delegation maintained a non-committal posture on the four other principal Arab points. Passfield informed the Arabs that these demands would be considered by the Colonial Office, and stated that their objections to Jewish immigration would be taken into account in establishing future Jewish quotas.

The talks failed to resolve the Palestine problem mainly because the Arabs refused to moderate their hardline position that called for the outright termination of the Jewish National Home. These discussions were viewed as futile by the Colonial Office. Passfield was irritated by the whole affair, and commented: "I do not think it is of any use seeing the Arabs again; nor is there now any idea of getting them to meet Dr. Weizmann or other Jews. They are not in that state of mind." The failure of these meetings became public knowledge when the Colonial Office was forced to refute the provocative statement issued to the press by the Arab delegation. However, despite these rebuffs, the Colonial Office continued its efforts to placate the Arabs.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Minutes by Passfield, May 8, 1930 and Shuckburgh, May 9, 1930, G0733/191/77253. Both communiqués were published in The Times on May 14, 1930.

A Second White Paper And a
Colonial Office Blunder

The Colonial Office incorporated the memorandum of future policy, presented to Cabinet on April 2, 1930, into the form of a draft statement of the British position in Palestine for the Permanent Mandates Commission. This proposed paper was intended to reveal past, present, and future British policy to the Mandates Commission.⁵⁷ It was a toned-down and somewhat ambiguous elaboration of the policy outline rejected by Cabinet on April 2, 1930. Criticism of Arab intransigence as an impediment to the rapprochement between the two communities was omitted. Mention of the unreasonable position of the Arab delegation that had been deplored publicly by the Colonial Office was avoided entirely. While the Prime Minister's speech on the Shaw Report of April 3, 1930 was reproduced in the draft statement, elements potentially restrictive to the Jewish National Home were also included. The Colonial Office policy of conciliation was to be continued.

⁵⁷C.P. 151 (30), dated May 5, 1930, CAB 24/219.

The ratification of key observations made by the Shaw Commission was advocated in the draft statement. On the paramount issues of land and immigration, the acceptance by the Government of the Commission's criticism of the economic absorptive capacity basis for Jewish immigration was urged. However, with reference to the pending Hope Simpson inquiry, the acceptance of Snell's minority proposal for a comprehensive investigation of land, immigration, and development was suggested. Support for the Inquiry's criticism of the position of the Histadruth in the selection of Jewish immigrants was recommended with the comment: "His Majesty's Government are making inquiries with regard to the [Shaw Commission] statement...that the selection of immigrants under the Labour Schedule ought not to be entrusted to the General Federation of Jewish Labour." The Labour Schedule referred to was a class of immigration established regularly by the Government of Palestine on the basis of the economic absorptive capacity guideline. Because the bulk of Jewish immigrants to date had been admitted to Palestine under this category, the Labour Schedule was crucial to the Jewish National Home project.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Between 1923, the first full year of the operation of the economic absorptive capacity policy, and 1929, 40,557 of the 77,299 Jews and their dependents who immigrated to Palestine were admitted under the Labour Schedule. This constituted 52.5% of the level of Jewish immigration for that period. Other categories existed for the admission of the independently wealthy, members of liberal professions, and persons with capital. See Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report [S] by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Year [S] 1923 to 1929 [inclusive], Colonial Nos. 5, 12, 20, 26, 31, 40, and 47 (London, 1924-1930).

Dealing with the Shaw Commission's request for a review of the constitutional question, the draft white paper alluded to the possible establishment of a modified legislative council without substantive powers such as jurisdiction in land and immigration matters. The draft statement included the proposed acceptance by the British Government of the Commission's suggestion to publish "a clear statement of policy" to safeguard the rights of non-Jews and to provide more definite guidance to the Palestine Government "on such vital issues as land and immigration." This future pronouncement was characterized in the draft paper as "a further and more explicit statement of policy...." In addition to land, immigration, and development policy, which was to be determined on the basis of Hope Simpson's inquiry, as well as reinforcement of the rights of non-Jews, this statement was to contain an affirmation of the Shaw Commission's "recommendations relating to the functions of the Zionist Organization and the Palestine Zionist Executive."

Discussing the findings of the Shaw Commission on the causes of the 1929 Arab riots, the draft white paper urged the acceptance of its assessments on the nature of the outbreak and the Zionist complaints against the Mufti. This proposed policy statement downplayed Harry Snell's reservations against the vindication of the Mufti from responsibility for the disturbances, as advocated by the majority of the Commission. In addition, it castigated Snell's critical comments on the acquittal of Moslem religious officials "of all but the slightest blame" for creating irritations against the Jews at the

Western Wall. The paper contained a specific reiteration of the Shaw Commission's view that the responsibility for the controversy around the Wall was attributable equally to Jews and Moslems.

This draft was submitted to the Prime Minister for his approval on May 7, 1930. MacDonald was critical of the section that attacked Snell's reservations about the Shaw Report, and commented that its inclusion required Cabinet approval. At its meeting of May 14, 1930, the Cabinet approved the draft statement without change, and confirmed its status as a Parliamentary paper. In addition, the Cabinet gave the Prime Minister forty-eight hours discretion to make unlimited revisions and additions. However, Ramsay MacDonald did not use this authority.⁵⁹

Potentially adverse reaction on the part of the Zionists to this White Paper was diverted by a Colonial Office blunder that became a source of embarrassment to the Prime Minister. This faux-pas related to the suspension of the Jewish Labour Schedule.

The Colonial Office was still anxious to placate the Arab leaders of Palestine in spite of their recent performance in London. Immediately following the final session, Passfield, at the suggestion of his officials, requested the High Commissioner to suspend granting future immigration quotas of this category to Jews. Although this decision was motivated by a desire to conciliate the Arabs, it was justified on the basis of the Shaw Report. It should be noted that no

⁵⁹Cabinet Conclusions 27.(30), May 14, 1930, CAB 23/63. The White Paper was released on May 27, 1930. Palestine. Statement with regard to British Policy, Cmd. 3582 (London, 1930).

consultations took place between the High Commissioner and the Colonial Secretary before the implementation of this course of action.

In reply to Passfield's wire, Chancellor cabled that he had just approved the new Labour Schedule, valid until September, 1930, and added that this suspension was not economically justified. As can be expected, Chancellor's unexpected decision created consternation at the Colonial Office. Officials were particularly upset because Chancellor had broken with precedent by not consulting with Passfield on this schedule. They believed that the High Commissioner had exceeded his authority on this occasion. Chancellor undoubtedly felt that he merely had exercised the vast discretionary power delegated to him by the British Government.⁶⁰

While the approval of the Colonial Secretary to immigration proposals may have been nominal in the past, Harold Beckett did not regard this situation as routine, and minuted: "...the High Commissioner by taking this action now, has put us in a very difficult position tactically, and it is also open to doubt whether his decision can be justified...." Beckett wondered whether Chancellor should be told to suspend the new schedule pending further explanation for his action. Williams, on the other hand, recommended a cancellation of "at least some of the schedule...on the grounds that the question of economic capacity is really one of the matters on which we await the views of Sir John Hope Simpson as an independent expert." Shuckburgh concurred with both assessments. He approved Beckett's suggestion to

⁶⁰Passfield to Chancellor, cable, May 6, 1930; Chancellor to Passfield, cable, May 7, 1930. CO733/188/77113/I.

instruct Chancellor by wire "...to hold up all certificates that have not actually been issued..." pending a full report by mail. While Sir Samuel Wilson could not understand why Chancellor had not obtained Passfield's consent, he seconded Shuckburgh's proposed action. Passfield agreed to this advice, characteristically, without comment.⁶¹

Passfield's instructions countermanding the distribution of certificates were cabled to Chancellor on May 13, 1930. However, Chancellor had informed the Jewish Agency's Palestine Executive of the approval of 2,350 certificates under the Labour Schedule on May 12, 1930. Upon receipt of Passfield's telegram, Chancellor promptly suspended the entire immigration quota granted the previous day. This measure effectively halted Jewish immigration to Palestine.⁶² A rather upset David Ben Gurion, then a Labour Zionist leader in Palestine, wired Shelomo Kaplansky, Poale Zion's delegate in London, to notify the British Labour Party of this withdrawal. In times of crisis, the Labour-Zionist affiliate of the British Labour Party, Poale Zion, frequently lobbied the Second Labour Government through the Labour Party organization at Transport House to redress grievances concerning the administration of the Palestine Mandate on the basis of ideological solidarity. J.H. Middleton, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Party, sent Passfield a copy of Ben Gurion's telegram on May 16, 1930.⁶³

⁶¹Minutes by Harold Beckett, May 9, 1930; Williams, May 9, 1930; Shuckburgh, May 9, 1930; Wilson, May 10, 1930; Passfield, May 12, 1930. Ibid.

⁶²Passfield to Chancellor, cable, May 13, 1930; Chancellor to Shuckburgh, letter, May 14, 1930. Ibid.

⁶³Ben Gurion to Kaplansky, cable, May 15, 1930; Middleton to Passfield, letter, May 16, 1930. Ibid. Ben Gurion (1886-1973) served as the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

The Jewish Agency in London was appalled by this shift in policy, especially as it had just been misinformed on this issue. The Prime Minister had met with a Zionist delegation on May 12, 1930; the very day that Passfield approved the cancellation of permits and that Chancellor granted a new immigration quota. Shuckburgh's relevant minute on this meeting indicates that the Zionists had questioned the possibility of the suspension of Jewish immigration to Palestine. The official, and unattributed, reply was to the effect that the High Commissioner was still being consulted on this issue.⁶⁴

Immediately following the suspension of Jewish immigration, Ramsay MacDonald was unaware of any tension between the Colonial Office and Sir John Chancellor or between the Colonial Office and the Zionists. However, on May 17, 1930, Ramsay MacDonald was confronted with a letter of protest from Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a copy of his formal letter to Sir Samuel Wilson, and a note from Middleton at Transport House enclosing the text of Ben Gurion's telegram. Chaim Weizmann termed the withdrawal of the certificates as "tantamount to a suspension of the Mandate," and stated his belief that the gravity of the situation merited a personal interview. Dr. Weizmann's letter to Wilson also condemned the suspension of the permits as a blow "to the letter and spirit of the Mandate and will be considered so by the Jewish People."

⁶⁴Minute, May 13, 1930, ibid. It should be noted that relations between the Jewish Agency and Colonial Office were then extremely strained. Passfield's failure to arrange an interview between Dr. Weizmann and Hope Simpson, as promised, had created this tension. See N.A. Rose, The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929-1939 (London, 1973), pp. 8-9.

J.H. Middleton's covering letter summarized the circumstances in which he had been requested to transmit Ben Gurion's protest on behalf of Labour Zionism.⁶⁵

Mystified by this set of correspondence, Ramsay MacDonald's extant written comment is: "Find out what has been done."⁶⁶ The Prime Minister had been awaiting the outcome of the special consultations that were promised the Arab delegation on May 2, 1930 pending a possible suspension of immigration. Meanwhile, Dr. Weizmann sent Malcolm MacDonald a letter requesting his intervention to obtain an interview with his father. Weizmann also wanted to meet Malcolm MacDonald. Dr. Weizmann wrote that he intended to resign in protest. However, as he was "...certain that the P.M. is not aware of the action of the C.O.," he wanted an opportunity to inform Ramsay MacDonald of the situation before actually resigning. The implication of Weizmann's letter was that only Ramsay MacDonald's personal intervention could remedy this situation which was "...contrary to the spirit of our last conference...."⁶⁷

An explanatory memorandum was sent to the Prime Minister on May 19th. Blame for this embarrassing situation was attributed solely to Chancellor on the grounds that he had exceeded his authority. The rationale for Passfield's decision was given as doubt expressed by the Shaw Commission as to the absorptive capacity of Palestine. This

⁶⁵Weizmann to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, May 16, 1930; Weizmann to Wilson, letter, May 16, 1930. Premier 1/102.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Weizmann to Malcolm MacDonald, letter, May 17, 1930, ibid.

justification is noteworthy as Ramsay MacDonald and his Cabinet had repudiated this very aspect of the Shaw Report scarcely three weeks before. The Prime Minister sought Colonial Office advice on whether he should grant Dr. Weizmann an interview as suggested by his son. Colonial Office resentment was rife. At first, Passfield reluctantly agreed to the proposed meeting. However, the Colonial Secretary suddenly reversed himself. Neville Butler, one of the Prime Minister's private secretaries, reported that he summarized both differing views and that "the Prime Minister took Malcolm's."⁶⁸ Passfield's opposition was so adamant that he refused to allow the Colonial Office, the official British liaison body with the Jewish Agency, to issue an invitation to Dr. Weizmann to meet with Ramsay MacDonald.

Such an encounter never occurred. Told of the Prime Minister's predicament by Malcolm MacDonald on May 20, 1920, Dr. Weizmann decided not to press the issue of a meeting further. In a letter to Malcolm MacDonald, however, the Zionist leader privately expressed his reservations concerning the capacity of the Colonial Office to administer the Palestine Mandate in an even-handed manner:⁶⁹

...If there were real co-operation between the Government and ourselves, difficulties such as the present would not arise, or, if they did arise, could be put right before they got out of hand. In the past I have often enough defended acts of the British Government before my own people, and have had to face many a storm over things for which I could hardly have been expected to assume responsibility. I did so for the sake of the policy of co-operation. But the spirit of co-operation...does not exist in the Colonial Office at present. They not only place us constantly before faits accomplis, but they do so, if you will allow me to say so, to your own father...

⁶⁸Minute, May 23, 1930, ibid.

⁶⁹Weizmann to Malcolm MacDonald, letter, May 23, 1930, cited in Leonard Stein, Weizmann and England (London, 1964), pp. 18 and 19.

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister was concerned by the controversy aroused by the suspension of the Labour Schedule. Searching for a means by which to extricate himself from Zionist and Parliamentary pressure against this action, he was impressed by Dr. Weizmann's suggestion that Hope Simpson should conduct an immediate study of immigration prior to his inquiry. Malcolm MacDonald was delegated by his father to present this proposal to Dr. Shiels. Noting that "The Prime Minister was very favourably struck by this suggestion," Malcolm MacDonald requested Shiels to "consider it carefully." Despite the emphatic nature of this request, senior officials rejected Weizmann's plan outright. Sir Samuel Wilson not only opposed it on the grounds that such action would delay Hope Simpson's inquiry, but also condemned this proposal on the premise that its implementation would constitute a victory for Jewish pressure tactics. Wilson's instructions for the transmission of this suggestion to Hope Simpson indicate that the Colonial Office did not intend to present it in favourable terms. Hope Simpson opposed this idea. The Prime Minister accepted his reservations, and did not press the issue.⁷⁰

During this dispute between the Prime Minister and the Colonial Office, General Jan Smuts intervened. In a cable to Passfield, he took issue with the immigration suspension, and requested a "statement of facts and reassurance regarding future policy."⁷¹ This wire was not referred to Ramsay MacDonald. Instead, it was dealt with exclusively

⁷⁰Malcolm MacDonald to Shiels, letter, May 22, 1930; minute by Wilson, May 23, 1930. C0733/188/77113/I.

⁷¹Smuts to Passfield, cable, May 25, 1930, ibid. The cable had been addressed to Passfield in his capacity of Secretary of State for the Dominions.

in the Colonial and Dominion Offices. The reluctance on the part of officials and politicians to circulate this message to the Prime Minister can be attributed to their fear of Smuts' influence upon him. It appears that they were concerned that MacDonald would be encouraged to take a firmer stand on the immigration suspension issue and possibly demand its removal. There is no doubt that he had the greatest respect for Smuts. Impressed by Smuts' recent letter to The Times, Ramsay MacDonald had rejected the Colonial Office attempt to establish an anti-Zionist policy with the publication of the Shaw Report. Instead, the Prime Minister had found his proposal for an additional inquiry so appealing that MacDonald urged his nomination as investigator. The Colonial Office had just barely succeeded in preventing this appointment.

In responding to Smuts' telegram, the Middle East Department resorted to a low-key approach. Departmental officials replied to it as if it were a general inquiry concerning British policy from a prominent leader of one of the Dominions. An explanatory message was routinely dispatched to the six Dominions to justify the suspension. Noting that Hope Simpson had been appointed to investigate land settlement, immigration, and development, the circular stated that pending the outcome of his findings "further arrivals of immigrants in certain categories should be restricted." The telegram assured the Dominions that "No certificates have been cancelled...." These comments were misleading as the most important classification of Jewish immigration had, in fact, been suspended indefinitely.⁷²

⁷²Circular telegram No. 31, May 28, 1930, ibid.

CHAPTER 2

COLONIAL OFFICE ACTIVITY:

SUMMER, 1930

A Controversy in Geneva

The position of Palestine as a Mandate was a source of exasperation to the Colonial Office. British accountability for the administration of Palestine was viewed generally as a nuisance especially whenever the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations took an interest in closely examining a territory under its jurisdiction. After the 1929 Arab riots, the League Council had called for a special session of the Permanent Mandates Commission to examine this unrest. Originally scheduled for March, 1930, the meeting had been postponed by the Commission in February until June, 1930, to enable an evaluation of the Shaw Report to be made. At the request of the Commission, the May, 1930 Policy Statement had been prepared as a background paper to reveal British intentions regarding Palestine at this meeting.

Meanwhile, the Jewish Agency unexpectedly submitted a detailed refutation of the Shaw Report on May 26th for dispatch to the Permanent Mandates Commission, according to protocol.¹ Colonial Office officials

¹Jewish Agency, Memorandum on the "Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929," by Leonard J. Stein (London, May, 1930).

were chagrined by this document. T.I.K. Lloyd, a senior civil servant and Secretary to the Shaw Commission, considered it "a restatement of the Jewish case presented to the Shaw Commission." He added: "...in my opinion, [the paper] puts that case more clearly and more logically than it was put during the proceedings in Jerusalem."² The only substantive recommendation on this report was that Harry Luke, Chief Secretary and Acting High Commissioner of Palestine at the time of the 1929 riots, appear before the Commission to refute the Jewish Agency brief.³

Great Britain was represented at the Seventeenth Extraordinary Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission by Dr. Drummond Shiels, Harry Luke, T.I.K. Lloyd and Gerald Clauson. The British delegation weathered an intense attack from the Commission. Throughout the two-week session, the Commission closely examined the disturbances of 1929 as well as aspects of British policy in Palestine. Shiels, Luke,

²Memorandum by Lloyd, May 29, 1930. C0733/193/77271. Lloyd (1896-1968) served as Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1947 to 1956, and presided over the termination of the Palestine Mandate in 1948.

³Minute by Williams, May 30, 1930, *ibid.* Harry Luke (1884-1969) was strongly opposed to the Jewish National Home. See Sir Harry Luke, Cities and Men: an Autobiography (London, 1956), vol. 2, pp. 202 ff. and vol. 3, pp. 1-27. Chaim Weizmann considered the appointment of Luke as a British delegate to have constituted a "'studied insult'" because of his known antipathy towards Zionism. See Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-11. Luke was transferred to Malta, effective July, 1930, to become Lieutenant-Governor.

and Lloyd were thoroughly cross-examined by all members of this body.⁴ Dealing with the 1929 riots, the Commission took an unfavourable view of the Shaw Report, and suggested that British negligence had contributed to the unrest. The importance of the land and immigration questions was recognized by the Commission. The May, 1930 immigration suspension was closely scrutinized. In addition, questions on land transfers indicate that most Commissioners were aware of the correlation between Jewish immigration and the availability of land. In response to astute Commission comments that the British Government intended to halt the progress of the Jewish National Home, Shiels disingenuously stated:⁵

I want to say quite clearly and definitely that there is no new policy; there is no secret to be disclosed, and that the British Government stands to-day where it did when it accepted the Mandate, and its policy is the same.

Only one official assessment written at the time is available. Extant in the Premier papers, this memorandum was prepared by T.I.K. Lloyd. It ventilated Lloyd's fury over proceedings in Geneva.

⁴The Permanent Mandates Commission was a standing committee of the League of Nations composed of eleven members from a variety of nations. Its members included the Marquis Theodoli (Italy) as Chairman, D.F.W. Van Rees (Netherlands) as Vice-Chairman, Miss V. Dannevig (Norway), Lord F. Lugard (Britain), Martel Merlin (France), Camille Orts (Belgium), Leopoldo Palacios (Spain), the Count de Penha Garcia (Portugal), William E. Rappard (Switzerland), Dr. H. Ruppel (Germany), and N.M. Sakenobe (Japan). Of the eleven members, Van Rees, Lugard, and Merlin had served as colonial administrators with their respective governments. Because the Commission lacked the authority to visit the mandates under its jurisdiction, it conducted its reviews exclusively in Geneva.

⁵Eleventh Meeting, June 9, 1930, League of Nations, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Seventeenth (Extraordinary) Session held at Geneva from June 3rd to 21st, 1930, including the Report of the Commission to the Council and Comments by the Mandatory Power, Official No. C.355.M.147.1930.VI (Geneva, 1930), cited below as P.M.C. Minutes, p. 85.

In the catalogue of events that angered him most, the first was, interestingly enough, the role of Dr. Chaim Weizmann in Geneva. At a meeting with Dr. Shiels, Weizmann evidently requested a statement to the Commission by the British delegation that would reassure Zionist interests. This proposal was rejected. Lloyd, in addition, attacked an observation critical of the Shaw Report made by Van Rees, noting that it was "clearly based on the Zionist Organisation's memo to the League of Nations." It is evident that Lloyd viewed the events in Geneva not only as strong criticism of the Shaw Report but also as a forceful attack against the Palestine Administration. However, Lloyd held out hope for the British position by writing that a unanimous report would be unlikely, given the existence of anti-Zionist members of the Commission. An anonymous marginal comment on the Prime Minister's copy of this report refuted this assertion by stating: "But they have."⁶

This faulty assessment was symptomatic of the myopia of British officials in dealing with the Seventeenth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission. Not only did they fail to foresee the severe mauling received by the British delegation at the hands of the Commissioners; but also they misread the outcome of their deliberations on the British case. Meanwhile, at Number 10 Downing Street,

⁶This report, dated June 12, 1930, was sent to the Prime Minister on July 8, 1930. Premier 1/102. Lloyd presented the Commission with a rebuttal that was prepared in Geneva at the time of the session. See "Comments on the Statement Made by M. Van Rees at the Fifth Meeting of the Seventeenth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission in Regard to the General Conclusions of the Shaw Commission," Memorandum by Mr. Lloyd (Accredited Representative), C.P.M. 1037, Annex 3, P.M.C. Minutes, pp. 126-128.

Malcolm MacDonald informed his father that Lloyd's assessment was biased primarily because of his association with the Shaw Commission. Moreover, he questioned the extent to which Shiels had committed the British Government by pointing to an extract of Lloyd's brief that stated: "Dr. Shiels went through the findings paragraph by paragraph and indicated in regard to each whether and if so to what extent H.M.G. accepted it."⁷

Galley-proofs of the Commission's report were received by the Colonial Office in mid-July. The report was highly critical of the operation of the Mandate. Rejecting the major findings of the Shaw Commission, the Permanent Mandates Commission accused the British Government of negligence in permitting the disturbances to occur. Characterizing the role of the Government of Palestine in the establishment of the Jewish National Home as inactive, the Commission urged it to participate in this project. The Commission strongly opposed the contemplated introduction of a legislative council, asserting that the acceptance of the Mandate by the Arab leadership of Palestine was a prerequisite for such action. The Commission bluntly stated that, since such an eventuality was so unlikely in the short term, the British Government should maintain direct rule over Palestine. In addition, the Commission warned the British Government against adopting a policy with the aim of "...crystallising the Jewish National Home at its present stage of development...." This comment was most significant as the Colonial Office was planning this very course of action.

⁷Minute by Butler, July 16, 1930, Premier 1/102. This extract referred to Shiels' appearance at the June 6, 1930 morning meeting of the Commission.

League procedures permitted mandatory powers to present supplementary briefs to refute findings of the Mandates Commission prior to the publication of its official report on a particular session. This right of reply had never been exercised up to this point. Working with galley-proofs of the Commission's report, however, the Colonial Office prepared a reply. Departmental officials were incensed by the report. A comment by Gerald Clauson was indicative of the ministry's reaction: "Broadly speaking, the Report is in places a damaging and I think a rather vicious attack on the British Government. The general inspiration is clearly Jewish...." Sir Samuel Wilson concurred with Clauson's minute by describing his comments as "a clear summary of the Report which is clearly pro-Jewish," and approved his recommendation that a drafting committee be established to prepare a rebuttal. Shiels was in agreement with Wilson on his proposed action.⁸

The critical tone of the report upset Ramsay MacDonald, as the following extract from the Cabinet Conclusions of July 28, 1930 indicates: "The Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that he had seen a proof of the Report of the Mandates Commission, which was not pleasant reading."⁹ At the following session, the Colonial Office rebuttal was

⁸ Minutes by Clauson, July 10, 1930; Wilson, July 17, 1930; and Shiels, July 17, 1930. CO733/193/77368/1. Shiels disputed Clauson's comment by remarking that the Commission had treated Arabs and Jews equally as it had appeared more interested in attacking the British Government. Undated marginal comment on Clauson's minute.

⁹ Cabinet Conclusions 45 (30); CAB 23/64.

considered and approved by Cabinet.¹⁰ Curiously enough, the unprecedented nature of the reply was not raised at this or at the previous meeting.

Instead, the rather low-key minutes state:

In the course of the discussion it was pointed out that the Colonial Office comments took a line antagonistic to and critical of the Report of the Permanent Mandates Commission, but in the circumstances this was deemed unavoidable.

Bowing to a complaint of overwork voiced by Arthur Henderson at the previous meeting, the Cabinet, in addition, agreed to send Shiels to defend the actions of the British Government in Palestine before the League Council where the report of the Commission would be considered.

Moreover, another sub-committee on Palestine was reconstituted to:

...meet during the Recess to consider the policy of the Government and the best way of handling the situation in regard to the application of the Balfour Note and the Palestine Mandate...

Members of this body included Passfield; Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer; J.H. Thomas, Dominions Secretary; Lord Thomson, Air Minister; and Thomas Shaw, War Minister. A notable and inexplicable omission from this sub-committee was Arthur Henderson, who had been appointed to the previously inoperative version of this committee. He was absent from the Cabinet meeting of July 30, 1930.

This sub-committee had a profound effect in determining policy for Palestine.¹¹

¹⁰The draft reply was presented to Cabinet as C.P. 278 (30), dated July 29, 1930, CAB 24/214. Cabinet Conclusions 46 (30), July 30, 1930, CAB 23/64. The British rebuttal was published in P.M.C. Minutes, pp. 148-154.

¹¹Following the release of the Shaw Report, a committee composed of the Foreign Secretary, the War Minister, and the Air Minister had been appointed "to assist" the Colonial Secretary in the development of Government policy for Palestine. Cabinet Conclusions 18 (30), April 2, 1930, CAB 23/63. This committee had never met.

Hjalmar Procopé, Foreign Minister of Finland, had been appointed rapporteur to write an evaluation of the Commission review for the League Council. With the presentation of an official British rebuttal, Procopé faced the unprecedented task of assessing both documents to guide the League Council in its deliberations. The fact that Britain had chosen to exercise this right of reply was considered "bad tempered" among League circles in Geneva.¹² With the release of the Commission report and the British reply on August 26th, a sensation was created in Geneva because of the unusual bluntness of both documents.¹³ The New York Times observed widespread disappointment at the Palais des Nations because of the harsh British response to the Commission report, especially since it had come from a Labour Government.¹⁴ This dispatch went on to note that this stiff reaction had exacerbated the inherent weakness of the League to operate as a credible international body on the basis of moral suasion.

Elaborating on the theme of this news item, it can be observed that the Labour Government patently had ignored its own ideological policy with its hard-hitting response to the Commission report. According to Labour and the Nation, the Labour Party manifesto published in 1928, a future Labour Government "...will co-operate cordially with

¹²The New York Times, August 13, 1930.

¹³Ibid., August 31, 1930. The New York Times based this report on leaked information carried in The Daily Telegraph, London, August 26, 1930. The official documents had been scheduled to be released concurrently with the League Council's deliberation of the Palestine question in September. The Daily Telegraph had also disclosed the text of the Commission's report prematurely. See news item based on The Daily Telegraph, July 10, 1930, The New York Times, July 11, 1930.

¹⁴The New York Times, August 31, 1930.

the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations and will make every effort to strengthen and extend its authority."¹⁵ This was not the only breach of principle committed by the Second Labour Government. Throughout the 1930-1931 period, Labour policy on Palestine, at least, tended to be malleable. Despite intense pressure from the British Government, Procopé's brief vindicated the Commission report. Indeed, he urged the League Council to request Britain to follow all of the recommendations of the Mandates Commission.¹⁶

When Procopé's memorandum was presented, Arthur Henderson staged a démarche over this issue before the League Council. This move was obviously intended to avert a crisis in Geneva. Had the Foreign Secretary not backed down, the reports of the Commission and the British Government - together with Procopé's comments and resolution - would have been referred to the League Council for adjudication. The British Government faced the serious prospect of international humiliation at the hands of the League Council on account of Procopé's unfavourable report. Therefore, denying emphatically that the British Government

¹⁵The Labour Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Labour and the Nation (London, n.d. [1928]), p. 51. The failure of the Second Labour Government to implement its election platform was by no means restricted to its administration of international relations. Professor G.D.H. Cole has written: "The Labour Government, of 1929-31 had never attempted to apply a constructive socialist policy, or even to follow the mild precepts of Labour and the Nation which dealt with social reform and with employment policy." See A History of the Labour Party from 1914 (London, 1948), p. 258.

¹⁶The New York Times, September 7, 1930. Procopé's report, C.438.1931.VI, dated August 23, 1930, had also been disclosed prematurely. The Finnish Foreign Minister had attached a resolution for consideration by the League Council that recommended the unconditional acceptance of the Commission's report.

intended "crystallising" the Jewish National Home, Henderson not only accepted the two League reports; but he also stated that the Commission had a proper duty to criticize mandatory powers.¹⁷ This episode was seen as:¹⁸

...a complete victory for the Commission...establishing a precedent that not only increases the prestige of the Mandates Commission but will make it much easier for the League to deal with the great powers on all matters.

¹⁷The Times, September 9, 1930. The Council meeting took place on September 8, 1930.

¹⁸The New York Times, September 9, 1930. Drummond Shiels had been appointed by the Cabinet to defend British interests in Palestine before the League Council. However, to salvage British prestige, Henderson took over this task on the spot..

Three Pressing Problems and Two
Important Meetings

Three related political issues, one of which constituted a legacy from the First World War, and two significant events represent additional problems that require examination. The three questions involve wartime pledges to the Arabs, British recognition of the reconstituted Jewish Agency, and the proposed unification of the administration of British interests in the Middle East under the Foreign Office. The two additional events of note were the Jewish Agency and Zionist Organization meetings in Berlin of August 26-28, 1930. While these questions and events are diffuse, the one feature that unifies them is their relevance to Palestine.

The problem of the wartime pledges in the McMahon Correspondence emerged as the result of close Parliamentary questions. Sir John Chancellor had cited this exchange of letters as one of the reasons for the policy proposed in his dispatch of January 17, 1930. Because of its relevance to the Palestine question and the Moslem religion, this correspondence had remained secret on account of its extremely sensitive nature.

Dr. Shiels had a difficult time in dealing with several Parliamentary questions and one debate on this issue. Because the Arab copy of this correspondence was extant, some M.P.'s, particularly those sympathetic with the Arab cause, had a strong inkling of the contents of these documents. Shiels was in a difficult position when he refused to discuss the issue on the grounds that such a statement would simply duplicate pronouncements of previous and existing policy in the Middle East.¹⁹ To help Shiels cope with this pressure, the Foreign Office involved itself because of the complex jurisdictional and political nature of the question, which was basically two-fold. One aspect revolved around the extent and nature of British commitments to the Arabs; the other, the wisdom of disclosing the text of this exchange with a definitive explanation of its terms.

The major hurdle that confronted British officials in dealing with this matter was the status of Palestine. Foreign and Colonial Office officials tried to avoid the issue entirely in their draft replies to Parliamentary questions. Nevertheless, throughout this episode, the British position regarding the status of Palestine with respect to the correspondence was maintained. According to this stand,

¹⁹Dr. Shiels was pressed on this issue in the House of Commons on April 9, 1930, Commons, vol. 237, cols. 2147-2148; ibid., May 7, 1930, vol. 238, cols. 949, 1085-1096; ibid., May 21, 1930, vol. 239, col. 385; ibid., June 4, 1930, cols. 2136-2137; ibid., June 18, 1930, vol. 240, col. 389; ibid., June 24, 1930, col. 990; ibid., July 16, 1930, vol. 241, col. 1260; ibid., July 23, 1930, cols. 2128-2129; and ibid., August 1, 1930, vol. 242, cols. 902-903. The Shaw Report had referred to the McMahon Correspondence in advocating "some measure" of self-government for the Arabs of Palestine. See pp. 10, 125, and 130.

Palestine had been excluded entirely from any undertaking given by McMahon to the Sherif of Mecca. On the basis of correspondence by McMahon in Colonial Office files, the British attitude was considered justifiable. It should be noted that an official observed that even if this position were not defensible the Arabs of Palestine would derive no benefit as Palestine would belong to the Emir of Trans-Jordan, the principal heir of the Sherif of Mecca.²⁰

Although Colonial Office officials doubted the wisdom of the Mandate, they were not prepared to permit the release of this documentation. They considered the establishment of the Mandate to have been a chose jugée that could not be categorically reversed.²¹ For the sake of political continuity, moreover, they were reluctant to promote formally a dramatic alteration of policy that could be aided by the disclosure of the McMahon Correspondence. While a drastic change in the fabric of the Mandate appealed to Colonial Office officials, the implementation of such a policy required a subterfuge behind which it might be nurtured quietly. Through this type of manipulation, they could retain tight control of a fundamental change in policy. With the potential impact of the release of the McMahon Correspondence, civil

²⁰ Background paper entitled: "General Historical Summary," Chapter X, prepared by W.J. Childs of the Foreign Office. C0733/189/77121. This manuscript emerged as FO Confidential Print 13778 and C.P. 271 (30), CAB 24/214. In his recent monograph on the subject,

Y. Porath cites the latest available sources to indicate that the McMahon Correspondence contained no provisions favourable to the interests of the Arabs in Palestine. See op. cit., pp. 44 ff.

²¹ Minutes by Williams, April 24, 1930 and Shuckburgh, April 29, 1930, C0733/189/77121.

servants could have found their scope of action limited and possibly neutralized because of the resulting publicity and subsequent intervention on the part of politicians in policy-making.

Citing his reading of the mood of the House of Commons, however, Shiels pressed for a white paper to reveal some of the relevant documents. Colonial and Foreign Office Officials who were in contact with the India Office considered this request seriously. They concluded that a shortage of non-controversial documents would make such a revelation impracticable. Passfield decided to put the issue before Cabinet, and ordered the background memorandum on the subject to be circulated. The Cabinet decided that publication of the McMahon Correspondence was impossible. As a result of this decision, Drummond Shiels made a firm statement in the House of Commons rejecting disclosure. It is worth noting that, following this, the matter remained closed throughout the balance of the 1930-1931 period. Shiels' announcement was accepted as the conclusion of the question.²²

The fact that Colonial Office civil servants did not consider exploiting the McMahon Correspondence to terminate the Jewish National Home project at this time is significant. On the basis of the position established by officials in 1930, the British Government rejected the McMahon Correspondence as justification when it decided to crystallize the Jewish National Home project in 1939. The unilateral reversal of the

²²Minute by Shiels, July 8, 1930, *ibid.* At first, Shiels had opposed disclosure. Minute, May 7, 1930, *ibid.* Minute by Passfield, May 1, 1930, *ibid.* Cabinet Meeting July 30, 1930, Cabinet Conclusions 46 (30), CAB 23/64. *Commons*, August 1, 1930, vol. 242, cols. 902-903.

Mandate in 1939 was rationalized in terms of appeasement towards the Arabs of Palestine to induce them to accept a minority Jewish presence.²³

In dealing with the recognition of the Jewish Agency, Colonial Office officials demonstrated overt hostility towards that organization. On August 14, 1929 the Jewish Agency had reconstituted itself with the sanction of the Colonial Office, to include non-Zionists. The Colonial Office did not recognize its new status officially until August 6, 1930, even though the Agency formally had applied for such acknowledgement on September 19, 1929. However, this request remained dormant until Lord Melchett raised the issue in May, 1930. Melchett stated that the continuing lack of recognition placed key non-Zionists in a quandary.²⁴

Colonial Office reaction was unsympathetic. Williams opposed recognition on the grounds that it would have an adverse affect in Palestine. He added that such a step required the approval of Chancellor. As a result, Passfield somewhat evasively replied to Melchett that the lack of formal acknowledgement had not hindered the Zionist cause. He noted that the Jewish Agency had not pressed this matter until that time. Moreover, he stated that the political situation prevented action at that moment. However, Melchett quickly requested some "intimation" of recognition to ensure the successful integration of

²³See Palestine. Statement of Policy, Cmd. 6019, (London, May, 1939), p. 5. The term "appeasement" has been used deliberately in this context because of the association of the Palestine question with the general policy pursued in international affairs by the Government of the day, which was led by Neville Chamberlain. It should be noted that Malcolm MacDonald was the Colonial Secretary of the day who authorized the development of this policy for Palestine.

²⁴Melchett to Wilson, letter, May 22, 1930, C0733/191/77266.

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non-Zionists into this venture.²⁵

In handling this question, the Colonial Office established the position that the Jewish Agency had not reminded the British Government of its request. This attitude was to serve as the British defence in the event of questioning at the pending Seventeenth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission. It should be stressed that this stand was disingenuous. In its brief of May, 1930 to the British Government, the Jewish Agency indeed had requested official recognition of the Agency as a "public body," according to the terms of Article 4 of the Mandate.²⁶

Chaim Weizmann asked Wilson for recognition at a meeting held at the Colonial Office on July 7th by requesting a letter. He pressed Wilson further on this question in a strongly worded note. In it, he criticized the Colonial Office for failing to recognize the reconstituted Jewish Agency especially since the reorganization of this body had been required by Article 4 of the British-inspired Mandate terms. Moreover, he bitterly attacked the Shaw Commission for attributing the blame for the 1929 riots to this change on the same grounds. In conclusion, he bluntly accused the Colonial Office of evading the issue. While Weizmann conceded

²⁵Minute by Williams, May 23, 1930; Passfield to Melchett, letter, May 26, 1930; Melchett to Passfield, letter, May 27, 1930.
Ibid.

²⁶Namier Memorandum, pp. 70-71. Harry Luke was questioned on this lack of recognition at that session of the Permanent Mandates Commission. He replied that the matter was "under consideration." Eleventh Meeting, June 9, 1930, P.M.C. Minutes, p. 93.

that practical recognition existed, he stressed that formal acknowledgement was imperative.²⁷

The Colonial Office considered this question to have been an open one even at this time. In a memorandum for Shiels on the subject, Sir Samuel Wilson wrote that the Agency's letter of September, 1929 required action "one way or the other." At a high level departmental meeting that involved Passfield and Chancellor, held on July 18, 1930, recognition was approved. However, the Colonial Office delayed notifying the Jewish Agency of this decision until August 6th.²⁸

The third question that surfaced in mid-1930 was the proposed centralization of the administration of Middle East affairs under the Foreign Office. In March, 1929, a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence had been instructed: "to make recommendations as to the methods by which the existing machinery for political control in Arabia can be simplified and speeded up." Under the chairmanship of Warren Fisher, perhaps the most powerful British civil servant of the day, the sub-committee presented its findings to the Cabinet in July, 1930. Apart from examining the question at hand, Warren Fisher and the representatives of the three services submitted a second report in which they urged the "...transferring to the Foreign Office the general

²⁷Minute by Harold Beckett on July 7, 1930 meeting, July 8, 1930, C0733/191/77266; Weizmann to Wilson, letter, July 9, 1930, ibid.

²⁸Memorandum by Wilson, July 14, 1930, ibid. Minutes of departmental meeting of July 18, 1930, extant in C0733/193/77368/I. Passfield to Weizmann, letter, August 6, 1930, C0733/191/77266.

control of our relations with the whole of the territories in the Middle East."²⁹

The Palestine issue had inspired this unexpected intervention to the chagrin of the Foreign and Colonial Offices. This initiative is significant as it revealed the concern of an official as highly placed as Warren Fisher regarding the competence of the Colonial Office to administer the Palestine Mandate. Such was the opposition of these two ministries that Monteagle and Shuckburgh, who represented their respective departments on the sub-committee, as well as the delegates from the India Office, refused to associate themselves with the supplementary report.

The Cabinet rejected Warren Fisher's recommendation. Instead, it reinforced the status quo. The delineation of responsibility in the Middle East remained unchanged. The Cabinet approved, with slight modifications, the major proposals that called for the establishment of two additional sub-committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence to co-ordinate British activity in the Near East. One committee was to include the ministers who had an interest in this area, namely the Secretaries of State for the Colonies, India, Foreign Affairs, War, and Air, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer; the other, senior officials from the member departments of the Ministerial Sub-Committee. The formation of these two bodies,

²⁹C.P. 252 (30), dated July 17, 1930, CAB 24/214. Warren Fisher (1879-1948), Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and Head of the Civil Service, greatly influenced the structure and operation of the British Government in the inter-war period. See Obituary of Sir Warren Fisher, The Times, September 27, 1948.

especially the Official Sub-Committee, merely institutionalized the informal practice of consultations in decision-making among high level officials.³⁰

Two important meetings of relevance to Palestine took place during the summer of 1930. The first was the conference of the Jewish Agency Administrative Committee; the second, the meeting of the Zionist Organization Actions Committee. Both gatherings were conducted concurrently in Berlin from August 26 to 28, 1930. The most significant feature of the Berlin meetings was an address presented by Dr. Weizmann on August 28, 1930 in which he unexpectedly defined the goal of the Jewish National Home. Weizmann interpreted this end as the formation of an independent bi-national Jewish-Arab state.³¹

It is not correct to say that the Basle programme promised us a Jewish State, nor that the Balfour Declaration promised us a Jewish State. In 1919 I spoke of "Palestine as Jewish as England is English" because I believed it then. Now I don't believe it. We were promised only a Jewish National Home in Palestine. But such as it is, with its limitations, it attracts the best elements in Jewry. I consider it was unwise and detrimental for others to make other statements.

Weizmann's speech caused a furore. Because of the hostile reaction on the part of Zionists who were unwilling to commit the movement to this position at that time, he was forced to recant his definition to avoid censure. Press cuttings and explanatory notes from the Jewish Agency kept the Middle East Department informed of

³⁰ Cabinet Meeting, July 23, 1930, Cabinet Conclusions 44 (30), CAB 23/64.

³¹ Israel Cohen, A Jewish Pilgrimage. The Autobiography of Israel Cohen (London, 1956), p. 272. See also The New York Times, September 14, 1930.

these turbulent developments. Lewis Namier reported that the "moderates" who supported Dr. Weizmann narrowly defeated the "extremists."³² Despite this detailed information, the Colonial Office was unimpressed by the fact that Weizmann had attempted to repudiate the possibility of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. Instead, departmental officials were preoccupied by another aspect of the Berlin meetings, namely the resolution that called for the British Government to consider an Agency memorandum in drafting its forthcoming statement of future policy.

This memorandum had been written by Lewis Namier, and submitted to the Colonial Office in May, 1930.³³ It contained sections that upset departmental officials. Especially contentious issues such as immigration, land, Trans-Jordan, and the position of the Jewish Agency were discussed. In this brief, the Jewish Agency officially sought the power to regulate Jewish immigration through the delegation of appropriate authority by the Palestine Government.³⁴ Moreover, the Agency demanded access to arable land held by the Government of Palestine, claiming that it had been discriminated against in the distribution of this land.³⁵ In addition, the Jewish Agency requested financial support from the Government of Palestine to encourage Jewish settlement.³⁶ Referring to Trans-Jordan, the Agency called for open

³²This report was contained in a letter from Williams to Shiels, September 5, 1930, C0733/193/77368/II.

³³Namier Memorandum, Namier to Wilson, letter and enclosure, May 27, 1930, C0733/192/77275.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 14-15.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 21 ff. The Shaw Commission made this particular observation. See Shaw Report, pp. 22-23.

³⁶Ibid., p. 38.

Jewish settlement. Emphasizing that "Trans-Jordan is legally part of Palestine," Lewis Namier showed that Mandate provisions barring racial and religious discrimination had been broken with the continued exclusion of Jews. Citing the opposition of the Permanent Mandates Commission to this practice, he requested the unification of the two segments of Palestine under the obligation for the establishment of the Jewish National Home.³⁷ Discussing the position of the Jewish Agency Namier, like the Colonial Office, wanted a clear definition of the status of the Jewish Agency. Unlike them, however, he intended that this interpretation should strengthen the position of the Agency;³⁸

...Those functions [under the terms of the Mandate] are inter alia political, and, although an exact analogy cannot be found, correspond in some measure with those of the Chartered Companies constituted from time to time for the settlement and development of imperial territories.

It is evident that Colonial Office officials were infuriated by this memorandum mainly because the Agency's requests ran so contrary to departmental thinking. Indeed, the May brief was later cited to justify the contemplated curtailment of the Agency's status.³⁹

...As an instance of the way in which the Jewish Agency regards its position, it may be noted that they suggest... that their functions correspond in some measure to those of the chartered companies... Such chartered companies as the B[ritish] S[outh] A[frica] Company and the Niger Company were, of course, invested with administrative powers of a wide character, and were virtually the Government of the Territory concerned.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 65 ff.

³⁸Ibid., p. 71.

³⁹Copy of unsigned and undated Colonial Office memorandum, prepared in late December, 1930, p. 26. Extant only in F0371/15325/E17/17/31.

It appears that the nature of these Jewish Agency demands encouraged officials to strive for the reversal of the Jewish National Home policy. Namier's memorandum clearly created strong feelings among civil servants. Observing O.G.R. Williams' reaction to the August, 1930 Jewish Agency resolution, it can be readily observed that he was angered by the prospect of reconsidering the May brief. This particular issue reveals a distinct hardening of Williams' attitude towards Zionism. He believed that the Agency's brief had received enough attention and did not merit reference in the pending policy paper. However, Williams wrote the following comment:⁴⁰

...It is of course one of the Jewish contentions that "the Jewish National Home is the central purpose of the Palestine Mandate" and any special prominence given in our statement of policy to the Jewish memorandum might be used in support of this contention. This is, however, a view which H.M.G. do not accept and, as was made very clear by the Permanent Mandates Commission, and in the report of the rapporteur to the Council of the League, is regarded as incompatible with the proper interpretation of our mandatory obligations.

Nevertheless, although the correlation between the Jewish Agency Memorandum of May, 1930 and this change in attitude cannot be proven conclusively, it is evident that Williams' opinion on the purpose of Britain's presence in Palestine had shifted dramatically over the previous nine months. In reviewing Chancellor's dispatch of January, 1930, Williams had supported the general consensus that the Jewish National Home project was the sole ~~rationale~~ rationale for the British Mandate of Palestine, commenting:⁴¹

⁴⁰Minute by Williams, September 17, 1930, C0733/192/77275.

⁴¹Minute by Williams, February 2, 1930, C0733/182/77050/A.

With the [Jewish] National Home policy eliminated our excuse for remaining in Palestine would be reduced to little more than that of a territory containing the Holy Places of three religions being under the protection of a strong European power pledged to the maintenance of equal treatment between the rival parties.

While Williams provides the most readily available illustration of this transformation, this shift permeated throughout the Colonial Office. Williams was a senior official in the department. His opinion on this issue was accepted by higher authority.⁴² It should be stressed that his views had greater weight than usual at that time on account of Sir John Shuckburgh's four-month absence due to illness, from mid-July to mid-November, 1930. During this crucial period in the development of British policy for Palestine, Williams was the major source of continuity. His influence in the decision-making process was, therefore, pivotal.

⁴²Minute by Sir Gilbert Grindle (1869-1934), September 17, 1930, CO733/192/77275. Grindle was Senior Assistant Under-Secretary of State. He was managing Shuckburgh's responsibilities during his absence.

Hope Simpson's Findings

Politicians and civil servants viewed the Hope Simpson inquiry as the essential element for the resolution of Palestine policy. Specifically, Ramsay MacDonald regarded this investigation as an effort to quieten controversy created by the weaknesses inherent in the Shaw Report and the suspension of Jewish immigration certificates. The Prime Minister maintained an open mind on the possible outcome of Hope Simpson's findings. What Ramsay MacDonald desired was an irrefutable report that would solidly support any viable policy in Palestine with the minimum of fuss.

While the Prime Minister was non-committal, Passfield and his Colonial Office staff were not. In response to the High Commissioner's January 17th dispatch, the Colonial Office secretly had evolved a policy based on the interrelated land and immigration questions to reverse the Jewish National Home project. The findings of the Shaw Commission had added impetus to this policy option. Having determined that the future development of the Jewish community in Palestine should rest on political as opposed to economic grounds, the Middle East

Department had resolved to halt the growth of the Jewish National Home project. Officials were determined to implement this strategy, notwithstanding the appointment of Sir John Hope Simpson to conduct an independent study of the questions of land, immigration, and development.

Nevertheless, this stand did not lead to conflict between Hope Simpson and departmental officials. This was due to the fact that Hope Simpson's personal bias had precluded the possibility of a fully objective investigation. Indeed, Hope Simpson became from the beginning of his assignment an authoritative source for the confirmation of existing Colonial Office assumptions. Before going to Palestine, he was asked to comment on draft legislation submitted by Chancellor to restrict Jewish land acquisitions. Complying with this request, Hope Simpson wrote a brief report in which he asserted that this legislation was essential. His assessment was not based on personal investigation, but upon a cursory perusal of Colonial Office files on the land question. While favouring restrictive land legislation, he objected to overt discrimination against non-Arabs. His recommendation dealing with tactics also supports the notion that he was not entirely objective in his approach to the forthcoming investigation:⁴³

⁴³Memorandum by Hope Simpson, May 1, 1930, CO733/185/77072/II. The proposed legislation was dropped temporarily to avoid worsening the controversy created because of the immigration suspension. Minute by Shuckburgh, June 18, 1930, CO733/185/77072/I. This legislation was resurrected in November, 1930.

It might be well to limit the application of this legislation, in order to emphasise its temporary nature. The policy should be settled, and permanent legislation possible in twelve months.

The major implication of this comment was his suggestion that future policy would not be formulated on the basis of an objective inquiry but merely "settled." Hope Simpson clearly envisaged the inevitability of permanent legislation as the result of his investigation. Scarcely two weeks after his May 20th arrival in Palestine, Hope Simpson informed Passfield that restrictive legislation was urgently required to protect the Arab peasantry. Moreover, he considered the situation of Arab peasant debt to have been as acute a problem as in India. Chancellor's appointment of Claude F. Strickland to investigate the establishment of Arab co-operative credit societies was based on this finding.⁴⁴

Hope Simpson freely admitted that the sources for his conclusions were Arab landowners. While conceding that his unnamed informants may have exaggerated the conditions of the Arab peasantry, he placed great credence on their views. Accepting these assessments, apparently without question, Hope Simpson relied on supporting information furnished by officials of the Palestine Government. As a result, most of his critical findings were based on superficial data. For his conclusion of a high level of Arab unemployment in urban areas, he

⁴⁴ Claude F. Strickland (1881-1962) had served in the India Civil Service from 1905 until just prior to this appointment. He had been Registrar of Co-operative Societies in the Punjab for a major portion of his career. Hope Simpson to Passfield, cable, June 2, 1930, CO733/185/77072/III; Chancellor to Passfield, cable, June 7, 1930, CO733/192/77299. Strickland's appointment for a term of two months was announced in The Times, July 25, 1930.

accepted on trust oral assessments provided by Edward Keith-Roach, Deputy District Commissioner of Jerusalem, and A.T. Barker, a Haifa policeman.⁴⁵

To substantiate his finding that the Jewish Agency had displaced Arab farmers through extensive land purchases, he relied on the recent survey conducted by a committee of mandatory officials headed by W.J. Johnson and R.E.H. Crosbie to study the position of Arab farmers with respect to the Palestine Government. In the April to July period during which the investigation was conducted, the committee had examined what it considered to have constituted a representative sample of rural Arab villages. According to its findings, 29.4% of the residents scrutinized had been forced off the land as a consequence of Jewish Agency expansion. It should be noted that no distinction was made between migrant farm workers, tenant farmers, persons whose holdings had been foreclosed for non-payment of mortgages, or nomads. Interpolating this percentage to the previous census total of 86,980 rural Arab villagers, the committee determined that 25,572 Arabs were landless and destitute because of Zionist land acquisitions. Hope Simpson accepted these conclusions, as well as the rather imprecise methods by which they were formulated without question.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Hope Simpson to Chancellor, letter, July 11, 1930, Chancellor Papers 16/6. See Palestine. Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development, by Sir John Hope Simpson, Cmd. 3686 (London, October, 1930), cited below as the Hope Simpson Report, pp. 131-140.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 26 and 142. This data was not mentioned in the Johnson-Crosbie Report. See Government of Palestine, Report of a Committee on the Economic Condition of Agriculturalists in Palestine and the Fiscal Measures of Government in Relation thereto (Jerusalem, 1930).

To establish his finding that the amount of available arable land in Palestine was approximately 50% less than that stated previously, Hope Simpson personally conducted brief aerial surveys. On the basis of this superficial examination of a small section of territory, he determined that existing statistics relating to the disposition of land were inaccurate. In 1925, the Government of Palestine had calculated that the amount of arable land in the area excluding the Negev Desert totalled 12,500,000 dunams; one dunam being equivalent to over a quarter of an acre.⁴⁷ However, Hope Simpson now claimed that 6,544,000 dunams had actually been available.⁴⁸

Hope Simpson submitted his report to Passfield on August 22, 1930. The report confirmed departmental attitudes on land and immigration. Hope Simpson advocated a freeze on land transactions. Moreover, he supported the increased restriction of Jewish immigration to avoid prejudicing the position of Arabs. He criticized the inalienability of Jewish National Fund land as well as the exclusive Jewish Agency employment practices. However, Hope Simpson urged the establishment of a development commission to overcome the apparent Arab land crisis and to ensure the economic absorptive capacity for continued Jewish immigration, according to British Mandate obligations. This development scheme was to be financed by a loan backed by the British Government. It should be stressed that the tone of his report

⁴⁷Lords, May 20, 1925, vol. 61, cols. 417-420.

⁴⁸Hope Simpson Report, pp. 23 and 60. During the balance of the British Mandate of Palestine, no systematic survey that could have substantiated or refuted this finding was ever completed.

was conciliatory.⁴⁹

Hope Simpson's major thesis was the need for mutual co-operation and understanding between the Arab and Jewish communities. This theme was repeated throughout, emphasizing his sympathy for bi-nationalism. Although Hope Simpson personally shared many of the Colonial Office reservations towards the Jewish National Home project, he had made an effort to formulate a policy that would accommodate conflicting claims in Palestine. The development scheme to him was the keystone to the reconciliation of both communities. While this proposal constituted an even-handed suggestion, of benefit to both Jews and Arabs, it caught the ministry by surprise. What Colonial Office officials had expected from Hope Simpson was a mere description of conditions. Restrictive action, instead of the positive policy presented, was viewed as the inevitable consequence of his inquiry.

With his report, Hope Simpson enclosed two covering letters. The first was dated August 18, 1930; the second, August 22, 1930.⁵⁰ His first note was a candid elaboration of his investigation intended for private Colonial Office consumption; his second, a formal note to accompany the publication of the report. In his first letter, Hope Simpson criticized successive British and Palestine administrations for "failure to carry out the terms of the Mandate." While personally

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 141-153, 87-91. The draft report was circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215. It was released unchanged as Cmd. 3686. A companion volume consisting of maps was published in February, 1931. See Palestine, Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development, by Sir John Hope Simpson, Appendix Containing Maps (in continuation of Cmd. 3686), Cmd 3687 (London, 1930).

⁵⁰C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215.

opposed to this principle, Hope Simpson viewed the major British responsibility in Palestine as the establishment of the Jewish National Home with the caveat of ensuring the rights of the existing population. The key theme of this comment was that the abdication of the Palestine Government from providing direction to development had brought about the growth of the Jewish Agency as a para-government.

The attitude of the Administration has resembled that of a spectator - perhaps an interested spectator - of a social experiment carried on before his eyes, but in which he does not feel that he has a duty to take an active part. Now and then when trouble developed the Government has been compelled to take a hand, but once the trouble over, the status quo was resumed.

The formation of a development commission emerged as the means by which the British and Palestine Governments could play an active role in implementing Mandate obligations. The major aspect of this proposal revolved around the necessity of making the increased settlement of Jews compatible with the protection of Arab rights. Hope Simpson stated: "Either the existing area must be rendered capable of supporting more cultivation, or the admission of Jews to settle on the land must be prevented."

In detailing his objections to Jewish land-holding and employment practices, Hope Simpson was more blunt than in his report. His attack indirectly identified, misinterpreted, and condemned Weizmann's infiltration policy:

The policy of the Zionists indicates that their ultimate intention, by means of steady and consistent land purchases and settlement with the provisions noted, is to buy the country, and to buy it under conditions which will render it impossible for any Arab to earn his daily bread in the territory which they have acquired. It is a policy of the inevitability of gradualness of the most sinister kind.

To nullify this activity, Hope Simpson proposed that long-term leaseholding should become the feature of all future agricultural development. It should be stressed that this had been characteristic of agricultural development programs that he had administered in India. His suggested development commission, with British financial backing, would either purchase tracts of land when available on the open market or expropriate undeveloped land. In addition, this body would control the use of state lands. Moreover, he envisaged a bi-national principle in the operation of this project. As far as the proposed structure was concerned, Hope Simpson recommended the parity of Jewish and Arab representation on the commission. He also urged the establishment of Arab and Jewish settlements on the same tracts of land to reduce sectionalism. This leasehold system would be applicable to both Jews and Arabs. As Hope Simpson stated, "It is noticeable that the Mandate contains no provision whatever, contemplating purchase of land by Jews." The main consequence of the implementation of this proposal would lead to the total dependence of growth in Jewish immigration on the policy of the Palestine Government.

CHAPTER 3

THE HOPE SIMPSON REPORT AND THE WHITE PAPER ON POLICY OF

OCTOBER 1930

Hope Simpson's Development Plan

By late July, 1930, Colonial Office officials became aware that Hope Simpson intended to submit a more comprehensive report than they had anticipated. They realized that he planned to recommend detailed development proposals tied to a bi-national format.¹ However, departmental officials were not perturbed by this unexpected development. They merely integrated this element into their overall strategy. In a briefing memorandum to the Cabinet Committee on Palestine that was prepared by the Middle East Department for Passfield's signature immediately prior to its first meeting, "a policy of development [as] the principal constructive feature of the new statement of policy" was deemed to be of the utmost importance in order "to reconcile" the two communities.² Yet, most of the policy options contained in this paper were actually intended to conciliate one segment of the

¹Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, July 23, 1930, Premier 1/102.

²Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter and enclosures, August 12, 1930, *ibid*, Appendix I, Memorandum I of documents under heading P.P.C. (30) 2.

population, namely the Arabs. In doing so, the Colonial Office was acceding to the minimum demand made by Arab leaders, which called for the crystallization of the Jewish National Home. Nevertheless, this was not mentioned in the memorandum. An omission such as this was by no means accidental. Throughout the development of the proposed policy statement, Colonial Office civil servants, with Passfield's consent, influenced the Cabinet Committee by removing opinions that did not conform to their expectations. All intimation of the very real radical change in policy contemplated by these officials was shrouded from view. As the only source of information on Palestine affairs, the nature and content of background papers such as this could not be easily challenged.

The ministry's treatment of the Zionist cause was, at best, superficial; at worst, hostile and one-sided. Passfield wrote that relations between the Jewish Agency and the British Government had deteriorated. However, he attributed this situation to hostile propaganda. He stated that, as a result of this alleged agitation, the Jewish Agency had recorded a drop in donations for Zionist settlement in Palestine. Moreover, he suggested that this apparent setback was a conscious effort to embarrass the Palestine Government as a strong Jewish presence generated the revenue that sustained it. Although the Jewish Agency's position paper of May, 1930 was not circulated to the Cabinet Committee, as requested, Passfield gave it short shrift. He referred briefly to the Agency's thesis of the tie between Jewish investment and open immigration, and commented that this brief minimized

the alleged Jewish evictions of Arabs:³

The contentions of the Jewish Agency are so directly contrary to the conclusions of Sir John Hope Simpson, so far as they can be foreshadowed,...that it appears very difficult to consider this aspect of future policy without a careful examination of his full report.

Describing the forthcoming policy statement as a reaffirmation or clarification of previous policy, especially the Churchill White Paper, Passfield introduced elements favourable to the Arabs. The tenor of this memorandum in describing future policy as unchanging was clearly misleading. To begin with, he noted that the May Statement to the League of Nations committed the British Government to a definitive outline of policy.⁴ Passfield added that this paper also called for a more precise explanation of the rights of non-Jews in Palestine. Moreover, he stated that the giving of "more explicit directions as to the conduct of policy" on land and immigration was required. Passfield wrote that the role of the Jewish Agency in the Churchill White Paper should be reaffirmed with a "more precise definition" of its position.

While conceding that the Report of the Seventeenth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission stressed that Britain should not crystallize the Jewish National Home project, Passfield stated that the minimal Arab position called for a static situation with a halt to Jewish land acquisition and immigration. In one particularly noteworthy distortion of the truth, Passfield asserted that the solution

³Ibid. See Namier Memorandum.

⁴Cmd. 3582.

to the constitutional question relating to self-government was the introduction of a legislature on the 1922 model as a "safety valve." Passfield wrote that because there was "little indication" of Arab acceptance this proposal could be included without risk in the pending white paper. However, this statement was false. A legislature on the 1922 model represented one of the major demands made by the Arab delegation to Britain in May, 1930.

Passfield's memorandum was the major element of the package of briefing material that was furnished by the Colonial Office to guide the deliberations of the Cabinet Committee. The three other papers had been prepared by Sir John Campbell, Sir Spencer Davis, and Sir John Chancellor.⁵ Campbell's brief concerned development. In it, he predicted that Hope Simpson's proposed development plan would require a loan of £2,000,000 to be guaranteed by the British Government, but indicated that financing should not prove difficult. Davis' paper dealt with defence and finance. He stressed that weaknesses in the defence of Palestine, obvious at the time of the 1929 Arab riots, had been remedied. Nevertheless, he was less optimistic on the question of the financial position of the Palestine Government. According to his sobering assessment, the Government of Palestine faced a financial crisis because its revenues were unable to cope with its expenditures. Chancellor's paper related to constitutional

⁵Sir Spencer Davis (1875-1950) was Treasurer of the Palestine Government. He had served previously with the Government of the Mandate of Tanganyika. During the 1930-1931 period, he acted as the Officer Administering Government in the absence of the High Commissioner. For reports, see appendices under heading P.P.C. (30) 2, Premier 1/102.

and political prospects. Basically, this assessment was a restatement of his January 17th dispatch. Chancellor's most important suggestion was that Britain should declare the establishment of the Jewish National Home as completed in order to promote Arab independence for Palestine on the Iraqi model.

These documents had the effect of complementing Passfield's memorandum. On account of their authoritative nature, they had a tremendous impact on the outcome of the Committee's review of the Palestine question. It is significant that this collection of papers was the only comprehensive background correspondence dealing with Palestine to which the Committee had access during its deliberations.

The Cabinet Committee met three times prior to the publication of the Hope Simpson Report and the subsequent policy statement. The Colonial Office briefing material was discussed at the Committee's first meeting, held on August 18, 1930; however, action was deferred pending the receipt of Hope Simpson's report, expected around August 25th. At the Committee's second meeting of September 10, 1930, Hope Simpson's findings and the draft policy statement, that had been prepared by O.G.R. Williams on the basis of Passfield's memorandum of August 12, 1930, were considered. These two documents were presented immediately to the Cabinet with one comprehensive set of recommendations.

⁶Committee on Policy in Palestine. Report, September 15, 1930, C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215.

The Cabinet Committee accepted the text of the proposed policy statement without question, and suggested that the Cabinet approve it "in the form set out" together with Hope Simpson's report. At this point, the draft white paper was a provocative document. Nevertheless, the Cabinet Committee raised no objections against its inflammatory tone. Instead, the Committee concentrated its attention on Hope Simpson's proposals concerning development. Because of the financial implications of these recommendations, the Committee had taken upon itself the establishment of an expert sub-committee to assess the development issue, informing the Cabinet of this after the fact. Philip Snowden, Chairman of the Cabinet Committee, inspired this action. The role of the Chancellor of the Exchequer emphasized the important position of the Treasury in political affairs, an involvement that was symptomatic of Britain's deteriorating financial position. Therefore, in attempting to account for the failure of the Cabinet Committee to take issue with the draft policy statement, it can be observed that Committee members were preoccupied with the financial consequences of the forthcoming policy, to the exclusion of the equally significant political considerations. The Cabinet deferred its final approval of the policy statement pending the outcome of the Sub-Committee's review of the development question. As a result of this decision, Hope Simpson's report was left in abeyance.⁷

⁷Cabinet Meeting, September 19, 1930, Cabinet Conclusions 54 (30), CAB 23/63.

The Expert Sub-Committee included Sir John Campbell, Sir John Hope Simpson, Percival Waterfield of the Treasury,⁸ O.G.R. Williams, and Norman Mayle as Secretary. The Chairman of this body was Sir Basil Blackett, a Director of the Bank of England.⁹ Despite the fact that Snowden established tight financial guidelines before it ever met, the Sub-Committee influenced the outcome of the development policy. Snowden's ceiling of £100,000 on expenditures to settle 3,000 families was ignored.

To begin with, Hope Simpson objected to this limitation by stating that his plans envisaged a total expenditure of £6,500,000, as opposed to the £2,000,000 that Campbell had arbitrarily forecast. He added that the ceiling imposed by Snowden would restrict the development scheme to Arabs and not include Jews. However, Sir Basil Blackett was not prepared to question the Chancellor of the Exchequer's dictum. Commenting that the question was complicated by Snowden's reluctance to authorize a large loan as well as by the poor financial position of the Palestine Government, he suggested that the British Government should admit this financial weakness to the League and adopt the neutral position of consolidating existing Jewish settlement and dealing only with immediate Arab problems. As the minutes of this

⁸Percival Waterfield (1888-1965), an Assistant Secretary at the Treasury, later served as Principal Assistant Secretary from 1934 until 1939. In 1938, he was a member of the Palestine Partition Commission, known as the Woodhead Commission. See Palestine Partition Commission Report, Cmd. 5854 (London, October, 1938).

⁹Sir Basil Blackett (1882-1935) was a former senior official at the Treasury. He had served as Finance Member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General of India. At this time, he was Chairman of the Colonial Development Advisory Committee, which had been established in 1929.

meeting state: "Mr. Williams observed that the adoption of such a course might lead to great difficulties at Geneva, and might conceivably result in the Mandate being transferred to another power." Blackett's proposal received no further consideration. Instead, Waterfield was delegated to persuade Snowden to alter his position.¹⁰

Although Snowden refused to reconsider his stand on this issue, the Expert Sub-Committee remained undeterred.¹¹ Its report to the Cabinet Committee gave priority to settling 10,000 Arab agricultural families - a private estimate by Hope Simpson - that allegedly had been made landless as the result of Jewish Agency development.¹² A formula for spending among Jews and Arabs was arrived at by using the existing population ratio of one-to-five. As a result, it was proposed that 2,000 Jews would be settled, bringing the projected cost of the development project to £2,640,000. Sub-Committee members recognized that the lack of parity could generate Jewish hostility. In addition, they conceded that an adverse Jewish reaction, coupled with a cut in outside Jewish support, could leave the Palestine Government in a difficult position in attempting to maintain existing Jewish communities.

¹⁰ Minutes of Palestine Sub-Committee, September 18, 1930, C.P. 309 (30), CAB 24/215.

¹¹ Minutes of Palestine Sub-Committee, September 19, 1930, ibid.

¹² Report of the Palestine Sub-Committee, September 20, 1930, ibid.

The Sub-Committee expressed its regret for having broken Snowden's preconditions. Its members admitted that their findings and recommendations exceeded their terms of reference, but rationalized this action on the grounds that Jewish immigration could not continue without an adequate development program for Arab farmers. However, they added that considering the Jewish National Home as a completed project was an unthinkable policy.

The allotment of priorities for this scheme was remarkable because of its inconsistency with established British policy. In formalizing the development scheme, the Sub-Committee consciously threw off balance Ramsay MacDonald's recently reiterated equal obligation interpretation of the Mandate. The principle of parity that formed the basis of this policy was rejected with the proposal for disproportionate spending on the Arab community. The equal treatment position advocated by Hope Simpson in the presentation of his development scheme was emasculated. This crucial segment of his report remained a dead letter.

The Sub-Committee report was examined by the Palestine Cabinet Committee on September 22nd. The Cabinet Committee concluded that it was "politically impracticable" to declare immediately that the Jewish National Home was completed. However, it stated that Great Britain had a legal and moral obligation to help the Arabs but no financial responsibility to assist the Jews.¹³ It should be noted

¹³ Committee on Policy in Palestine. Second Report, September 22, 1930, ibid.

that the terms of the Mandate were characteristically vague on this issue because they neither approved nor rejected the possibility of financial support for any segment in Palestine. As a result, the Cabinet Committee categorically rejected the participation of the Jewish community in the development scheme. Hope Simpson's parity scheme for development was totally destroyed. The Committee recommended that a £2,500,000 loan, guaranteed by the British Government, be allotted for the settlement of the 10,000 allegedly landless Arab families, as estimated by Hope Simpson. This provision, somewhat disingenuously, carried the proviso that "the settlement of Jews is not excluded from consideration."

The final Committee report called for the amendment of the draft policy statement to remove any reference to the equal development proposals outlined in Hope Simpson's Report. As it stood, the white paper noted that the British Government would undertake a program of joint development. In addition, the Cabinet Committee made three other far-reaching recommendations. These proposals included a freeze on all Jewish land acquisitions for five years, the restriction of Jewish immigration, and the enactment of legislation dealing with Arab agricultural tenancy.

The formulation of these conclusions was a rushed process. Moreover, financial expediency was the essential factor that determined them. The timing of the three meetings held by the Cabinet Committee and the somewhat hurried nature of developments that occurred in them suggest that the roles of participants other than Passfield and

Snowden were negligible. Armed with sufficient one-sided and irrefutable information, Passfield exerted tremendous influence on the proceedings. For the ill-informed cabinet ministers, the subtleties of policies relating to Palestine undoubtedly were a formidable challenge to analyse. Therefore, sophisticated issues such as constitutional development, the McMahon Correspondence, and the nature of the Balfour Declaration had virtually nothing to do with the final outcome of the Cabinet Committee's review of the Palestine question.

Instead, the issue became simplified. To members of the Cabinet Committee, it was the problem of remedying an apparent inequity facing 10,000 Arabs who had been made homeless as the result of Jewish Agency expansion. This consideration was the key factor that motivated the restrictive view taken of the Jewish National Home project. In its final report to the Cabinet, the Cabinet Committee stated:

Our conclusions and recommendations may be summarised as follows:-

- (i) His Majesty's Government are, in our view, morally bound to see that provision is made for those Arab tenants, who have been dispossessed of their holdings as a result of the manner in which the policy of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate has hitherto been applied...

Perhaps the major consequence of the Cabinet Committee report was the proposed five-year freeze on the Jewish National Home project, as opposed to an even-handed development scheme for Jews and Arabs. This aspect of the Committee's recommendations represented the acceptance of the minimal Arab position concerning the Jewish presence

in Palestine. In addition to accepting Hope Simpson's figure of 10,000 landless Arabs, the Cabinet Committee placed great credence in his finding that the amount of arable land was substantially less than had been believed earlier. Despite these conclusions, Hope Simpson was personally convinced that a program of intensive development could remedy these two problems and equally benefit the Arab and Jewish communities. Therefore, noting the influence of Passfield and Snowden on the deliberations, it can be observed that this policy emerged as an alternative to equal development mainly for financial reasons. Snowden had ruled out total development, as advocated by Hope Simpson, on economic grounds. The modified development program constituted a holding action designed to settle 10,000 Arabs at minimal cost while restricting for at least five years, the growth of the Jewish National Home to its own reserve land. It should be stressed that the Colonial Secretary did not fight in Cabinet for a larger expenditure to enable joint development. The demise of Hope Simpson's development scheme was not mourned at the Colonial Office as officials had achieved precisely what they had set out to do, namely halt the progress of the Jewish National Home. O.G.R. Williams was satisfied with the prospect of a five-year freeze. Commenting on this decision, Williams noted:¹⁴

¹⁴Minute by Williams, September 18, 1930, CO733/183/77050/C.

The result makes the Statement rather lame & vague in effect & tends to obscure the fact that our policy vis à vis the Jewish National Home is - at any rate for the next 5 years - dangerously static & to that extent difficult to defend against criticism at Geneva. But it has the advantage of not tying down H.M.G. too definitely as to the precise manner of procedure, & of saving the face of the Jewish leaders by avoiding too definite a declaration of restrictive measures.

The Events Behind The White Paper
On Policy of October, 1930

The White Paper of October, 1930 was written by O.G.R. Williams. It represented the outcome of Colonial Office efforts to remould British policy in Palestine. Basically, this paper was an invidious document. The five-year freeze on Jewish growth was purposely obscured, While Hope Simpson's recommendation to limit Jewish agricultural expansion to existing reserve lands was followed, official support of his alternative suggestion of a joint development project had been deleted. The May immigration suspension, moreover, was justified on the basis of the economic assessment in Hope Simpson's report, as opposed to the political rationale in his undisclosed cable of August 20, 1930.¹⁵ In addition, the subordinate position of the Jewish Agency as a force in the administration of the Mandate was emphasized.¹⁶

¹⁵ Palestine. Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, Cmd. 3692 (London, October, 1930), cited below as the Passfield White Paper, p. 21. Hope Simpson to Passfield, cable, August 20, 1930, extant only in FO371/14500/E4546/1774/65. This wire was not circulated to the Cabinet Committee or to the Prime Minister.

¹⁶ Passfield White Paper, pp. 7-8.

While the White Paper paid lip-service to the concept of the Mandate as constituting a dual obligation, reaffirmed by Ramsay MacDonald on April 3, 1930, it clearly tilted the balance against the Zionist position. The aim of the Mandate as the establishment of a Jewish National Home was obviously negated by the comment that "the population of Palestine as a whole, and not any sectional interest, is to be the object of the Government's care." Thinking within the Colonial Office on the rationale of Britain's purpose in Palestine had shifted drastically. Williams himself had stated nine months earlier that the Jewish National Home project was the sole justification for the British presence in Palestine.¹⁷

It should be stressed that the Policy Statement bitterly criticized the role of the Histadruth. Earlier, the Shaw Report had accused this body of encouraging chauvinistic labour practices in Palestine and of screening prospective immigrants according to their political beliefs. The attack on the Histadruth had been explicitly mounted in the May, 1930 White Paper. Sir John Chancellor consistently opposed this group for its socialist and exclusively Jewish direction. Hope Simpson identified the Histadruth with "the social experiment of the Communist type" in communal farming. He bluntly stated that Zionist policy was "dictated" by this organization. In writing off the doctrines of the Histadruth as "peculiar," he suggested that its authority be curtailed.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 10-11.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 19-22. Shaw Report, pp. 103-111. Cmd. 3582, p. 8. Hope Simpson to Passfield, letter, August 18, 1930, C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215.

In this discussion of the question of immigration and the Histadruth, it must be added that a very real fear of Communism existed with the Palestine Administration. Arthur Mavrogordato, the Police Commandant, was a vociferous red hunter. A 1929 seditious ordinance had outlawed the existence of the Communist Party. Chancellor's regime was characterized by deportations of Jewish immigrants back to the U.S.S.R. for alleged Communist leanings. The Histadruth was, therefore, suspect for its political orientation.¹⁹

The White Paper attack on the Jewish labour organization was all the more remarkable considering the fact that a Labour Government held power. In condemning the Histadruth's employment policies, the White Paper stated:²⁰

The Executive of the General Federation of Jewish Labour, which exercises a very important influence on the direction of Zionist policy, has contended that such restrictions are necessary to secure the largest possible amount of Jewish immigration and to safeguard the standard of life of the Jewish labourer from the danger of falling to the lower standard of the Arab.

However logical such arguments may be...it must... be pointed out that they take no account of the provisions of Article 6 of the Mandate, which expressly requires that, in

¹⁹Arthur Mavrogordato (b.1886) was found to be incompetent as the result of an investigation of the Palestine Gendarmerie by Herbert Dowbiggin (1880-1966), Inspector-General of the Ceylon Police. This inquiry had been brought about as a consequence of the Arab riots. Sir Samuel Wilson believed that the department "...ought not inflict him on any colony...." Wilson to Chancellor, letter, January 14, 1931, Chancellor Papers 17/3. Nevertheless, Mavrogordato was transferred to Trinidad in July, 1931. See C0733/203/87116/ (1931), entitled "Deportations to U.S.S.R."

²⁰Passfield White Paper, p. 18. Labour policies under Chancellor were regressive despite the fact that a Labour Government was in power. The Government of Palestine was slow in dealing with issues such as factory legislation, the recognition of trade unions, and social insurance. This sluggishness galled the Histadruth, British trade unionists, Drummond Shiels, and even Passfield. See C0733/189/77149 (1930), entitled "Labour, Unions, Insurance, Factories," and C0733/191/77186 (1930), entitled "Railways, Union of Railway, Postal, and Telegraph Workers."

facilitating Jewish immigration and close settlement by Jews on the land, the Administration of Palestine must ensure that "the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced."

This attitude ran contrary to the relevant object of the Labour Party, expressed in Labour and the Nation, which committed the Party:²¹

To co-operate with the Labour and Socialist organisations in the Dominions and Dependencies with a view to promoting the purposes of the Party and to take common action for the promotion of a higher standard of social and economic life for the working population of the respective countries.

The events revolving around the publication of the White Paper are somewhat difficult to account for because of the fragmented documentation. However, one feature that should be examined is the role of Dr. Drummond Shiels in the process. Shiels had been dispatched to Palestine and Cyprus to investigate the situation first-hand. He left Britain on September 3rd, arrived in Palestine on October 4th, and departed on October 14th. Shiels was absent from Whitehall during the crucial period in which the Policy Statement was prepared and Hope Simpson's development proposals were debated. It is evident that before his departure Shiels wanted the publication of the Policy Statement delayed until his return. In noting this attitude, Williams personally saw no objection to his request. Moreover, Shiels favoured consultations with the Jewish Agency on the question of the style as opposed to the content of the White Paper. Williams supported this proposal for "modifications of detail" to remove "causes of misapprehension as to the intentions of His Majesty's Government" and to avoid "any unnecessary injury to Jewish susceptibilities."²²

²¹Op. cit., Object (f), p. 6.

²²Minute by Williams, September 18, 1930, C0733/183/77050/C.

On September 9th and 18th, Jewish Agency representatives met with Williams to attempt to discuss the pending Policy Statement before publication. At the first meeting, Dr. Selig Brodetsky forcefully asserted the right of the Jewish Agency to such consultations. At the second interview, Lewis Namier took a more moderate attitude in requesting consent for the Jewish Agency to comment on the Statement. Land and immigration were crucial issues that concerned the Jewish Agency. In addition, the constitutional question created anxiety. Aside from the demand for consultations on the White Paper, this problem was the paramount issue at the September 9th meeting between Brodetsky and Williams. At this point, the Jewish Agency opposed the formation of a legislative council, a reversal from its position maintained since 1922. The constitutional question had been a subsidiary issue throughout 1930.²³

Chancellor, in his January 17th dispatch, had proposed the establishment of a legislative council with majority Arab representation. In the meantime, Dr. Weizmann had opposed the formation of such a body on the grounds that this step would impede the Jewish National Home. What Weizmann envisaged was the encouragement of local government and the formation of parallel Jewish and Arab national councils. Drummond Shiels viewed his suggestion positively: "This is a very good letter from the wisest of the Zionist leaders, and there is much to be said for his views on the setting up of a leg[islative] council in the near future."²⁴

²³ Minutes by Williams, September 9, 1930 and September 18, 1930, ibid.

²⁴ Weizmann to Shuckburgh, letter, March 5, 1930; minute by Shiels, March 22, 1930. CO733/187/77105.

The recommendation of the Shaw Commission that favoured the development of self-government undoubtedly had encouraged the Palestine Government to keep this question alive. It is evident that Chancellor and Robert Drayton, the Solicitor-General, believed that the formation of a legislative council with an Arab majority would serve as the appropriate concession to obtain Arab support for the Mandate. In a letter to Chancellor, Drayton expressed his sympathies with Arab demands for self-government through a legislative council. He added the caveat that the matters of land and immigration should be withheld from the competence of such a body. Chancellor echoed this view in his covering letter to these observations. Shuckburgh minuted that he doubted whether this suggestion was helpful. Shiels was blunter in his assessment:²⁵

I fancy that the Sol[icitor] Gen[eral] does not quite grasp the Arab objective. It is to get such governing institutions as will enable them - as a majority - to make the principles of the Mandate ineffective. It would not meet them to take most of the important matters out of the hands of the body they hope to control.

Passfield's comment, partly attributable to his stormy encounter with the Arab delegation, echoed Shiels' minute: "It would have to be a definite obligation on any such Council to legislate for the execution of the Mandate. To this the Arab delegation returned an absolute refusal. No action at present." This question remained in limbo although brief mention was made to the development of self-governing institutions in the White Paper addressed to the League of Nations in

²⁵Chancellor to Shuckburgh, letter and enclosure, April 5, 1930; minutes by Shuckburgh, April 29, 1930 and Shiels, May 5, 1930. Ibid.

May, 1930. The Permanent Mandates Commission followed a position similar to that expressed privately by Shiels.²⁶

The theme of constitutional development was an important feature of the Policy Statement of October, 1930. Nevertheless, it was purposely buried in the text. During the consideration given to it by the Colonial Office, proposals on this issue were attributed to Sir John Chancellor. The Churchill White Paper had included provision for the establishment of a legislative council consisting of twelve elected and eleven official members. Of the twelve elected members, there were to have been eight Moslems, two Jews, and two Christians. In calling for the creation of a legislative council on the basis of Churchill's formula, Williams added one innovative provision. If any group, Moslem, Christian, or Jewish, refused to participate in the election of non-official members assigned to it, the Palestine Government would have the right to appoint its allotted representatives. This feature was intended to prevent the recurrence of a boycott comparable to that organized by the Arab Executive in 1922 that had scuttled this proposal.

Passfield placed great emphasis on this measure in submitting the draft Policy Statement to Cabinet. It should be noted that he did not mention that this provision would complement Colonial Office policies intended to crystallize the Jewish National Home. The establishment of the constitutional framework would ensure the perpetuation of the 1922 status quo in terms of Jewish political

²⁶Cmd. 3582, pp. 8-9. "Report to the Council of the League of Nations on the Work of the Session," P.M.C. Minutes, pp. 142-143.

representation. The consequences of this measure would be profound. Not only would the growth of the Jewish National Home be halted economically and numerically, but it would also be limited politically.²⁷

On receipt of the page-proofs of the White Paper, Chancellor viewed this section with enthusiasm. However, he noted that the Zionists were attempting to reverse this proposal. Shiels had met with a delegation from the Histadruth on October 10, 1930. While the Parliamentary Under-Secretary had refused to discuss future British policy, he did state that the British Government contemplated "some form of Parliament" for Palestine. Although Chancellor stressed that Shiels was ill when the Zionist representatives lobbied him on this issue, he refused Shiels' request for assistance in telegraphing a message to the Colonial Office to modify this provision. It appears that Shiels had second thoughts on this aspect of the White Paper. Accusing the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of shirking his responsibilities, Chancellor informed Williams that Shiels wanted this commitment transformed into a vague promise. Chancellor even believed that Shiels was a tool of the Zionists. In a private note to Chancellor commenting on his account of Shiels' visit to Palestine, Sir John Hope Simpson noted: "...it fortifies the [low] opinion held of him [Shiels] by Passfield."²⁸

²⁷Memorandum by Passfield, September 18, 1930, C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215.

²⁸Chancellor to Williams, letter, October 18, 1930, CO733/183/77050/C. The New York Times, October 11, 1930. Shiels had been afflicted with acute food poisoning at the welcoming reception in his honour tendered by the High Commissioner. See The Times, October 30, 1930. Hope Simpson to Chancellor, letter, October 22, 1930, Chancellor Papers 16/6.

In assessing this remarkable episode, a tantalizing question can be posed. Was there a conscious effort on the part of senior civil servants, especially Sir Samuel Wilson, to exclude Drummond Shiels from a potentially moderating role in determining policy by shipping him off to the Middle East for eight important weeks? The Parliamentary Under-Secretary was absent from London during the deliberations of the Palestine Cabinet Committee and the Expert Sub-Committee. Moreover, he was not present at the Colonial Office during the critical period when the draft Statement was being framed for presentation to the Cabinet. Indeed, the first opportunity he had to examine the Policy Statement in a substantive form occurred in Palestine when he was shown the page-proofs of the White Paper that had been dispatched to the High Commissioner. Although Shiels' somewhat frantic effort to tone down part of the White Paper lends credence to the thesis that officials intentionally removed from an active policy-making function, no solid evidence exists to support this hypothesis. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, even had civil servants acted in the best of faith, Shiels was left completely out of the picture when important policy matters for which he was responsible in the House of Commons were being settled.

When reviewing the factors that led to the publication of the White Paper on Palestine of October, 1930, the question of its approval by the Cabinet should be discussed.²⁹ In Reflections on the Constitution, Harold Laski has argued that the Policy Statement was

²⁹This evaluation is an elaboration of the discussion presented by Professor N.A. Rose, op. cit., pp. 16-18.

ratified by the Cabinet "without adequate discussion." This asserts the release of the White Paper to constitute a perversion of the British Cabinet system and represent an illegitimate expression of Government policy.³⁰ However, an examination of the circumstances surrounding the approval of this policy by the Cabinet can effectively refute this thesis.

The Policy Statement was, in fact, discussed at two Cabinet meetings. On September 19, 1930, the Cabinet ratified the proposed White Paper, contingent on the findings of the Expert Sub-Committee.³¹ With the presentation of its final report to the Cabinet on September 24, 1930, all of the recommendations made by the Palestine Cabinet Committee were approved. Included in this comprehensive ratification was its principal proposal urging the approval of the draft Statement subject to limited amendments at the discretion of the Colonial Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This authority was restricted. Passfield and Snowden were empowered to modify the text only in order to make it consistent with the terms of the Cabinet Committee's proposals. It should be stressed that in approving the October White Paper the Cabinet gave little scope to the Colonial Secretary to amend it before publication. Rather than representing a deviation from the British Cabinet system, this episode constituted a reinforcement of it.³²

³⁰ Harold Laski, Reflections on the Constitution (Manchester, 1951), pp. 122-123.

³¹ Cabinet Conclusions 54 (30), CAB 23/63.

³² Committee on Policy in Palestine. Second Report, September 22, 1930, C.P. 309 (30), CAB 24/215. Cabinet Conclusions 55 (30), CAB 23/64.

Indeed, far from being ignorant of the implications of the Policy Statement, Cabinet ministers immediately recognized the unfavourable consequences of the proposed policy to Zionist interests when presented with the draft text. When first discussing the Statement, the Cabinet considered instructing Passfield to consult with Dr. Weizmann prior to its publication to forestall hostile Jewish reaction, but deferred its decision on this proposal pending the outcome of the Expert Sub-Committee's findings. Confronted with these conclusions at its meeting of September 24, 1930, the Cabinet realized that the Zionists would be worse off than it earlier had believed. Therefore, not only was Passfield specifically requested to inform Dr. Weizmann "verbally" of the contents of the White Paper, but also he was strongly urged to hold a similar meeting with the Marquess of Reading before briefing Weizmann.³³

The following day, O.G.R. Williams modified the White Paper, as directed by the Cabinet. At this point, no further reference to Cabinet was required. The text was immediately approved by Sir George Grindle, acting for the ailing Shuckburgh. Sir Samuel Wilson concurred with this decision. In doing so, he minuted his agreement with earlier comments made by Sir John Campbell and Sir Basil Blackett to the effect that the Statement was too long. However, noting that its length could preclude press criticism on the grounds of superficiality, he did not have it changed. Passfield ratified this version of the White Paper on October 2, 1930.³⁴ Although the

³³Ibid.

³⁴Minutes by Grindle, September 25, 1930; Wilson, September 27, 1930; and Passfield, October 2, 1930. C0733/183/77050/C.

Policy Statement was completed, the practical steps to implement its policies particularly on the land question were not resolved. Sir John Hope Simpson had used his India Office experience to examine the Palestine situation and to offer practical suggestions. However, while concluding the White Paper, Middle East Department officials noted that Hope Simpson had not revealed the appropriate Indian laws that would solve the key land question, now identified by Colonial Office civil servants and supported by him. As far as Williams was concerned, the major task facing the Middle East Department at this point was the enactment of land legislation. Nevertheless, this question was not settled by the time that the White Paper was released.³⁵

Meanwhile, Passfield had met with Reading on September 25th to inform him of the contents of the Policy Statement and Hope Simpson Report. No account of this interview is extant in departmental correspondence. Nevertheless, more information exists on Passfield's October 1st encounter with Dr. Weizmann. In a letter reporting the matter to the Prime Minister, Passfield stated that he had informed the Zionist leader of the gist of Hope Simpson's report and of the "proposals" for the Policy Statement.³⁶ He noted that Weizmann "took it very well indeed, but, of course, explained that he could not express an opinion until he had seen the documents." In response to Weizmann's concern that a definite numerical limit was to be imposed on the ultimate number of Jewish settlers, Passfield reported: "This

³⁵ Minute by Williams, October 2, 1930, ibid.

³⁶ Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, October 3, 1930. Premier 1/102. A copy of this letter was sent to Snowden.

I was able to tell him was not in question at present, though it might one day come to that." The Colonial Secretary added: "I think he was contented to hear that the agricultural colonisation could go on, for some years at least, on the land already acquired."

In fact, Dr. Weizmann, suspecting the intent of the White Paper policy, informed Passfield on October 13th that he would have no choice but to resign if the Statement were issued. Through the intervention of Malcolm MacDonald, a second meeting between Weizmann and Passfield was held at the Colonial Office on October 15th in a last-minute attempt to resolve this crisis. However, according to the Jewish Agency's account of this interview, "...Lord Passfield tried to say everything he could to prevent any kind of unpleasantness or difficulties and was playing for time...."³⁷ It should be emphasized that the Colonial Secretary did not revise his assessment of Weizmann's attitudes concerning the White Paper policy. Neither the Prime Minister nor Snowden were told of the strong opposition expressed by the Zionist leader against the coming policy after his meeting of October 1st with Passfield.

The Colonial Office had no intention of requesting the Cabinet to reconsider the Policy Statement. Proofs of the White Paper were forwarded to the Prime Minister and Snowden on October 6th. Snowden had no comments to offer. Meanwhile, Ramsay MacDonald's reaction to the Statement was symptomatic of his ambivalence towards Palestine affairs. The Prime Minister believed that a vigorous examination of

³⁷ Jewish Agency minutes, October 15, 1930, cited in Rose, op. cit., p. 16.

problems in Palestine had been carried out and that its results should be implemented accordingly. The only amendment that he presented dealt with the final paragraph of the White Paper. It should be noted that this intervention was fully consistent with his Government's practice of delegating the final approval of policy papers to him as its head. Instead of making an appeal for co-operation to the Zionists, Ramsay MacDonald suggested that the Statement should also include a request for Arab support.³⁸ This was the limit of Ramsay MacDonald's intervention in the matter. The change was quickly made and the Statement of Policy, together with the Hope Simpson Report, was tabled in the House of Commons on October 20, 1930.

Prior to this, advance copies of these documents were delivered to the Jewish Agency on October 17, 1930. The Zionists frantically attempted to persuade the Colonial Office to modify the White Paper or, failing this, at least to delay publication pending further discussion. Nevertheless, Weizmann's last-ditch telephone conversation with Passfield of October 18th was to no avail. The Colonial Office had no intention of changing its course. As in the case of Weizmann's protest of the previous week, the Colonial Office kept both Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden ignorant of his second intervention.³⁹

Evaluating the activity of the Colonial Office, it can be observed that Passfield and his civil servants had allowed serious flaws to enter their work. They thought that they had prepared a conclusive

³⁸"The Origins of the Palestine Statement of Policy," undated and unsigned memorandum, CO733/182/77050/A.

³⁹Rose, op. cit., pp. 16-18.

white paper based on the ostensibly concrete findings of Hope Simpson's report. To a certain extent they were justified. Radical changes in the fabric of policy relating to Palestine were masked in the reaffirmations and reiterations given to previous principle. However, practical measures to implement this policy had not been settled. Moreover, weaknesses of detail within the Hope Simpson Report proved to be sources of grief to the Middle East Department and to the Colonial Office.

In addition, Passfield and his officials had not been conscious enough of Jewish sensibilities. They permitted a brusquely worded document to appear. Controversy emerged as much over the presentation of the White Paper as over the issue of policy expressed in it. Although the Hope Simpson Report was even-handed towards both segments of Palestine, the White Paper was one-sided. The Policy Statement clearly lacked the finesse of Hope Simpson's conciliatory proposals. The two divergent documents were indicative of conflicting attitudes on Palestine. While Hope Simpson privately held reservations against Zionism, he had evolved a formula to encourage the co-existence of both communities. Britain's obligation for the Jewish National Home could be compatible with the "dual obligation" policy that emphasized Arab rights as an equal part of British Mandate responsibilities. Bilingualism was the inherent feature of the Hope Simpson Report.

On the other hand, Colonial Office officials disliked the Jewish National Home project, and were determined to undermine it in favour of Arab nationalism. Aspects of the Zionist efforts were severely and rather gratuitously criticized in the White Paper. This biased attitude characterized the Policy Statement. This document became so associated with Passfield that it has been termed the Passfield White Paper. Although Passfield had little to do with its actual preparation, he bore the ultimate responsibility for it.

CHAPTER 4

TWO WHITE PAPERS, ONE POLITICAL CONTROVERSY

Immediate Reaction

Reaction to the White Paper was both immediate and hostile. Dr. Chaim Weizmann resigned from the Presidency of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization on October 20th. The text of Weizmann's angry letter to Passfield was distributed quickly to the press to ensure the widest possible publicity.¹ Even more sensational was the wholehearted support given to Dr. Weizmann by two noted non-Zionist Jews. Felix Warburg and Lord Melchett both resigned their positions in the Jewish Agency. In doing so, they took great pains to publicize their opinions that the Policy Statement repudiated Mandate obligations.²

The Labour Government was faced with an embarrassing situation. The Middle East Department was confronted with the coalescence of diverse Jewish factions, Zionist and non-Zionist, on this issue. By resigning, Weizmann had broken off official relations between the Jewish Agency, the body representing Jewish participation in the Mandate,

¹Weizmann to Passfield, letter, October 20, 1930, published in The Times, October 21, 1930.

²Ibid., October 22, 1930.

and the British Government, the Mandatory power in Palestine. This unprecedented action dramatized Zionist antagonism, created by the very real shift in British policy. Dr. Weizmann could take no other stand. The White Paper proposals had undermined the long-term Zionist policy, formulated and fostered by Weizmann, of dependence on British sponsorship for the creation of the Jewish National Home. Weizmann termed the new policy a "profound change," and stressed that it crystallized the development of the Jewish National Home. He maintained that the White Paper repudiated British assurances on future policy given by Arthur Henderson to the League Council the previous month. Because of its nature, Weizmann adamantly rejected the White Paper as a basis for further co-operation between the Jewish Agency and the British Government.

Such controversy alone would have created difficulties for the Government. However, Ramsay MacDonald's problems were complicated further by denunciations of the White Paper policy on the part of opposition politicians. Palestine again had emerged as a source of weakness for his minority Government. The Prime Minister had succeeded in forestalling political opposition against the recommendations of the Shaw Commission the previous April. However, the White Paper generated intense political heat. An important feature that distinguished this policy from the one presented in April, 1930 was the lack of an all-party consensus. The Prime Minister did not hold consultations with opposition leaders on future policy for Palestine as he had done the previous April. The harsh reaction of MacDonald's opponents against the Policy Statement indicates that this omission

was considered a slight. As a result, this factor contributed greatly in transforming a non-partisan issue into a domestic political controversy. Notwithstanding this, it is extremely likely that the White Paper on its own merits would have disturbed the opposition. However, the ill-will created by what was interpreted as a calculated insult compounded the seriousness of the political crisis that confronted Ramsay MacDonald.

A prominent group of Conservatives led the attack by criticizing the White Paper policy in a letter to The Times on October 23rd. Stanley Baldwin, Sir Austen Chamberlain,³ and Leopold Amery⁴ co-signed the letter, giving it weight as an authoritative rebuke. The White Paper was castigated for its harshness towards the Zionist cause. Moreover, the new policy was also attacked for its contradiction with British Mandate obligations to the Zionists.

In addition, David Lloyd George was even more vociferous in his condemnation of the Policy Statement. During a political speech delivered on October 24th, he endorsed the Baldwin-Chamberlain-Amery letter, and then tore into the White Paper. Lloyd George accused the Labour Government of a "'breach of national faith."⁵ He elaborated

³An active participant in British political life, Sir Austen Chamberlain (1863-1937) had held the positions of Postmaster-General, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of State for India, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He was a member of the War Cabinet in 1918.

⁴Leopold Amery (1873-1955) had served as Colonial Secretary in the 1924-1929 Conservative Government. In 1919-1920, he had been Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. Amery was subsequently Secretary of State for India from 1940 until 1945.

⁵The Times, October 25, 1930.

this charge by stating that the Government intended to "'scuttle"' its obligations to the Zionists.

General Jan Smuts again felt it necessary to intervene on the Palestine question. The previous May, he questioned the immigration suspension. However, this initiative had little impact as the Colonial Office effectively stifled his protest by withholding it from the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, his co-signed letter to The Times of December, 1929 had led Ramsay MacDonald to establish Hope Simpson's inquiry. Smuts' latest intervention also influenced the course of Government policy in Palestine. To begin with, his cable of October 22, 1930 was addressed to the Prime Minister. In it, he strongly criticized the White Paper policy, but concluded by providing a set of recommendations to remedy what he considered to have represented a serious injustice:

I would most strongly urge the Government that a statement be issued that the terms of the Balfour Declaration be fully carried out in good faith and that the Government's Palestine Policy will be recast accordingly.

The Prime Minister immediately requested advice from the Colonial Office, and promptly received a draft reply stating that the policy for Palestine remained unchanged and that the British Government did not "aim at crystallizing the Jewish National Home at its present stage of development." The Colonial Office rebuttal was wired to Smuts without amendment. In responding to this explanation with his cable of October 24, 1930, Smuts accepted the Prime Minister's account of the situation, but retained strong reservations concerning the future direction of British policy in Palestine, shrewdly drawing

attention to the restrictive land and immigration strategies that the Colonial Office intended to use in order to halt the Jewish National Home project:

I specially welcome your assurance that the recent statement does not definitely crystallize the Government's policy on the National Home, as my impression remains that, both as regards land purchase and immigration, the Government's statement does not correspond to the active obligation for a National Home undertaken in the Balfour Declaration.

Nevertheless, Smuts inadvertently added to Ramsay MacDonald's difficulties.⁵ Misunderstanding the confidential nature of this exchange, he released copies of the three cables to the press. Smuts merely informed the Prime Minister of this action as a courtesy while acknowledging his qualified acceptance of the explanation provided to him. The Prime Minister's objections did not arrive in time to prevent the distribution of this correspondence. Smuts promptly apologized for this action. However, faced with a fait accompli, Ramsay MacDonald reluctantly authorized his staff to distribute the text of this exchange to the press in London. The impact of this correspondence, coming from a personality of the stature of Smuts, contributed enormously to the growing clamour against the White Paper policy.⁶

⁵Smuts to Ramsay MacDonald, cable, October 22, 1930; Vincent to Boyd, letter, October 23, 1930; Boyd to Vincent, letter and enclosure, October 23, 1930; Ramsay MacDonald to Smuts, cable, October 23, 1930; Smuts to Ramsay MacDonald, cable, October 24, 1930. Premier 1/103. See The Times, October 25 and 27, 1930.

The opening of Parliament provided additional opportunity for criticism of the White Paper. In his reply to the King's Speech, Stanley Baldwin termed the Policy Statement "a very serious alteration." To him, Palestine represented an important political issue, ranking second on his list of pressing topics of the day - behind India but ahead of the serious domestic problem of unemployment.⁷ In his somewhat limp rebuttal to Baldwin's attack, Ramsay MacDonald set the tone for his Government's response to criticisms of the White Paper policy. This position was maintained throughout the controversy.⁸

I repeat, there is nothing that has amazed the Colonial Office more than the extraordinary meaning and the extraordinary intentions attributed to the Colonial Office and the Government on account of the publication of the White Paper.

David Lloyd George undermined the Prime Minister's reply with a devastating speech the following day. He ridiculed Ramsay MacDonald's assertion that no shift in policy had occurred by commenting that if there had been no change there would have been no opposition to Government policy. Moreover, Lloyd George effectively hit a key weakness in policy by questioning the terms and nature of the proposed development fund. In conclusion, he requested a special debate.⁹

⁷Commons, October 28, 1930, vol. 244, col. 18. The question of independence for India had re-emerged with the publication of a report by Sir John Simon, which recommended responsible government on a gradual basis. On account of the controversy created by this proposal, the British Government had arranged for a conference of representatives from India, the British political parties, and the British and Indian Governments to be held in London the following month to discuss the future constitutional status of India. This meeting, which became known as the Round Table Conference, was the first of a series of gatherings conducted throughout the 1930's on this question. It took place from November 20, 1930 until January 19, 1931.

⁸Ibid., col. 24.

⁹Ibid., October 29, 1930, cols. 46-47.

To compound Ramsay MacDonald's political woes, Harry Gossling, Labour M.P. for Whitechapel, died suddenly on October 24th. The loss of a member would have been troublesome enough for the minority Government. The fact that Gossling had represented a constituency with a large Jewish population was a source of grave concern to the Labour Party. Whitechapel had been considered a safe Labour seat. Poale Zion, the Zionist labour affiliate, was instrumental in ensuring recent electoral successes. As a result of the uproar over Palestine, the vacancy in this constituency could not have occurred at a more inopportune time for the Labour Government.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the White Paper aroused antagonism within the Labour Party. This opposition focused on the glaring inconsistencies between Labour Party and Government policy on Palestine. At the Thirtieth Labour Party Conference held in early October, 1930, a resolution sponsored by Poale Zion was approved. This resolution urged the British Government to promote and to finance Jewish immigration to Palestine. The convention specifically lauded the minority view expressed by Harry Snell in the Shaw Report.¹¹ Prominent Labour M.P.'s such as Lieutenant-Commander

¹⁰The assessment of the political situation in Whitechapel by G.R. Shepherd, the National Agent of the Labour Party, was quite gloomy. Report dated November 25, 1930, Labour Party Papers, vol. 57.

¹¹The Labour Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Report of the Thirtieth Annual Conference (London, 1930), pp. 220-222.

Joseph Kenworthy¹² and Colonel Josiah Wedgwood¹³ had no compunction about publicly expressing their dislike of the October Policy Paper. In letters to The Times, Parliamentary debates, and public speeches, they vociferously condemned Government policy.¹⁴

Strong opposition to the White Paper and adverse reaction from the constituencies made the Palestine question a pressing issue within the Labour caucus. At a stormy meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party held on October 31, 1930, Passfield attempted to assure his colleagues that no shift in policy towards Palestine had been intended. According to Passfield, the White Paper had "'created a most deplorable impression"' among Jews. Admitting that the wording of the Policy Statement was unfortunate, Passfield disingenuously stated that the text was "'perhaps open to anti-Jewish interpretation which was not meant by the Colonial Office.'" Nevertheless, the Colonial Secretary's explanation did little to reduce opposition to the White Paper policy. Passfield failed to convince opponents within his own party that this policy did not represent an innovation in Government

¹²Lieutenant-Commander Joseph Kenworthy (1886-1953), later the tenth Baron Strabolgi. See Joseph M.K. Strabolgi, Sailors, Statesmen - and Others; and Autobiography (London, 1933).

¹³Colonel Josiah Wedgwood (1872-1943) had served in Ramsay MacDonald's First Labour Government as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1928, he began to lobby for the transformation of Palestine into a self-governing Jewish dominion, establishing a pressure group for this purpose: the Seventh Dominion League. See Josiah C. Wedgwood, The Seventh Dominion (London, 1928) and N.A. Rose, "The Seventh Dominion," The Historical Journal XIV (2), June, 1971, pp. 397-416. At this point, Wedgwood believed that the White Paper had killed his project.

¹⁴See The Times, October 28 and 30, 1930.

thinking.¹⁵

Throughout the controversy, the Government took the position that the White Paper furore was a misunderstanding. Tactically speaking the Government could take no other stand. A frank admission of the designs of the Colonial Office Middle East Department on Palestine would probably have dismayed and embarrassed the Prime Minister as well as members of the Palestine Cabinet Committee that ostensibly had determined this policy.

In London, the Zionist Organization opposed the White Paper on two fronts. The movement strenuously attempted to discredit Government policy by fostering opposition among Jewish and non-Jewish sympathizers as well as among the general public, particularly in Britain. In addition, the Zionist Organization developed an active response to the Policy Statement. Zionist energies were geared to neutralizing the new policy on the basis of international law. It appears that the Marquess of Reading was instrumental in developing this strategy. Basically, this policy envisaged Jewish Agency representations before the Council of the League of Nations to obtain an unfavourable interpretation of the White Paper policy from the Permanent Court at the Hague.¹⁶

¹⁵The New York Times, November 1, 1930, also reported that the Prime Minister was considering the possibility of issuing a second statement to remedy the controversy created by the first.

¹⁶See Israel Cohen, op. cit., p. 275 and The New York Times, October 22, 1930.

This Zionist strategy was supported by Lord Hailsham¹⁷ and Sir John Simon,¹⁸ two noted lawyers whose views carried much weight because they had served as senior law officers of the Crown. In their letter to The Times, they condemned the White Paper policy as a violation of international law. Both personalities stated their learned opinion that the new policy involved "a departure from the obligations of the Mandate." In particular, they deplored the sections of the Policy Statement that restricted unoccupied state lands to Arabs, that condemned the exclusively Jewish employment policy on Zionist projects, and that continued the suspension of Jewish immigration. Moreover, Hailsham and Simon urged the British Government to suspend contested provisions of the White Paper pending an advisory opinion from the Hague Court.¹⁹

¹⁷Douglas McGarel Hogg (1872-1950) had been created Viscount Hailsham in 1928. He had held office as Attorney-General (1922-1924, 1924-1928) and Lord Chancellor (1928-1929) in former Conservative Governments. At this time, he was Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords. He later served as Secretary of State for War and Leader of the House of Lords (1931-1935), Lord Chancellor for a second time (1935-1938), and Lord President of the Council (1938).

¹⁸Sir John Simon (1873-1954) had been Attorney-General (1913-1915) and Home Secretary (1915-1916) in various Liberal Governments. He later served as Foreign Secretary (1931-1935), Home Secretary for a second time and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (1935-1937), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1937-1940), and Lord Chancellor (1940-1945).

¹⁹The Times, November 4, 1930.

The Colonial Office on
the Defensive

Colonial Office officials did not anticipate the uproar that the Policy Statement would generate.²⁰ The Middle East Department was stung by the intensity of hostility against the White Paper. Dr. Weizmann's resignation at this point had been unexpected. Moreover, the active opposition on the part of British politicians dismayed officials. Reacting to this widespread antagonism, the Colonial Office deliberately fostered the stand that the White Paper policy involved no departure from previous Government policy. Colonial Office civil servants were aware that the ministry was in a vulnerable position. Throughout the entire controversy, officials strove to protect their position by again consciously distorting or omitting the truth in dealings with the Zionists, politicians, and other departments, including the Prime Minister's office.

²⁰ See "The Origins of the Palestine Statement of Policy," op. cit., C0733/182/77050/A.

A readily available example of this procedure is Passfield's reply of October 25, 1930 to Dr. Weizmann's letter of resignation. The text of the Colonial Secretary's letter was given to The Times by Dr. Weizmann, together with his rebuttal.²¹ Passfield wrote that Weizmann's resignation was "based on an imperfect appreciation of the Government's attitude and intentions." Moreover, he noted that the British Government did not intend "'to crystallize the development of the Jewish National Home at the present stage of development,'" as Weizmann had charged. Passfield concluded by asserting that verbal representations from the Zionists had been considered and "certain changes in the wording" of the White Paper had been made.

Dr. Weizmann challenged Passfield on the basis of inconsistencies between the Hope Simpson Report and the White Paper. The only point on which he could refute Passfield on fact was Passfield's declaration of prior consultations between the Jewish Agency and the Colonial Office over the text of the Policy Statement. In reality, Colonial Office officials at the highest level consistently rebuffed Jewish Agency attempts to offer suggestions on the wording of the White Paper. Instead of misconstruing the intent of the White Paper policy, the Jewish Agency had accurately identified its implications, especially the land-freeze section. The strategy of using the accessibility of land as a lever to curtail Jewish immigration, and ultimately the Jewish National Home project, was recognized.

²¹ Passfield to Weizmann, letter, October 25, 1930; Weizmann to Passfield, letter, October 30, 1930. The Times, October 31, 1930.

O.G.R. Williams, the civil servant who had originated and developed this scheme, minuted that the White Paper policy would halt the Zionist enterprise for at least five years.

The emergence of Palestine as a partisan political issue upset British officials. The activity of opposition politicians in contesting the Policy Statement angered senior civil servants. Colonial Office officials were particularly incensed by the Hailsham-Simon letter. Williams was vociferous in his condemnation of it.²²

If the policy of His Majesty's Government is to be immobilised because a certain number of irresponsible or interested persons choose to suggest that it is in conflict with the Mandate, I do not see how the administration can be carried on.

Sir John Shuckburgh noted: "It strikes me as amazing that Lord Hailsham & Sir J. Simon should put their names to such a document." Within the Middle East Department, it was recognized that the mere consideration of this matter by the Hague Court would damage British interests. The tenor of Williams' remarks on the subject indicates that this active Zionist strategy was both credible and potentially effective. Williams wrote:²³

It is extremely unlikely that we should get an opinion from the Hague Court which would be of the slightest practical value in elucidating our difficulties. It would, I think, either be a compromise, on familiar lines, between the contending parties, or it would be so framed as to be exceedingly unfavourable and humiliating to His Majesty's Government; and the latter alternative is the more likely owing to the peculiar composition of the Hague Court.

²² Minute by Williams, November 4, 1930, G0733/182/77050.

²³ Minutes by Shuckburgh, November 4, 1930 and Williams, November 4, 1930, ibid.

The resulting rebuttal was published under Passfield's signature in The Times on November 6, 1930. Writing that an "inaccurate representation" of the sections of the White Paper criticized made their arguments plausible, he proceeded to minimize the impact of their attack by dealing with the issues questioned. On the problem of state lands, Passfield commented, most disingenuously, that the Policy Statement did not rule out the possibility of permitting Jewish settlement on this land. In fact, Colonial Office policy was based on the prohibition of Jewish settlement on state land. Passfield attempted to refute the attack made on the White Paper provision that criticized exclusive Jewish employment practices. He argued that the Policy Statement did not actually mean that these policies would be ended by Government intervention. However, the use of Government pressure to discourage these practices was an option accepted by the Colonial Office. On the question of immigration, Passfield wrote that it was not the intention of the White Paper policy to curtail Jewish immigration as long as "'any Arab' remained without employment," as Hailsham and Simon stated. This comment clearly contradicted the opinions expressed by Colonial Office civil servants on the subject to rationalize the change in policy.

Passfield's response was based on a literal interpretation of the text of the Policy Statement. While his reply may have been consistent with the straight text of the White Paper, it revealed only part of the truth. Colonial Office attitudes clearly favoured the provisions of the White Paper criticized by Hailsham and Simon. Despite the efforts of Colonial Office civil servants, the effects of the

Hailsham-Simon letter remained. This attack, coming from individuals as prominent in the law as they were, was an embarrassment to the Government and a further blow to the Colonial Office.

While officials in London were uneasy at the outcome of the Policy Statement, the High Commissioner of Palestine was jubilant.

Sir John Chancellor was pleased with Weizmann's resignation, and minimized what he interpreted as an organized campaign of international Jewish hostility against Great Britain.²⁴

In view of the enormous opposition generated by the Policy Statement, the Prime Minister became dissatisfied with the performance of the Colonial Office. By this time, Ramsay MacDonald was well aware that inconsistencies existed in what the Colonial Office had led him to believe would be the unchanging nature of policy in Palestine. The subtleties of the change in Palestine policy, as expressed in the White Paper, clearly escaped the Prime Minister. As far as he was concerned, the "equal obligation" position that he enunciated the previous April still stood when, in reality, the balance had just been tilted to favour Arab interests.

However, upon consideration of the Colonial Office practice of promoting its policies by withholding vital information, this lack of awareness on the Prime Minister's part was to be expected. Ramsay MacDonald had no idea of the evolution of the anti-Zionist policy at the Colonial Office from its origins in January, 1930. Throughout 1930, Passfield's officials consistently had furnished the Prime Minister

²⁴Chancellor to Williams, letter, October 22, 1930, CO733/183/77050/D/A.

with selected information designed to condition him to the very real shift in policy envisaged by the Middle East Department in the October White Paper. As a result, Ramsay MacDonald had accepted the final draft of the Policy Statement with only one minor amendment.

By late October, he began to have second thoughts on the validity of the policy outlined in the White Paper. The Prime Minister had authorized the Hope Simpson survey and a definitive policy statement in order to undo the controversy on Palestine created by the Shaw Commission. This manoeuvre had backfired. Ramsay MacDonald faced a serious domestic political crisis over Palestine. As a reaction, from the opposition to the Policy Statement, the Prime Minister attempted to detach himself as much as possible.

Ramsay MacDonald left his Colonial Secretary to bear the brunt of the widespread hostility to the White Paper by doing little to support either the Policy Statement or Passfield. Throughout the controversy, the Prime Minister defended the White Paper in a limited fashion by taking the position that it had been misunderstood. It is obvious that the Prime Minister wanted to extricate himself from the taint of liability for the Policy Statement.

One striking example of this lack of support was Ramsay MacDonald's failure effectively to refute assertions made by Lloyd George and Joseph Kenworthy to the effect that the White Paper had been published without the approval of the Cabinet. The undoubtedly jaundiced views of Passfield's permanent officials to this political bludgeoning are unfortunately not extant. However, Beatrice Webb, his

wife, viewed this scuttling quite grimly in her Diaries. According to her, Passfield passively accepted this brusque treatment without objection.²⁵

Less than two weeks after the release of the October White Paper on Palestine, the Prime Minister was seriously considering a modification of policy to mitigate the outcry. His options were limited. For the sake of consistency, he could not repudiate his own Government's policy outright. In considering this alternative, Ramsay MacDonald was influenced by General Smuts' call for the reversal of the White Paper through the publication of an interpretative statement. Nevertheless, he initiated this change of position unofficially and indirectly by responding to Dr. Weizmann's rebuttal to Passfield's reply of October 25th, which the Zionist leader had sent him before publication in The Times. Instead of letting the matter stand with a description of the controversy as a misunderstanding, as Passfield had done in his letter, MacDonald took the initiative to open the door to discussions as a means of reducing "differences" created by the White Paper. Citing the immediate problem of the Imperial Conference as cause for delay, Ramsay MacDonald invited Weizmann to a private interview the following week to consider "precise points." The Prime Minister left the formulation of an agenda to

²⁵Lloyd George made this charge in the House of Commons. See Commons, November 17, 1930; vol. 245, cols. 79-80. Kenworthy's accusation was carried in The Times, October 28, 1930. See Beatrice Webb's Diaries, entry for December 14, 1930, p. 260.

Weizmann, and requested the Zionist leader to submit one to him through his son Malcolm.²⁶

In this note, Ramsay MacDonald departed from the strictures of the White Paper policy. His proposal to subject contentious provisions to a "thorough exploration," with a view to modifying them, repudiated the somewhat strident White Paper comment that Palestine policy would not be changed because of outside pressure. Although the Prime Minister did not specify whether these talks would lead to an explanatory statement, he strongly hinted at this possibility:

...I am more convinced than ever that...the great bulk of the divisions between us are words, interpretations upon words, assumptions of what is or is not inevitable or consequential...I am more certain than ever that...a thorough exploration would remove practically everything and reduce the real differences between us to such small proportions and importance as to enable co-operation to continue.

The remarkable feature of this initiative is the fact that the Colonial Office was not consulted beforehand. Passfield was merely informed that the Prime Minister would meet with Dr. Weizmann after the invitation had been issued. The Prime Minister's office sent a copy of this note to the Colonial Office only on November 13th. Had Colonial Office civil servants been aware of its contents before its dispatch, they undoubtedly would have made strong representations to

²⁶Weizmann to Passfield, letter, October 30, 1930, published in The Times, October 31, 1930. Ramsay MacDonald to Weizmann, letter, October 31, 1930, Premier 1/103. The Imperial Conference was held from October 1, 1930 until November 14, 1930. See The Times, October 22, 1930 and November 15, 1930. At this conference, Ramsay MacDonald's Government agreed to acknowledge the political equality between the Dominions and Great Britain and to grant the Dominions full independence in enacting legislation. These measures were formalized by the Statute of Westminster of 1931.

dissuade Ramsay MacDonald from pursuing this course of action.²⁷

In addition to initiating the modification of the White Paper policy, the Prime Minister effectively vetoed the immediate implementation of this policy by blocking the quick introduction of restrictive land legislation. Concerned by information received from Dr. Weizmann to the effect that new land ordinances were about to be proclaimed in Jerusalem, the Prime Minister strongly suggested to Passfield that an opportunity might be taken to get into closer touch with the Zionists through consultations on such legislation. Ramsay MacDonald was troubled enough by this question to send a follow-up letter to the Colonial Secretary. Reiterating his concern over the land ordinances situation, he wrote: "...although the White Paper says that co-operation with the Jews is to be sought, nothing is known by the Zionist agency about them." Ramsay MacDonald feared that the arbitrary imposition of land laws at this time by the Palestine Government would exacerbate an already delicate situation.²⁸

The result will be that whatever they contain will be the subject of further propaganda and mischief-making. I do hope that Chancellor is handling the situation with discretion. He must see the tremendous issues involved.

²⁷Vincent to Boyd, letter and enclosure, November 13, 1930, Premier 1/103.

²⁸See The New York Times, November 3, 1930. The Prime Minister had originally made this request in a note to Passfield dated approximately November 1, 1930, of which no trace exists. Ramsay MacDonald to Passfield, letter, November 4, 1930, C0733/185/77072/IV. This land legislation had been shelved the previous May because of the controversy created by the suspension of the Jewish Labour Schedule;

Faced with this explicit instruction, Sir John Shuckburgh recommended that the High Commissioner should be informed accordingly. The result of this suggestion was an unprecedented cable to Chancellor in which Passfield instructed the High Commissioner to consult fully with the Jewish Agency "to minimize future controversy." Although the Prime Minister delayed the implementation of the White Paper policy, he did so inadvertently. In dealing with this question, Ramsay MacDonald revealed his lack of awareness of the significance of the land question in achieving this policy. The speedy imposition of restrictive land laws was the only viable means of enacting the new policy. The Zionists were well aware of the implications of the land issue. With such consultations, they could actively resist aspects of the legislation that prejudiced their interests by prolonging discussions. Colonial Office officials recognized that a delay of any sort would damage their policy for Palestine.²⁹

²⁹Minutes by Shuckburgh, November 5, 1930 and Williams, November 10, 1930, C0733/185/77072/I. Passfield to Chancellor, cable, November 5, 1930, C0733/185/77072/IV.

The Intervention of Arthur Henderson and the
Reconsideration of Government Policy

The intervention of Arthur Henderson gave impetus to an official Government policy to cope with the uproar over the Policy Statement. Government pronouncements describing the controversy as a misunderstanding had failed to extricate it from its political troubles. At the Cabinet meeting of November 6, 1930, Arthur Henderson took the initiative of raising the topic of Palestine on the grounds that the urgency of the situation adversely affected both his dealings with the League of Nations as Foreign Secretary and his domestic political responsibilities as Labour Party Secretary. It should be stressed that the subject of Palestine was not on the agenda for this Cabinet meeting.³⁰

³⁰Cabinet Conclusions 66 (30), CAB 23/65. Arthur Henderson (1863-1935) had served as Home Secretary in the First Labour Government. A political organizer of great ability, he remained Secretary of the Labour Party during the period of the Second Labour Government. Henderson not only administered the Foreign Office effectively, but also managed the Labour Party competently.

This initiative was all the more remarkable when one considers the attitude of Foreign Office officials on the Palestine White Paper. Members of the Eastern Department shared the opinions and prejudices of their Colonial Office counterparts concerning the Palestine question. The Foreign Office had an interest in the matter because of its connection to the League of Nations. Unofficial consultations were carried on among officials in both ministries. The Colonial Office Middle East Department usually kept the Eastern Department informed of developments in Palestine. Occasionally, copies of telegrams and notes between Chancellor and Passfield were sent to the Foreign Office as a matter of courtesy.

In evaluating Hope Simpson's report and private letter to Passfield of August 18, 1930, the Foreign Office supported his views. George Rendel regarded the letter in particular to have constituted an accurate reflection of conditions in Palestine.³¹ More interesting, perhaps, was his assessment of the final report of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine. He considered the proposal to redefine the Jewish National Home as a completed project to have been a viable option, but concurred with the Committee's decision not to issue such a statement on political grounds: "Indeed, any such reversal of policy, apart from leading to a dangerous conflict with the Jews all over the world, might even end in suggestions that the Mandate should be transferred to some other power." However, while holding similar opinions on the

³¹Hope Simpson to Passfield, letter, August 18, 1930, C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215. Minute by Rendel, October 3, 1930, FO371/14493/E5218/400/65.

justification of this policy, Foreign Office officials were more aware than their Colonial Office counterparts of the potentially explosive effects of the White Paper.³²

It will be seen...that the whole question is to be discussed informally with Dr. Weizmann, and possibly with Lord Reading, before Sir J. Hope Simpson's Report, and the statement of policy which is to accompany it, are published. It is hoped that this may render it possible to find some means of mitigating the Jewish outcry and the general Zionist attack on His Majesty's Government which are almost bound to follow the publication of these two documents.

With the uproar following their publication, Foreign Office officials, together with their Colonial Office counterparts, were concerned by the emergence of Palestine as a partisan domestic political question. Rendel was highly critical of the letter signed by Baldwin, Chamberlain, and Amery, which had appeared in The Times on October 22, 1930. He wrote that he wondered whether the note would have been written had they known "all the facts," referring to Hope Simpson's August 18th letter and the report of the Expert Sub-Committee.³³

Left on its own, the Foreign Office would have maintained its support of the White Paper. However, as Arthur Henderson's views became known, the attitudes of officials changed drastically. Before any outline of his involvement in the Palestine controversy is presented, his role as Foreign Secretary should first be discussed. From the start of his controversial appointment as Foreign Secretary,

³²Minute by Rendel, October 3, 1930, F0371/14493/E5219/400/65.

³³Minute by Rendel, October 27, 1930, F0371/14493/E5718/400/65.

Arthur Henderson imposed his personality and will on the Foreign Office. To begin with, Henderson immediately removed Sir Robert Lindsay from his post as Permanent Under-Secretary because he doubted his loyalty. Although Sir Robert Vansittart was assigned by Ramsay MacDonald to monitor Henderson because of the tension that existed between the two, he performed his duties conscientiously as Henderson's Permanent Under-Secretary.³⁴ Moreover, with the appointment of Sir Walford Selby, Henderson had chosen a capable and dependable private secretary.³⁵

In a comparison of the characteristics of Henderson and Passfield in dealing with the Palestine question, one ostensibly similar trait has been identified by David Carlton in Henderson. Carlton has written that Henderson's conduct as minister was somewhat detached.³⁶ At first glance this aloofness may be viewed as a lack of interest. However, it can be observed that in the case of the

³⁴In one of the few informative memoirs written by a senior British official, Robert Vansittart (1881-1957) has provided a personal account of the Palestine controversy of 1930-1931. See The Mist Procession. The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart (London, 1958), pp. 383-386.

³⁵Sir Walford Selby (1881-1965) was a career official. He had served as Assistant Private Secretary to Viscount Grey (1911-1915), First Secretary at the Residency in Cairo (1919-1922), and Principal Private Secretary to Secretaries of State since 1924. He was later Ambassador to Austria (1933-1937) and Portugal (1937-1940). In his outspoken autobiography, Selby considered Henderson "an admirable appointment." See Diplomatic Twilight 1930-1940 (London, 1953), pp. 3-4.

³⁶David Carlton, MacDonald versus Henderson. The Foreign Policy of the Second Labour Government (London, 1970), p. 22.

Palestine controversy, at least, Henderson concentrated his attention on broad outlines of policy as opposed to its detailed administration. This assessment substantiates Carlton's thesis.

An examination of Foreign Office correspondence on Palestine reveals that Henderson rarely read the relevant documents and minutes.

~~The signature of Walford Selby, however, appears on the minute sheets.~~

Selby was the key link in Henderson's administrative structure. He digested information on the files, and presented it orally to Henderson in précis form. Throughout the Palestine uproar, Selby managed to retain a sense of objectivity. Henderson had no axe to grind on the Palestine question. As a result, he was willing to reject the early assessments and recommendations of his Eastern Department on the White Paper.

Passfield's attitude too was seemingly one of detachment. Unlike Henderson, Passfield played a day-to-day role in Palestine matters. However, he was clearly apathetic in the key activity of determining policy trends or the consequences of policy decisions. Passfield's passivity relegated him to a position of ratifying suggestions which included a revised policy for Palestine made by his senior civil servants. Almost all of his notations in departmental minutes were restricted to his signature and the appropriate date. A study of extant documentation relating to Palestine in the 1930-1931 period reveals that Passfield seldom challenged any recommendations presented by his subordinates in Whitehall.

One of Passfield's main weaknesses on the Palestine question was his lack of objectivity. As a weak and ineffectual minister, Passfield was willingly manipulated by his permanent subordinates on Palestine matters, at least. There seems to have been no malice intended by his civil servants against Passfield personally. Throughout 1930, Colonial Office officials confidently believed that their proposed anti-Zionist plans were just and practicable. Passfield shared this attitude. His subordinates had been waiting for an opportunity to impose an anti-Zionist shift to British policy in Palestine. Since 1921, previous Colonial Secretaries had managed to resist this pressure. Winston Churchill, Lord Devonshire, and Leopold Amery had been more forceful administrators on this issue than Passfield.

In reacting to the Palestine controversy, Arthur Henderson had taken Weizmann's resignation quite seriously. Through Walford Selby, Henderson inquired whether statements that he had made on British policy for Palestine at the League Council meeting, the previous month, were inconsistent with the provisions of the White Paper, as alleged by Dr. Weizmann. George Rendel minuted that the "crystallization" of the Jewish National Home was not intended by the Policy Statement; however, he admitted that Henderson's description of the immigration suspension as temporary was incompatible with White Paper policy.³⁷

³⁷Minute by Rendel, October 22, 1930, F0371/14493/E5716/400
/65.

The Foreign Secretary accepted this assessment. He undoubtedly would have continued to maintain this attitude had not the Hailsham-Simon letter been published. The appearance of this letter in The Times brought about Henderson's active involvement in the Palestine question. Examining the letter, the Foreign Secretary was clearly impressed by the credible case that could be made before the Hague Court against the Policy Statement. Aware of the international ramifications of an unfavourable verdict, he considered the matter grave enough to warrant the immediate attention of his Cabinet colleagues. By promoting an active British policy, he intended to remove this threat.

The Cabinet favoured the establishment of another committee to consider the whole question. Despite the publication of Passfield's rebuttal in The Times that very morning, the Hailsham-Simon letter continued to impress his colleagues. Consultations with a legal authority on "juridical aspects of the question" were recommended. As a result, the Lord Advocate for Scotland, Craigie Aitchison, was nominated for the task.³⁸ An unnamed Cabinet member proposed that this committee should establish contact with Zionist representatives and recommend the "attitude to be taken by the Government in view of the reception of the recently issued White Paper." However, neither the nature of this action was defined nor was the notion of a second statement considered at this meeting. In addition, the committee was urged to pressure the Government of Palestine to keep in "close touch"

³⁸ Craigie Aitchison (1882-1941) remained Lord Advocate in Ramsay MacDonald's National Government of 1931.

with both the Jews and the Arabs before "issuing certain edicts now under consideration," undoubtedly a reference to the proposed land ordinances intended to implement the new policy.³⁹

Arthur Henderson influenced the ultimate conclusions of the meeting. The first resolution decreed that the Colonial Office should consult the Foreign Office before issuing any public statement "in regard to our policy in Palestine." As justification for this proposal, the involvement of the Foreign Secretary as the representative of the British Government at the League of Nations was cited. With this recommendation, Henderson explicitly questioned the wisdom of the White Paper policy. The hostility of Foreign Office civil servants to the Policy Statement emerged after Henderson had made his stand known.

The second conclusion formally established another Cabinet Committee on Palestine composed of Passfield, Henderson, A.V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Thomas Shaw, the War Minister. Members of the previous Committee who were omitted included Lord Thomson, the former Air Minister; J.H. Thomas, the Secretary of State for the Dominions; and Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The crucial addition to the Committee was Arthur Henderson. The ostensible role of this reconstituted forum was to consider objections raised against the White Paper policy. The results of the Prime Minister's meeting with Dr. Weizmann, scheduled for that afternoon, were expected to influence the function of the new Cabinet Committee.

³⁹Cabinet Meeting, November 6, 1930, Cabinet Conclusions 66(30), CAB 23/65.

Evaluating the consequences of Henderson's intervention during the Cabinet meeting of November 6, 1930, it should be stressed that the Foreign Secretary, while questioning the validity of the White Paper policy, did not offer a concrete alternative. He never raised the possibility of a second explanation either at the Cabinet session of November 6th or at the following meeting of November 11th. The initiative for discussions between the Government and the Zionists, with a view to a different explanation, came from the Prime Minister. His October 31st letter to Dr. Weizmann had been intended to defuse the Palestine controversy. However, Ramsay MacDonald was keeping this option to himself. He did not inform his Cabinet colleagues of the nature of his October 31st note to the Zionist leader. This secrecy on the part of the Prime Minister can account for the rather indefinite role contemplated for the reconstructed Cabinet Committee.

Because Ramsay MacDonald did not discuss the consequences of such talks at the November 6th Cabinet meeting, the whole question of discussions between the Cabinet Committee and the Zionists remained vague and dependent on the outcome of the Prime Minister's interview with Dr. Weizmann. This meeting was viewed as an unofficial exploratory encounter. Ramsay MacDonald wanted to present informally the option of discussions to Dr. Weizmann as a concession to obtain the restoration of official contact between the Jewish Agency and the Government. Such a reconciliation was considered a major step towards reducing his Government's political difficulties. However, the

Prime Minister did not commit his Government to this alternative in advance as he was evidently uncertain of the terms under which the Zionists would choose to re-establish contact and enter into negotiations.

Dr. Weizmann considered the White Paper a totally unacceptable document. Ramsay MacDonald was clearly concerned about the possible basis on which discussions could follow. For the sake of consistency, his Government had taken the position that the whole problem was a misunderstanding. Ramsay MacDonald's goal of negotiations seems to have been the accommodation of Zionist objections within the fabric of White Paper policy. The repudiation of the Policy Statement as a precondition for discussions was clearly out of the question.

No account is extant in the Public Record Office of the November 6th meeting between the Prime Minister and Dr. Weizmann. However, developments that followed this interview indicate that Weizmann described his personal position as favouring discussions on specific provisions of the White Paper, without accepting them as grounds for negotiations. In exchange, it seems that Ramsay MacDonald mentioned the possibility of a second explanation. However, circumstantial evidence suggests that Dr. Weizmann was purposely vague in his commitment of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency to this formula.

Weizmann's position can be attributed to the fact that the General Council of the Zionist Organization was then holding an emergency meeting in London. While condemning the White Paper, the Council empowered its executive and a special political committee to conduct negotiations on behalf of the Jewish Agency. This political committee was composed of five members, including two representatives from the Zionist Organization of America and the Va-ad Leumi. Chaim Weizmann was mandated to remain in his two offices pending the forthcoming Zionist Congress and Jewish Agency Assembly, scheduled for February, 1931. The main implication of these meetings was that Dr. Weizmann had lost his freedom of action in dealing with the British Government. His negotiations with the British would now depend on the consent of his Zionist Executive and the special committee of five.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the meeting with Dr. Weizmann convinced Ramsay MacDonald that his Government could conduct discussions with the Zionists. On his father's instructions, Malcolm MacDonald drafted a formal invitation to Dr. Weizmann to discuss the Policy Statement with the recently regrouped Cabinet Committee.⁴¹

In view of the fact that the recent White Paper on Palestine has proved liable to serious misunderstanding and doubts have been raised as to the compatibility of some passages with certain articles of the Palestine Mandate, I should be glad if you and some of your colleagues would come and exchange views on these matters with some members of the Cabinet.

⁴⁰The minutes of these meetings were published in the November, 1930 issue of New Judea, a publication of the World Zionist Organization.

⁴¹Ramsay MacDonald to Weizmann, letter, November 8, 1930, Premier 1/103.

The outcome of the talks had been left open. These terms did not mention the possible modification of White Paper policy as a result of the discussions by a second statement. It is apparent, however, that such an explanation represented an implicit consequence of the negotiations. The Prime Minister had committed his Government to nothing drastic other than formal talks with the Zionists. Under those conditions, he was certain that discussions could take place on a basis acceptable to him and his Government.

Arthur Henderson's account to the Cabinet meeting of November 11th is our only British source of information for the events that led up to the re-establishment of formal relations between the British Government and the Zionists.⁴² It seems that Dr. Weizmann and his executive had accepted Ramsay MacDonald's somewhat limited invitation to negotiate with the Cabinet Committee. While the Cabinet Committee wanted to meet with the Zionists during the week of November 10th-16th, the Zionists had requested a delay pending the arrival of a delegate from the Zionist Organization of America.⁴³ As far as Henderson had been concerned, everything was in order for a conference to have been held during the week of November 17th-24th.

⁴² Cabinet Conclusions 67 (30), CAB 23/65.

⁴³ Such representation never materialized. Instead, Harold Laski substituted for the leaders of the Zionist Organization of America.

However, Henderson reported that Passfield had committed a faux pas, jeopardizing the proposed discussions. The Zionists were dismayed by an interview between Passfield and the Managing Editor of the Yiddish daily, The New York Forward, published on November 7, 1930, in which the Colonial Secretary was reported to have said: "It [the White Paper] is not my document; it is the Cabinet's document; I am only technically responsible."⁴⁴ Henderson was particularly angered because this public pronouncement had not been cleared by the Foreign Office, as required by the resolution enacted at the previous Cabinet meeting. According to Passfield's apology to Ramsay MacDonald, the interview had taken place at Ernest Bevin's insistence to aid the Whitechapel by-election campaign.⁴⁵ The format of the meeting was that of a background briefing designed to explain "misinterpretations" over the Policy Statement to a left-wing American Jewish readership. One of the preconditions for this interview was that all comments were to be unattributable in nature. Passfield's name was not to have been mentioned. However, The Forward correspondent reported this encounter as a formal interview. At the time of his account to the Prime Minister, Passfield was uncertain as to which particular feature of his conversation had upset the Zionists.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Leopold Amery exploited this article in an attack on Government policy in the House of Commons. See Commons, November 17, 1930, vol. 245, col. 114.

⁴⁵ At this point, Ernest Bevin (1881-1951) headed the Trades Union Congress. As Foreign Secretary in the Third Labour Government (1945-1951), Bevin was a controversial figure because of his publicly stated hostility against the Jewish National Home project. The Foreign Office then participated actively in the administration of the Palestine Mandate because of the internationalization of this question following the Second World War. During his tenure of office, the Mandate was abandoned in 1948.

⁴⁶ Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, November 12, 1930, Premier 1/103.

The Forward interview precipitated a crisis between the Cabinet Committee and the Zionists. The resolution of this controversy resulted in the granting of greater concessions than intended from the British Government. These concessions were made in order to obtain Zionist participation in negotiations and, as a consequence, end the serious political crisis still faced by the Government. The Zionists refused to meet with the Cabinet Committee until the publication of a second policy statement was assured. In his report to the Cabinet meeting of November 11th, Henderson added that the Zionists had informed him that their presence at these talks "would only result in splitting the Zionist movement." Dr. Weizmann had suggested a formula for an announcement which Henderson read to the Cabinet. No trace of this version is extant at the Public Record Office. However, Henderson then read a statement which he personally had prepared. The text of this formula was hotly contested in Cabinet.

Finally, Henderson was requested to ask the Zionists whether they would accept an invitation to meet with the Cabinet Committee under the terms agreed to by Cabinet and with the public announcement of the Government's revised offer. This formula committed the Government to a further statement. Significantly, this initiative came from Henderson; not the Prime Minister. It constituted a retreat from the restrained invitation made the previous week:⁴⁷

⁴⁷The underlined sections indicate where the Cabinet amended Henderson's draft. Craigie Aitchison was formally appointed legal adviser to the Cabinet Committee at this Cabinet meeting.

Doubts having been expressed as to the compatibility of some passages of the White Paper of October 21st with certain Articles of the Palestine Mandate, and other passages having proved liable to serious misunderstandings, His Majesty's Government will make a further statement concerning these matters and they have invited representatives of the Jewish Agency to confer with some members of the Cabinet on the subject.

The question that left Zionist participation in doubt was the issue of whether the Government would implement contested aspects of the White Paper. The Zionists had refused to negotiate on the basis of the Policy Statement. However, the Government position did not contemplate a repudiation of the White Paper. To complicate matters, the Cabinet consensus precluded Henderson's proposed diplomatic accommodation of these two difficult points. That would have involved suspending outright the implementation of contentious provisions of the White Paper pending the outcome of the talks. As a result, the Policy Statement received an additional ratification. Despite this rebuff, the Foreign Secretary agreed to attempt to persuade the Zionists to accept the Cabinet statement without a special formula that considered the sensibilities of the Zionists: "Pending promulgation of the intended statement no action will be taken on the points in question."

Arthur Henderson met with Dr. Weizmann and Lewis Namier at the Foreign Office on November 12th. Weizmann accepted the conditions approved by Cabinet. In an official letter to the Prime Minister, Weizmann officially acknowledged Ramsay MacDonald's invitation of November 8th, as amended by Cabinet, and agreed to negotiations on the basis of the contentious formula. Dr. Weizmann sent the Prime Minister

an additional letter requesting the participation of Malcolm MacDonald in the talks.⁴⁸

He has our complete confidence, and if you will allow me to say so, our most sincere affection and respect. We should like him to be present as a link between us and the Cabinet delegation, and still more as a link between us and yourself. We should further like him to be able to report to you from his own personal knowledge both the progress made and the difficulties encountered in the conference.

The significant feature of the establishment of discussions between the Jewish Agency and the Government is the fact that it was not handled through the Colonial Office. The Colonial Office was only sent a copy of the Prime Minister's October 31st letter to Weizmann on November 13th, after the direction of Government policy towards the White Paper had shifted. The consultations leading up to the talks were not conducted by Passfield, Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine, but by Arthur Henderson.

It is clear that Ramsay MacDonald wanted a rapprochement with the Jewish Agency at almost all costs. Because Passfield was unacceptable to the Zionists, Henderson, through his initial intervention on the issue, became the British intermediary by default. The Cabinet resolution of November 6, 1930 that had made Colonial Office consultations with the Foreign Office mandatory on public statements relating to Palestine, in effect, had established the position of the Foreign Office as the substitute ministry to deal with Palestine. As a result, the Colonial Office was frozen out of full control of Palestine policy

⁴⁸ Weizmann to MacDonald, official letter, November 12, 1930; Weizmann to MacDonald, unofficial letter, November 12, 1930. Premier 1/103.

for several months. In addition, the Foreign Office had de facto veto power over day-to-day decisions relating to the administration of Palestine.

To emphasize this situation, it should be noted that Arthur Henderson answered Dr. Weizmann's unofficial letter to the Prime Minister of November 12th. "In conformity with your wishes," he wrote, "I intend to attach Mr. Malcolm MacDonald as my personal assistant."⁴⁹ The Foreign Secretary had made no attempt to appoint an official from either his ministry or the Colonial Office to occupy this sensitive position. To ensure that this controversy was resolved as expediently as possible, he clearly intended to maintain personal control over the negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister had indicated in the House of Commons that the Government proposed to publish a supplementary statement to interpret the White Paper. On the evening of November 14, 1930, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement to announce officially the resumption of relations between the Jewish Agency and the British Government and the start of joint discussions to formulate a mutually acceptable ~~explanation~~ of the White Paper.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Henderson to Weizmann, letter, November 13, 1930, ibid.

⁵⁰Commons, November 12, 1930, vol. 244, col. 1655. The Times, November 15, 1930.

CHAPTER 5

THE MODIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT

POLICY

Consternation at the Colonial Office and Controversy in the House of Commons

Colonial Office officials viewed the shift in policy with dismay. Quick implementation of the essential provisions of the White Paper had been foiled. Because of the imposition of an additional statement of policy on the Colonial Office, the £2,500,000 loan-plan was considered delayed until after the new year.¹ The immediate enactment of restrictive land ordinances was also postponed because of the Cabinet resolution requiring prior consultations between the Government of Palestine and the Jewish and Arab communities. Sir John Shuckburgh well expressed the mood of anger and frustration prevalent at the Colonial Office:²

It is of course not for me to criticise the policy of the Cabinet, but I do feel strongly that great and quite unnecessary risks are being taken. The proposed statement [announcing discussions] - as to the terms of which, as you know, we were not consulted & can accept no responsibility whatever - may purchase a temporary abatement of Jewish invective; but that relief (whatever may be its exact value) will be dearly bought at the price of renewed unrest in

¹Minute by Shuckburgh, November 11, 1930, C0733/182/77050.

²Minute by Shuckburgh, November 13, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/A.

Palestine & of all loss of confidence in the will or power of H.M.G. to pursue a consistent policy.

Just as Colonial Office civil servants initially declined to accept responsibility for a changed Palestine policy, so too did Foreign Office officials. A situation emerged in which both ministries declined to acknowledge willingly any responsibility for the consequences of this shift. The imposition of a de facto Foreign Office veto on all Palestine matters exacerbated relations between the two departments.

Foreign Office officials quickly adjusted to the stand on the Palestine controversy taken by Henderson at the November 6th Cabinet meeting. As a result, two distinct trends in the attitudes of Foreign Office officials to this issue can be detected. With the publication of the White Paper, individuals such as George Rendel held opinions similar to those of their Colonial Office counterparts. However, after Henderson's intervention, Foreign Office civil servants promptly reversed themselves. In a memorandum requested by Henderson through Selby on the circumstances behind the final draft of the White Paper, George Rendel performed an abrupt about-face. He criticized the Colonial Office for poor judgement. While absolving the Foreign Office of any blame for the fiasco, Rendel considered the Colonial Office as being entirely responsible for it.³

In view of the fact that the Foreign Office were not represented on the Cabinet committee, this procedure was perhaps not unnatural. Moreover, in view of the importance of the authority under which the statement of policy was prepared, it would have been exceedingly difficult for Foreign Office officials to put forward any criticisms.

³Memorandum by Rendel, November 8, 1930, FO371/10494/E6071/400/65.

On the other hand, it is unfortunate that neither the statement in its final form, nor the result of Lord Passfield's interview with Dr. Weizmann were communicated to the Foreign Office, since this might have enabled us to anticipate, and possibly forestall, some of the difficulties that have arisen.

O.G.R. Williams became aware of Foreign Office "dissatisfaction" and prepared a refutation. This draft became an informal "Dear Van" letter from Sir Samuel Wilson to Sir Robert Vansittart. In this note, Wilson maintained the Colonial Office position that attributed the responsibility for the Policy Statement to the Cabinet Committee. He wrote: "The whole matter [of the final version of the White Paper] was more or less taken out of our hands....," and regretted that this committee structure precluded consultation on "normal departmental lines." According to Wilson, the fact that Arthur Henderson had been excluded from the Cabinet Committee made prior discussion difficult.⁴

In a conciliatory reply, Vansittart wrote:⁵

I don't think anyone here conversant with the facts feels that the Colonial Office were to blame for the fact that the Foreign Office were not consulted before publication of that statement...That we did not see the statement in its final form before publication, and that we were not informed of the result of Lord Passfield's discussions with Dr. Weizmann, is perhaps regrettable, but not unnatural considering that the Foreign Office were not represented on the Cabinet Committee. In any case I personally have no feeling that any blame attaches to the officials of the Colonial Office.

⁴Minute by Williams, November 13, 1930; Wilson to Vansittart, letter, November 14, 1930. C0733/182/77050/D/A.

⁵Vansittart to Wilson, letter, November 19, 1930, ibid.

Before the new Palestine policy was changed by the Cabinet, Colonial Office civil servants were confident that their plans would be realized. On the day that the two state papers were published, O.G.R. Williams obtained Treasury approval to pay the salaries of the Director of the development program and of an assistant, as proposed in the Hope Simpson Report and White Paper. Sir John Hope Simpson was offered the directorship, almost immediately, for a five-year term. He promptly accepted.⁶

The Prime Minister was "dubious" of the wisdom of making this offer in view of the hostile reaction to the Policy Statement. Passfield took issue with Ramsay MacDonald's reservations by emphasizing that Hope Simpson was indispensable for the position. Despite this, the appointment was withdrawn at the Prime Minister's insistence.⁷ The significance of MacDonald's intervention is noteworthy. Chronologically, it occurred between his October 31st olive branch to Dr. Weizmann and their November 6th meeting. The suspension marked the first occasion in which the Prime Minister had rejected action suggested by the Colonial Office relating to Palestine, in 1930, at least. The establishment of the development commission was perhaps the major ingredient of the White Paper policy. Coming when it did, this rebuff foreshadowed the modification of the White

⁶Waterfield to Williams, letter, October 21, 1930; Passfield to Hope Simpson, cable, October 22, 1930; Hope Simpson to Passfield, cable, October 24, 1930. C0733/194/77402.

⁷Duff to Boyd, letter, October 27, 1930; Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, November 3, 1930; Duff to Passfield, letter, November 4, 1930; Passfield to Hope Simpson, cable, November 6, 1930. Ibid.

Paper policy contemplated by the Prime Minister. However, the Colonial Office seems to have been oblivious to this rather ominous development, as far as their hopes for Palestine were concerned. Departmental minutes dealing with this proposed appointment contain none of the comments of alarm that later characterized the thinking of officials after the November 11th Cabinet meeting.

Meanwhile, the Middle East Department attempted to placate opinion aroused over the White Paper by partially removing the suspension of Jewish immigration certificates imposed the previous May. On November 7, 1930, 1,500 permits were granted unconditionally under the Jewish Labour Schedule for the next six months, as opposed to the 2,300 permits withdrawn in May, 1930. Because this gesture constituted a half-measure, the Colonial Office failed to obtain political advantage. Although the Jewish Agency benefited, it did not consider this decision to have represented a conciliatory démarche on the part of the Colonial Office sufficient to foster the re-establishment of communications. Opposition to the Policy Statement, therefore, was not tangibly reduced.⁸

Faced with their initial reverse by the Cabinet on November 11th, departmental officials struggled frantically to salvage their policy for Palestine. On the basis of a recommendation put forward by Shuckburgh, they attempted to neutralize the pending announcement of negotiations between the Government and the Jewish Agency.⁹ They

⁸ Minutes by Williams, November 1, 1930; Shuckburgh, November 3, 1930; Wilson, November 4, 1930; and Passfield, November 4, 1930; Passfield to Chancellor, cable, November 5, 1930. C0733/188/77113/II. See The Manchester Guardian, November 11, 1930.

⁹ Minute by Shuckburgh, November 13, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/A..

advocated the release of a parallel communiqué on behalf of the Arabs, which would state that British policy regarding the White Paper was to remain firm. The formula to reconcile the Jewish Agency had not yet been disclosed. Shuckburgh's proposal was clearly intended to influence not only the tenor of future discussions but also the nature of the explanation that would emerge out of these talks. However, such was the weakened position of the Colonial Office in Palestine affairs that officials were in no position to press this suggestion successfully. An attempt to pressure the Prime Minister to repudiate this change in policy through the use of scare tactics failed.

In a letter to Ramsay MacDonald, sent immediately following this decisive Cabinet meeting, Passfield disclaimed responsibility on behalf of himself and his ministry for what he interpreted as the dire consequences of the announcement of negotiations. Using a carefully selected assortment of correspondence from the High Commissioner, he attempted to dramatize the political situation in Palestine. This was intended to promote the fear of renewed Arab disturbances.¹⁰

In spite of my reluctance to trouble you at this moment, I cannot do otherwise than submit to you the enclosed telegrams from the High Comm[issioner]. I am afraid I must leave it to you and Henderson to decide about what you publish immediately.

As the High Commissioner was unaware of the November 11th formula, Passfield was faced with the task of informing him of the change in policy. At the Colonial Office, there was concern that Chancellor would resign in protest over this. In his note to the

¹⁰ Minute by Shuckburgh, November 13, 1930, CO733/185/77072/1. Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter and enclosures, November 13, 1930, Premier 1/103.

Prime Minister, Passfield added:

All that could be done to mitigate any harm (as to Arab opinion) would be for me to send a private and personal telegram to the High Comm[issioner] at the earliest moment explaining that publication had to be made, for reasons here...

With the consent of Ramsay MacDonald, Passfield wired the High Commissioner to explain that he had attempted vainly to maintain the White Paper. Attributing the shift in policy to international considerations, he noted that the public statement announcing the negotiations with the Jewish Agency had been determined despite his last minute intervention with the Prime Minister. In conclusion, the Colonial Secretary made it quite clear that Arthur Henderson was responsible for the final version of this statement.¹¹

Not surprisingly, the High Commissioner believed that this change was ill-advised. However, he did not resign. Commenting on the situation, he wrote:¹²

¹¹Passfield to Chancellor, cable, November 14, 1930, CO733/183/77050/D/A. This was one of the few instances in which a private and personal message to the High Commissioner of Palestine was circulated outside of the department in the 1930-1931 period. Because of the candid nature of such cables, departmental officials preferred to retain them within the Colonial Office. Communications of this sort were considered so sensitive that it was standard procedure for private secretaries to Secretaries of State and colonial governors to encode and decipher private and personal cables in the inter-war period. See Major Sir Ralph Furse, Aucuparius. Recollections of a Recruiting Officer (London, 1962), p. 16. Furse (1887-1973) was responsible for the recruitment of Colonial Office personnel during this period.

¹²Chancellor to Shuckburgh, letter, November 16, 1930; available only in Premier 1/103.

I have had a disagreeable four weeks with the Jews, who were beginning to calm down and to realise the extravagance and baselessness of their criticisms of the White Paper, when the present new development occurred...

Expressing his long-held opinion that the Jews with their Jewish Agency held an unfair advantage over the Arabs, he noted:

I wish there was a body of Arab propagandists in Downing Street to counter the Jewish propaganda. Alas there is none, so the Arab side of the case does not receive equal attention. I have both Arabs and Jews to encounter here, so the scales are heavily loaded against me.

Chancellor attributed the intense Zionist activity to the Baldwin-Chamberlain-Amery letter, and shared Shuckburgh's view of its "mischievous character." Suggesting a firm hand in the negotiations, the High Commissioner wrote:

The Jews do not accept "No" when you say it to them the first time; but when they come to you a second time and you say "No! damn you!" (I speak figuratively, for I am always courteous to them) they do accept it. That has been my experience.

Despite its reconciliation with the Zionists, the Government was unable to calm the domestic political controversy created by the White Paper. Indeed, opposition politicians intensified their demands for a special debate on Palestine policy. On November 13, 1930, the Government acceded to their demands, scheduling the discussion for the evening of November 17th. Intended as the motion for adjournment, the debate became an eight-hour marathon. Opposition figures such as David Lloyd George, Sir Herbert Samuel, Leopold Amery, and Major Walter Elliot effectively attacked the Government. Although present during the debate, Stanley Baldwin was silent. Meanwhile,

Labour members such as Joseph Kenworthy joined this criticism. In addition, Henry Mond¹³ and James de Rothschild,¹⁴ two supporters of the Jewish Agency, participated. Opposition to Government policy focused on key questions such as the status of the Jewish National Home project, the position of the Histadruth, immigration, land, and particularly on the White Paper itself.

Drummond Shiels carried the burden of the Government defence. The general tenor of his rebuttal was one of equivocation. It is clear that the Government was attempting to retain some semblance of the White Paper policy, despite criticism. Inconsistencies within the White Paper and between the White Paper and the Hope Simpson Report, as well as between the White Paper and previous policy, were explained away as misunderstandings. The Government took great pains to avoid antagonizing both Jews and Arabs. As a result, Drummond Shiels went through rigorous contortions to interpret the Policy Statement in such varied ways as to deflect attack. Ultimately, the White Paper proved to be malleable, and remained intact by the end of the debate.

Shiels consistently maintained that the Policy Statement involved no departure from previous policy. Using a certain amount of duplicity, he stated: "...it is obvious that the suggestion that this Government is seeking to crystallise the Jewish National Home in its

¹³Henry Mond (1898-1949), a Conservative M.P., was the son of Lord Melchett. Melchett had resigned from his position as Chairman of the Jewish Agency in protest against the White Paper.

¹⁴James de Rothschild (1878-1957), a Liberal M.P., was President of the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association. He later participated actively with the Jewish Agency in the negotiations with the Government over the White Paper.

present position is without a shadow of foundation."¹⁵ While the Government as a whole was ambivalent in regard to this freeze, the Colonial Office had promoted this policy quite actively. Probably the only new public revelation of Government thinking during this debate was the disclosure of the stand that the Arabs must be conciliated, to persuade them to tolerate the Jewish National Home. Shiels optimistically noted that the Arabs were showing signs of co-operation. He added: "...the wisest and the sanest leaders of Zionism realise that without a contented Arab population, the full success of the Jewish National Home cannot be assured."¹⁶

Throughout the debate, Shiels was especially vague when dealing with the position of the White Paper. This approach was clearly the most advisable one for him to follow as the Government was attempting to avoid any possible controversy at this point. Nevertheless, this tactic so upset members on both Government and opposition benches that the evening sitting was prolonged in an effort to obtain a clear account of the status of the White Paper. Indeed, one member suggested that a motion of censure should be introduced if such an explanation were not made. Clearly caught on the spot, Shiels attempted to find a means of escape out of his predicament by becoming even more evasive on the issue. This ploy backfired. Pressed further, he found himself pinned down, and was

¹⁵Commons, vol. 245, col. 96. Participating during the debate, the Prime Minister spoke in generalities of the Jewish contribution to Palestine and the need for parallel Arab development. See ibid., cols. 115-120.

¹⁶Ibid., col. 103.

forced to give a straightforward statement:¹⁷

I have made it perfectly clear how the Government stand. It is quite obvious, surely, that the answer to the question put to me is that the White Paper, as explained and amplified to-day, certainly stands.

Such a blunt assertion was not in the best interests of the Government. The terms of the negotiations with the Jewish Agency purposely had left this matter undefined to enable Zionist participation. The public reaction of Jews to this statement was silence, except in Palestine. However, it should be noted that a specific statement of this nature could only serve to undermine the discussions with the Jewish Agency.

Nevertheless, Shiels' comment enabled the debate to end without further incident. Because the debate had been linked to a motion of adjournment, as opposed to one of non-confidence, the question of the Government's policy in Palestine was not put to a formal vote. Although the minority Labour Government had not been in jeopardy, it had endured the attacks of the most articulate British politicians of the day. However, the Government had acted astutely in holding the debate. By providing members with an opportunity to ventilate their criticisms of the White Paper policy, the Government effectively defused the domestic political crisis confronting it over Palestine. Following the debate, the Palestine controversy ceased to have the same level of intensity.

¹⁷Ibid., col. 210. Shiels had failed to put the motion of adjournment beforehand.

It should be added that the Palestine question was a non-issue in the House of Lords where Passfield sat. The only major criticism of Government policy of the Fall, 1930 session was made by the Marquess of Reading as part of the Liberal Party reply to the King's Speech.¹⁸ Because the Palestine question received so little attention in the Lords, Drummond Shiels, not Passfield, was faced with the actual task of defending the Government politically since practically all attacks against the White Paper policy were made in the Commons.

¹⁸Lords, October 28, 1930, vol. 79, cols. 27-28.

The Negotiations between the Government and the
Jewish Agency - The First Phase

Before dealing with the negotiations between the Government and the Zionists, the goals and strategies of both sides should first be discussed. During the November 17th debate, Rhys Hopkin, a Zionist supporter, stated: "I think the House will agree that the test of the success or failure of this debate will depend upon whether the status quo can be established."¹⁹ However, did the Government or Zionists envisage a return to the status quo in formulating their game-plans?

The position of the Government was in fact one of extreme caution. Short-term political considerations had motivated the shift in White Paper policy. However, it is clear that Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, and Passfield were aware of the possible damage to the credibility of their Government that an outright repudiation of policy could cause. In maintaining a tight defensive strategy, the Government intended to placate the Zionists by granting the most minimal concessions possible. Nevertheless, throughout the negotiations, the

¹⁹Commons, vol. 245, col. 183.

Government maintained a facade of flexibility. While a return to the status quo was a tenable possibility for the Government, such an eventuality depended on the form of its implementation.

Although the Government adhered to a strategy of firmness, the Jewish Agency maintained a posture of aggressiveness in striving to obtain long-term benefits from the negotiations. Dr. Weizmann was well aware of the short-term political advantage that the Jewish Agency held in these talks, and exploited it to the chagrin of British officials. As the essential goal of these talks, a return to the status quo emerged as the minimal Zionist aim.

Nevertheless, the leadership of the Jewish Agency appreciated the dilemma of the Government's inability to repudiate the Policy Statement itself. Responsible Zionist leaders such as Dr. Weizmann did not call for the outright annulment of the White Paper. Instead, they refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Policy Statement, and directed their attention to the reversal of Government policy. The status of the White Paper was not mentioned in the deliberations that led to the negotiations. The Zionists were able to claim that discussions would not be conducted on the basis of the White Paper. The Government concurred with this position by not challenging it. Moreover, Government spokesmen went out of their way to equivocate on the status of the White Paper, as shown during the November 17th debate. However, with the progress of the deliberations, this mutually accepted lack of precision regarding the standing of the Policy Statement ultimately required clarification. Controversy was to revolve as much around the form of this statement

as around its content. Whether this interpretation would emerge as a white paper or not was to be vigorously debated since the publication of this explanation as a formal statement of policy would constitute a de facto repudiation of the October White Paper.

Negotiations lasted from November, 1930 until February, 1931.

In this period, six formal sessions took place between the Palestine Cabinet Committee and the Jewish Agency. However, a more meaningful part of these discussions was conducted at the sub-committee level during the informal sessions dealing with the drafting of the explanation. Nevertheless, the most essential aspects of the talks revolved around personal contacts between Dr. Chaim Weizmann, on one hand, and Arthur Henderson, on the other, with Malcolm MacDonald occupying the role of trusted intermediary.

Although the Zionist leader was held more accountable to the Jewish Agency than ever before, he managed to overcome the constraints imposed upon him by his organization and to dominate proceedings. Weizmann was the central figure in the negotiations. Aware of his position, he was able to successfully manipulate the Agency's bargaining role. The resulting explanation, therefore, represented another noteworthy instance of Weizmann's use of personal diplomacy comparable in stature, perhaps, to that employed to obtain the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate of Palestine.

The Zionists based their negotiating demands on a memorandum prepared by Leonard Stein.²⁰ From the start of the discussions, Dr. Weizmann made it clear that the Jewish Agency viewed the pending explanation in terms of a reply to this statement. To begin with, the Zionists called for the withdrawal of the White Paper policy through its non-implementation. As far as the Agency was concerned, the two key consequences of the resulting return to normality in Palestine policy were the removal of restraints on immigration and land. The Zionists envisaged the parallel development of both communities, as opposed to what they viewed as the Colonial Office policy of "balancing one section of the population...against another."²¹ Subsidiary issues raised by the Agency included Jewish settlement in Trans-Jordan and increased Jewish participation in public works.

At the first conference held on November 17, 1930, Dr. Weizmann immediately took issue with the White Paper provision that limited policy consultations by the two communities to the level of the High Commissioner. He strongly opposed the principle of negotiations between the Jewish Agency and High Commissioner on any aspect of the Policy Statement, especially the proposed land ordinances. Exploiting its access to the Cabinet Committee, the Agency resisted this attempt to curtail Zionist access to officials and politicians in Whitehall.²²

²⁰ Jewish Agency, The Palestine White Paper of October, 1930, Memorandum by Leonard J. Stein (London, 1930), cited below as the Stein Memorandum.

²¹ Ibid., p. 11.

²² Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 1st Conf., November 17, 1930, CAB 27/433.

The Government's negotiating team, under Henderson's leadership, made no attempt to enforce this aspect of the White Paper policy.

Indeed, by remaining non-committal on this issue, the Palestine Cabinet Committee managed to reduce potential conflict between the Colonial Office and the Jewish Agency on this score, at least. Henderson and his Committee became the focal point of all major Agency dealings with the British Government relating to day-to-day affairs in Palestine. The Cabinet Committee neither encouraged nor discouraged contacts of this nature. Although members of the Committee had not intended to act in this capacity, they listened patiently to the varied representations made by the Zionists. It should be emphasized that the subject matter of some of these interventions bore little relevance to the immediate business at hand of preparing a mutually acceptable interpretation of the White Paper.

Anxious to defuse the political uproar created by the Policy Statement, Arthur Henderson took Zionist protests quite seriously, and, on behalf of the Committee, actually recommended remedial action to the Colonial Office. Impressed by Dr. Weizmann's criticism of the proposed land ordinances for Palestine, the Foreign Secretary requested Passfield to avoid any possible controversy on this issue. As a result, Passfield sent the High Commission "a general warning to cover all contingencies." This message instructed Chancellor to obtain Passfield's authority before issuing any land legislation.²³

²³ Minute by Shuckburgh, November 20, 1930, CO733/185/77072/I. Passfield to Chancellor, cable, November 21, 1930, CO733/185/77072/IV.

Meanwhile, Craigie Aitchison prepared a draft explanation on the basis of the Stein Memorandum. Specific Zionist objections to the White Paper were dealt with in a dispassionate manner. However, this preliminary text generated a fierce reaction at the Colonial Office. The extent of Colonial Office antipathy that followed the presentation of this draft can be gauged by the fact that Passfield was uncharacteristically vocal in his denunciation of it. To begin with, Passfield objected to this text as it implied to him that the British Government was coming to an agreement with the Zionists as a quasi-governmental body. Viewing this process as tantamount to providing the Jewish Agency with a veto over British policy in Palestine, the Colonial Secretary vociferously criticized it. In addition, Passfield disliked the notion of publishing the statement both as a letter and a white paper "without considering that we are not having similar conversations with the Arabs." These criticisms were clearly not aimed specifically at the Lord Advocate's draft explanation. Instead, they were focused on the principle of an interpretative statement. On the basis of these comments, it can be readily observed that Passfield and his officials had not reconciled themselves to the Government's policy of conducting talks with the Jewish Agency.²⁴

²⁴ Minutes by Williams and Shuckburgh, November 21, 1930; Passfield to Henderson, letter, November 24, 1930. C0733/183/77050/D/A.

The Cabinet Committee met on November 24, 1930 to consider the Lord Advocate's draft explanation. Because of the strong objections voiced by Passfield, Craigie, Aitchison and Malcolm MacDonald were delegated to rewrite it.²⁵ They presented the second version to a drafting sub-committee composed of officials from the Colonial and Foreign Offices, in addition to Aitchison and MacDonald, on November 25th.

During this meeting, Walford Selby, on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, disclaimed the Foreign Office of ultimate responsibility for the final explanation. This action was most remarkable considering the fact that Arthur Henderson's intervention had in the first place persuaded the Government to negotiate an interpretative statement with the Zionists. Although the Foreign Secretary had initiated this policy, he was not willing to be accountable for the consequences of this course of action. Commenting on this meeting, George Rendel minuted:²⁶

Mr. Selby made it clear at the beginning of the meeting that the Foreign Office were not in a position to take any major responsibility in connexion with this document, which dealt with matters falling primarily within the Colonial Office sphere, and that our role was to suggest drafting amendments rather than to deal with points of policy.

Surviving documents indicate that this point was missed by Colonial Office officials who attended this session. Their comments dealt exclusively with the content and nature of the proposed statement.

²⁵ Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 2nd Mtg., November 24, 1930, CAB 27/433.

²⁶ Minute by Rendel, November 26, 1930, FO371/14494/E6390/400/

Civil servants up to the highest level expressed their pessimistic views on the whole situation of the negotiations, but did not refer to the Foreign Office abdication from accountability.

O.G.R. Williams commented: "Even as it [the explanation] stands, I fear it will be interpreted as a virtual emasculation of the White Paper." Moreover, he predicted "serious trouble with the Arabs." Williams was also bothered by the intervention of Malcolm MacDonald to eliminate the veto of the Palestine Government over land transactions. Believing that the draft went as far as the Colonial Office wanted "towards placating Jewish sensibilities," Williams added that the Committee was striving to maintain co-operation with the Zionists. According to Williams, the next step in negotiations, after Jewish Agency agreement to the draft, would be discussions on development.²⁷

Characterizing the explanation policy as an arbitrary imposition on the Colonial Office, Sir John Shuckburgh wrote: "If that is so, there is no more to be said. 'High Policy' is beyond the purview of the Department or of myself...it is only on the above assumption that we could accept any responsibility in connection with the draft Memorandum." He opposed publication on the grounds that "...It will look like a surrender, will infuriate the Arabs and will expose to our critics in every camp a wide new surface for attack and misrepresentation." However, he added: "If it comes to publishing, I would prefer to do so in the form of a letter to

²⁷Minute by Williams, November 26, 1930, CO733/183/77050/D/A.

Dr. Weizmann or other of the Jewish leaders rather than in that of a statement of policy. Another parliamentary paper is to be avoided at all costs."²⁸

Discussing the possibility of negotiations on the development scheme with the Jewish Agency, Shuckburgh recommended that the Arabs should be involved: "It is just barely conceivable (I am the last person in the world to be over-optimistic on the point) that a 'golden moment' might arrive at which we could put our whole future policy in Palestine on something like an agreed basis." On the question of British funding for the Jewish National Home, he criticized a provision of the draft explanation favouring this end:

The words seem to me most dangerous. They amount to an admission that it is part of our mandatory duty to find money for the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. This may be true (though I doubt it), but it would clearly never do to admit it. It would lead to endless demands upon our purse.

In addition, Shuckburgh questioned the expediency of promising the Zionists a share of the development fund: "It may ease our difficulties for the moment to pretend to the Jews that there will be something for them; but I fear that in the long run we shall have to pay for the deception."

Sir Samuel Wilson's anger at the helplessness of the Colonial Office in this negotiation situation was evident. Concurring with the general consensus against publishing this explanation as a policy statement, the Permanent Under-Secretary wrote:²⁹

²⁸ Minute by Shuckburgh, November 26, 1930, ibid.

²⁹ Minute by Wilson, November 27, 1930, ibid.

We have nothing to apologise for, and every unbiased person that I have heard discussing the matter takes this view. It may be that the White Paper was a little too definite but the real reason for its not being liked is that it tells the truth, which the Zionists and pro-Zionists have been shutting their eyes to ever since the War: and they don't like being told it!

During the November 27th meeting of the Cabinet Committee, the format of the explanation was determined. Arthur Henderson suggested that this statement should emerge as a letter from him to Dr. Weizmann. The Foreign Secretary opposed publication of the interpretation as a policy statement on the grounds that such a move would represent the repudiation of the October White Paper and would create hostile reaction among Arabs. Stating that he did not intend to present his views on this issue immediately to the Cabinet, Henderson commented that he would await the anticipated Jewish initiative concerning the vehicle for this explanation. Henderson's proposal was adopted unanimously by the Committee. It should be stressed that the Foreign Office, as opposed to the Colonial Office, was instructed by the Cabinet Committee to redraft Aitchison's draft explanation into the form of a personal letter.³⁰

Meanwhile, on November 28th, Dr. Weizmann appealed to Walford Selby for an immediate response to the Stein Memorandum. Claiming that his position as Zionist leader would be made intolerable unless he received a prompt reply, Weizmann informed Selby that he was under intense political pressure from within his organization. A statement that a reply would be sent shortly by the Government to Weizmann had

³⁰ Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 3rd Mtg., November 27, 1930, CAB 27/433.

been made by Michael Marcus, M.P. at a Labour Party rally in Whitechapel the previous evening.³¹

As a consequence of this development, a meeting of the Cabinet Committee was called for the following day, Saturday, November 29, 1930. Participants at the extraordinary session included Henderson, Passfield, Shaw, and Malcolm MacDonald. The major conclusion of the gathering was a resolution to send the first part of the draft letter, that had been prepared at the Foreign Office the previous day, under Henderson's signature to Dr. Weizmann.³²

By the time of the third formal conference held on December 5, 1930, Dr. Weizmann's political difficulties within the Jewish Agency had eased. Under his leadership, the Zionists now took a more aggressive stand in the discussions by broadening the scope of issues under consideration. To begin with, Weizmann demanded that the new statement should have the same weight as the October White Paper. In response to this proposal, Henderson maintained a non-committal position. However, it should be added that the Foreign Secretary bound the British Government to the "interpretation of the Mandate by the Hague Court 'failing satisfaction.'"³³

³¹Minutes by Rendel and Selby, November 28, 1930, F0371/14494/E6391/400/65. Minute by Shuckburgh, November 28, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/A. Selby to Passfield, letter, November 28, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/B. Marcus (1894-1960) was the Member of Parliament for Dundee.

³²Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 4th Mtg., November 29, 1930, CAB 27/433.

³³Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 3rd Conf., December 5, 1930, CAB 27/433. Minute by Williams, December 16, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/A.

This promise constituted a remarkable concession to the Zionists. In opposing the White Paper immediately following its publication, the Jewish Agency was seriously considering the Marquess of Reading's suggestion to refer the Policy Statement to the Hague Court. However, any possible decision, no matter how favourable to Zionist interests, would have been meaningless without British recognition of the Court's jurisdiction in the matter. Henderson's guarantee assured the Agency that the British Government would acknowledge the competence of the International Court to adjudicate conflicting British and Zionist interpretations of the Mandate. The Jewish Agency not only had obtained the modification of the White Paper; but also had received official British sanction to appeal insoluble grievances to the Hague Court for binding arbitration.

During this meeting, the Zionist leader actively promoted substantial changes in policy. Dr. Weizmann urged the establishment of a guaranteed Jewish quota for all public works positions on the basis of Jewish contributions to general tax revenue. He pressed for a dispatch to be sent to the High Commissioner "emphasizing that there is to be no racial discrimination in regard to P[ublic] W[orks]."

As far as immigration was concerned, the Zionist leader recommended a drastic alteration to the restrictive White Paper provision on the Labour Schedule.

On the crucial land question, Dr. Weizmann bluntly stated that the Jewish Agency's Palestine Executive had been instructed to boycott discussions of the draft ordinances with the High Commissioner because the Zionists considered the terms of the proposed legislation

inconsistent with the Hope Simpson Report. Obviously anxious to retain the opportunity for consultations in London, he added that a Jewish Agency memorandum on this issue would be placed before the Cabinet Committee for consideration.

Moreover, Dr. Weizmann used this conference as a forum in which to raise the possibility of Arab settlement programs in Beersheba and Trans-Jordan. He concluded his presentation by noting that an additional Jewish Agency statement dealing with proposals for land policy in Palestine would be submitted in addition to the announced critique on the land ordinances.

Reaction in the Middle East Department to Weizmann's extensive proposals was unusually restrained. Departmental officials were more preoccupied with Henderson's commitment to refer British and Zionist differences over the terms of the Mandate to the International Court at the Hague for adjudication upon the request of the Jewish Agency. Colonial Office civil servants were especially concerned as such a step was unprecedented. Sir John Shuckburgh believed that the Foreign Secretary had placed the British Government in an extremely difficult position.³⁴

Despite this concession, Dr. Weizmann continued to vigorously pursue the Jewish Agency policy of preventing the implementation of important White Paper provisions, especially those relating to land. In his letter to Henderson of December 9, 1930, the Zionist leader opposed the decentralization of negotiations on the ordinances to the

³⁴ Minute by Shuckburgh, December 17, 1930, ibid.

level of the High Commissioner. Expressing his dislike for the land legislation, Dr. Weizmann requested Henderson to have it stopped. The letter was promptly sent to the Colonial Office for the preparation of a reply to be signed by the Foreign Secretary. A personal and private telegram to Sir John Chancellor on this issue was also drafted for Passfield's signature by the Middle East Department. Shuckburgh's assessment of Weizmann's note and of his ministry's position was bitter.³⁵

The tone of Dr. Weizmann's letter strikes me as distinctly insolent; and I feel that this policy of "conciliating" the Zionist leaders - whose demands rise & will continue to rise with each fresh concession - is heading the Government into an impossible position.

I do not understand that our views are desired as to the expediency of acceding to this latest demand. Assuming that it has been decided to accede, then the drafts represent, in my view, the least desirable method of doing so.

In his covering note to Henderson, which accompanied the draft reply to Weizmann's letter, Passfield barely concealed the rage felt in his department over Weizmann's most recent intervention.³⁶ Describing the High Commissioner's position as difficult, the Colonial Secretary emphasized the desire prevalent in the Colonial Office to restrict all official Jewish Agency contacts to the level of the Palestine Government.

³⁵Weizmann to Henderson, letter, December 9, 1930, C0733/185/77072/IV. Minute by Shuckburgh, December 11, 1930, C0733/185/77072/I.

³⁶Passfield to Henderson, letter, December 11, 1930, C0733/185/77072/IV.

The response prepared by the Colonial Office to the Zionist leader, on the other hand, was a model of restraint. The discussions in Palestine were justified on the basis of the encouragement given by the Permanent Mandates Commission to local government. The land ordinances were shown to be necessary in terms of honouring the Government's commitment to settle the 10,000 allegedly landless Arab families.

Passfield also enclosed the text of the draft telegram describing the Zionist position on the land ordinances to the High Commissioner for Henderson's approval. With this cable, the Colonial Secretary intended to inform Chancellor of the Jewish Agency boycott and to advise him not to request its views. The dispatch of this wire brought about the indefinite suspension of action to implement this essential provision of the White Paper. Dr. Weizmann's intervention on this question had proved extremely effective.³⁷

In the interval, the drafting sub-committee of the Cabinet Committee met again on December 11, 1930 to consider the most recent Jewish Agency "remarks" on the issues at hand. Because of the composition of this body, the tenor of the meeting tended to be unsympathetic to the Jewish Agency memorandum, especially to the criticisms of Hope Simpson's statistics. George Rendel described the Zionist amendments to Henderson's letter of November 29th as "all slightly tendentious in tone." He added that "...the cumulative effect of the alterations...may be to alter very considerably the tone and

³⁷Passfield to Chancellor, cable, December 13, 1930, ibid.

balance of our defence."³⁸

At the conference held on December 5, 1930, points of drafting were delegated to sub-committees of the Cabinet Committee and the Jewish Agency. Therefore, the Lord Advocate's sub-committee met with Lewis Namier and Harry Sacher, of the Jewish Agency, on December 11, 1930 to discuss points in contention. However, this session became deadlocked over the definition of the Mandate provision that concerned "safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine...." Sacher's interpretation of "civil rights" as personal liberties was hotly contested by Colonial Office officials who were present.³⁹

Shortly after this stormy encounter, the Jewish Agency submitted its promised position paper on land policy to the Cabinet Committee through Malcolm MacDonald on December 17, 1930. In this memorandum, the Agency stressed the necessity of maintaining the alienation of land tenure in Palestine. It should be noted that the Zionists had obtained support from a most unlikely source for this point of view. In reply to a recent question in the House of Lords, Passfield had stated that the alienability of land tenure constituted a traditional Arab practice. The Colonial Secretary's disclosure implied that the introduction of a system of land tenure based on the inalienability of holdings would represent an intrusion upon a historic Arab custom. Moreover, in their

³⁸Memorandum by Rendel, December 11, 1930, available only in C0733/183/77050/D/B.

³⁹Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 3rd Conf., December 5, 1930, CAB 27/433. Article II of the Mandate. Minutes of meeting held December 11, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/B. Harry Sacher (1881-1971), a close associate of Weizmann, was a member of the World Zionist Organization executive. As a member of the Editorial Board of The Manchester Guardian in 1917, he had encouraged this newspaper to favour the creation of the Jewish National Home under British sponsorship..

statement, the Zionists reiterated their position on the form of the explanation, immigration, Trans-Jordan, security, and the status of the Jewish Agency. In addition, the Jewish Agency again requested a share of the development fund.⁴⁰

Reaction at the Colonial Office to this brief was cool. In an early assessment, Williams claimed that the adoption of Zionist proposals by the British Government would destroy the basis of the White Paper policy. Citing the Hope Simpson Report as justification, he maintained that the Jewish Agency alone should be forced to change its land tenure practices. On the question of Jewish participation in the development program, Williams commented that Cabinet approval would be needed.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the drafting sub-committee met on December 17th to rework contentious sections of Henderson's November 29th letter. These amendments were discussed with Jewish Agency delegates Harry Sacher, Lewis Namier, and Leonard Stein on December 18th. Reviewing this meeting, O.G.R. Williams noted that "...as much controversial matter as possible [was excised] from the letter as an 'olive branch' to the Jews & not as a reply to Mr. Stein's memo." Describing the attitudes of the Zionist spokesmen, Williams added: "At last night's meeting Mr. Stein was present & was very reasonable & conciliatory. Mr. Namier & Mr. Sacher were as intransigent as normal."⁴²

⁴⁰ Jewish Agency, "Memorandum on Land Development," unpublished paper (London, n.d. [December, 1930]), C0733/185/77072/IV. Lords, December 3, 1930, vol. 79, cols. 439-454.

⁴¹ Minute by Williams, December 23, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/A.

⁴² Minute by Williams, December 19, 1930, ibid.

The Foreign Office evaluated the Jewish Agency paper in general terms. It is clear that the apprehension expressed by Colonial Office civil servants over the possibility of a new policy statement was shared by their Foreign Office counterparts. George Rendel hoped that the Palestine Cabinet Committee would:⁴³

...resist the Jewish demand for a new "Statement of Policy". It is one thing to publish as a white paper an explanatory correspondence with the Jewish Agency. This proceeding could cause no adverse comment. But the issue of a new "Statement of Policy" would inevitably be regarded as a repudiation of the original White Paper - even if it did not repudiate it in terms...

At the fourth formal conference held on December 19, 1930, Arthur Henderson informed the Jewish Agency delegation that Zionist requests to have issues such as immigration, land tenure, self-government, security, and Jewish settlement in Trans-Jordan considered by the Cabinet Committee were beyond its terms of reference.⁴⁴ The Jewish Agency's attempt to transform the Cabinet Committee into an operational body as the official British liaison link with the Zionists, instead of the Colonial Office, was thwarted as a result of this intervention.

Undaunted by this reverse, Chaim Weizmann immediately called for a round table conference to be held in London between the British Government, the Zionists, and the Arabs.⁴⁵ Commenting on the

⁴³Minute by Rendel, December 19, 1930, F0371/14494/E6831/400/65.

⁴⁴Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 4th Conf., December 19, 1930, CAB 27/433.

⁴⁵This proposal evidently was inspired by the Round Table Conference on India in progress at the time. One of the major problems affecting the constitutional issue was the tension between the Hindu and Moslem communities regarding the status of the minority Moslem population. Despite their political differences, Hindu and Moslem representatives were at least talking to one another with the active encouragement of Ramsay MacDonald as mediator.

feasibility of such a meeting, Passfield stated pessimistically that both Jews and Arabs would refuse to participate. Weizmann promptly vouched for Jewish Agency acceptance. However, this point was not resolved by the end of this session. Nevertheless, at Weizmann's request, Henderson consented to the distribution of a press release on the progress of negotiations that was to be drafted by Malcolm MacDonald.

Despite the Foreign Secretary's rebuff to Zionist attempts to broaden the scope of the Cabinet Committee, Dr. Weizmann sent him a letter almost immediately following this formal session in which he pressed the issue of extending its terms of reference. In addition, Weizmann's note of December 19, 1930 followed up Zionist demands concerning land, immigration, constitutional development, and security that had been presented to the Palestine Cabinet Committee for consideration.⁴⁶

A copy of this letter was sent to the Colonial Office for comment. Needless to say, departmental officials were outraged by it. O.G.R. Williams was furious because he viewed it as an attempt on the part of the Jewish Agency to claim an expanded part in the administration of the Palestine Mandate. The fact that the Zionists advocated a minimal role for the Colonial Office in this process

⁴⁶ This letter is currently unavailable in Colonial Office, Foreign Office, Prime Ministerial, or Cabinet correspondence. It is included, however, in Colonial Office File 77050/I, entitled "Representations of the Jewish Agency," that is closed until 1981. See Registry Book for Colonial Office Middle East Department, C0793/13.

particularly upset him as well as other civil servants. Sir John Shuckburgh shared Williams' disdain for Weizmann's latest letter, and wrote "...the Jewish demands are growing more and more insistent, not to say insolent...."⁴⁷

Confronted by the powerlessness of his department and the intense activity of the Jewish Agency, Passfield reacted strongly to this situation. He wrote a spirited six-page letter to Arthur Henderson.⁴⁸ In doing so, he exhibited unusual vigour. This incident is remarkable because he acted out of character when compared to his almost passive style of administering Palestine affairs. To begin with, Passfield vehemently criticized the role played by Weizmann and his supporters in the negotiations. He viewed with alarm the introduction by the Zionists of the issues of Trans-Jordan, immigration, land-ordinances, development, and the legislative council into the discussions. Moreover, he commented that the talks were endangering the political situation in Palestine, which he described as tense.

Claiming that the Jewish Agency was stalling proceedings to gain time for fund raising, Passfield repeated an accusation that he had made previously to the Prime Minister.⁴⁹ He wrote that the Zionists were exploiting the White Paper "...in order to counteract the grave financial effects of the American slump." Moreover, Passfield rejected

⁴⁷Minutes by Williams and Shuckburgh, December 23, 1930, C0733/183/77050/D/A.

⁴⁸Passfield to Henderson, letter, December 26, 1930, available only in C0733/183/77050/D/B.

⁴⁹The Colonial Secretary had made this charge in his letter to Ramsay MacDonald of November 3, 1930, Premier 1/103.

the Zionist request for a permanent arrangement of monthly meetings between the Jewish Agency and Colonial Office in London to discuss Palestine matters. He characterized this proposal as being contrary to his department's view that official contact between the Zionists and the British Government should be limited to the level of the Government of Palestine.

Referring to Jewish Agency opinions on the development scheme, Passfield opposed alterations to this plan, other than as recommended by an expert recognized by his ministry. He condemned the Jewish Agency assessment on the land question as being "purely negative, without a single constructive suggestion." Focusing on Weizmann, he wrote: "I can imagine Dr. Weizmann expounding these criticisms, big and little together, in a whole series of meetings, which can hardly be dignified by the name of discussion." In conclusion, Passfield appealed to Henderson to limit the current conferences to "explanations of the White Paper."

At the end of December, 1930, negotiations dealing with the interpretation of the White Paper were progressing at a slow rate. Discussion on the explanation was clearly secondary to the struggle being conducted between the Jewish Agency, on one hand, and the Colonial Office, on the other, over the possible expansion of the scope of the Cabinet Committee. Arthur Henderson had acted decisively to limit the terms of reference of this Committee. However, the Jewish Agency continued to urge the reconsideration of this decision.

The Whitechapel By-Election

As far as the effect of the policy shift on domestic politics was concerned, the Whitechapel by-election emerged as the barometer of Jewish opinion in Britain. The writ for this contest was issued on November 17, 1930, scheduling it for December 3rd. The timing of this announcement was linked to the House of Commons debate on the White Paper and the negotiations between the Jewish Agency and the British Government. The Trades Union Congress, under the leadership of Ernest Bevin, had been assigned the responsibility of organizing the Labour campaign. Nevertheless, the role of Arthur Henderson, as Labour Party Secretary, in guiding the by-election cannot be underestimated. Despite the bitter feelings created by the Policy Statement, the Poale Zion actively supported the Labour Party in the by-election.

While documentation relating to the by-election is remarkably scarce in surviving Colonial Office files, it is evident that Colonial Office civil servants held the view that the alteration of policy had been motivated by political reasons over this contest.⁵⁰ The timing of

⁵⁰ Hope Simpson to Chancellor, letter, December 3, 1930, Chancellor Papers, 16/6.

the partial removal of the suspension on Jewish immigration to Palestine and the pending interpretation of the Policy Statement were emphatically stressed by Labour propagandists during the campaign. This strategy worked. The Labour Party retained the seat, but with a vastly reduced majority.⁵¹

The Whitechapel by-election, nevertheless, posed serious difficulties for Dr. Weizmann because of its controversial nature. While attempting to steer the Zionist movement clear of any connection with this contentious campaign, he faced a situation in which many of his prominent supporters took sides. To begin with Dr. Selig Brodetsky, his associate, was offered the Liberal nomination, but declined.⁵² Moreover, the Mond family campaigned vigorously for the Conservative candidate; while Sir Herbert Samuel supported the Liberal nominee.

The premature release of confidential information concerning the discussions irritated both Weizmann and the Colonial Office, and affected the course of the negotiations. On November 27th, Michael Marcus, a Labour M.P., informed an election rally:⁵³

⁵¹A comparison between the results of the by-election and of the poll held during the previous general election (in parentheses) indicates that the Labour Party suffered a loss of popularity on account of the October White Paper:

Hall: Labour -	8,544	(13,701)
Janner: Liberal -	7,445	{ 4,521 }
Guinness: Conservative -	3,735	{ 3,478 }
Pollitt: Communist -	2,106	(Not contested)

See The Manchester Guardian, December 4, 1930.

⁵²Dr. Selig Brodetsky, Memoirs (London, 1960), p. 139.

⁵³The Times, November 28, 1930.

I have already seen last night a document, a copy of which is being sent to Dr. Weizmann to-night by the British Government, which contains proposals which will materially influence the present position in favour of the Zionist movement.

In view of the fact that the sole copy of this text was being retained at the Foreign Office where it had been formulated, it appears that Arthur Henderson was involved in the politically inspired leak of the letter. This disclosure placed Dr. Weizmann and Colonial Office officials in an embarrassing position because they had not yet seen the note.

Weizmann faced possible censure from his own organization for failing to communicate a document which it was alleged he possessed. Colonial Office civil servants lacked an important paper of direct consequence to a sensitive area of their responsibility. It should be noted that this premature release precipitated the rushed dispatch of the first part of the British explanation to Dr. Weizmann on November 29, 1930.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Colonial Office officials were furious at this leak. See minutes by Williams, November 28, 1930 and December 1, 1930, CO733/183/77050/D/A.

CHAPTER 6

THE MACDONALD LETTER

The Conclusion of Negotiations

Throughout the period of the negotiations, the Colonial Office found itself at a dead end in the day-to-day administration of Palestine. Officials and politicians in the ministry had become extremely cautious. The disastrous effects of recent Colonial Office policy decisions had made them reluctant to take any decisions on Palestine, even of the most trivial nature, without first obtaining sanction from higher authority. As a result, actions that previously had been considered routine were subjected to the scrutiny of the Foreign Secretary, in his capacity as Chairman of the Cabinet Committee, and more infrequently to the perusal of the Prime Minister. The complications created by these extensive consultations bothered officials and politicians alike at the Colonial Office.

The fact that Arthur Henderson was reluctant to read Colonial Office files submitted for his attention exasperated civil servants. Commenting on one such instance, Sir John Shuckburgh wrote:¹

Mr. Selby returned the papers [on Jewish land acquisitions] with a minute saying that he did not think it necessary, at that stage, to show the correspondence to the S[ecretary] of S[tate] for F[oreign] A[ffairs]. In conversation he told me

¹Minute by Shuckburgh, January 14, 1931, CO733/200/87082.

that he despaired of getting Mr. Henderson to read papers in this form, & hoped that we would not send him more of our files.

It seems to me that we are in a hopeless position, & that whatever we do is bound to be wrong. If we send papers to the F[oreign] O[ffice], we are told not to be so troublesome; if we don't, we are charged with deliberately withholding vital information.

However, the procedure of referring proposed administrative decisions to Malcolm MacDonald simply infuriated departmental officials. During the 1930-1931 period, Malcolm MacDonald acted as a liaison between the Jewish Agency and various Government departments. Because of his close ties with members of the Jewish Agency executive, Henderson and his father valued him as an expert on Zionist attitudes, and consulted him during the negotiations. However, as far as Colonial Office civil servants were concerned, Malcolm MacDonald, despite his relationship to the Prime Minister, was a mere back-bench Member of Parliament.

While Colonial Office officials were cautious over Palestine matters, the Foreign Secretary was also prudent. Henderson wanted no controversy whatever to be generated by Government departments during the talks with the Jewish Agency. Therefore, to minimize the risk of Zionist unease, the Foreign Secretary, through Walford Selby, encouraged Malcolm MacDonald to gauge Jewish Agency opinion before offering comment on proposed Colonial Office measures. It should be stressed that at no time as a result of Malcolm MacDonald's consultations with the Zionists was a Colonial Office decision challenged.

The events revolving around the appointment of an official to supervise the activity of the Palestine press reveal the extent of this practice. Walford Selby bluntly suggested that this decision should first be cleared with Malcolm MacDonald. The tenor of opinion in the ministry was one of anger. O.G.R. Williams and Sir John Shuckburgh minuted that Selby's recommendation should be ignored. While sympathizing with these reservations, Sir Samuel Wilson demurred:²

We all agreed that the present arrangement is most unsatisfactory, and nothing seems likely for the moment to change it. Would it not be better to try to do this through Mr. Malcolm MacDonald by frankly explaining to him how impossible the present situation is...

While Drummond Shiels sympathized with the objections voiced by Williams and Shuckburgh, he concurred with Wilson's proposal, writing that MacDonald "...might be helpful, both with a near relative of his and with the Jewish Agency, in enabling them to see that the present position cannot go on." Passfield agreed with Wilson's recommendation.³ As a result, the Colonial Office embarked on a project to influence Malcolm MacDonald. This attempt proved successful in that it achieved the virtual elimination of such consultations. Malcolm MacDonald ceased to intervene actively in Palestine matters for the next six months. In addition, the newly developed rapport between the Colonial Office and the Prime Minister's son enabled departmental officials to influence the ultimate form of the negotiated explanation of the October White Paper.

²Selby to Boyd, letter, January 13, 1931. Minutes by Williams, January 21, 1931; Shuckburgh, January 24, 1931; and Wilson, January 28, 1931. C0733/190/77168.

³Minutes by Shiels and Passfield, January 29, 1931, ibid.

Meanwhile, the sluggish pace of the discussions between the Jewish Agency and the Cabinet Committee picked up in the new year. Encouraged by Henderson's desire to wind up the negotiations, the draft letter of explanation that had been sent to Dr. Weizmann on November 29, 1930 underwent extensive deliberations on the sub-committee level. Throughout this phase of the negotiations, the Jewish Agency and the Colonial Office were engaged in an intense struggle. On the one hand, the Jewish Agency, having obtained concessions from the Cabinet Committee before Christmas, was attempting to secure further advantages. On the other, the Colonial Office was striving to prevent the Committee from conceding additional points requested by the Agency. Moreover, the ministry was even trying to persuade the politicians to withdraw certain key concessions granted to the Zionists, particularly those relating to land, immigration, and agricultural development.

On January 30, 1931, the Jewish Agency unexpectedly ratified the draft explanation. According to thinking in the Colonial Office, the American Zionists had not been as difficult to satisfy as had been expected.⁴ This effectively ended the Colonial Office efforts to dilute the explanation. At the meeting of the Cabinet Committee, held immediately before the conference, Passfield had attempted to alter the text with recommendations from the High Commissioner. In addition, he had promoted the idea of a parallel letter for the Arabs. At the time Tom Shaw and Arthur Henderson, who undoubtedly had some idea that the Zionists were ready to settle, had strongly opposed Passfield's proposals

⁴Passfield to Chancellor, letter, February 6, 1931, C0733/197/87050 Pt. 1.

on the grounds that their introduction at this point would reopen the discussions entirely. With the text of the letter closed, Passfield was unable to press his objections further.⁵

Tactically, the Jewish Agency acted superbly. By setting realistically high minimum demands, Zionist leaders obtained the de facto repudiation of the Policy Statement. During the early stages of the talks, Jewish Agency negotiators had introduced additional elements. Discussions on the status of Trans-Jordan and the political administration of the Mandate can be viewed as diversions added to encourage British assent to the minimal Zionist demands intended to neutralize the Policy Statement. As bargaining cards, these two subjects were irrelevant to the sought-after repudiation of the White Paper policy.

The Jewish Agency had nothing to lose and everything to gain in presenting them, especially with the political advantage it held. Referring to Weizmann's proposed rapprochement with the Arabs, Dr. Drummond Shiels criticized this hard bargaining stand: "If Dr. Weizmann is sincere about wishing an agreement with moderate Arabs, he would have been wiser not to push his political advantages to the utmost in recent weeks."⁶

Nevertheless, when the final text of the letter was on the verge of approval by the Cabinet Committee, the Jewish Agency revived the question of the political administration of the Palestine Mandate. During

⁵Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 5th Conf., January 30, 1931. Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 6th Mtg., January 30, 1931. CAB 27/433.

⁶Minute by Shiels, February 7, 1931, CO733/197/87050 Pt. 1.

the early phase of negotiations, the Zionists had attempted unsuccessfully to have the political control for the conduct of the Mandate transferred from the Colonial Office to the Cabinet Committee. This effort had been firmly, but politely, rebuffed by Arthur Henderson.

The Agency embarked on a two-pronged attempt to have the responsibility for the administration of the Mandate removed from the Colonial Office. To begin with, the Zionists indirectly renewed their earlier proposal to have the Palestine Cabinet Committee transformed into a permanent body, with de facto control of Palestine affairs held by the Foreign Office. In a six-point memorandum, discussed by the Cabinet Committee on January 30th, the Jewish Agency advocated a continuous process of consultations between the Jewish Agency and the Committee. Topics for consideration would include development, Trans-Jordan, a legislative council for Palestine, and the status of the Jewish Agency.⁷

The Zionists' second thrust was more direct. At the January 30th formal conference, in the presence of Passfield himself, Weizmann requested the transfer of jurisdiction for the Palestine Mandate to the Foreign Office, explaining that he had no confidence in the Colonial Office. While Henderson apparently was flattered by the Jewish Agency's appreciation, he bluntly stated that he did not want "more work." Referring also to the Zionists' six-point note, the Foreign Secretary added that such a change, direct or indirect, required Cabinet consent.⁸

⁷Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 6th Mtg., January 30, 1931, CAB 27/433.

⁸Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 5th Conf., January 30, 1931, CAB 27/433. Weizmann followed up this proposal at an informal meeting with Sir Robert Vansittart held on February 4, 1931. Minute by Vansittart, February 4, 1931, FO371/15281/E623/444/65.

Meanwhile, the whole question of departmental jurisdiction in the Middle East was reopened in Cabinet independently of this Jewish Agency activity. The previous July, the Cabinet had rejected a recommendation from the Committee of Imperial Defence to unify the administration of Middle Eastern matters under the control of the Foreign Office. At that time, discussion had concentrated on political aspects of the question. However, during the January 20th Cabinet meeting, a new element was injected: financial expediency. The Prime Minister reported that the Treasury wanted the matter reconsidered.⁹

Officials in the Colonial and Foreign Offices drafted separate papers to support the status quo. Civil servants from both departments collaborated in the preparation of these two papers.¹⁰ It is evident that Arthur Henderson had no desire to shift his opposition to such a change, voiced the previous July. The Jewish Agency's formal proposal to extend the life of the Cabinet Committee ostensibly was considered seriously by the Foreign Secretary. He presented this question to Cabinet for a decision, together with the final draft of the explanation. While he left the extension of the Committee to the discretion of the Cabinet, Henderson noted that he would participate with reluctance.¹¹

⁹Cabinet Conclusions 8 (31), CAB 23/66.

¹⁰Memorandum by Passfield, January 31, 1931, C.P. 27 (31).
Memorandum by Henderson, February 5, 1931, C.P. 28 (31). CAB 24/219.

¹¹Memorandum by Henderson, January 30, 1931, C.P. 25 (31), ibid.

If there is to be any extension of the terms of reference of the Committee in accordance with the wishes of the Jewish Agency, it must, in my opinion, be laid down quite clearly that the Committee cannot be made in any way responsible for the day-to-day administration of Palestine. Further consideration of this problem by the Committee as at present constituted, under my Chairmanship, will in any case involve claims upon time which I can ill afford to spare, having regard to the present difficult European situation and with the Disarmament Conference and other important matters requiring my urgent attention.

At the January 30th formal conference, Dr. Weizmann's posture on the extension of the Cabinet Committee was one of flexibility. It appears that he was sounding out the Committee on this question. It should be added that he did not pursue either his six-point plan or his direct proposal as adamant take-it-or-leave-it propositions. However, the one question on which he stood firm was that of development. The attitude of Colonial Office civil servants to Weizmann's renewed attempt to extend the Cabinet Committee was hostile. Sir John Shuckburgh
minuted:¹²

....the present intolerable state of affairs, in which no one knows where the real authority for the administration of Palestine resides, will be continued without check... they [the Jewish Agency proposals] seem likely to end by setting up something in the nature of a permanent secret tribunal for the Government of Palestine. I can conceive nothing further removed from British ideas of administration and nothing more likely to lead to disaster on the spot... there is grave danger that concessions may be made to them [the Zionists] which will seriously hamper the Palestine Administration in its already very difficult task of holding the balance equally between all sections of the population...

Departmental officials focused their criticism of this proposal on Henderson's refusal to accept accountability in the event the Cabinet Committee was prolonged. Shuckburgh wrote: "But who is to be responsible?"

¹² Minute by Shuckburgh, February 2, 1931, CO733/197/87050/5.

Clearly some one must be; but so long as the Sub-Committee remains in being, the unfortunate 'some one' will have to discharge his task under absolutely impossible conditions...."¹³ The Foreign Office clearly had established this impossible precondition on the question of accountability to ensure the inevitable demise of Weizmann's suggestion. Shuckburgh's acerbic comments go on to reveal: "The whole question has been discussed with Mr. Selby, who thinks it important that Lord Passfield should be in a position to place these considerations [Colonial Office objections] before the Cabinet."

It should be stressed that Colonial Office officials saw through the Jewish Agency rationale for this change. Sir Samuel Wilson indicated that adoption of the proposed administrative structure would effectively emasculate the authority of the Palestine Government, something that the Zionists would not have lamented. Agreeing with the objections of civil servants to the operational problems of such a change, Drummond Shiels provided Passfield with some blunt advice: "You should make it clear that the Colonial Office cannot accept responsibility for what may occur."¹⁴

This opinion prevailed at the February 5th meeting of the drafting sub-committee. Walford Selby requested recommendations from this body to enable the Foreign Secretary to clear up "the issues raised by Dr. Weizmann's request...." Reviewing the Jewish Agency proposal in

¹³ Minutes by Shuckburgh, February 3, 1931, C0733/197/87050 Pt. 1.

¹⁴ Minutes by Wilson and Shiels, February 3, 1931, ibid.

conjunction with the terms of reference that had established the Cabinet Committee, the sub-committee concluded that the Cabinet Committee had the authority to discuss only "the composition and powers of the Development Commission" on a continuing basis with the Agency. However, it suggested that such negotiations should be diverted to "the department...responsible for the ~~administration~~ of Palestine." The sub-committee also proposed that all future contacts with the Jewish Agency should be terminated after one further session. Moreover, it recommended that Jewish Agency views on the question of a round table meeting should be considered "through the ordinary channels," which in effect meant the Colonial Office. In conclusion, possible discussion on Trans-Jordan was rejected out of hand.¹⁵

Dr. Weizmann retained a somewhat flexible attitude when confronted with these conclusions during his February 6th interview with Selby and Malcolm MacDonald. As in the case of the January 30th conference, Weizmann firmly maintained that the committee should at least hold discussions on the development question with the Agency. Walford Selby recorded that Weizmann stressed the possibility of a "very difficult situation...not only for himself but also for His Majesty's Government if it were not found possible to meet his wishes to the extent that he had indicated...."¹⁶

¹⁵ Minutes of sub-committee meeting, February 5, 1931, ibid.

¹⁶ Selby to Boyd, letter, February 6, 1931, ibid.

In view of Dr. Weizmann's adamant position, the sub-committee reconvened on February 9, 1931 to reconsider its previous proposal to direct discussions concerning development to the Colonial Office. Malcolm MacDonald, who had been absent from the February 5th session, brought about a compromise solution to this impasse. As a result of his intervention, the sub-committee now suggested the establishment of an ad hoc inter-departmental committee to negotiate with the Zionists exclusively on development. The Cabinet Committee quickly approved the recommendations of the sub-committee. Jewish Agency representatives accepted this formula, and withdrew their request for the far-reaching extension of the Cabinet Committee.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the sub-committee also had been preoccupied with completing arrangements for the release of the explanation. The text of the interpretation had been completed on January 30, 1931. However, two important details concerning its publication remained to be settled. The first problem related to the format of the statement. Early versions of the explanation had taken the form of a letter from Arthur Henderson to Dr. Weizmann. The publication of the statement as an interpretative correspondence had been settled in November. Both the Jewish Agency and the Cabinet Committee had found this format acceptable.

¹⁷Memorandum by Henderson, February 10, 1931, C.P. 40 (31), CAB 24/219. The Agency also consented to Passfield's proposal to establish parallel discussions on development between the High Commissioner and the Arabs in Palestine.

However, the Zionist effort to obtain the transfer of the political administration of the Mandate from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office had created controversy in Government circles. The advisability of Arthur Henderson as signatory to the letter was being questioned. Moreover, the participation of Arthur Henderson in this capacity had become equally unpalatable to both the Foreign Secretary himself and Passfield. Contemporary press accounts were rife with rumours of the imminent transfer of responsibility over Palestine from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office. Indeed, there was a question on the Commons Order Paper inquiring "...whether it is proposed to transfer the supervision of Palestine affairs from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office." Therefore, Henderson's involvement as signatory would have been viewed as tantamount to such a shift. The Cabinet Committee recommendation that the Prime Minister should sign the final form of the letter, proposed by Henderson in his memorandum to the Cabinet of January 30th, was adopted by the Cabinet on February 4th.¹⁸

Because Passfield and Henderson were unable to sign the letter, the Prime Minister had emerged as the only authoritative political figure who could provide credibility to this document. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister did not appreciate the merit of this Cabinet decision. Ramsay MacDonald remained reluctant to sign the letter, until the last minute: "I am not quite sure that I should sign this letter commenting

¹⁸ An article in The Daily Telegraph, February 7, 1931, aroused particular interest in Government circles. See Premier 1/103. Cabinet Meeting, February 4, 1931. Cabinet Conclusions 11 (31), CAB 23/66. Drummond Shiels emphatically denied that the Government intended to pursue this course of action. See Commons, February 11, 1931, vol. 248, cols. 388-390.

upon a paper issued by the Colonial Office. Has this been adequately considered and are the reasons good? I do not like it."¹⁹

In reply to the Prime Minister's reservations, Passfield forcefully reiterated the position held by both him and Henderson on this issue, while conceding that Ramsay MacDonald, as Prime Minister, had the right to overrule his Cabinet.²⁰

It really would be very bad for Henderson to sign it - not that I mind being thrown over (as this would be interpreted to mean) - but because it would seem to the Jewish Agency to indicate that their insistent demand that Palestine should be transferred to the F.O. was favoured.

The Foreign Secretary presented similar arguments to the Prime Minister. As a result of these strong representations, Ramsay MacDonald became reluctantly reconciled to this action.²¹ Despite his unwillingness to become associated with this document, the explanation became known as the MacDonald Letter after its release.

The second matter concerning the publication of the letter that remained to be resolved was the question of its status. While considering the format of the proposed explanation in November, the Cabinet Committee had vetoed the presentation of this interpretation as a white paper statement comparable to that of the October Policy Statement. Although the Committee had decided that the explanation should be published as a letter, it had not determined whether the letter should be released as a command paper.

¹⁹Undated minute, Premier 1/103.

²⁰Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, February 9, 1931,
ibid.

²¹Minute by Vincent, February 9, 1931, ibid.

Arthur Henderson's covering memorandum to Cabinet of January 30, 1931 formed the basis of Cabinet resolutions on the forthcoming explanation. Nevertheless, this document contained no reference to its status. In the relevant Cabinet conclusion, however, the Cabinet gave authority for publication of the letter as a white paper. Colonial Office civil servants were appalled by this decision. Although Sir Samuel Wilson instructed his officials to begin preparations to publish the letter as a command paper, he sought to reverse the Cabinet's resolution. Passfield's role in this intervention was characteristically passive. The Permanent Under-Secretary requested Malcolm MacDonald to visit him on February 9th to discuss the question. Wilson's explanation was forceful enough to persuade Malcolm MacDonald to change his mind on this subject. G.A.C. Cliffe, Wilson's Private Secretary, minuted:²²

Mr. Malcolm MacDonald entirely agrees that the letter to Dr. Weizmann sh[oul]d be published in the press & not as a W[hite] Paper. He left Sir S. Wilson at 12 o'clock and was going off direct to speak to the P[rime] M[inister] about it.

Sir Samuel Wilson's initiative was successful. Malcolm MacDonald emerged as the key figure who determined the ultimate form of the explanation. While he supported the Colonial Office view on this matter, Malcolm MacDonald doubted whether the Zionists would accept this format. The Prime Minister also questioned the expediency of Wilson's proposal. He feared that this action would reopen negotiations, an anxiety shared by the Foreign Office:²³

²² Minutes by Boyd, February 5, 1931 and Cliffe, February 9, 1931, C0733/197/87050 Pt. 1.

²³ Minute by Duff, February 10, 1931; undated minute by Ramsay MacDonald. Premier 1/103.

Hankey's recollection is that either Henderson, Passfield or Thomas [Shaw] suggested that letter to W[eizmann] must be published as the Jews anyhow w[oul]d publish it. The prev[ious] pp. was a W[hite] P[aper]...this must be a W[hite] P[aper].

However, on February 10, 1931, Malcolm MacDonald managed to convince Chaim Weizmann and his executive to accept publication of the letter in the form of a statement to the press. This change was ratified by the Cabinet on February 11th "owing to the bad impression which publicity in so prominent a form was likely to make on Arab opinion in Palestine." Nevertheless, Ramsay MacDonald retained the option of publishing the explanation with the votes in Hansard, if pressed to do so. In addition, the alternative of publication as a white paper was left to the discretion of the Prime Minister in the event of extremely rough Parliamentary opposition.²⁴

During the Cabinet meeting of February 11th, two other related problems were resolved. The first question concerned the proposal for concentration of the administration of Middle East matters at the Foreign Office; the second, related to the Jewish Agency request for the extension of the Cabinet Committee. Both Passfield and Henderson objected forcefully to the centralization of the responsibility for Middle East affairs at the Foreign Office. The Palestine controversy was clearly the underlying feature of this debate. Passfield was noted as observing that "most of the difficulties of Palestine and Trans-Jordan are inherent and will persist no matter what Minister or Department bears the responsibility."

²⁴ Minutes by Shuckburgh, February 10, 1931, C0733/197/87050 Pt. 1 and Duff, February 10, 1931, Premier 1/103. Cabinet Meeting, February 11, 1931, Cabinet Conclusions 13 (31), CAB 23/66.

In deference to the opposition of Henderson and Passfield, the Cabinet concluded that it would be "inexpedient" to alter the status quo. The consultative inter-departmental committee structure, established in July, 1930, was confirmed. Interestingly enough, the issue of financial expediency did not figure as an important element of discussion either in the Cabinet meeting or in relevant briefing papers. Although the Treasury had revived the question, Philip Snowden played no major part in these deliberations. The Cabinet resolved this issue on the basis of administrative and political factors. Economic considerations did not enter the picture at all.

The Cabinet also dealt with the projected extension of the Palestine Cabinet Committee. Arthur Henderson presented the compromise agreement negotiated between the Jewish Agency and the Committee, and recommended its acceptance. The Cabinet ratified this suggestion. As a consequence, the transformation of the Cabinet Committee into a permanent body was officially rejected. However, the conversion of the Committee into an ad hoc negotiating body restricted to agricultural development was sanctioned, with the caveat that simultaneous talks be held between the High Commissioner and the Arabs in Jerusalem. The composition of the Cabinet Committee remained the same. In addition, Malcolm MacDonald and the Lord Advocate were re-appointed advisers to this body.

Meanwhile, opposition politicians were aware that the release of the explanation was imminent. Questioned closely on the status of this interpretation by Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Prime Minister noted: "If it were laid before Parliament [as a white paper]...it would give

the paper a status which it is undesirable it should have."²⁵ To meet Chamberlain's wishes, Ramsay MacDonald promised publication with the votes "so that it [the letter] will become official in that sense." This offer effectively short-circuited Parliamentary demands for its presentation as a command paper. The Prime Minister's definition of the letter, however, upset Zionist officials. Dr. Weizmann took strong exception to the demeaning interpretation given to the explanation. As a result, Ramsay MacDonald revised his previous statement in Parliament on the following day, thereby elevating the position of the letter.²⁶

The letter was published in Hansard on February 13, 1931.²⁷ It contained enormous concessions to the Zionists. Important White Paper provisions concerning land, immigration, the status of the Jewish Agency, the Histadruth, and public works were, in effect, neutralized. This statement swung British policy back to the "equal obligation" position, expressed by Ramsay MacDonald in April, 1930. In addition, it pointedly rejected the crystallization of the Jewish National Home as Government policy.

Elaborating on the major elements of the interpretation, it can be observed that future land regulation was limited to that of a temporary nature intended to solve the problem of the "landless Arabs" through the contemplated development scheme. Impediments to Jewish immigration,

²⁵ Commons, February 11, 1931, vol. 248, cols. 388-390.

²⁶ Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 6th Conf., February 12, 1931, CAB 27/433. Commons, February 12, 1931, vol. 248, cols. 599-600.

²⁷ Commons, February 13, 1931, vol. 248, cols. 751-757.

envisaged in the October Policy Statement, were explained away. The White Paper attacks on the Jewish Agency and Histadruth were softened to the point of reversal. On the question of public works, Jewish contributions to the revenues of the Government of Palestine were to determine a set-ratio of Jewish labour. Such a formula had represented a key demand of the Zionists.

One important omission, however, was any reference to constitutional development, that is the introduction of a legislative council, as proposed in the October Policy Statement. It should be added that the prospect of Zionist involvement in the development project received greater emphasis than it had obtained in the White Paper.

Chaim Weizmann was satisfied with the explanation. However, in his official acknowledgement to the Prime Minister, he stressed that it was necessary for the Colonial Office to follow the terms of the letter. He clearly realized the key role of Colonial Office officials in generating unsympathetic policies towards the Zionists. He feared that these civil servants would not implement the policy laid down in the explanation. Based on previous experience, Weizmann's apprehension was well-founded.²⁸

The Jewish Agency's acceptance of the interpretation as an official letter without the status of a command paper had been unexpected by British politicians and officials. By proposing the extension of the Cabinet Committee, the Zionists had succeeded in diverting the attention of officials and politicians away from the text of the explanation. As a ploy, the move was brilliantly successful. Sir John Chancellor's vociferous

²⁸Weizmann to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, February 14, 1931, Premier 1/103.

criticisms had been rejected out of hand. Passfield's proposal for an additional explanation on behalf of the Arabs had met a similar fate.

The Zionists under Weizmann's leadership had retained one basic goal throughout the negotiations: to neutralize the elements of British policy that would stifle the Jewish National Home.²⁹ In this, the Jewish Agency succeeded admirably. The constitutional question aside, the only point that remained fully unresolved was the development scheme. However, a firm negotiating strategy had obtained further high-level talks on this question.

While the Zionists were aggressive bargainers, they possessed the acute sense of timing to bend at the right moment. In renewing the extension proposals, Jewish Agency officials were undoubtedly serious in their intentions. This effort appears to have represented an attempt to sound out British negotiators and to obtain additional concessions that would have proven superfluous in terms of neutralizing the White Paper, but useful for the Zionists. However, being realists, the Zionists quickly had conceded a number of points in exchange for the ad hoc committee on development. They were aware of the political problems facing the Labour Government over this issue. An additional white paper would have damaged its credibility. The Agency consciously accepted the letter format of the explanation as a gesture to enable the Government to save face.

²⁹See Dr. Chaim Weizmann, op. cit., pp. 334 ff.

The Arabs of Palestine and
British Policy

The Arab leadership of Palestine offered a diffuse reaction towards the October White Paper and the MacDonald Letter. This may be attributed to the fact that the Arab hierarchy was in turmoil when these two documents were released. During the Fall of 1930, The New York Times consistently reported that there was continued dissension among Arabs on religious lines. Moslems were openly feuding with Christians.³⁰ To complicate this sectarian strife, the Christians tended to be political moderates, favouring acceptance of the White Paper policy, especially the legislative council provision, as an enormous concession to Arab interests.

However, the Moslems, under the leadership of the Mufti, were ostensibly non-committal, but they opposed the stand of the moderates. Moreover, this faction condemned the nature of Arab representation on the proposed legislative council. During this period, dispatches in The New York Times indicated that the Moslems would reject the White

³⁰See The New York Times, October 24, 1930; October 25, 1930; November 2, 1930; November 3, 1930; November 9, 1930; December 10, 1930; December 14, 1930; and December 21, 1930.

Paper for alleged inadequacies. The Arab Executive, nevertheless, issued a statement on December 28, 1930 in which the Policy Statement was accepted only as a minimal offering, a full two months after publication.³¹

In the same manner, response to the MacDonald Letter was indefinite. Other than submitting a protest note in which ominous reprisals were threatened, the Arab leadership did little of substance to follow up this matter.³² Certainly, Arab opinion to the letter was, as anticipated, hostile. However, the general political situation in Palestine did not in any way deteriorate to a crisis-stage comparable to that of 1929. The dire predictions contained in the gloomy telegrams from the High Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary, that were circulated to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary during the negotiations, never materialized.

To account for this state of affairs, it should first be noted that, throughout this period of apparent indecision on the part of the Arab hierarchy, the Mufti was fighting for his political life. The major threat facing his position of pre-eminence in the Arab community of Palestine came from within the Arab leadership. This factionalism was due to religious and social factors. On the one hand, the moderate element, in which the Christians constituted a recognizably significant group, were interested in neutralizing him because of his religious and political extremism. On the other hand, members of the rival Nashishibi family wanted him out of the way purely for sectarian as

³¹Ibid., December 29, 1930.

³²Chancellor to Passfield, cable, February 17, 1931, G0733/197/87050/4. See The New York Times, February 18, 1931.

opposed to ideological reasons. The internecine strife between the two families had re-emerged following the publication of the MacDonald Letter. This blood feud, which had been patched up the previous Spring immediately prior to the meetings held between the Arab leadership and the British Government in London, had now resumed with intensity.

The Mufti's position had so deteriorated by early March, 1931, that this combination of Christians and dissident Moslems managed to obtain effective control of the Arab Executive. In formulating the Executive's tepid response to the MacDonald Letter, this faction had soundly beaten back extremist resolutions proposed by the Mufti's group. Indeed, the official position of the Arab Executive favoured participation in the legislative council policy of the October White Paper, and rejected the policy of economic or other reprisals against the Jewish community or the British. As a particular expression of its disapproval of the MacDonald Letter, the Executive resolved not to meet Dr. Weizmann, who was expected in Palestine the following week to hold talks with the Arabs. Considering the fact that the Mufti and his followers were still a force to be reckoned with, the moderates clearly had been forced to act warily on this question. Nevertheless, the Executive did make it clear that this rebuff did not rule out the possibility of discussions at a later time.³³ While on the surface the Arab Executive had been hostile to the idea of talks leading to some sort of understanding with the Jewish community, it should be noted that lines of communications had been established. Before this, the

³³Ibid., March 4, 1931.

idea of contact with the Jewish community, and especially with Dr. Weizmann, had been considered unthinkable by the Arab Executive.

To complicate matters within the Arab community further, the Mufti was preoccupied with grand political designs of his own. At this point, he was engaged in no less a project than the re-establishment and re-location of the Moslem Caliphate in Jerusalem with himself as head. This would place him in a position of pre-eminence in the Moslem world. However, because of the dissension within the community, Arabs in Palestine were deeply divided on this issue as well.

Meanwhile, the Colonial Office was also questioning the Mufti's political future. When formulating future policy for the October White Paper, the Colonial Office had begun to consider seriously the option of "...reducing his [the Mufti's] prestige and influence as soon as possible...."³⁴ The intervention of Eric Mills on this question led directly to this proposal.³⁵ In addition, a confidential assessment on the Mufti by Sir John Hope Simpson influenced the Middle East Department greatly.³⁶

³⁴Minute by Williams, August 27, 1930, CO733/193/77364. The previous day, Auni Bey Abdul Hadi, a prominent Moslem lawyer, resigned from the Arab Executive, and announced his intention to form a political party of his own with the specific goal of opposing the Mufti. He had been one of the principal Arab counsels during the hearings of the Shaw Commission. This act marked the beginning of internal strife within the Arab community in the 1930-1931 period. See The New York Times, August 27, 1930.

³⁵Eric Mills (1892-1961) was Assistant Chief Secretary of the Government of Palestine. He had been seconded to the Middle East Department by the Palestine Government from 1921 until 1925.

³⁶Hope Simpson to Passfield, letter, August 18, 1930, C.P. 301 (30), CAB 24/215.

Politically, the difficulty between Jew and Arab is largely due to the Grand Mufti. He is a man of small attainments, and, had he not been appointed Grand Mufti by Sir Herbert Samuel, nothing would ever have been heard of him...He has a petty mind, and his whole attention is directed to manoeuvres which will fortify his personal position. I understand that there is an intention to remove him. The sooner that is done the better for Palestine.

The Mufti's power is based on his command of the purse... There is at present no audit of the expenditure of this money, and little doubt that the Mufti is using it for his own ends. Chancellor is contemplating legislation to provide for an annual audit. That will be excellent.

British officials in Whitehall, therefore, considered the Mufti "...the principal obstacle to any compromise or rapprochement between Jews and Arabs." As such, they now entertained the idea of weakening him politically. However, a British-inspired move to force him from either or both of his offices as Mufti of Jerusalem or President of the Supreme Moslem Council was considered extremely unwise in this volatile political environment. Therefore, the Middle East Department decided to consider an indirect course of action to achieve this end. O.G.R. Williams proposed to eliminate the Mufti's financial power base as President of the Supreme Moslem Council by having the administration of the extensive communal funds or Waqf and the Moslem civil courts or Sharia courts removed from his control. These two elements were the key functions of the Council.³⁷

To implement the first recommendation, the Middle East Department intended to place the administration of the Waqf into the hands of a separate department of the Palestine Government, staffed entirely by Moslems. It was anticipated that communal funds could thus be strictly

³⁷Minute by Williams, August 27, 1930, C0733/193/77364.

audited and conscientiously administered. The example of the administration of the Waqf in Cyprus was cited as a suitable model to follow. To carry out the second proposal, the Colonial Office was prepared to incorporate the Sharia courts into the judicial structure of Palestine by making them subordinate to the jurisdiction of the Chief Justice of Palestine. Judges of the Sharia courts were to benefit from the security of pensionable status and tenure of office. This measure was intended to ensure "appropriate safeguards" in the administration of civil justice within the Moslem community. By linking the reforms to an obvious increase in the prestige of these two functions, officials intended to implement them in a manner that would consider the sensibilities of the Moslem community.

As far as O.G.R. Williams was concerned, "...the Supreme Moslem Council, for practical purposes, means the Mufti...." Because the Supreme Moslem Council had been created by the Government of Palestine in 1922 and since the Mufti, as President of this body, was a salaried official of the Palestine Government, adequate authority existed to implement the two proposed reform measures. The Government of Palestine had ample grounds to take such action. British officials were well aware of the extent of the misappropriation of communal funds and the corruption of the Sharia courts. By September, 1930, the plunder of communal funds had been so extensive, that the Council had incurred a deficit in excess of LP. 30,000.³⁸ Moreover, officials realized that this situation could not be remedied without outside

³⁸ Extract from "Police Weekly Appreciation Summary," September 6, 1930, extant only in ibid. The LP. had a par value with the L Sterling.

intervention. Throughout his tenure as President of the Supreme Moslem Council, the Mufti had consistently usurped power for himself and his followers by refusing to hold general elections, as stipulated in the constitution imposed by the Palestine Government with the creation of the Council.

At first, the Middle East Department was anxious to have the Mufti neutralized as Williams had recommended. Nevertheless, although these measures met with the approval of Sir John Chancellor, who was in London at the time, Sir Spencer Davis, the Officer Administering the Government of Palestine, in Chancellor's absence, opposed their adoption. While conceding that "...such reform will be in the general interest of the Moslem community...", Davis feared that:³⁹

...any declaration of intention by H.M. Government at present will be opposed as being designed to place [the] Moslem community in [an] invidious position in regard to [the] management of its own affairs...and will only strengthen popular allegiance to the Mufti.

These two arguments so impressed Colonial Office officials that they decided to let the matter drop for the moment.⁴⁰ Although this decision was perhaps an understandable one at the time, the Middle East Department allowed the question to remain dormant indefinitely. Officials chose not to implement these proposals when the Mufti's position within the Arab Executive deteriorated to its lowest point after

³⁹Passfield to Davis, cable, August 30, 1930; Davis to Passfield, cable, September 4, 1930. Ibid.

⁴⁰Minutes by Mayle, September 8, 1930; Harold Beckett, September 9, 1930; Williams, September 9, 1930; Grindle, September 15, 1930; and Passfield, September 15, 1930. Davis was informed that the matter was in abeyance. Passfield to Davis, cable, September 16, 1930. Ibid.

the publication of the MacDonald Letter. Instead of capitalizing on this situation to support the sizable moderate element on the Arab Executive, and thereby increase the possibility of a rapprochement between the two communities, British officials decided to maintain the status quo. By refusing to act decisively, they missed an ideal opportunity to neutralize the Mufti with the minimum of adverse reaction. The Arab moderates had gone as far as they could to eliminate the Mufti from effective control of the Arab Executive, and thus from his position of dominance within the Arab community. To consolidate their gains, comparable action on the part of the Palestine Government had been imperative as the Mufti was its political creation.

To account for this puzzling about-face, the factor of strategy must be considered. While officials disliked the Mufti, they wished to retain him as the bulwark against Communism among the Arabs in Palestine. The one feature in the Mufti's political make-up that redeemed him in the eyes of the Colonial Office and the Government of Palestine was his virulent anti-Communist stand. This reason emerged as the paramount consideration that justified the retention of a hands-off policy towards him in Whitehall and Jerusalem.⁴¹

⁴¹It should be noted that this antipathy was mutual. The Palestine Communist Party considered the Mufti a clerical reactionary who was serving as an agent of British Imperialism in Palestine. See Arthur Mavrogordato, "Memorandum on Recent Activity of the Palestine Communist Party," Chancellor to Passfield, dispatch and enclosure, June 17, 1930, extant only in F0371/14500/E3997/3634/65. See also the report by E.P. Quigley (b.1889), June 18, 1931, C0733/204/87156/I. Quigley was a District Commissioner with the Government of Palestine.

British officials in Whitehall and Jerusalem had become deeply troubled by what they viewed as the growing threat of Communism in Palestine. Their concern was attributable to the recent shift in policy by Soviet authorities to Arabize the outlawed Communist Party of Palestine. This measure had been instituted in December, 1929. Before this change in direction, the leadership and following of the Communist Party had been comprised mainly of European immigrants, who were almost exclusively Jewish, from Eastern Europe. Because of the antipathy between the Jewish and Arab communities, Arab participation had been minimal. Now British officials had become aware of the steady stream of Arabs who were being trained in Moscow for duties with the movement in Palestine. This alone was unsettling enough. However, officials in London and Jerusalem believed that Soviet activities throughout the Middle East were based in Palestine. The prospect of a Communist-led revolt to be initiated in Palestine against British interests in the Middle East was considered the inevitable consequence of this activity unless firm action was taken to counter it. By vigorously suppressing Communist activity and by retaining the Mufti as a counterweight, officials believed that they could overcome this menace.

British officials were well aware of the Mufti's own sinister designs for Palestine and the Middle East. Although the transfer of British support to the rival Nashishibi family was considered, this option was ruled out. O.G.R. Williams felt that this clan "...would develop as hostile an attitude to the British Government as that of which the Mufti is suspected...."⁴² Moreover, he feared that the

⁴²Minute by Williams, December 4, 1931, C0733/193/77364.

ensuing strife between the two families would create a diversion that the Communists could exploit. Therefore, in the interests of warding off the imponderable Communist threat, British officials effectively sacrificed the possibility of an Arab-Jewish rapprochement by electing to retain the Mufti. Despite this decision, the Colonial Office and the Government of Palestine maintained the policy of attempting to obtain an understanding between the two communities.

This possibility was considered most unlikely by British authorities, in any event. Evaluating the MacDonald Letter, Chancellor took the position that the explanation "...seriously militated against any Arab co-operation with the Jews in Palestine." However, the High Commissioner, his officials, and, for that matter, the Colonial Office were aware that rapprochement was virtually impossible with the continued presence in Arab political life of the extremist faction led by the Mufti. In a letter to Passfield dated February 13, 1931, Chancellor had, in fact, referred to the problem of the Mufti as the major impediment to improved Arab-Jewish relations.⁴³

British officials tolerated the Mufti's nefarious activities as an alternative more palatable than the advance of Communism. This position brought the Colonial Office into conflict with the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office discounted the threat of Communism in Palestine and the Middle East at this time. Instead, Foreign Office officials evidently considered the Mufti to have represented the major menace to British interests in this region.

⁴³Chancellor to Passfield, cable, February 17, 1930, CO733/197/87050/4. Chancellor to Passfield, letter, February 13, 1931, CO733/197/87050 Pt. 1. Chancellor's cable was passed to the Prime Minister and Arthur Henderson, while his "private and personal" letter was not.

The Foreign Office was especially troubled by the Mufti's efforts to establish an Islamic World Congress. This matter had become an irritant in Anglo-Turkish relations as the Turkish Government viewed with dismay this brazen attempt to recreate a Pan-Islamic hegemony. Moreover, the Foreign Office Eastern Department feared that the Congress could be exploited as a springboard for anti-British activity throughout the Middle East on religious as opposed to political lines. Such was the concern at the Foreign Office that the Colonial Office was requested to "...put to the High Comm[issioner] the suggestion that the Mufti should be threatened with removal from the post of President of the Supreme Moslem Council if he did not exercise proper control of discussions at the forthcoming Moslem Congress."⁴⁴

The High Commissioner of the day, Sir Arthur Wauchope, rejected this proposal outright, and the Colonial Office supported him wholeheartedly. Throughout this inter-departmental controversy, the Colonial Office minimized the potential consequence of Moslem unity under the Mufti. Commenting on this matter, Sir John Shuckburgh noted:⁴⁵

A combined Arab rising is a possibility; but Arabs as a whole are so much divided among themselves that anything like concerted action among them, on a wide scale, does not seem a very probable contingency.

As the result of the Islamic Congress, the Mufti's prestige in the Moslem world was enhanced. Although the Caliphate had not been formally restored in ~~Jerusalem~~, this had been done for all intents and purposes. The Mufti had emerged "...as acknowledged leader in Islam

⁴⁴ Minute by Williams, December 4, 1931, C0733/193/77364. This assessment was a review of events that were linked to the Islamic World Congress in progress at the time. The Mufti had intended to use this meeting as the means by which to secure his appointment to a restored Caliphate.

⁴⁵ Minute by Shuckburgh, June 11, 1931, C0733/204/87156/1.

by the way in which he conducted the business of the Moslem Congress....⁴⁶
 The forthright action taken by Arab moderates to oust the Mufti and his faction, as a result, had been soundly reversed. Because of this turn of events, it became impossible for British officials to reduce his importance as they had earlier contemplated. At this point, the Colonial Office and the Government of Palestine had no choice but to tolerate his unsettling activities on the political scene of Palestine. Only with his involvement in the renewal of disturbances in 1936 were they in a position to weaken his position. However, at that time, they again chose not to act. Instead, the Mufti was permitted, in 1937, to flee to Lebanon where he continued his subversion.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Obituary of the Mufti, The Times, July 6, 1974.

⁴⁷Ibid. Throughout his term of office, British officials never intervened to audit communal funds under his control. This inaction was criticized by the Royal Commission that investigated the situation in Palestine in 1936. See Cmd. 5479, pp. 52-53 and 178. It should be added that the Mufti headed the Islamic World Congress, which he founded in 1931, until the time of his death in 1974.

The Resurgence of the
Colonial Office

With the publication of the MacDonald Letter and the resolution of the jurisdiction question, the Colonial Office reassumed its supremacy in Middle East affairs. The Foreign Office willingly surrendered its short-term control of Palestine matters.⁴⁸ While the Foreign Office Eastern Department kept up-to-date on Palestine developments, its interest was generally of a casual nature. Once again, Foreign Office civil servants observed events in Palestine, and concerned themselves only with aspects of Palestine affairs relating to traditional departmental responsibilities. These obligations included the administration of the foreign relations of Palestine and the representation of British interests in Palestine before the League of Nations.

Upon the restoration of full political authority over Palestine affairs, Colonial Office officials attempted to water down the British concessions to the Zionists contained in the MacDonald Letter. Extant evidence strongly suggests that Passfield, in collusion with his

⁴⁸Minute by Rendel, February 17, 1931, F0371/15330/E755/444/65.

officials, planned to place minimal emphasis on the provisions of the explanation before it was issued. In his February 6th letter to Chancellor, Passfield referred disparagingly to the section of the explanation that was intended to guarantee the employment of Jews on public works: "You will observe...that all that the High Commissioner is required to do under the terms of the paragraph is to 'take into account' the Jewish contributions...."⁴⁹

The MacDonald Letter stipulated that Jews should share in a proportion of public works opportunities "taking into account Jewish contributions to public revenue." The Jewish Agency successfully had obtained official British sanction to a quota system based on Jewish taxation, and began to press the Colonial Office on this promise. Not only did this concession entail the hiring of a minimum percentage of Jews for public works jobs; but also this guarantee involved their employment on terms suitable to their higher standard of living. In fact, a two-tiered payment scheme for public works had been approved.

Throughout the negotiations, Colonial Office officials constantly opposed this concept. Believing that this provision of the letter was too pro-Jewish, Harold Beckett minuted: "...apparently the Jews are afraid of anything that even looks impartial." Determined, therefore, to obstruct the implementation of this guarantee, Colonial Office officials were slow to act on this issue. They merely recommended that the High Commissioner should hire Jews. As could be expected with such a lack of direction, little was done in Palestine to

⁴⁹ Passfield to Chancellor, letter, February 6, 1931, C0733/197/87050 Pt. 1

fulfil this promise.⁵⁰

However, throughout the remaining days of the Second Labour Government, this provision enjoyed the full backing of the Treasury. In authorizing public works projects of direct benefit to the Jewish community, the Treasury was liberal. Treasury approval for expenditures in conformity with the Letter was provided in response to Jewish Agency requests for improved roads in areas of Palestine with a large Jewish population. In addition, the existing Haifa Harbour project received Treasury sanction for the two-tiered scheme of public works wages. Because of the uncharacteristically generous support given to this principle by the Treasury, the Colonial Office could not justify its failure to implement this guarantee on financial grounds.⁵¹

In attempting to stifle this provision of the MacDonald Letter, the Colonial Office was confronted with active opposition from the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office intervened over the Haifa Harbour project to ensure that the hiring of Jewish labourers by contractors would become an "obligation" instead of a "possibility." Colonial Office officials considered this request "inadvisable." However, the Foreign Office Eastern Department termed the Colonial Office answer "not very convincing." Rendel sent another letter to Wilson in which he forcefully criticized the Colonial Office stand and virtually demanded that the Foreign Office amendment be enacted. Williams' reply on behalf of the Colonial Office claimed that the Foreign Office representations had

⁵⁰ Minute by Beckett, February 24, 1931, CO733/203/87130/I.

⁵¹ Minutes by Mayle, August 17, 1931 and Williams December 8, 1931. CO733/203/87130/II.

arrived too late. It is clear that, having had no intention of bowing to Foreign Office wishes, the Colonial Office procrastinated on this issue to evade the prospect of reviewing its position.⁵²

This incident and the Colonial Office method of handling the Foreign Office at this time emphasize the resurgence of Colonial Office authority over Palestine. Five months earlier, the Colonial Office Middle East Department would obediently have accepted a Foreign Office request on a subject as seemingly inconsequential as this. However, Colonial Office officials were now confident, perhaps over-confident, of their paramount position in administering British interests in the Middle East.

On the employment question, at least, this sense of certainty was misplaced. Because of the full support provided to the employment guarantee of the MacDonald Letter by the Treasury and the Foreign Office, Colonial Office resistance to its implementation was particularly obvious. As the result of the violent demonstration of June 16, 1931 that was organized by the Histadruth in Palestine to dramatize this inaction, high level politicians in Britain became aware of this situation. By resorting to unorthodox measures, the Zionists ultimately obtained positive results. With the intervention of Malcolm MacDonald and the Prime Minister in this matter, Colonial Office officials urged the High Commissioner to implement this aspect of the Letter. The procrastination on the part

⁵²Rendel to Wilson, letter, May 9, 1931, CO733/198/87058/I. Williams to Vansittart, letter, May 23, 1931, FO371/15328/E2743/30/31. Minute by Rendel, May 26, 1931, ibid. Rendel to Wilson, letter, May 30, 1931, CO733/198/87058/I. Williams to Vansittart, letter, June 12, 1931, ibid.

of the Colonial Office was remedied by mid-July, 1931. Faced with the renewal of direct involvement by the Prime Minister's office in the administration of the Palestine Mandate, the ministry promptly complied with Ramsay MacDonald's wishes.⁵³

Meanwhile, urged on by Chancellor, the Colonial Office attempted to establish a legislative council in Palestine. This measure represented an essential ingredient of the White Paper policy of October, 1930. Reference to this contentious question was omitted from the MacDonald Letter, despite strong Zionist objections. As a result, the issue of constitutional development remained the only major element of the October Policy Statement that had not been modified.

Anxious to salvage some portion of their shattered policy, departmental officials focused their attention on this issue. While grasping at straws, the Middle East Department viewed the establishment of a legislative council as the vehicle with which to implement quietly as much of the discredited White Paper policy as possible by crystallizing the Jewish National Home politically. Colonial Office civil servants were prepared and determined to counter Jewish Agency objections to this measure. However, they were unequipped to deal with strong Foreign Office reservations against it.⁵⁴

⁵³Minute by Shuckburgh, June 25, 1931, C0733/206/87253. See The New York Times, June 19, 1931.

⁵⁴Chancellor to Passfield, letter, December 12, 1930. Minutes by Beckett and Shuckburgh, March 13, 1931, C0733/202/87105. Williams to Rendel, letter, March 25, 1931, F0371/15326/E1525/17/31.

The Foreign Office criticized the proposed creation of the legislative council on technical as opposed to political grounds. This position had emerged upon review of the draft oath of office recommended by Chancellor. Following the publication of the Churchill White Paper in 1922, provision had been made for members of the proposed legislative council to take an oath of loyalty to "the Government of Palestine." The High Commissioner now wished prospective members to swear allegiance to "His Majesty King George Vth and his heirs and successors." William Beckett was wary of the consequences of this oath:⁵⁵

If the Legislative Council for Palestine are made to take the oath to His Majesty simpliciter in the same manner that, say, the Legislative Council of any British protectorate or colony have to take it, and this is an innovation introduced now amending previous arrangements under which the oath was to be taken to the Government of Palestine, we may be quite sure that there are many people at Geneva and elsewhere who will seize upon this as being a new claim to sovereignty over Palestine.

Undoubtedly preoccupied with the land and development issues, Colonial Office officials did not follow up this matter immediately by formulating an alternative that would be acceptable to the Foreign Office. While this point of detail was minor when viewed in perspective with the political aspects of the question, it effectively prevented the establishment of an elected legislative council for the remainder of the Second Labour Government. Indeed, although they later pursued this proposal, departmental officials never succeeded in instituting a legislative council, along the lines recommended by Winston Churchill in 1922, during the balance of the British Mandate of Palestine.

⁵⁵Minute by William E. Beckett, April 2, 1931, ibid. Rendel to Williams, letter, April 29, 1931, C0733/202/87105

The Land Ordinance Controversy

The land question constituted the major element of contention between the Colonial Office and the Jewish Agency until the fall of the Second Labour Government in August, 1931. Their conflict revolved around the problem of legislation affecting the transfer of land and agricultural development. The matter of land ordinances, nevertheless, was perhaps the most pressing issue in relations between the Agency and the Colonial Office.

Legislation to restrict the free sale of land was as imperative of the White Paper policy. This measure represented the necessary means by which the Colonial Office intended to stifle the Jewish National Home project. During the discussions which led to the MacDonald Letter, Sir John Chancellor attempted to impose six restrictive land ordinances. Jewish Agency negotiators in London were so incensed by this action that they attempted unsuccessfully to have the issue placed on the agenda of the formal talks. Nevertheless, they managed to persuade the Cabinet Committee to consider one of the proposed ordinances on the sub-committee level.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Minutes, C.P.I. (30) 3rd Conf., December 5, 1930, CAB 27/433. Weizmann to Henderson, letter, December 9, 1930, CO733/185/77072/IV.

This particular ordinance was a revised act for the temporary "protection" of agricultural tenants pending the establishment of the development scheme. As it stood, the draft legislation provided the High Commissioner with far-reaching discretionary power to annul all future rural land transactions, to define tenancy, and to determine "adequate" compensation for displaced tenants.

This lack of precision troubled the Zionists. However, they first attacked the draft law on the basis of its validity in the context of the pending explanation of the October White Paper at a meeting held on January 19, 1931. This strategy failed. Nevertheless, the Zionists received a commitment from the Cabinet Committee for additional discussion of the legislation at a future meeting between the Agency and the Colonial Office. As a result of this rebuff, the Jewish Agency shifted its tactics. It now aimed at having the draft ordinance modified instead of withdrawn. The Agency, therefore, attempted to have the terms of the ordinance defined as precisely as possible to minimize the delegation of discretionary power to the High Commissioner.⁵⁷

With the termination of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine after the release of the MacDonald Letter, a second conference on this issue was held between representatives of the Colonial Office and the Jewish Agency on March 7, 1931. Claiming that political considerations, as opposed to economic factors, would prevail in the review provisions of the legislation, the Jewish Agency representatives took exception with the discretionary powers given to the High Commissioner. Although

⁵⁷"Notes of Conference held at the Colonial Office on Monday, 19th January, 1931," C0733/199/87072/I.

Sir John Shuckburgh demurred at the Jewish Agency rationale for opposing the contemplated powers of the High Commissioner, he agreed to the compromise formula that was negotiated during the meeting. According to this understanding, the proposed authority of the High Commissioner to control land transfers on a virtually unlimited basis would remain unaltered. However, the compensation provision of the ordinance was to be fully delineated.⁵⁸

When informed of the amendments to the proposed legislation, the High Commissioner objected vehemently to them. He resisted the compromise draft on the grounds that it would not enable him to cope with what he interpreted as a crisis of Zionist-inspired evictions of Arabs. Officials in Whitehall were impressed by this strident response. Shuckburgh accepted his assessment of conditions in Palestine without question, and indicated that tougher land legislation was required "...whether or not the Jews are prepared to agree." Because of Chancellor's vociferous reaction, the Colonial Office decided to abrogate its agreement with the Jewish Agency on the terms of this major ordinance.⁵⁹ However, officials were unwilling to terminate this understanding unilaterally. To achieve this end, they took great pains to protect their department politically. The set-backs associated with the October Policy Statement had made officials acutely aware of the necessity of paying attention to details of execution as well as to political considerations in planning a controversial policy.⁵⁹

⁵⁸"Note of Conference held at the Colonial Office on Saturday, 7th March, 1931," C0733/199/87072/II.

⁵⁹Passfield to Chancellor, letter, March 12, 1931; Chancellor to Passfield, cables, March 25 and April 11, 1931; minute by Shuckburgh, April 15, 1931. Ibid.

Learning from their mistakes of the previous Autumn, Colonial Office civil servants now realized that contentious decisions on Palestine would require the complete backing of higher authority. Passfield first raised the question of the High Commissioner's concern before Cabinet. Then, shortly afterwards, a copy of Chancellor's reply was sent to the Prime Minister: This matter was discussed at no less than three Cabinet meetings. During all of these sessions, Passfield stressed the situation of the mass evictions of Arabs by the Zionists, as perceived by the High Commissioner. In doing this, he omitted any mention of the negotiated draft law until the third Cabinet meeting.⁶⁰

This activity was part of a carefully contrived effort to scuttle the compromise version of the ordinance. The Colonial Secretary's intervention on this issue brought about positive results for his ministry. By distorting the nature of political conditions in Palestine, by misrepresenting the Zionist position on the matter, and by placing the negotiated draft in as unfavourable a light as possible, Passfield obtained Cabinet sanction to break the compromise agreement.

The ordinance was proclaimed on May 30, 1931. It was enacted as a temporary measure for the specified period of one year. However, provision existed for the extension of this legislation at the discretion of the High Commissioner. Nevertheless, the renewal of this ordinance would require authority from Whitehall for political reasons. It should be noted that this law was the sole land ordinance enacted during the remaining term of the Second Labour Government.

⁶⁰ Wilson to Duff, letter, April 21, 1931, Premier 1/103. Cabinet Meetings April 15, 1931 (morning), April 15, 1931 (afternoon), and April 22, 1931. Cabinet Conclusions 22 (31), 23 (31), and 24 (31), CAB 23/66.

As can be imagined, Dr. Chaim Weizmann was furious at this unilateral decision. In his stiffly worded response to Passfield, Weizmann accused the Colonial Secretary of breaking an understanding with his organization over this issue. Commenting on this protest, Shuckburgh noted that it was "fully to be expected." In addition, he wrote that this tacit agreement could be repudiated as it did not exist in writing. As a result, Passfield rejected Weizmann's reply by asserting that he could find no basis to such an understanding in departmental minutes.⁶¹

In evaluating the events surrounding the abrupt proclamation of this land law, it can be observed that the Colonial Office definitely had regained its position of supremacy over Palestine affairs. The frustration evident during the November to February period was clearly dissipated. Colonial Office civil servants, to the highest level, virtually had returned to their peremptory methods of administering Palestine, tempered with an additional element of caution. With full Cabinet backing, this mood of confidence was so strong that officials had been willing to risk an uproar from the Jewish Agency over the issue. This attitude is all the more remarkable when one considers that the Permanent Mandates Commission was scheduled to meet barely two weeks after the decision on the land legislation had been taken.

⁶¹Weizmann to Passfield, letter, May 27, 1931; minute by Shuckburgh, May 28, 1931; Passfield to Weizmann, letter, June 1, 1931. C0733/199/87072/II.

CHAPTER 7

THE FINAL DAYS OF THE SECOND

LABOUR GOVERNMENT

A Development Commission for Palestine: The Sparring Between the Colonial Office and the Jewish Agency

The issue of agricultural development represented the second aspect of the land question that concerned the Jewish Agency and the Colonial Office in the remaining days of the Second Labour Government. With the publication of the MacDonald Letter, the development issue had been reopened. By authorizing discussions between the Jewish Agency and the ad hoc Cabinet Committee on this question, the Cabinet had reversed its earlier rejection of financial assistance for the Jewish National Home. Colonial Office civil servants were angered by this change in policy. Nevertheless, they were forced to be cautious in their dealings with the Jewish Agency on this matter because the ministry was unable to act arbitrarily. The Cabinet had specifically committed the Government to negotiations with the Jewish Agency. In addition, the Lord Advocate for Scotland and Malcolm MacDonald, who were both noted for their impartiality, had been delegated to serve on the ad hoc Committee.¹

Pt. 1.

¹See minute by Shuckburgh, March 12, 1931, C0733/210/87402.

In formulating their department's confidential position, Colonial Office officials attempted to retain as much of Hope Simpson's development plan as possible. They adamantly opposed giving the Zionists any portion of the development fund whatever because they believed that the budgeted amount of £2,500,000 would merely cover the cost of settling landless Arabs. However, this strategy failed to take into account the complete reversal of the Treasury on development after the Cabinet had amended the direction of this program. Not only did the usually parsimonious Treasury authorize the inclusion of Jews in this scheme; but also it stipulated that there was to be no distinction in the use of the money. According to this dictum, benefits were to be applied equally and simultaneously to both communities. In addition, the Treasury reserved the right to approve every expenditure from the development fund.²

By establishing rigorous operational guidelines, the Treasury made it quite clear that it intended to monitor constantly the implementation of the development plan. This imposition of tight control demonstrates that the Treasury lacked confidence in the ability of the Colonial Office and the Government of Palestine to execute financial responsibilities within budgeted limits and to follow Treasury directives in the disbursement of funds. In this time of general fiscal insecurity, the Treasury despaired of the financial administration practices employed by both the Colonial Office and the Palestine Government. Treasury officials, at this point, had little faith in possible promises from

²Waterfield to Shuckburgh, letter, March 18, 1931, ibid. The Treasury insisted on the appointment of a departmental official to the proposed development commission, who would be accountable directly to Whitehall.

either body that the development project would be administered on a financially sound basis and in an even-handed manner.³

Needless to say, this emphatic decision placed the Colonial Office in a difficult position. Dismayed by the Treasury's stand, departmental officials believed that it was especially urgent that the appointment of Hope Simpson as Director of Development be secured immediately. They had just pressed this matter on Malcolm MacDonald and the Lord Advocate. Their initiative took on added importance because of the Treasury's intervention. With the speedy creation of an administrative framework to implement the scheme exclusively on behalf of the Arabs, departmental officials wanted to impose the original development plan as a fait accompli, and thereby, undercut the Treasury. Nevertheless, the Colonial Office was unsuccessful. To the consternation of officials, Malcolm MacDonald and the Lord Advocate rejected this proposal, noting that the timing of the appointment prior to the negotiations would be inappropriate.⁴

To compound the woes of departmental officials, the Inter-Departmental Committee, as the ad hoc Committee became known, took an independent posture in determining its negotiating strategy prior to the talks, instead of deferring to the plan prepared by the Middle East Department. Under the chairmanship of the Lord Advocate, the Committee.

³See Warren Fisher to Wilson, letter, March 18, 1931 and minute by Williams, March 26, 1931. CO733/200/87081.

⁴Shuckburgh to Malcolm MacDonald, letter, March 16, 1931; Shuckburgh to Aitchison, letter, March 16, 1931; Malcolm MacDonald to Shuckburgh, letter, March 19, 1931; Aitchison to Shuckburgh, letter, March 20, 1931. CO733/210/87402 Pt. 1.

decided that its basic position was to be one of flexibility. This stand was contrary to the wishes of the Colonial Office. To begin with, Zionist proposals were to be accepted provided they did not prejudice the interests of the Arabs. In establishing its terms for the implementation of the development program, the Committee concluded that the problem of the landless Arabs was to be dealt with first. It rejected the Colonial Office recommendation to appoint immediately Hope Simpson as Director of Development. The Committee also diluted the Treasury demand for total control of the development fund by calling for the appointment of a Treasury official to a position on the Commission subordinate to that of the Director and High Commissioner.⁵

It should be noted that the Committee wished to involve Arab leaders in the discussions by inviting them to London. Faced with the responsibility of convening the negotiations for the middle of April, 1931, Colonial Office officials went through the motions of inviting both Jews and Arabs to London. However, the Arab Executive in Palestine curtly rejected this invitation, but expressed willingness to discuss the question in Jerusalem. Fully expecting the Arabs to refuse this proffered invitation, the Middle East Department had considered this move "good tactics."⁶

⁵Minutes of meeting held on March 30, 1931 by Shuckburgh, March 31, 1931, ibid.

⁶Minute by Williams, March 20, 1931; Passfield to Chancellor, cable, March 31, 1931; Chancellor to Passfield, cable, April 8, 1931. Ibid.

Colonial Office officials and Passfield did not intend to take the discussions with the Jewish Agency seriously. Commenting on an interview with Chaim Weizmann and Selig Brodetsky held before the talks, Passfield remarked that the whole process of negotiations was "not a matter of coming to an agreement with them."⁷ However, on the basis of the strategy established by the Inter-Departmental Committee, O.G.R. Williams had prepared a position paper that was distributed to the Zionists prior to the first conference. Incorporating the major recommendations of the Committee, Williams had elaborated on them by providing detailed courses of action to implement them. As a result, this brief contained provisions of inestimable value to the Agency.⁸

With the recommended nomination of a Jewish representative to the operational framework of the development scheme, the right of Zionist participation in the project was clearly recognized. Moreover, because this delegate was to serve with an Arab member on an equal basis under the Director of Development, the principle of equality between Jews and Arabs in the administration of this project was tacitly acknowledged. However, the question of parity in the distribution of financial benefits under the program was not mentioned. As far as the responsibilities of the Commission were concerned, a further investigation of the agricultural situation in Palestine was proposed. According to Williams' suggestion, the master-plan of the project would be predicated on an independent basis, as opposed to Hope Simpson's Report. The first task of the Commission was

⁷Minute by Passfield, April 16, 1931, ibid.

⁸Memorandum by Williams, April 16, 1931, CO733/210/87402 Pt. 2.

to be the enumeration of the landless Arabs. In putting forward these conciliatory proposals, Williams was clearly attempting to forestall what he viewed as the inevitable Agency objections against the development scheme by meeting the Zionists part-way.

Three formal meetings were conducted between the Inter-Departmental Committee and the Jewish Agency.⁹ As during the negotiations which led to the MacDonald Letter, the Zionists played their hand astutely. Basically, the Jewish Agency conceded the necessity of first settling any Arabs who may have been displaced as the result of its land acquisitions. However, capitalizing on Williams' background paper and the premature release of Claude F. Strickland's report on agricultural co-operation in Palestine,¹⁰ the Zionists demanded parity with the Arabs in the expenditure of the development fund, and reintroduced the question of Jewish settlement in Trans-Jordan.¹¹ Referring to the proposed £2,500,000 development loan, the Jewish Agency called for £1,000,000 allotments each to Zionist and Arab interests; the remaining £500,000 to be used for agricultural surveys and projects to benefit "...the country as a whole...including Trans-Jordan."

⁹These conferences took place on April 16, 1931; April 22, 1931; and April 29, 1931.

¹⁰Claude F. Strickland had been appointed, at Hope Simpson's request, to evaluate the potential for agricultural co-operatives in Palestine. His report, released in November, 1930, was an unusually balanced document. It recommended, among other things, the establishment of a Jewish agricultural bank to be backed by the Government of Palestine. See The Times, November 29, 1930.

¹¹"Proposals on the Development Scheme submitted to His Majesty's Government by the Jewish Agency for Palestine," Weizmann to Shuckburgh, letter and enclosure, April 28, 1931, C0733/210/87402 Pt. 2.

Following the three conferences, the Colonial Office believed that the negotiations with the Zionists had reached an impasse. On the advice of his officials, Passfield submitted a copy of Williams' position paper to the Prime Minister for his backing. This was done to influence him to pressure the Agency to accept the Colonial Office proposals. Meanwhile, the Treasury objected to them on the grounds that pressing financial considerations made the prior definition of the terms of the scheme imperative. Nevertheless, Passfield's intervention succeeded in achieving its desired goal. Ignoring the Treasury's advice of caution, as well as the possibility of Jewish Agency objections, Ramsay MacDonald, minuted:¹²

I am not acquainted with the facts of negotiations set out in these papers, but the Gov't. cannot agree to Dr. W[eizmann's] proposals. I desire the D[evelopment] Comm[ission]: to be set up without unavoidable delay. On the question of handling, I would suggest that the L[or]d Advocate should have a chance of an informal talk with Dr. W[eizmann] telling him that the C[olonial] O[ffice] wishes to proceed expeditiously & feels time [has] now come for doing something & indicating line of letter [to the High Commissioner giving the terms of the project] proposed...

Commenting on the subsequent luncheon meeting with Dr. Weizmann and the Lord Advocate, Malcolm MacDonald termed it a "satisfactory talk." Aitchison had committed the British Government to present its proposals to the Jewish Agency in writing, and had agreed to Weizmann's suggestion to appoint a legal assessor from England. In return, Dr. Weizmann accepted the undefined nature of the development scheme, but considered

¹² Waterfield to Shuckburgh, letter, May 2, 1931, *ibid.* Waterfield to Duff, letter, May 2, 1931; Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, May 3, 1931; Minute by Ramsay MacDonald, May 3, 1931. Premier 1/103.

the negotiations still open.¹³

However, Sir John Shuckburgh wanted to seize the opportunity to terminate all discussions on development. Shuckburgh recommended that written British proposals should be presented to the Jewish Agency, as promised by Aitchison, but without inviting comment. To reformulate the British position, the Lord Advocate, Malcolm MacDonald, and Sir John Chancellor met at the Colonial Office on May 13, 1931. Somehow, this diverse group managed to prepare a consensus proposal. This draft received immediate and unquestioned Treasury approval. Moreover, despite the resistance of senior civil servants, a copy of the British scheme was submitted to the Jewish Agency for comment.¹⁴

This version of the development project was indefinite in nature. The Inter-Departmental Committee ratified Williams' proposal to reject Hope Simpson's Report as the basis for the program. The precise details of the scheme were to be established by an additional comprehensive inquiry. This aspect of the Committee's draft terms met Zionist objections to the Hope Simpson Report. While the first priority of the development scheme was to be the settlement of displaced Arabs, the Jewish and Arab communities were to benefit from the remaining funds. However, the Committee did not state whether the distribution of such money was to be done on the basis of parity. Though the terms of the development scheme did not give the Zionists parity in expenditure, this question was left unsettled. The

¹³Minute by Malcolm MacDonald, May 7, 1931, ibid. Memorandum by Aitchison, May 8, 1931, CO733/210/87402 Pt. 2.

¹⁴Note on May 13, 1931 meeting by Shuckburgh, ibid.

remainder of the development fund was to be allocated after the inquiry presented its findings. Nevertheless, the Jewish Agency was not really at a disadvantage. Although the Zionists did not receive a prior commitment, the Arabs were in a similar position.

In addition, mention of Trans-Jordan was purposely omitted from these terms. Nor was provision made for the immediate appointment of Jewish and Arab representatives to the Development Commission, as outlined in the British position paper of April, 1931. The Development Director, his legal adviser, and the Treasury representative were to be its sole members until the terms of the program were resolved. Evidently, this modification had been made to preclude the potentially adverse effects of boycotts on the part of both communities.

It should be noted that consultations between the two communities on this question were to be limited to the level of the High Commissioner. The terms of the scheme envisaged an active role for the High Commissioner as the clearing house for anticipated Jewish and Arab comments to the Colonial Office. These assessments were expected to provide views on the final form of the project to be determined by the new survey. This specific provision had been inspired by the Middle East Department as part of its effort to downgrade the activity of the Jewish Agency in London.

Jewish Agency reaction to this draft was one of delay. To begin with, Dr. Weizmann's political position within the Zionist movement was precarious. Sir John Shuckburgh foresaw this possibility when he recommended granting the most minimal of concessions to the Zionists the

previous February.¹⁵

There is always the question whether Dr. Weizmann & his friends can "deliver the goods". It is quite possible that they may be eliminated from the Agency & succeeded by persons who will not consider themselves bound by any agreement reached as the result of the present discussions. We shall, in that case, find ourselves in the position of having entered into a number of embarrassing commitments for no return whatsoever.

The biennial congress of the World Zionist Organization, postponed from February because of the negotiations over the MacDonald Letter, had been rescheduled for early July. In the period of May and June, 1931, Chaim Weizmann was struggling to maintain his pre-eminence within the Zionist Organization. He needed another coup comparable to that of the MacDonald Letter. Because the Jewish Agency was then being pressed by the Colonial Office over the Agricultural Tenants Ordinance, Weizmann was attempting to salvage some benefit for the Agency in order to extricate himself from the difficult political position in which he found himself.

Moreover, he was trying to obtain parity for the Jewish community of Palestine in the development project in order to give credibility to his pending effort to commit the Zionist movement to a bi-national solution to the Palestine question. During the 1930-1931 period, Weizmann was quietly promoting the idea of defining the ultimate end of the Jewish National Home in terms of a bi-national state of Jews and Arabs in Palestine and Trans-Jordan.

¹⁵ Minute by Shuckburgh, February 2, 1931, C0733/197/87050/5.

Previously, Weizmann had favoured the infiltration technique of constructing the Zionist entity. Throughout the 1920's, he had purposely refrained from explaining the ultimate goal of the Jewish National Home. However, he first departed publicly from this previously held position at the Berlin meetings of the Jewish Agency and Zionist Organization executives in August, 1930. Nevertheless, Weizmann was severely attacked for this initiative. While this criticism ostensibly was generated by ideological considerations which called for Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, it should be noted that his opponents condemned this proposal mainly because it represented a unilateral limitation of the Zionist position. Zionists were undoubtedly aware of the stand of British officials on this issue, which interpreted the final goal of the Jewish National Home as the creation of a majority Arab state in Palestine with certain minority rights for the Jewish population. Because no comparable concession was forthcoming from the British, they firmly resisted the idea of frittering away an important bargaining point.

Therefore, what Weizmann now wanted from British officialdom, and the British Government for that matter, was agreement to his compromise proposal of orienting the Mandate to the establishment of a fully bi-national entity, as opposed to either a majority Arab or Jewish state. In attempting to embark formally on his bi-nationalism policy, Weizmann was looking for a concrete quid pro quo or at least for some indication that the British Government was willing to agree to this concept.

As a result, Weizmann took a two-pronged stand in dealing with the development project. He first attempted to obtain full recognition of parity in the expenditure of funds and the general orientation of the scheme. Failing this, Weizmann, operating on the basis that if the Zionists were unable to obtain a significant advantage from the plan no one else would, worked for the abrogation of the project. The procrastination of the Jewish Agency to the revised British proposal can be explained in this light. Aware of the fact that no immediate opportunity existed to sink the project outright, Weizmann inspired the Zionist response of delay to avoid prompt implementation, at least until after the Zionist Congress. Creation of the development scheme, on the lines proposed, would deal a grave blow to Weizmann's standing in the Zionist movement.

As a result of the negotiations on development, the Jewish Agency had obtained at least two meaningful concessions from the British Government.. Because of Zionist objections, the draft development program would not be implemented on the basis of Hope Simpson's Report.. Moreover, as a consequence of a Jewish Agency initiative, Hope Simpson was eliminated from consideration as Director of Development. Lewis French, another retired India Office civil servant, was appointed Director, instead.¹⁶

¹⁶Lewis French (1873-1945) had served in the Punjab as Colonization Officer of the Chenab Canal irrigation project. He subsequently had been appointed Director of Land Records and later Chief Secretary to the Government of Kapurthala State.

The Twentieth Session of the Permanent Mandates
Commission, the Nineteenth World Zionist
Congress, and the Establishment of
Another Inquiry in Palestine

In the midst of its preparations to establish the Development Commission in Palestine, the Middle East Department was required to deal with the Twentieth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission. The Mandates of Palestine and Iraq had been scheduled for review at this meeting in June, 1931. The Palestine Mandate had been examined previously by the Commission at the Seventeenth Extraordinary Session held in June, 1930. On this occasion, the British delegation had undergone a rough examination at the hands of the Commission. Departmental officials still retained bitter memories of this event and the subsequent debacle before the League Council when Arthur Henderson was forced to retract the official Government critique of the Commission's unfavourable Report dealing with the administration of the Palestine Mandate. Such was the sentiment of senior civil servants that an unsuccessful attempt was made to have the consideration of Palestine and Iraq postponed to the November sitting.

The intense activity of Colonial Office civil servants together with their Foreign Office counterparts immediately prior to this meeting indicates that a rough reception comparable to that of the Seventeenth Extraordinary Session was anticipated. The selection of the chief British delegate was a difficult procedure. Claiming a lack of responsibility for recent Palestine policy, Colonial Office officials at first suggested sending the Lord Advocate with M.A. Young, a high Palestine Government official; to represent Britain. Dr. Drummond Shiels was finally nominated for the position, but he accepted this responsibility with the greatest reluctance: "I don't like the P[ermanent] M[andates] C[ommission], as at present composed. Its chief members are pedantic and small in outlook and with - on Palestine at least - an anti-British bias."¹⁷

The British case was one of extreme caution. Basically Drummond Shiels equivocated on British policy. His brief was clearly intended to raise the minimum of controversy. For example, in determining British strategy, Colonial Office officials had rejected the notion of publicly downgrading the status of Jewish Agency contacts to the level of the High Commissioner in Palestine. In addition, they had decided against inviting a ruling on this question because of the potentially adverse consequences of such a decision. Because of the low-key British position, the Twentieth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission did not turn out as badly as departmental officials earlier had feared. The section of the Permanent Mandates Commission Report on Palestine that most upset

¹⁷Minutes by Beckett and Shuckburgh, March 12, 1931; minute by Shiels, March 14, 1931. C0733/204/87157.

British officials ran as follows;¹⁸

The Mandates Commission, which has followed, not without some uneasiness, the fluctuations of the mandatory Power's policy in Palestine, earnestly hopes that the new endeavours to solve the problem of the relations between the Arabs and Jews will be crowned with success.

Sir John Shuckburgh minuted that the term "'fluctuations' is offensive, and is meant to be offensive." Dr. Shiels noted that this expression was "meant to annoy...." However, an indication of the unexpected mildness of the Permanent Mandates Commission's review was the fact that this phrase was not challenged. The British Government did not utilize the rebuttal procedure to comment on this session as it had done in responding to the Seventeenth Meeting.¹⁹

During the Spring of 1931, the entire question of relations between the Jewish Agency and the Government of Palestine was reviewed by the Middle East Department. This appraisal was precipitated by the pending resignation of Sir John Chancellor as High Commissioner. Chancellor's early retirement was not a sudden action motivated by a fit of pique over the Government's modification of the October White Paper. Indeed, the possibility of his premature departure was rumoured in official circles as early as September, 1930 before the Policy Statement had even been released.²⁰

¹⁸League of Nations, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Twentieth Session held at Geneva from June 9th to June 27th, 1931, including the Report of the Commission to the Council, Official No. C.422.M.176.1931. VI (Geneva, 1931), "Report to the Council on the Work of the Palestine Session," Annex 16, p. 231.

¹⁹Minutes by Shuckburgh, July 9, 1931, and Shiels, July 13, 1931, C0733/204/87157.

²⁰See Hope Simpson to Chancellor, letter, September 29, 1930, Chancellor Papers 16/6.

Departmental officials were well aware of the deterioration in relations between the Jewish Agency and the Palestine Government during Chancellor's administration. In an assessment of the relations between the Agency and the Palestine administration, Sir John Hope Simpson provided first-hand knowledge of the poor state of these ties. Hope Simpson bluntly stated that Chancellor and his officials demonstrated little or no interest in either the Jewish Agency or the Jewish National Home project. While Chancellor was critical of this particular view, O.G.R. Williams minuted that Hope Simpson's assessment was not unfounded. He added that Chancellor's antipathy to the Agency was in fact hardening. To remedy this situation, Williams proposed that the Middle East Department should intervene actively to mend relations between the Jewish Agency and the Palestine Government.²¹

I very much sympathise with the High Commissioner's difficulties in regard to this subject, but I feel strongly that it will be necessary to do what we can to meet the views of the Agency so far as it is possible without impairing the authority of the Palestine Administration or seriously hampering its machinery...

Sir John Shuckburgh agreed with Williams' assessment and his recommended solution, observing: "I think we have been too passive in our attitude in Palestine on both sides...."²² Inherent in this activity was the desire on the part of Colonial Office officials to make contact with the Palestine Government more palatable to the Jewish Agency. Implicit in their views was the assumption that the Zionists had been encouraged to take their representations to London because of the hostility of the

²¹Minute by Williams, May 27, 1931, C0733/207/87265.

²²Minute by Shuckburgh, May 29, 1931, ibid.

Government of Palestine towards the Jewish Agency. By making the Palestine Government more amenable to Jewish sensibilities and by discouraging direct Jewish Agency contacts in London, civil servants clearly hoped to limit official Jewish Agency representations to Palestine.

Returning to the land development issue, it can be observed that by early June, 1931 Colonial Office officials were becoming impatient at the Zionist delay in replying to the latest British proposal. Sir John Shuckburgh wanted the matter completed as soon as possible. Therefore, he raised the question by requesting Passfield to write a reminder to Craigie Aitchison. He noted: "It is no good my writing to the Lord Advocate: he never takes the slightest notice of my letters." In his letter to Aitchison, Passfield suggested that the lack of a Jewish Agency reply should be considered as tacit agreement.²³

However, the Lord Advocate promptly replied, and enclosed Weizmann's response to the British draft.²⁴ Dr. Weizmann wrote that his extensive rebuttal had been prepared with the forthcoming Zionist congress in mind. The two major points on which Weizmann concentrated his attention were the position of the High Commissioner in this scheme and the allocation of funds. The Zionist leader demanded the right for the Jewish Agency to appeal issues from the High Commissioner to London. In addition, Weizmann repeated the Jewish Agency request for parity in the distribution of benefits.

²³Minute by Shuckburgh, June 10, 1931; Passfield to Aitchison, letter, June 10, 1931. C0733/211/87402 Pt. 3.

²⁴Aitchison to Passfield, letter and enclosure, June 11, 1931, ibid.

Passfield firmly resisted accepting the Zionist proposals. The Colonial Secretary informed the Lord Advocate that his ministry opposed committing itself to the principle of parity in advance. The hostile opinion of Colonial Office officials to the activity of the Jewish Agency in London ensured the rejection of Weizmann's other request relating to the right of appeal to Whitehall. Aitchison discussed the points of Passfield's tough letter of June 15, 1931 with Weizmann, but was unable to offer the Zionist leader any concessions.²⁵

Officials quickly decided that the details of the plan were to be released in the form of a dispatch from Passfield to the High Commissioner. The Jewish Agency was sent an advance copy of the draft, which had remained unchanged despite Zionist objections. Immediate publication was recommended by civil servants as highly placed as Shuckburgh and Wilson, despite their knowledge that Weizmann was then under severe attack at the Zionist Congress in Basle. Dr. Drummond Shiels, however, strenuously objected to this proposal:²⁶

...it [this announcement] might be a deciding factor against Weizmann and might expose us to charges of unfairness to Him and responsibility for a very serious disaster to the whole Zionist movement...I certainly would not take the action proposed in the Minutes without the approval of the Prime Minister as this may become a serious matter and the C.O. should not act without a full backing. We do not wish, when our relations and position have so much improved, to be possibly held responsible for precipitating a serious crisis, without taking steps to get higher authority behind us.

²⁵Passfield to Aitchison, letter, June 15, 1931; Aitchison to Passfield, letter, June 24, 1931. Ibid.

²⁶Minute by Shiels. July 6, 1931, ibid.

Nevertheless, Passfield's response to Shiels' strongly worded comment was non-committal: "If the High Commissioner can postpone publication, ask him to do so until Monday [July] 13th." As a result, Shiels' unequivocal objection was presented to Chancellor as a "suggestion." However, the High Commissioner consented to delay the release of the announcement.²⁷

As matters eventually turned out, Weizmann's political enemies within the Zionist movement disclosed the terms of the development project prematurely at the Congress. Because the British did not go far enough in meeting Jewish Agency reservations, Weizmann's already precarious position at the Zionist meeting was further undermined by this leak. While observing the proceedings of the stormy conference, Drummond Shiels minuted: "...as things are turning out, I think we acted wisely." Meanwhile, official publication of the outline was again postponed, this time at the insistence of the Colonial Office, from July 18th until July 20th. The matter had been placed on the Order Paper of the House of Commons as a Parliamentary Question that was to be answered on July 20, 1931.²⁸

²⁷Minutes by Passfield and Shuckburgh, July 7, 1931; Passfield to Chancellor, cable, July 7, 1931; Chancellor to Passfield, cable, July 8, 1931. Ibid.

²⁸See The Times, July 9, 1931 and The New York Times, July 10, 1931. Minute by Shiels, July 9, 1931, C0733/211/87402 Pt. 3. The dispatch was published in Hansard in response to this question. See Commons, July 20, 1931, vol. 255, cols. 1058-1064.

The Seventeenth World Zionist Congress took place in Basle, Switzerland from July 1st to July 15th, 1931. Following this conference, the biennial meeting of the Jewish Agency was held. The Zionist gathering was a tumultuous affair. When the smoke finally cleared, Dr. Weizmann had been rather bloodily deposed from his position as President of the World Zionist Organization, and replaced by Nahum Sokolow.²⁹ His status in the Jewish Agency, as a result, had become untenable; and he was also replaced as leader of this body.

While the Zionist movement underwent convulsions in Basle, its administrative personnel and general policy outlook changed little. Although Weizmann remained out of office until 1935, Selig Brodetsky, Israel Cohen, and others retained their positions of influence. Moreover, Weizmann's program of quiet infiltration was maintained by the new leadership. After the Basle debacle, Weizmann's successors minimized the violent nature of the Congress, and emphasized the continuity in his policy of moderation.

In a sense, Dr. Weizmann was the scapegoat for the many problems confronting the movement at the time. Delegates attacked him specifically for his position of co-operation with Britain in the construction of the Jewish National Home. Rennie Smith, a back-bench Labour M.P., was an observer at the Congress. In a letter to the Prime Minister on this event,

²⁹Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936), the Hebrew journalist and writer, had been associated with Chaim Weizmann during the negotiations that had led to the Balfour Declaration. See his History of Zionism, 1600-1918, 2 vols (London, 1919). Active politically and diplomatically on behalf of the Zionist cause, he was elected Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in 1929. Sokolow remained President of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency until 1935.

Smith astutely wrote: "The Zionists are furious with the British Government over the Passfield White Paper, but since they cannot throw the Government out, they have thrown out Dr. Weizmann."³⁰

Participants of varied ideological backgrounds combined to defeat Weizmann. As a result, Dr. Weizmann was deposed for a number of diverse reasons. Some Zionist representatives believed that the MacDonald Letter did not go far enough to meet their demands. Others took issue with Weizmann's handling of the development scheme negotiations, especially with the provision that restricted the authority of the Jewish Agency on this issue to the level of the High Commissioner in Palestine.

Weizmann was especially castigated for advocating the concept of political parity for Palestine. The statement that he had made to support this principle at the Berlin meetings, the previous August, continued to haunt him. As a result, his plan to introduce this issue at the Congress was repudiated. The Zionist Congress rejected out of hand the notion of bi-nationalism. In addition to voting him out of office, the Congress censured Weizmann for his stand on political parity. However, while the Zionist delegates were militant, they hedged on one essential point: the definition of the Jewish National Home. They did not adopt the extreme demand for an overt assertion of full Jewish sovereignty, with all of the political implications inherent with such a resolution. The ultimate aim of the Jewish National Home was again officially shrouded in the double-talk of "recreating in Erez Israel...[Jewish]...national life with all the

³⁰ Cited in Vera Weizmann, The Impossible Takes Longer ed. by David Tutaeu (London, 1967), p. 120.

essential features of a people's normal existence."³¹

In evaluating this event, Charles Peake, the British Minister in Berne, accurately observed the prevalent bitterness towards the British Government. Moreover, he noted the unity of diverse elements that had led to the formation of the new executive. Peake also commented that this new administration would carry out Weizmann's general policy but that it would press Jewish claims more intensively. In addition, Peake was aware of the deteriorating financial situation of the movement, and wrote that the consideration of the budget had taken a position of significance out of place with its status at a meeting of this nature.³²

As far as the Colonial Office was concerned, nothing really had changed. While Weizmann was out of the picture, officials still found themselves in constant contact with the likes of Brodetsky and Cohen. In assessing Peake's dispatch, O.G.R. Williams considered the financial aspect significant.³³ At this point, the Zionist movement was in deep financial trouble. Because of the substantial drop in contributions as a result of the American depression, the Zionist Organization was experiencing a grave liquidity crisis. On account of this shortage of cash, Jewish-sponsored immigration to Palestine had begun to falter early in 1931. Colonial Office officials were aware of the fact that the Zionists had been unable to use their hard-fought entry certificates because of a

³¹Resolution Number 3, New Judea, July-August, 1931. See also The Manchester Guardian, July 20, 1931.

³²Peake to Henderson, dispatch, August 12, 1931, F0371/15330/E4259/304/31.

³³Minute by Williams, August 26, 1931, C0733/206/87250.

lack of funds.³⁴

In fact, immediately prior to the Congress, two individuals prominent in the Jewish Agency made an unofficial appeal to the British Government through Malcolm MacDonald for financial assistance. This was done without the approval of Weizmann or his executive. Citing Oscar Wassermann, a leading non-Zionist member of the Jewish Agency hierarchy and Director of the Deutsche Bank, Maurice Hexter, the American representative on the Palestine Executive of the Jewish Agency, informed MacDonald:³⁵

It is no idle statement accordingly when he speaks of the financial collapse which awaits the movement in Palestine. To you who have manifested such an understanding sympathy over our work during the past eighteen months I want to turn with this letter. Do you see any way whereby H.M.G. can come to our rescue?

Hexter enclosed a copy of Wassermann's urgent wire to Weizmann in which the financial situation of the Jewish Agency was described as "catastrophic." Adding that the United States was out of the question as far as Zionist fund-raising was concerned, Wassermann recommended an official approach to the British Government for a £250,000 loan on the security of Agency land in Palestine.

Opinion among Colonial Office civil servants to this extraordinary request was hostile. Sir John Shuckburgh recommended a policy of non-involvement, minuting that the British Government should allow the expected crash to be "resounding." He went on to comment: "This may sound brutal,

³⁴ Minutes by Mayle and Harold Beckett, January 12, 1931 in response to a letter from Chancellor to Shuckburgh, December 20, 1930. C0733/188/77113/II.

³⁵ Hexter to Malcolm MacDonald, letter and enclosure, June 28, 1931; Malcolm MacDonald to Shuckburgh, letter and enclosures, July 2, 1931. C0733/206/87289.

but it is merely only prudent to face the realities of the case." Sir Samuel Wilson elaborated on Shuckburgh's proposal by suggesting consultations with the Chancellor of the Exchequer "as a matter of tactics." Subsequently, Passfield noted: "I have heard from the C[hancellor] of the E[xchequer] that this is out of the question in any form." The Prime Minister intervened in this issue to formulate and sign a telegram refusing this request, though he noted that he had "no lack of sympathy with the difficulties of the Agency."³⁶

³⁶Minutes by Shuckburgh, July 2, 1931; Wilson, July 3, 1931; and Passfield, July 3, 1931, ibid.

Dismay at Number 10 Downing Street and Frantic
Activity at the Colonial Office

While the Colonial Office was not upset by Weizmann's defeat, the Prime Minister and his son were. In a rather glum letter Ramsay MacDonald told Passfield: "The situation in Palestine gets worse and worse, and will not be improved by what is going on at Basle at the present moment...." Malcolm MacDonald was angered by Weizmann's imminent defeat. In a stiffly worded note addressed to Sir Samuel Wilson, he castigated the Colonial Office for creating this situation:³⁷

...the High Commissioner's failure to implement the Prime Minister's letter...following on top of all the previous trouble, has led to a very serious weakening of Dr. Weizmann's position at the Congress, and consequently our wisest and best friend in the Zionist Movement is likely to be defeated...

It can be observed that his balanced views on the possible solution of the Palestine problem indicate that Malcolm MacDonald was not the rabid Zionist that Colonial Office civil servants considered him to be. MacDonald went on in his letter to stress his appreciation for the necessity of reconciling the Arabs to the Mandate, and emphasized his support for the

³⁷ Ramsay MacDonald to Passfield, letter, July 14, 1931, cited in Beatrice Webb's Diaries, p. 276. Malcolm MacDonald to Wilson, letter, July 10, 1931, C0733/211/87402 Pt. 3.

principle of parity in Palestine. According to MacDonald, Weizmann had been on the verge "for two months" of launching his "Political Parity" policy. As far as MacDonald was concerned, British ineptitude "in the last few weeks has...probably defeated the greatest chance that there was of getting real co-operation between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine in the next year or two." Malcolm MacDonald added: "If he could have got that carried at Basle it would have been a tremendous reassurance to the Arabs." The parity question represented one of the major issues that contributed to Weizmann's defeat.

This letter brought a quick reaction from the Colonial Office. Wilson immediately sent MacDonald a reply. His response was intended to soothe MacDonald's strong views on this question. The critical tone of MacDonald's letter troubled Wilson, and undoubtedly led him to write: "I would like very much to know to what you are referring." Wilson invited MacDonald to drop into the Colonial Office "and let me know exactly what it is you mean."³⁸

While Dr. Chaim Weizmann suffered politically for advocating parity, his successors intended to retain this policy, at least quietly. During the Congress, David Ben Gurion flew to Britain for an interview with the Prime Minister.³⁹ Lewis Namier accompanied him to Chequers on July 12th. According to Ramsay MacDonald's account of the meeting, he was

³⁸Wilson to Malcolm MacDonald, letter, July 10, 1931, ibid.

³⁹Ben Gurion and his Labour faction represented Weizmann's main source of support at this point. At the Zionist Congress, Ben Gurion stood by Weizmann as long as he politically dared to. After Weizmann's defeat, he immediately swung his group over to the new executive in order to obtain Labour representation on it. See The New York Times, July 9, 1931.

pressed by the Zionists to announce British support for "parity as between Jews and Arabs in Palestine."⁴⁰ The Prime Minister could not logically object to this principle as it fitted in with the "equal obligation" interpretation of the Mandate that he had enunciated in April, 1930. It is clear that Ramsay MacDonald was evasive in his reply to the Zionists:

I told them [Namier and Ben Gurion] that I did not know exactly what it meant in detail, and in that respect could not commit myself one way or the other. I said, however, that in principle I thought this was a reasonable formula, though in its application I would have to leave you and the Colonial Office responsible, together with the Palestinian Government.

Ramsay MacDonald was deeply concerned by charges that the Palestine administration was refusing to honour his letter, thereby undermining Weizmann's position. Requesting proof, the Prime Minister promised prompt action to meet Zionist complaints. On this issue, Ramsay MacDonald told Passfield to be "very vigilant," and added: "...if there is any doubt...the most rigid instructions should be sent [so] that the letter should be carried out in every respect."

In his reply to Ramsay MacDonald, Passfield, not surprisingly, expressed vehement Colonial Office opposition to the acceptance by the British Government of the principle of parity.⁴¹ This opinion had prevailed in the Colonial Office throughout the 1930-1931 period. Officials had attempted unsuccessfully to reverse the tenor of the Mandate to favour Arab interests with various white paper pronouncements and shifts in the nature of its administration. As such, even this middle of the road policy

⁴⁰ Ramsay MacDonald to Passfield, letter, July 16, 1931, CO733/197/87050/2 Pt. 2.

⁴¹ Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, letter, July 24, 1931, Premier 1/103.

favoured by Weizmann, remained anathema to them. Passfield rejected the recognition by the British Government of the principle of bi-nationalism on the grounds of strategy and finance:

This [parity] is a word full of danger. The Jewish population of Palestine is still under 20 per cent of the whole; and with the Arab birthrate of 55 per 1000 there is little prospect of that proportion being much (if at all) increased for years to come. The application of "parity" to Land Development would be wholly impracticable. The Government has never admitted any obligation actually at public expense to settle Jewish Colonists on the land...

Colonial Office reservations against the idea of parity in Palestine prevailed. The Second Labour Government under Ramsay MacDonald's leadership adhered nominally to the October White Paper as interpreted by the MacDonald Letter without any further modifications of policy. Nevertheless, Palestine policy remained in a state of flux throughout its remaining days.

Because the main thrust of White Paper policy revolved around the development scheme for the alleged thousands of landless Arab families, no immediate action could be taken to implement this course of action pending Lewis French's report which was due at the end of 1931. Substantive measures on the land question that were intended to achieve the ultimate goal of Colonial Office officials, the reversal of the Jewish National Home project in favour of Arab interests by impeding the basis of Jewish immigration, depended on the outcome of this investigation.

Colonial Office civil servants were still attempting to reduce the role of the Jewish Agency in London. The Middle East Department worked cautiously to implement this controversial policy. The terms of the embryonic development project can be viewed as the first of many potentially subtle manoeuvres aimed at reducing Jewish Agency prestige in London.

Departmental officials were astute enough, however, to support Shields' proposal for a regularized monthly meeting between the Colonial Office and the Jewish Agency. Realizing that Zionist communications with Government officials in London could not be totally eliminated, they viewed these limited consultations both as a sop and as a means to minimize Jewish Agency contact. Civil servants clearly had no intention of taking Zionist representations seriously, but favoured the line, expressed by Sir John Shuckburgh, which involved listening to Jewish Agency complaints and then referring the Agency to the High Commissioner.⁴²

However, economic and political circumstances worked against Colonial Office officials. Indeed the deteriorating financial situation of Great Britain was one of the main factors that led Ramsay MacDonald to scuttle the Second Labour Government and to form his coalition National Government. Economics also ultimately killed the development project and all of the restrictive measures intended to stifle the Jewish National Home project for which the Colonial Office had been striving. In assessing the effect of the Government's worsening financial position on Palestine policy, O.G.R. Williams minuted: "The only controversial matter of importance is the development scheme, including the question of legislation to control land transactions and the problem of resettling displaced Arabs."⁴³

⁴² Minutes by Shuckburgh, August 1, 1931, C0733/206/87250 and Williams, August 13, 1931, C0733/197/87050/8. Exhausted by his duties as Head of the Middle East Department, Shuckburgh was appointed Senior Assistant Under-Secretary of State in July, 1931. See Hope Simpson to Chancellor, letter, February 26, 1931, Chancellor Papers 16/6.

⁴³ Minute by Williams, September 30, 1931, C0733/210/87382.

Therefore, Colonial Office officials, anticipating the continued deterioration of the Government's financial situation, tried to salvage some of their plans to freeze the Jewish National Home project. Realizing the uncertainty of the £2,500,000 loan, departmental officials attempted to have permanent land legislation enacted in late August, 1931. However, Sir John Shuckburgh was at first hesitant to recommend the immediate imposition of these proposed ordinances.⁴⁴

...if we go ahead without further consultations with the Jews, the usual outcry is certain to be raised, and the Office will be subjected to the usual attack. It almost becomes a question of high politics upon which I hesitate to advise. Probably it will be thought best - in spite of the delay and inconvenience involved - to let the Jews see the draft Ordinance before we authorise its enactment, and to give them an opportunity of putting in their inevitable protest.

The Jewish Agency under Brodetsky's leadership vociferously resisted this ploy on the grounds that the terms of the development project had called for the enactment of permanent legislation upon the completion of Lewis French's investigation. This argument enabled them to obtain the indefinite postponement of long-term legislation through the intervention of Malcolm MacDonald. Despite this set-back, O.G.R. Williams, supported by Sir Samuel Wilson, resolved to continue to fight for the imposition of the ordinances.⁴⁵ However, such legislation was not enacted until the repudiation of British Mandate obligations towards the Jewish National Home was proclaimed in the May, 1939 White Paper on Palestine.

⁴⁴Minute by Shuckburgh, July 23, 1931, G0733/199/87072/I.

⁴⁵Brodetsky to Wilson, letter, August 31, 1931; minutes by Williams, September 22, 1931 and Shuckburgh, September 24, 1931. Ibid.

With the fall of the Second Labour Government on August 28, 1931, Ramsay MacDonald formed the coalition National Government. This change was favourable to Zionist interests because prominent supporters of the Jewish National Home project from the two opposition parties joined the Cabinet. Members of the two National Governments led by Ramsay MacDonald until 1935 included Stanley Baldwin, the Marquess of Reading, Sir Herbert Samuel, Sir John Simon, and Lord Hailsham. These personalities all had played notable roles in the opposition to the October, 1930 Palestine White Paper.

The irony of their unexpected rise to office was not missed by Colonial Office officials. Cabinet solidarity involved consistency of policy. One extant example of official amusement at this turn of events was the reaction to a request by Stanley Baldwin to clear a speech to be presented at a December, 1931 testimonial dinner for Dr. Weizmann.

O.G.R. Williams minuted:⁴⁶

Mr. Walford [Baldwin's Secretary] referred to a letter which Mr. Baldwin & Mr. Amery had written to "The Times" on the subject [of Palestine]: presumably his message should not conflict too strongly with that!

Meanwhile, Lewis French conducted his review of the agricultural situation in Palestine without the co-operation of either the Arab or the Jewish communities. The Arab leadership refused to have anything to do with French's survey. Establishing the withdrawal of the February, 1931 Letter as a precondition to participation, they boycotted this inquiry. The Jewish Agency, for its part, did not co-operate with Lewis French because it viewed this investigation as political rather than economic in nature.

⁴⁶ Minute by Williams, November 30, 1931, CO733/200/87092.

The Zionists had unsuccessfully requested the implementation of a development scheme on the basis of Claude F. Strickland's report. The Agency, therefore, considered French's investigation as a Colonial Office attempt to reverse Strickland's balanced recommendations.

French's final report was presented to the Government of Palestine almost five months late in April, 1932. The Arab Executive and Jewish Agency were given an opportunity for comment. Both organizations rejected it out of hand. An assessment of this document has characterized it as an analysis of the "difficulties, rather than the possibilities of development."⁴⁷ According to French, the amount of state land was inadequate for either the re-location of the so-called landless Arabs or the settlement of Jews. Therefore, his major proposal was the expropriation of arable land from private owners to provide a base for the implementation of a joint development project.

The high costs of such an undertaking clearly made the British Government reluctant to carry out his recommendations. This financial consideration resulted in Government inaction. The £2,500,000 development loan was never enacted. Moreover, it is clear that the British Government was in no hurry to implement French's somewhat restrictive proposals that would have made all land transactions subject to the approval of the Development Commission. The Report itself was not made public until July,

⁴⁷Esco, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 714. Government of Palestine, Reports on Agricultural Development and Land Settlement in Palestine by Lewis French (London, 1933), cited below as French Reports. See The Times, August 20, 1932; November 12, 1932; July 15, 1933; July 17, 1933; July 18, 1933; and August 23, 1933. See also The New York Times, July 14 and 15, 1933. This issue was discussed briefly in Parliament. See Commons, July 14, 1933, vol. 280, cols. 1439-1443.

1933.⁴⁷ This procrastination was perhaps the major factor that brought about French's resignation in November, 1932.⁴⁸

French's final Report did not contain a precise enumeration of "landless Arabs." The registration and evaluation of claims had not yet been completed. However, French did offer an estimate of 1,000 to 2,000 families. It should be stressed that this figure was a remarkable drop from the estimate of 10,000 families made by Hope Simpson. The Palestine Government eventually enumerated 656 displaced Arab families, and released this information in 1935.⁴⁹ Only 367 families took advantage of resettlement. The expenditure for this project amounted to £72,240, a far cry from the £2,500,000 estimated by the Expert Sub-Committee in September, 1930.

The bogey of Zionist-created evictions of Arabs, raised by officials in Palestine, supported by Hope Simpson and civil servants in Whitehall, had in fact turned out to have been a phantom. The key development scheme feature of the October, 1930 White Paper was the result of faulty analysis. The Colonial Office had employed this issue to evolve a policy that would limit the Jewish National Home in order ultimately to foster a majority Arab state in Palestine. The ploy of enacting tight land regulations to restrict immigration and thereby Jewish development had rested on an unreal basis.

⁴⁸See The New York Times, November 17, 1932.

⁴⁹French Reports, p. 60. Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the year 1934, Colonial No. 104 (London, 1935), pp. 57-58.

The outcome of the Palestine Government survey represented a devastating rebuttal to the thesis put forward in the Shaw, Hope Simpson, and French inquiries - not to mention the October, 1930 White Paper - that a substantial portion of the Arab community had been made homeless as the result of Jewish settlement. Nevertheless, reaction to this study was sparse. Two factors may account for this lack of response. The first was the existence of a boom economy in Palestine that made the requirement of economic absorptive capacity for increased Jewish settlement academic; the second, the impact of the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933 on the growing deterioration of the position of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Both features received a great deal of prominence undoubtedly because they were more newsworthy than an untimely report.⁵⁰

Circumstances relating to Palestine in 1935 differed considerably from those of the 1930-1931 period. The economic situation aside, it should be stressed that the status of Palestine as the Jewish National Home had changed dramatically among Zionists. Instead of representing an abstract and distant goal, it now constituted an immediate refuge for oppressed Jews. This consideration was particularly urgent because of the restrictive immigration practices preventing Jews from obtaining sanctuary elsewhere. The activities of the Zionist movement, from 1933 on, reflected a deep concern for the plight of European Jewry. As a result, Jewish

⁵⁰ See The Times, February 27, 1935. This issue was raised in Parliament only once; by Barnett Janner (b.1892), who was then a Liberal M.P. Commons, July 25, 1935, vol. 304, cols. 2109-2112. Janner had contested the Whitechapel by-election unsuccessfully in December, 1930. However, he had won this constituency in the following general election held in October, 1931.

immigration reached unprecedented levels. In 1931, 4,075 Jews were admitted. This figure rose substantially to 9,553 in 1932, took off to 30,327 in 1933, and increased further to 42,359 in 1934 and 61,854 in 1935.⁵¹

With the assistance of a sympathetic Government, Jewish growth in Palestine continued until 1935, the year of MacDonald's departure from political leadership. While MacDonald remained Prime Minister, the British administration of Palestine was generally favourable to the Zionist cause. MacDonald's role in this process cannot be underestimated. His continuing personal interest in the Jewish National Home and the problems confronting the Jewish people offset the restrictive pressures of Colonial Office officials.⁵² Without such high level support, departmental officials would have attempted to impose their anti-Zionist views on the administration of the Mandate.

Viewing these developments in context with the 1930-1931 scene, it can be observed that pressing Jewish Agency grievances from this period had been resolved or tabled. The potentially unfavourable development scheme was aborted. Constitutional development, the establishment of a legislative council, remained dormant until 1935. The level of immigration and land acquisitions rose dramatically because of the buoyant economy and

⁵¹These statistics are gleaned from annual reports by the British Government on the administration of the Palestine Mandate, *op. cit.*, for the 1931-1935 period. For a perceptive account of the anxiety expressed by Jews at the Eighteenth Biennial Zionist Congress, concerning the status of European Jewry, see The Times, August 23, 1933.

⁵²See the text of his speech delivered at the opening of the Anglo-Palestine Exhibition in June, 1933. The Times, June 8, 1933.

the consequences of Nazi oppression. Contrary to the dire predictions by Colonial Office officials, especially Sir John Campbell, Zionist growth in Palestine became self-supporting in nature. The effects of the world depression had been considered catastrophic to the movement by both the Jewish Agency and the Colonial Office. By necessity, the Agency was forced to adopt an economic policy of self-reliance in 1931 to make the Jewish National Home project pay for itself.

The October, 1930 Policy Statement, as drastically modified by the MacDonald letter, remained the official basis of British policy on Palestine until May, 1939. Despite Zionist protests to the contrary, especially at the 1931 World Zionist Congress, the February, 1931 letter had returned Palestine policy to the pre-White Paper status quo. As a result, the Jewish National Home project was able to expand rapidly.

Had British officials brought about the crystallization of the Zionist enterprise, they would have attempted to foster a majority Arab political entity along the lines of Iraq. The rights of the Jewish minority would have received the same status as that granted the Kurdish minority in Iraq through constitutional guarantees. As in the case of the Kurds in Iraq, the Jewish Community in Palestine ultimately would have been persecuted and conceivably disbanded, despite the existence of constitutional provisions guaranteeing communal integrity. The unsteady nature of the Zionist project at the time would have made such a situation likely.

In 1939, the Colonial Office under the leadership of Malcolm MacDonald attempted to impose an Iraqi-style solution to the Palestine question. However, by the time that the British Government repudiated its Mandate obligations to the Jews in May, 1939, the Zionists had created a substantial presence that could not be reduced. This numerical and economic factor was strengthened by their resolve, formed because of the desperate position of European Jewry, to fight the 1939 White Paper. As a result, the viability of the Jewish Community enabled it to resist this reversal of British policy and ultimately to tear it to shreds with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, the principal themes that have been discussed above should be reviewed. In accounting for the administration of the Palestine Mandate in 1930-1931, it may be noted that the Second Labour Government had three major policy options from which to choose when confronted by the Arab riots of 1929. First, the Government could have ended the pervasive political role of the Mufti, and encouraged moderate Arab leaders. Secondly, it could have simply elected to ensure that the Government of Palestine administered the mandate in an even-handed manner. Thirdly, it could have revived the hitherto unsuccessful policy of conciliation to reduce Arab opposition to the mandate. On the basis of the concerted pressure exerted by senior Colonial Office officials, Ramsay MacDonald's minority Government embarked on the third alternative; only to reverse itself when faced with possible political disaster on account of the political furore created by it.

Instead of alleviating the Palestine problem, the policy fostered by British officials and overturned by their political leaders served only to frustrate both communities. The attempt to crystallize the Jewish National Home alienated the Jews, and the publication of the MacDonald Letter angered the Arabs. Because of the vagaries of British policy in the 1930-1931 period, neither group was satisfied. Indeed, it can be argued that the differences between both communities

widened on account of the tension and suspicion caused by these developments. Therefore, in the absence of a consistently positive policy towards Jews and Arabs, British interests in Palestine would have been better served by the return to the policy of a balanced administration to maintain the status quo, with all of its imperfections, that had existed prior to Sir John Chancellor's arrival in Palestine.

Nevertheless, assessing the possibilities of a more active positive policy for Palestine, it can be observed that the British Government would have been better advised by officials to select a combination of the first two options in an attempt to encourage a rapprochement between Jews and Arabs. This would have involved the removal of the Mufti from the political scene and the adoption of an energetically impartial administration on the basis of bi-nationalism. The implementation of these two alternatives could have done much to calm political disagreement in Palestine. However, by not doing so at this time, Colonial Office officials in London and Jerusalem missed an opportunity to resolve the Palestine question. In 1930-1931, the differences between Jews and Arabs, while irritating, could not be considered irreconcilable, as they later became as positions on both sides hardened.

Malcolm MacDonald recognized this.¹ He was appalled by what he viewed as the failure of the Colonial Office to conciliate both communities, instead of just the Arabs. The fact that the Colonial Office had never bothered to consider seriously the option of bi-nationalism as a possible solution to the Palestine question particularly disturbed him. By

¹See Malcolm MacDonald to Wilson, letter, July 10, 1931, op. cit., CO733/211/87402 Pt. 3.

remaining alert to this alternative, MacDonald had encouraged the development of a modus vivendi among Jews, Arabs, and British officials. While influential Jews and Arabs were prepared to be flexible, British officials were not. Instead, they continued to strive for the implementation of their hardline solution to the Palestine question.

The inability and unwillingness of Passfield as Colonial Secretary to encourage his ministry to consider bi-nationalism were the major factors that militated against the moderation of this firm position. While he had opted out of an active role in decision-making, Passfield did intervene occasionally only to promote the crystallization of the Jewish National Home. Therefore, even had he been a more forceful administrator, it is doubtful whether the policies developed by the Colonial Office would have been appreciably different.

However, as a strong counterpoint to Passfield, the energetic intervention of Dr. Chaim Weizmann was the essential ingredient that enabled the Jews to overcome adverse Colonial Office policies. Weizmann achieved this end by successfully undermining the ability of the Colonial Office to administer Palestine effectively. Because the Zionist leader adamantly refused to deal with Passfield or his officials following the publication of the October White Paper, they lost control of the policy-making function for Palestine for a critical interval. Passfield was simply not forceful enough to recover this authority on behalf of his department. Weizmann's firmness, coupled with Passfield's weakness, led to the creation of the ad hoc Cabinet committee that negotiated specific Government policies directly with the Jews, as a subject community of

Palestine, an event that was exceptional in British Colonial administration. Through the ruthless exploitation of this concession, Weizmann and his colleagues outmanoeuvred the Colonial Office, and obtained the repudiation of the October White Paper, as well as other important advantages.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely whether this exercise would have been necessary had some balance developed towards the Jewish National Home at the Colonial Office. With a modicum of even-handedness, it is possible that Chaim Weizmann could have enjoyed some success with his bi-national solution for the Palestine question. Had the Mufti been eased from his position of power, moderate elements within the Arab community of Palestine could have emerged to take up Weizmann's initiative. As a consequence, some sort of long-term understanding between Jews and Arabs might have been reached. Jewish and Arab agreement to a bi-national format for Palestine, under British sponsorship, could have finally settled the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the Balfour Declaration, regarding the ultimate goal of the Jewish National Home. As a result, the dilemma in which Great Britain found itself on this issue could have been resolved since the future of Palestine would have been predicated on a basis that was accepted by both communities. Thus, it is conceivable that some of the conflict that has subsequently occurred in the Middle East might have been avoided.

APPENDIX A

COLONIAL OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE PERTAINING TO PALESTINE:
A SELECTION OF DESTROYED POLITICAL FILES

1930

- 77004 Prevention of Crime Ordinance No. 45 of 1929.
- 77007 Unemployment Returns.
- 77009 Miscellaneous Correspondence.
- 77011 Crime Returns.
- 77012 Wailing Wall: General.
- 77013 Wailing Wall: Commission, Parliamentary Questions.
- 77015 Police: Reorganisation of, Parliamentary Questions.
- 77018 Advisory Council: Minutes.
- 77019 Newspapers Published in Palestine.
- 77020 Disturbances: Situation Reports.
- 77021 Disturbances: Police Summaries.
- 77022 Disturbances: Palestine Press Summaries.
- 77025 Disturbances: Miscellaneous.
- 77026 Disturbances: Commission of Enquiry, Enquiries, etc.
- 77027 Disturbances: Foreign Press, etc.
- 77031 Disturbances: Commission of Enquiry, Report.
- 77033 Disturbances: Parliamentary Questions (Misc.).
- 77039 Disturbances: Commission of Enquiry. Protests, etc.
- 77045 Emigration and Immigration: Returns.

- 77047 Grand Mufti: Activities of.
- 77049 Mandate: Protest against Administration of.
- 77050 Future Policy: Parliamentary Questions.
- 77050/3 Future Policy: Protests, Misc.
- 77050/4 Future Policy: Correspondence with Prime Minister of New Zealand re: Protests.
- 77062 Tel Aviv: Financial Position of.
- 77069 Executive Council: Minutes.
- 77073 Holy Places Commission.
- 77077 Education.
- 77090 Visas for Russians.
- 77094 Activities of Dr. J. Magnes.
- 77095 Cost of Palestine to British Exchequer.
- 77096 Jewish Settlement.
- 77102 Supreme Moslem Council: Jamel al Husseini.
- 77110 Land Settlement (Amendment) Ordinance.
- 77130 Labour Conditions on Government Works, Parliamentary Questions.
- 77132 Zionist Organisation: Attitude of H.M. Representatives towards. Channel of Communications with H.M.G.
- 77137 Census of Workers and Industries.
- 77139 Immigration Office at Warsaw.
- 77143 Subsidiary Legislation 1930.
- 77146 Undesirables.
- 77147 Intelligence System in Palestine and Trans-Jordan.
- 77151 Haycroft Commission 1921.
- 77165 Deputation from Edinburgh Zionist Association to Dr. D. Shiels.

- 77170 Deportation of A. Blumengarten.
- 77175 Suspect Index.
- 77177 Annual Confidential Reports: Senior Officers.
- 77178 League of Nations: Minutes of 16th Session.
- 77184 Deportations from Palestine to the Soviet Union.
- 77189 Zionist Dissentions.
- 77192 Death of Lord Balfour.
- 77193 Correspondence of Professor Frankfurter.
- 77199 Immigration and Travel Section: Reorganisation of Personnel.
- 77201 Activities of Dr. Jacob Alkow in U.S.A.
- 77207 Land for Jewish Settlement.
- 77211 Future Policy: Appointment of Sir J. Hope Simpson,
Parliamentary Questions.
- 77212 Future Policy: Appointment of Sir J. Hope Simpson, Misc.
Correspondence.
- 77220 Supreme Moslem Council: Salaries of Members, Constitution of.
- 77227 Annual Report for 1929.
- 77228 Activities of Abdul Kader Muzaffar.
- 77229 Arab and Jewish Population. Relations.
- 77250 Zionist Organisation Memo. to the Permanent Mandates Commission.
- 77264 Immigration: Misc. Correspondence.
- 77268 Police: Mr. Dowbiggin's Report.
- 77272 War Office Documents: Retention by Miss Newton.
- 77273 Foreign Labour.
- 77276 Immigrants from Russia.
- 77278 Permanent Mandates Commission: June 1930 Session.

- 77288 Memo. from Vaad Leumi to Permanent Mandates Commission.
- 77306 Boycott of British Trade by Jews.
- 77317 Visit of Dr. Shiels to Palestine.
- 77322 British Officials in Palestine: Jewish Influence on.
- 77329 Zionist Movement in U.S.A.
- 77349 System of Liaison between Palestine and Trans-Jordan.
- 77353 Palestine Affairs Misc.
- 77361 "Doar Hayom" Newspaper.
- 77363 Relations with Russia.
- 77365 Report of Sir John Hope Simpson: Printing of.
- 77366 Zionist Organisation: Congress in Berlin of the.
- 77397 Activities of Subhi al Khadra and Newspaper "Al Jamia al Arabia."
- 77437 Syrio-Palestine Committee.
- 77447 Visit of Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Salmond.
- 77454 Disturbances: Principles for Prevention and Suppression.

1931

- 87007 Unemployment Returns.
- 87011 Crime Returns.
- 87018 Advisory Council: Minutes.
- 87019 Newspapers Published in Palestine.
- 87020 Situation Reports.
- 87021 Police Summaries.
- 87022 Palestine Press Summaries.
- 87027 Foreign Press.
- 87031 Zionist Organisation Memo. on Policy.
- 87032 Conditions in Palestine.
- 87037 Zionist Movement in U.S.A.
- 87045 Emigration and Immigration: Returns.
- 87050/3 Future Policy. Protests, Resolutions, etc.
- 87050/7 Future Policy. Reconstituted Cabinet Committee.
- 87056 Land Law (Amendment) Bill.
- 87057 Unauthorised Military Organisations.

- 87064/1 Co-operative Societies:- Reports of C.F. Strickland and Messrs. Johnson and Grosbie.
- 87069 Executive Council: Minutes.
- 87077 Education.
- 87090 Visas for Russians.
- 87096 Mandate Administration and Article by Professor Toynbee.
- 87113/1 Immigration - Miscellaneous Correspondence.
- 87119 Communists Activities.
- 87120 Immigrants from Russia.
- 87125 Treasury Control as Affecting Palestine Staff.
- 87128 Deportation to Poland of individuals who have lost Polish Nationality.
- 87143 Subsidiary Legislation 1931.
- 87146 Undesirables.
- 87150 Disturbances: Safad Enquiry.
- 87156 Situation in Palestine.
- 87157/1 Permanent Mandates Commission. 20th Session. Jewish Agency submissions to -
- 87175 Suspect Index.
- 87176 Immigration Office at Warsaw.
- 87177 Annual Confidential Reports: Senior Officers.
- 87189 Activities of Messrs. Rosenfeld, Sommer, Brofman, and Luchinsky.
- 87195 Grand Mufti: Activities of.
- 87207 Land for Jewish Settlement.
- 87229 Arab-Jewish Relations.
- 87236 Petitions.

- 87251 Jewish Press - Interviews with Representatives of.
- 87282 Zionist Revisionists:
- 87284 Protection of Cultivators (Amendment) Ordinance. No. 3 of 1931.
- 87285 Cost of Palestine to British Exchequer.
- 87307 National League.
- 87313 Immigration and Travel Section: Reorganisation of.
- 87345 Disturbances: Principles for Prevention and Suppression.
- 87368 League of Nations: Permanent Mandate Commission's Report.
- 87381 Vacancy. Attorney General.
- 87396 Financial Crisis: Economies to meet.
- 87405 Supreme Moslem Council: Constitution of.

APPENDIX B

COLONIAL OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE PERTAINING TO
PALESTINE: CLOSED POLITICAL FILES

1930

- 77050/I Future Policy: Representations of Jewish Agency. Closed until 1981.
- 77053 Arab Delegation to London. Closed until 2031.
- 77135 Communist Activities. Closed until 2031.
- 77214 Palestine Sub-Committee. Closed until 1981.
- 77263 Future Policy: Discussions with Mr. Rutenberg. Closed until 2031.
- 77323 Immigration and Land Development. Report of Sir John Hope Simpson. Closed until 2031.

1931

Nil.

APPENDIX C

FOREIGN OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE PERTAINING TO PALESTINE:
A SELECTION OF POLITICAL PAPERS UNAVAILABLE
AT THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

1930

E490/184/65 E636/184/65 E901/184/65 E4099/184/65 E4100/184/65 E4820/184/65	Palestine: Permanent Mandates Commission. 17th, Extraordinary Session.
E1677/266/65 E2785/226/65 E3446/226/65	Zionist Organisation: H.M.G.'s Relations with.
E384/384/65 (entire file)	Palestine. United States Comment and Cuttings.
E4820/400/65	Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Notes for British representative at forthcoming session of Permanent Mandates Commission.
E5779/400/65	Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Balfour declaration: position vis-à-vis H.M.G.'s Statement of new policy: telegrams exchanged between General Smuts and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.
E6188/400/65 E6200/400/65 E6224/400/65 E6287/400/65	Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Arab anxiety regarding possible modifications in view of Jewish pressure on H.M.G.
E6225/400/65	Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Cabinet Conclusions regarding formation of Cabinet Committee and functions of: H.M.G.'s invitation to Dr. Weizmann to meet Committee.

- E6253/400/65 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Discussions on Palestine: efforts of Mr. Cadogan to prevent Permanent Mandates Commission raising the whole question.
- E6323/400/65
E6461/400/65 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Resolutions by various Zionist bodies in U.S.: list and analysis of by Washington Embassy.
- E6341/400/65 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Suspension of Jewish immigration. Alleged protest by Polish Ambassador in London.
- E6377/400/65 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Recommendations and conclusions of League Council regarding adoption of measures by H.M.G. in carrying out conditions of mandate for Palestine.
- E6432/400/65
E6822/400/65 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Memo. prepared by the Lord Advocate in answer to the Jewish case against the White Paper: revision of F.O. minutes (Mr. Rendel).
- E6830/400/65 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): M. MacDonald: draft letter to Dr. Weizmann.
- E2504/427/65
E2994/427/65 Palestine (Arab-Jewish Conflict): Visit of Arab delegation to U.K.: demands of: attitude of H.M.G. towards.
- E3138/484/65
E4024/484/65 Zionist Organisation: Protests etc. against suspension of Jewish immigration into Palestine: procedure for dealing with resolutions by H.M. representatives abroad.

1931

E713/17/31 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Draft letter to Dr. Weizmann: letter prepared by Crown Advocate: meeting of Cabinet Committee to discuss, - Publication.

E1713/17/31 Palestine (Policy of H.M.G.): Haj Amin el Hussein. Visit to Egypt in connexion with proposed Islamic conference and statement regarding situation in Palestine.

E5773/304/31 Zionist Organisation. Zionist Organisation of America. Report on 34th annual convention.

E307/307/31 Palestine. Political situation (police summaries):
(entire file) Communist and Arab activities, etc.

E1834/1428/31 Mandates (Permanent Mandates Commission). Discussion
E2105/1428/31 of H.M.G.'s policy in Palestine: British representatives.
E5080/1428/31

E1590/1543/31 Palestine: acts of brigandage and measures to prevent.

E4834/1543/31 Allegations of Syro-Palestinian delegation that H.M.G. intends to reverse policy in favour of Jews if Jewish bankers in United States support the pound sterling.

E1205/1205/65 Islam: Pan Islamic activity.
(entire file)

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