The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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Issued in London in 1917, the Balfour Declaration was one of the key documents of the twentieth century. It committed Britain to supporting the establishment in Palestine of "a National Home for the Jewish people," and its reverberations continue to be felt to this day. Now the entire fascinating story of the document is revealed in this impressive work of modern history.

With new material retrieved from historical archives, scholar Jonathan Schneer recounts in dramatic detail the public and private battles in the early 1900s for a small strip of land in the Middle East, battles that started when the governing Ottoman Empire took Germany's side in World War I. The Balfour Declaration paints an indelible picture of how Arab nationalists, backed by Britain, fought for their future as Zionists in England battled diplomatically for influence. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to either side or even to most members of the British government, Prime Minister David Lloyd George was telling Turkey that she could keep her flag flying over the disputed territory if only she would agree to a separate peace.

The key players in this watershed moment are rendered here in nuanced and detailed relief: Sharif Hussein, the Arab leader who secretly sought British support; Chaim Weizmann, Zionist hero, the folksmensch who charmed British high society; T. E. Lawrence, the legendary "super cerebral" British officer who "set the desert on fire" for the Arabs; Basil Zaharoff, the infamous arms dealer who was Britain's most important back channel to the Turks; and the other generals and prime ministers, soldiers and negotiators, who shed blood and cut deals to grab or give away the precious land.

A book crucial to understanding the Middle East as it is today, The Balfour Declaration is a rich and remarkable achievement, a riveting volume about the ancient faiths and timeless treacheries that continue to drive global events.

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