



Dr Chaim Weizmann

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'Dr Chaim Weizmann' (supplementary obituary), *The Times*, 17 November 1952, 8



I SHOULD be grateful if I might contribute a personal note on the late Chaim Weizmann. Almost all who ever met him, or even heard him speak, Jews and Gentiles, friends and adversaries, knew very soon that they were in the presence of a man of genius, for he could exercise a degree of personal fascination over individuals and

small groups alike, seldom, if ever, equalled in our time. Long before the creation of the state of Israel he came to be accorded the treatment due, if not to the head of a state, at any rate to the head of a government in exile. This extraordinary effect was due to the astonishing spell cast by his own personality, by the fact that he was felt to be not the head of a party or a movement, but the embodiment of a people and the authentic voice of a tremendous historical tradition.

His authority was at times disputed by his own rebellious followers, but scarcely ever by the statesmen of the world. For his moral force was so great and so concentrated, the combination of vivid tragic imagination and pungent irony so astonishing, that the vast disparity between his gifts and his material power was often scarcely felt. So he was enabled, during the 1920s and 1930s, to create his own unique position, and that of the Zionist movement, out of his own inner resources; and it was consequently due to him more than to any other man that the idea became a reality in his own lifetime.

These resources were truly immense. He was made of one piece, and possessed an inner calm and harmony seldom found in public men, or indeed any other kind of men. A man of unbending pride, power and dignity, he was not vain or self-conscious, or arrogant, or avid for public admiration, and he was absolutely fearless. He had a clear, coherent, unwaveringly steady and exceedingly humane view of the world and of history, which resembled the noble liberalism of the great nationalists before Bismarck. In some respects he was the Cavour of his people; he possessed infinite patience, great wisdom and unerring political skill, but to this he added a natural feeling for the hopes and sufferings and aspirations of the poverty-stricken Jewish masses from whom he came – feelings which those socially or geographically remote from them could not fully share.

He loved, beyond most things, generosity, style, everything large, handsome and noble. His love for and friendship with such men as Balfour, Smuts, Léon Blum, Masaryk, Winston Churchill was based on a mutual recognition of these attributes. So, too was

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his devotion to England and everything English, which survived the embittering years which followed the White Paper of 1939.

Indeed, in the end, it was this love for, and delight in, the qualities of the kingdom in which he had made his home and of which he had become a subject that exposed him to the criticism of his more militant followers, who looked on him as hopelessly, and to them fatally, Anglophile. His loss of political power was due to the failure of his pro-British policy as much as to his failing health. He never returned to England, but together with his devoted, charming and distinguished wife, to whom he was so happily married, and who is still, fortunately, with us, he advocated moderation to the end. With him died a great miracle worker ('Miracles sometimes occur,' he once said to me, 'but one has to work terribly hard for them') and the noblest and best man I have ever known.

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