

The Ruling Measures and Influence of Herbert Samuel during His Tenure as High Commissioner

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Abstract

Herbert Samuel, a British Jewish official, was concerned about Palestine affairs. He submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet at the beginning of the First World War, hoping that Britain could control Palestine. After the San Remo Conference, Britain started to mandate Palestine, and Samuel was appointed as the First High Commissioner for Palestine. During his tenure, he relaxed Jewish immigration standards, protected Jewish laborers, opened up land sales and weakened Arab nationalist movements. It promoted the development of a Jewish National Home, intensified the contradictions among Arab, Jewish and British, and laid the foundation for the ultimate failure of British mandate in Palestine.

Keywords

Herbert Samuel; Palestine; Ruling measures; Influence.

1. Introduction

Palestine, located in the core of the Middle East, is the strategic hub for Britain to protect Suez Canal and Indian shipping routes. Due to the existence of Ottoman Empire, it is difficult for Britain to intervene in Palestine affairs. The outbreak of the First World War gave Britain an excuse, and Samuel took the opportunity to take part in the affairs there. This article will sort out the reasons for Samuel's appointment as High Commissioner, and analyze the main ruling measures and influence during his five-year term.

2. Background

On November 9, 1914, Herbert Henry Asquith delivered a speech on dividing the Ottoman Empire in London City Hall, in which he mentioned Palestine, which attracted Samuel's attention. On that day, he held talks with Edward Grey. Samuel stated that he is not a Zionist, but the Ottoman Empire will collapse, Britain must control Palestine, and help Jews rebuild a Jewish state can take the initiative. Gray was attracted by this view and agreed with it. Then Samuel discussed this topic with Lloyd George, George also praised it.[1]

Introduced by the editor of Manchester Guardian, Samuel met Chaim Weizmann, a leader of Zionist organization. In the meeting, Samuel said that they should do great things in Palestine and build railways, ports and schools by Jews.[2] Weizman was surprised by Samuel's attitude. After the meeting, he sent a telegram to his wife, "The Messianic times have really come. It turns out that he knows a great deal about Zionism." [3] Since then, Samuel has further discussions with others and decided to submit his ideas to the Cabinet.

In January 1915, Samuel submitted a memorandum named The Future of Palestine to the Cabinet. He mentioned that the time is not yet ripe to establish an independent and autonomous Jewish state in Palestine, and turning it into a dependency of Britain will be welcomed by

Zionists. In addition, Samuel also put forward several assumptions about the future of Palestine, and Samuel believed that the best solution was "Under British rule facilities would be given to Jewish organizations to purchase land, to found colonies, to establish educational and religious institutions, and to spend usefully the funds that would be freely contributed for promoting the economic development of the country." [4] This memorandum was not paid attention by Asquith and Gray. Lloyd George agreed after reading it. On February 5th, he asked Gray for advice. Gray expressed his concern, "There may be possible questions with the French, but it is well worth considering as a possibility." [5] On March 11th, Samuel submitted a new memorandum to the Cabinet. He revised the number of Jews, and stopped mentioning Britain's annexation of Palestine, but made Britain its protectorate. [6] The new memorandum still has not received feedback, because at this time, Britain thought that the best way to deal with Germany was to confront directly from Western Europe. Samuel's proposal went against the mainstream strategy, so it was ignored.

However, the war is getting tighter. In December 1916, Asquith resigned and Lloyd George came to power, he was ready to change the policies. Zionists seized the opportunity to lobby the British Government and made some achievements, which caused the anxiety of Edwin Montagu, Samuel's cousin and India Secretary. Because the Zionist was pro-German before, and they were hostile to these "religious fanatics", Montagu submitted two memorandums to the Cabinet. He questioned the feasibility of Palestine Jews building a country, and thought that such actions would cause dissatisfaction in France. [7] However, the Cabinet held a meeting on October 17, in order to ask for advice on whether to support the Zionist. At the meeting, Samuel expressed his approval opinion, "If the policy were carried into effect through British influence, it would be calculated to win for the British Empire the gratitude of Jews throughout the world." [8]. On October 31, the Cabinet held a meeting to authorize Arthur Balfour to send a letter to Lord Rothschild, expressing that Britain is in favor of Jews establishing a "national home" in Palestine, which is Balfour Declaration. Samuel's efforts not only promoted the promulgation of the Declaration, but also made him a key figure in the Zionist Movement, paving the way for him to become the High Commissioner.

In December 1917, the British army captured Jerusalem and established a Military Administration there. It seems that the dream of Zionism is getting closer and closer. In order to express their gratitude to the British Government, the Zionists organized a grand celebration party at London Opera House. Samuel attended the party and delivered an inspiring speech. In his speech, he said, "That is why we meet today to thank the British Government, our own Government, that has made all this possible, that we shall be able to say, not as a pious and distant wish but as a near and confident hope." [9] This speech surprised participants with Samuel's enthusiasm and vitality, and Samuel became famous in Zionist organizations.

At this time, Palestine is in an embarrassing situation, the Military Administration treats each side equally, no preferential treatment was given to Jews because of the promulgation of the Declaration. A British Jewish officer wrote home, "The after-war politics of Palestine are very obscure and there are many problems that will require very delicate handling, I believe the British Government is aware of this, but they have to hold the balance very evenly so as not to offend Muslim opinion which would endanger the whole Empire, or Jewish opinion either which would raise difficulties throughout the World..." [10]

In early 1920, Samuel was asked by the Foreign Office to visit Palestine. After the journey, he replied to Foreign Office, pointing out that the main responsibility for the tension in Palestine lies with the Military Administration itself, "The attitude of the administrative authorities in Palestine does not appear to be fully in harmony with that of His Majesty's Government. It is now a year and a half since Mr. Balfour's Declaration was made. No public pronouncement on the subject of Palestine has yet been issued, and from the reports which reach us from various quarters, it would seem that the British Administrators in Palestine do not always conduct their

relations with the Arabs on the basis that the declaration of November 2nd 1917 embodies the settled lines of policy." [11] This reply clearly expressed Samuel's doubts about the rationality of Military Administration management methods. Samuel advocated vigorously developing the economy to solve the conflict between Arab and Jewish. In his letter to George Curzon, he said that although the region is backward, there is room to accommodate more people. As long as the economy develops, all residents will benefit, and the anti-Semitism fear based on misunderstanding of Jews will disappear. [12]

When Samuel left Palestine, riots broke out in Jerusalem, there were casualties in Arabs and Jews. The Military Administration's tough way of handling the riots aroused deeper dissatisfaction, and its management was on the verge of collapse. After San Remo Conference, Palestine was placed under British mandate and made Britain assume the obligations of the Declaration, Samuel was summoned to San Remo urgently. On April 24th, Lloyd George met with Samuel and wanted to invite him to be the High Commissioner. Samuel immediately replied, "I am deeply interested in Zionism idea and would be willing to make any sacrifices to promote its success." [13]

The news that Samuel will be appointed as High Commissioner is like a bombshell. After he returned to London in May, he was called to Foreign Office, where Curzon showed him a telegram from Allenby which asserted, "As regards effect on native population I think that appointment of a Jew as first Governor will be highly dangerous. They will regard appointment of a Jew, even if he is a British Jew." [14] Curzon suggested Samuel reconsider, then Samuel visited Lloyd George, and the Prime Minister suggested that Samuel should not be intimidated by warnings. Samuel officially accepted his post on June 14th, "It is a high task to aid in the upbuilding of the Holy Land, I accept it gratitude." [15] In this way, Samuel became the first Palestine High Commissioner, and took office on July 1 for a five-year term.

3. The Main Ruling Measures and Thier Infulence

3.1. Open Jewish Immigration Standards

During the First World War, Jews were in a miserable situation, most of them were expelled or forced to emigrate. As of the establishment of the Military Administration, there were about 56,000 Jewish settlers in Palestine. During the Military Administration, it was very difficult for Jewish immigrants to enter Palestine.

The Civil Administration headed by Samuel promulgated the new Immigration Ordinance on September 1, 1920. The standards are very loose. As long as they are healthy and can make a living, immigrants who do not pose a political threat or criminal danger to society are allowed. In Jaffa, the main port for immigration, N. I. Mindel was chosen as the Immigration Office, Dennis Cohen was appointed in Jerusalem and Albert Hyamson became assistant director of the immigration department. They are many Jewish sympathizers became immigration offices. [16] In the next three months, nearly 6,000 Jewish immigrants entered Palestine. [17] Due to the influx of Jewish immigrants, in May 1921, a large-scale armed conflict broke out in Jaffa. Captain Brunton of General Staff Intelligence reported the incident in detail in a secret report. According to the report, more than 90 people were killed and more than 200 people were injured in the fierce confrontation, and the shelter of Jewish immigrants in Jaffa was also attacked and seriously damaged. [18]

Samuel had to announce the suspension of Jewish immigration to ease the situation, but the policy adjusted quickly, the White Paper published in 1922 allowed Jewish immigration to recover. In the White Paper, Samuel took the lead in customizing the standard of economic absorptive capacity, accepting Jewish immigrants according to the standard line, so that only families with assets of more than 500 pounds can immigrate into Palestine. Because of the policy of Władysław Grabski, and the major countries like Britain and America had closed the

door to Jewish immigration, so many Polish Jews chose to immigrate to Palestine in order to make a living. According to the examination, each family from Poland owns more than 600 pounds on average. Hyamson even proposed to raise the entry threshold from 500 pounds to 1,000 pounds to cope with the influx of wealthy Polish Jewish immigrants. [19] These wealthy middle-class Jewish immigrants stimulated the economic development of Palestine.

During Samuel's tenure, he experienced the third Aliyah (1919-1923) and the fourth Aliyah (1924-1931). The Jewish population doubled from 60,000 to more than 120,000, while the Arab population decreased from 89.9% to 83.5%. [20] Samuel's ruling measures and new immigration ordinance opened the door to the peak of Jewish immigration in recent years.

Table 1. Jewish immigration into Palestine 1919-1928

Year	Number of immigrants	Authorities
1919	806	Military Administration
First half of 1920	1647	Civil Administration First High Commissioner Herbert Samuel
Second half of 1920	6576	
1921	8294	
1922	8685	
1923	8093	
1924	12905	
First half of 1925	15223	
Second half of 1925	17912	Second High Commissioner Herbert Plumer
1926	13244	
1927	2320	
1928	784	

*Based on Palestine Immigration Policy under Sir Herbert Samuel: British, Zionist and Arab Attitudes. p.170.

3.2. Protecting Jewish laborers

Jewish laborers were the main Jewish immigrants at first. According to Dr. Arthur Ruppin, who is in charge of Jewish immigrants, only 10,000 Jewish laborers can successfully integrate into the Palestine economic life in the first year of the founding of the Civil Administration. However, for political reasons, Zionist organizations mentioned this number to 17,000 and reported it to the Civil Administration. Finally, 16,500 Jewish laborers were allowed to enter. [21] In fact, only a small number of Jewish laborers can find jobs, most of them still need to rely on Zionist organization, but it is difficult for Zionist organization to prepare enough funds. Samuel chose to believe in their ability to collect funds, and did not stop immigration. Instead, he insisted that the current labor force was far from enough. In November, 1920, he wrote to Weizmann to say that "it would be a mistake to attempt to limit the number of Jewish immigrants in the near future to so small a figure as 1,000. There will be a very considerable demand for labor here." [22]

In addition to increasing the number of Jewish laborers, Samuel is still trying his best to ensure the employment of Jewish laborers. From 1922 to 1923, the Palestine economy declined, and many public projects providing jobs for labor migrants were completed in the previous two years. The newly started projects were quite limited, and the unemployment rate was as high as 12-13%. [23] In this situation, some Jewish laborers were arranged to build railways for military departments to ensure employment. However, the military department informed the Civil Administration that it planned to replace Jewish laborers with Egyptian laborers unless it could reduce costs. The daily salary of Jewish laborers is 16-20 piasters, while that of Egyptian

laborers is 10-12 piasters. The Palestine railway company also said that Jewish laborers cannot do heavy work. The output of Arab laborers and Jewish laborers employed by their company is about 5: 2. After conversion, the value of Arab laborers is more than three times that of Jewish laborers. [24] But Samuel refused to replace Jewish laborers on a large scale. In his view, the principle of providing employment for Jewish laborers is more important than the cost.

During Samuel's tenure, Jewish labor economy gradually became self-contained. On December 12, 1920, the Histadrut was established in Haifa, which marked the gradual integration of Jewish labor economy. The Histadrut not only provides employment services for Jewish immigrants, but also protects Jewish laborers. Most Palestine Jewish laborers have joined the Histadrut. At the beginning of its establishment, it had 4,400 members, which grew to 8,394 two years later. Five years later, it provided services for nearly 25,000 workers, accounting for 75% of the entire Palestine Jewish laborers. [25] Samuel's protective measures are indispensable to the rapid development of the Histadrut.

The Arab and Jewish economies are basically isolated, and the gap between the rich and the poor in Arab and Jewish is widening. An official of the Civil Administration pointed out, "Instead of the mud huts (I can hardly call them houses) of the Arab villages you see the white or grey stone (Jewish) cottage with cherry red roofs." [26] Under the unemployment crisis, some Jewish laborers also lost their jobs, and their relationship with government employers became increasingly tense. Arab laborers were even more dissatisfied with Samuel's labor protection policy, which made the tripartite contradiction gradually expand.

3.3. Open Land Transactions

During the Military Administration, land transfer was forbidden. After Samuel took office, the Civil Administration issued a land transfer ordinance and reopened the land registration office. The Jews buy land by the Jewish National Fund and the Palestine Land Development Company. They negotiated with the landlords. When many landlords living in Beirut or Damascus want to inspect their real estate in Palestine, they must apply for a passport from France and then apply for a visa from Britain, which is very cumbersome. In the face of the high bid from Jewish organizations, landlords are willing to sell their real estate. In 1921, the PLDC acquired 63,634 dunums of land in a single transaction. The purchase price was 226,040 pounds, with an average price of 3.55 pounds per dunum, far lower than the market price of 7.4-15 pounds. [27] In 1923, the amount of land acquired increased obviously, and the report submitted by the JNF to the Zionist Congress stated that "Our principal goal is to return our nation to working the land", so the cost was not always the central factor. [28] Most of the land purchased by Jews is in some fertile areas of coastal plains and valleys.

According to statistics, from 1920 to 1923, Jews purchased more than 148,000 dunums of land in Palestine. Tel Aviv, a typical Jewish city, developed rapidly. The entry of a large number of middle-class Jewish immigrants not only promoted the construction industry, but also the corresponding small workshops and handicraft factories appeared everywhere. According to Meir Dizengoff, 80% of Jewish immigrants chose to settle in cities and towns in 1923. Israeli economic historian Dan Diladi estimated that the population of Tel Aviv increased from 21,000 to 40,000 between 1924 and the end of 1925. [29]

The continuous acquisition of land, especially the low-priced purchase of Arab land, will bring about a new round of conflicts, because most Palestine Arabs are farmers, the policy will inevitably affect their lives. In the early morning of November 28, 1924, near Afuleh village, Arab indigenous farmers had a dispute with a group of Jews who had newly acquired land. One Arab was hit, about eight Jews and two Arabs were slightly injured. Police and doctors from Nazareth rushed to the scene to investigate immediately after the incident, only to find out who opened the revolver and who had hidden weapons. [30] This case is only a microcosm, and the authorities have not solved the problem of land sales. By 1924, there were 71 Jewish

agricultural immigrant villages in Palestine, of which 20 were newly built after the First World War. [31] Both Zionist organizations and Britain have publicly insisted that the establishment of a Jewish National Home does not mean that the interests of Arabs will be harmed. However, it has become obvious in reality that the status quo of large-scale Jewish land purchase and settlement poses a serious threat to Arab farmers.

3.4. Split Arab forces

In the Palestine Arab world, apart from the contradictions between the landlords and the lower class, there are also contradictions among the elite families. Britain takes advantage of contradictions and deliberately creates discord among elite families. After the riots in Jerusalem in April 1920, Musa Kazim al-Husseini, then mayor of Jerusalem, disobeyed the advice of British officials and declared himself a leader and spokesman against the British mandate. Ronald Storrs tried this "unruly man" in absentia, dismissed him from the post of mayor of Jerusalem, and intended to give the post of mayor to another elite family. [32] Therefore, Raghib al-Nashashibi became the mayor of Jerusalem, which is equivalent to adding a wedge to the gap that the two families cannot close for a long time. Less than a year later, the former Mufti in Jerusalem died, and Samuel appointed Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the half-brother of former mayor Musa al-Husseini. This position was completely controlled by Samuel. At that time, Amin al-Husseini was still young and lacked prestige. Shaikh Hisam al-Din Jarallah won the most votes in Mufti's election, and Amin al-Husseini did not even enter the top three. [33] Soon after, Amin al-Husseini served as the chairman of the Supreme Muslim Council under Samuel's arrangement. In this way, the two important positions were held in the hands of two competing and even hostile families. Amin al-Husseini's appointment as Mufti also caused dissatisfaction among many other Arab families, and factional struggles made the British and Zionist organizations profit from it.

In addition to the discord between Arab elite families, there are also discord within Arab families. Frederick Kisch, an official of the Civil Administration, received an anonymous call to ask him to meet privately, and later found out that he was the nephew of the former Mufti, Taher al-Husseini. He expressed his hope to Kisch that the Zionists and the British could help him launch a coup. He wanted to depose and exile the current Mufti and take his own position. Kisch said in his report to Samuel that Taher was credible. [34]

Samuel observed the centrifugal force in Arab from the above events, and he was ready to take advantage of these contradictions. At the end of 1922, he put forward the idea of establishing a moderate political party within Arab. He wrote to Victor Cavendish in December, saying that some Arabs have different views from the mainstream Arab. Although there are not many people, there are local leaders with high prestige. They admit that Palestine is not yet self-governing, welcome the British mandate, and believe that with the help of Britain, this country can finally achieve self-governance. [35] Samuel used the conditions such as ensuring that the "cooperators" could hold positions in the government to persuade and successfully win over some Arabs, and the National Muslim Association began to appear. Attempts to weaken the influence of the Arab nationalist organization Muslim-Christian Associations and the Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Congress. Both sides began to fight each other in the media. The Executive Committee warned the Palestines to be vigilant and called the National Muslim Association a "traitor". The latter said that their purpose was to break the country out of a miserable state, and emphasizing the cooperation with the Civil Administration. [36] In fact, ordinary people do not care about the upper-level political struggle, and the emergence of the National Muslim Association cannot shake the status of the Executive Committee and Muslim-Christian Association. But there is no doubt that such a long struggle has split the Arab nationalist movement.

4. Conclusion

According to Samuel's experience before he took office as High Commissioner, although he was not a Zionist, he paid close attention to Palestine affairs and had frequent exchanges with Zionist organizations. He was one of the earliest cabinet members who attached importance to the Palestine affairs and actively operated this matter. When Samuel was in office, Hebrew University opened, the number of Jewish immigrants reached a new high, and the development of a Jewish National Home flourished. Let Jews become the richest and most dynamic community in the Middle East in the following decades. In 1937, when the Royal Peir Commission investigated the Palestinian situation, it said that the main performance of a Jewish National Home had been established before 1925, and in the following ten years, it was only the old situation intensified and no new factors had emerged. Undoubtedly, when Samuel left office, the foundation of a Jewish National Home had been firmly laid, which made a good start for the founding of Israel.

The development of a Jewish National Home is bound to arouse that dissatisfaction of indigenous Arab. Ordinary Arab people are resistant to Jews' purchase of land and occupation of employment resources. Attacking Jews and destroying Jewish industries have become their most direct way of venting. Arab nationalists believe that they are the core force to help Britain defeat the Ottoman Empire, not the efforts of Jews. They protest against the unfair treatment they have received, so they are increasingly resisting cooperation with Britain. Samuel is even more powerless to change the situation, because it is difficult for him to objectively and fairly handle the contradictions between Arabs and Jews on behalf of British officials. As a result, it is hard for Britain to realize the requirements of mandate of the League of Nations, that is, the idea of establishing an autonomous institution with the participation of both Arab and Jewish communities has become increasingly unrealistic. At this time, the failure of Britain's mandate in Palestine began to take shape, and deteriorated in the remaining 23 years, eventually failing, so it had to withdraw in a hurry and hand over the problem to the United Nations and the United States.

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