

CHAPTER VI THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MANDATE

A DEFINITION OF FRONTIERS

Rarely had the fruits of military victory been as palpable as those savored by England when the fighting stopped. By December 1918, 200,000 Commonwealth troops had planted the Union Jack in Syria, western Turkey, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and lower Iran, a swath of territory encompassing all the historic land routes between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The French, to be sure, had established a civil administration of their own in the Syrian coastal littoral, even as the Hashemite Arabs managed their own political affairs in the interior. But if this occupation disposition seemed roughly to approximate the Sykes-Picot Agreement, it was an arrangement that Britain, in its incomparable bargaining position, was determined to revise. “When Clemenceau came to London after the War [in December 1918],” Lloyd George wrote later, “I drove with him to the French Embassy through cheering crowds. After we reached the Embassy he asked me what it was I specifically wanted from the French. I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul attached to Iraq, and Palestine from Dan to Beersheba under British control. Without any hesitation he agreed.” Indeed, the French premier had little choice.

While rival French and Arab claims for the governance of Syria still awaited solution at the Paris Conference, there were no disagreements in principle that Syria was to be allocated to France as a special mandatory responsibility, that Iraq was to be awarded to Britain, and that Palestine, too, now would become a British mandate. The Supreme Council of the Peace Conference formally validated this understanding at San Remo on April 25, 1920. On the other hand, the one—non-Turkish—Middle Eastern boundary issue that had yet to be settled related to Palestine. Neither the British nor the Jews succeeded in achieving precisely the configuration for the Holy Land they would have chosen. On the basis of exhaustive geographic and geological surveys, Weizmann and his Zionist colleagues asked the Supreme Council for a Palestine bounded in the north by the slopes of the Lebanon range, the headwaters of the Jordan, and the crest of Mount Hermon; in the east by the Transjordan-Mesopotamian desert; and in the south by the Gulf of Aqaba. The British for their part could only favor a demand to enlarge and enrich their future mandate. Their general staff continually stressed the importance of extending the frontiers of Palestine northeastward to protect the rail routes from the Mediterranean; while Balfour, in turn, supported Zionist claims to the water resources of the upper Jordan and Litani rivers.

Yet the French hardly were prepared to accept these desiderata without qualification. Rather, they endorsed the Lebanese contention that the “historic and natural” frontiers of Greater Lebanon included the sources of the Jordan. In a meeting with Lloyd George on March 20, 1919, Foreign Minister Stéphane Pichon coldly turned down a British appeal to revise the Sykes-Picot boundaries and argued instead that the northern Galilee, with its network of Jewish settlements, must remain within the Syrian enclave. It was a literalist interpretation of the 1916 agreement that the British plainly could not accept, for their troops even then were garrisoned throughout all of Galilee as part of “Occupied Territory South.” The impasse continued until February 1920.

Then, at last, in response to Britain’s withdrawal of support for Feisal’s demands in Syria, the new Millerand government accepted essentially the current military boundaries in Palestine. Conversely, the maximalist frontiers requested by the Zionists, and until then advocated by the British themselves, simply were ignored. Lloyd George, no less than his French counterpart, was prepared now to accept the status quo. As London saw it, buffer protection of Egypt, including the use of Haifa as a Mediterranean naval base, and the construction of a railroad and pipeline from Iraq to the sea, probably could be met within the existing Palestine borders. The Jews admittedly had been useful in fulfilling these objectives, but the broadly projected Zionist borders that would have guaranteed Palestine economic viability were of secondary importance to the British. On December 4, the two Allied prime ministers reached a final understanding on the boundary issue.

The accord represented a painful setback for the Jews. To the north and northeast, the country was deprived of its most important potential water resources, including the Litani River, a key fount of the Jordan, the spring arising from Mount Hermon, and the greater part of the Yarmuk. The boundaries similarly ignored the historic entity of Palestine—“from Dan to Beersheba”—as envisaged in the original negotiations leading to the Balfour Declaration. Moreover, by failing to approximate any natural geographic frontiers, the borders left the country perennially exposed to armed invasion. This heritage of economic and military vulnerability was to curse the Palestine mandate, and later the entire Middle East, for decades to come.

HIGH AND EARLY HOPES IN THE HOLY LAND

Notwithstanding the territorial disappointment, the Zionists had grounds for optimism on the future of the National Home. Nor were they dismayed even by the wretched physical condition of the Holy Land and its Jewish settlement. When Allenby’s army occupied Palestine in 1917–18, it took possession of the single most desolated province of the Ottoman Levant. Arid, malarial, inhabited by a shrunken population of some 560,000 Arabs and 55,000 Jews near the war’s end, the country had been starved by Allied blockade, ravaged and ruined by Turkish depredations. Scores of villages had been laid waste, trees and orange groves damaged, public security all but extinguished. The British thereupon gave their first and most urgent attention to food supplies, which Allenby ordered imported directly from Egypt. The American Near East Relief soon

followed with shipments of clothing and medicines for the Christian and Moslem populations. The Zionist Organization and Hadassah, its women's counterpart, matched these efforts for the Jews.

The next priority clearly was to reorganize Palestine's administration and revive its economy. Under Sir Arthur Money, Allenby's military administrator in Palestine, and later, under Money's successor, Sir Louis Bols, the country was resected into districts, each under a British military governor, each operating under regulations issued by central departments of finance, justice, health, agriculture, education, and public works. British officers and civil servants held the senior administrative posts; Palestinian Arabs and Jews served in the lower echelons. The system worked well enough to become the essential pattern of the later mandatory regime ([this page](#)). Measures also were taken to improve the health and sanitation of Palestine, as cisterns were dug and hospitals and clinics opened. With the purchasing power of a large British army coursing through cities and towns, the nation's economic circumstances markedly improved. The atmosphere in Palestine for the time being was tranquil, even hopeful.

So, initially, were the prospects for the Zionists. For them, the Balfour Declaration was less a definitive statement than a skeleton of principles that now had to be fleshed out. To that end, the commission they prepared to dispatch to Palestine was intended to advise the military authorities in their relations with the Yishuv ([this page](#)). A few months later, the Zionists went so far as to draft a "constitution" under which Palestine would be reconstituted as a Jewish Commonwealth. It was evident, then, as the peace conference approached, that the Zionists intended to give the term "national home" a more vigorous, even aggressive, character, and to dispel some of its ambiguity—for which their own initial Sokolow version, written in the summer of 1917, was at least partially responsible. On November 18, 1918, they submitted their new draft proposal. It stated forthrightly that "the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish People ... is understood to mean that the country of Palestine should be placed under such political, economic and moral conditions as will favour the increase of the Jewish population, so that in accordance with the principle of democracy it may ultimately develop into a Jewish Commonwealth, it being clearly understood ..." (here followed the two provisos inserted into the text of the Balfour Declaration). The American Jewish Congress, meeting on December 16, 1917, adopted a similar resolution, as did Jewish congresses in Palestine, Austria-Hungary, Poland, South Africa, and elsewhere. Even the moderate Achad HaAm endorsed it. At first, too, the Foreign Office seemed equally prepared to accept this Zionist interpretation of the original Balfour document. As shall be seen, it was not until the Churchill White Paper of 1922 that the British government felt constrained decisively to limit Zionist intentions ([this page](#)).

Rather, at the outset Lloyd George and Balfour made clear that they had accepted the Zionist cause as unshakable on its own merits, no less than as a *raison d'être* for a British mandate. "It is not enough that the Jews should have access to Palestine," stated Balfour in a memorandum of August 11, 1919, "but that their homeland be a viable one." As far back as December 1917 the foreign secretary had approved the departure of a Zionist Commission for Palestine to organize relief work and supervise repair of damage to the

Jewish colonies. Indeed, as a special token of official approbation, Weizmann, the commission chairman, had been received by King George V on March 7, 1918. Including in its membership Zionist representatives from France and Italy, the commission embarked for Palestine later in the month. It was immediately given official status as an advisory body to the military government in all matters relating to Jews—precisely as the Zionists had demanded.

Nor were serious objections to the Zionist homeland expressed in other quarters. Although Prime Minister Millerand of France rejected British—and Zionist—claims to the headwaters of the Jordan, he did not dream of challenging the notion of a Jewish national home. Neither did the Italian government, despite its continuing resentment at a unilateral British protectorate over the Holy Land. President Wilson remained firmly committed to the Balfour Declaration throughout the Peace Conference, “and so far I have found no one who is seriously opposing the purpose which it embodies,” he assured Felix Frankfurter, then a leading American Zionist. In entrusting Palestine to Britain, moreover, the Allied statesmen at San Remo incorporated into their allocation award the verbatim text of the Balfour Declaration. The basic moral support of the Western governments appeared firmly established, as a result.

For a while, too, the friendship of the Hashemite Arab leadership seemed equally beyond question. During the war, the British failed to sense any latent inconsistencies between their patronage of an Arab revolt and their encouragement of Zionist aspirations. It is recalled that in McMahon’s crucial letter to Sherif Hussein, on October 24, 1915, the British high commissioner excluded from the area of Arab independence the land west of the “districts” of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. A controversy arose at war’s end, and remained unsettled for years afterward, on the status of Palestine in this allocation. The wording here hardly was precise, for “district” was not a Turkish administrative term. Was McMahon referring to “vilayets”? Eventually that became the Arab contention. Had it been accepted, the strip of territory detached from Arab rule unquestionably would have been too narrow to include Palestine. The Jews, of course, no less than McMahon himself and the entire British government, took the opposite position, insisting that the term “district” had been used simply in a loose sense, meaning vicinity; and thus a line drawn west of the vicinities of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, separating this territory from the coastal region, apparently excluded Palestine from Arab administration.

In January 1918, after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, Commander D. H. Hogarth, research director of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, was dispatched to Jidda to clarify for Hussein the implications of the Zionist program. Reassuring the sherif that Arab freedom would be safeguarded, Hogarth added, meaningfully: “In this connection, the friendship of world Jewry to the Arab cause is equivalent to support in all states where Jews have political influence. The leaders of the movement are determined to bring about the success of Zionism by friendship and cooperation with the Arabs, and such an offer is not one to be lightly thrown aside.” The hint was received with enthusiasm by Hussein. Sensing the potential financial advantages of Arab-Jewish cooperation, the sherif issued the Jews several warmly phrased invitations to return to

their “sacred and beloved homeland.”

For its part, the Zionist leadership was not oblivious to the need for manageable relations with the Arabs. In the summer of 1918, Weizmann conferred with a group of Syrian émigrés living in Cairo and used the fullest measure of his charm and persuasiveness to emphasize Zionist intentions of respecting Arab rights and sensibilities. The Syrians were neither charmed nor persuaded. They countered, rather, with a suggestion for the proportional representation of the Arab majority in any future Palestine government. Weizmann in turn was so unsettled by this response that he decided no time was to be lost before meeting personally with Emir Feisal, Hussein’s son and leader of the Arab Revolt. To that end, the Zionist leader departed on a ten-day journey to Aqaba, at the entrance to the Red Sea. He was received cordially, even lavishly, with a sumptuous banquet prepared in his honor. Weizmann wrote afterward:

I explained to [Feisal] ... our desire to do everything in our power to allay Arab fears and susceptibilities, and our hope that he would lend us his powerful moral support.... I stressed the fact that there was a great deal of room in the country if intensive development were applied, and that the lot of the Arabs would be greatly improved through our work there. With all this I found the Emir in full agreement....

Feisal promised to convey the gist of the talk to his father. “The first meeting in the desert laid the foundations of a lifelong friendship,” Weizmann recalled.

It was a relationship that appeared to offer significant possibilities of cooperation. Embroiled in a diplomatic struggle with the French over the Arab role in Syria, and convinced that the Jews possessed alliance value in that battle, Feisal was prepared to reaffirm his sympathy with the Zionist movement. In December 1918, Sykes brought the two men together once more in London. Each again expressed mutual understanding and support for the other’s position. It was thereupon agreed that all water and farm-boundary questions should be settled directly between the Arabs and the Jews. The atmosphere was benign. At a luncheon given in his honor by Lord Rothschild, the emir reminded his listeners (in a draft address written by T. E. Lawrence) that “no true Arab can be suspicious or afraid of Jewish nationalism.... We are demanding Arab freedom, and we should show ourselves unworthy of it, if we did not now, as I do, say to the Jews—welcome back home—and cooperate with them to the limit of the Arab State.”

These discussions and exchanges of courtesies ultimately were formalized in a document signed by Weizmann and Feisal, a pact envisaging a common stance at the Peace Conference. It declared:

His Royal Highness the Emir Feisal, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of Hejaz, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organization, mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people, and realising that the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine, and being desirous further of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have agreed upon the following Articles....

And the most important of those articles guaranteed the Jews their right of free immigration into Palestine and settlement on the land. It was accompanied by a reciprocal assurance that Arab tenant farmers would be safeguarded on their plots and assisted in their economic development. Significantly, one of the final clauses provided for British arbitration of all disputes between the two peoples—unmistakable evidence of London’s role in stage-managing the agreement. The “treaty” was signed on January 4, 1919. On his own, however, Feisal attached a codicil below the signatures on the Arab version: “Provided the Arabs obtain their independence as demanded in my Memorandum dated the 4th of January, 1919, to the Foreign Office of the Government of Great Britain, I shall concur in the above article.” Otherwise, the compact would be null and void, the addendum declared.

A week later, the Zionist leaders offered the Arabs a number of vital concessions, including a free zone at Haifa port and a joint Arab-Jewish free harbor on the Gulf of Aqaba. When Feisal in turn appeared before the Peace Conference on February 6 to demand Arab independence, he concurred that Palestine should be invested with its own guaranteed status as the enclave of the “Zionist Jews.” As it turned out, however, Feisal expected more than a territorial quid pro quo from the Jews. He also expected Zionist diplomatic support against the French. Two weeks before, the emir’s key advisers had approached the Zionist leaders with a proposal for an Arab-Jewish entente, a “Semitic” understanding in preference to the Western mandates. Together, it was suggested, the two peoples would oppose French claims to the Syrian interior. The initial Zionist reaction to this overture was noncommittal. Feisal’s advisers persisted, returning to the formula continually. Embarrassed, finally, Weizmann asked his Arab friends at least not to interfere with the French regime in the Syrian “littoral.”

It soon became evident that Weizmann was unwilling to act independently of his British patrons, who had made specific commitments of their own to the French. By mid-1919, as a result, Feisal terminated his public meetings with the Zionists and asked them to desist from releasing statements invoking his name. His January 4 “treaty” with Weizmann was not published, and the Zionists, respecting Feisal’s wishes, withheld comment on it for many years. Increasingly disillusioned with the Zionist connection, the emir chose now to envisage the Jewish National Home as merely a subprovince within the Arab kingdom. “But when some Zionists speak about Palestine becoming as Jewish as England is English,” he declared, “... they are really talking unreasonably.” To David Yellin, a Zionist emissary who visited him in July 1919, Feisal suggested that the Jews should negotiate henceforth directly with the Palestine Arabs. It would be best, too, he warned, if the Zionists moderated their claims in Palestine and agreed instead to regard the Holy Land as an integral part of Greater Syria. In late autumn of 1919, Feisal ceased public communication with the Zionist leadership altogether. His policy of invoking Jewish cooperation for Arab diplomatic purposes in Syria manifestly had failed.

The administration of Palestine, meanwhile, began taking shape as a somewhat unimaginative collection of lower-rung professional functionaries who had been assembled hurriedly from the British army and the Egyptian civil service. Because their connections essentially were with the Arabs, most of these officials were convinced that Moslem friendship alone should be the central preoccupation of their government's policy. The Jews sensed—indeed, exaggerated—this combination of mediocrity and philo-Arabism. In an aggrieved letter to Balfour, Weizmann insisted that the government's approach was “fraught with grave danger” for the Jews. “The present system tends ... to level down the Jew politically to the status of the native,” he argued, “and in many cases the English Administration follows the convenient rule of looking on the Jews as so many natives.” If the policy continued, it would “tend towards the creation of an Arab and not a Jewish Palestine.” Frequently, too, Menachem Ussishkin (Weizmann's successor in 1919 as chairman of the Zionist Commission) and other—less than reticent—east European Zionists provoked British dislike by their urgent insistence upon employment for Jews in the public services, an end to restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases, and the immediate fulfillment of other Zionist demands. Sir Ronald Storrs commented ruefully later that “a people can be at once bitterly wronged and yet withal so maddeningly tiresome as sometimes to annihilate surprise, though never regret, for their suffering.” Storrs and other British officials thereafter took refuge from this pressure by adopting a stiffly formal approach to the Zionists.

As early as June 8, 1919, Sir Arthur Money, Allenby's military administrator for Palestine, warned that “fear and distrust of Zionist aims grow daily [among the Arabs] A British mandate for Palestine on the lines of the Zionist programme will mean the indefinite retention in the country of a military force considerably greater than that now in Palestine.” As if to confirm his warning, barbed Arab newspaper editorials, public Arab threats, and instances of unrest in Palestine Arab towns grew each month. In February 1920 a party of Arab raiders attacked the Jewish colonies of Metulla and Tel Chai along Palestine's northern border, in a twilight area between the British and French zones of occupation. Among those who were killed defending the outposts was Joseph Trumpeldor, wartime leader of the Zion Mule Corps. Shocked at the loss of this Zionist folk hero, and deeply alarmed for the future, Weizmann warned Money's successor, Sir Louis Bols, that far worse trouble was afoot. Bols was inclined to minimize the danger. But in March 1920 the Syrian National Congress, in a calculated gesture of repudiation toward the French, offered Feisal the throne of a united Syria, including Palestine.

More ominously yet, it was the season of Nebi Musa, a traditional Arab counterpart to Easter and Passover, when devout Moslems traveled in pilgrimage on the Jericho road to the grave of Moses (an Islamic as well as a Hebrew patriarch). The Arab revelers arrived in Jerusalem on April 4. Soon a large crowd gathered to hear a nationalist harangue by agitators, not all of them local, who extolled the name of Feisal. Their purpose clearly was to influence the Allies, who were scheduled to dispose of the mandates in San Remo within the next fortnight. The crowd became unruly, the Arab

police joined in the applause, and violence began. During the next three hours, 160 Jews were wounded. Eventually British troops arrived and quelled the disturbances. The next morning, however, instigators who had been detained overnight were released, and attacks on the Jews promptly resumed. Order was not restored until the third day. A number of Jews and Arabs had been killed by then, and several hundred wounded. The aftermath of the bloodletting was as unnerving to the Zionists as the violence itself. The Arab mayor of Jerusalem was dismissed, to be sure, and two leading agitators were given stiff prison sentences. But the majority of Arab rioters received only light jail terms, while Vladimir Jabotinsky and several of his colleagues, who had organized a Jewish self-defense group during the turmoil, were sentenced by a military court to fifteen years' imprisonment.

Thereupon, in England as in the Jewish world, the reaction both to the violence and to the disparity of sentences was so uproarious that the government promptly convened an official court of inquiry. Throughout the hearings in Jerusalem, the officers of the military administration defended their conduct, insisting that Zionist provocation alone had inflamed the Arabs. The Jews in turn accused the mandatory government of complicity, of encouraging Moslem nationalist unrest. At this point, too, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, chief intelligence officer in Cairo, astounded his superiors by fully endorsing the Zionist accusations. So shocking was this indictment that the Palestine military administration was seriously compromised now before British public opinion. Thus, on April 29, 1920, less than a week following the Supreme Council's allocation of the Palestine mandate to Britain, London announced the imminent dismantling of the military regime in the Holy Land in favor of a provisional civil administration.

It was in San Remo, a day before the assignment of the mandates, that Herbert Samuel was informed of his selection by Lloyd George as civil high commissioner for Palestine. The choice was not illogical in view of Samuel's record as a Liberal party leader and former cabinet member. He was known, too, as a loyal Jew and Zionist, and this reputation seemingly emphasized the government's commitment to the Jewish National Home. The appointment obviously was not without its risks. Feisal regarded it as a provocation of the Arabs. So did Allenby, who warned that violence would follow. When, therefore, Samuel arrived in Jerusalem on June 30, 1920, it was deemed advisable to have him escorted from the railroad station to Government House by a sizable contingent of armored cars, and accompanied everywhere by detectives.

These misgivings and precautions soon appeared unwarranted. Most of Samuel's initial appointments aroused enthusiasm among Jews and Arabs alike. They included the able and progressive Wyndham Deedes as chief secretary; Norman Bentwich, a distinguished (Jewish) barrister as attorney general; Sir Ronald Storrs, retained as governor of Jerusalem as a symbol of impartiality; and experienced senior army officers brought over from Egypt as administrators of the Jaffa and Haifa districts. Well received, too, were Samuel's first executive directives: to ascertain landholdings by a cadastral survey; to establish credit banks; to undertake a large program of public works, including highway and railroad construction, telegraph and telephone lines, and

swamp drainage. The Zionists, of course, were particularly gratified by Samuel's firm open-door policy on immigration. In the opening years of his administration, the influx of Jews surpassed all earlier waves ([Chapter VII](#)). The high commissioner's extensive connections in the British government also were Palestine's good fortune. He got what he wanted from London; his budgets generally were approved. Personally, the man all but radiated fairness and gentle courtesy. His very physical presence—tall, handsome, courtly—awed and impressed those who met him. Bentwich recalled that even Arab nationalists respected Samuel: “ ‘Nafsu Sharif!’ they would say, ‘his self is honourable.’ ”

But this very impartiality, as some Zionists had feared, proved to be the high commissioner's Achilles' heel. “All my life a convinced Liberal,” Samuel wrote later, “... I was the last man to take a hand in any policy of oppression.... Nothing could be worse than if it were to appear that the one thing the Jewish people had learnt from the centuries of their own oppression was the way to oppress others.” It was his obsession with fairness that influenced the high commissioner to appoint Ernest T. Richmond, a committed anti-Zionist, as formulator-planner of the administration's Arab policy; to withhold a large block of state land from Jewish purchase in the Beisan area; and to establish rigorous procedures for approving Arab land transfers to Jews. Far from placating Arab nationalism, however, these conciliatory gestures apparently encouraged it. Throughout 1921, Arab restiveness in Palestine grew. Some of it could be attributed to events in Syria. In July 1920 the French had brutally liquidated Feisal's self-proclaimed kingdom. As a consequence, Arab officials in Feisal's short-lived regime suddenly found themselves without employment or nationalist outlet. Palestine became their surrogate. Other, not less fundamental, reasons for local unrest, however, could be traced to the native politics of Arab Palestine itself ([Chapter VIII](#)). Renewed troubles accordingly began in Jaffa on May 1, 1921, when a ragtag group of Jewish Communists brashly marched through the center of town in the wake of a Zionist labor parade. The incident served the Arab nationalists as a useful pretext. They rioted, violence extended immediately to the countryside, and soon Petach Tikvah and other Jewish farm colonies were besieged. By the time British troops finally suppressed the last attack at the end of the week, forty-seven Jews and forty-eight Arabs had been killed and several hundred others of both peoples wounded. In the shocked aftermath of the bloodletting, a commission of inquiry was immediately appointed to conduct hearings under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Haycraft, chief justice of Palestine. Thereafter, the full spectrum of Arab grievances was ventilated, including the repugnance felt by Moslems for Zionist social ideals and the disquiet shared by all Arabs at mounting Jewish immigration.

The commission's final report made little effort to veil its essential sympathy for Arab resentment. More alarming, from the Zionist viewpoint, was Samuel's decision temporarily to concede Arab demands by stopping Jewish immigration. The ban was lifted shortly, in July 1921, but under more rigid controls, including a guarantee of available employment. The very notion of “artificial” quotas deeply rankled the Zionists, who were certain now that the measures foreshadowed a policy of British retrenchment on the Jewish National Home. They were not wrong. Although at

London's insistence the text of the Balfour Declaration had been incorporated directly into the San Remo mandatory award, in Britain itself by late 1921 growing reservations were being expressed at the government's pro-Zionist policy. Numerous former officials of the defunct Palestine military government, including several recently cashiered army personnel, volunteered as advisers to the Arab delegation that had arrived in London to protest the Jewish National Home. Their most useful weapon was the anxiety of the British people to demobilize their far-flung military units and to reduce imperial expenditures. A violent uprising in the Iraqi mandate in 1920, suppressed only at great cost, had aroused misgivings that were further exacerbated now by the riots in Palestine. At this point, Lord Northcliffe's influential chain of newspapers urged the government to drop the Palestine responsibility like a hot potato. The warning was echoed by Sir William Joynson-Hicks and a small group of fellow members of the House of Commons. To the Lloyd George government it was evident that a formula would have to be devised to ensure security and order in the Holy Land, lest Parliament reject the mandate altogether.

In the spring of 1921, as it happened, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill summoned a gathering of leading military and imperial officials to Cairo to formulate a new approach to the unsettled Iraqi mandate. Churchill's visit also provided a logical occasion to explore a Palestine settlement. In late March the colonial secretary journeyed on to the Holy Land. There, to Jew and Arab alike, he firmly reiterated his support of the Jewish National Home. Yet his tour also resulted in the separation of Transjordan from Palestine, and a "reclarification" of the Balfour Declaration. Nominally within the boundaries of the Palestine mandate, Transjordan was a high plateau land—the biblical Edom—inhabited by some 300,000 Arab peasants and seminomads. With the end of the war, this entire region east of the Jordan River was included within the Arab sphere, for a vague understanding existed that it was reserved to the Arabs by the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. No attempt was made by Feisal to administer the area, however, and following his involuntary departure from Syria in the summer of 1920, Transjordan was reduced entirely to a no-man's land. Soon Bedouin attacks on the inhabited Jewish areas west of the Jordan threatened to get out of hand. To pacify the territory, Samuel received approval from London to dispatch a few officials across the river; it was hoped that they would guide the Arabs to self-government. The effort failed. Beyond the town limits of Keraq and Amman, lawlessness continued unchecked.

It was at this juncture, in the late summer of 1920, that Emir Abdullah, the sheri's oldest son, appeared on the fringes of Transjordan with his retinue. He was en route to Syria to help "restore" his brother Feisal to power. By March of 1921 Abdullah had succeeded in pushing on to Amman. Churchill's Middle East conference was under way in Cairo at the time, and news of Abdullah's presence east of the Jordan aroused dismay among the assembled officials. It was apparent that the little emir would have to be stopped before he provoked a crisis between France and England. Thereupon T. E. Lawrence and Churchill revived an idea that had been discussed between them even before this latest crisis. It was to ask Abdullah to stay in Transjordan, where he could

reign (though not rule) as Britain's protégé. Churchill immediately cabled London and obtained its permission to make the offer. He and Abdullah met on May 26 and conferred for a day and a half in Jerusalem. The emir, a "cheery-faced, shrewd, genial little man," as Churchill described him, listened intently as the colonial secretary outlined the proposal. By its terms, Abdullah would withhold any further action against the French. He would establish an orderly government in Amman, recognize Transjordan as an integral part of Britain's Palestine mandate, and administer the territory in the name of the mandate. In return, Britain would provide Abdullah with a monthly subsidy, with trained advisers, and with the assurance of Transjordanian independence at some future date. After discussing the proposal with his advisers through the night of the twenty-sixth, the emir accepted the offer the next morning. Churchill then departed for home glowing with self-satisfaction.

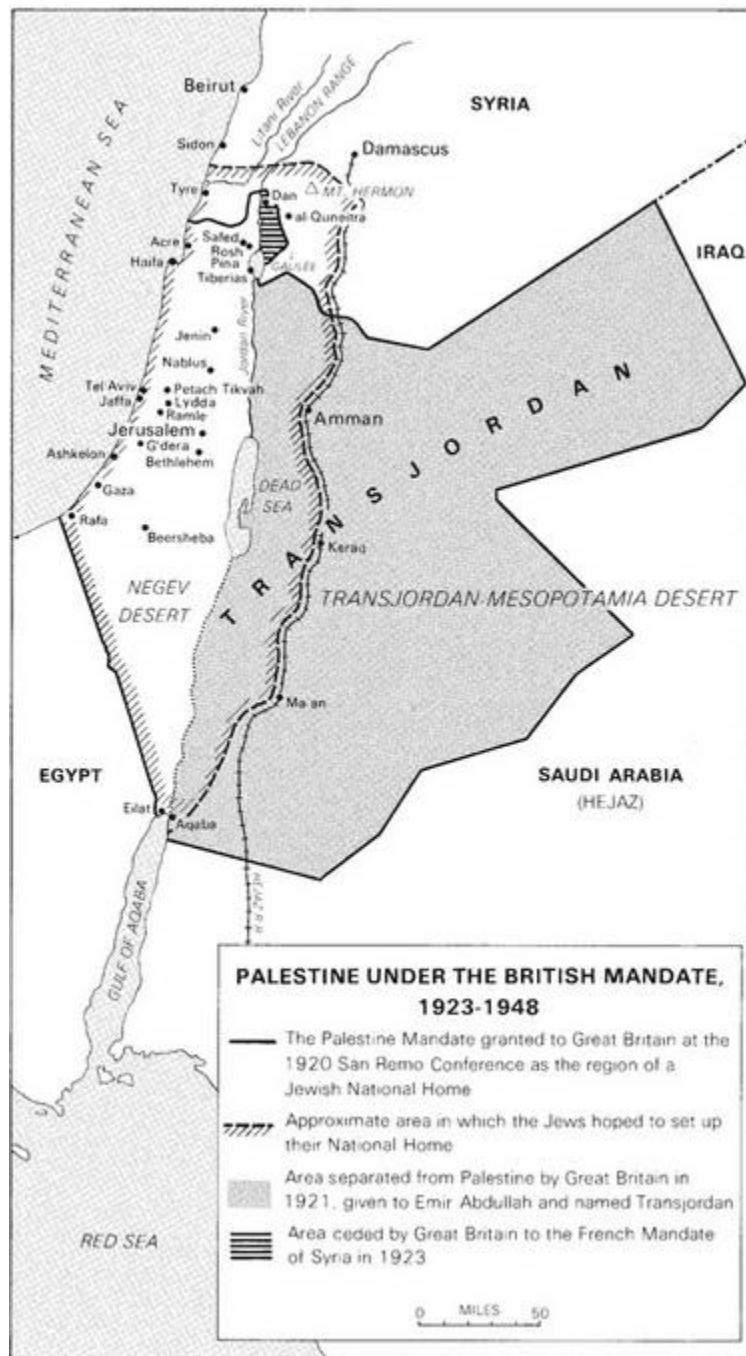
The establishment of an Arab government east of the river was Britain's first explicit admission that Transjordan was included in the zone of Arab autonomy, as promised by McMahon to Hussein in 1915, rather than in integral Palestine. It followed logically that the Balfour Declaration could not be applied to that territory. Interestingly enough, Balfour himself had not made such an assumption. In a memorandum to Lloyd George on August 11, 1919, the foreign secretary had proposed drawing the frontier well east of the Jordan for the development of Zionist agriculture. Abdullah himself, for that matter, was astonished at the shift in Britain's position. Later he wrote: "[God] granted me success in creating the Government of Transjordan by having it separated from the Balfour Declaration which had included it since the Sykes-Picot Agreement assigned it to the British zone of influence." This major concession to the Arabs evidently registered only slowly on the Zionists. In their earlier correspondence with the British they had expressed at most a perfunctory interest in the Transjordanian area; their colonies were all to the west. Only afterward, when the mandate officially excluded the Jewish National Home east of the Jordan, did recognition of the lost bargaining point fully dawn on the Zionist leadership.

Still other restrictions were imposed on the Jewish National Home. In May 1922, Herbert Samuel returned to London to impress on the Colonial Office the need for dispelling Arab fears on the Palestine question once and for all. This could be accomplished only by a "definitive" interpretation of the Balfour Declaration, he insisted. His recommendation was accepted. A statement of policy was drafted, mainly by Samuel himself, for issuance over Churchill's signature. Known afterward as the Churchill White Paper, the document restricted the Jewish National Home to the area west of the Jordan, eschewed the notion of creating a predominantly Jewish state, and limited Jewish immigration thenceforth to the "economic capacity of the country." The statement read in part:

Phrases have been used such as that Palestine is to become "as Jewish as England is English." His Majesty's Government regard any such expectation as impracticable and have no such aim in view.... When it is asked what is meant by the development of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole but the further development of the existing Jewish

community ... in order that it may become a center in which the Jewish people as a whole may take ... an interest and a pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospects of free development ... it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance.

The draft was submitted to the Zionist Organization in June. Fearful of losing British support altogether, Weizmann and the Zionist Executive reluctantly signed it. The Arab delegation, on the other hand, rejected it flatly. The mixed reception notwithstanding, the government published the Churchill White Paper on July 1, 1922, as the official interpretation of the British mandate in Palestine. On this basis, too, the mandate won swift acceptance by the House of Commons five days later, and by the Council of the League of Nations on September 29.



The Zionists had suffered a reverse of sorts, but hardly a fatal one. In the preamble of its mandatory award to Britain, after all, the League Council recited the Balfour

Declaration almost verbatim; alluded specifically to “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine” and to the moral validity of “reconstituting their National Home in that country”; imposed on the British the obligation not simply to permit but to “secure” the Jewish National Home, to “use their best endeavours to facilitate” Jewish immigration, and to encourage Jewish settlement on the land. Hebrew was recognized as an official language. A Jewish Agency (provisionally the Zionist Organization itself) was authorized to cooperate with the mandatory in the development of natural resources and in the operation of public works and utilities. It was plain, then, from beginning to end, that the League award was framed to protect the Zionist redemptive effort. The British accordingly were invested with “full powers of legislation and administration,” a provision not included for the Syrian and Iraqi mandates, in which the obligation was imposed of ensuring self-government; self-government manifestly was not intended for the Holy Land on the basis of an obvious Arab majority. It was significant, for example, that the word “Arab” did not once appear in the mandatory award, and that the Arabs and other nations in Palestine were repeatedly described merely as “non-Jews.” Nor was there doubt that the British government intended to stand behind the mandate. The Bonar Law cabinet, which succeeded the Lloyd George coalition in October 1922, firmly rejected every Arab effort to alter Britain’s support of Zionism and of the Jewish National Home.

THE “CONSTITUTION” OF THE MANDATE

As the legal instrument defining Britain’s obligations under the mandate, the League of Nations award similarly laid down a number of general “non-Zionist” provisions. Public order, good government, and civil and religious rights were assured for all the inhabitants of the country, “irrespective of race and religion.” The Administration was charged with recognizing the sacred holidays of the various communities, with guaranteeing the security of the holy places and freedom of access to them. English, Arabic, and Hebrew were recognized as official languages. By the same token, each community was authorized to maintain its own school system. To ensure, also, that these and other requirements were fulfilled, the mandatory document obligated Britain to submit an annual report of its tenure in the Holy Land to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. Yet, at best, the award could only set guidelines for the mandatory. It was for the British themselves to institute the operative government for Palestine. An organic law, therefore, upon which the mandatory administration based its functional activities, was signed by the king in London on August 10, 1922, and proclaimed by Sir Herbert Samuel in Jerusalem on September 1. This was the Palestine Order in Council. Although it included the traditional provisions of freedom of worship, liberty of conscience, and Britain’s responsibility to foster the Jewish National Home, the Order in Council in essence was an austere practical document that defined the various components of the mandatory government.

Thus, the executive was designated as a high commissioner, who appointed all

subsidiary administrative officials. An independent judiciary under a chief justice was empowered to protect the rights of natives and foreigners alike, and to assure solicitude for the traditions and mores of the various religious communities. To that end, the Order in Council affirmed the jurisdiction of the religious courts in matters of personal status ([this page](#)). One of the most important of the document's features reflected Samuel's warmest hopes for the cultivation of self-government in Palestine. It was for the election of a legislative council, subject to the powers reserved to the high commissioner to "establish such Ordinances as may be necessary for the peace, order, and good government of Palestine." The body would consist of twenty-two members, ten of them official members of government, and twelve unofficial members. The latter, citizens of Palestine themselves, would be elected through a delicately calibrated scheme of primary and secondary elections. To ensure the protected status of the Jewish and Christian minorities, the secondary electors would be organized into twelve electoral colleges according to their religious communities. The council would be debarred, too, from passing ordinances that violated the terms of the mandate—specifically, the growth of the Jewish National Home. Tax and revenue matters similarly were exempt. In any event, the high commissioner possessed the option of veto.

On the basis of this elaborately delimited format, Samuel's administration laid the groundwork for general elections. A census was taken, revealing a population of 650,000 Moslems, 87,000 Jews, and 73,000 Christians. No serious opposition to the legislative council was encountered in its earliest phase. But within a few weeks Arab nationalist leaders expressed growing misgivings about a scheme permitting Jews to share even limited consultative authority with Arabs. In the end, therefore, a majority of Arabs boycotted the primary elections, and the government was obliged to cancel the rest of the voting. Samuel reverted instead to a purely nominated body. At his request, the Palestine Order in Council was amended by a second Order in Council, this one issued on May 4, 1923. The new instrument authorized the high commissioner to establish simply an advisory, rather than a legislative, council. In Samuel's blueprint, the new body would include (besides himself) ten official members, as well as eight Moslem, two Jewish, and two Christian Palestinians—to be appointed by the government. Yet even this modification failed to placate the Arab nationalists. Once more they forced the appointed Arab representatives to withdraw from the advisory council, thereby dooming the scheme. It was evident that the opponents hoped to compel Britain to institute majority self-government, an arrangement that would entirely favor the Arabs.

Somewhat frantically, at this point, Samuel requested the Arab leaders at least to organize their own Arab Agency. The organ would serve as a counterpart to the Jewish Agency prescribed by the mandatory award and would cooperate with the government on matters relating to Arab interests in Palestine. But at a tense meeting in the high commissioner's palace, the Arab leadership rejected the proposal on the spot. Musa Kazem al-Husseini, who earlier had led an Arab delegation to England to protest the Jewish National Home ([Chapter VII](#)), observed that his people had never recognized the status of the Jewish Agency and therefore had no desire for a similar agency of their

own. Samuel accordingly was left with no choice but to accept this third rejection of Arab cooperation as final. With regret, he announced that the legislative as well as the executive functions of the government henceforth would be reserved exclusively to the high commissioner and subordinate officers of the Palestine administration.

From 1923 on, therefore, until the end of Britain's tenure in 1948, the government that functioned in Palestine was unique among League "A" mandates. Far from nurturing the local population to self-government, it was a Crown Colony in all but name. The high commissioner was all-powerful, with full rights to appoint, dismiss, or suspend anyone holding government office in Palestine, and to sell or lease any public lands. Ultimately, Samuel and his successors were restrained by no constitutional limitations whatever as far as the nation's inhabitants were concerned. The only built-in checks on the executive's authority lay in the provisions of the mandate itself and of those in the Order in Council guaranteeing freedom of conscience, worship, fair trial, and similar traditional Western liberties. Occasionally citizens of Palestine themselves appealed real or fancied injustices to London, to the Colonial Office, or if necessary beyond that to the Privy Council—even to Parliament. But the method was unwieldy, at best.

Nor did the high commissioner hesitate to use his powers of legislation extensively. Each year his office issued as many laws for Palestine as Parliament did for Britain. Indeed, the Arab press spoke derisively of this "law factory" that turned out new ordinances without rest. To a degree, the spate of legislation reflected the need for revising a host of near-medieval Ottoman legal practices, especially in the realm of criminal and commercial law. Most of the ordinances, however, were devoted to restructuring the nation's administration. With its 9,000 square miles, Palestine was divided now into three districts—north, south, and Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem functioned both as the headquarters for its own district and as capital of the mandatory government. British commissioners governed each of these administrative units, with other British officers responsible for subdistricts. Although municipal councils were elected in 1926 ([this page](#)), throughout the entire period of British rule mayors were appointed by the high commissioner, who could remove them at his discretion. In effect, there were no limits to the government's centralized authority.

Neither were there any restrictions, except financial ones, on the mandatory's allocation of its budgeted funds. After the police, the public works department accounted for the bulk of government expenditures. This was the office responsible for construction and upkeep of roads, for government buildings and transport, for harbors, public water supplies, and sewage and drainage. To finance the various projects, as well as the cost of government itself, the administration organized departments of customs, excise, and trade. These collected nearly half the revenues of the mandate. Other income producers were land taxes, urban property taxes, livestock taxes, assessments on agricultural produce, license fees, and court fees. Public communications, including railroads, mails, telegraph, and telephones, similarly earned revenues. It was only after 1929, when renewed violence broke out in the Holy Land, that substantial expenditures from Britain itself were required to underwrite the country's enlarged military and

police forces. But until then, the mandate was paid for almost exclusively by the citizens of Palestine.

THE OPERATION OF THE MANDATE

What did the Arabs and Jews get for their money? As early as the mid-1920s, the answer was becoming dramatically evident. When Britain assumed responsibility for the Holy Land, it took over an economic cripple, a nation that was impoverished well beyond the ravages of war itself. Underpopulated, boasting little industry or trade and few known natural resources, Palestine was debilitated, too, by administrative chaos no less than by famine. The Turks had taken their records of land ownership with them upon withdrawal, and the enforcement of security and justice, the fulfillment even of the most elementary duties of public administration, had ceased. In addition to dispensing public relief, therefore, Britain's initial efforts in Palestine during the first two years of its occupation were devoted simply to restoring a minimal degree of law and order. The task was fulfilled impressively, despite occasional outbreaks of rioting. Shortly before the Jaffa bloodshed of 1921, Samuel's associates had been contemplating a locally recruited Palestine police force to be composed exclusively of Arabs and Jews, under British officers. This project had to be dropped temporarily, in the aftermath of the May riots, and a Palestine Gendarmerie substituted for it. While still consisting largely of Jews and Arabs, the force this time was heavily corseted with British police veterans, many of them former "Black and Tans" who had served in Ireland. By mid-1922, fortunately, violence had subsided almost completely. Thus, upon Samuel's retirement in 1926, Lord Plumer, his successor, felt confident enough to disband the Palestine Gendarmerie. In its place he established the Palestine Police Force, staffed it with about 600 men, and backed it with the Transjordanian Frontier Force, a small regular military corps of 1,200 troops that normally was assigned to patrol Palestine's eastern frontier. By general recognition, Plumer's soldierly, no-nonsense personality was itself worth a battalion.

Yet the British brought more than order to Palestine. They provided law as well. Perhaps the mandatory's single most impressive accomplishment was the establishment of an honest and efficient judiciary. Samuel's civil regime had laid down the pattern for the future, and it was not altered significantly by the Order in Council of 1922. The administration of justice was based on twenty magistrate courts, possessing civil and criminal jurisdiction in minor cases. A number of the magistrates were Arabs and Jews. More serious litigation and issues of appeal went before three-judge district courts, and afterward to courts of appeal consisting of between three and five judges. The juridical hierarchy led eventually to a supreme court, functioning as a court of appeals as well as a high court of justice, and comprising six justices—usually two Englishmen, two Moslems, one Christian, and one Jew, presided over by the chief justice. Although the jury system was not introduced into Palestine, the writ of habeas corpus was, and the courts, separated altogether from the executive, operated with efficiency and fairness. Their judges were men of known probity. In nearly all instances, the justice they

dispensed was evenhanded and incorruptible. Indeed, it was applied quite frequently against the mandatory government itself.

The content, no less than the administration, of the law was similarly revolutionized. Virtually the entire Ottoman criminal and commercial code was replaced both by modern legislation and by the English Common Law and Equity. From the early 1920s on, lawyers and judges alike quoted British, Commonwealth, even American law reports, until by the end of the mandate the Common Law had become the dominant legal tradition in Palestine. The exceptions for the most part were those provisions of Ottoman law that dealt with land matters and civil law as codified in the old Turkish Mejlleh, while issues of personal status were left to the religious courts of the various religious communities ([this page](#)). It was essentially in this form that the legal system of Palestine was adopted in 1948–49 by the State of Israel.

The mandatory administration expended much effort and talent, as well, on fostering agriculture, a sector of the economy the Turks had ruinously neglected. The government's agricultural department established research stations for improving cultivation and livestock. With this help, the ravages of cattle plague, locusts, and fruit flies were markedly reduced. Extensive afforestation was carried out. In its first decade the government planted a million trees (the Zionists planted millions of others). Tobacco cultivation was fostered. A modern, efficient procedure was instituted for land registration. Imaginative fiscal reforms were carried out, too, in property assessment and taxation. Customs tariffs were alternately lowered on industrial goods and raised to protect citrus and other agricultural crops. By 1925 Palestine exports—largely citrus—climbed to £1,330,000, a 40 percent increase in five years.

Wide-ranging improvements in communications were accomplished by enlarging the rail network, building roads and bridges, and further modernizing and augmenting postal, telegraph, and telephone services. Air links were established with Europe and the rest of the Middle East. An international airport was constructed at Lydda. Plans were under way to enlarge the harbor at Haifa. Educational reforms also were carried out. Each village was required now to maintain a school building, while the government provided teachers, furniture, and books. By 1929, 30,000 Arab children attended these government schools. The British similarly established clinics and dispensaries in the major Arab population centers.

Unquestionably, there were also shortcomings in the government scheme of administration. The Jews complained that the mandatory had virtually abandoned its legal and moral responsibility to foster the economic growth of the Jewish National Home. For example, the Jewish share of contributions to the public revenues totaled approximately 45 percent by the end of the first decade. Nevertheless, it was the Arabs who benefited most impressively from government expenditures. The departments of agriculture, public health, and education all concentrated heavily on the Arabs. By the same token, the ratio of Jews employed in public works was far smaller than that of the Arabs. The British of course had a rationale for this imbalance. They explained that the Jews were competently providing their own social services, while the illiterate and impoverished Arabs had only the mandatory to supply their needs. This was true. Even

so, the Jews resented the fact that their taxes were not being returned to them in the form of additional government help, and that the major investments in Palestine's economic growth were being supplied not by the government, surely not by the Arabs, but by Jewish public and private capital.

These weaknesses and inequities notwithstanding, it was soon evident that the improvements wrought by Samuel's administration were light-years beyond anything Palestine had ever known. The high commissioner himself completed his term of office in June 1925. In that month the Hebrew University was inaugurated on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem with the visit of distinguished figures from abroad. Allenby came from Egypt. Balfour came from England and was moved to tears by evidence of the progress he saw everywhere around him. Writing his final summary report for Parliament, Samuel could allude not merely to the organization of a civil police force, the gradual pacification of the country, the excellent legal system and public services. He could refer meaningfully, as well, to the spectacular rise of the Jewish population since 1917, from 55,000 to 103,000. Much of this Jewish growth and progress admittedly was the result of Zionist enterprise alone. Yet it benefited in measurable degree from a quality of peace, order, justice, and administrative integrity far superior to that provided by any neighboring government. This record of achievement was to continue under the forthright, soldierly administration of the new high commissioner, Herbert, Viscount Plumer.

THE ROOTS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

If the British accomplished much in Palestine, however, the Jews matched and ultimately surpassed this progress by their own exertions. The fact was well recognized by Churchill, who observed in his White Paper of 1922:

During the last two or three generations the Jews have re-created in Palestine a community, now numbering 80,000, of whom about one-fourth are farmers or workers upon the land. This community has its own political organs; an elected assembly for the direction of its domestic concerns; elected councils in the towns; and an organization for the control of its schools. It has its elected Chief Rabbinate and Rabbinical Council for the direction of its religious affairs. Its business is conducted in Hebrew as a vernacular language, and a Hebrew press serves its needs. It has its distinctive intellectual life and displays considerable economic activity. This community, then, with its town and country population, its political, religious and social organizations, its own language, its own customs, its own life, has, in fact, "national" characteristics.

The religious identity to which Churchill alluded traced back to a period well before British rule. For several centuries it had been the Ottoman tradition to allow Palestine's religious communities virtual self-government in ecclesiastical matters, under the so-called millet system, by which communal autonomy was expressed largely through the jurisdiction of the empire's various religious courts. In this manner, for example, the individual Christian communities administered their own charitable endowments and dealt with questions of personal status—marriage, divorce, inheritance—in accordance

with rules and regulations issued by hierarchical tribunals. So did the Moslems. The personnel of these institutions normally were appointed by the Ottoman government. Upon occupying the Holy Land, the British chose to continue the practice of religious autonomy; although, in the case of the Moslems, appointments to the religious courts were transferred from the mandatory government (as successor to the Turkish regime) to a Supreme Moslem Council, under the presidency of the Mufti of Jerusalem ([Chapter VIII](#)).

The Jews similarly had enjoyed religio-autonomous privileges under the Turks. Their communal leader during those years was the Sephardic chief rabbi, the Chacham Bashi, who in turn appointed the members of the Jewish religious tribunals. As in the case of the Moslems and Christians, the British maintained the practice, but enlarged and systematized it. In February 1921 they authorized the election of a Rabbinical Council by select groups of rabbis and Orthodox Jewish laymen. The Council, in turn, consisted of two chief rabbis, one Sephardic, the other Ashkenazic, together with a number of associate rabbis and lay councillors from each “ethnic” branch of the Jewish community. It was this body that appointed the members of the rabbinical courts, whose jurisdiction over Jewish law included the traditional areas of marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

The mandatory’s recognition of Jewish communal identity extended into a number of secular areas, as well. We have noted that the Yishuv’s prewar attempts to establish an organized Jewish representation largely had foundered ([Chapter IV](#)). Now, with hostilities over and the Turks gone, the effort was renewed. On December 18, 1918, an impressive assembly of Palestine Jews gathered in Jaffa to draft a “constitution” for the National Home. The measures adopted by this group ultimately exerted a powerful influence on future—Jewish—governmental development. For example, it was affirmed that elections should be not only direct, secret, and equal (including women), but also proportional, based on the old Zionist Congress technique of votes for separate party lists. Thereafter, elections for an Asefat HaNivcharim—a National Assembly—took place in April 1920. Some 20,000 persons, more than 70 percent of all registered Jewish voters, participated in the balloting; and afterward, the newly elected National Assembly formally opened in Jerusalem in October 1920. Its 314 members belonged to twenty different parties, and its first order of business subsequently was to elect a Va’ad Le’umi—an executive of thirty-six men and women. Samuel, meanwhile, impressed by this evidence of Zionist communal purpose, offered the National Assembly a certain functional latitude over Jewish religious, cultural, and social welfare activities.

The embryonic Jewish government functioned continually from 1920 on, meeting at least once a year and holding new elections every three to six years. For a long while it did not achieve official mandatory recognition. The delay stemmed partly from the opposition of Orthodox Jews, who resented the equal membership allowed women; and partly from British unwillingness to delegate taxation powers to the Assembly—even within this body’s restricted sphere of competence. But when the Assembly’s representatives submitted a complaint to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, the Plumer administration relented. In July 1927 the government issued an ordinance formally recognizing a single Jewish community, the Knesset Israel, with its

own religious and secular organs. The religious organ, of course, was the Rabbinical Council, and it had been functioning for a number of years. In the secular area, the National Assembly and its Va'ad Le'umi now also were granted official status. More significantly, the Assembly was granted a qualified power of taxation within the Knesset Israel for education, relief of the poor, care of the sick and orphans, and the financial maintenance of the Rabbinical Council and of the Assembly itself. Similar rights of taxation were accorded to any local community encompassing a minimum of thirty Jews. For the Yishuv these measures represented a limited, but potentially important, new avenue to self-government.

Moreover, both Arabs and Jews were granted yet additional jurisdiction over their internal affairs by the Municipal Franchise Ordinance of 1926. It will be recalled that the Arabs earlier had refused to accept the 1922 Order in Council scheme for a legislative council. Such a body, they argued, would neutralize their majority advantage in Palestine. The ordinance of 1926 therefore represented a government compromise at the lower echelon of municipal government. It replaced the nominated local council with elected officials, provided for separate registries of voters (Moslem, Christian, Jewish), and allocated council seats to the various communities in proportion to the voters on their respective registries. It was by no means surprising that these features proved attractive enough to dissipate Arab, as well as Jewish, suspicions. In the largest number of Palestine towns and villages Arabs comprised a majority on the local councils, and this was sufficient inducement for them to participate. The Jews, on the other hand, not only ensured themselves of at least minority representation in the councils (and of course majority representation in Tel Aviv, inhabited by Jews alone), but were protected in "mixed" towns through the restriction of council authority to purely economic, sanitary, and other "neutral" matters that were not affected by religious or cultural differences. Nor were activities relating to Jewish schools, orphanages, and hospitals touched upon; these continued within the jurisdiction of the Knesset Israel. By providing this single, isolated opportunity for Arab-Jewish cooperation in self-government, the Municipalities Ordinance represented one of the happier accomplishments of British tutelage.

Here then, in essence, was the structure of the mandate, of its "constitution" and government. Endowed with the official imprimatur of the Peace Council, of the League of Nations, and of Parliament in London, Britain as the mandatory authority further validated its tenure in Palestine through a succession of imposing ordinances and statutory codes. Its obligation under the mandate to provide a fair and just administration was discharged in letter and spirit by an efficient, honest bureaucracy, by an incomparable legal system, by high commissioners palpably devoted to the physical and economic well-being of Palestine's inhabitants, and by a transparently sincere desire to conciliate the ethnic and religious sensibilities of both the Arab and the Jewish communities. A principal consideration, too, in all the mandatory's activities during its early tenure, and simultaneously animating and inhibiting them, was the legal commitment to foster the growth of the Jewish National Home. Indeed, it was in their determination to fulfill this responsibility—this mandate, in its most literal sense—

that the British proconsuls in the Holy Land (together with the Zionists themselves) achieved some of their most notable-early-successes. What turned out to be a substantially different matter was the endeavor to reconcile the Zionist goal with the national aspirations of Palestine's Arab majority. It was here, with the passage of years, that the mandatory learned that it had embarked on a far more complicated and, in the end, an all but hopeless undertaking.