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THE NORTHCLIFFE PRESS AND ZIONISM: *THE TIMES*, *THE DAILY MAIL*, AND THE BATTLE FOR THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME IN PALESTINE, 1917-1922

by
ELIJAH GREEN POWELSON

A thesis
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for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of History and Archaeology
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
at the American University of Beirut

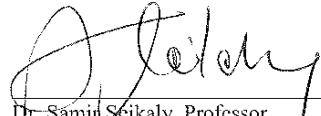
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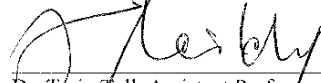
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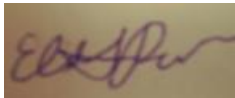
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Elijah Green Powelson for

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Major: Arab and Middle Eastern History

Title: The Northcliffe Press and Zionism: *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, and the Battle for the Jewish National Home in Palestine, 1917-1922

The historiography of Zionism in the immediate post-Balfour Declaration period has correctly assigned much of the credit for the Chaim Weizmann-led movement's successful quest for legitimacy in Great Britain to statesmen such as Herbert Samuel, Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour. But the historical understanding of the role played by pre-eminent media figures Lord Northcliffe, owner of Britain's prestigious and popular newspapers *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*, and H. Wickham Steed, editor of *The Times*, is much less coherent, owing to the fact that these leading influencers initially supported Zionism in their papers before turning against it in an aggressive manner a few years after the Balfour Declaration was issued.

A comprehensive analysis of the Palestine/Zionism-related articles in *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* from 1917-1922 challenges several common assumptions about the press's role in the creation of the Jewish national home, and reveals the crucial contribution that the Northcliffe papers made in validating Weizmann's early activities in Palestine. While both papers did eventually launch classic Northcliffe-style propaganda campaigns against Weizmann and his cadre, this thesis will argue that Northcliffe and Steed's earlier efforts in validating the movement in the eyes of the British public was far more impactful and played an essential role in confirming Britain's sponsorship of the Zionist plan for Palestine.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE NAPOLEON OF JOURNALISM

“News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress, all the rest is advertising.”

-Alfred Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Northcliffe¹

A. Introduction

While British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour’s declaration in November 1917 promising his government’s support for the creation of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine was undeniably an enormous victory for the burgeoning Zionist movement, it did not represent the final confirmation of Britain’s pro-Zionist stance moving forward. The Balfour Declaration was, after all, a non-binding document of just 67 words that was not immediately ratified by any official British or international body. Furthermore, the declaration was announced in the middle of the First World War, and even those in London with strong feelings about the Zionist movement knew that the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire) must be defeated before the issue could be addressed seriously. The point where Britain’s commitment to the principles of the Balfour Declaration solidified entirely came with two actions in the summer of 1922: the release of Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill’s “White Paper,”

¹ Ian Hargreaves, *Journalism: Truth or Dare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 178.

which reiterated and expanded on Britain's commitment to Zionism, followed weeks later by Parliament's ratification of the British Mandate for Palestine, which restated the full text of the declaration in its preamble.² But during this nearly five-year period leading up to the Mandate's confirmation, the Zionist movement had to face serious challenges from a wide range of critics. Outbreaks of violence in Jerusalem in April 1920 and in Jaffa in May 1921 caused many in London to realize that the indigenous Palestinian Arabs might not be as receptive to the "Jewish national home" idea as was previously believed and thus a greater taxpayer-funded military expenditure would likely be required to maintain order.³ Additionally, rumors began swirling that a heavy Bolshevik presence existed—or perhaps even played a leadership role—in the Palestine Jewish community, and this alongside the arrival of the anti-Semitic forgery known as *The Jewish Peril* (also known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) into public discourse allowed for British anti-Semites and anti-communists to unite in their disapproval of their government's support for Zionism. Moreover, many statesman had endorsed the Balfour Declaration solely because they believed it would assist with Britain's war effort—thus, after the war's conclusion many began to wonder what exactly Britain was gaining out of continuing to support the construction of the Jewish national home. These factors among others made the struggle to secure firm British support for political Zionism after 1917 a much more difficult pursuit than the movement's leader Chaim Weizmann and his cadre had anticipated. Despite all of the opposition, the proponents of Zionism—both in England

² See: "Statement of British Policy (Churchill Memorandum) on Palestine, 1 July 1922" and "The Mandate for Palestine, 24 July 1922," in *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, ed. J. C. Hurewitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 103-110.

³ See: Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979); Sharman Kadish, "'Boche, Bolshie and the Jewish Bogey': The Russian Revolution and Press Anti-Semitism in Britain 1917-1921," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 22:4 (2010), 24-39.

and in Palestine, both gentile and Jewish—were able to claim an even bigger victory in 1922 than the one they achieved in 1917, as the confirmation of the Mandate guaranteed that Palestine would continue to be governed as it had since the Herbert Samuel-led civil administration assumed control over the country in 1920. It was in June of that year that the generally-Arab friendly military administration was removed, in favor of a government led by the ardent Zionist Samuel—who Weizmann liked to refer to as “our Samuel.”⁴

Historians have correctly assigned much of the credit for the Zionist movement’s perseverance after the Balfour Declaration to Weizmann, Samuel and Churchill. But the historiography of the early mandate period is much more muddled when it comes to understanding the role that the British press played in seeing the terms of the Balfour Declaration realized by the Mandate, especially with regards to the contribution made by the most powerful press baron of them all: Alfred Harmsworth, the 1st Viscount Northcliffe. Most accounts claim that Northcliffe represented a huge obstacle for the Zionist cause, as his prestigious *Times* and popular *Daily Mail* engaged in an aggressive anti-Zionist campaign.⁵ Others have noticed that the Northcliffe Press was initially pro-Zionist before eventually taking a radical turn against the movement, with various dates

⁴ On Samuel’s term as High Commissioner of Palestine, see: Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001); Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Struggle for Palestinian Statehood* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007); Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000); for the “our Samuel” quote, see: Chaim Weizmann, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann: August 1898-July 1931* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 331.

⁵ David Cesarani, “Anti-Zionist Politics and Political Antisemitism in Britain, 1920–1924,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 23:1, 1989; Michael J. Cohen, “Was the Balfour Declaration at risk in 1923? Zionism and British imperialism,” *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 29, 2010, No. 1; Susan Lee Hattis, “Jabotinsky’s Parity Plan for Palestine,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13:1 (1977), 60-66; Weizmann, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 352.

and events offered as turning points yet little to no supporting evidence presented.⁶ Nowhere is this confusion more apparent than in the words of Weizmann himself—while he remarked in 1920 that “Zionists the world over will never cease to be grateful for what *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* have done for them,”⁷ in his memoirs he complained that the Northcliffe Press “launched out into a virulent campaign against us.”⁸ Adding to the intrigue is the fact that Lord Northcliffe was not simply Britain’s top newspaper man at this time; as one historian put it, he “possessed a power such as no newspaper proprietor has ever wielded before or since”⁹ and had become arguably the most influential figure in all of Britain around the same time that the Balfour Declaration was issued. While Northcliffe was known for often being uninterested in most political matters, the question of Palestine became near and dear to the press baron’s heart following a visit to the country in 1922; Zionism was, in fact, one of the very few political issues he ever spoke out about passionately in public. On top of the indisputable influence that *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* possessed during this period, comments made both in public and in private by Weizmann, Samuel, and Churchill regarding Northcliffe and his papers prove that the leading Zionists of the day were deeply concerned with what type of coverage their movement received in the Northcliffe Press. In addition, by 1921 the debate over Palestine in Parliament had been completely reframed as a result of the arguments legitimized and popularized by *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*. So what exactly was the

⁶ Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*; Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949); Andre Liebich, *Wickham Steed: Greatest Journalist of His Times* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018); Martin Watts, *The Jewish Legion and the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 81-82.

⁷ “Zionist Plans,” *The Daily Mail*, 7 May 1920.

⁸ Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 351.

⁹ Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965), 294.

Northcliffe Press's attitude towards continued British support for the Zionist movement in Palestine after the Balfour Declaration, and what role did Northcliffe's top two papers ultimately play during the transition from the Declaration into the Mandate for Palestine?

This thesis will argue that while *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* at various times made significant contributions to both the Zionist and anti-Zionist causes from 1917-22, in the final analysis, the Northcliffe Press's assistance to the former was far more impactful. *The Times*, under the editorship of Henry Wickham Steed throughout most of the period, provided invaluable legitimacy to the Weizmann-led Zionist Commission upon its arrival in Palestine shortly after the Balfour Declaration, and continued to prop the movement up for years by downplaying—if not outright ignoring—legitimate concerns voiced by a range of respectable critics about its activities and future plans. By the time Steed had grown frustrated with the Zionist movement's direction and leadership and Northcliffe had become a fervent opponent of the Jewish national home project, the damage had already been done, and an ineffectual Northcliffe Press campaign against Weizmann launched in 1921 paled in comparison to the type of potent propaganda Northcliffe's papers were known for. But this thesis does not seek to simply correct the record on the Northcliffe Press's overall contribution to the Zionist cause; rather, it argues that Steed's pro-Zionist efforts as editor of *The Times* were as essential for the movement's success as the efforts of any other leading British supporters of Zionism. In any conversation about the British players most responsible for the solidification of His Majesty's Government's pro-Zionist policy following the Balfour Declaration, the contributions of Steed and Northcliffe must be brought up alongside those of the usual candidates of Samuel, Churchill, and Balfour.

B. The Rise of Lord Northcliffe¹⁰

As this thesis hinges on Lord Northcliffe's status as perhaps the most influential figure in Britain during the period, it is necessary to understand who he was and how he had reached this level of power by the time the Balfour Declaration was issued. Alfred Charles William Harmsworth was born in a middle-class home outside of Dublin to an Irish mother and an English father in 1865. After launching the school magazine at his secondary school in Kilburn, London, his passion for journalism was sparked; he declined to attend university and instead started his first newspaper, *Answers* (1888). While *Answers* never got much further than he and his younger brother Harold (later, Lord Rothermere) dropping off free copies door-to-door, the elder Harmsworth began to develop ideas about gaps in the British press market that he believed he could fill. Alfred and Harold's comic book magazines *Comic Cuts* and *Chips* and their "high-class penny journal for ladies" *Forget-Me-Not* achieved substantial success, and by 1892 their publications combined to sell over one million copies per week. Two years later, the Harmsworth brothers took a significant leap by entering the field of political journalism with the purchase of *The Evening News* for £25,000. *The Evening News* had been an innovator upon its start in 1881, as it quickly became London's first popular evening paper. By the time the Harmsworths purchased it in 1894, competition in the evening

¹⁰ There is much literature on the press lord, but the most essential reads include: Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*; Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960); Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (London: Routledge, 2010); William E. Carson, *Northcliffe, Britain's Man of Power* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1918); J. Lee Thompson, *Northcliffe: Press Baron in Politics, 1865-1922* (London: John Murray, 2001).

paper market had seriously reduced its circulation, yet the paper would see a revival through the use of Alfred's methods which would become his trademark: simplifying the content with short paragraphs, snappy sentences and bold headlines. Harold, the more business-minded of the brothers, innovated a distribution system where the paper would be placed in parts of London with heavy pedestrian congregation. Having proven the ability both to succeed and to innovate in the field of political journalism, the Harmsworth brothers entered competition with the big morning dailies with the launch of *The Daily Mail* in 1896.¹¹

The Daily Mail continued the precedent set by the Harmsworth brothers' previous efforts by simplifying and depoliticizing the content and adding much more focus on human interest stories. It saw immediate success; just one year after its debut, *The Daily Mail* had become the most widely-circulated newspaper in the world, and just six years later it passed the circulation milestone of one million readers.¹² The Harmsworths' rise to the top was met with much disapproval from an elite class that tended to view the *The Daily Mail* as nothing more than fluff—Lord Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, who served three terms as Prime Minister from 1885-1902, quipped that the paper was “a newspaper for office boys written by office boys.”¹³ Around the turn of the century, the predominant view that *The Daily Mail* was essentially apolitical was proven false, as the Harmsworths' belief in imperialism, patriotism, and nationalism came out fully on

¹¹ On the rise of the Harmsworth brothers, see: J. Lee Thompson, “Fleet Street Colossus: The Rise and Fall of Northcliffe, 1896-1922,” *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 25, 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); Williams, *Read All About It*, 125-148.

¹² Williams, *Read All About It*, 129.

¹³ Harold Herd, *The March of Journalism: The Story of the British Press from 1622 to the Present Day* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), 241.

display during the outbreak of the Second Boer War in 1899.¹⁴ An exclusive interview obtained from the former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony Cecil Rhodes at the outset of the war established *The Daily Mail* as one of the most important sources of political news in Britain,¹⁵ and its unabashed jingoism throughout the conflict led to its readership numbers reaching their peak.¹⁶ In 1908, two years after receiving the peerage Lord Northcliffe, Alfred Harmsworth took his boldest step yet by purchasing Britain's "paper of record," *The Times*. This paper, once described by Abraham Lincoln as "the most powerful thing in the world excepting the Mississippi,"¹⁷ had entered a period of decline prior to its purchase by Northcliffe; by 1890 it was facing financial collapse and had been surpassed in stature by *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily News*.¹⁸ *The Times* had held the power and prestige of an official organ nearly from the beginning of its establishment in 1785 and throughout much of the nineteenth century, and after Northcliffe's purchase, the paper was restored both to profitability as well as to its status as one of the most influential media outlets in Britain.¹⁹ With the prestigious *Times* and the popular *Daily Mail* now both under his control, Northcliffe dominated the media in London like no man had done before; to quote historian Robert Blake, Northcliffe's ownership of these two papers gave him both "the classes and the masses."²⁰ By the outbreak of World War I, ownership of *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Evening News*, *The Sunday Times*, and *The Weekly Dispatch* gave Northcliffe control of around 40% of the morning and 45% of the

¹⁴ Williams, *Read All About It*, 130.

¹⁵ Carson, *Northcliffe*, 157.

¹⁶ Williams, *Read All About It*, 130.

¹⁷ Carson, *Northcliffe*, 197.

¹⁸ Thompson, "Fleet Street Colossus," 116.

¹⁹ Williams, *Read All About It*, 135.

²⁰ Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, 294.

evening newspaper circulation in the United Kingdom.²¹ Some in London worried that Northcliffe would attempt to mold *The Times*, one of Britain's few politically-focused papers, into the shape of the lighter, more-tabloid like *Daily Mail*.²² Yet he ultimately allowed *The Times* to carry on with its sophisticated approach; he kept editor George Earle Buckle and his political focus on board and chose to implement only small modernizations.²³

Up until World War I, Northcliffe was widely considered to be much more interested in financial success than political influence. But as one biographer noted, the *Times* owner "had always seen his newspapers as instruments of their owner, to be used as he chose,"²⁴ and the press baron made one of the bolder choices of his career by launching a savage political attack campaign in his papers during the early stages of the First World War. In March 1915, senior British army officer John French gave an interview to *The Times* in which he blamed Britain's disappointing war performance on the lack of ammunition supply. In a controversial move, Northcliffe decided to jump on the intelligence and publish rancorous articles in *The Times* placing the blame squarely on War Secretary Herbert Kitchener for failing to keep the troops' ammunition supply adequately stocked. Northcliffe Press correspondent and later Northcliffe biographer William E. Carson remarked that attacking a figure as prestigious as the Boer War hero Kitchener quickly made the *Times* owner "the most detested man in England."²⁵ But

²¹ John M. McEwen, "The National Press During the First World War: Ownership and Circulation," *Journal of Contemporary History*, XVII (1982), 466-474.

²² According to Thompson, "Fleet Street Colossus," 116 and James D. Startt, *Journalists for Empire. The Imperial Debate in the Edwardian Stately Press, 1903-1913* (New York: Praeger, 1991). 6-7.

²³ Carson, *Northcliffe*, 222-226.

²⁴ Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, 256.

²⁵ Carson, *Northcliffe*, 23.

Northcliffe would soon be vindicated: following an embarrassing defeat to the Germans on the Western front at the Battle of Aubers Ridge (near the French-Belgian border) in May 1915, a *Times* war correspondent telegraphed Northcliffe from France to report that the defeat was caused by the lack of high-explosive artillery shells.²⁶ *The Times* broke the story and caused a ruckus in London; several ministers of the government of Prime Minister H. H. Asquith resigned, precipitating the government's fall, while leading critic of the munitions issue Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George was reassigned to head the newly-created Munitions Office. But bringing down the Asquith government was not enough to satisfy Northcliffe, who deployed *The Daily Mail* to keep the pressure on Kitchener with more sensational attacks, starting with 21 May's "The Shells Scandal: Lord Kitchener's Tragic Blunder." Although Kitchener would continue to serve as War Secretary, he found himself increasingly sidelined from top military decision-making until his untimely death in June 1916.²⁷ Asquith's reputation, meanwhile, continued to plummet, and the widely-praised job done by Lloyd George in the Munitions Office led to the latter replacing the former as Prime Minister in December 1916. British historiography usually credits both the falls of both Kitchener and Asquith and the rise of Lloyd George to Northcliffe's role in instigating the 1915 "Shell Crisis."²⁸ Yet Northcliffe's motive was not simply to get rid of Asquith and Kitchener. The press lord was angered that the British public had seemingly bought into the Asquith government's "business as usual" approach—a phrase coined by Asquith's First Lord of

²⁶ This information was leaked by John French himself in hopes of engineering Kitchener's removal.

²⁷ A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 47. Kitchener's reputation was further tarnished (and Northcliffe's approach was further vindicated) as the result of a simultaneous embarrassing Allied failure at Gallipoli, Ottoman Turkey in 1916.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-30.

the Admiralty Winston Churchill—that encouraged citizens to take a casual attitude towards the war and carry on with their standard daily routines. Northcliffe believed the British people needed to embrace a “total war” outlook, and he used his papers throughout the duration of the war to push scathing anti-German propaganda as a means to this end.²⁹

Northcliffe, having earned the nickname “The Napoleon of Journalism,”³⁰ was already one of the most influential figures in Britain, and he emerged from the Shell Crisis as one of the most trusted. But it is not enough to simply label him Britain’s top press baron, for one could argue he was in fact the most powerful man in the country. Leading British historian A. J. P. Taylor claims that World War I marked the period where the press reached “perhaps its highest point of influence,” as radio had yet to emerge; Northcliffe, Taylor wrote, was the “founder of modern journalism” who “could destroy when he used the news properly.”³¹ Yet it remained the case that Northcliffe only sought to deploy his papers on propaganda campaigns when a political situation bothered him intensely. As we shall see, the Palestine question had undoubtedly become one of these issues by 1922 if not earlier.

C. Approach and Limitations of the Thesis

As the lion’s share of the research and writing for this thesis took place during the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic, several unexpected obstacles necessitated a shift in the

²⁹ J. Lee Thompson, *Politicians, the Press & Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe & The Great War, 1914-1919* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000), 26.

³⁰ Carson, *Northcliffe*, 44.

³¹ Taylor, *English History*, 26-27.

project's direction. Originally, I had planned a trip to London to conduct research at The British Library and The National Archives, which would have given me access to, among other sources, the personal papers of the two central characters in this story, Lord Northcliffe and Wickham Steed. Access to these sources as well as more obscure books available in Britain but not online or at the American University of Beirut would have likely allowed me to obtain much greater insight into more of the behind-the-scenes developments in this story. But with air travel suspended and these research centers closed, I decided to make the focus of the research the databases that were available to me in their entirety—the complete archives of the editions of *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* from 1917 to 1922. To this end, I attempt to place the reader in the shoes of an average concerned British citizen of the period, reading the papers with an interest in Palestine having only a basic understanding of Zionism and its implications. While I do my best to offer insights as to why Northcliffe and Steed took the approaches in the papers that they did, it is obviously more difficult to speculate incisively without full access to their personal papers. But ultimately, the story of a press propaganda campaign is told in the pages of the paper itself, and therefore I believe the intentions of the propagandists is less significant than the information and beliefs promoted by the propagandists. Yet the newspapers themselves are incapable of telling the whole story, and I have attempted to complement the main source material with additional information from as many diplomatic cables, memoirs, diaries, letters, personal papers, etc. as possible—some in primary source form, others quoted from secondary material.

The reader will notice that while the thesis looks to the pages of both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* to tell the story, it is the former that receives most of the attention.

This is primarily due to the fact that, as discussed above, Lord Northcliffe saw *The Times* as the place where thorough political discussions should take place while *The Daily Mail*'s political commentary should be as simple and succinct as possible. While this thesis therefore is much more a history of *The Times* than *The Daily Mail*, I believe that the latter plays a necessary complementary role in widening our understanding at certain moments throughout the story. As a result, the differing approaches of the papers means that we receive much more insight into the views of Wickham Steed than those of Lord Northcliffe. Northcliffe's perspective on Palestine does not become more clear towards the latter part of the story, yet this perspective alongside his political divergence with Steed on the issue form an essential part of our understanding of these papers' approaches and impacts. Furthermore, it is never quite clear when we are hearing the voice of Northcliffe on the Editorial page of *The Daily Mail* rather than that of the paper's official editor during this period, Thomas Marlowe. While Steed was in full control of *The Times* from February 1919 through August 1922, *The Daily Mail* could serve as the voice of Northcliffe whenever the press baron felt like injecting his views directly. Marlowe himself once stated in a letter to his boss that "I have always endeavoured to carry out your wishes when I was informed of them,"³² while *Daily Mail* managing director S. J. Pryor commented that it was oftentimes "unclear which of them was in charge."³³

This thesis utilizes a chronological approach: Chapter 2 covers the Northcliffe Press in the period from the announcement of the Balfour Declaration to the end of the military administration (November 1917 – June 1920), when both papers were

³² Marlowe to Northcliffe, 20 May 1907, quoted in Thompson, *Politicians, the Press & Propaganda*, 77.

³³ Matthew Engel, *Tickle the Public: One Hundred Years of the Popular Press* (London: Orion, 1996), 68.

unequivocally pro-Zionist. The next phase, chronicled in Chapter 3, covers the first year of Herbert Samuel's civil administration (June 1920 – June 1921). In this period, *The Daily Mail* began to raise the question of rising costs in Palestine and gradually began treating the Zionist issue exclusively in budgetary terms; *The Times*, meanwhile, for the first time acknowledged that legitimate concerns with the Zionists existed and began to frame the Palestine dilemma as a failure of the leadership of Samuel, Chaim Weizmann and Winston Churchill. Chapter 4 tackles the final phase, spanning Samuel's landmark speech addressing Arab concerns with Zionism to the final confirmation of the Mandate in Parliament (June 1921 – July 1922), in which *The Daily Mail* added an uncharacteristic amount of political focus onto its usual approach of discussing Palestine in the context of wasteful government spending, while *The Times* finally embarked on its ill-fated anti-Weizmann propaganda campaign.

The broader historiographical discussion that this thesis seeks to contribute to is the debate over the extent to which the Jewish national home policy could have seen significant alterations in the period between the Balfour Declaration and the final confirmation of the Mandate. Numerous scholars have attempted to address this question and have offered various dates or events that marked the point of “no turning back” for British support for Zionism.³⁴ Knowing what we know about the power and influence of the Northcliffe Press, and knowing that Lord Northcliffe did eventually become a steadfast opponent of the principles of the Balfour Declaration, is it possible that an

³⁴ See for example: Malcolm Yapp, “The Making of the Palestine Mandate,” in *Middle Eastern Lectures, Vol. 1* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 1995); Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*; Cohen, “Was the Balfour Declaration at risk in 1923?”

earlier shift against the Zionist movement in *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* could have resulted in a vastly different form of governance for Palestine under the British mandate?

CHAPTER II

WISEST AND BEST POLICY

NOVEMBER 1917 – MAY 1920

A. Introduction

Alfred Harmsworth, the 1st Viscount Northcliffe, owner of Britain's most popular (*The Daily Mail*) and most prestigious (*The Times*) newspapers, did not express his views on Zionism publicly until 1922, although his papers had begun to acquire a reputation for anti-Semitism during the First World War. This began right around the same time as the Shell Crisis of 1915, when *The Times* reported that Germany's sinking of the *Lusitania* (a British ocean liner carrying nearly 1,200 people) was being celebrated by Jewish communities in Hamburg. *Times* correspondent Valentine Chirol accused the German Jewish shipping magnate Albert Ballin of perpetrating the crime, while the paper also promoted a campaign to strip British Jewish banker Sir Ernest Cassel of his knighthood and citizenship. Jewish newspapers in London attacked *The Times* for "describing all Jews as Germans" and "inciting the people, day after day, to identify the Jews with the Germans."³⁵ The conflation of Jews with Germans was also a feature of Northcliffe's private conversations: when British Jewish banker Nathan Rothschild, 1st Baron Rothschild wrote to the *Times* owner on the eve of Britain's entry into the war in July 1914 to request that his paper calm its aggressive interventionist stance, Northcliffe and his trusted Vienna-based reporter Henry Wickham Steed regarded this as a "dirty

³⁵ Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Vol. 4: Suicidal Europe, 1870-1933* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), 191.

German-Jewish international financial attempt to bully us into advocating neutrality.”³⁶

Despite all this, when Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour issued his declaration that the British government viewed with favour the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine in November 1917, both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* were unequivocal in their support for the policy.

To those familiar with some of the statements made and actions taken by leading promoters of Zionism such as Balfour,³⁷ Winston Churchill,³⁸ or even the movement’s founding father Theodor Herzl,³⁹ it is perhaps not surprising to read about a proponent of the Jewish national home idea who also seemingly harbored anti-Semitic views. For Northcliffe, ensuring Allied victory in the war trumped all other concerns, and like many in London he saw the Balfour Declaration as holding the potential to provoke a greater American input into the Allied cause.⁴⁰ But after American escalation was secured, the Germans were soon defeated and the war was over—yet the Northcliffe Press did not start questioning Britain’s support for the Jewish national home project going forward. Rather, it served as one of the most influential sources of Zionist propaganda in Britain

³⁶ These are Steed’s words, to which Northcliffe concurred, recalled in Steed’s memoir *Through Thirty Years, 1892-1922, Vol. II* (London: Heinemann, 1924), 8. Steed identifies the writer of the letter to Northcliffe not as Lord Rothschild but as “the head of one of the chief financial houses in the City,” but Niall Ferguson identifies the author as Rothschild in *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 258.

³⁷ As Prime Minister (1903-05), Balfour supported the passage of the 1905 Aliens Act, regarded by many as designed to keep Eastern European Jews out of Britain.

³⁸ Churchill wrote a notorious editorial for the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* in 1920 entitled “Zionism vs. Bolshevism,” in which he praised Zionists (“good jews”) yet used anti-Semitic conspiratorial themes to describe socialists and communists (“bad jews”).

³⁹ Herzl diagnosed one of the main causes of anti-Semitism in *Der Judenstaat* as the “abundance of mediocre intellects” produced by Jewry; many scholars have noted anti-Semitic themes in his books and diary entries. See: Peter Loewenberg, *Theodor Herzl: A Psychoanalytic Study in Charismatic Political Leadership* in “The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of History,” ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: Basic Books, 1971); Muhammad Ali Khalidi, “Utopian Zionism or Zionist Proselytism? A Reading of Herzl’s *Altmeuland*,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, Summer 2001.

⁴⁰ Beginning in 1915, the Foreign Office discussed expressing support for Zionism as a way to rally Jews in America and all over the world in support of the Allied cause. See: Mayir Vereté, “*The Balfour Declaration and its Makers*,” in *From Palmerston to Balfour: The Collected Essays of Mayir Vereté*, ed. Norman Rose (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 55-56.

during the crucial period when Chaim Weizmann and the Zionist Commission began setting up shop in Palestine. This chapter will argue that despite plenty of evidence of substantial opposition to Zionism and the Balfour Declaration emanating from British officials (both in London and in Palestine), British Jewish groups, and the native Palestinian Arabs, the Northcliffe Press chose to act as one of Weizmann's most reliable propagandists for a full year-and-a-half after the defeat of the Germans and two-and-a-half years after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration.

B. The United States and the Balfour Declaration

The year 1917 was, in the words of British historian A. J. P. Taylor, “the worst year of [World War I]” for British civilians.⁴¹ The British wheat supply had been reduced to a paltry reserve, food and fuel supplies had begun to dwindle, and conversations were starting to take place in London about the possibility of labor and supply rationing. On the military front, British Expeditionary Front Commander Douglas Haig's disastrous campaign in Passchendaele, Belgium had achieved minimal territorial gains yet caused the loss of myriads of soldiers and officers. Prime Minister David Lloyd George, desperate to turn the hopeless situation around, sought a greater contribution to the Allied effort from the United States and President Woodrow Wilson, who had declared war on Germany in April and had sent the Allies supplies and raw materials but had yet to engage troops.⁴² Lloyd George decided to send the influential Lord Northcliffe across the Atlantic with the task of securing increased American involvement in the war. Lloyd

⁴¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 88.

⁴² Taylor, 73-93.

George had made several attempts to form a relationship with the press baron following his ascendancy to the premiership in December 1916, but Lord Northcliffe had consistently rebuffed his overtures.⁴³ But the belief that a greater input from the United States—a country Northcliffe had visited twenty times since 1894 and admired greatly—could play a decisive role in defeating the Germans led the press baron to accept the Prime Minister’s offer to serve as the Chairman of the British War Mission to the United States in May 1917.⁴⁴ *Times* correspondent Wickham Steed later remarked that Lloyd George’s assignment for his boss was inspired both by the premier’s “wish to utilize [Northcliffe’s] knowledge of America” but also to “[remove] his influence from the military wrangle at home,”⁴⁵ owing to the fact that *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* had been among the leading critics of the Prime Minister’s handling of the war.⁴⁶ Northcliffe made his way to the US and spent the next six months meeting with business leaders, journalists and government officials pleading the British case for more American help. The trip included stints in New York and Washington before the press lord embarked on a tour of the Mid-Western United States, where he believed the substantial German-American communities were playing a role in pushing anti-Allied Powers propaganda. From Northcliffe’s perspective, the trip was mostly unsuccessful: while he was pleased with some of the progress he had made with businessmen and journalists, he complained

⁴³ Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, 175-224.

⁴⁴ For more on Northcliffe’s time as head of the British War Mission, see J. Lee Thompson, “‘To Tell the People of America the Truth’: Lord Northcliffe in the USA, Unofficial British Propaganda, June-November 1917,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Apr 1999), 243-262.

⁴⁵ Henry Wickham Steed, *Through Thirty Years, 1892-1922: A Personal Narrative, Vol. II* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd.), 140-141.

⁴⁶ For more on the tumultuous relationship between Northcliffe and Lloyd George, see: J. M. McEwen, “Northcliffe and Lloyd George at War, 1914-1918,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Sep 1981), 651-672.

in a letter sent back home that “ignorance about the war is absolutely colossal”⁴⁷ among government officials, including President Wilson. He made numerous references in letters to friends and colleagues to American indifference and incredulousness at his claims of British weakness and German strength, and he blamed this complacent attitude on the effectiveness of German propaganda alongside the weakness of British propaganda.⁴⁸ Disappointed, he went back to London at the beginning of November, determined to focus on stepping up the propaganda efforts in his papers while continuing to lobby for greater American support from afar.

Northcliffe arrived back in Britain on 3 November 1917, one day after Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour’s declaration that His Majesty’s Government viewed with favour the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Knowing that the Declaration and Zionism were of supreme importance to several figures close to Wilson—most notably, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis⁴⁹—the Northcliffe Press jumped on a potential opportunity to induce greater American support for Britain by enthusiastically endorsing the development. Breaking the news of the declaration on 9 and 10 November one week after its announcement, both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* reported via their Washington-based correspondents that it was not only Zionists but “all classes of Jews in the United States” who were thrilled with Balfour’s announcement, with *The Times* adding that the Foreign Secretary’s letter filled American Jews with enthusiasm and strengthened “their determination to prosecute the war to a victorious

⁴⁷ Northcliffe Circular Letter, 12 August 1917, Northcliffe Papers, Harmsworth Archive, quoted in Thompson, ““To Tell the People of America the Truth,”” 252.

⁴⁸ Thompson, ““To Tell the People of America the Truth,”” 252-262.

⁴⁹ See: Ben Halpern, “Brandeis and the Origins of the Balfour Declaration,” *Studies in Zionism*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1983), 71-100.

conclusion.” According to *The Times* report, the Zionist movement represented “nearly 90 per cent of American Jewry, indeed all Jewry except Socialists of the Hillquit type⁵⁰ and an extremely small minority of wealthy financiers.”⁵¹ This premise was expanded on for the first time in greater detail in an editorial in *The Daily Mail* on 20 December by foreign correspondent Bernard B. Falk. Noting that three quarters of the world’s Jewish population lived outside of Central Power-controlled Germany and Austria-Hungary, Falk posited that Balfour’s promise had the power to bring up to 10 million Jews (“mostly American and Russian”) over to the Allied side, including “some of the greatest businessmen and financiers.” For Falk, the decision to declare publicly the desire to “restore the national home for the Jewish people” put Britain in perfect position to “be the voice of this propaganda.”⁵²

Following the Balfour Declaration, the Northcliffe Press continued to promote the Zionist cause by highlighting the contributions of Jewish battalions to the war effort and by praising the progress of the existing Zionist colonies in Palestine. A puff piece boosting the efforts and discipline of Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky’s Jewish Legion battalion appeared in *The Times* in February 1918;⁵³ the following month, *The Daily Mail* reported the astonishment of the British Ambassador to the United States (Rufus Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading) at the Jewish community’s ability to contribute so much to the war effort while simultaneously rehabilitating Palestine.⁵⁴ *The Times* added commentary on the uniquely impressive physiques of Jewish war recruits and claimed that building

⁵⁰ Morris Hillquitt was a Socialist Party of America leader, New York City mayoral candidate and anti-war activist of Russian Jewish origin.

⁵¹ “Palestine for the Jews,” *The Times*, 10 Nov 1917; “American Jews’ Gratitude” *The Daily Mail*, 10 Nov 1917.

⁵² Bernard B. Falk, “The Sympathies of 10,000,000 Jews,” *The Daily Mail*, 20 Dec 1917.

⁵³ “Jewish Soldiers’ March,” *The Times*, 5 Feb 1918.

⁵⁴ “The Fighting Jews,” *The Daily Mail*, 27 March 1918.

the Jewish battalions had become “the all-absorbing topic of interest in practically all sections of Palestinian Jewry.”⁵⁵ On 30 March, a *Times* correspondent in Jerusalem described the Jewish agricultural colonies in southern Palestine as “tidy villages, with lands which are far more thoroughly and scientifically cultivated than almost all the Arab estates or the Turkish Crown lands.” The article emphasized the democratic nature and organizational capabilities of the colonies’ village councils—which possessed “greater powers and responsibilities than many town councils in Europe”—in spite of many years of Turkish neglect and the detrimental effects of the war.⁵⁶ *The Daily Mail*’s version of this report claimed that the progress of Jewish colonization in Palestine had even far outpaced the progress of the colonization efforts undertaken by the French government in Tunisia, despite only enjoying the backing of private individuals.⁵⁷

While the Northcliffe Press was offering glowing praise for everything Zionist, the movement’s leader Chaim Weizmann moved to Palestine to establish the Zionist Commission (ZC) in February 1918, and it did not take long before the new organization began to collide with both the British military administration and the Palestinian Arab elite. The ZC, granted the power by the British government to serve merely as a liaison between the Jewish community and British officials,⁵⁸ began embarking on a wide range of development activities including establishing telephone and electricity operations, a program to locally exploit the mineral resources of the Dead Sea, and the granting of “official” status to the Hebrew language.⁵⁹ These audacious projects drew the ire of

⁵⁵ “The New Maccabees,” *The Times*, 17 Aug 1918.

⁵⁶ “Model Farm Colonies,” *The Times*, 30 March 1918.

⁵⁷ “Home Rule for Palestine,” *The Daily Mail*, 21 May 1918.

⁵⁸ Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 64.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

Ronald Storrs, the Military Governor of Jerusalem and *de facto* man in charge of Palestine,⁶⁰ who considered himself a Zionist but did not feel that it was the military regime's duty to begin the implementation of the Jewish national home.⁶¹ While Storrs sympathized with and tried to reason with the Zionists, other military officials soon ran out of patience: Lieutenant General Walter N. Congreve, commander of troops stationed in Egypt and Palestine, described the Zionists as “aggressive, contentious and unbridled” and expressed hope that the Balfour Declaration would be canceled.⁶² Similar grumblings began emanating from London, including from highly influential statesman such as Earl Curzon of Kedleston, who criticized several of his fellow government officials for “allowing the Jews to have things too much their own way.”⁶³ Meanwhile, an Arab political club known as the Muslim-Christian Association formed in Jaffa with an unequivocally anti-Zionist, anti-Balfour Declaration platform and soon began organizing in other Palestinian cities.⁶⁴

None of this was reported in the Northcliffe Press, and when the topic of opposition to Weizmann's efforts did come up in *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*, the depth of the opposition was obscured. The League of British Jews (LBJ), led by Louis Montagu, 2nd Baron Swaythling, appeared several times in the Northcliffe Press in 1918 to criticize the idea of a “specific Jewish Government” and to call for a British

⁶⁰ General Edmund Allenby was technically the highest-ranking official in charge in Palestine from his occupation of the country in December 1917 until his re-assignment to Special High Commissioner of Egypt in 1919, yet most accounts view Storrs as the main man in charge.

⁶¹ Segev, 86.

⁶² Ibid, 92.

⁶³ Ibid, 95.

⁶⁴ Ilan Pappé, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis, 1700-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 175-177; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Struggle for Palestinian Statehood* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 55.

Protectorate in Palestine,⁶⁵ yet the true aims of the organization were never printed. Not once was it stated that Lord Swaythling and his movement not only steadfastly opposed the Balfour Declaration, but that the LBJ had in fact been formed in November 1917 as a direct response against it.⁶⁶ *The Times* did note Swaythling's fear that the creation of a Jewish state would cause trouble for European Jews who had no interest in immigration, and also made sure to highlight his stated hope that the population of Palestine would over time become majority Jewish.⁶⁷ But the central goal of Swaythling and the LBJ, which featured several notable figures including Sir Philip Magnus and Lionel de Rothschild, had always been to prevent the implementation of the Balfour Declaration.⁶⁸ This fact was nowhere to be found in the pages of *The Times* nor *The Daily Mail*.

Likewise, rarely was a word said in the Northcliffe Press about the Arabs in Palestine and their growing anti-Zionist sentiments. One of the few mentions of the native inhabitants came on 30 July, when *The Daily Mail* reported that Weizmann's gift of a "historic copy of the Koran" to Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Kamil al-Husayni had touched Palestine's Islamic community.⁶⁹ It would not be until after the war's end and the Paris Peace Conference's beginning that the issue of Arab cooperation with the Jewish national home idea would be addressed in the Northcliffe Press. But for the first year after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* chose either to ignore or to misreport on the numerous British figures in London, British figures in Palestine, and Arab figures in Palestine who complained that the ZC was overstepping its

⁶⁵ "League of British Jews," *The Daily Mail*, 19 June 1918.

⁶⁶ Stuart Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews: The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1896-1920* (Princeton: Princeton Legacy Library, 1982).

⁶⁷ "Future of Palestine" *The Times*, 15 May 1918.

⁶⁸ Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: the Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 121.

⁶⁹ untitled article, *The Daily Mail*, 30 July 1918.

assignment and engaging in state-like activities. Meanwhile, the official line in the Northcliffe Press remained that “not one Jewish statesman sought a Jewish state.”⁷⁰

C. The Emergence of Wickham Steed

Whether Northcliffe’s lobbying and press efforts played a significant role in Wilson’s thinking or not, the United States did finally increase its war contribution in 1918. The Americans helped British and French forces turn back the powerful German “Spring Offensive” (March – July) before playing an even more crucial role in the Allied “Hundred Days Offensive” (August – November). On 9 November, German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated his throne, essentially marking the beginning of the end of the war. Britain and France, who had been engaging in hypothetical discussions over the future of Ottoman-administered lands were the Ottoman state to collapse for years,⁷¹ now had to address the Palestine question more seriously. Just as the post-war peace conference in Paris got underway, *Times* editor Geoffrey Dawson stepped down from the post he had held since 1912, citing Northcliffe’s over-bearing influence in his resignation letter:

It is a step to which I had in any case been making up my mind for some weeks past—ever since it became clear that Lord Northcliffe was constantly dissatisfied with the policy of the “Times” on the ground that it differed from his own expressions of opinion in other newspapers.⁷²

⁷⁰ “Home Rule for Palestine,” *The Daily Mail*, 21 May 1918.

⁷¹ There is endless literature on the Sykes-Picot Agreement and British-French foreign policy in this era; one of the best overviews can be found in David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Avon Books, 1989).

⁷² Geoffrey Dawson to John Walter, Chairman of *The Times* Publishing Company; retrieved from “Resignation of the Editor of the ‘Times,’” *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 Feb 1919.

Northcliffe would later comment, “I liked Dawson very much. I had nothing against him except that he is just naturally pro-German. He can’t help it.”⁷³ Northcliffe quickly filled the vacancy of Britain’s top newspaper editorial position with his most trusted foreign correspondent, Wickham Steed. Steed, a *Times* reporter for nearly twenty-five years prior to the promotion, had become a Northcliffe favorite thanks to his role in the push for war; while many *Times* correspondents had been either ambivalent or in opposition to Britain’s entry into the conflict, Steed’s dispatches in the summer of 1914 were the most hawkish of any printed in the paper.⁷⁴ Steed’s aggressive view towards the war stemmed from his deep loathing for Austria-Hungary and his desire to see its collapse, a position he had developed after many years of serving as the *Times* Vienna correspondent.⁷⁵ Aside from his work for *The Times*, Steed was mostly known at this point for authoring a book based on his experiences in Austria-Hungary entitled *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, released in 1913. For the purposes of our discussion, the most pertinent section in Steed’s first and most popular book was the one entitled “The Jews.” As Steed biographer Andre Liebich and others have noted, the section is riddled with anti-Semitic canards. Steed opined that certain characteristics were inherent in the Jewish race, including the tendency to exploit other’s labor.⁷⁶ The Jewish type of chauvinism was a “peculiarly repugnant” form of jingoism and its greatest danger was its “dissimulation of Jewish ideas and interests under a non-Jewish cloak.”⁷⁷ Steed went as far as to say that “the intensity of the Jewish race character is such that the Jewish strain will persist for generations in non-Jewish families

⁷³ Geoffrey Harmsworth and Reginald Pound, *Northcliffe* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 827.

⁷⁴ Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 195.

⁷⁵ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), 114.

⁷⁶ Henry Wickham Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy* (London: Constable & Co., 1913), 149.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 174.

into which Jewish blood has once entered.”⁷⁸ Much of the section was devoted to advancing the thesis of Werner Sombart, the German economist who had published a book two years prior (*The Jews and Modern Capitalism*) arguing that capitalism was essentially a Jewish creation.⁷⁹

Steed’s anti-Semitism is undeniable, and as we shall see in Chapter 3, it is this element of his world view that has garnered the most attention among modern scholars.⁸⁰ But interestingly, Steed also makes it clear in *The Hapsburg Monarchy* that while he held a distinct disdain for “assimilationist” Jews—particularly those assimilating as proud Germans or Austrians—he also harbored considerable sympathy for the burgeoning Zionist movement. “Healthier ideas are beginning to prevail among the younger generation of Jews in Austria-Hungary,” Steed offered, “thanks largely to the influence of Zionist propaganda.”⁸¹ He felt that the main effect of the rise of Zionism had been to give its young adherents “self-confidence and the courage of their convictions.”⁸² Steed painted a picture in *The Hapsburg Monarchy* of an existential struggle between assimilationists and Zionists, and argued that because Zionism tended towards openness and honesty that it was “the most hopeful sign noticeable in Jewry for centuries.”⁸³

Steed assumed his new role as editor of *The Times* shortly after the opening of international peace discussions in Paris, and it was over the course of the conference that several of the issues with the British-Zionist program for Palestine became more visible, especially with regards to the Arab perspective. The Muslim-Christian Association

⁷⁸ Ibid, 168.

⁷⁹ Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, trans. M. Epstein (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951).

⁸⁰ For more on Steed’s anti-Semitism, see Andre Liebich, “The Antisemitism of Henry Wickham Steed,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 46:2 (May 2012).

⁸¹ Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, 175.

⁸² Ibid, 177.

⁸³ Ibid, 179.

(MCA) formed in the previous year had now crafted a formal statement of opposition to the Balfour Declaration and Zionism, which both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* published in March.⁸⁴ Weizmann, meanwhile, further angered the nascent Arab anti-Zionist movement by proclaiming in his presentation in Paris that the goal of the Zionist movement was to “make Palestine as Jewish as England is English,”⁸⁵ a quote that would be held up by the MCA and other elements of the anti-Zionist movement as evidence of the true aims of Zionism for years to come. Yet the most glaring indication of the reality of Arab feeling towards Zionism emerged from the US-sponsored King-Crane Commission. The Commission, President Wilson’s attempt to collect a comprehensive survey of public opinion about what form of government was desired by the inhabitants of the nearly-collapsed Ottoman state, brought to light the severity of Arab hostility to Zionism. In the section addressing the Zionist project, the Commission reported that there were:

1,350 (72.3 per cent) petitions protesting against Zionist claims and purposes. This is the third largest number for any one point and represents a more widespread general opinion among both Moslems and Christians than any other. The anti-Zionist note was especially strong in Palestine, where 222 (85.3 per cent) of the 260 petitions declared against the Zionist program. This is the largest percentage in the district for any one point.⁸⁶

Although the full report was not submitted to the conference until August and not published in its entirety until the end of 1922, enough details had emerged for *The Times* to acknowledge on 28 July that “except for the Jewish minority nobody favours Zionism

⁸⁴ “Jews in Palestine,” *The Times*, 10 Mar 1919; “Claims to Palestine” *The Daily Mail*, 8 Mar 1919.

⁸⁵ Chaim Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann: August 1898-July 1931* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 257.

⁸⁶ Charles R. Crane and Henry Churchill King, “Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey,” (New York: Editor & Publisher, 1922).

for Palestine.”⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the conference ended with most of the Palestine question left unanswered; the progress that was made was the creation of the “mandatory power” concept, in which a great power would hold sovereignty over Palestine until its inhabitants were ready to govern themselves.

With Steed now running the show, *The Times* went from mostly ignoring the growing concerns about Zionism to criticizing their merits in the autumn of 1919. A *Times* correspondent stationed in Jerusalem began this effort in a report on 16 September entitled “The Return of the Jews.” While the reporter acknowledged that the largest obstacle standing in the way of the implementation of the Balfour Declaration was indeed opposition from native Arabs, this opposition derived from a “sheer illusion.” The Arabs of Palestine—who the correspondent described as “much smarter” than most other Arabs—were instigating unrest only because of their misunderstanding of the nature of the Zionist movement. Most responsible Jews, the correspondent claimed, were driven by economic and cultural rather than political concerns. Furthermore, the Weizmann-led ZC had shown caution in its approach towards immigration and political development and had instilled the reporter with confidence that “moderate Zionism” was prevailing in Palestine. When the reporter asked ZC leadership if they felt that the yet-to-be-named first High Commissioner of Palestine should be a Jew, the response was a resounding “no”—the ZC merely expected a Jewish representative on the High Commissioner’s council. For this reporter, “Christian and Musulman fanatics” must listen and understand, for acceptance that the Zionists were playing a positive role in Palestine was “the only way of safety.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ “Future of Syria,” *The Times*, 28 July 1919.

⁸⁸ “The Return of the Jews,” *The Times*, 16 September 1919.

This report prompted a response in *The Times* from Joseph Cowen, one of the founders of the British Zionist Federation and a former close confidant of Herzl. Cowen, a high-ranking member of the Zionist Organization at this time but not identified as such in his letter, wrote to *The Times* to clarify the Zionist position. Despite what the Jerusalem correspondent had claimed, the Zionist movement was indeed economic, cultural, *and* political—the Zionists sought, as Weizmann had made clear in Paris, “a not-too-distant future of a Palestine as Jewish as England is English.” The Arabs had no legitimate reason to object to this, Cowen argued, for they had been granted a state in the Hedjaz and they were nearly as responsible as the Turk for the centuries of neglect in Palestine.⁸⁹ Steed’s editorials, meanwhile, read as if there was no Arab-Zionist conflict at all; when the issue of Palestine came up, the *Times* editor only seemed to want to discuss the need for British and French cooperation in running their respective mandates (Palestine for Britain, Syria for France) side-by-side. “Jewish Palestine” was a given for Steed, and it was up to the British and French to settle the Palestine-Syria border question in a way that created “not a struggling State, but one that is capable of vigorous and independent national life” and allowed for “full economic development for the country.”⁹⁰

Faced with clear evidence that there was indeed serious Arab opposition to Zionism and that the Zionists did indeed seek to dominate the country, Steed made it clear at the beginning of his new assignment as *Times* editor that he intended to provide Weizmann and his cadre with a full, unqualified endorsement. Arab concerns were brushed off if not ignored entirely, and at no point in 1919 did the voice of an Arab or

⁸⁹ Joseph Cowen, “The Jewish Claim in Palestine,” *The Times*, 25 September 1919.

⁹⁰ “The Settlement in Syria,” *The Times*, 19 September 1919.

even an Arab sympathizer of English extract find its way onto the Letters to the Editor page. While Zionists familiar with *The Hapsburg Monarchy* may have been surprised to find such a positive portrayal of their movement in *The Times* following Steed's arrival at the editor's chair, Weizmann got exactly what he expected from the paper. The Zionist leader recalled in his memoirs that six months prior to the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, he went to *Times* headquarters to hand in a letter in person; there to receive him was Steed, who Weizmann found to be "not only interested in our movement, but quite well informed in it."⁹¹ Days later, Weizmann picked up a copy of *The Times* and was delighted to find that Steed had written "a magnificent presentation of the Zionist case."⁹²

Why was the Northcliffe Press continuing to support Zionism now that the war was over? The key factors were most likely Russia and America. Northcliffe despised the Bolsheviks just as much as the Germans, yet *The Times* tended to prioritize propagandizing against the latter even after the Bolshevik Revolution as he deemed the Germans to be the more immediate threat.⁹³ But with the Germans now out of the picture and Vladimir Lenin's revolutionary government having seemingly stabilized after taking power, Northcliffe and Steed saw continued endorsement of Zionism as a way to strengthen the Anglo-American partnership in the face of another formidable enemy. Woodrow Wilson would remain in office stateside until January 1921, and Northcliffe knew that any reversal on the Jewish national home policy would likely strain relations

⁹¹ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 254.

⁹² *Ibid*, 255.

⁹³ Kenneth O'Reilly, "The *Times* of London and the Bolshevik Revolution," *Journalism Quarterly*, 56 (Spring 1979), 69-76.

with the administration in Washington. As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, it did not take long for rumors of a Zionist-Bolshevik connection in Palestine to surface, and Northcliffe and Steed took differing views about the seriousness of these allegations. But in 1919, maintaining a strong relationship with Wilson was far more important for Northcliffe and Steed than providing a forum for the anti-Zionist movement.

D. *The Daily Mail* and the Financial Burden of Palestine

The opening of the League of Nations inaugural assembly in January 1920 meant that the work of the Paris Peace Conference was essentially finished.⁹⁴ The end of the conference meant the beginning of the mandate system, and the San Remo Conference in April all but guaranteed that Britain would receive the Mandate for Palestine. As soon as Britain's future role in Palestine seemed to be confirmed, *The Daily Mail* began to express serious concerns over the financial burden that this role would entail. As it turned out, these concerns would define the paper's Palestine coverage for the next two years. Veteran Northcliffe Press correspondent Lovat Fraser led this charge, first bringing up the issue in March 1920 to argue that Chancellor of the Exchequer Austen Chamberlain's already bloated army budget estimate (described by Fraser as "bred by madness out of waste") was based on a theoretical 50% reduction in army garrisons in Palestine and Mesopotamia, a proposition highly unlikely to be fulfilled.⁹⁵ The settlement at San Remo only exacerbated the concern for future spending in *The Daily Mail*; in the first editorial focusing on foreign military expenditure abroad post-San Remo, the paper warned of

⁹⁴ MacMillan, 485.

⁹⁵ Lovat Fraser, "Twelve Hundred Millions!" *The Daily Mail*, 15 March 1920.

getting involved in the Armenian question, for “the British taxpayer is already saddled with a ‘sort of war’ in Palestine.”⁹⁶ Another report shortly after San Remo described Chamberlain’s foreign expenditure policies as “parasitic” and complained that the efforts in Palestine, Mesopotamia and Armenia were putting upon the British taxpayer “the burdens of the whole earth.”⁹⁷

At the same time as *The Daily Mail* began expressing profound concern for government expenditure in Palestine, the paper did not waver in its support for the Zionist movement. The settlement at San Remo was still announced as a great victory for both the Jews and the British:

The fate of Palestine has been settled in a way satisfactory to Zionist aspirations. It will be the national home for the Jews in the manner outlined by the Balfour declaration [...] The mandates for Palestine and that for Mesopotamia are to be British [...] Thus will the Jewish aspirations of thousands of years be fulfilled. Palestine, a country rendered derelict by centuries of Turkish rule, will retain its historic importance under a stable government.⁹⁸

The Daily Mail wanted the government to press on with its full support for Zionism, yet it expected the Zionist Organization to commit to picking up a greater share of the bill. Weizmann was well aware of this, telling a *Daily Mail* correspondent in an exclusive interview shortly after San Remo, “We must raise £25,000,000 for the work, but that will not be difficult.”⁹⁹ A few days later, the paper reported with a delighted tone that German-American Jewish businessman Nathan Straus, owner of Macy’s Department

⁹⁶ “The Taxpayer’s Danger,” *The Daily Mail*, 29 April 1920.

⁹⁷ “Sack the Parasites,” *The Daily Mail*, 21 April 1920.

⁹⁸ “National Home of Jews,” *The Daily Mail*, 26 April 1920.

⁹⁹ “Zionist Plans,” *The Daily Mail*, 7 May 1920.

Stores, had just contributed a sizable donation of £20,000 to the Hebrew University's Medical Center.¹⁰⁰

While never particularly tied to the Tory Party, Lord Northcliffe was certainly a staunch conservative, and government spending plans he deemed to be excessive would always grab his attention—especially in *The Daily Mail*, the paper aimed at the masses. But by no means did the estimated costs for Palestine begin to have the paper re-think its pro-Zionist approach; Northcliffe was confident both in the ability of his paper to pressure the government into budget cuts as well as the Zionists' ability to fundraise. Northcliffe like many in Britain at the time held exaggerated and anti-Semitic assumptions about the level of financial capital that existed in the Jewish community, and he sought at this point to merely remind the Zionists that the British were supporting the Jewish national home because they believed that the Jews could pay for it themselves.

E. Nebi Musa Festival, 1920

Meanwhile, a massive outbreak of violence in Jerusalem would open up a new stage in the Jewish national home debate. On 4 April 1920, the procession of the annual Islamic pilgrimage to the Tomb of Moses outside the city of Jericho failed to depart Jerusalem before a wave of violence erupted in the holy city. Tens of thousands had gathered in Jerusalem's Old City for the march, and while accounts vary as to what happened next, the end result was that hundreds (mostly Jews) were injured and nine (five Jews and four Arabs) were killed.¹⁰¹ In the aftermath, the Zionists placed a heavy share of the blame on

¹⁰⁰ "Grateful U.S. Jewry," *The Daily Mail*, 11 May 1920.

¹⁰¹ Segev, 128-144.

Ronald Storrs and the leaders of the military administration. Weizmann accused Bertie Harry Waters-Taylor, General Allenby's chief of staff, of inciting the Arabs to riot. The Zionists were also highly angered by Storrs's blockage of Vladimir Jabotinsky's attempt to bring his Jewish Self-Defense Corps militia to the Old City to counter the rioters, as well as his subsequent arrest for illegal arms possession. Zionist Commission chief Menachem Ussishkin described the events in Jerusalem as a pogrom, implying that the government had not only endorsed but helped to organize anti-Semitic violence.¹⁰² The official British inquiry into the disturbances known as the Palin Commission would not submit its report until July, although the *Times* Jerusalem correspondent reported two days after the violence quieted that a reliable eye-witness had told him that the Arab attack appeared to be pre-meditated.¹⁰³

As evidenced by both Steed's editorials as well as dispatches from reporters in the Nebi Musa riot aftermath, the events in Jerusalem created a newfound sense of concern about the Jewish national home's future on the pages of *The Times*. A *Times* correspondent in Washington relayed rumors he had heard on 14 April that the British were considering reneging on the Balfour Declaration and turning Palestine into a Jewish province under the Hashemite Prince Faisal's newly-created Arab State in Syria. The reporter deemed this prospect to be "distinctly explosive," especially from the standpoint of British-American relations. Turning control of Palestine over to the Arabs would "disgust our friends and encourage our enemies" and would eventually "produce an agitation of the same type as the agitation about Ireland," the reporter continued. The article concluded with a re-print of the full text of the Balfour Declaration, appended with

¹⁰² Ibid, 137-138.

¹⁰³ "Origin of Jerusalem Riots," *The Times*, 9 April 1920.

a statement from the Jewish Correspondence Bureau claiming Jewish desire to live in peace with the Arabs.¹⁰⁴ Steed took to the Editorial page the next day to express his view that if the rumor this correspondent was hearing was true, this policy shift would do immense harm in the United States, where “90 per cent of the Jewish population are fervent Zionists.” Steed warned that reversing the Balfour Declaration, the document that “filled hearts with joy around the world,” would crush Jewish faith in Great Britain. The Declaration “embodied the wisest and best policy of which the situation admitted” and had “satisfied the passionate hopes of all Jewry.”¹⁰⁵ Two days after the San Remo resolution was passed, Steed took to the Editorial page once more to boost the Balfour Declaration and to criticize Storrs and the military authorities. After commenting that the attitude of the British administration in Palestine had been “strangely anti-Zionist,” Steed went on to speculate that the real reason behind the prison sentence given to Jabotinsky—who was “well and honourably known in this country”—was that the Zionist militia leader had written critical things about Storrs in the press. Without mentioning Storrs by name, Steed concluded the piece by strongly implying that the military governor should be removed from office:

If the difficult problem of Palestine is to be solved under a British mandate, no stigma of partiality should attach to the executive agents of the mandatory Power. The first step, therefore, is promptly to remove that stigma where it exists and, with it, those who may be responsible for attaching it to the British name.¹⁰⁶

Over on the Letters to the Editor page, Herbert Samuel, the Jewish former Home Secretary who had promoted the idea of a Jewish national home as early as 1915, wrote

¹⁰⁴ “Jewish Homeland,” *The Times*, 14 April 1920.

¹⁰⁵ “The Promised Land,” *The Times*, 15 April 1920.

¹⁰⁶ “Mandate for Palestine,” *The Times*, 27 April 1920.

in to warn of additional dangers of renegeing on the Balfour Declaration. According to Samuel, the simultaneous rise of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey and the granting of the Arab State in Syria to Prince Faisal posed the serious threat of the two merging into an Islamic alliance opposed to the Allies. If this were to transpire, a British-Jewish controlled Palestine would serve as “the perfect buffer state.” For Samuel, the British public had no reason to seek the friendship of Arabs or any other nationality other than Jewish.¹⁰⁷ Less than two months later, Samuel would be appointed the inaugural High Commissioner of Palestine, to replace General Allenby’s military rule with a civil administration on 1 July 1920. The move was highly controversial: Allenby himself cabled the Foreign Office to warn that the appointment of a Jew as the first Governor “will be highly dangerous,”¹⁰⁸ and Lieutenant General Louis Bols followed up by warning that the native population “are convinced that [Samuel] will be a partisan Zionist and that he represents a Jewish and not a British government.”¹⁰⁹ While these concerns were expressed in private, similar apprehensions were voiced by a number of lords when Parliament took up the issue of Palestine just days before Samuel was to take office. Charles Cochrane-Baillie, 2nd Baron Lamington declared that the appointment of Samuel showed the government to be “out of touch with the feeling in the Near East” and that the Arabs would regard it as “a distinct challenge.” Edward Stanley, 4th Baron Sheffield concurred, warning that the Arabs in Palestine “must feel suspicious.” Lord Curzon, now having replaced Balfour as Foreign

¹⁰⁷ HS, “England and Palestine,” *The Times*, 7 April 1920.

¹⁰⁸ Doreen Ingrams, *The Palestine Papers, 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1972), 105.

¹⁰⁹ Ingrams, *The Palestine Papers*, 106.

Secretary, added that “very grave doubts have been expressed as to the wisdom of sending a Jewish Administrator to the country at this moment.”¹¹⁰

However, the debate over the wisdom of Samuel’s appointment did not make it into the pages of *The Times* whatsoever. Steed made his views on the new High Commissioner clear on 16 June: “[Samuel] will carry with him to Palestine the good will of all who understand the high importance of stating the Jewish question in its true terms, and of enabling Jews, as Jews, to stand on an assured footing among the great peoples of the earth.”¹¹¹ But the opposing view was not given a platform in the paper, and the 29 June debate in the House of Lords referenced above was not even mentioned. Although *Times* readers did not find out what Curzon, Sheffield and Lamington had to say about Samuel, they were exposed to an exclusive interview with leading American Zionist Louis Brandeis, in which the Supreme Court Justice and close associate of President Wilson expressed “very great pleasure at the admirable appointment.”¹¹²

F. Conclusion

Regular readers of the Northcliffe papers were likely unsurprised to pick up the 7 May 1920 edition of *The Daily Mail* and read that Weizmann had told a *Mail* reporter, “Zionists the world over will never cease to be grateful for what *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* have done for them.”¹¹³ The favors Northcliffe and Steed pulled for Weizmann during this period were numerous: pumping up the Jewish battalions and Jewish agricultural colonies shortly after the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, offering

¹¹⁰ House of Lords Debate, 29 June 1920.

¹¹¹ “The High Commissioner for Palestine,” *The Times*, 16 June 1920.

¹¹² “Justice Brandeis,” *The Times*, 23 June 1920.

¹¹³ “Zionist Plans,” *The Daily Mail*, 7 May 1920.

flippant coverage to the anti-Zionist League of British Jews, downplaying the concerns of the Arabs and Zionist-skeptics in London and in Palestine, showing confidence that the Zionists would be able to contribute the lion's share of the expenses for the Jewish national home, restating the importance of upholding the Balfour Declaration in the aftermath of the Jerusalem riots, and calling for the ouster of Storrs after the riots. Despite the mounds of evidence that both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* were categorically pro-Zionist publications for well over two years following the Balfour Declaration, the secondary literature has continued to repeat the myth that the Northcliffe Press was always a part of the anti-Zionist coalition in London.

Had international affairs played out differently, Northcliffe and Steed would have more than likely gone in another direction with their Palestine coverage after World War I ended. Northcliffe had never displayed any interest in Zionism at all and supported it solely as a part of his campaign to win over American support; Steed's endorsement of the ideology was also purely strategic, as he saw it as a way to weaken Germany and Austria-Hungary. Had the end of the war truly marked the end of what Northcliffe perceived to be an existential threat to the global order, it is difficult to see any reason why the Northcliffe Press would have persisted in their support of Zionism. But the threat of Germany and Austria-Hungary was immediately replaced by that of Bolshevik Russia, and so *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* decided to press on with the approach that Northcliffe and Steed believed would keep both America and worldwide Jewry on their side. Thus, Weizmann enjoyed the full backing of the most powerful media in Britain during the crucial early stage of the Zionist colonization of Palestine.

CHAPTER III

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

MAY 1920 – JUNE 1921

A. Introduction

Wickham Steed's journalistic record as editor of *The Times* following the conclusion of World War I is almost exclusively remembered for the moment in May 1920 when he granted mainstream recognition to the notorious anti-Semitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Although Steed's analysis of the document took an ambivalent approach towards its legitimacy and merely called for further investigation into its claims, the significance of this moment has been overstated and its details have been misconstrued. Modern Jewish historian Janet Kerkes makes the erroneous claim that *The Times* published the text of the *Protocols* in their entirety;¹¹⁴ in another misconception, Walter Laqueur claims in his book on Russian and German intellectual history that the paper "endorsed" the forgery.¹¹⁵ David Cesarani takes the most contentious approach, offering that *The Times* under Steed's watch "purveyed the myths of Jewish Bolshevism, fanaticism, dual-loyalty and Jewish power" in the course of its "offensive against Zionism."¹¹⁶ In recent years, several scholars have pushed back on

¹¹⁴ Janet Kerkes, *Masked Ball at the White Cross Café: The Failure of Jewish Assimilation* (Lanham, MD: University Press, of America, 2005), 270.

¹¹⁵ Walter Laqueur, *Russia and Germany: A Century of Conflict* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), 324.

¹¹⁶ David Cesarani, "Anti-Zionist Politics and Political Antisemitism in Britain, 1920–1924," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 23:1, 1989, 32.

some of these claims, including Martin Watts¹¹⁷ and most notably Andre Liebich, who published the first comprehensive biography of Steed in 2018.¹¹⁸ Liebich correctly notes that throughout his career, Steed enjoyed dabbling in “stories of intrigue and dark plots,” yet his flirtation with anti-Semitic and other types of conspiracy theories did not preclude him from endorsing the Zionist cause.¹¹⁹ Both Watts and Liebich have theorized that Steed’s anti-Semitism not only ceased to get in the way of his Zionism, but in fact likely contributed to his support for the Jewish national home in Palestine.

But what neither Watts nor Liebich have addressed is that Steed’s views on British support for the Zionist project did indeed undergo a noticeable shift in the period between the summer of 1920 and the summer of 1921, which was in fact the period that fell right after Steed’s awareness of the *Protocols*. What this chapter will argue is that the pages of *The Times* from this period indicate that it was not these mysterious *Protocols* that triggered the shift—it was rather Steed’s slow-but-steady loss of confidence in the three men who had become the central figures of Britain’s adventure in Palestine: Chaim Weizmann, Herbert Samuel and Winston Churchill. Weizmann and Samuel, both previously praised by Steed, over time came to be portrayed in *The Times* in a negative light, due to a combination of Steed’s dislike for their policies and public statements as well as on-the-ground reports that came in from Palestine painting a grim picture of the country’s instability. Churchill, meanwhile, had long since drawn the ire of Steed, and his entrance into the Palestine equation gave more credence to the *Times* editor’s growing

¹¹⁷ Martin Watts, *The Jewish Legion and the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 81-82.

¹¹⁸ Andre Liebich, *Wickham Steed: Greatest Journalist of His Times* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018).

¹¹⁹ Andre Liebich, “The Antisemitism of Henry Wickham Steed,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 46:2 (May 2012), 187-193 and 199.

belief that Palestine had become under the control of incompetent leadership. The shift in *The Times* was gradual—there was not one single event that sent the Palestine coverage into a different direction. But this chapter will attempt to show that several developments in Palestine following the Jerusalem riots of May 1920 began to put doubt about the wisdom of continued unfettered support for the Zionist project in Steed’s mind until the tipping point was finally reached with another outbreak of sectarian violence in the summer of 1921.

B. ‘The Jewish Peril’

The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, usually referred to as *The Jewish Peril* in Britain at this time, entered British public discourse in early 1920 thanks to Howell Arthur Gwynne, editor of the London daily *The Morning Post*. The text, which was originally published in Russian in 1905 and alleged to contain details of a Jewish plot for world domination, came to Gwynne’s attention in the autumn of 1919. After discussing its contents with a number of journalists, media figures, and political figures that included acclaimed author Rudyard Kipling, journalist and *National Review* editor Leo Maxse and conservative women’s leader Violet Bathurst, Gwynne decided to press on with its publication despite casting his own doubt on their legitimacy in private correspondences. Gwynne first handed off the text to the reputable London-based printing firm Eyre & Spottiswoode for publication in pamphlet form in February before running it as a

seventeen-part series of articles in *The Morning Post* in July.¹²⁰ Triggered by the growing discussions in response to the Eyre & Spottiswoode release, Wickham Steed's first commentary on the text came on 8 May 1920 in an article titled "The Jewish Peril: A Disturbing Pamphlet."¹²¹ While the conclusion of this article was that an impartial investigation of the documents was needed to determine whether they were genuine or a forgery, Steed conveyed a sense of unease when considering the "uncanny parallels" the document held with revolutionary activity that had already taken place in Russia and elsewhere. The line "Wars should not produce any territorial alterations" from the text reminded him of the slogan "Peace without annexation" chanted by Lenin and other revolutionary leaders; the line "we must know how to confiscate property without any hesitation," furthermore, was an unmistakably Soviet ideal. Steed added that the Jewish response to the pamphlet had been thus far inadequate; he noted that the London weekly *Jewish Chronicle* had offered ad hominem attacks against the publisher but had yet to address the substance of the text, causing the *Times* editor to call for "an official comment from Jewry" on its content.¹²²

After Steed's initial commentary on the text, over the next few days he published a number of responses in *The Times*, which mostly consisted of distinguished intellectuals writing in to denounce the charges as conspiratorial nonsense. South African Judge J. A. J. de Villiers was the most vehement in his criticism, writing two days after Steed's commentary to describe *The Jewish Peril* as "balderdash" and state that "no sane

¹²⁰ See two articles by Keith M. Wilson: "The Protocols of Zion and the Morning Post, 1919-1920," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 19:3 (1985); "Hail and Farewell? The Reception in the British Press of the First Publication in English of the Protocols of Zion, 1920-22" *Patterns of Prejudice*, 11:2 (1992).

¹²¹ The article was not published on the Editorial page nor did it list Steed as author, yet a *Times* archivist confirmed that it was indeed written by Steed, according to Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 279.

¹²² "The Jewish Peril," *The Times*, 8 May 1920.

person would fall for this twaddle.”¹²³ This was followed-up with a commentary from C. Hagberg Wright, head librarian of the London Library and noted Russophile, who cited his “intimate knowledge of Russian literature and intellectual life for the last 20 years” in saying that “these protocols are worthless.” Wright noted that not even the “great Russian anti-Semitic encyclopedia” made any mention of this text.¹²⁴ The following day, Russian historian Sonia E. Howe chimed in to comment that the English translation of the original 1905 Russian version was highly inaccurate and had added words such as “Jewish” and “extermination” that did not appear in the original version.¹²⁵ Finally on 12 May, Leo Tolstoy’s friend and translator Aylmer Maude contributed a letter providing more detail about the dubious history of the original 1905 document and quipped that Steed’s statement that the pamphlet would “perturb the thinking public” would be more accurate had it instead referenced “the unthinking public.”¹²⁶ Steed also allowed a leading anti-Semite to weigh in: that of John Henry Clarke, leader of the organization known as “The Britons.” The Britons formed in the summer of 1919 with the explicitly-stated purpose of disseminating anti-Semitic propaganda,¹²⁷ and Clarke had edited a book published in 1918 entitled *England under the Heel of the Jew*. Clarke’s brief letter, printed directly below those of De Villiers and Wright, stated simply that official Soviet documents indicate that 458 out of 556 “principal State functionaries of Russia” were Jews, and therefore Jews indeed played a dominating role in the Bolshevik Party.¹²⁸

¹²³ J. A. J. de Villiers, “The Jewish Peril,” *The Times*, 10 May 1920.

¹²⁴ C. Hagberg Wright, “The Jewish Peril,” *The Times*, 10 May 1920.

¹²⁵ Sonia E. Howe, “The Jewish Peril,” *The Times*, 11 May 1920.

¹²⁶ Aylmer Maude, “The Jewish Peril,” *The Times*, 12 May 1920.

¹²⁷ Gisela C. Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939* (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), 49.

¹²⁸ J. H. Clarke, “The Jewish Peril,” *The Times*, 10 May 1920.

Although Steed published three letters attacking the authenticity of *The Jewish Peril* and just one tacitly endorsing it, it does appear as if the *Times* editor had somewhat bought in to the conspiracy. He included in his report of 8 May the claim that “a high percentage of the leaders [of the Russian government] are Jews,” and put the onus on the Jewish community to disprove the allegations rather than laying the responsibility on those alleging a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to produce better evidence. But after these four responses were published within a few days of Steed’s column, the issue was dropped—*The Jewish Peril* would not be spoken of again in the paper until more than a year later when *Times* correspondent Philip Graves discovered that the text was plagiarized from an 1864 French political satire of Napoleon III. More importantly, there was no discernible effect in *The Times*’s Palestine coverage; as we shall see later in this chapter, the appointment of Herbert Samuel to the High Commissioner’s office just weeks after this brief *Protocols* controversy led to some of the most glowing Palestine commentary to date. Knowing what we know about Steed’s views on Jewish tendencies from *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, it is safe to assume that even if he may have had his doubts about whether or not the specific allegations made in *The Jewish Peril* were factual, he certainly believed that there were indeed Jewish groups out there engaging in similarly sinister behavior. There is no indication that he felt the Zionist movement had anything to do with any of this, however, and Andre Liebich is correct to posit that the main takeaway from this incident is that Steed simply could not resist the urge to be the first to break a scandalous story.

C. Report from George Nicholl Barnes

The Times's initial reaction to the Jerusalem riots of April 1920 was to tacitly call for Military Governor Ronald Storrs's removal, as discussed in Chapter 2. But the scale of the violence necessitated a more serious look at the Palestine question in the paper, and for the first time in the post-Balfour Declaration era a multi-part series of articles appeared, offering the most comprehensive look at the situation to date. The author of the series--entitled "Jerusalem To-Day" was the recently-retired Labour Minister George Nicholl Barnes, who may have been assigned the task simply for being in the right place at the right time—*The Times* reported in February that Barnes was departing on a "propaganda tour in the provinces on behalf of the League of Nations,"¹²⁹ which coincidentally placed him in Jerusalem on the day the violence broke out in the holy city. He did have some experience in undertaking this type of task, however, having authored a commission on enquiry into British industrial unrest at the behest of Lloyd George in June 1917.¹³⁰ Barnes had also worked on Palestine since the preparations for the Balfour Declaration, having served in the Lloyd George War Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio.¹³¹ The first two parts of Barnes's *Times* report blamed both Jews and Arabs for the deteriorating situation yet expressed sympathy with each side's feelings towards the other. The religious Jews of Jerusalem made the Wailing Wall a "sad sight," thanks to the "demented-looking men"; Arabs who thought of these as "typical Jews" had understandably formed a bad opinion of Jewry. Visitors to Jerusalem, meanwhile, were likely to have negative perceptions of both these Jews as well as the unavoidable Arab beggars. The enhanced presence of the Hashomer Jewish paramilitary organization (soon

¹²⁹ "Mr. Barnes and the League," *The Times*, 2 Feb 1920.

¹³⁰ George Nicholl Barnes, "Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest" (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1917).

¹³¹ Ingrams, *The Palestine Papers*, 59.

to evolve into the Haganah) was only serving to heighten sectarian tensions. Barnes opined that the “mutual ragging” taking place between Jew and Muslim was keeping the city in a state of ferment that needed only a spark to boil over. As far as the riots themselves, Barnes attributed several causes: the lack of newspapers on both sides, the long delay for a political settlement following General Allenby’s occupation, as well as the fact that “Eastern minds tend to exaggerate.” He compared the situation with Ireland, in that there was no recognized authority capable of settling the dispute over rights to the land. But in the final analysis, Barnes opined that the “the main cause of the trouble” was the Balfour Declaration—the first time such an idea appeared in the pages of *The Times*. Upon expanding on this premise in the final part of the series, Barnes proposed that the issue was not with the Declaration itself, but that the Arabs had “misinterpreted and misunderstood” its meaning. The Declaration, which Barnes believed called for neither a Jewish State nor Jewish ascendancy, simply sought an expansion of the Jewish colonization efforts that, in his view, had been highly successful. Weizmann and other certain Jewish figures deserved a substantial share of the blame for the contribution that their arrogant language invoking “conquest” had made to Arab confusion, and Barnes recommended that the Zionists “put a muzzle on some of their most volatile members.” The former Labour Party leader concluded the report with a hopeful tone, naming Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild (the man to whom the Balfour Declaration was addressed) as well as Lloyd George’s Health Minister Alfred Mond as examples of leaders of the “moderate” version of Zionism that he was confident would soon prevail.¹³²

¹³² “G.N. Barnes, “Jerusalem To-Day,” *The Times*, 11 and 12 May 1920.

Although Barnes was neither a *Times* correspondent nor someone with any apparent prior relationship to either Northcliffe or Steed, the “Jerusalem To-Day” series offered an analysis of the Palestine question very similar to the one the Northcliffe Press would soon be promoting on a regular basis. Barnes’s view that the Arabs held some legitimate complaints yet were still a backward people with a tendency to exaggerate would become a line frequently pushed by *The Times*, as was the belief that the messy situation could be solved simply by coming up with a political settlement that did away with the military occupation. Perhaps most notably, Barnes was the first to write in *The Times* of the Zionist movement as having both a moderate and a radical camp—and in his view, several of Weizmann’s actions indicated that the movement’s leader may have belonged to the latter camp. Barnes’s musings did not alter the Northcliffe Press’s view that the arrival of Herbert Samuel to the High Commissioner’s office would soon restore order, but they did present Steed and Northcliffe with the first thorough and substantial evidence from an esteemed source that the Palestine situation was not as encouraging as had been assumed.

D. Arrival of Herbert Samuel

Former Home Secretary and Postmaster-General Herbert Samuel’s long-awaited appointment to the post of High Commissioner of Palestine in July 1920 was met with much fanfare in the Northcliffe Press. *The Daily Mail* reported from Jerusalem on 3 July that not only was Samuel’s arrival “hailed by all Jews in this country as a great event in Jewish history,” but that “20,000 Jews, Moslems and Christians lined the streets to cheer

him.”¹³³ *The Times* displayed an even higher degree of praise, drawing comparisons with King Herod’s return from Rome¹³⁴ and describing the anchoring of Samuel’s boat into the Jaffa harbor as “one of the greatest events in the history of Palestine.”¹³⁵ Two days later, *The Times* reported that the new High Commissioner had made “an excellent impression among the Christian, Moslem and Jewish population,” and that the Arabs in particular were now beginning “to understand the wisdom of the Home Government in appointing such a man to his high post.”¹³⁶ But *The Times* also sought to pressure Samuel into providing a more thorough explanation of the Balfour Declaration (as called for in George N. Barnes’s series); a correspondent from Haifa reported on 24 July that the Palestinian Arab community was disappointed thus far in not finding an “inspired explanation” of the document.¹³⁷

Aside from clarifying the Balfour Declaration, the other issue the Northcliffe Press sought to push Samuel on at the beginning of his term was correcting the injustice done to Vladimir Jabotinsky at the hands of military governor Ronald Storrs (discussed in Chapter 2). The issue was a consequential one that had sharpened the divide between what one might call committed Zionists and Arab sympathizers. Richard Meinertzhagen, Chief Political Officer under General Allenby from 1918-1920 and an ardent Zionist, recalled in his memoirs that “the Arabs were intent on trouble and emboldened by a belief that they had the sympathy of the Administration” at the Nebi Musa Festival, an

¹³³ “Union Jack on Mount of Olives,” *The Daily Mail*, 3 July 1920.

¹³⁴ Herod the Great (c. 74 – 4 B.C.) was a Judean king who ruled with Roman approval. A revolt in 40 B.C. forced Herod to flee to Rome, however he was able to return in 37 B.C. with assistance from Mark Antony. After his return to Judea, he left a tremendous impact, especially in terms of building projects—the Temple Mount was expanded, the Second Temple was renovated, and the Tomb of the Patriarchs was constructed.

¹³⁵ “The New Era in Zion,” *The Times*, 5 July 1920.

¹³⁶ “Palestine Moslems and Sir H. Samuel,” *The Times*, 7 Jul 1920.

¹³⁷ “British Policy in Palestine,” *The Times*, 24 Jul 1920.

analysis to which both Prime Minister Lloyd George and Foreign Secretary Curzon expressed agreement with.¹³⁸ Weizmann, meanwhile, had furiously undertaken a letter-writing campaign in an effort to secure Jabotinsky's release.¹³⁹ *The Times* made it clear on which side they stood, having reported in June that Jabotinsky's sentence was the same length as those handed out to "Arabs who had raped and pillaged" when in reality the man was guilty of nothing other than being the leader of a militant organization. Jabotinsky had no arms on him at the time of his arrest and was "attempting to promote peace" during the riots, and thus the sentence must be overturned.¹⁴⁰ The Jabotinsky case was the first test of Samuel's administration in the eyes of both the Northcliffe Press and the Zionist Organization, and Samuel did what was expected of him, releasing the Jewish Legion leader and nineteen of his associates from Acre Prison on 12 July. *The Times* in response reported that Samuel's action signaled "a new era in Palestine" and that the High Commissioner's presence had led to "complete calm" reigning all over the country.¹⁴¹ Shortly after his release, Jabotinsky gave an exclusive interview to *The Daily Mail*, in which he explained that his "Self-Defence Corps" had formed as a direct result of nearly twenty-five years of anti-Jewish propaganda spread by Arabs.¹⁴²

By commuting Jabotinsky's sentence, Samuel had passed his first test in the eyes of the Northcliffe Press. Over the next few months, the High Commissioner would continue to receive favorable coverage in both papers, and Cecil Harmsworth, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Lord Northcliffe's younger brother, reported to

¹³⁸ Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary, 1917-1956* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), 80.

¹³⁹ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 143-144.

¹⁴⁰ "M. Jabotinsky's Sentence," *The Times*, 4 Jun 1920.

¹⁴¹ "The New Era in Palestine," *The Times*, 12 Jul 1920.

¹⁴² "Lieut Jabotinsky," *The Daily Mail*, 2 Sept 1920.

the British representative to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations¹⁴³ William Ormsby-Gore in October that Samuel's presence had achieved a "period of tranquility and freedom from internal disturbances or external raids."¹⁴⁴ Northcliffe himself, while continuing to grumble about the high costs of maintaining Palestine in *The Daily Mail*, offered kind words for Samuel's job performance at a ceremony for Storrs in December.¹⁴⁵ But as the calendar flipped to 1921, Samuel's administration would face new challenges, and an organizational shake-up carried out in London would make a key contribution towards the Northcliffe Press's newfound pessimism with regards to the Palestine situation.

E. Revelation of the Mandate and Creation of the Middle East Department

In February 1921, the full text of the Mandate for Palestine was leaked to the British press. Consultations over the content of Mandate had been ongoing for more than two years, with representatives from the Zionist Commission exchanging drafts with representatives of the Foreign Office, first under the direction of Balfour and, after October 1919, Lord Curzon. Throughout this process, it was the Zionists who led the way in the crafting of the document's language while the British mostly offered notes and suggestions—although much of the British contribution was ultimately ignored. Curzon, for example, opposed the inclusion of the line recognizing "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine" without any corresponding recognition of an Arab

¹⁴³ The Permanent Mandates Commission was the League of Nations commission responsible for mandates. On this body and its work on Palestine, see: Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁴ "Progress in Palestine," *The Times*, 28 Oct 1920.

¹⁴⁵ "New Era in Jerusalem," *The Times*, 22 Dec 1920.

connection, yet this line made it into the final document, possibly due to an untimely vacation taken by Curzon during a key moment in the negotiations. The draft mandate also included the full text of the Balfour Declaration reproduced verbatim in its preamble. Significantly, the Zionist's mandate-drafting team, initially formed to prepare a presentation at the Paris Peace Conference, was assembled in November 1918 by Weizmann, who put none other than (then-MP) Herbert Samuel in charge of overseeing the committee.¹⁴⁶ The fact that the document was primarily written by Zionists is apparent even after a cursory read, as numerous articles in the document were devoted to giving the Zionists more power. Article 4 declared that “an appropriate Jewish agency [...] shall be recognised as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home.” Article 6 included the facilitation of Jewish immigration in the duties of the “appropriate Jewish agency,” while Article 11 gave this agency the power to collaborate with the Administration on matters of “any public works, services and utilities, and to develop any of the natural resources of the country.”¹⁴⁷ While the ZC (soon to be rename Palestine Zionist Executive, or PZE) would not be confirmed as the appropriate Jewish agency until 1929, the organization was presumed to be the body in question upon the leaking of the document.

Steed published the text of the Mandate in its full form in *The Times* on 5 February 1921 and added his commentary on the same edition's Editorial page. While expressing frustration that the Mandate had failed to provide the long-awaited

¹⁴⁶ For more on the creation of the Mandate, see Malcolm Yapp, “The Making of the Palestine Mandate” in *Middle Eastern Lectures Number One* (Jerusalem: Graphit Press, 1995), 9-26.

¹⁴⁷ “The Mandate for Palestine,” in *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics, Vol. 2,* ed. J. C. Hurewitz, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

clarification of the meaning of the national home for the Jewish people phrase—for Steed, the Mandate merely “repeats the phrase without defining it”—his final analysis was that the document offered “conditions that are necessary for the liberty and progress of the country and for the satisfaction of Mr. Balfour’s promise that Palestine should be a national home for the Jews.” The outsized role presumably granted to the Zionist Commission was among the proposed constitution’s strengths, Steed felt, “because Jewish brains and money expended in the improvement of this sadly neglected estate are likely to be the best cement of the new Palestinian nationality.” As for the Arabs, Steed opined that they too would reap the benefits of Jewish brains and money, and that “the Arab who agrees to be a Palestinian first and an Arab second will have his full share in the prosperity of the country.”¹⁴⁸

Pleased as Steed was with the terms of the Mandate, both he and Northcliffe were far less enthused about the simultaneous bureaucratic shakeup that had taken place with regard to Britain’s Arab provinces. Owing largely to the alarming number of Arab-led uprisings throughout 1920 that included disturbances in Syria, Iraq, Egypt as well as the riots in Jerusalem, the government revived an idea initially pitched by Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu back in 1918 of moving the Arab question from the Foreign Office to somewhere where it could receive more specialized attention. As 1921 began, Palestine was transferred to the domain of the Colonial Office, which opened a new department in February tasked with overseeing the “Class A”-designated mandates of Palestine and Mesopotamia. Leading this new Middle East Department was incoming Colonial Secretary and one of Northcliffe’s least favorite public figures Winston

¹⁴⁸ “The Palestine Mandate,” *The Times*, 5 Feb 1921.

Churchill, who was moving over from the War Office following the resignation of Lord Alfred Milner.¹⁴⁹ Lord Northcliffe's hatred of Churchill dated back to at least the early stages of the war, for the press lord had always associated the new Colonial Secretary with many of the war's biggest blunders, including the Shell Crisis and the Gallipoli campaign.¹⁵⁰ In 1916, Northcliffe remarked in a letter to a British diplomat that although he approved of Lloyd George's performance as War Secretary, Lloyd George was "always being egged on by Churchill and other little but venomous people."¹⁵¹ *Daily Mail* staff member Tom Clarke later recalled in his memoir of the press baron that "the chief" refused to forgive Churchill for his role in designing Britain's embarrassing military failures at Gallipoli and Antwerp.¹⁵² Upon Churchill's appointment as head of the War Office in early 1919, Northcliffe's budget-focused correspondent Lovat Fraser warned *Daily Mail* readers that the new War Secretary was a "spender and a taxer" who "has never shown the smallest sign of any sympathy with public economy."¹⁵³ As Churchill moved into the Colonial Office two years later, the critique remained the same: *The Daily Mail* lamented that "taxpayers will regret that Mr. Churchill, who has been mainly responsible while at the War Office for the immense waste of public money in Mesopotamia, is arranging to transfer the control of that country with himself to his new office."¹⁵⁴ This critique came on the heels of Churchill's recent House of Commons

¹⁴⁹ On the bureaucratic reshuffle and creation of the Middle East Department, see: Aaron S. Kleiman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 89-93 and Sahar Huneidi, "Was Balfour Policy Reversible? The Colonial Office and Palestine, 1921-23," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1998).

¹⁵⁰ As mentioned in the Introduction, Churchill coined the term "business as usual" to describe the casual attitude the British people should take to their daily lives during wartime, a concept which Northcliffe detested.

¹⁵¹ Northcliffe to Sir Philip Sassoon, 18 Oct 1916, quoted in Thompson, "Fleet Street Colossus," 130.

¹⁵² Tom Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corp., 1931), 91.

¹⁵³ Lovat Fraser, "Wasted Millions," *The Daily Mail*, 29 Jan 1919.

¹⁵⁴ "Mr. Churchill," *The Daily Mail*, 18 Jan 1921.

speech defending a government proposal to allot a maximum of £39,750,000 for military garrisons in Arab lands just two months before the opening of the Middle East Department.¹⁵⁵

Evidently, Churchill's new assignment and the creation of a new bureau under his watch had a significant impact on how Steed viewed the Palestine situation as well, for the first editorial he offered on the country following the opening of the Middle East Department displayed a markedly different perspective than the one he had written just weeks earlier in response to the release of the text of the Mandate. Promoting the view of National Savings Movement head John Dickson-Poynder, 1st Baron Islington that the British government was covering too many of the foreign expenses that should be taken care of by the League of Nations, Steed accused Churchill of trying to "thrust a huge annual expenditure upon the British taxpayers without giving either House a chance of debating these questions until it is too late." The Zionist leadership, meanwhile, were "going very far astray" by trying to "persuade the British taxpayer to pay for the Palestine garrison."¹⁵⁶ For Steed, the appointment of Churchill added another layer of concern to an aspect of the Palestine commitment that seems to have been growing in his mind; namely, that the Zionist Organization was not the endless geyser of cash resources that he had assumed and would attempt to get the British to cover as much of the costs as possible. With a spendthrift like Churchill in charge, this prospect became ever more likely.

Around this same period, Steed began receiving reports that the criticisms of Weizmann and the Zionist Commission first brought to his attention by George N. Barnes

¹⁵⁵ Kleiman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World*, 85.

¹⁵⁶ "Question of the Mandates," *The Times*, 24 Mar 1921.

in the previous year were much more widespread than he had previously assumed. In a four-part series that ran in *The Times* from April-May 1920 entitled “Palestine To-Day,” a special correspondent reported that over the past eighteen months, the work of the ZC had been “much criticized from many different standpoints”—not only by the Arabs, but from several sections of the Palestinian Jewish population as well. Non-Zionist Orthodox communities were upset with the ZC’s outsized role in their affairs, but more significantly, followers of top colonial financier Edmond James de Rothschild¹⁵⁷ had become restive with the “unproductive expenditure” of Zionist funds that had taken place under ZC control. The criticisms voiced by these Zionists were manifold: injudicious relief distribution, too many unnecessary salaried posts, too little construction work, and the bringing in of large numbers of Russian immigrants who carried many socialist ideas but little knowledge of Palestine. Perhaps most alarming was that Zionist colonists appeared to be receiving “no financial support from many of its former helpers in England, and especially in America.”¹⁵⁸

Steed’s support for Zionism, like that of Northcliffe and many others in London, had always been backed by the belief that the Zionists would have no problem paying for the project themselves. But in early 1921, he began to see that a much greater British outlay in Palestine was both expected and, with Churchill in charge, likely to be secured. He still maintained confidence in Samuel at this point, who by all accounts had served to provide a calming presence in the first three-quarters of his first year in office. But

¹⁵⁷ Not to be confused with his twice-removed first cousin Walter Rothschild, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Edmond James de Rothschild was from the French branch of the Rothschild banking family and had financed early Zionist settlements such as Rishon-le-Zion; Walter Rothschild, an Englishman, was a banker, zoologist, Member of Parliament, close friend of Weizmann and the man to whom the Balfour Declaration was addressed.

¹⁵⁸ “Palestine To-Day,” *The Times*, 28 Apr 1921.

following an outbreak of sectarian violence in Jaffa in May far more deadly than the previous incident in Jerusalem, Steed's confidence in the viability of essentially- unchecked British support for the Zionist endeavor moving forward would finally reach its turning point.

F. Jaffa Riots, 1921

On 1 May 1921, an argument between two different Jewish groups participating in Labor Day parades in Jaffa devolved into the most violent case of Jewish-Arab strife in the first few years of British-controlled Palestine. Members of the Jewish Communist Party got into a fistfight with members of the socialist Ahdut HaAvoda Party, and a general outbreak of chaotic violence ensued. As word spread throughout the city, many Jaffa residents believed Arabs were being attacked and came out into the streets to fight back. The crowd degenerated into a mob-like mentality, and Jewish homes, stores and passersby were attacked. When the dust had settled, 47 Jews and 48 Arabs had been killed, with more than 200 injured.¹⁵⁹ Samuel, who now confided with Zionist Commission leadership that he viewed Palestine as a “war of the Arab nation against the Hebrew nation,”¹⁶⁰ attempted to calm matters by implementing a temporary ban on Jewish immigration. In a speech on 3 June at Government House in Jerusalem, Samuel clarified that once the immigration ban was lifted, further immigration should be dependent on whether or not it presented a burden on the Palestinian economy. Churchill backed up Samuel on 14 June in the House of Commons, praising his record as High

¹⁵⁹ For more on the Jaffa riots, see Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 173-201.

¹⁶⁰ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 180.

Commissioner and the cautious measures he had taken in response to the Jaffa riots. The Colonial Secretary struck an optimistic tone for Palestine's future, dismissing Arab fears of a Zionist plan to gain total control over the country as "illusory," and promoting the view that continued development of the country via Jewish capital would strengthen the general wealth of the whole community, Arabs included.¹⁶¹

Steed was not convinced by either speech. He editorialized on 16 June that Samuel's immigration ban, temporary as it may have been, was a "profound mistake" for it had only served to justify Arab fear and violence.¹⁶² The day prior, Churchill's downplaying of the issues and belief in staying on the current course had been taken to task in another Steed editorial:

We doubt, in particular, whether [Churchill] has really understood the meaning of the Zionist movement or the nature of the difficulties that have been created in Palestine, or the consequences of Sir Herbert Samuel's failure to deal energetically with them.¹⁶³

Clearly, Steed was calling for a new direction in Palestine policy in the aftermath of the Jaffa riots. But what did he have in mind, and what inspired the new perspective? It was not a newfound belief that the Arabs should play a greater role in Palestinian affairs, for he maintained in the same editorial in which he criticized Samuel that "except by Jewish help, Palestine can never be anything but a diseased appendix of the Arab world."¹⁶⁴ Nor was it triggered by a fear, as some in London felt, that the role of Jewish communists and socialists in instigating the Jaffa disturbances meant that full British support should be halted temporarily until an investigation could determine the extent of the Bolshevik

¹⁶¹ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 14 Jun 1921.

¹⁶² "Our Middle East Policy," *The Times*, 15 Jun 1921.

¹⁶³ "Mr. Churchill and the Middle East," *The Times*, 16 Jun 1921.

¹⁶⁴ "Our Middle East Policy," *The Times*, 15 June 1921.

element in Palestine. For Steed, Britain's continued unquestioned support for the Zionist adventure could not be justified while the triumvirate of Weizmann, Samuel and Churchill ran the show. Churchill was a reckless spender who was ignorant of Palestinian affairs and had a reputation for having poor instincts; Samuel's desire to realize the impossible task of pleasing both Jew and Arab had rendered his administration ineffective; Weizmann's arrogant attitude and mismanagement had both fueled Arab hostility to Jewish presence in their country and birthed a widespread anti-ZC feeling throughout Jewish colonist communities. Of these three figures, Steed appeared to view Weizmann as the most logical one to launch a press campaign against, perhaps owing to the fact that he was not an appointed government official, or perhaps because he saw Weizmann's three-year-run as the top Zionist representative to Palestine affairs as having played a larger role in the country's deterioration than that of the more recently-arrived Samuel and Churchill. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the Jaffa riots represented the final moment in which *The Times* could be said to have been a pro-Zionist paper—and attacks on the Weizmann-led ZC would become one of the defining features of its Palestine coverage.

G. Conclusion

This chapter has traced the evolution of the Northcliffe Press's coverage of Palestine from the riots in Jerusalem in 1920 to the riots in Jaffa in 1921. Interesting as *The Times's* attitude towards the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* may be for scholars of anti-Semitism and of the history of anti-Semitism in British society, in the final analysis it tells us very little about Wickham Steed's changing views on the long-term viability of constructing

the Jewish national home in Palestine. This is not to say that anti-Semitism did not play a role in Steed's shifting perspective; rather, Steed's realization that his anti-Semitic assumption of endless Jewish money was greatly exaggerated appears to be a key factor in his decision to re-think his stance on promoting both the Zionist project and Britain's role in it. But the event Steed is most known for in this period—popularizing the *Protocols*—does not tell us much about how *The Times* transitioned from one of Weizmann's most unwavering allies to a skeptic of his cause to, as we shall see in Chapter 4, an opponent he had to overcome. To truly understand why Britain's most prestigious newspaper began to turn against Zionism, it is much more enlightening to consider Steed's evolving opinions of Samuel and Weizmann alongside the addition of a figure despised by Northcliffe in Churchill. The Jaffa riots were the straw that broke the camel's back; while the Jerusalem disturbances could be written off as an isolated incident that resulted from the lack of a civilian government, this excuse was no longer valid following the establishment of Samuel's administration. With the civilian government seemingly incapable of maintaining order and the burgeoning Arab nationalist movement emboldened by Samuel's concessions, Steed began to see that Palestine was heading down a chaotic path with no resolution in sight. More outbreaks of violence meant that more British troops, more policemen and greater military expenditure would be needed to maintain order—but for what in return? With the war now over, Woodrow Wilson out of office in Washington, and the evidence of a significant Bolshevik presence in Palestine flimsy at best, Steed was among many in London who began to wonder what the point of continuing the Palestine adventure was. By August

1921, *The Times* was reporting that “there will be no peace until the whole [Palestine] policy is revised.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ “Unrest in Palestine,” *The Times*, 10 Aug 1921.

CHAPTER IV

A SECOND IRELAND

JUNE 1921 – JULY 1922

A. Introduction

Following the Jaffa riots of May 1921, *Times* editor Wickham Steed was no longer a supporter of a Zionist movement led by Chaim Weizmann and backed by High Commissioner for Palestine Herbert Samuel and Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill. Yet Steed remained a promoter of Zionism, for abandonment of the project at this point would put Palestine in the hands of the Arabs—a prospect that presented a whole other set of problems. The numerous uprisings in Palestine, Iraq and Egypt from 1919-1921 demonstrated the high degree of anti-British feeling throughout the Arab provinces, and the delayed Turkish settlement caused by the rise of Mustafa Kemal had many in London anxious about the possibility of an Arab-Turkish reconciliation made to thwart British and French control over the Middle East. The Zionists, with all their faults, were more reliable partners in the quest to maintain Britain's empire. But Weizmann presented a major problem, for his arrogance and incompetence had fueled Arab rage and discouraged investment from wealthy Jews abroad. Thus, Steed's strategy from the summer of 1921 on was simple: launch a press campaign in *The Times* with the goal of having Weizmann removed as leader of the Zionist movement and having the special

privileges implicitly given to his Palestine Zionist Executive (formerly, the Zionist Commission)¹⁶⁶ removed from the Mandate.

Lord Northcliffe, meanwhile, no longer saw any value in supporting the Jewish national home project by 1922, and this position was likely furthered by his brief visit to Palestine in February. As his diaries from the Palestine trip and his reports from it published in *The Times* show, he had nothing positive to say about Zionism by this point and returned home from the country determined to launch a vitriolic press campaign in his papers. But ultimately, the campaign proved futile; aside from an inconsequential House of Lords vote rejecting the Mandate in June 1922, the British commitment to the Weizmann-led Zionist project reached new heights in the summer of 1922 and again in 1923. Why were Northcliffe and Steed's efforts so unsuccessful? This chapter will look at the approaches *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* took in pushing anti-Zionist and/or anti-Weizmann propaganda in the final year before the Mandate's confirmation and analyze why Britain's most effective propagandists barely left a dent in Weizmann's vision for Palestine.

B. The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence Resurrected

One of the most essential roles *The Times* played in favor of the anti-Zionist movement starting in 1921 was its decision to switch sides on one of the more contentious issues from this period of Middle East history: the meaning of the infamous series of letters known as the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence.¹⁶⁷ The series of ten exchanges from

¹⁶⁶ At some point in 1921, the Zionist Commission changed its name to the Palestine Zionist Executive. For the sake of simplicity, the organization is referred to as the ZC in Chapter 3 and the PZE in Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁷ The full story of the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence's creation and its interpretations is far too complex to address thoroughly here. See: George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab*

July 1915 to July 1916 between High Commissioner for Egypt Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca Husayn (father of Prince Faisal) saw the two sides negotiate over the details of boundaries of a future Arab State were the Arabs to rise up and revolt against the Turks. Upon its revelation, the correspondence was initially understood to be controversial because of its apparent territorial contradictions with negotiations between British diplomat Mark Sykes and his French counterpart François Georges-Picot that had also taken place between 1915 and 1916. As questions regarding the compatibility of the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and the Sykes-Picot Agreement were raised at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Steed lamented in the pages of *The Times* about the documents' contradictions as well as the decision to leave the French in the dark about the existence of talks with Husayn.¹⁶⁸ Colonel T. E. Lawrence wrote in to *The Times* on 11 September 1919 to correct the record; identifying himself as a key member of the McMahon-Husayn negotiations, Lawrence claimed that he “could see no inconsistencies” between the correspondence and Sykes-Picot and knew “no one who does.” The problem, according to Lawrence, was simply that Sykes-Picot was unworkable and no longer suited British or French interests; therefore, it should be discarded in favor of the McMahon-Husayn agreement.¹⁶⁹ Apparently satisfied, Steed endorsed Lawrence's view in the paper a week later, and shifted the conversation to emphasizing the need for the French and British to draw a border for Palestine favorable for Jewish economic

National Movement (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1939); Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Abdul Latif Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and The Question of Palestine, 1914-1921* (London: Luzac, 1977); Arnold Toynbee and Isaiah Friedman, “The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence: Comments and a Reply,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1970), 185-201.

¹⁶⁸ “The Future of Syria,” *The Times*, 19 Aug 1921.

¹⁶⁹ T. E. Lawrence, “The Syrian Question” *The Times*, 11 Sep 1921.

interests.¹⁷⁰ But at no point during this exchange in the summer of 1919 did Steed or Lawrence make any mention of a contradiction between McMahon's promise and the Balfour Declaration.

As far as Palestine was concerned, the belief that it fell within the borders of the proposed Arab state promised by McMahon in 1915 remained official British policy through 1920, as affirmed by several official documents authored by the Arab Bureau,¹⁷¹ the War Office,¹⁷² as well as by Balfour himself in one of his final policy statements as head of the Foreign Office.¹⁷³ It was only in December 1920 that Hubert Young, a diplomat working in Lord Curzon's Foreign Office who would soon move over to Churchill's Middle East Department, offered the interpretation that McMahon's promised Arab state explicitly excluded areas west of the "district" of Damascus rather than the areas west of the cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, as had been previously understood in London. The difference was crucial, as areas west of the district of Damascus included all of Palestine and modern-day Lebanon, whereas the areas west of the four aforementioned cities merely covered Lebanon. Young's interpretation did not generate much attention at the time, and *The Times* did not report on it at all. But beginning in 1921, the view that McMahon had promised Palestine to the Arabs in 1915 became one of the central tenets of the Palestinian national movement's argument against the legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration. A delegation of the Palestine Arab Congress (discussed in the following section) presented their first official statement and

¹⁷⁰ "Settlement in Syria" *The Times*, 19 Sep 1921

¹⁷¹ See: Henry McMahon, "Arab Bureau Memorandum," 19 April 1916, quoted in Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*, 203.

¹⁷² Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*, 206.

¹⁷³ Memorandum on Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia: Reflections of Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record: Vol. 2 British-French Supremacy, 1914-1945*, ed. J. C. Hurewitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 184-191.

interpretation of Britain's promises to Churchill at the Cairo Conference in March 1921, and much of their case hinged on the belief that the promise made by McMahon "nullif[ied] the contract with the Jews."¹⁷⁴ In what was likely the first case of Steed endorsing the Arab position on Palestine against that of the official British and/or Zionist position, an editorial in *The Times* on 13 August 1921 diagnosed one of the two essential problems of the Palestine dilemma as the fact that "conflicting political promises were made by the British government; first to the Arabs, then to the Jews." The implication was that Steed was rejecting the Young interpretation and believed—or at least purported to believe—that McMahon's promise did indeed contradict the Balfour Declaration. The second essential problem in Palestine, according to Steed, was that the Zionists had "read far more into [the Balfour Declaration] than its authors ever intended it to mean."¹⁷⁵

Was Steed endorsing the position of the Arabs that the contradiction between the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and the Balfour Declaration meant that the latter was null and void? Certainly not; as his commentaries on the matter over the next year would show, he supported the position of Colonial Secretary Churchill that even if McMahon's promised Arab State could not be granted exactly as laid out in the letter, the spirit of the promise could still be honored by placing Prince Faisal on the throne of Iraq.¹⁷⁶ But the fact that Steed was now taking the Arab side on the McMahon-Husayn debate was revealing, and it is impossible to imagine him doing so had the Arabs raised the issue of McMahon's promise in 1919 or 1920. Steed's real goal here was to delegitimize the

¹⁷⁴ *Report on the State of Palestine: Presented to the Right Honourable Mr. Winston Churchill P.C., M.P. by the Executive Committee of the Third Arab Palestine Congress,* (March 21, 1921), Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, Lebanon.

¹⁷⁵ "Arab Claims for Palestine," *The Times*, 13 Aug 1921.

¹⁷⁶ Isaiah Friedman, *British Pan-Arab Policy, 1915-1922: A Critical Appraisal* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 356-358.

Mandate; although his primary objective was to see the Zionist Executive's implied role removed from the text, identifying problems with the Mandate on any grounds increased the likelihood that the entire text could be taken up for debate by Parliament. Steed's legitimization of the Arab position had a major impact, as the issue of whether or not Palestine was committed to the Arabs by McMahon in 1915 would become central to the debate over the ratification of the Mandate in the spring of 1922. Opponents of the Mandate in Parliament such as George Clarke, 1st Baron Sydenham, Lord Islington and William Joynson-Hicks would soon be using the "McMahon's promise" argument to counter the efforts of Colonial Secretary Churchill and other Zionists to have the Mandate confirmed. By countersigning this view and giving the platform to the Arabs to emphasize it throughout 1921-22, Steed gave mainstream recognition to what previously had been dismissed as frivolous rumblings by stubborn, extremist Arabs.

C. Arrival of the Delegation of the Fourth Palestine Arab Congress

Much to the dismay of High Commissioner Herbert Samuel, a delegation representing the Fourth Palestine Arab Congress (PAC) arrived in London in August 1921.¹⁷⁷ The PAC, which had evolved out of the political clubs ("Muslim-Christian Associations") formed in the major Palestinian cities in response to the Balfour Declaration, had previously been portrayed in *The Times* as a fanatical organization not to be taken seriously. The "Palestine To-Day" series of May 1921 (discussed in Chapter 3) described the leadership of the PAC as demonstrating a "lack of political sense" by demanding the abrogation of

¹⁷⁷ On the PAC's failed attempts to meet with Samuel and the High Commissioner's efforts to stop them from going to London, see: Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*, 149-154.

the Balfour Declaration upon a brief meeting with Churchill earlier in the year and portrayed the statement they presented to the Colonial Secretary as reading “more like a denunciation of Jews in general than a sober exposition of the Arab case.” The “Palestine To-Day” series also claimed that many felt the PAC’s political program represented “the views of a small minority at best” and speculated that foreign actors—namely, Turkey’s Mustafa Kemal and Syrian High Commissioner Henri Gouraud—had played a role in fomenting anti-Zionism among the Arabs.¹⁷⁸ Yet when the PAC delegation made its way to London, the group suddenly received a much more sympathetic portrayal in the paper without having modified any of their chief objectives. The organization was re-introduced to *Times* readers on 13 August in an article that laid out the group’s key demands: the creation of a representative government based on the existing pre-war population of Palestine, the transfer of immigration policy to the envisaged Parliament of this new government, and the abolition of the Balfour Declaration. While noting that the prospect of a Palestinian Parliament being granted powers that would allow it to pass legislation that contradicted the Mandate was unlikely, the article concluded that the PAC’s platform affirmed the need for the administration to issue a “better clarification” of the Declaration than Samuel had offered in his speech of 3 June.¹⁷⁹ Steed’s editorial published the same day downplayed accusations of PAC extremism: the *Times* editor speculated that the group’s use of the word “abolition” with regards to the Declaration may have been a “mistranslation” from the Arabic word and that a Zionist-Arab conference under neutral chairmanship was the best approach to finally come to a more coherent understanding of the document. Alluding to Weizmann’s excessive zeal, Steed

¹⁷⁸ “Palestine To-Day,” *The Times*, 6 May 1921.

¹⁷⁹ “Arab Claims for Palestine,” *The Times*, 13 Aug 1921.

also posited in this same editorial that “on the Jewish side” there was widespread belief that the Declaration had “been so twisted as to handicap Zionist activities in the country.”¹⁸⁰

The PAC delegation spent most of the fall and winter of 1921 conducting fruitless negotiations with Churchill’s underlings at the Middle East Department, including Richard Meinertzhagen, Hubert Young and John Shuckburgh.¹⁸¹ But in October, the official government enquiry into the Jaffa riots (“Palestine Disturbances in May 1921,” better known as the Haycraft Commission) was released, and to the dismay of Weizmann and the Zionists, the report reached several conclusions akin to what the Arabs had been clamoring about. Although the Haycraft Commission largely placed the blame for the level of Jaffa’s violence on the Arabs, it expressed an overall tone of sympathy towards Arab grievances and offered condemnation of both Samuel and Weizmann. The Haycraft Commission charged Samuel’s government with implementing “a policy mainly directed towards the establishment of a National Home for the Jews, and not to the equal benefit of all Palestinians,” Weizmann’s Zionist Executive with placing “the interests of Jews above all others,” and the Zionist immigrants themselves with offending the Arabs “by their arrogance and by their contempt of Arab social prejudices.”¹⁸² With their cause validated by the report’s findings, the PAC delegation began to see their activities receive renewed attention in both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*.¹⁸³ While other British papers such as *The Manchester Guardian* were doing their best to minimize the presence of the

¹⁸⁰ “Palestinian Contentions,” *The Times*, 13 Aug 1921.

¹⁸¹ Ingrams, *The Palestine Papers*, 137-150.

¹⁸² “Palestine: Disturbances in May, 1921: Reports of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto,” (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1921).

¹⁸³ For example: “The Future of Palestine,” *The Times*, 16 Nov 1921.

PAC and never quoted the members directly,¹⁸⁴ *The Times* was now following the delegation's activity closely and taking notice of the growing number of British statesmen who were associating themselves with the group.

Shortly after the release of the Haycraft Commission, Steed took the unprecedented step of granting space on the Letters to the Editor page to PAC delegation leaders Shibly Jamal and Musa Kazim al-Husayni to thoroughly present their case against the Balfour Declaration in their own words. Their 19 December letter "The Future of Palestine" informed *Times* readers that their congress had formed not out of anti-Jewishness, as the forty-six Jewish colonies in Palestine which had been allowed to grow and prosper would attest, but rather because the Zionists were now talking openly about a Jewish state rather than merely a Jewish "national home." They claimed that both Churchill and Prime Minister Lloyd George had admitted in public speeches that the British had not fulfilled their promise to the Arabs, while Weizmann had continuously used his "make Palestine as Jewish as England is English" line from Paris Peace Conference—and as recently as two months ago (September 1921) at the World Zionist Organization (WZO)'s Carlsbad Conference. Jamal and al-Husayni's core demands included an official British government clarification of the Balfour Declaration and the abolition of the Zionist project in Palestine.¹⁸⁵ Two days later, Sir Graham John Bower, a retired British colonial administrator who had served in South Africa and Mauritius, wrote in to *The Times* praising the Jamal-Husayni letter, adding that the Arabs had indeed "delivered the goods" for Britain during the war. For Bower, the McMahon-Husayni Correspondence was a clear contract in which the Arabs had upheld their end of the deal,

¹⁸⁴ Daphna Baram, *Disenchantment: The Guardian and Israel* (London: Guardian Books, 2004), 21-22.

¹⁸⁵ Shibly Jamal and Musa Kazim al-Husayni, "The Future of Palestine," *The Times*, 19 Dec 1921.

but the key question remained: Was the Balfour Declaration a contract? If so, why had Britain received nothing in return?¹⁸⁶

The Shibly-Husayni statement in *The Times* provoked a response from Leonard Stein, the Political Secretary of the WZO who would later go on to write the first comprehensive “behind-the-scenes” history of the Balfour Declaration,¹⁸⁷ and over the next month Stein and Jamal would engage in an antagonistic debate on the pages of *The Times*. Stein began by challenging the claim that Balfour contradicted the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence, noting that the esteemed former Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey, a key figure in the McMahon-Husayn negotiations, had declared his full sympathy with the Declaration. “If the alleged breach of faith was imperceptible to so high-minded a statesman as Viscount Grey,” Stein added, “it was equally imperceptible to one far better qualified to speak for the Arab world than the members of the Palestine Delegation.” In addition to Grey’s endorsement, Stein noted that Prince Faisal had stated at the Paris Peace Conference that he harbored no objections to the Balfour Declaration. Furthermore, the claim that the Palestinian Arabs had fought alongside the British was a myth; in fact, Stein contended, the Arabs had remained passive during the supposed “Arab Revolt” at the same time that Jewish battalions fought valiantly alongside General Allenby. In his concluding remarks, Stein expressed surprise that “so insulting a demand” as the call for the abolition of the Balfour Declaration was being put forth, and it “would be still more surprising if it were seriously entertained.”¹⁸⁸ Jamal replied two weeks later, dismissing the notion that later public statements by Grey and Faisal could negate the

¹⁸⁶ Graham Bower, “The Future of Palestine,” *The Times*, 21 Dec 1921.

¹⁸⁷ See: Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961).

¹⁸⁸ Leonard Stein, “The Future of Palestine,” *The Times*, 28 Dec 1921.

clear contradiction found in the 1915 and 1917 documents, and noting that Stein had failed to mention that Prince Faisal had stated that Weizmann's vision of a Jewish state directly clashed with Arab ideas seven months after his supposed endorsement of the Balfour Declaration. As to the charge of Arab passivity during the war, Jamal pointed to a statement by Otto Liman von Sanders, the German military commander who led the Turkish army in Sinai and Palestine against Allenby, as proof of the Palestinian Arab role, and claimed that Palestinian efforts would have been even greater had the country not been effectively controlled by Central Power forces. Matching his counterpart's hostility, Jamal charged that the "world should know the whole truth, not only those sections of it that suit the Zionist argument."¹⁸⁹ This back-and-forth would continue for several weeks, with Jamal getting the last word; in his final letter, the PAC delegation's secretary told the British public that Stein's claim of an Arab ulterior motive to kick the British out of Palestine entirely was a pure fabrication.¹⁹⁰

Weizmann recalled in his memoirs that Stein's response to the Haycraft Commission was a "most effective piece of work" and that the anti-Zionists were "impervious to objective reasoning on the subject."¹⁹¹ But while Weizmann and other Zionists may have believed that Stein clearly "won" this debate and the conversation over the Jaffa riots in general, just the fact that Steed allowed Jamal to enter the debate stage with Stein was undoubtedly a win for the Arabs. The average *Times* reader likely knew little about the details of what Stein and Jamal were discussing, yet could see that Jamal was proving himself worthy of participating in the debate and was showing the ability to

¹⁸⁹ Shibly Jamal, "The Future of Palestine," *The Times*, 12 Jan 1922.

¹⁹⁰ Shibly Jamal, "The Future of Palestine," *The Times*, 28 Jan 1922.

¹⁹¹ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 350.

offer effective rebuttals to Stein’s arguments. Stein was a worthy intellectual adversary; the Oxford-educated Political Secretary of the WZO would go on to write several books, serve in Parliament, and become president of the Jewish Historical Society of England. Yet Jamal held his own, and Steed gave him an assist by accompanying his initial letter with a supportive letter from a respected Arab-sympathizing British official in Bower. Foreshadowing what would become the *Times*’s approach to Palestine debates, Stein was not offered the same support.

D. Lord Northcliffe Goes to Palestine

While Steed was working on reshaping the Palestine debate, Lord Northcliffe embarked on a world tour in the fall of 1921 “in quest of health and recuperation for a mind and body exhausted by the labours of many years”¹⁹² in the words of his younger brother Cecil Harmsworth, although the press lord’s heart issues at this juncture were far too serious to be solved by rest and relaxation. In reality, Lord Northcliffe was dying; one of his hosts on the early part of the tour in Australia described him as “a man already under the sentence of death” who gave off “the impression of a man whose whole body was poisoned, as indeed it was.”¹⁹³ Nevertheless, Northcliffe embarked on an extensive final voyage, visiting North America, Oceania, and much of Asia before arriving at the Arab leg of Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan and Syria in February 1922. Northcliffe completed a Palestine itinerary that included the cities of Jerusalem, Nablus, Ludd and Haifa as well

¹⁹² Alfred Viscount Northcliffe, *My Journey Round the World (16 July 1921—26 Feb 1922)* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1923), ix.

¹⁹³ Ian D. Clark, *A Peep at the Blacks’: A History of Tourism at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, 1863-1924* (electronic publication: Sciendo, 2016), page number not listed in electronic edition.

as the Jewish colonies of Rishon-le-Zion and Balfouria,¹⁹⁴ and met with numerous notables including Hajj Amin al-Husayni (Grand Mufti of Jerusalem); Rahghib al-Nashashibi (Mayor of Jerusalem); Ronald Storrs (Governor of Jerusalem and Judea); and Wyndham Deedes (Samuel's chief secretary in the civil administration).¹⁹⁵¹⁹⁶ During his visit to Rishon-le-Zion, the colony's president gave a speech praising Northcliffe, yet when the press baron was given the floor, he used the opportunity to blast Zionist immigration policies. Northcliffe's speech, which historian C. W. R. Long described as a "violent tirade against the Balfour Declaration,"¹⁹⁷ warned the settler audience that they had overestimated the British public's support for Zionism, and that Palestine's recent importation of "undesirable" immigrants such as Bolsheviks was one of the chief causes of the Arab-Jewish strife. He lamented that on his previous trip to Palestine thirty years prior there had been no friction between Arabs and Jews, yet this time around the country was simmering with tension. If this situation were to improve, Northcliffe concluded, then the Zionists needed to be more selective when it came to allowing in immigrants.¹⁹⁸ Northcliffe commented in his trip diary that the settlers "seemed to be under the impression that all England was devoted" to the Zionist cause, which provoked the press baron to warn them that this "wasn't so" and that they should be "careful that they didn't tire out our people by any more secret importation of arms."¹⁹⁹ High Commissioner Samuel came down with an illness and was thus unable to meet with Northcliffe, but the

¹⁹⁴ "By Car Through Palestine," *The Times*, 13 Feb 1922.

¹⁹⁵ "Arab Complaints in Palestine," *The Times*, 9 Feb 1922.

¹⁹⁶ Herbert Samuel's appointment with Northcliffe was canceled after the High Commissioner came down with an illness.

¹⁹⁷ C. W. R. Long, *The Palestinians and British Perfidy* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2019), 124.

¹⁹⁸ "Lord Northcliffe in Palestine," *The Times*, 8 Feb 1922.

¹⁹⁹ Northcliffe, *My Journey Round the World*, 272.

press baron left him a note, remarking that “as a supporter of sane Zionism, I am frankly unhappy at many things that it is impossible to ignore.”²⁰⁰

Weizmann recalled in his memoirs that Northcliffe’s trip to Palestine seemed to have “put him off” the Zionist cause which he had previously supported, and that the press baron returned to London convinced that Jewish settlers were mostly “arrogant, aggressive types” who also mostly subscribed to communism and/or Bolshevism.²⁰¹ Northcliffe’s diary entries from this trip seem to indicate, however, that his first-hand experience did not trigger a sudden change of heart on the question of Palestine. Rather, the press lord seemingly arrived in Palestine in search of evidence that would confirm views he already held. Northcliffe complained in a diary entry written in Gaza on 6 February—before meeting with any Zionists—that “[Britain], without sufficient thought, guaranteed Palestine as a home for the Jews despite the fact that 700,000 Arab Moslems live there and own it.”²⁰² Perhaps Northcliffe’s experience sharpened his anti-Zionist views, as he did wonder after an awkward lunch in Jerusalem how these “rude people” must treat the natives if they were so off-putting to a man of his prestige. Likewise, he bemoaned in another diary entry that so few of the Zionists were “sane and moderate” like his friend Itamar Ben-Avi, editor of the *Do’Ar Ha-Yom* newspaper (also known as *The Hebrew Daily Mail*).²⁰³ But it is much more likely that Northcliffe’s anti-Zionism had been building over time and that these unpleasant encounters simply added fuel to the fire.

²⁰⁰ Northcliffe to Samuel, 11 Feb 1922, quoted in Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 826-827.

²⁰¹ Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 350-351.

²⁰² Northcliffe, *My Journey Round the World*, 270.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 276-77.

After a few days in Palestine, Northcliffe moved on to Amman and then to Cairo, but he declined to wait until returning home to London to issue a personal statement on his Palestine visit. On 15 February, Steed published Northcliffe's report in *The Times* under the headline, "Palestine Dangers: Arrogance of Extremists" with the even more subversive subheading, "A Second Ireland." Northcliffe began with kind words for Rishon-le-Zion, praising its success in wine-growing and its peaceful relations with its Arab neighbors as proof of the "capacity to colonize of the right kind of Jew." But for Northcliffe, the riots in Jaffa, the recent discovery of Zionist arm-smuggling, the fact that roads were now patrolled by armored cars, and the provocative speeches given by British, European and American Zionists were all proof that the Arabs—whom he referred to as the "ancient inhabitants of Palestine"—were correct to feel great anxiety at the prospect of a full-fledged Zionist takeover. Both the Arabs and the "native Palestinian Jews" resented the arrogance and swagger displayed by the new Ashkenazi arrivals, and further trouble was ahead if the moderates could not hold the extremists in check. Northcliffe concluded by calling for concrete measures to be taken:

The impression left on me, after many years of absence from Palestine, is that the country is in a most unhappy condition. The real situation is apparently not generally known in England. I suggest that Parliament, the Press, and the British taxpayer should insist on a complete and public investigation of the affairs of Palestine. In my opinion, unless the situation be firmly dealt with and greater respect shown for the rights of the 700,000 Palestinian Moslems and Christians, the country runs the risk of becoming a second Ireland.²⁰⁴

Northcliffe's invocation of Ireland came just months after the conclusion of the "Black and Tan War," in which civil disobedience had degenerated into massive sectarian

²⁰⁴ "Palestine Dangers," *The Times*, 15 Feb 1922.

violence, resulting in hundreds of British and Irish casualties and the partition of the island into an independent Republic of Ireland and a British-controlled Northern Ireland.²⁰⁵ As this *Times* report and the commentary in his trip diaries make clear, Northcliffe was calling for a much more radical reversal of British policy than Steed. While Steed wanted Britain's Zionist endeavor to be reassigned to more competent managers, Northcliffe was apparently ready to reconsider the Palestine question entirely. Meanwhile, High Commissioner Samuel noted in his monthly report to the Foreign Office that Northcliffe's visit "contributed to an increase of political activity in the country." The overall effect of the press lord's appearance and subsequent statements, according to Samuel, was to "encourage the Arab population. The effect on Jewish circles had been correspondingly bad."²⁰⁶ Soon after, Health Secretary and leading Zionist Alfred Mond wrote to Samuel in an attempt to calm his fears regarding Northcliffe.²⁰⁷ Ten days after Northcliffe's "second Ireland" remarks were printed, Weizmann complained in a speech at Oxford University about the press's role in creating a false impression of the Zionist movement in the mind of the "average newspaper reader."²⁰⁸

What happened between Northcliffe and Steed in the spring of 1922 following the press baron's return home is a matter of some controversy. Receiving treatment for his illness in Paris, Northcliffe began sending Steed angry cables criticizing his writing abilities, denouncing certain *Times* articles and making implicit threats that he intended to

²⁰⁵ A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 155-161.

²⁰⁶ Report on the Political Situation in Palestine for the Month of February, 1922 [CO 733/19], in *Records of Jerusalem 1917-1971, Volume 2: 1921-1930*, ed. Jane Priestland (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2003), 94-95.

²⁰⁷ Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 352.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 340.

sell the paper. Steed claimed that Northcliffe's illness was not just physical but mental: his boss was "insane" by 1922 and had even been certified by doctors as such. The claim of Northcliffe's insanity made it into the volume of the official *History of The Times* (published in 1952) that addressed this period and is often noted in British historiography, yet the Harmsworth family rejected this and the evidence of his insanity produced by Steed was flimsy at best.²⁰⁹ One former *Times* clerk claimed that the source of Northcliffe and Steed's feud was in fact Palestine—according to this account, Northcliffe had demanded impassioned anti-Zionist propaganda to be published in *The Times* following his trip, a demand which Steed rejected.²¹⁰ Whatever the case may be, Northcliffe's trip certainly led to an increased focus on Palestine in both *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*, and the campaign against Zionism took a more comprehensive approach.

E. The Non-Arab Anti-Zionist Voice

For more than three years following the Balfour Declaration, *The Times* consistently downplayed Jewish and Christian opposition to the Zionist movement. As discussed in Chapter 2, the paper misrepresented the platform of Lord Swaythling and the anti-Zionist League of British Jews upon their inception in 1918 and continued to push the line that 90% of Jews around the world were ardent Zionists. It was only in the summer of 1921 that *The Times* began publishing reports that substantial sections of Palestine's Jewish residents—both long-time residents and fresh Zionist arrivals—had major issues with the direction Weizmann and the Palestine Zionist Executive (PZE) were taking the Zionist

²⁰⁹ Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, 238-240 and 263-269. See also *History of The Times: Volume IV: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948*, ed. Stanley Morison (New York: MacMillan Co., 1952).

²¹⁰ Douglas Reed, *The Controversy of Zion* (Durban, South Africa: Dolphin Press, 1978).

movement. The Christian perspective, meanwhile, was hardly touched upon. But as *The Times* sought to direct propaganda against Weizmann and Samuel in the fall of 1921, a new platform in the paper was given to Jews and Christians—whether Palestinian, British or European—who wanted to express opposition to Zionism and/or the PZE. On 30 September 1921, a *Times* correspondent in Milan reported that the Italian daily *Il Secolo* would soon be publishing an interview with “a Cardinal who holds a high position in the Vatican.” While this unnamed Cardinal expressed sympathy with Jews who headed to Palestine in a desperate attempt to escape anti-Semitism, he added that Samuel and his followers “neither can nor ought to aspire at creating in Palestine a monopoly which would offend too much the most rooted feelings of the Christian masses.”²¹¹ Five days later, similar complaints emerged from a Palestine-based Christian leader, the Bishop of the Anglican Church of Jerusalem Rennie McInnes, who was in London for the annual meeting of the “Jerusalem and East Mission.” McInnes remarked that although he had always supported the ideal of Zionism, the Zionists currently in Palestine lacked “any desire to work for the common good of the country” and their attitude was largely responsible for the ongoing friction. Furthermore, Weizmann’s comment that his movement’s goal was to make Palestine as Jewish as England was English had stirred nine-tenths of the natives into such active and bitter resentment that the ideal was now unattainable.²¹² McInnes’s remarks generated pushback from a leading rabbi in *The Manchester Guardian*,²¹³ but *The Times* offered no such challenge.

²¹¹ “Rome and Zionism,” *The Times*, 30 Sep 1921.

²¹² “Ecclesiastical News,” *The Times*, 5 Oct 1921.

²¹³ B. Salomon, “Bishop MacInnes and Zionism,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 Oct 1921 and 11 Oct 1921.

Following Lord Northcliffe's trip to Palestine, *The Times* also began presenting the Jewish case against Zionism, starting with the voice of the Orthodox community which had until this point not been heard in the paper. This perspective was presented thoroughly via the pen of the man who had presented the Haredi Orthodox community's case to Northcliffe in Jerusalem: Jacob Israël de Haan. De Haan, a Dutch-born journalist who would be assassinated by the Haganah just two years later, displayed an interest in Zionism from a religious perspective during his early career in Holland and in Russia, but became a committed anti-Zionist and leader of the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael following his relocation to Jerusalem in 1919.²¹⁴ In his debut effort for *The Times* less than two weeks after meeting with Northcliffe, De Haan focused his criticism on Samuel, charging the High Commissioner with attempting to create a single political-religious identity for all Jews while ignoring the complaints from the anti-Zionists present in Palestine's Jewish community. Not only were anti-Zionist Orthodox rabbis denied agency, but the tax structure in Palestine forced the Orthodox community to pay taxes to rabbis with whom they had serious religious disagreements, constituting a breach of freedom of religion. The root of the issue, according to De Haan, was the Balfour Declaration, for Balfour's promise only safeguarded the rights of the Zionist Jews in Palestine.²¹⁵ In a follow-up letter three weeks later, De Haan claimed that the Zionists in Palestine actually refused to use the word "Zionist," preferring "Jew" in an effort to create the perception that all Jews are Zionists and that Zionist opinion was Jewish opinion.²¹⁶ Simultaneous to De Haan's views, Steed included additional criticism from

²¹⁴ Ludy Giebels, "Jacob Israel de Haan in Mandate Palestine: Was the victim of the first political Zionist assassination a "Jewish Lawrence of Arabia?" *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol. 46 (2014), 118-121.

²¹⁵ Jacob Israël de Haan, "The Jews in Palestine," *The Times*, 23 Feb 1922.

²¹⁶ Jacob Israël de Haan, "The Orthodox Jews and the Zionists," *The Times*, 15 Mar 1922.

other non-Arab voices. Liberal former MP John Barran, a recent visitor to Palestine, wrote in to endorse Northcliffe's analysis of the situation on the ground and grumbled that the British public had no idea why their government had issued the Balfour Declaration.²¹⁷ Soon after, the distinguished Indian civil servant M. Abbas Ali Baig posed the question: how would the people of England feel if it were "suddenly announced that London was to become the 'national home' of the Moslems?"²¹⁸

Aside from a very brief statement from Weizmann that endorsed Northcliffe's call for a full public investigation into the situation in Palestine,²¹⁹ not one letter from any Zionist or Zionist sympathizer was published by Steed for two full months following Northcliffe's trip. When the voice of a Zionist did finally reappear in *The Times*, it was not that of a Weizmann-aligned figure, but rather that of Israel Zangwill, a former associate of Theodor Herzl who had long since abandoned the political Zionism of Weizmann in favor of "cultural" Zionism. A regular *Times* reader may have been surprised to see Zangwill given writing space on the Letters to the Editor page, for the author and playwright had published a popular book the year prior that featured forthright criticism of Steed ("an anti-Semitic editor") and his paper (which had "sunk from a national to an individual organ, and rarely publishes a letter not parasitic to its policies").²²⁰ But Steed's priority at this point was airing the grievances of as many critics of the Zionist movement's direction as possible, and Zangwill used his *Times* platform to state bluntly what Weizmann, Churchill, Balfour, etc. had steadfastly denied in public but were acknowledging in private: "what Lord Balfour and Mr. Lloyd George originally

²¹⁷ John Barran, "The State of Palestine," *The Times*, 28 Feb 1922.

²¹⁸ M. Abbas Ali Baig, "Jews in Palestine," *The Times*, 10 Mar 1922.

²¹⁹ Chaim Weizmann, "The Condition of Palestine," *The Times*, 17 Feb 1922.

²²⁰ Israel Zangwill, *The Voice of Jerusalem* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), 215.

meant by their notorious manifesto was exactly what all the world understood—to wit, the conversion of Palestine into a Jewish State.”²²¹

What happened to Israel Cohen, Joseph Cowen, or Vladimir Jabotinsky? The associates of Weizmann who had typically appeared in *The Times* in the post-Balfour Declaration era to present the WZO/PZE perspective—oftentimes unopposed—were nowhere to be found. Now, Steed was presenting the arguments of anti-Zionist or anti-Weizmann figures without allowing a Zionist rebuttal. This stance reflected *The Times*’s newfound attempt to frame the conflict in Palestine not as struggle between Jews and Muslim Arabs, but as one between Zionists and Zionist opponents, with the latter category containing substantial representation from both Christians and Jews. This was not inspired by any legitimate sympathy with the anti/non-Zionists in Palestine, but rather from Steed’s strategy of attacking Weizmann from a wide range of angles.

F. Report from Philip Graves

Following Lord Northcliffe’s return, the *Times* owner had Steed publish a comprehensive report on Palestine authored by the journalist who had accompanied him on the Palestine leg of the tour: veteran *Times* correspondent Philip Graves, a reporter with years of experience in Turkey, Egypt and Palestine. Graves had gained much acclaim in the fall of 1921 by exposing *The Jewish Peril* (discussed in Chapter 3) as fraudulent in a series of articles for *The Times*. Graves fit neither the mold of an Arab sympathizer nor a Zionist

²²¹ Israel Zangwill, “Zionists’ Territorial Needs,” *The Times*, 8 May 1922.

sympathizer; his views on the matter were succinctly summed up in the preface to his book *Palestine, the Land of Three Faiths*, released in 1923:

I do not believe in political Zionism, which I interpret as an attempt to promote the artificial Judaization of the country by importation of large numbers of Jews in the hope that this will lead to Jewish political dominance. I am equally sceptical of the ability of the Palestinian Arabs, unaided by Jewish brains and capital and by British administrators, to make anything of the country, except in a distant future for which the modern world will not wait.²²²

Graves's eight-part series was highly publicized (*Times* readers were reminded no less than four times to keep an eye out for it prior to its imminent appearance) and featured vehement criticism of both Jews and Arabs. His critique of the Zionists painted a picture of a battle between moderates and extremists that he felt was unfortunately being won by the latter. The central problem was not Samuel, who was "unfairly criticized by both [Arabs and Jews]," but rather that the Zionist Executive had been "extremist, bitter and provocative" and was playing far too large a role in Palestine's governance.²²³ The PZE's immigration policy was more hasty than practical and had led to Arab suspicion; for Graves, anti-British feeling among the Arabs was "entirely a result of political or 'predatory' Zionism."²²⁴ PZE leaders David Eder and Menachem Ussishkin received much of the blame—the former for his statement that only Jews should have "national home" rights and the right to bear arms and the latter for being "incredibly ignorant about Palestine" and incapable of accepting the facts on the ground.²²⁵ Graves's final installment of the series called for the PZE, which "ceased to have any real utility to the

²²² Philip Graves, *Palestine, the Land of Three Faiths* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 3.

²²³ Graves, "Some Truths about Palestine: An Independent Inquiry," *The Times*, 8 Apr 1922.

²²⁴ Graves, "Some Truths about Palestine," *The Times*, 4 Apr 1922.

²²⁵ Graves, "Some Truths about Palestine," *The Times*, 7 Apr 1922.

Zionist cause,”²²⁶ to be abolished and replaced by a new Jewish Agency that represented a more diverse selection of Jewish leaders. This new Jewish Agency, which would ideally feature intelligent and capable Western European Jews seen to be more moderate as well as business-savvy American Jews with sensible ideas, should follow the example set by the thinker Ahad Ha’am by abandoning political Zionism in favor of cultural Zionism and to convert their understanding of Palestine as a religious center rather than a Jewish state.²²⁷

Yet Graves’s series was even more critical of the Arabs, who he portrayed as an unsophisticated race as well as a monolith who did not merit a division into “moderate” and “extremist” camps. While acknowledging that their criticisms of the Balfour Declaration and political Zionism were legitimate, Graves contended that Arabs—especially the Muslim Arabs in Palestine—were “very backward,” as centuries of Turkish neglect had left them mostly illiterate and unaware of what was happening outside their villages. The Arabs were correct to point out that Jews enjoyed far more positions of power in Samuel’s government, but this was to be expected given the serious dearth of educated Arabs. Since Allenby’s invasion, Graves charged, the Arabs had almost always been the instigators of sectarian violence, despite their “mendacious” tendency (or “genius of inaccuracy”) to blame the Jews. Furthermore, the Arabs refused to work with Jews even when it was to their benefit, and if the political climate was to improve in the future, they must realize that “it is only through cooperation with moderate Zionism that

²²⁶ Graves, “Some Truths about Palestine,” *The Times*, 8 Apr 1922.

²²⁷ Graves, “Some Truths about Palestine,” *The Times*, 11 Apr 1922.

Palestine will prosper culturally and economically.” For *Times* readers who missed Graves’s report, Steed offered a summary on 11 April:

As [Graves] points out, the Palestinian Arabs do not possess the highest order of intelligence; they have no eminent political leader; they are singularly deficient in comprehension of the character and motives of other peoples. At the same time, the Zionists have been singularly lacking in appreciation of the extremely delicate conditions in which their experiment is being made. They are extraordinarily bad politicians, as a Jew admitted to [Graves], and thereby are immensely increasing the difficulties of Great Britain as a Mandatory Power and are intensifying Arab resistance. [...] In the meantime, the conclusion is obvious that [...] the present Zionist Commission, with its political aims and exclusive privileges, must go.²²⁸

If Northcliffe wanted an anti-Zionist propaganda push in *The Times*, Graves was not the right man for the job, for his perspective was quite similar to the predominant British view that Jews and Arabs were equally deserving of blame for the mess that Palestine had become. Even Weizmann expressed appreciation in his memoirs for Northcliffe’s assigning of the “moderate” Graves to look deeper into the Palestine question.²²⁹

However, there was another journalist employed by Northcliffe perfectly suited to play the role that the press baron was looking for: J. M. N. Jeffries. Jeffries, who would go on to play a crucial role in providing evidence that the Arabs had indeed been promised Palestine by Henry McMahon, much like Graves had many years of experience as a Palestine correspondent for Northcliffe and had visited the country as recently as April 1920.²³⁰ Unlike Graves, Jeffries was a true champion of the Arab cause: his pamphlet *The Palestine Deception* (1923) and book *Palestine: The Reality* (1939) offered nothing but respect and sympathy for the Arabs and chose instead to attack Zionism and British

²²⁸ “Political Zionism,” *The Times*, 11 Apr 1922.

²²⁹ Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 282.

²³⁰ Colin Andersen, *Balfour in the Dock: J. M. N. Jeffries & the Case for the Prosecution* (Bloxham, UK: Skyscraper Publications, 2017), 44.

support for it from every possible angle. Although Jeffries was a *Daily Mail* reporter, he had contributed to *The Times* during the war, for it was quite common for Northcliffe-employed reporters to appear in both papers—especially when the press baron wanted “all hands on deck” for a propaganda campaign. So where was Jeffries in the spring of 1922? Perhaps Steed did not feel comfortable with the level of anti-Zionist vitriol Jeffries possessed and chose to publish the report from the correspondent who—like himself—focused his attacks on the PZE rather than the ideology of Zionism itself and who also harbored similar prejudices against the Arabs. Whatever the reason, the Northcliffe Press did not deploy its most effective weapon against Zionism after Lord Northcliffe returned from Palestine.

G. *The Daily Mail*, 1921-22

Beginning in 1921, the overwhelming concern for *The Daily Mail* was the promotion of “the Geddes Axe,” the program for deep spending cuts promoted by the Conservative former Transport Minister Eric Geddes.²³¹ The Geddes Axe was an outgrowth of the Anti-Waste League, a political party founded by Northcliffe’s brother Harold Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Rothermere, who would soon take over controlling interest of *The Daily Mail*. Palestine would continue to come up mainly in the context of critiquing the bloated budget—one article quoted Shibly Jamal as saying the implementation of the Geddes Axe was not possible without abolishing the Balfour Declaration²³²—yet political commentary on the situation was featured in *The Daily Mail* more than ever before. An

²³¹ A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 183-184.

²³² “Palestine,” *The Daily Mail*, 23 Feb 1922.

October 1921 article bestowed praise upon George Napier Whitingham's newly-released travelogue, *The Home of Fadeless Splendour, or, Palestine of Today*, and specifically recommending reading Whitingham's chapter on Muslim attitudes towards Jerusalem if one wished to understand the problem of Palestine.²³³ The chapter in question, in which Whitingham recounted conversations with both Musa Kazim and Hajj Amin al-Husayni, had a highly Arab-sympathetic bent:

The opinions of the three leading Moslems in Jerusalem as regards politics as they were in 1920 cannot fail to be of interest, and are therefore placed on record. I was amazed to find such wonderful unanimity amongst them and other Moslems with whom I discussed the subject. There seemed to be neither bitterness or hatred, and certainly no self-seeking, only a feeling of intense disappointment that they had not been consulted on a question which would change the whole outlook of the country they loved with such devotion.²³⁴

But Palestine coverage increased in size and scope following Northcliffe's trip.

Beginning the day of Northcliffe's arrival in Gaza, *The Daily Mail* and *The Times* began to converge and publish identical articles on Palestine, which exposed *Daily Mail* readers to Northcliffe's commentary about the "right kind of Jew," "a second Ireland," etc.²³⁵ *The Daily Mail* also utilized *The Times*'s approach of amplifying the concerns of non-Zionist Jews, and did so in bold fashion on 18 February. An article entitled "Sir Stuart Samuel's Advice to Jews" claimed that Herbert Samuel's brother, a member of Britain's Jewish Economic Board, was among the Orthodox Jews who did not see eye-to-eye with the Weizmann faction of the Zionist movement. Stuart Samuel, along with some of the wealthiest American, British, French and Italian Jews, had bravely charged that Zionist

²³³ "The Holy Land Today," *The Daily Mail*, 26 Oct 1921.

²³⁴ George Napier Whitingham, *The Home of Fadeless Splendour, or, Palestine of Today* (London: Hutchinson, 1921), 140.

²³⁵ See for example, "Anti-Zionist Jews' Discontent," *The Daily Mail*, 9 Feb 1922, which was also printed in *The Times*.

national aspirations were unjust and would end in economic failure. The article concluded that the lack of support from the wealthier sections of Jewry proved that the Jewish national home project was “built upon sand” and was sure to fail.²³⁶ Embarrassingly, Stuart Samuel himself wrote in two days later to dispute this: the High Commissioner’s brother clarified that he did indeed support the Jewish National Home, but his statement was simply meant to show support for those Jews who desired to immigrate to countries other than Palestine.²³⁷ In May, the political situation would be examined again with a depth unusual for *The Daily Mail* in an interview with Sir Henry Wilson, one of Britain’s most prestigious army officers. Wilson, speaking just weeks before his assassination at the hands of IRA gunmen, posited that if Britain left Palestine, the problem would solve itself, as the Zionists would follow suit after the realization that they had begun something that they were incapable of carrying out.²³⁸ The interview was backed up the following day by an article claiming Wilson’s remarks “had everyone talking,” and that now rumors were swirling that Muslim Indian distrust of Britain stemmed from the Palestine situation.²³⁹

It is unclear at this point to what degree Lord Northcliffe’s declining health was hampering his ability to influence *The Daily Mail*, and one biographer believes that Lord Rothermere’s control of the paper likely began several months before the younger Harmsworth officially gained control after his brother’s death.²⁴⁰ But the sudden appearance of articles that read more like *Times* articles, as well as the sudden reprinting

²³⁶ “Sir Stuart Samuel’s Advice to Jews,” *The Daily Mail*, 18 Feb 1922.

²³⁷ “Sir Stuart Samuel and Palestine,” *The Daily Mail*, 20 Feb 1922.

²³⁸ “What Are We Doing in Palestine?” *The Daily Mail*, 3 May 1922.

²³⁹ “Middle East Waste,” *The Daily Mail*, 4 Feb 1922.

²⁴⁰ Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, 262.

of *Times* articles that contained a more political bent, shows that an attempt was being made to have *Daily Mail* readers think about Britain's support for Zionism in a depth much greater than the paper was known for.

H. Mandate Confirmed

It took just two weeks after Northcliffe's return from Palestine for Churchill to grow tired of the attacks in *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*. The Colonial Secretary cabled Samuel on 25 February to complain that there was now "a growing movement of hostility, against Zionist policy in Palestine" in both houses of Parliament that had been "stimulated by recent Northcliffe articles."²⁴¹ Weizmann, meanwhile, recalled in his memoirs that the press lord's Palestine trip led to the launch of a "virulent" anti-Zionist campaign in the Northcliffe Press.²⁴² The pro-Zionist press voiced similar concerns: *Jewish World* accused *The Times* of "picking up any sort of cudgel that is likely to prejudice the Zionist movement in the eyes of the public"²⁴³ and *The Manchester Guardian* complained of the paper's "typical Northcliffian mood" of "anti-Jewish propaganda" geared towards winning over the "unthinking and the reactionary."²⁴⁴ Finally, Parliament took up the issue of the Mandate in June 1922, and nearly every argument against its conformation was one that had been pushed by the Northcliffe Press over the previous year. Lord Islington brought the motion that the Palestine mandate in its current form was

²⁴¹ Churchill to Samuel, Telegram, Private and Personal, 25 Feb 1922, PRO CO 733/18, quoted in Sahar Huneidi, "Was Balfour Policy Reversible? The Colonial Office and Palestine, 1921-23," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1998), 30.

²⁴² Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 351.

²⁴³ quoted in "Sir Herbert Samuel," *The Times*, 28 Apr 1922.

²⁴⁴ "The Future of Palestine," *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 July 1922.

unacceptable in the House of Lords for it conflicted with McMahon's promise and went against the wishes of the great majority of the people in Palestine. Islington asked that a potential revision of the Mandate must first remove Articles 4, 6, and 11, i.e. the articles presumed to be assigning special tasks to the PZE. Lord Sydenham added that leading British and American Jews agreed that Zionism was "spiritually false and economically unsound." Responding to these charges was none other than Lord President of the Council Arthur Balfour himself, making his first appearance in the House of Lords. Lord Balfour denied the claim that the PZE had any political power in Palestine, as well as the notion that his Declaration had naturally led to Jewish domination over the Arab population. The former Foreign Secretary seemed to view the discussion as a waste of time, and wondered why his Declaration was being criticized now rather than in 1917. Lord Buckmaster then took the floor to knock Balfour for failing to address the issue of McMahon-Husayn's conflict with the Jewish national home, before the House of Lords passed Islington's motion by a count of 60-29,²⁴⁵ representing the first notable victory for the anti-Zionist movement in Britain.

Perhaps sensing that the Lords' vote signaled that the tide was finally turning against British support for Zionism, Steed's editorial the following day saw him take his most radical position against the cause to date. While commending Balfour for presenting an "eloquent defence of idealist Zionism," Steed bemoaned that the Zionism heretofore propped up by the British was "aggressive and intolerant," its primary goal being the "exploitation" of the country mainly in the interest of Jewish immigrants. Addressing Balfour's question of why none of these complaints were voiced back in 1917, Steed

²⁴⁵ *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), 22 Jun 1922.

answered that the British people then believed they were supporting a movement based on religious and race traditions; they now realized that Zionism was in reality a political movement “largely of an alien character” that had intruded, imposed and taken control over British policy. In another tacit attack against the Weizmann faction, Steed called upon the “ideal” Zionists to condemn the dominant strain of Zionism and attempt to resuscitate what was “good and sound” in the cause.²⁴⁶

But jubilation among the anti-Zionists would be short-lived, thanks to the efforts of Churchill and Samuel. On 1 July, Churchill released his long-awaited “White Paper,”²⁴⁷ which read almost as a rebuttal to the previous ten months of Northcliffe Press attacks. The central idea of Churchill’s paper was that that Palestine as a whole should not be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that this home should be founded in Palestine. The document defined the Jewish National Home not as a state, but as “further development of the existing Jewish community, with assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a center in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride.” The White Paper went on to clarify that a Jewish agency was authorized by the Mandate to assist in general development but was not entitled to share in government. The argument that McMahon promised Palestine to the Arabs was categorically rejected by the White Paper—the Hubert Young interpretation of McMahon’s promise had “always” been the official stance of the British government, it claimed.²⁴⁸ While Samuel, Shuckburgh and Churchill

²⁴⁶ “Palestine Mandate,” *The Times*, 23 Jun 1922.

²⁴⁷ Although referred to as the “Churchill White Paper” it appears to have been mostly written by Samuel and John Shuckburgh, as per Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*, 159.

²⁴⁸ “Churchill White Paper,” 1 July 1922, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record: Vol. 2 British-French Supremacy, 1914-1945*, ed. J. C. Hurewitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

were putting the finishing touches on the White Paper, they simultaneously negotiated a substantial budget cut for the Palestine administration. Churchill bragged to the House of Commons on 4 July that he had successfully reduced the Palestine budget from £8 million to £4 to £2 and finally, down to less than £1 million. This budgetary development—likely more so than the White Paper—secured the Mandate’s support in the House, which overwhelmingly overturned the Lords’ motion and confirmed the Mandate by a count of 292 to 35.²⁴⁹ Steed voiced his displeasure at the vote, opining in *The Times* that because the Commons had “failed in its duty,” British policy would “continue to drift amid the difficulties and obscurities of the Palestine problem.”²⁵⁰

On 24 July, the British Mandate for Palestine was finally confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations. Three weeks later, Lord Northcliffe was dead from complications from the heart condition endocarditis. Lord Rothermere took over *The Daily Mail*, while the Astor family purchased a controlling interest in *The Times* and promptly fired Steed as editor, marking the end of Northcliffe and Steed’s run on top of Britain’s journalistic world.

I. Conclusion

Several factors contributed to the ineffectiveness of the Northcliffe Press’s anti-Zionist campaign in the final year before the Mandate was confirmed by Parliament. Steed and Northcliffe were not on the same page on the issue, as the former sought a change of leadership while the latter wanted the project aborted altogether. The two rarely had

²⁴⁹ Sahar Huneidi. “Was Balfour Policy Reversible? The Colonial Office and Palestine, 1921-23.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1998), 33.

²⁵⁰ “Parliament and Palestine,” *The Times*, 5 Jul 1922.

significant disagreements on matters of politics, which is why the *Times* owner felt comfortable allowing Steed to essentially control the political stance of the paper upon being appointed editor in 1919. But by 1922, Northcliffe had grown disgusted with the direction Steed had taken *The Times*, a development that was likely enhanced by—if not triggered by—Steed’s ambivalence over the Palestine question. Normally, Northcliffe would have simply gotten rid of Steed, as he had George Earl Buckle, Geoffrey Dawson and other editors and reporters who had allowed his papers to stray from his vision. But the press baron’s moribund state made doing so much more difficult, and he seemingly never had less control over *The Times* than he did in the spring of 1922. With Steed at the helm, *The Times* certainly offered assistance to the anti-Zionist movement through popularizing the McMahon’s promise argument, legitimizing the Palestine Arab Congress’s cause, and amplifying the concerns of anti-Zionists and non-Zionists of all nationalities and religions. Yet Steed did not have it in him to consistently promote the Arab cause, and he chose to remind *Times* readers that the Arabs were backwards, unsophisticated and untrustworthy just as often as he told them that Arab concerns were just, most notably via the report from Philip Graves. While Northcliffe was not exactly 100% pro-Arab—he remarked in his diary during the Palestine trip that the Muslims of the country lie “outrageously”²⁵¹—he had begun to acquire a genuine sympathy for their position, and more importantly knew that the most effective form of press propaganda was one that unabashedly promoted one side against the other. The fact that Northcliffe’s trusted correspondent J. M. N. Jeffries, perhaps the foremost promoter of the pro-Arab, anti-Zionist case in all of Britain at this time, made no appearance in *The Times* during

²⁵¹ Northcliffe, *My Journey Round the World*, 274.

this period indicates that Steed was likely in full control of the paper while Northcliffe lay in bed in a seriously deteriorating mental and physical state. With Steed and Graves playing the biggest roles in the Northcliffe Press while Northcliffe and Jeffries remained on the sidelines, Weizmann dodged a bullet, and by the summer of 1922 was celebrating the biggest Zionist victory to date.

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE

THE PALESTINE DECEPTION

“In 1922 Lord Northcliffe, visiting Palestine and perceiving the results of our government there, declared that we were making a second Ireland of that country. What happened in succeeding years, and even more what has been happening of late, in 1937 and 1938, show that he spoke only too truly.”

-J. M. N. Jeffries, 1939²⁵²

Following the death of his brother Lord Northcliffe in August 1922, *Daily Mail* owner Lord Rothermere sent J. M. N. Jeffries on another assignment to the Near East for further investigation into the Palestine question.²⁵³ Aside from providing more reporting on Palestine, one of the primary goals of the trip was to meet with Faisal (now King of Iraq) and obtain copies of each letter of the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence. While Faisal had discussed the correspondence with Jeffries upon their first meeting in 1920, Jeffries did not realize the significance of the letters at the time.²⁵⁴ Jeffries’s mission was successful, and after arming himself with a copy of the Sharifian archives’ “accepted first translation from the Arabic, taken very literally from the original,”²⁵⁵ he launched an aggressive attack on the Zionists and their British enablers in a month-long *Daily Mail* series entitled “The Palestine Deception,” beginning on 8 January 1923. After having been a spectator to a political back-and-forth over who said what about Palestine in 1915

²⁵² J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1939), 1. This is the first line of the book.

²⁵³ Izzat Tannous, *The Palestinians: Eyewitness History of Palestine Under British Mandate* (New York: I. G. T. Company, 1988), 218-219.

²⁵⁴ Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, 64.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

for over two years, the British public finally could now read the pertinent excerpts from this contentious correspondence. Jeffries's exposé caused an uproar in London, and led to a revival of the Palestine debate in the House of Lords in March. Although both Parliament and the Council of the League of Nations had approved the British Mandate for Palestine the previous July, the mandates had yet to take effect due to the delay in settlement of the Turkish question,²⁵⁶ leaving a small window of opportunity for a reversal of the British decision on Palestine. The Lords relied heavily on Jeffries's work for their ammunition; Lord Sydenham read excerpts from Jeffries's *Daily Mail* articles before commenting, "If the extracts which I have quoted can be relied on as authentic, then it is perfectly clear that Palestine is included among those countries which are to be independent."²⁵⁷ When Lord Islington took the floor in another Palestine debate three weeks later, he essentially recapped Jeffries's "Palestine Deception" series both in its explanation of the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its denunciation of former Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill's deceitful actions with regards to Palestine. The pro-Zionist side had little to argue against the charges: Colonial Secretary Victor Cavendish, 9th Duke of Devonshire began his rebuttal by merely reciting his predecessor's words from the 1922 White Paper before agreeing to "consider the point" regarding the Palestine promise. Devonshire declined, however, to make the government's records of the correspondence public. Former Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, once an outspoken critic of those who claimed McMahon's promise contradicted Balfour's declaration, now acknowledged that some of the government's

²⁵⁶ The Turkish War of Independence did not conclude until July 1923, at which point Turkey established its borders by ratification the Treaty of Lausanne. Britain, France and the other signatories ratified the treaty by July 1924.

²⁵⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, 1 March 1923.

engagements—which had not been “officially made public” but had “become public through other sources”—had become “exceedingly embarrassing” as their “inconsistencies” had been revealed.²⁵⁸ Behind the scenes, the Foreign Office acknowledged in a cable to the Middle East Department just before the first Lords debate that “we should not be likely to strengthen our case by publishing the McMahon letters.”²⁵⁹ The pair of debates in the House of Lords led to the creation of a “Special Cabinet Committee on Palestine,” tasked by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin to come to a “prompt and final decision on Palestine.” Another delegation from the Palestine Arab Congress arrived in London with the hopes of being interviewed, only to be told by Middle East Department diplomat John Shuckburgh that the Special Cabinet Committee was “not hearing oral evidence and accordingly could not receive them.” However, the committee did conduct one sole interview—with the High Commissioner for Palestine, Herbert Samuel. Meanwhile, committee members Devonshire and Richard Meinertzhagen kept Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann informed on the proceedings. On 27 July 1923, the Special Cabinet Committee submitted its final report, which concluded that because it was “well-nigh impossible for any Government to extricate itself without a substantial sacrifice of consistency and self-respect, if not honour,” it was advisable to proceed on with the terms of the Mandate. The debate over British support for a Zionist-dominated Mandatory Palestine was finally put to rest once and for all.

Jeffries’s success in reshaping the Palestine debate drew him the ire of Weizmann, who would later refer to the “Palestine Deception” series in his memoirs as

²⁵⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, 27 March 1923.

²⁵⁹ R. C. Lindsay to John Shuckburgh, 19 February 1923, PRO CO 733/55, quoted in Sahar Huneidi, “Was Balfour Policy Reversible? The Colonial Office and Palestine, 1921-23.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 1998), 35.

“a series of savage articles” that presented “a wholly distorted picture of Jewish life in Palestine.”²⁶⁰ The Zionist leader wrote to Zionist Commission Jerusalem chief Frederick Kisch as *The Daily Mail* was publishing the series to complain that “Jeffries continues to bombard us with articles” and that the paper was “still trying to run us to death.”²⁶¹ While Jeffries began working on having his *Daily Mail* series published in pamphlet form, Weizmann ruminated over how to respond. In the same letter to Kisch, he commented that *Times* correspondent Philip Graves’s upcoming book could potentially serve as the best reply:

Philip Graves is writing a book, which will practically be an answer to the *Daily Mail*. [Nahum] Sokolow, [Leonard] Stein and I have had various conversations with him and I think he will be very useful.²⁶²

This, of course, was the same Philip Graves who accompanied Lord Northcliffe on his trip to Palestine and contributed a comprehensive report to *The Times*’s ostensibly anti-Zionist campaign in the spring of 1922. When Graves’s book was released in 1923, the preface featured implicit criticism of Rothermere and Jeffries, surely to the delight of Weizmann:

Nor do I see what advantage can accrue to the British Empire from obedience to the commands of our Press Stentors,²⁶³ who cannot yet realize that our abandonment of Palestine would involve, not merely the abandonment of the Holy Land first to anarchy and then to the first foreign Power which desired to put an end to that anarchy, but the loss of the

²⁶⁰ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 283.

²⁶¹ Chaim Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann: August 1898-July 1931* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 242.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ In Greek mythology, Stentor was a herald of Greek forces during the Trojan War. In *The Iliad*, Homer described Stentor as having a voice “powerful as fifty voices of other men.”

bridgehead of the Suez Canal and of one of our principal stations on our Imperial Air Line to the East.²⁶⁴

Even after Wickham Steed's termination from his post as *Times* editor, Weizmann could still rely on journalists from the Northcliffe-Rothermere orbit to help him counter effective criticism of the Zionist movement. Jeffries, meanwhile, temporarily ceased focusing on the Palestine situation following the release of his pamphlet *The Palestine Deception*, and spent the next decade continuing to cover foreign affairs for *The Daily Mail*, mostly in Europe.²⁶⁵ He retired in 1933 and began working on his memoir, *Front Everywhere: The Reminiscences of the Famous Special Correspondent* (1935). But the following year, an Arab general strike in Palestine initiated a full-scale nationwide revolt, and Jeffries decided to return to the Palestine question once again. He began compiling materials for what one reviewer would describe as “probably the most comprehensive statement of the Palestine problem from the Arab point of view that has been published”²⁶⁶: *Palestine: The Reality* (1939). The 748-page book enjoyed a positive overall reception—as well as the expected criticism from Zionists—upon its release, yet was perhaps overshadowed by another book that was released four months earlier and covered many of the same issues with regards to Palestine: George Antonious's *The Arab Awakening* (1938).²⁶⁷ Antonious's book quickly became an essential part of the Middle East history canon—in the words of Edward Said, it is “the classic and foundational book

²⁶⁴ Philip Graves, *Palestine, the Land of Three Faiths* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 1.

²⁶⁵ Colin Andersen, *Balfour in the Dock: J. M. N. Jeffries & the Case for the Prosecution* (Bloxham, UK: Skyscraper Publications, 2017), 222-223.

²⁶⁶ Robert Gale Woodbert, “Palestine: The Reality by J. M. N. Jeffries,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (July 1940).

²⁶⁷ *The Arab Awakening* was the first book to publish the unabridged version (translated by Antonious) of the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence; *Palestine: The Reality* became the second to do so four months later. Jeffries and Antonious were in contact with one another during the writing process and the former spoke highly of the latter; see: Andersen, *Balfour in the Dock*, 5-6.

on Arab nationalism”²⁶⁸—while Jeffries’s soon went soon out of print. Aside from some public debates in the press over Palestine with leading Zionist Norman Bentwich and Arthur Balfour’s daughter Blanche Dugdale,²⁶⁹ Jeffries’s career wound down after *Palestine: The Reality*. He retired to Spain and passed away in 1960.

But as the Balfour Declaration reached its one hundredth birthday, Jeffries’s works reemerged. With only a small number of copies floating around after being out of print for nearly eighty years, *Palestine: The Reality* was republished by London’s Skyscraper Publications in 2017, three years after the *Palestine Deception* pamphlet was republished by Washington’s Institute for Palestine Studies. The re-release garnered much attention; John McHugo of *The Balfour Project* website called it “the best book available examining the Balfour Declaration.”²⁷⁰ Many felt that the book was not only a worthy contribution to the literature concerning the history of Britain and Zionism, but that Jeffries’s perspective was so ahead of its time that the book seemed almost prophetic. Retired teacher and activist Colin Andersen was so struck by it—“no single work on [Palestine], however, has educated me, and moved me, as profoundly as *Palestine: The Reality*,”²⁷¹—that he embarked on a quest to research Jeffries’s life, resulting in the first biography of the journalist: *Balfour in the Dock: J.M.N. Jeffries & the Case for the Prosecution* (2017). Leading anti-Zionist news website *The Electronic Intifada*’s review of the book commented that a “little-known journalist predicted the consequences for

²⁶⁸ Edward W. Said, “The Anglo-Arab Encounter,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 406.

²⁶⁹ See: Andersen, *Balfour in the Dock*, 145-146 and 271-277.

²⁷⁰ John McHugo, “Book review of Palestine the Reality by J.M.N. Jeffries,” *The Balfour Project*, <https://balfourproject.org/and-the-best-book-about-the-balfour-declaration-is/>, 22 Oct 2018.

²⁷¹ Andersen, *Balfour in the Dock*, 10.

Britain's meddling in Palestine."²⁷² The detractors have called the book a "central piece of English anti-Zionist propaganda," a statement which Jeffries himself would likely not take much issue with; on the very first page of *Palestine: The Reality*, the author states that his mission is to "give the [Arab] case as amply as possible," a goal that seemingly no other Englishman had at the time.²⁷³

There were plenty of anti-Zionists present in Britain at the same time as J. M. N. Jeffries. But Jeffries may have been the first British anti-Zionist of note who was also unequivocally pro-Palestinian.

²⁷² Selma Dabbagh, "Putting Balfour on Trial," *The Electronic Intifada*, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/putting-balfour-trial/23076>, 23 Jan 2018.

²⁷³ Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, xiii.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

EXISTENCE DENIED

This thesis has attempted to prove that *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* played one of the more crucial roles in advancing the Zionist cause after 1917 as it fought to make Lord Balfour's promise of a "national home for the Jewish people" a reality. While the perspective of these papers certainly went through a number of shifts, ultimately the two-and-a-half years-worth of glowing pro-Zionist coverage immediately following the Balfour Declaration left the greatest impact. Although the idea that Lord Northcliffe's papers launched an aggressive and virulent anti-Zionist crusade sometime in the early 1920s is often repeated in the secondary literature, upon further inspection this supposed anti-Zionist campaign was in reality rather ambivalent. Much of the campaign's ineffectiveness can be explained by the dominating role played by Wickham Steed, who despite never having been a passionate believer in the Zionist cause seemed to have also held the view popular in London at the time that it was simply too late for the British to turn their backs on the Jewish national home project. This was essentially the conclusion of the Special Cabinet Committee's report of 1923, which tacitly acknowledged that most of the presupposed notions of Palestine's value to the British Empire were either no longer relevant or never existed in the first place. If there was a time for Britain to reverse its Palestine policy, it would have been in the first two or three years following the Balfour Declaration, but thanks in large part to Steed's efforts during the period, those who questioned British support for Zionism were never given mainstream legitimization.

Shielded by nothing but positive coverage in the most influential organs of the British press, the Zionist movement felt emboldened in taking an aggressive approach to establishing itself in Palestine. Although Lord Northcliffe was unintentionally responsible for some of the Zionist movement's biggest steps forward—the Balfour Declaration may have never happened were it not for Northcliffe's campaign against the government of H. H. Asquith²⁷⁴—it seems fair to say that Zionism was something he supported in 1917 purely for wartime strategy reasons and then did not think much about until it was too late to force a significant change. But when he was presented with the reality of Zionism first-hand, he felt that he, and the British public, had been lied to. More than just feeling that Zionism was not what had been advertised, his experience in Palestine led him to understand and respect the Arab perspective at a time when so few of his ilk could. He told *Daily Mail* correspondent Lovat Fraser after his journey, "We musn't suppose that because a man wears a turban or a tarboosh that he is a fool or slow or unable to combine [...] these people are not so much unlike ourselves as we thought they were."²⁷⁵ This is a premise that a man like Steed could never entertain; for him, as deceitful, unreasonable and stubborn as the Zionists could be, at the end of the day the British had to support the intelligent, sophisticated Europeans over the backwards, ignorant Arabs. But it is not sufficient to say that Steed's preference for the Zionists over the Arabs was a matter of

²⁷⁴ Asquith, Prime Minister from 1908-1916, had no interest in supporting Zionism. After Northcliffe's exposure of the Shell Crisis, Asquith's government fell and committed Zionist Lloyd George became premier in December 1916. Less than a year later, the Balfour Declaration was issued. see: Mayir Vereté, "The Balfour Declaration and its Makers," in *From Palmerston to Balfour: The Collected Essays of Mayir Vereté*, ed. Norman Rose (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 58-61.

²⁷⁵ Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 826-827.

choosing the “lesser of the two evils”; rather, this is a story of Orientalism. As Edward Said so eloquently wrote in his classic work *The Question of Palestine*:

Both the British imperialist and the Zionist vision are united in playing down and even canceling out the Arabs in Palestine as somehow secondary and negligible. [...] And both visions belong fundamentally to the ethos of a European *mission civilisatrice*—nineteenth-century, colonialist, racist even—built on notions about the inequality of men, races, and civilizations, an inequality allowing the most extreme forms of self-aggrandizing projections, and the most extreme forms of punitive discipline toward the unfortunate natives whose existence, paradoxically, was denied.²⁷⁶

At the same time that Steed was (for tactical reasons) promoting the Arab argument against Zionism, seeing how it completely shifted the terms of public discourse, and then witnessing the complete lack of British and Zionist ability to offer a coherent response, he was still writing editorials charging that the Arabs “do not possess the highest order of intelligence” and were “singularly deficient in comprehension.”²⁷⁷ Steed was not unique in this regard; this was the overwhelming sentiment in Britain at the time. But the trailblazing Jeffries was attempting to lead a charge against this way of thinking, and at the very end of Northcliffe’s life, the press baron was also beginning to come around to this perspective.

It may be difficult for those with a basic knowledge of the early history of Britain’s role in the Zionist project to believe that there was ever a point when British support for the Jewish national home could have been seriously modified or canceled. The only tangible success for this early anti-Zionist movement, after all, was an inconsequential 1922 House of Lords vote, more than a decade after the Lords ceased to

²⁷⁶ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1979), 17-18.

²⁷⁷ “Political Zionism,” *The Times*, 11 Apr 1922.

have substantial power.²⁷⁸ But this thesis has attempted to show that two men capable of making a radical change happen were in fact there, in the right place, at the right time: Lord Northcliffe and J. M. N. Jeffries. Unfortunately for the Palestinian Arabs, a number of factors contributed to the pair's limited success; for Northcliffe, poor health, untimely death, and a late change in perspective on the validity of the Zionist ideology; for Jeffries, a late realization of the implications of the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence. It is absolutely conceivable that a healthy Northcliffe, visiting Palestine in 1919 or 1920 rather than 1922, with Jeffries at his side rather than Philip Graves, could have returned to London and launched a press campaign in *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* that did to Chaim Weizmann what his notorious 1915 press campaign did to Lord Kitchener. The Zionists dodged several bullets thanks to various circumstances that surrounded Northcliffe and Jeffries, although the monumental victory of seeing the Balfour Declaration ratified into the Mandate for Palestine was not simply a matter of luck. Weizmann, Balfour, David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and Herbert Samuel all deserve a considerable amount of the credit, and history has done a fair job in rewarding them. But in the final analysis, Wickham Steed belongs in this same conversation.

²⁷⁸ The Parliament Act of 1911 severely weakened the power of the Lords, effectively removing their ability to veto bills relating to government spending or taxation.

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