Zionism (the "National Assembly," as Herzl termed it), thus transforming this previously inchoate movement into an international political organization; secondly, the adoption of the "Basel Program," here quoted in its entirety. To provide for continuity, direction, and political action an executive committee was formed with Herzl as its chairman. For the next six years, until his death in July of 1904, Herzl devoted himself to the goal of persuading the Sultan to grant Palestine to the Zionist organization in order to put his plan into effect, but without success.

The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion, on suitable lines, of the colonization of Palestine by Jewish agricultural and industrial workers.
2. The organization and binding together of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps towards obtaining government consent, where necessary, to the attainment of the aim of Zionism.

Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, 1915-1916

Following the 1908 coup d'état that overthrew the autocratic regime of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid in the Ottoman Empire, the government came into the hands of the Turkish nationalists of the "Committee of Union and Progress," decidedly pro-German. In that year the Sharif Husayn ibn 'Ali, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and considered in Istanbul as pro-Turkish, was appointed the Grand Sharif of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina by the new administration. The second of his three sons, 'Abd Allah, had been elected to a seat in the new Turkish parliament. Prior to the outbreak of the war 'Abd Allah, en route to Mecca, stopped in Cairo in February of 1914 to discuss with the then British Consul, Lord Kitchener,

Source: Great Britain. Parliamentary Papers, Miscellaneous No. 3 (1939). Correspondence Between Sir Henry McMahon, G.C.M.G., G.C.F.O., K.C.I.E., C.S.I., His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo and the Sherif Hussain of Mecca July 1915 - March 1916 (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1939) Cmd. 5957. Reprinted here are two of the letters that were exchanged between the Sharif Husayn ibn 'Ali, the guardian of the two Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina and Sir Henry representing the British Government. The first is dated 14 July 1915 and the second (the fourth letter) is dated 24 October 1916. Each represents the respective views of the Arab nationalists and the British cabinet in regards to Syria-Palestine. Reprinted by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
the possibility of British support for an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Government.

With the outbreak of the war in August of that year, Lord Kitchener was recalled to London and appointed Minister of War and was replaced in Cairo by Sir Henry McMahon as High Commissioner, with Egypt having been proclaimed a protectorate of Great Britain. In November the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. Early in 1915 Lord Kitchener, perhaps recalling his earlier conversation with 'Abd Allah, requested that Sir Henry obtain from the Sharif Husayn the Arab requirements for a revolt in order to open a southern front to occupy Turkish troops so that they could not be deployed in Europe. Meanwhile the Sharif had sent his youngest son, Faysal, to Damascus to assure the Ottoman governor of the family's loyalty to Istanbul. There he met the leaders of the al-Fatat society seeking independence of the Arabs who gave to him the so-called "Damascus Protocol" that came to serve as the basis for the Sharif Husayn's first letter to Sir Henry.

In response to an oral message relayed to him in Mecca by a representative of Sir Henry, the Sharif Husayn sent his first letter to the High Commissioner.

Mecca, Ramadan 2, 1333

[July 14, 1915]

Whereas the entire Arab nation without exception is determined to assert its right to live, gain its freedom and administer its own affairs in name and in fact;

And whereas the Arabs believe it to be in Great Britain's interest to lend them assistance and support in the fulfillment of their steadfast and legitimate aims to the exclusion of all other aims;

And whereas it is similarly to the advantage of the Arabs, in view of their geographical position and their economic interests, and in view of the well-known attitude of the Government of Great Britain, to prefer British assistance to any other;

Husayn-McMahon Correspondence

For these reasons, the Arab nation has decided to approach the Government of Great Britain with a request for the approval, through one of their representatives if they think fit, of the following basic provisions which, as time presses, have not been made to include matters of relatively smaller importance, since such matters can wait until the time comes for their consideration:

1. Great Britain recognises the independence of the Arab countries which are bounded: on the north, by the line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37° N. and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat Jazirat (ibn 'Umar) - Amadia to the Persian frontier; on the east, by the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden whose status will remain as at present); on the west, by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.

2. Great Britain will agree to the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate for Islam.

3. The Sharifian Arab Government undertakes, other things being equal, to grant Great Britain preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries.

4. With a view to ensuring the stability of Arab independence and the efficacy of the promised preference in economic enterprises, the two contracting parties undertake, in the event of any foreign state attacking either of them, to come to each other's assistance with all the resources of their military and naval forces; it being understood that peace will be concluded only when both parties concur.

In the event of one of the two parties embarking upon a war of offence, the other party will adopt an attitude of neutrality, but, if invited to join, will agree to confer with the other party as the conditions of joint action.

5. Great Britain agrees to the abolition of the Capitulations in the Arab countries, and undertakes to assist the Sharifian Government in summoning an international congress to decree their abolition.

6. Clauses 3 and 4 of the present Agreement are to remain in force for a period of fifteen years. Should either party desire an extension, due notice of one year before the expiry of that period will have to be given.

Therefore, since the entire Arab nation is (God be praised!) united in its resolve to pursue its noble aim to the end, at whatever cost, it requests the Government of Great Britain to return an answer, whether negatively or in the affirmative, within thirty days of the receipt of this mes-
sage, in default of which it reserves its right to complete freedom of action, just as we will consider ourselves absolved from the letter and the spirit of the declaration which we made earlier through 'Ali Efendi.

In his response, dated 30th August, Sir Henry reiterated Great Britain's desire for Arab independence and the establishment of an Arab caliphate. However, he stated that the question regarding the frontiers of the proposed Arab state was premature and "a waste of time." On this Husayn was adamant. Therefore, on 24 October, McMahon wrote:

Cairo, October 24, 1915

I have, with gratification and pleasure, received your note of the 29th Shawwal, 1333 [9 September 1915], and its tokens of sincere friendship have filled me with satisfaction and contentment.

I regret to find that you inferred from my last note that my attitude towards the question of frontiers and boundaries was one of hesitancy and lukewarmth. Such was in no wise the intention of my note. All I meant was that I considered that the time had not yet come in which that question could be discussed in a conclusive manner.

But, having realized from your last note that you considered the question important, vital and urgent, I hastened to communicate to the Government of Great Britain the purport of your note. It gives me the greatest pleasure to convey to you, on their behalf, the following declarations which, I have not doubt, you will receive with satisfaction and acceptance.

The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.

Subject to that modification, and without prejudice to the treaties concluded between us and certain Arab Chiefs, we accept that delimitation.

As for the regions lying within the proposed frontiers, in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France, I am authorised to give you the following pledges on behalf of the Government of Great Britain, and to reply as follows to your note:

(1) That, subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca;

(2) That Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression, and will recognise the obligation of preserving them from aggression;

(3) That, when circumstances permit, Great Britain will help the Arabs with her advice and assist them in the establishment of governments to suit those diverse regions;

(4) That it is understood that the Arabs have already decided to seek the counsels and advice of Great Britain exclusively; and that such European advisers and officials as may be needed to establish a sound system of administration shall be British;

(5) That, as regards the two vilayets of Baghdad and Basra, the Arabs recognize that the fact of Great Britain's established position and interests there will call for the setting up of special administrative arrangements to protect those regions from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of their inhabitants, and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.

I am confident that this declaration will convince you, beyond all doubt, of Great Britain's sympathy with the aspirations of her friends the Arabs; and that it will result in a lasting and solid alliance with them, of which one of the immediate consequences will be the expulsion of the Turks from the Arab countries and the liberation of the Arab peoples from the Turkish yoke which has weighed on them all these long years.

I have confined myself in this note to vital questions of primary importance. If there are any other matters in your notes, which have been overlooked, we can revert to them at some suitable time in the future.

I have heard with great satisfaction and pleasure that the Sacred Kiswa and the charitable gifts which had gone with it, had arrived safely and that, thanks to your wise directions and arrangements, they were landed without trouble or damage in spite of the risks and difficulties created by the present deplorable war. We pray to Almighty God that He may bring a lasting peace and freedom to mankind.

I am sending this note with your faithful messenger, Shaikh Muhammad ibn 'Aref ibn 'Uraifan, who will lay before you certain interesting matters which, as they are of secondary importance, I have abstained from mentioning in
On the basis of Sir Henry's pledge to assist in the establishment of Arab independence following the victory of the allies, Husayn declared war against the Ottomans on 5 June 1916.
to bring the Arabs in on the side of the Entente. However, it was not until 21 October 1915 that the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Gray, informed the French Government, through its ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, of this action and of Husayn's own demands, suggesting that they should meet to discuss their mutual interests in the Middle East. Cambon thereupon requested Charles-Georges Picot, one of his political advisors, to represent France. Sir Arthur Nicolson, the permanent undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, was selected to negotiate for his government. On 23 November Picot and Nicolson began their discussions, but after only two days the two had reached an impasse. Nicolson was thereafter replaced by Sir Mark Sykes, Middle East advisor in the War Office and regarded as a friend of the Arabs. The two initiated a basic agreement on 3 January 1916. Following the approval of the draft by both the French and British Governments in early February, Sykes and Picot traveled to Moscow to present it to the Tsarist government for approval. The Russian foreign minister agreed to the division of the Fertile Crescent in return for support of Russian annexation of the northern Turkish regions of Erzeroum, Trebizond, Van, Bitlis, and Kurdistan. The resultant agreement established in a series of letters exchanged between the three parties between 26 April and 23 October 1916. The terms of the arrangement for the division of the Arab lands between Britain and France are contained in a letter from Sir Edward Gray to Ambassador Cambon dated 16 May 1916, and for the proposed cessation of Turkish territories to Russia in a letter from Sir Edward to Count Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador to the Court of St. James, dated 23 May. Both Italy and Japan were informed of these agreements, but, of course, not the Arabs. Writing later, David Lloyd George, the leader of the second War Cabinet, wrote, "It was a foolish document." and quoted Lord Curzon as stating, "When the Sykes-Picot Agreement was drawn up it was, no doubt, intended by its authors ... as a sort of fancy sketch to suit a situation that had not then arisen, and which it was thought extremely unlikely would ever arise; that I suppose must be the principal explanation of the gross ignorance with which the boundary lines in that agreement were drawn."1

It is accordingly understood between the French and the British Governments—

1. That France and Great Britain are prepared to recognize and protect an independent Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States in the areas (A) and (B) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall have priority of right of enterprise and local loans. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall alone supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

2. That in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.

3. That in the brown area [Palestine] there shall be established an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies, and the representatives of the Sheik of Mecca.

4. That Great Britain be accorded (1) the ports of Haifa and Acre, (2) guarantee of a given supply of water from the Tigris and Euphrates in area (A) for area (B). His Majesty's Government, on their part, undertake that they will at no time enter into negotiations for the cession of Cyprus to any third Power without the previous consent of the French Government.

5. That Alexandretta shall be a free port as regards the trade of the British Empire, and there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards British ship-

ping and goods; that there shall be freedom of transit for British goods through Alexandretta and by railway through the blue area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the red area, or (B), or area (A); and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against British goods on any railway or against British goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

That Haifa shall be a free port as regards the trade of France, her dominions and protectorates, and there shall be no discrimination in port charges or facilities as regards French shipping and French goods. There shall be freedom of transit for French goods through Haifa and by the British railway through the brown area, whether those goods are intended for or originate in the blue area, area (A) and area (B), and there shall be no discrimination, direct or indirect, against French goods on any railway, or against French goods or ships at any port serving the areas mentioned.

6. That in area (A) the Baghdad Railway shall not be extended southwards beyond Mosul, and in area (B), northwards beyond Samarra, until a railway connecting Baghdad with Aleppo via the Euphrates Valley has been completed, and then only with the concurrence of the two Governments.

7. That Great Britain has the right to build, administer, and be sole owner of a railway connecting Haifa with area (B), and shall have a perpetual right to transport troops along such a line at all times.

It is to be understood by both Governments that this railway is to facilitate the connexion of Baghdad with Haifa by rail, and it is further understood that, if the engineering difficulties and expense entailed by keeping this connecting line in the brown area only make the project unfeasible, that the French Government shall be prepared to consider that the line in question may also traverse the polygon Banias-Keis Marib-Salkh Kad Tell Qds-Des-Mesmie before reaching area (B).

8. For a period of twenty years the existing Turkish customs tariff shall remain in force throughout the whole of the blue and red areas, as well as in areas (A) and (B), and no increase in the rates of duties or conversion from ad valorem to specific rates shall be made except by agreement between the two powers.

There shall be no interior customs barriers between any of the above mentioned areas. The customs duties leviable on goods destined for the interior shall be collected at the port of entry and handed over to the administration of the area of destination.

9. It shall be agreed that the French Government will at no time enter into any negotiations for the cession of their rights and will not cede such rights in the blue area to any third Power, except the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States, without the previous agreement of His Majesty's Government, who, on their part, will give a similar undertaking to the French Government regarding the red area.

10. The British and French Governments, as the protectors of the Arab State, shall agree that they themselves acquire and will not consent to a third Power acquiring territorial possessions in the Arabian peninsula, nor consent to a third Power installing a naval base either on the east coast, or on the islands, of the Red Sea. This, however, shall not prevent such adjustment of the Aden frontier as may be necessary in consequence of the recent Turkish aggression.

11. The negotiations with the Arabs as to the boundaries of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States shall be continued through the same channel as heretofore on behalf of the two Powers.2

12. It is agreed that measures to control the importation of arms into the Arab territories will be considered by the two Governments.

I have the honour to state that, in order to make the agreement complete, His Majesty's Government are proposing to the Russian Government to exchange notes analogous to those exchanged by the latter and your Excellency's Government on the 26th April last. Copies of these notes will be communicated to your Excellency as soon as exchanged...

Shortly after the successful revolution in November of 1917 the new Bolshevik government of Russia published all of the secret agreements and treaties discovered in the archives of the former Imperial Foreign Ministry, including the "Sykes-Picot Agreement." This was almost at once brought to the attention of the Sharif Husayn and other leaders of the Arab national movement, who, to say the least, were quite angry at the duplicity of Great Britain. It would have appeared that the Agree-

2 i.e., continuation of the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence.
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ment was no longer valid since the Bolshevik government renounced it; the French, however, considered the Agreement still valid for it was the basis for France’s claim to Syrian territory. Even prior to this action the British Cabinet in the Spring of 1917 had begun to reconsider portions of the Agreement, particularly regarding Palestine. In April the “Sub-committee on Territorial Desiderata”, led by Lord Curzon, in its recommendations to the Cabinet stated: “It is of great importance that both Palestine and Mesopotamia should be under British control. To ensure this it is desirable that His Majesty’s Government should secure such modification of the Agreement with France of May 1916 as would give Great Britain definite and exclusive control over Palestine.”

This, and the question of Mosul, became the bases for Britain’s willingness to keep the Agreement alive. In December 1918 Georges Clemenceau, the French premier, arrived in London for conversations with Prime Minister Lloyd George. In his memoirs Lloyd George provides an account of the verbal agreement reached by the two leaders:

When Clemenceau came to London after the War I drove with him to the French Embassy through cheering crowds who acclaimed him with enthusiasm. After we reached the Embassy he asked me what it was I specially 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. Although that agreement was not reduced to writing, he adhered to it honourably in subsequent negotiations.


Balfour Declaration, 1917

This vague and apparently innocuous statement of policy issued by the British Cabinet and sent by the Foreign Secretary to a private citizen, Baron Lionel Rothschild, came to be one of the most important and far-reaching documents in the entire history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It served as both the basis for large-scale Jewish immigration into Palestine under the auspices of Great Britain, leading in 1948 to the foundation of the State of Israel, and as the pretext by which Britain could obtain control over this strategic area, because the text of the letter was included within the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine.

The immediate background to the issuance of the Declaration is very complex so that all that can be included here is a brief summary of its history.

One of the leading personae behind the Declaration was Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a brilliant Russian Jewish chemist and an outspoken advocate of Zionism, later to become the first President of the State of Israel. He emigrated first from his homeland to Switzerland, and from there to England in 1904, where he settled in Manchester, then the center of his particu-

lar specialization. As he later wrote in his autobiography, his move to England was predicated upon the belief that there he would find the greatest sympathy for Zionism. As with Herzl, Weizmann was a firm advocate in the necessity for the Zionists to gain Palestine by legal means rather than through infiltration as proposed by many other Russian Zionists. This necessitated obtaining the support of the leading British politicians, whose cooperation was achieved because of their own devout Christian upbringings and imperialist ideals. In 1906 he gained his first convert, Arthur James Balfour, a former Unionist Prime Minister and later Foreign Secretary in the Second War Cabinet. Eight years later he was introduced to the Minister of Munitions, and soon to be Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. These two were not alone in their support of the Zionist dream, but they were shortly to be of inestimable value. A third supporter of great influence was Sir Mark Sykes, one of the authors of the "Sykes-Picot Agreement," who, when they met in 1916, was Principal Secretary of the War [inner] Cabinet. Sir Mark was especially esteemed by the others because of his supposed "special knowledge" of the Middle East gained from a year's travel there prior to the war.

Between the outbreak of the war in 1914 and the end of 1916, Weizmann and his allies prepared public opinion for the acceptance of Zionism through the newspapers, particularly the highly respected Manchester Guardian and The Times, and pamphlets. Finally, in January 1917, Weizmann, now President of the English Zionist Federation, and others of the executive committee, gave Sir Mark a document titled "Outline of Program for the Jewish Resettlement of Palestine in Accordance with the Aspirations of the Zionist Movement," which Sir Mark, in turn, could submit to the new cabinet under the premiership of Lloyd George. The time was most propitious.

By 1917 the allies were in desperate condition in their conflict with the Central

Powers: the loss of men at the fronts had been horrendous; the financial conditions of Britain and France were precarious, requiring new influx of capital from the United States; vast amounts of food and war materials were being lost to German U-boats; Russian losses had been so great that there was fear that she might come to separate terms, thereby freeing German troops to be moved to the western front and also depriving the allies of foodstuffs from the Ukraine. The cabinet believed that if the government came out in official support of Zionist immigration and settlement in Palestine, the Jews of the world, and particularly those in the United States and Russia, would, in return, place political pressure upon their respective governments for even greater support of the war effort. Later, in his memoirs, Lloyd George wrote: "The Zionist leaders gave us a definite promise that, if the Allies committed themselves to giving facilities for the establishment of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine, they would do their best to rally to the Allied cause Jewish sentiment and support throughout the world. They kept their word in the letter and the spirit...."¹ There was, furthermore, a fear that Germany might come out in support of the Zionists to increase Jewish support for the Central Powers.

Although most of the members of the cabinet were in favor of such a declaration there was opposition, led by the Jewish Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu. Throughout most of the year the three interest groups, the Zionists, the Jewish anti-Zionists, and the government agonized over the precise wording of the statement through six successive drafts. Finally, following approval by the leaders of the American and French governments, on 31 October, the cabinet approved the final text.

¹ Memoires of the Peace Conference, II, 737.
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Foreign Office,
November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government 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, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

[Signed]

Arthur James Balfour