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.
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- This demand took concrete shape under the leadership of ‘Chaim Weizmann’ and finally culminated in the creation of Israel.
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- 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.
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- The Jewish refugees who had to be settled somewhere, sought to make a country for themselves.
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- **Uganda Offer -** Britain offered unrestricted immigration permits for Jewish people in Uganda (Which was under British rule).
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- While ‘Herzl’ endorsed the offer as an interim solution, it received a mixed response from the Jewish masses.
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- The opposition was because many Jews wanted to make Palestine home, due to their historic and religious connection with it.
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- Following Herzl’s death, Jewish polity was driven by a young professor named ‘Chaim Weizmann’ who was a Russian Jew.
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- **Palestine Demand -** He single-mindedly steered the movement towards

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 (1st 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 Monetgu-Chelmsfort reforms).
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- He called for the complete rejection of the Zionist statement, arguing that it would promote anti-semetism worldover.
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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 largly 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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