



BENNY MORRIS AND *BEFORE THEIR DIASPORA*

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Benny Morris's review of my book, *Before Their Diaspora*,* would seem to say more about the methodological assumptions of the reviewer than it does about the book itself. The reviewer kicks off with an *argumentum ad hominem* which he maintains throughout. "Not feigning or aspiring to objectivity," I am "above all an eloquent proponent of the Palestinian cause." My "lapses of judgment and half-truths . . . clearly stem from the passionately partisan perspective" that I make "no effort to hide." I commit "a major distortion . . . clearly meant to deceive" when I say that the Haganah initiated attacks against Palestinian villages in 1947. A principal grievance of the reviewer appears to be that my "wide range of factual errors and judgmental lapses or distortions" are impervious to the "series of accurate and balanced accounts of the 1948 war" that appeared in the 1980s, presumably a coy reference to his own work on 1948 which he does not mention by name.

When the reviewer comes to the content of *Before Their Diaspora*, he depicts the photographs as meant "to capture in freeze-frames a society that is about to vanish" and "describe a people in the throes of historical movement and convulsion." The frames, we are told, "succeed; the motion of history less so." I am not quite sure how photographs can be other than "freeze-frames." But more to the point is his subsuming of the dispossession of the Palestinians under "the throes of historical movement and convulsion" and

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* See *JPS* 22, no. 1 (Autumn 1992), pp. 109-11.

the "motion of history," as though the wheels of history in Palestine in the first half of this century operated neutrally and deterministically, irrespective of the Zionist Basle Program of 1897 or the willfulness of the Zionist leadership and its sponsors in London and Washington.

I am charged with depicting the Palestinians "as a blameless society shambling towards tragedy" and as "objects rather than subjects, done upon and by rather than doing." Not so. One does not have to be blameless to be a victim. And there is nothing "shambling" about my Palestinians—they are doing an awful lot of things.

Already in 1899, in the first photograph of the main text (no. 3), the Palestinian mayor of Jerusalem is warning against the consequences of Zionism. In the selected photographs, which necessarily can capture only a fraction of what they were up to, Palestinians are shown holding conferences and National Congresses in resistance to Zionism (photo nos. 82, 83, 87, 89, 100), sending delegations to the British high commissioner, the Vatican, London, and the League of Nations in Geneva (84-86, 93-94, 101), petitioning the colonial secretary, Winston Churchill (86a-b), attending peace talks in London (290-91), organizing emergency relief committees and collecting contributions (92, 277), and holding national strikes (90, 96, 97, 243a), mass protest demonstrations (107, 108, 110), and other forms of organized protest (250a-g). Photographs mark the founding of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party (102), and the creation of the all-party Arab Higher Committee in April 1936 (242). A series of photographs during the 1936-39 Arab Rebellion shows Palestinian guerrillas, their organization and training, as well as specific actions including derailing trains, blowing up pipelines, trains, and armored cars (113, 251-54, 256, 263-64, 271-75). Another series shows guerrilla and resistance activities during the 1948 war, including the blowing up in Jerusalem of the offices of the Zionist *Palestine Post* and the headquarters of the Jewish Agency (396-402, 405-9).

Otherwise, when not resisting British pro-Zionist policies, the Palestinians are shown building schools, libraries, commercial centers, hospitals, cinemas, apartment buildings, and residential quarters (4, 65, 136, 317-32) and going about their ordinary tasks: stonecutting, fishing, carpenting, harvesting, and growing, packing, and shipping bananas, grapes, olives, vegetables, tobacco, and oranges (124-28, 138-46, 149-57). Photographs show craftsmen and artisans at their sundry trades and depict a variety of factories, commercial enterprises, and publishing ventures producing books ranging from the Arabic translation of Homer's *Odyssey* to manuals on practical chemistry (187-92, 333-40, 342a-g).

Shambling?

The reviewer charges that I set up as "villains of the piece—the wily, brutal predator (the Zionists) and the predator's wily-cum-bumbling patron (Britain)." Which of the protagonists emerge as "villains" or otherwise and in what garb is, of course, the reader's privilege (including the reviewer's) to decide from his or her perspective, but nowhere in the text do these designa-

tions or any of their synonyms appear. And the "villains," according to the reviewer's description of my book, are "forever there, in the wings, almost never in the photographs." It is true that there are not many photographs of Jews in the book. But "almost never?" Not so. In the last two political sections, when the Zionist leadership sets the pace even more than the British, they appear in 37 out of 57 photographs, or 65 percent of the total. As for the British, they appear in 67 out of 168 photographs pertaining to political and public events throughout the book, or 40 percent of this total. "Almost never?"

Nor are the British depicted as in any way "bumbling." On the contrary, they are shown, *inter alia*, suspending democracy, rejecting petitions, ignoring the appeals of delegations, and disregarding the resolutions of the Palestine National Congresses and the recommendations of their own expert commissions of inquiry. They facilitate massive Jewish immigration by force of arms, fire into unarmed crowds of civilians, and rain baton-blows on the head of the grand old man of Palestinian politics, the eighty-year-old Musa Kazem al-Husseini (110). They flex their imperial muscles on land and in the air (91, 108, 267, 278), open vast detention camps (248-50), blow up entire residential quarters (258-62), break up Palestinian political organizations and exile their leaders (268-69), establish military courts that mete out the death penalty for the mere carrying of arms (270), disarm the Palestinians and arm the Jews (279, 280), make collective arrests (282), and quarter troops in Palestinian educational institutions (284). They whet Zionist appetites by endorsing the principle of partition in 1937 together with that of the forcible transfer of the Palestinian inhabitants from the area designated to be the Jewish state.

Bumbling?

The reviewer's denial on such a scale of the evidence of his eyes would seem to afford an insight into his whole approach. He would seem to have fitted the photographs (seen and unseen) into a preconceived *idée fixe* he had brought to his task. But this does not inhibit him from ruminating: "Perhaps there is a lesson here about the (necessarily?) treacherous connection between history and photography." Yes indeed, except that the shoe is on the other foot.

The reviewer's remarks about my presentation of Palestinians and "villains" culminate in the fatuous assertion that the Palestine tragedy "as it unfolded between 1917 and 1948 had as much to do with things done and not done by the Palestinians and their more or less sincere Arab supporters as by the Zionists and the British." Why fatuous? Because it ignores the vast chasm in the balance of power between, on the one hand, the resources of the World Zionist Organization and its sponsors in London and Washington, and, on the other hand, those of the pre-industrial Palestinian community and the pre-oil enriched Arab states riven by inter-dynastic disputes and neutralized by subservience to various forms of Western tutelage. As one indicator of this chasm, it might be useful to cite the total Arab and Palestinian

contributions to the Arab Higher Committee (the highest Palestinian political organization in the country), which reached \$1.73 million for the years 1946 and 1947,¹ against the contributions to the Yishuv from American Jewish sources *alone*, which totalled \$145 million for the same period.²

Following his general comments, the reviewer pinpoints four specific factual errors among the "wide range" of such errors with which the book is apparently awash. It is interesting to note that in a book covering some 2,600 weeks spread over fifty years, these "errors" fall within less than 2 weeks of each other, in April 1948.

"Error" One. As against my statement that on 21 April 1948 the British announced "their withdrawal from Haifa," he asserts that "the British announced not 'withdrawal from Haifa' but from certain positions along the Arab-Jewish seam in Haifa." He buttresses this extraordinary trivialization of the single most devastating (to the Palestinians) strategic move by the British between November 1947 and 15 May 1948 with the point that the British stayed on in Haifa afterwards, as if this latter mattered at all. What he glides over is that by suddenly withdrawing from the confrontation line between the two communities (his so-called "seam") weeks before the end of their mandate, the British seamstress was handing over the core of the city (and therefore the whole of Galilee) to the side they knew to be the stronger one. In other words, the British action was an outright invitation to the Haganah to take over the city proper (while they redeployed on its periphery). This action immediately brought about a fierce confrontation in the British Cabinet between Foreign Secretary Bevin and Field Marshall Montgomery, the imperial chief of staff, not to mention the exodus of 70,000 Palestinian civilian residents from the main harbor city of the country. So strained did relations become between Bevin and Montgomery over Haifa during 22-23 April that the latter expected to be sacked³—an indication of how seriously the British government viewed the sudden withdrawal of their military from Haifa's intercommunal "seam."

Of course the reviewer knows all this. In his own book, he shows an admirable grasp of the strategic significance of the British military move in Haifa. He describes the three courses open to the British commander on the eve of the move in the latter's own words: "'To maintain my present dispositions in Haifa and Eastern Galilee,' 'To concentrate the Eastern Galilee force in Haifa,' and 'To retain my present dispositions in Eastern Galilee and to redeploy my forces in Haifa, whereby I could secure certain routes and areas vital to me and safeguard as far as possible my troops'—the third course was the most attractive."⁴ Indeed, the reviewer informs us that precisely on the afternoon of 19 April, some thirty-six hours before the British withdrawal, Abba Schneller, the Histadrut and MAPAI leader in the city, went to the British commander "and sounded him out on the British attitude to a possible major Haganah offensive against the Arab militia in Haifa"⁵—

hardly the initiative of the side that considered itself the weaker or the object of British hostility.

Some light may be shed on Zionist intentions by the name given to the Haganah operation in Haifa—"Bi'ur Hametz," which the reviewer himself translates as "Operation Passover Cleansing."⁶ According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "No hamez (leaven) is to be found in the house or owned during Passover (Ex 12:15, 19). On the night before the festival, the house is thoroughly searched for hamez (Pes 1:1). All leaven found in the house is gathered together in one place and burned on the following day before noon." One hardly need spell out to whom the "leaven" of the operation's name referred.

"Error" Two: As against my statement that "Haifa fell on April 22-23," he tells us that "in fact Arab Haifa fell to the Haganah [like an apple?] on 21-22 April, the battle ending in the afternoon of 22 April." It is true that the actual fighting ended on the afternoon of 22 April, but in speaking of Haifa's "fall" I make a distinction, which the reviewer does not, between the cessation of fighting per se and the final sealing of the city's fate. On the evening of 22 April, Field Marshall Montgomery was reprimanded at 10 Downing Street for the army's behavior. Returning to the prime minister's residence the next morning (23 April), he found Foreign Secretary Bevin even "more agitated than he had been the night before" and maintaining that the "army should have stopped any nonsense in Haifa."⁷ For twenty-four hours (22-23 April) it looked as if the British government might force its military to reassert itself in Haifa—a prospect which presently evaporated, definitively marking the city's fall. Even as late as 25 April, the Palestinian Haifa Arab Emergency Committee wrote to the British commander that since "the clashes had finally ceased" on 22 April, "We submit that it is only fair and just that you should now assume control of the whole town and be responsible for the maintenance of peace and order. . . . The adoption of this measure will secure the removal of members of the Jewish forces from the Arab quarters, and will, doubtless, help to restore a feeling of confidence and safety to the Arab inhabitants *minimizing the number of Arab evacuees*" (emphasis added).⁸

"Error" Three: As against my statement that the Haganah attacked *after* the British withdrawal from Tiberias, the reviewer asserts that "the Haganah attack on Arab Tiberias, on 16-17 April, *preceded* the British announcement of withdrawal from the city" (emphasis in original). But again he is nit-picking. The most important British fighting unit in Eastern Galilee until early April was the First Parachute Battalion of the Sixth Airborne Division. This unit, according to the official historian of the division, Major R. D. Wilson, "became unoperational in Galilee on 8th April in readiness for its embarkation." Wilson continues: "Within a few days of the withdrawal of the 1st Parachute Battalion, the disturbances in Tiberias and Safad came to a head . . . and on 14th April while true negotiations were in progress [in Tiberias] under the direction of Brigadier Colquhoun the Jews launched a

heavy attack which after four days resulted in the defeat and complete evacuation of the Arab population."⁹ Thus the reviewer is off by forty-eight hours with regard to the *start* of the Jewish offensive against Tiberias as well as being off the mark with regard to the *sequence* of British withdrawal and the Haganah offensive in the city.

"Error" Four: The reviewer tells us that 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni (Palestinian commander in the Jerusalem area) "did not die 'as he led a successful counterattack' at Castel" but rather that he was "shot by a Jewish sentry as he approached Castel, which he apparently believed was already in Arab hands." Not so. What happened on the ground in the most dramatic and key battle of the entire war was the following:

On 3 April, while 'Abd al-Qadir was in Damascus trying (vainly, as it turned out) to obtain "heavy" weapons (artillery, machine guns, mortars) and ammunition from the Arab League Military Committee because of the escalating fighting on the Jerusalem front, the Haganah attacked, conquered, and expelled the inhabitants of the strategic village of Castel commanding the approach to Jerusalem on the main road from Jaffa and Tel Aviv. The Haganah's move heralded the launching, on 6 April, some ten miles to the west, of Operation Nachshon—the first operation of the Haganah's master plan, Plan Dalet. The operation aimed at the conquest and cleansing of Palestinian villages in the plain on both sides of the main road from Jaffa to Jerusalem, deep in territory which had been "assigned" to the Palestinian state under the UN partition recommendation.

The following day, on 4 April, 'Abd al-Qadir's guerrillas launched a counterattack on Castel, led in his absence by his deputy commander, Kamil 'Urayqat. The Palestinian counterattack was pressed for the next three days, from 4 through 6 April, enabling the Palestinians to gain some ground, including a quarry on a strategic hill about a mile southeast of Castel. But Haganah reinforcements had by then blunted the Palestinian counter-offensive, in which 'Urayqat was wounded on 6 April and had himself to be evacuated to Jerusalem.

'Abd al-Qadir returned to Jerusalem on 7 April, arriving at 5:00 A.M. after an all-night journey from Damascus, empty-handed and in despair following a final and acrimonious showdown with the Military Committee. At 11:00 that night, he relaunched the stalled Palestinian counterattack to recapture Castel. He organized his forces in three formations. The right wing (to attack from the east) he assigned to Hafiz Barakat, a member of a merchant family from Hebron. The left wing (to attack from the west) he assigned to Harun Bin Jazi and his Bedouin volunteers from Transjordan. The center he entrusted to his lieutenant Ibrahim Abu Dayyeh, a villager from Hebron district. Accompanied by only a few elderly assistants, 'Abd al-Qadir established his command post in the recently occupied quarry nearby.

By the predawn hours of 8 April, Bin Jazi and Abu Dayyeh had won considerable ground while suffering heavy casualties, but Barakat had failed to make any progress. The pressure of the former two forced the Haganah to

pull back from the lower slopes of Castel and concentrate their forces at the summit of the hill. There they tenaciously remained. Repeated attempts by Abu Dayyeh to dislodge them by raiding parties carrying explosives failed in the face of heavy Jewish fire. Fearing that dawn would reveal the Palestinian positions to the Haganah forces on the commanding heights, Abu Dayyeh sent an SOS to 'Abd al-Qadir, requesting that he goad Barakat to move more energetically forward. 'Abd al-Qadir, who had been chafing at the slow progress of his forces, impetuously but typically left his command post upon receipt of Abu Dayyeh's appeal, ordering his aides to stay behind. He disappeared uphill into the night and was next seen by the Haganah member Yoram Kaniuk, who with his comrades manned a post on the Castel hilltop. Many years later, Kaniuk related: "We five young men had seen a majestic figure wearing crossed bandoliers. I was startled, my hand trembled and I missed. But the fellow next to me did not."¹⁰

By dawn it became known to the guerrillas that their leader was not at his command post. Word spread throughout the region that 'Abd al-Qadir was surrounded or missing. Reinforcements poured in. By 11:00 A.M. 'Abd al-Qadir's counterattack began to gather new momentum. By early afternoon the Haganah forces and their Palmach reinforcements had been routed, and Castel was back in Palestinian hands. But at the moment of their triumph the Palestinian guerrillas found the body of their commander close to the Haganah command post at the village summit.

The reviewer next proceeds to catalog the "lapses of judgment and half-truths" and "elisions" which stem from my "passionately partisan perspective." He pinpoints seven lapses of this genus.

Exhibit One: The reviewer seems to take exception to my statement that the General Assembly partition resolution was "a nonmandatory recommendation." Well, was it so, or not? The answer can either be yes or no, and the reviewer well knows that it *was* a "nonmandatory recommendation." So why the carping?

Exhibit Two: The *pièce de résistance* of the review is the umbrage taken at my statement "Haganah attacks on villages and residential quarters were answered by Palestinian attacks on Zionist colonies and *vice versa*" (emphasis added). It is this that warrants the charge of "a major distortion, and one clearly meant to deceive." Not so. Indeed, my statement leans over backwards by implying *reciprocity*. In fact, the first Haganah attack on Palestinian civilians since 1939 occurred on 12 August 1947 near Petah Tikva,¹¹ and according to the Haganah's own official history of the war (in Hebrew) the Palestinian leadership gave orders to its guerrillas *not* to start hostilities in the weeks immediately following the General Assembly partition recommendation. One might note that this was due not to lack of Palestinian resolve to resist forcible partition, but rather to the leadership's keen awareness of its total military unpreparedness.

But which side actually "launched the hostilities that evolved into the 1948 war" is in any case far less important than which side had been planning, arming, training, and organizing for war (albeit behind the fig leaf of "compliance" with the will of the international community). Interested readers can judge for themselves by studying the series of interlocking military plans drawn up by the Haganah as of the early 1940s,* and particularly Plans Gimmel and Dalet, this last begun, according to Haganah chief of military operations Yigal Yadin, in 1944.¹² They might also want to identify on a contemporaneous map the long list of Palestinian towns and villages targeted for conquest under these plans. The Zionists' various military preparations, including the organization and training of field brigades and mobile shock troops and the accumulation and manufacture of vast stores of weapons, enabled the Haganah command itself to write in a memorandum to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on 25 March 1946:

As far as the strength of the Arabs in Palestine is concerned, . . . there is no doubt that the Jewish force is superior in organization, training, planning and equipment, and that we ourselves will be able to handle any attack or rebellion from the Arab side without calling for any assistance from the British or Americans. If you accept the Zionist solution [partition and a Jewish state in the greater part of Palestine] but are unable or unwilling to enforce it, please do not interfere, and we ourselves will secure its implementation.¹³

At the same time, the members of the Anglo-American Committee held a meeting with General D'Arcy, commander of British forces in Palestine. According to an American member of the committee who was present,

We discussed with him what would happen if British troops were withdrawn from Palestine. "If you were to withdraw British troops, the Haganah would take over all of Palestine tomorrow," General D'Arcy replied flatly. "But could the Haganah hold Palestine under such circumstances?" I asked. "Certainly," he said. "They could hold it against the entire Arab world."¹⁴

Exhibit Three: The reviewer writes that "the fact that the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded the territory of the Jewish state-to-be on 15 May 1948, with the aim of destroying it, is somehow lost in the verbiage." Not so. Although my book *ends* on 15 May, I did refer to the intervention per se of units of the regular armies after 15 May (pp. 313, 320). This intervention was too little and came too late. It was itself a reaction to the invasion by the Haganah even of the territory allotted to the Palestinian state by the partition recommendation and the consequent destruction of the Palestinian community involving the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians. Given the publication during the 1980s of a series of accurate accounts of the 1948 war (including my own contribution to the subject),¹⁵ there is little reason for the reviewer to perpetuate the central Zi-

* See "Plan Dalet Revisited," *JPS* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988), pp. 3-70.

onist myth that the Arab capitals had either the will, the intention, or the force to destroy the Jewish state.

It is interesting to note that the reviewer excludes from his list of "invaders" Transjordan, which had the largest, best trained, and most strategically placed Arab army (about 4,800 men constituting the Third and Fourth Brigades of the Arab Legion). This leaves fewer than 10,000 troops¹⁶ under no unified command (and, in the case of Egypt and Iraq, with long lines of communications) to "destroy" the at least 50,000 troops of the Haganah—and this in the face of the prompt recognition by *both* superpowers of the nascent Jewish state.¹⁷ The three-to-one ratio suggested by military experts as the minimum needed for troops on the offensive to prevail over those on the defensive is also worth recalling.

Exhibit Four: The reviewer gets rather exercised over my assertion that the Soviet Union voted for partition "only in order to end British rule in Palestine." He notes my earlier statement that Britain had announced its decision to leave Palestine in September, that is, *before* the UN vote, with the implication that Britain's declared intention ruled out Soviet support for partition on these grounds. But in fact, the Soviet Union had indicated its support for partition even earlier, in April 1947, long before Britain's September announcement. Moreover, Soviet broadcasts (in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Yiddish, English, Swedish, Italian, and Russian) monitored by the British well into 1948¹⁸ demonstrate a veritable Soviet obsession that "perfidious Albion" was up to his old tricks and that the British were determined to remain in Palestine in one form or another—a fear that was surely behind Soviet approval of the massive Czech arms deal to the Zionists implemented by early April 1948.

But "anyway," the reviewer wonders, how could I "know what was on Stalin's mind?" He then suggests that the Soviets may have voted as they did "because they regarded partition as a fair and equitable solution to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict." Now, if he can believe that a Stalin who had caused the death of some twenty million of his own citizens, who had trampled on the rights of tens of millions of the peoples of Eastern Europe, whose own solution of the "Jewish problem" was a Jewish state in remotest Birobidjan, and who was within five years of declaring that his Jewish doctors were plotting to kill him—if he can believe that *such* a Stalin on the threshold of the cold war would be responding to the urgings of his instinct for fairness, well then, he can believe just about anything. And if I am denied clairvoyance with regard to Stalin's mind, how come the reviewer is endowed with this particular faculty with regard to *my* mind ("clearly meant to deceive"), the minds of Arab leaders in Beirut, Damascus, Iraq, and Cairo (their aim as invaders to "destroy" Israel) and, indeed, the mind of Stalin *himself*?

Exhibit Five: The reviewer claims that I "fail completely to mention al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni's services (recruitment, propaganda) on behalf of Nazi Germany during the war." Completely? On page 235 I mention that Hajj Amin fled in 1941 "to the Axis countries where he spent the remaining war

years." What I *do* "fail *completely*" to mention, on the other hand, is the agreement with Nazi Germany assiduously sought by the triumvirate of the Stern Gang, whose central figure was Yitzhak Shamir, the meetings between Chaim Weizmann and Mussolini, and the transfer agreement in the late 1930s between the World Zionist Organization and the Third Reich based on giving preference to "young pioneering" Jewish immigrants to Palestine at the expense of the German Jewish population at large.¹⁹

Exhibit Six: "Far worse," in the reviewer's judgment, is my failure to mention, in describing the Arab Rebellion of 1936-39, the internal Palestinian divisions, "the terrorist campaign the Husaynis waged against the Nashashibi-led opposition, and the emergence of Arab 'Peace Bands,' which fought against the rebels in the last months of the revolt and helped bring about its demise." My chapter on the Arab Rebellion contains all of 1,525 words—the length of an op-ed. Clearly I could touch upon only the most important features of the rebellion—those factors that had the more direct bearing on its outcome and on the post-rebellion balance of power. I did not and do not believe that, in such a constricted space, these internal divisions warranted mention among these factors, particularly as they did *not* reflect disagreement about national political objectives. The "Peace Bands" were the creation of British military intelligence, as their name clearly indicates. They were recruited from the ranks of criminal prison elements and collaborators. Their impact on the demise of the rebellion ranged from insignificant to minor. The demise of the rebellion was brought about by the sustained methodical killings of Palestinians by the British, the detention of Palestinians by the thousands, the dissolution of all Palestinian political organizations, the arrest or exile of Palestinian leaders, and the British strategy of *total* disarmament of the Palestinian population.

In this regard, it may be worthwhile to quote the words of Major-General (later Field Marshall) Montgomery, who in October 1938 assumed command of the Eighth Division in Palestine to fight the Palestinian rebellion. In a report to the War Office in London dated 4 December 1938, Montgomery explained the tasks which he would concentrate on:

To hunt down and destroy the rebel armed gang. They must be hunted relentlessly; when engaged in battle with them we must shoot to kill. . . . This is the real way to end the war [sic], i.e., to kill the rebels and particularly their leaders. . . . The situation is definitely in hand and there are very distinct signs that the rebel movement is crumbling. The surest way to complete this crumbling process is to direct all our energies *now* [emphasis in original] on killing the armed rebels. . . . I have taken off my brigadiers all the administrative details with which they were cluttered and have loosed them on the task of killing rebels. . . . There will be some very difficult problems ahead . . . for the present I am concentrating on killing the rebels. . . .²⁰

Exhibit Seven: The reviewer considers it "symptomatic" of my "narrow Palestinian focus" that while repeatedly referring to the Wailing Wall I nowhere explain its holiness to Jews. One would have thought that Western

readers in general, who are already as thoroughly apprised of this as they are of the holiness of the Holy Sepulchre to Christianity, need little assistance from me in this regard. What I thought important to mention—because relatively unknown to Western readers—is the other side of the coin: the Wailing Wall is the Western Wall of al-Haram al-Sharif (The Noble Sanctuary). This contains the magnificent Dome of the Rock built by the caliph 'Abd al-Malik between A.D. 688 and 691. It is the earliest Muslim monument surviving. To the south of it is the Mosque of al-Aqsa built by 'Abd al-Malik's son al-Walid during his caliphate, A.D. 705–715.

In the early days of Islam, Muslims turned in prayer to Jerusalem, not Mecca, which is why the former is known as “the first of the two *qiblas*.” According to the Quran, the Prophet Muhammad was transported on a wondrous steed, Buraq, from Mecca to Jerusalem in a mystical nocturnal flight. He tethered Buraq on the *inside* (facing east) of the Wailing Wall, which is why the wall is known by Muslims as the Buraq. The prophet ascended from the rock now under the Dome to within “two bow-lengths of the Throne of God.” This episode became the centerpiece of Sufi Islam, inspiring a vast corpus of mystical literature in which the ascension of Muhammad acquired the connotation of the escape of the human soul from its earthly moorings. Countless generations of Sufi pilgrims made their way barefooted to Jerusalem to contemplate the site of the Prophet's experience in the hope of partaking in it. The Prophet's mystical flight (*al-Mi'raj*) is to this day annually celebrated throughout the Muslim world on the twenty-seventh day of the month of Rejeb, the seventh in the Muslim calendar.

But the reviewer, in snide tones, cavils: “Instead [of mentioning the religious significance of the Wailing Wall to Jews], Khalidi described the Wailing Wall as the nether [sic] side of a wall to which Muhammad had tethered his horse [sic] while in transit [sic] after his death [sic] between Mecca and heaven [sic].” Thus is the reviewer's ecumenical focus so much wider than my own.

When all is said and done, the reviewer's comments have to be considered in the context *first* of his methodological assumptions and *second* of the thrust of his work on 1948.

A principal assumption of his seems to be the necessarily antithetical relation between passion and objectivity. There is no such relation. The vast body of literature against Nazism is not rendered invalid by the passionate advocacy of its writers, any more than is that of Western literature against communism.

Another principal assumption of his is the necessary correlation between accuracy and balance. There is no such correlation. Truth is not necessarily equidistant from two poles. This dimension of the reviewer's methodology is revealed unwittingly by the second alternative formulation he offers (and the one he apparently prefers) to my own “unbalanced” explanation of Soviet motives with regard to the partition resolution: “How about,” he suggests,

"The Soviets supported partition both because they wanted to see a fair solution *and* because they hoped to undermine Western influence in the Middle East?" (emphasis added). To be sure, this *sounds* more *balanced* than my blunt "The Soviet Union voted for partition *only* in order to end British rule in Palestine" (emphasis added). But is it *necessarily* more accurate, given all we know about Stalin in 1947? What the reviewer would seem to have in mind in this formulation, if one may be permitted to speculate, is basically its *sound*. In other words, he is talking about packaging. But history is not the business of marketing a commodity to maximize its sellability, however smooth the verbiage.

Notwithstanding, the reviewer has rendered important services to the study of 1948. He has brought to light an Israeli military intelligence report written in June 1948 which conclusively shows that in the majority of cases the depopulation of Palestinian towns and villages in 1947-48 was *not* the result of evacuation orders given to Palestinians by their leaders—hitherto the cornerstone of official Zionist/Israeli propaganda with regard to the Palestinian exodus in 1948—but of Haganah/IDF military operations. It does not derogate from the importance of the reviewer's revelation of the June report that the myth of Arab orders had been shot down some three decades earlier,* or that the reviewer was merely giving the *coup de grace* to a long-deceased horse. It is also to the reviewer's credit that he had the moral courage to chronicle numerous instances of appalling Israeli brutality against Palestinians in 1948, that he was the first Israeli to compile an authoritative list of the Palestinian villages occupied and depopulated by Israel in 1948, and that he meticulously detailed the Israeli policy of barring the *return* of the Palestinian refugees and the resultant sub-policy to that end of destroying their homesteads and confiscating their land.

Underlying the assumptions mentioned above are several components of a thesis to which the reviewer evidently subscribes, viz (a) the *equal* culpability of Palestinian acts of commission and omission and those of the Zionists, the British, and the Americans combined in influencing the course of events; (b) the sacrosanctity of the UN partition recommendation and the premise that it automatically created Israeli sovereignty in areas that were overwhelmingly inhabited and owned by Arabs, and that therefore any attempt on the part of the Arabs to retain these areas or indeed to resist the forcible Zionist takeover constituted an *invasion* of Jewish territory. Hence, his apparent waffling on the issue of whether the UN partition recommendation was mandatory or nonmandatory; (c) the moral responsibility of the Palestinians for allegedly initiating hostilities after the UN partition recommendation; and (d) the moral delinquency of the regular armies of the Arab countries for intervening after 15 May 1948 in the wake of the destruction of the Palestin-

* See the 1961 *Spectator* correspondence reproduced in "Plan Dalet Revisited," cited above.

ian community and the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians.

These assumptions and thesis components should in turn be viewed within the context of the other assumptions which inform the reviewer's work on 1948 and which underlie his central thesis—that "the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design." These assumptions are: (a) that the Zionist/Israeli military operations that led to Palestinian depopulation (a euphemism for ethnic cleansing) in 1947-48 took place with little connection to the preceding politico-strategic and ideological motivations and calculations of the Zionist political leadership. According to the reviewer, even when Zionist/Israeli military operations and expulsion orders in 1947-48 directly caused Palestinian depopulation, this was the result of on-site imperatives or at most of *ad hoc* decisions by extemporizing local commanders in the heat of battle; (b) the exemption of the Zionist leadership (practitioners par excellence of *realpolitik*) from all prior intent to fulfill their purposes at Palestinian expense, much less to plan territorial conquests and depopulation; and (c) the totally *ex post facto* crystallization of the Israeli policy of expulsion only *after* the Palestinian exodus had already started.

Thus, even while ignoring the relevance of Clausewitz's dictum about warfare being "the conduct of politics by other means," the reviewer, as a historian, also allows himself to view the events of 1947-48 in a virtual vacuum. But 1948 is the climax of events that began with the birth of the modern Zionist movement in the nineteenth century and more specifically in 1897 with the convening of the first Zionist Congress in Basle and its open challenge to the status quo in Palestine. Methodologically, to look at what happened in 1948 in isolation from its prodromal antecedents (consider, for example, his trivialization of the concept of transfer in pre-1948 Zionist strategy²¹) is like looking for the causes of World War I *after* Sarajevo, or those of World War II *after* Germany's invasion of Poland.

Reviewing all this, one has little option but to conclude that the reviewer's revisionist work on selected aspects of 1948 (laudable as far as it went) would seem—almost fifty years after the event and perhaps unwittingly—to be aimed at deflecting attention from what occurred *before* the Palestinian diaspora. This in turn would seem poignantly to illustrate how passion and objectivity can indeed collide, even in as dispassionate and balanced a person as the reviewer himself.

NOTES

1. Arab governments: £143,294; other Arab sources: £46,175; Palestinian sources: £156,202, making a total of £345,671, or about \$1.73 million. *Bayan 'an alhay'ah al 'Arabiyya al 'ulya li Filastin 1946-49* [Statement of the AHC for Palestine for 1946-49] (Cairo, 1951), pp. 64-65.

2. Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), p. 325. Halperin's complete chart of contributions is reproduced in my *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), p. 851.

3. *Memoirs of Field Marshall Montgomery of Alamein* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 424.
4. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 74.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
7. *Memoirs*, p. 425.
8. Appendix VII of the Haifa Arab Emergency Committee, *Memorandum on the Jewish Attack of 21st April 1948 on the Arabs in Haifa*, 27 April 1948, and its *Sequel*, 30 April 1948, in Arabic, with eight appendices in English.
9. R.D. Wilson, *Cordan and Search* (Aldershot, UK: Gale and Polden, 1949), p. 196.
10. *New York Times*, 25 April 1989.
11. Yehuda Slutsky, *Sefer Toldot ha-Haganah* [The History of the Haganah], vol. 3, part 2 (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved, 1972), p. 1334.
12. Lynne Reid Banks, *Torn Country: An Oral History of the Israeli War of Independence* (New York: Watts, 1982), p. 110.
13. Head of Command, Jewish Resistance Movement to joint Chairman [sic], Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 25 March 1946, Jerusalem, p. 11.
14. Bartley C. Crum, *Behind the Silken Curtain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), p. 220.
15. "The Arab Perspective," in William Roger Louis and Robert W. Scaockey, eds., *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 104-36.
16. About 4,000 Iraqis, 3,000 Egyptians, and 2,000 Syrians; Lebanon did not join the operations in Palestine until 4 June 1948, and then with less than 1,000 troops.
17. See *From Haven to Conquest*, pp. 861ff. for troop strengths.
18. BBC Monitoring Service No. 31, Caversham Park, Reading, Berkshire, 1 January 1948 ff.
19. David and Jon Kimche, *The Secret Roads* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), *passim*.
20. Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Making of a General 1887-1942* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), p. 293ff.
21. For an authoritative account of the role of this concept, see Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).