

## Balfore Declaration of 1917

### Why in news?

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- Zionist movement under 'Theodor Herzl' was moulded into a demand for a Jewish homeland.
- This demand took concrete shape under the leadership of 'Chaim Weizmann' and finally culminated in the creation of Israel.
- It is now 100 years since the Balfour declaration of 1917, a milestone event in the Jewish movement for self-determination.

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### How was the movement steered?

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- The ruthless pogroms carried out by 'Czarist Russia' against the Jews caused a large exodus.
- The Jewish refugees who had to be settled somewhere, sought to make a country for themselves.
- **Uganda Offer** - Britain offered unrestricted immigration permits for Jewish people in Uganda (Which was under British rule).
- While 'Herzl' endorsed the offer as an interim solution, it received a mixed response from the Jewish masses.
- The opposition was because many Jews wanted to make Palestine home, due to their historic and religious connection with it.
- Following Herzl's death, Jewish polity was driven by a young professor named 'Chaim Weizmann' who was a Russian Jew.
- **Palestine Demand** - He single-mindedly steered the movement towards

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making Palestine a home for Jews.

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- The eventual creation of a Jewish Palestine (Israel) saw Weizmann becoming its first president in the late 1940s.

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## How did the Jewish lobby during WW-1?

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- Weizmann saw the peace conference that would follow the Great War (1<sup>st</sup> World War) as best opportunity to push forth his agenda.

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- A memo of demands was to be drafted and Weizmann lobbied hard to mobilise the support of powerful Jewish men worldwide.

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- The most significant of them was **Lord Rothschild** who wielded enormous influence in the British government.

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- Subsequently, the Zionist leaders drafted a 'declaration a demands' in mid-1917, after fierce negotiations between extreme views.

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- British Foreign Secretary '**Arthur Balfour**' was courted to move a Zionist statement in the cabinet.

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- The statement sought political support for Weizmann's initiative.

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## What were the dissents?

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- Edwin Montagu, a Jewish member of the cabinet, opposed the whole concept (Also, famous for the Montagu-Chelmsfort reforms).

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- He called for the complete rejection of the Zionist statement, arguing that it would promote anti-semitism worldwide.

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- He felt that, declaring Palestine a Jewish homeland would morally deprive people like him of citizenship elsewhere.

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- While Weizmann galvanised Jews across Britain and US, Montagu started an

anti-Zionist propaganda but was largely isolated.

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### **What was the contents of the Balfore Declaration?**

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- In late 1917, the Britain cabinet finally declared complete support for the Zionist demands and promised help for the same.

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- It added that the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine shall be protected.

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- It also vouched for protecting the rights of the Jewish people and the political status enjoyed by them in any other country.

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- This came to be known as Balfore Declaration.

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**Source: The Hindu**

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