

**Stateless Diplomats:
The Zionist Movements' Emissaries to the League of Nations, 1919-1939**

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This research portrays the Zionist diplomatic arena in Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations, during 1919-1939. It analyzes the activities, working methods, and successes and failures of the principal professional Zionist diplomats, Victor (Avigdor) Jacobson (1869-1934) and Nahum Goldmann (1895-1982), each of whom was in turn entrusted with advancing the interests of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) in the League of Nations, the legal sovereign in British-mandate Palestine. The research delineates the networks of influential officials, statesmen, and journalists these diplomats cultivated, and traces their informal, behind-the-scenes meetings in corridors, lounges, and cafés.

I examine how professional Zionist diplomats saw the role of the League of Nations in relation to Palestine and how the Permanent Mandate Commission (PMC) was asked to intervene in the construction of the Jewish National Home. These questions lead to an exploration of the four-way relations between the British, the Zionists, the Arabs, and the League of Nations.

The Zionist Office in London failed to notice that the PMC members were influenced by anti-Zionist Catholic and Arab propaganda just before its first discussion of Palestine in 1924. Without a Zionist lobby at the League of Nations, the Commission supported the Arab position and criticized Jewish immigrants for failing to be a constructive element in Palestine. Alarmed by this international criticism, Chaim Weizmann, president of the WZO, embarked on a diplomatic campaign and decided to appoint a permanent Zionist representative in Geneva, Victor Jacobson, a veteran Zionist diplomat and an old friend.

Jacobson (and Goldmann, who replaced him after his death in 1934) excelled in making contacts with key members of the League — in the secretariat, among statesmen, and in the PMC. After

1925, the Zionist administration sent more and more complaints to the PMC, asking it to urge the government in Palestine to hasten construction of the Jewish National Home. By 1930, most members of the PMC were sympathetic to the Zionist cause and harshly critical of the conduct of the government before and during the violent events of 1929 — and of the conclusions of the Shaw Commission and the new White Paper announcing a change of policy in Palestine.

But in the late 1930s, the PMC, like other institutions in the League of Nations, began to lose its influence. By then, most PMC members were completely pro-Zionist, but after the Assyrian massacre following Iraqi independence in 1933, they were not eager to end the British mandate in Palestine, nor did they trust any political solution that would not include continued PMC supervision.