Britain's Educational Encounter with Palestinian Jewry

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British mandatory rule in Palestine was guided not only by political and economic goals but also by a cultural motivation, based on the historic precedents of the classical Greek and Roman empires. This feeling of mission was supported by the educational background of an elite group of men who were the policy-makers and officials throughout the empire, many of whom studied classics at Oxford or Cambridge. These government representatives felt that they bore the "white man's burden of responsibility," in Kipling's words, to bring the Empire's civilized message to the natives — both for their good and for that of mankind.

Between 1918 and 1938, some twenty to thirty percent of the graduates of various colleges at Oxford University served in the education services of the empire outside of Britain. They and graduates of other British universities sought to fulfill a cultural mission, just as the Athenian Empire, in whose light they had been educated, brought to its colonies the ethos and models of Athens' educational institutions. Although changes occurred after World War I, there was a large measure of continuity in shaping and implementing this educational policy and ideology throughout the Commonwealth.

Nonetheless, no uniform colonial education policy was established. Policy was set in accordance with local conditions, an attempt being made to combine traditional native values and institutions with a gradual process of change; no final goal was determined in advance. The Advisory Commission on Native Education, created by the Colonial Office in 1923, prepared directives and lines of action, and these were published in a "White Paper"; questions on educational matters in Palestine were addressed to this commission. Imperial education conferences were held, and a monthly periodical devoted to education was published. However, the colonial administrations did not clarify the educational goals they sought to promote because, as Julian Huxley noted, no thought was devoted to the future scenarios in the colonies.

THE CASE OF PALESTINE

In the case of Palestine, the British elite also had a religious, messianic ideal: the return of the Jews to their land, their conversion to Christianity, and the coming of the Messiah. These motifs had appeared in English

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Protestant literature since the seventeenth century, but were intensified in the nineteenth century, and played a role in Britain's willingness to issue the Balfour Declaration. The injustice done to the Jews by the nations of the world could be redressed only if the Jews were restored to their land, and England's goal would be to work toward this solution, claimed Lord Shaftesbury. Alongside these factors, there were coinciding and conflicting practical political considerations. Of particular note was the difference between the attitude of the policy-makers in London who supported the Balfour Declaration, and that of the occupation forces, and subsequently of the Mandatory government's civil administration, whose officials had previous colonial experience. The latter were accustomed to ruling over submissive natives and revealed no interest in Zionist aspirations. As Chaim Weizmann told the Zionist Actions Committee in January 1920: "They find it easier with the Arabs, with their simple standard of living, whereas the Jews pose many problems for them."

During the British occupation, Palestine was for the first time in two thousand years one geographical and political entity, and Jerusalem was fixed as its capital. The Ottoman government's official education system, in which the language of instruction had been Turkish, now came under the control of the British military administration. Ottoman education operated in accordance with a Turkish law passed in 1869, the implementation of which was extremely inadequate despite amendments introduced after the revolt of the Young Turks in 1908 and the legislation of 1913. At the outbreak of World War I, the government's education system comprised 95 elementary schools and three high schools, attended by nearly 10,000 pupils; these did not include Jewish and Christian schools, or private Muslim institutions.

Immediately upon the entry of the British army into Palestine, while the war was still being fought, professional education officers were appointed, who began to develop the new government's education system. Arabic replaced Turkish as the medium of instruction, and many efforts were invested in providing medical services to the schools. The foundation was thus laid for the development of an Arab education system under the auspices of the British authorities.

After ten years, the Mandatory government managed to increase the number of pupils in public education to 24,288, but even then, there was a school in only one of four villages. At the beginning of the Mandatory period the government education system encompassed only eight percent of the children of elementary school age; toward the end of the Mandate, it encompassed about a third. Attendance in government schools varied between two to four or five years. Despite the progress relative to the Ottoman period, the government could not meet the education demands of the Arab population.

In addition to the government education system, private Arab-Muslim and Arab-Christian schools also existed in Palestine. Among the many Christian denominational schools, were those operated by missionaries and religious organizations, as well as institutions established by Eastern Orthodox-Christians, Catholics, Greek-Catholics, Armenians, Copts, and various Protestant denominations. Christian schools that had closed at the outbreak of the war because of their relations with countries defined as enemy states, reopened during the period of British military administration and received limited support from the authorities.

The traditional Jewish education system shut itself in *ḥeders, talmudei Torah,* and *yeshivot,* and shunned contact with the colonial regime. It remained a private system that received only symbolic support from the authorities, as did private schools of other religions. The Hebrew education system, however, which saw itself as the public education system of the Jewish state-in-the-making and was funded by the World Zionist Organization, faced a serious dilemma. It wanted to receive financial support from the military administration, as did Arab education, but it was afraid of losing the autonomy it had enjoyed under Ottoman rule; one of the military administration's conditions for funding was that it have some supervision over the schools it supported. As the activities of the military administration's education officers grew, and as the greater part of the government budget for education came from taxes paid in the main by the Jewish population, the ferment and frustration in Zionist circles increased, and repeated applications were made for government support of Hebrew education without strings attached.

The military administration's education officers accepted the claim that the authorities should support Hebrew education, and agreed to allot to the Zionist Organization's Education Department ten percent of its budget for government schools, reflecting the ratio of Jews in the population.[1] It also agreed to support Jewish educational institutions outside the public Hebrew education system, as was customary regarding Arab private institutions. However, despite the fear of creating a precedent whereby the regime would consider itself responsible for funding only Arab education, the Zionists decided to forego government support in order to avoid the latter's supervision.

Thus the die was cast and it was difficult to change this situation later on. The decision in effect established two separate systems, Arab and Hebrew — one becoming the government education system, and the other a private one mainly under the aegis of the *yishuv* (the organized Jewish community).

1 The first British census of the population in 1922 counted 590,980 Muslims, 84,794 Jews, 72,024 Christians (mostly Arabs), and 7,028 Druze.

The issue of fair distribution between those who paid the taxes and those who enjoyed the government education services remained a burning issue throughout the Mandatory period. However, the question of the status of Hebrew education had implications beyond the problem of financing. A key issue, for instance, was the question of recognizing the matriculation examinations and the school-leaving certificates of the Hebrew high schools, so that graduates could be accepted in institutions of higher education outside of Palestine. Debates on this question were marked by crises and tensions between the *yishuv* and the Mandatory government.

At the basis of these confrontations was a political and cultural struggle between two systems: the Mandatory regime wished to impose its authority on the *yishuv*'s educational institutions and, as much as possible, influence the shaping of their culture. This was expressed, for instance, in attempts to establish an English-language university in Palestine that would constitute a source of British culture and a factor in shaping the development of local leadership. The *yishuv*, on the other hand, fought zealously for its cultural autonomy to the point that it rejected government funds, and missed opportunities to accept counselling and the importation of educational know-how. Nonetheless, the attempt to reverse this decision continued throughout the Mandatory years.

TWO SEPARATE SCHOOL SYSTEMS

The relations between the *yishuv* and the government in the educational field cannot be understood in isolation from the general political and social climate in the country, and from the changes that occurred in the course of the Mandatory period. The Mandatory government worked under conditions where every step that it took provoked tensions and disputes, and aroused feelings of injustice among both Arabs and Jews. In these circumstances, it was impossible to fashion an education policy that would satisfy all sides. The government adopted a progressive education policy, but since the two sectors of the population did not work as one society, the process of legislating the Education Ordinance took over five years from the publication of the proposal in October 1927. These years witnessed clashes with various population groups, religious orders, consulates and foreign embassies, and it was necessary to publish a variety of amendments and interpretations of the draft law.

In contrast to France, which made the French language and culture the focus of the educational policy in its colonies and sought to assimilate pupils into its culture, the English attempted to develop the local language in their educational institutions, and to adapt to local circumstances. This approach derived from the difference in priorities: economic goals took precedence

over the aspiration to fulfill a cultural mission. Moreover, the British were more tolerant, and recognized the importance of preserving local traditions. An effort was made to observe strictly article 15 of the Mandate which stated that each community should be allowed to maintain its own school system in its own language. The Mandatory government did not attempt to impose its culture on Hebrew schooling against Jewish will; it did not use the Education Ordinance in order to dismiss a single teacher because he or she was "undesirable" (in the words of the law). The first time that the Education Ordinance was used for this purpose was after the establishment of the State of Israel.

The Mandatory education policy aspired to create an infrastructure for a Palestinian society in which Jewish-Arab co-existence would prevail. This goal also corresponded to the interest of the authorities in maintaining civil law and order in the country. The government sought to develop through the education system a local liaison elite, as it was accustomed to do in other places under British rule. However, despite its efforts, a nationalist climate prevailed in the government-sponsored Arab education system, and the latter's low level of education could not further aspirations to develop such an elite liaison between the rulers and the ruled. The Mandatory government thus made do with introducing law and order, and gradual progress towards modernization, particularly in teaching agriculture in rural schools. The curriculum was quite poor with respect to teaching the history and geography of the region, in order to prevent the fueling of nationalist feelings; teaching was based on Western methods, while preserving traditional continuity. Despite efforts to foster Western universal norms and to avoid the development of a Palestinian nationalist culture, the Arab schools served as a hothouse for furthering nationalism.

The main institutions for training local manpower to carry out liaison tasks and administrative roles were the private Christian schools which had a higher standard than the government Arab system. This situation was similar to the general pattern that existed in Britain's African colonies. The private religious institutions received relatively small grants from the Mandatory regime and enjoyed great autonomy, while Christian religious education fostered loyalty to the administration and created an infrastructure of a Western culture shared by the rulers and the ruled. Thus while the government system served the Moslem population for the most part, the private, mainly urban, Christian schools served the government. Hebrew education resembled the private Christian schools with respect to educational standards and patterns of financing, but it fostered a nationalist culture that militated against its graduates joining the government bureaucracy and playing liaison roles. In 1930-1931 the religious division of pupils among the various education systems was as

follows: 40.8 percent Jews, 20.7 percent Christians, 9 percent Muslims in private schools, and 29.5 percent in government schools.

HEBREW EDUCATION AND THE MANDATORY GOVERNMENT

The status of the Jewish schools in the pre-state period is somewhat blurred. Since the *yishuv* lacked sovereignty, the schools were in fact private institutions. Though the Jewish community and the Mandatory power regarded the Hebrew schools supported by the Zionist institutions as the Jewish public education system, legally this was not the case.

At the core of the so-called Hebrew public education system were the elementary schools; the secondary schools were essentially private institutions. But even this generalization is not clear cut. From the very beginning, the World Zionist Organization supported the secondary schools, and later the kindergartens as well. The amount of financial support and supervision changed from time to time; as the Zionist education budget dwindled, this support decreased till it nearly disappeared, and the schools were mainly supported by tuition fees. However, during hard times the elementary schools also demanded tuition fees, and the demarcation lines between public and private schools were thus obscured.

The dominant position in the Hebrew education system during the Mandate period sought to maintain cultural autonomy, and to prevent the authorities from interfering. It demanded government funding — while refusing the government's contribution to and impact on Jewish schools. Nonetheless, one can discern decisive traces of mandatory influence on the cultural and educational processes of Hebrew education. Moreover, many of the reforms in Israeli education since the establishment of the Jewish state, and the demands for changes expressed in the various committees for educational reform, had already been recommended by the Mandatory's Department of Education and its commissions of experts. However, they were rejected by the *yishuv*, particularly by the Teachers's Association, and by the committees that supervised the Jewish community's ideological educational trends (Labor, Religious, and General).

WESTERNIZATION

The Mandatory government's influence on the Hebrew education system in Palestine was manifest first and foremost in the import of pedagogic know-how, a Western approach to critical thinking, an emphasis on universal values, and increased efficiency in patterns of educational organization and administration. The British Mandate reinforced these characteristics, that had begun to appear during the Ottoman period despite the Turkish authorities' attempts to curb them. At the beginning of the Mandatory

period, the Western orientation that already prevailed in the *yishuv* received legitimation and encouragement. Sir Ronald Storrs, British military governor of Jerusalem, and later district commissioner, promoted the creation of a music school in the city, opened a city-wide chess club, and prepared a proposal for establishing a Palestinian-English university in Jerusalem. The British developed sports activities, and promoted Western-style tea parties. New languages were heard in the streets and new styles of dress appeared; the *tarbush* disappeared and with it many other Oriental dress accessories.

These trends were readily accepted by the immigrants who arrived with the waves of the Third Aliyah, and the returning teachers and artists who had left Palestine for Western countries before the war. These newcomers brought with them novel esthetic norms and radical ideas of modern and futuristic trends in art, universally accepted styles in architecture, and progressive approaches to education that had developed in Europe and America. These constituted a leap from the provincialism of an isolated region and a sinking traditional Eastern society, to contemporary Western norms that the government presented as a model for identification and emulation. The British fashioned a new environment, and this created a demand for more Western culture and education.

The government and Hebrew public educational systems worked through modern bureaucracies that established criteria based on enlightened and universal standards seeking to replace particularistic ethnic and family loyalties. "I felt that the period of intimate family life ... had passed," writes educator Yehoshua Margolin on his return to Palestine after the war. There were changes in the status and self-image of the Sephardim, who had served in the past as a Jewish liaison to the Ottoman authorities and a bridge to their culture; most prominent among them were the Sephardi teachers, who had furthered the first signs of modernization in the *yishuv*. There was no longer any demand for their distinctive subculture; on the contrary, their Oriental ways were considered inferior and their influence waned because their status was devalued by the new cultural elite and institutions of education. The Near-Eastern culture they had reflected was no longer relevant in an environment where Western education was a prerequisite for employment in government service, and a sign of elitism. Western standards became a principal means for mobility, and "Anglicization" spread.

Despite the *yishuv*'s fears of "Anglicization", and its opposition to the culture exemplified by the British government — to importing "leftovers from Europe's table", in the words of critics who feared damage to the pioneering spirit of the Jewish community — new needs, stimuli, and incentives to "westernize" appeared, and the Mandatory regime gave legitimacy and support to these tendencies. Thus, for instance, Ze'ev Jabotinsky made the following claim regarding developments in the field of drama: "Our theater

must be a theater of all humanity ... [The Jew] in Palestine needs not only national education, but also general human culture." The main opponents to these positions were the religious parties and their followers on one hand, and left-wing Socialist circles on the other. Despite the debate over local versus universal loyalties — Judaism and Eretz Yisrael in contrast to the rest of the world — the Mandatory generation acquired more Western culture and values than they were aware of.

Some Western norms imported by the waves of aliyah to Palestine from Europe, particularly during the early Mandatory period, as well as the later influences of the Mandatory government, did not always correspond to the Zionist national ethos. This was expressed for example, in local antagonism toward new educational ventures, such as Deborah Kallen's experimental school in Jerusalem that was initiated and directed by Jewish educators from the United States. Ironically, the new radically progressive approach was especially upsetting to Labor leaders in Tel Aviv, whose own schools for children of workers also embraced methods of progressive education. It was treated with reserve both by the Teachers' Association and by circles of the General Union of Workers (Histadrut) who were apprehensive about novel educational experiments [not under their control].

In the 1920s a change began to take place in the relationships between the *yishuv*'s political and cultural elites. At a time when controversy was developing in the cultural, literary, and art establishments over giving priority to esthetic, rather than political, criteria, and new artistic views imported from the West were penetrating the society, the education system of the *yishuv* zealously continued to serve the dominant culture of the national movement and its political goals. Hebrew education rejected Western universal influences that did not correspond to the national spirit, particularly when they came from the government's Department of Education. The main defenders of Jewish nationalism were the Teachers' Association, and the Religious and Labor political trends; the General Zionist educational trend, that was not closely connected with any political party, was more moderate and compromising. Nonetheless, outside influences broke down the barriers in the national culture, and penetrated the entire educational system.

JEWISH AUTONOMY VS. BRITISH SUPERVISION

The aims of the Mandatory government in the field of culture were, inter alia: to raise the educational standards of the poorer sectors; to cool the nationalist ardor of Hebrew and Arab education; to educate for mutual tolerance; and to increase the effectiveness and economic viability of the education system. The government availed itself of several techniques to introduce its values and achieve its goals — for instance, by educational

legislation and recognition of the matriculation certificates of high schools. However, the most effective way of influencing Hebrew education was through funding.

As already noted, the *yishuv* missed an opportunity to benefit from the government's financial support of Hebrew education, and gave up its status as a public education system in order to preserve its autonomy — despite the fact that the Mandatory regime demanded only limited supervision. The director of the government's Department of Education wrote in his diary: "They did not have a correct notion regarding the pedagogic freedom prevalent in the administration of English education."

The Zionist establishment's decision was criticized by the American members of the Zionist Commission in Palestine — which preceded the establishment of the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem in 1921 — and subsequently by such leading personalities as Chaim Kalvaryski, Chaim Bugrashov, Chaim Arlosorov, and Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Members of the political Right-wing and Center were critical, and the Revisionists, especially, maintained that education should be under Mandatory government responsibility. Contesting the demand for educational autonomy and the fears that such autonomy would be undermined, Kalvaryski argued in 1921 that "in all countries, only minorities demand autonomy" and Jews must aspire to be the government in Palestine. On the Left, too, there were differences of opinion; Arlosorov in particular firmly supported a pro-governmental stance. He argued that the Mandatory's activities had great influence on all developments in Palestine; a negative attitude should not be adopted toward them nor should they be disregarded, since this would lead to making the country Anglo-Arab.

As the lean years in Hebrew education succeeded each other, pressures on the government to increase its fiscal support continued to grow, and differences of opinion intensified in the *yishuv* regarding the desirable division of tasks between the government and the Jewish national institutions in bearing the responsibility for funding education. One school of thought advocated seclusion in autonomous cells, while another opposed the isolationist approach that obliged the *yishuv* to carry the heavy burden of public services, particularly of education, at a time when the Arabs had become the main beneficiary of government services that were financed mainly by the Jewish tax-payers. The latter saw in the isolationist mindset a system that in the words of one critic, had its "origins in the psychology of the Diaspora, a tendency toward withdrawal and shrinking into a shell, a suspicion that the government would interfere in our affairs, and an exaggerated fear of what the gentiles would say." In the Leftist camp there were many disagreements on the subject: Ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir felt that the government should be responsible for education, whereas Aḥdut ha-Avodah advocated educational autonomy. Even after the creation of Mapai

(in 1930), opinions were divided; Chaim Arlosorov was an enthusiastic supporter of government responsibility, while David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson were opposed.

Although Palestine was not a British colony, but had been designated by the League of Nations as a Mandate under British rule, it was in fact administered as a colony under the close supervision of London, without representation of its local inhabitants. (An attempt made by the first High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, to change this, failed.) The government's policy was to maintain a balanced budget that would not entail any outlay from the British exchequer, and would relate to England's political and economic interests in Palestine. The development of the country and provision of services to its population, was a secondary goal. Accordingly, about 60 percent of the Mandatory's expenses were devoted to defense and administration, whereas some 12–14 percent were devoted to social services. By contrast, the Zionist sector spent about 40 percent of its budget between the two world wars on social services, and only 12 percent for administration and defense.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

In education, the government adopted an "equalization" policy, i.e., support for educating those in a position of inferiority — the Arabs. High Commissioner Samuel argued that "it was clear that the main means for raising the standard of living of the Arab population was through the development of education." In accordance with this policy of affirmative discrimination in favor of the weak, Samuel concentrated his efforts on rural education of the Arabs. During his early years in office, a new school was opened in this sector every week, and Samuel exceeded the budgetary restrictions imposed on him. The Colonial Office response was not long in coming: "Samuel must be told to curtail expenses and give Palestine the administration and things that it can budget for itself, even at a lower standard than currently existing ....He may not do this at the expense of the British tax-payer."

The policy that Arab education should be developed as long as the expenses did not exceed the budget, was expressed by H. Bowman who served as first head of the Mandatory's Department of Education:

> [The Arabs] are conservative, in the main ignorant.... Even the Supreme Arab Committee, the custodian of a great deal of Wakf money, spent only a negligible sum on education.... [The Jews] are educated .... They had an international organization, European education, and great sums of Jewish wealth that supported them; the Arabs could depend on nobody other than a beneficient government.... This sympathy for the under-dog created an impression

> that the officials preferred the Arabs over the Jews. There was also a natural affinity between the average Englishman and the Arab, which made relations with them easier and friendlier than with the Jews.

Bowman's deputy and successor, Jerome Farrel, also ardently defended an affirmative action policy for the Arabs. When the Storrs Committee, headed by the governor of Jerusalem, proposed in 1924 a reform in the organization of local government that included the creation of two separate public education systems with an equal status for Arabs and Jews, Farrel strongly criticized the program. He claimed that equality would harm the weak and that the difference between the two peoples would grow "under the disguise of equal treatment". It was only an affirmative discriminatory policy, he explained, that would lead to reducing the differences. This position was interpreted by the *yishuv* as hostile, since the government's progressive education policy sought to transfer resources from the relatively rich Jewish sector to the poorer Arab population at a time when the two groups did not operate as one society and there was even serious hostility between them.

The Department of Education may indeed have tried to behave fairly toward the two peoples, but every governmental program was interpreted differently by each sector, which felt that it was being discriminated against. The resentment of the Jews derived mainly from the fact that they thought they derived small benefit from government expenditures in relation to their tax share. In fact, however, while social services favored the Arab population, Jews who were city dwellers benefitted more from government infrastructure investments and general services than did the rural Arabs.

THE ZIONIST EDUCATION BUDGET

In the early years of the British occupation of Palestine, a large part of the Zionist budget was devoted to education. However, with the constant decline in Zionist revenues, and changes in priorities — development and settlement expenditures grew and the budget for social services fell — Hebrew education was left without adequate resources. After a stormy meeting with members of the Teachers' Association's executive committee, the President of the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann, said: "From the day that I came of age I have fought for culture .... The question must not be asked: Aliyah and settlement or culture? Zionism without culture is, in my opinion, a new Uganda. I will fight for culture with all my strength."

However the funds continued to dwindle. Education was perceived not as an investment, but as consumption that had to be reduced. The appeal "to increase productive works and to reduce education and culture expenditures" became ever more powerful. In 1920, the Zionist Executive's budget was the same as that of the government, whereas in 1932, the government's budget was £2.5 million yearly, with a surplus of one million pounds in its treasury, and the Zionist budget was £500,000 with a deficit of 500,000 Palestine pounds. The Hebrew education budget which in 1921 totalled £106,995, fell in 1924 to £60,000; the economic crisis of 1926-1927 further aggravated the situation. In 1919, the World Zionist Organization funded 90.5 percent of its Department of Education budget, whereas in 1928 the Chairman of the Zionist Executive, Harry Sacher, declared: "There is no money and no way out; let us not deceive ourselves...."

The Jewish national institutions had no authority to impose taxes, and parents who had become accustomed to the Zionist Organization's funding of education were unwilling to participate in the costs. This led to a reduction in Hebrew education that had flourished immediately following World War I. In the 1924 school year, the number of Jewish pupils in the institutions of the Zionist Organization Department of Education fell to 68 percent, in 1925 to 65 percent, and in 1926 to 60 percent. In 1927, the Zionist Organization's contribution to education fell to 46.7 percent of the Va'ad Le'umi's Education Department budget.[2] As a result of these circumstances, education in the disadvantaged sectors of the Jewish population was sharply reduced, a consolidation of low-cost programs and educational institutions took place, and a narrow, conservative approach to vocational education concentrated on teaching bookbinding and carpentry, ignoring the innovations in technological education that had developed in Europe. In consequence of these cutbacks in the education budget, many pupils from disadvantaged homes attended missionary schools. However, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, whose educational services had been greatly reduced after the war with the expansion of Hebrew education, again began to play a role in educating Jewish children in Palestine.

In 1929, the Jewish Agency was launched by the World Zionist Organization in the hope of attracting financial support from non-Zionist Jews. However, over the next two decades the Jewish Agency – World Zionist Organization's contribution to the Hebrew education system in Palestine decreased continually; despite the input into the budget from school fees, there were not sufficient funds to solve the monetary problems of Hebrew education. The major part of the education budget was no longer funded

2 The Va'ad Le'umi was the executive body of the *yishuv*, and its Education Department eventually succeeded that of the World Zionist Organization.

by imported capital under the aegis of the Jewish national institutions, but by local taxes of Jewish communities in Palestine, and by school fees; this led to a change in the control of Hebrew education — at the expense of the central national institutions. The new reality had far-reaching social and educational consequences, such as a widening gap in the percentages of school attendance of various population groups and in the level of educational services given to them, as well as a change in the status of teachers, most of whom became employees of local Jewish municipalities. In 1925, the first general teachers' strike broke out, after salaries had not been paid for some six months. Strikes and resignations became frequent occurrences.

Initially, the Mandatory government contributed a negligible sum to the Zionist Organization's Department of Education, as it did to other private educational frameworks. In 1926-1927, the High Commissioner, Lord Plummer, sought to change the status of the Hebrew education system from private to public. Despite the opposition of the Colonial Office, the Palestine government began, in fact, to treat the system as public, and its support increased from about two percent of the education budget in the early 1920s to some eleven percent. A formula was established whereby Hebrew education received an allocation in accordance with the size of the *yishuv* in the total Palestine population. However, the *yishuv* viewed this formula as discriminatory, since in the early 1930s it already constituted a third of the inhabitants but paid some three-quarters of the taxes; the government's expenditure for the education of a Jewish child was less than a third of its support for the education of Arab children.

In April 1933, this formula was changed and government grants were calculated according to the number of Jewish children, from age five to fourteen, in relation to the number of non-Jewish children in the same age group of the population, and not according to the number of children actually attending school, as demanded by the Department of Education of the Va'ad Le'umi. In 1943-1944, the government allocation to Hebrew education calculated in accordance with this formula was £65,000, constituting 13.3 percent of the Mandatory's education budget. The government imposed several conditions for its monetary share: sanitary and financial inspection, participation of a government representative on the Education Committee of the Va'ad Le'umi, government approval of the Va'ad Le'umi's education budget, and strengthening the authority of the Va'ad Le'umi's Department of Education in schools of the different political trends. Above all, the government demanded increased efficiency of the system that was suffering from budgetary deficits, non-payment of salaries, and recurrent strikes. It insisted on the formation of a budget committee, to be comprised of representatives from the Zionist Executive and a government official, that

would be charged with preventing deviations from the authorized budget. The government also demanded that the number of teachers serving on the Education Committee of the Va'ad Le'umi be limited, and that a bank-deposit guarantee payment of teachers' salaries. It also proposed merging small schools for increased efficiency, establishing a new wage scale for teachers, and abolishing the duplications in teacher training institutions which, in its opinion, prepared an excessive number of teachers. Most of the government's proposals and demands were rejected.

GOVERNMENT CRITICISM OF HEBREW EDUCATION

From the early 1930s, the Mandatory's critical attitude towards Hebrew education grew. Committees of experts were set up, proposals for increased efficiency and government education memoranda abounded. Thus, in 1931, the O'Donnel Commission discussed the high failure percentage of pupils in Hebrew education (70 percent finishing 3rd grade successfully and only 40 percent completing the 4th grade), the waste expressed in the surplus of teachers — one teacher for 22 pupils — and the small classes that were costly. The Commission also criticized the high academic standards of Hebrew secondary schools that prepared graduates beyond the absortive capacity of the country's economy; it complained about the lack of proper vocational schooling, and noted that the existing pattern stressed manual work and physical labor but did not give suitable theoretical training that would serve as a basis for advanced technological education. It argued that the separation between academic education and training for labor occupations created a system that did not allow passage from one stream to another. The Commission also criticized the poor level of administration in Hebrew education: "Teachers do not see themselves as being at the disposition of the principal, and expect to earn money in their spare time from private lessons", and the principals were occupied chiefly in fund raising. Inter alia, it recommended changing the structure of the Hebrew elementary school from eight to six years of study, and developing a selection and support system that would foster and finance the continued education of pupils according to achievement and not according to parents' economic status, as was the practice.

Similar criticisms were expressed by other commissions as well as by directors of the government's Department of Education. The McNeer Commission, appointed in August 1945 to study and propose reforms in education, noted the division of schools into political-ideological trends, financial instability, administrative shortcomings, defective teacher training and work discipline, and the absence of a labor code for teachers. Hebrew education, contended the Commission, represented rapid growth without

planning. It recommended transferring the supervision of young teachers from inspectors to school principals, and the appointment of regional inspectors. It also commented on the minority of women in the leadership and administration of Hebrew education, and on the absence of female inspectors for elementary and secondary schools. The suggestion to strengthen the status of school principals was criticized by the Teachers' Association which called for "collectives of teachers".

The government's Department of Education repeatedly stressed that it did not intend to demand abolition of the ideological-political trends in Hebrew education, although it saw the religious Mizrachi trend as "the past which will probably not return" and the Socialist Labor trend as "the future which may never come to be". It did, however, seek to abolish the ties of the trends to political parties. It strove to establish a proper division of authority between policy-making bodies and executive entities, and to eliminate the situation whereby the views of teachers who served on the Education Committee of the Va'ad Le'umi prevailed over those of their superiors. Some of the most important government proposals for reform were: establishing a labor code for teachers, defining their function as public employees, and creating a mechanism for settling disputes; introduction of compulsory education for ages 5 to 15, establishing junior high schools, development of vocational and pre-vocational streams to prevent dropouts, and teaching of vocational training and agriculture at an advanced level.

Government proposals for agricultural and vocational education were consistent with important values of Jewish nationalist education, but their realization was defective due to the internal inflexibility and conservatism that accompanied the young system from its inception. Consequently, it was the government's Department of Education that awarded garden prizes for schools, stressed the need to provide resources for developing agricultural and vocational training, and sponsored a scholarship fund for the secondary education of children from disadvantaged families.

A JEWISH CRITIQUE OF THE SYSTEM

Some of the decision-makers in the Jewish national institutions and in the professional and administrative echelons of Hebrew education agreed in practice with government criticism and proposals for reform. There were even those who sought to use government pressures in order to surmount the internal inflexibility, and to bring about changes. Thus, for instance, Ben-Zion Mossenson, Director of the Department of Education of the Va'ad Le'umi, said in 1940: "Those who stood at the helm of the education enterprise have for years recognized the need for changes.... We were reluctant to deal with the problem, and were swept along by the prevailing current,

until the government came with its demands and confronted us, against our will, with the question: 'Whither?'" Leaders such as Harry Sacher, Frederick Kisch, Henrietta Szold, and Otto Warburg, and educators such as Dr. Arthur Biram and numerous Hebrew University teachers, agreed with many of the proposals for educational reform and with the need to abolish partisan-ideological schools. "I found that all the government proposals were well founded.... In my opinion they are correct .... The current situation cannot continue," said Pinhas Ruttenberg, and David Ben-Gurion and Mossenson agreed with him. (Ben-Gurion's attitude had changed with his move from the Histadrut to the national institutions — from a sectoral to a national perspective.)

However, the proposals were opposed by the Teachers' Association and the supervisory committees of the political trends which fought tooth and nail against every government recommendation, particularly on separating education from political parties, and matching the working conditions and salaries of Hebrew teachers with those of Arab teachers. The Teachers' Association declared: "Cultural work is possible only under the single authority of the nation, without outside influences.... In other countries perhaps teachers have only to obey orders from on high, but here teachers are partners in the enterprise." The supervisory committees of the ideological trends argued that "whether or not changes are demanded by the government memoranda, whether or not our education needs them, the Education Committee of the Va'ad Le'umi, the *yishuv,* and the Zionist movement cannot accept government intervention in the only field in which we have autonomy." In the internal sharply partisan political climate of the country, and the decentralized educational structure that prevailed in the *yishuv,* the Education Department of the Va'ad Le'umi was unable to implement the changes demanded by the government even though it recognized the urgency of many of them, particularly those strengthening the powers of the national center as against the partisan divisiveness of the ideological trends.

With the transfer of responsibility for education from the Jewish Agency to the Va'ad Le'umi in the 1930s, and the decrease in funds controlled by the latter, Hebrew education found itself between the devil and the deep blue sea. Government allocations to Hebrew education, which were transferred through the Va'ad Le'umi, became the main tool for funding, and the Mandatory made its allocations provisional on compliance with its demands for increased efficiency.

The Jewish national institutions felt that they were gradually losing control of education, while local Jewish authorities were playing a more substantial role in allocating resources to schools. In effect, a parallel education network was beginning to develop for which the municipalities had major financial responsibility. In October 1941, the new situation was

officially approved and local authorities became the teachers' employers. As local government influence grew stronger, the educational powers of the Va'ad Le'umi became weaker; it served largely as the channel for government allocations. During 1933-1944, government funds constituted 35.3 percent of all the income of the Va'ad Le'umi's Education Department, whereas the Jewish Agency's contribution fell to 23 percent. (If the financial input of the local authorities is subtracted, the Education Department's income from the government was 59.3 percent and from the Jewish Agency 38.7 percent.)

The increasing dependence of the national institutions on government allocations for education did not lead to increased efficiency. Instead, subterfuges and clever methods for presenting the budget were developed, and amendments to the Education Ordinance were formulated in the hope that they would please the government and would not lead to budgetary sanctions. The heads of the Hebrew education system frequently disregarded principles and procedures, and even broke the law, in their attempts to present to the Mandatory authorities a supposedly balanced budget and deceptive plans for reform. As a result, the disappointed government repeatedly applied budgetary sanctions on the Va'ad Le'umi's Education Department.

The Mandatory's support of Hebrew education and its allocations to the Va'ad Le'umi were not based on law or agreement, but on government decisions that changed periodically. The lure of allotments for education to the national institutions was too great to resist; and the government was aware of the effective weapon it possessed and learned over the years how to use it. Thus, new rules of the game developed in the 1930s and 1940s, which, while not enabling the British to control and direct Hebrew education, did allow the Mandatory to influence education more than the Jews were prepared to admit.

A distinction must be made between the immediate influences deriving from the government's budgetary power and its direct and indirect cumulative cultural impact. It is difficult to isolate the different variables that operated in the complex system of Hebrew education, and to define clearly the government's part in improving educational administration, but certainly there were improvements in this area and in other fields, particularly when the changes did not clash with Zionist ideology. In any case, the Education Department saw these changes as overwhelming evidence of its influence.

CONCLUSION

Most of the aggregate influences of the Mandatory era were expressed in the educational reforms after the establishment of the State of Israel. They

include: the National Education Law of 1953 that abolished the ideological trends and the involvement of political parties — except for the religious sphere — in education; the 1968 reform in the structure of education that limited the elementary school to six years of study and created junior high schools; a new definition of the function of teachers who no longer come to school for teaching hours only (as recommended by the Etzioni Commission); changing the direction of technological, scientific, agricultural, and vocational education, and a stronger relationship of these streams to academic studies (as expressed in the Harari Commission report); demands for reforms in teacher training, and a reduction in the number of teacher-training colleges including the merging of small seminaries; special programs for children from disadvantaged sectors; and the development of sports activities.

The Mandatory government gave priority to British interests over those of the local population, and its expenditure for the development of public services, including education, was relatively small. This policy was criticized not only by the *yishuv* but even by consultants to the Mandatory regime, as well as by the 1937 Palestine Royal Commission (the Peel Commission). In 1929, a sum of £4,330 that had not been spent, remained in the education budget. "[This] economy is out of place," wrote Hope-Simpson in his report of 1930. The report submitted in 1937 by the Peel Commission noted:

> It greatly distresses us that the Administration has been incapable of doing more for education .... The change must come not only through modification of the existing ratio between the amount of support given to the Jews and that expended for Arab education, but as a result of an increase in general government spending on education .... It seems to us that if education received proper consideration, some way could be found of increasing its budget.

The commission of experts chaired by McNeer in 1945 also claimed that "public education in Palestine has suffered greatly from the failure to exploit the opportunity and to develop it when the government had money." However, not only budgetary constraints restricted the government's activity in education; it suffered from uncertainty in formulating its education policy and from an ambivalent attitude towards the national aspirations of the Jews. Having had no long-range policy towards the region's future, it did not prepare programs for this future.

The *yishuv*'s leadership, in its zeal to maintain the autonomy of Hebrew schooling, missed the opportunity to make education one of the public services for which the Mandatory government was financially responsible; it did not utilize the British authorities to overcome the system's conservatism and internal inflexibility, and to constitute necessary educational reforms.

The tensions and suspicions toward the foreign power, the intensiveness of internal political life that dragged the education system into the turmoil of fiercely partisan rivalries, the weakness of the Va'ad Le'umi's Education Department following the rise of municipal power centers, and the vested interests of the Teachers' Association — all prevented the system from benefitting from the reforms proposed by expert government commissions. These recommended reforms were rejected without being actually examined, and much significant imported know-how was not utilized.

The Teachers' Association played a particularly active role in rejecting the educational models presented by the government and in denying the Mandatory's contributions to Hebrew education. Opposition to these influences involved not only the professional interests of teachers — working conditions and salaries — but also the authorities' tendency to view the association as a simple trade union, and to disregard its historic rights in the shaping of Hebrew culture. The Teachers' Association sought to preserve its hegemony in the field of education and culture; in presenting itself as the standard bearer of pure Jewish nationalism, unaffected by foreign culture, it was fighting for a central place in the *yishuv*'s cultural elite.

Mandatory influence on Hebrew education was acknowledged openly after the British left Palestine and there was no longer fear of cultural assimilation or a challenge to the educational autonomy of the Jews. The cultural legacy of the Mandate also served, inter alia, as a catalyst in Hebrew education's transition from the influence of German pedagogic thought that had dominated it from the beginning of the modernization process, to an Anglo-American pedagogic mindset. This process of change began during the Mandatory period, and it intensified subsequently, parallel to changes in other fields of culture, including the shift from translations of German language publications into Hebrew, to the use of translated pedagogic literature from English. Jewish education's German connection, which had lasted for about 150 years, was eliminated and a new orbit of pedagogic influence was established.

Was opposition to, and denial of, the Mandatory influences on Hebrew education an expression of the Jewish nationalist movement forming its collective cultural identity in opposition to the political interests and cultural influences of the rulers, or did it constitute an error that was motivated by a short-term view and excessive national zeal? In retrospect it seems that this was a mistake that delayed the development of Hebrew education in Palestine. Nonetheless, the scope and degree of control that the government might exercise in practice could not have been foreseen beforehand, nor was it possible to predict the vitality that Hebrew education would display to counter the danger of cultural assimilation.

Cultural colonialism is not always a result of military occupation and

domination by force, as the various stages of education in Eretz Yisrael show. A study of cultural imperialism is liable to err on the side of simplicity and superficiality if the many facets and paradoxes of this complex phenomenon are disregarded. ☐

Religious Educator Joins Cabinet

As *AVAR ve'ATID* goes to press, the Knesset approved Prime Minister Shimon Peres' Cabinet that includes Rabbi Yehudah Amital, head of the Alon Sh'vut Yeshivah. Though the educator does not represent any political party, Peres invited him to join the government because of his nationwide reputation as a prominent religious teacher with moderate political views, who can contribute to the healing process between secularists and religionists following Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. As proof of this, a nearly full-page advertisement conveying good wishes to the rabbi on his appointment was published in the Israeli press, signed by scores of prominent religious and secular educators, including leaders of the kibbutz movements.

Following the Six-Day War, Rabbi Amital was a principal formulator of the initial Gush Emunim ideology which defined Zionism as a process of national redemption. However, eight years later, when an element in Gush Emunim equated Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon with that redemptive doctrine, he strongly disagreed, because it placed the interests of the State of Israel above those of the people of Israel. Such a policy, he asserted, is a profanation of God (*hillul haShem*). "There is a ladder of values in Judaism, and whoever does not distinguish between sacred and sacred will ultimately not be able to differentiate between sacred and profane," he stated. In Amital's view, the correct priority in Judaism's ladder of values is: the Jewish people, the Torah, and Eretz Yisrael. When there is a conflict between *klal yisrael* and the Greater Land of Israel — the interests of the former take precedence.

In 1988, Amital reluctantly headed a new Zionist religious party, MEIMAD, which abandoned the messianic motif of A Greater Israel in favor of peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Jews. It received over 17,000 votes — 3,000 short of the minimum required to elect a member to the Knesset. MEIMAD remains a movement for religious Zionist renewal.