

THE STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINE (Part Two: 1947-1973)

The British Foreign Secretary told Parliament on February 18, 1947 that "there is no prospect of resolving this conflict by any settlement negotiated between the parties." Further, he said, according to the League of Nations mandate, the legal basis for Britain's rule over Palestine, Britain did not have the authority to partition the country as everyone thought would be necessary. Thus, the British government had decided to turn the problem over to the United Nations. The Foreign Secretary did not mention, but it was obviously a significant factor, that Britain could no longer afford to keep nearly 100,000 troops employed in an increasingly vain effort to keep the peace in what was in comparison to India a relatively unimportant area.

In response to Britain's request, the UN Secretary General on April 2, asked that the General Assembly (UNGA) take up the question of what should be done about Palestine. Five of the member states thought they already knew what to do: Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, proposed "The termination of the Mandate over Palestine and the declaration of its independence." Their motion was rejected by the UNGA which instead, voted to establish a "Special Committee for Palestine" (UNSCOP) to recommend a different solution. It should have been sobering to the members of this, the last in the long line of inquiries, to hear the British delegate say,

We have tried for years to solve the problem of Palestine. Having failed so far, we now bring it to the United Nations, in the hope that it can succeed where we have not. If the United Nations can find a just solution which will be accepted by both parties, [we would] welcome such a solution [but] we should not have the sole responsibility for enforcing a solution which is not accepted by both parties and which we cannot reconcile with our conscience.

UNSCOP was to be composed of a diverse group, representatives of Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. As diverse as the committee was, its members shared one characteristic: none of them knew anything about Palestine. And they could not expect that they would get a "balanced" view since the representative of one party, the Palestinians, decided to abstain from collaboration with UNSCOP. In default of the Palestinian voice, the general ignorance of the members of the Committee and sporadic demonstrations in Palestine against its inquiry, the Jewish Agency dominated the proceedings.

Despite these problems, UNSCOP set out, or at least signed, a generally fair and informative appreciation of "the Elements of the Conflict" in its *Report to The General Assembly*. In summary, it portrayed two populations, one European, technologically advanced, united and determined, numbering about 600,000, and the other, numbering 1,200,000, Asian, divided both religiously and geographically into about 1,200 autarkic, self-governing communities and "native quarters" of the few cities, suffering from all of the inherited problems of colonialism, living in one small (26,000 square kilometer/10,000 square mile) area of which "about half ...is uninhabitable desert" with seasonal and limited rainfall and access to ground water only from fragile and (what ultimately have proven to be) endangered aquifers. Palestine was almost totally without minerals other than the potassium and sodium salts of the Dead Sea.

The delegates must have thought there was little to divide.

UNSCOP accepted as given, probably on legal advice, that it should work within the intent and functioning of the League of Nations mandate. In retrospect curiously, UNSCOP did not apparently consider the utility of negotiating with and between the Palestinians and the Zionists. Nor, as in various contemporary and subsequent instances of decolonization did it regard the majority community as the presumed legal heir to the colonial government. Only the Arab states thought of turning the "case" over to the International Court.

Viewing the mandate document as tantamount to a constitution for Palestine, UNSCOP emphasized that the Mandatory Power (Britain) had been obliged to "secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home," to "facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions" and to "encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish Agency...close settlement by Jews on the land..." while it "speaks in general terms only of safeguarding or not prejudicing the 'civil and religious rights' and the 'rights and position' of the Arab community in Palestine."

In attempting to balance these unequal obligations, the Committee observed, the "Mandatory Power has attempted, within the limits of its interpretation of the 'dual obligation' of the mandate, to provide some satisfaction of Arab political desires," but such moves "were generally rejected by the Palestinians and vigorously opposed by the Zionists."

UNSCOP was told that the Zionists demanded the right of "return" for European Jews in numbers defined only by the "economic absorptive capacity of the state." The Zionist representatives declared, however, that "The immigrant Jews [would] displace no Arabs, but rather [would] develop areas which otherwise would remain undeveloped." In an earlier communication (March 19, 1899) to an official of the Ottoman Empire, Theodore Herzl had written that the Zionist movement was "completely peaceful and very content if they are left in peace. Therefore, there is absolutely nothing to fear from their immigration...Your Excellency sees another difficulty, in the existence of the non-Jewish population in Palestine. But who would think of sending them away? It is their well-being, their individual wealth which we will increase by bringing in our own."¹

The basis of the Zionist claim to Palestine was, as from the beginning of the movement in Theodore Herzl's words, "Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home."

In a separate opinion, the Representative of India held that the Jewish contention that they were the "original" natives was both historically questionable and, if held to be the basis of a legal claim, would be a recipe for chaos since virtually all modern states would be open to similar claims based on ancient history. As he wrote,

To found their claim on their dispersion from Palestine after a period of approximately 2,000 years, whatever religious sentiment may be attached by them to the land occupied by their Prophets, appears to me to be as groundless as anything can be. A multitude of nations conquered various countries at various times and were eventually defeated and turned out of them. Can their connexion, however long, with the land which they had once

¹ "complètement pacifique et très content si on laisse la paix. Donc il n'y a absolument rien à craindre de leur immigration...Vous voyez une autre difficulté, Excellence, dans l'existence de la population non juive en Palestine. Mais qui donc songerait à les éloigner? C'est leur bien-être, leur richesse individuelle que nous augmenterions en apportant la nôtre."

conquered provide them with any basis after the lapse of even one century? If this were so, Moslems might claim Spain, which they governed for a much longer period than the Jews had governed part of Palestine...[moreover] this claim cannot be made by those who were subsequently converted to Judaism. Khazars of Eastern Europe, Turco-Finn by race, were converted to Judaism as a nation about 690 A.D. Can their descendants possibly claim any rights simply because the ancestors of their co-religionists had once settled in Palestine.

There is no indication that UNSCOP as a whole reacted to the Indian delegate's demarche. But it was, in part, foreshadowed by the Palestinian Arab Higher Committee which "postulate [d] the 'natural' right of the Arab majority to remain in undisputed possession of the country, since they are and have been for many centuries in possession..."

The Arab Higher Committee also made two further arguments: first, that "the term 'Arab' is to be interpreted as connoting not only the invaders from the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, but also the indigenous population which intermarried with the invaders and acquired their speech, customs and modes of thought in becoming permanently Arabized." It is the descendants of this mixed group, they said, who the current Palestinian "natives." And, second, they claimed "acquired" rights, which derived from the various British promises during and immediately after the First World War.

Thus, the Palestinians "have persistently adhered to the position that the Mandate for Palestine, which incorporated the Balfour Declaration, is illegal."

UNSCOP found the Arab claims weak. It held that the Palestinian claim to "natural" rights is flawed by the fact that "they have not been in possession of it [Palestine] as a sovereign nation...[and] Palestinian nationalism, as distinct from Arab nationalism, is itself a relatively new phenomenon." Moreover, Great Britain "has consistently denied that Palestine was among the territories to which independence was pledged." Finally, the Committee noted that the 1936 Royal Commission had pointed out that "there was a time when Arab statesmen were willing to consider giving Palestine to the Jews, provided that the rest of Arab Asia was free. That condition was not fulfilled then, but it is on the eve of fulfilment [sic]² now."

UNSCOP admitted that "the Jews would displace Arabs from the land if restrictions were not imposed..." [And found that since this] would seem inevitable...continued development of the Jewish National Home...envisages the possibility of a violent struggle with the Arabs." It concluded by quoting Lord Balfour saying that "The general lines of [the Balfour Declaration] policy stand and must stand."

So, UNSCOP recommended that following the British withdrawal, there should be a short interval during which time Palestine and the incipient Jewish state would be held under some sort of trusteeship while Palestine would be prepared to be partitioned into two states that would continue to be unified economically.

² UN documents generally use English rather than American spellings. British documents of course do too. I will not change them or note them [sic] as I have done with fulfilment/fulfillment here.

Meanwhile, the living circumstances of 250,000 or so displaced European Jews would be alleviated. The Committee ducked the question of whether or not that meant that the Displaced Persons would be allowed to enter Palestine. Finally, it noted that violence, carried out until recently "almost exclusively" by "underground Jewish organizations" would "render increasingly difficult the execution of the solution to be agreed upon by the United Nations." But it offered no means to lessen the violence or to avoid the likelihood of war.

After reviewing the reports, listening to emotional appeals by various delegates, individuals and groups and following orders transmitted by their home governments, the delegates to the UN General Assembly voted (Resolution 181) on November 29, 1947, 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions, despite strong opposition by Arab member states, to recommend partition of Palestine. The key feature was that it awarded the incipient Jewish state, whose citizens-to-be owned or controlled less than 6% of the land, 55% of the Mandate.

II What Was Happening on The Ground in Palestine

The General Assembly had issued its verdict but it left open the question of how to actually carry out the resolution when no UN-controlled military or police forces were available. Britain's "84,000 troops were leaving. And they had proved insufficient to maintain law and order, in the face of a campaign of terrorism waged by highly organised Jewish forces equipped with all the weapons of the modern infantryman." To appreciate the full meaning of the UN General Assembly decision, I consider it in the context of in four interacting categories:

First, the British military force began to disengage not only overall but selectively from cities, towns and camps. As it did, it opened areas that became essentially free fire zones. The British commander reasonably took the position that his priority was to keep his soldiers out of harm's way. They should be evacuated as quickly and as safely as possible. What happened after they had left, or even what happened during the process of their leaving, was not their responsibility. Thus, as they vacated their former positions, one at a time, they necessarily if inadvertently favored one side or the other. Where they could, they tried to protect the residents; thus, for example in the city of Tiberias, they evacuated the nearly half of the residents who were Palestinians. Thus, they acted to protect the Palestinians but effectively turned the city over to the Jews. Overall, their actions necessarily favored the Zionists.

Second, the Arab states loudly proclaimed the responsibility to protect the Palestinians. However, until after the legal end to the Palestine mandate, they could not intervene. Doing so would have constituted an act of war against Britain, and the British would not allow them to move. So in the months between the beginning of the British withdrawal and May 15, they were effectively immobilized.

Legality was not the only reason. There were two other reasons for their inactivity:

The first reason for their inactivity was that they were weak. Egypt and Iraq were effectively under British military occupation since their abortive revolts against the British (Iraq in 1941 and Egypt in 1942), and their armed forces were kept small, disorganized and ill-equipped. Corruption sapped their logistics while purges of officers suspected of political ambition or nationalist ardor weakened their command structures. When the Iraqi army

was sent to Palestine, many of its soldiers were not adequately armed, and some were without uniforms or even suitable footwear. The Egyptian army was the butt of British jokes -- it was said to be the largest army in the world, judged by the girth of the officers. They were scorned as inferior colonials. The Army had only cast-off British equipment. Morale was naturally low. The only reasonably effective Arab military force was the Jordanian Legion which had been designed to patrol the desert and to provide income for bedouin tribesmen who were its recruits. It was composed of only four battalions and one (as yet untrained) artillery unit. It had no transport and little ammunition. Moreover, it was not a "national" force: it was under the command of British officers.

None of the Arab governments was an effective leader in its own country. King Farouk was generally despised by educated Egyptians; the mass of Egyptians lived on the edge of starvation, Egypt was already a "country of crowds" -- with roughly 1,000 people on each square kilometer of inhabitable land -- disease was common and life expectancy was short. Like the Egyptians, the Iraqis had troubles of their own. And they thought their governments were a big part of their troubles. The King of Iraq was a little boy who was under the control of a much hated regent who was regarded as a puppet of the British. Only Trans-Jordan's Amir Abdullah seemed popular among his mainly bedouin subjects.

The second inhibition was that the leaders of the Arab states were divided by personal ambitions. Each pursued his own goals. King Farouk's Egypt wanted to take over at least Gaza to anchor the Sinai Peninsula while Abdullah had secretly worked with the Zionists for years to get their support for his incorporation of "Arab Palestine." Neither he nor Farouk were interested in the Palestinians. Farouk confiscated military equipment destined for Abdullah. Each ruler espoused a different Palestinian faction. In short, jealousies, ambitions and personal quarrels were of much more importance to them than their declared protection of the Palestinians. Thus, the Arab states had no unified strategy and did not seek, even separately, to work with such forces as the Palestinians mustered.

Realizing their incapacity, the Arab states got the Arab League to offer on March 21, two months before the Mandate was due to lapse, a compromise peace. They offered to take in the thousands Jewish "illegals," whom the British were holding on Cyprus, as citizens of their countries and urged that, rather than being divided as the UN had voted, the whole Mandate area be put once again under a trusteeship.³

Third, the Palestinian cause attracted volunteer fighters -- a category of combatants we see in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq -- who began to infiltrate the Mandate before the British left. Some of them were displaced Palestinians who had been in exile since they had fought against the British in the 1936-1938 "revolt." Most were from other Arab countries. They are believed to have numbered about a thousand by the end of 1947 and rose to perhaps 3,000 in the next year.

³ That proposal was briefly considered by the US Government which realized that a dangerous and destructive war, which was likely to harm American interests, was inevitable if the UN decision were implemented. The American "retreat" infuriated American Zionists who mounted a political attack on the Truman Administration, with articles in *The New York Times* castigating officials for "duplicity," "shoddy and underhand turnabout" and "a shocking reversal." The Administration quickly backed down. What the Truman Administration did was a replay of the February 14, 1931 British Government disavowal of its White Paper, based on the Hope-Simpson Report, that would have limited Jewish immigration.

How effective these volunteers were is in doubt. Some carried out terrorist acts, particularly against Zionist targets in the area the UN had designated as the Arab Palestinian state, but the record shows that while they were brave, they were not decisive. In the village structure of Palestine, they were alien. In some villages which still sought to remain neutral, they were unwelcome.

Overall, the Palestinians had little military capacity. The intelligence agents of the Jewish Agency had been monitoring the Palestinians for years and reported in detail on their arms, organizations and sources of supply: they reported that the Palestinians had no arms production capability except in primitive bombs, few and mostly antiquarian rifles, usually with only 20-50 bullets a gun, practically no heavier weapons, no mortars, no machineguns, no artillery, no armored vehicles and no aircraft -- their only potential source of supply, Britain, embargoed arms sales to them. Perhaps even more important, they had no cadres of trained troops, no staff, no planning and no command and control organization. Perhaps most important, they had no intelligence sources in the Jewish community, Their only significant military leader was killed on April 8. Villages operated independently and so, as the Israeli military intelligence reports confirm, "Villages in 1948 often fought -- and fell-- alone, the Haganah was able to pick them off one at a time in many districts. In many areas there was not even defensive co-operation between neighbouring villages, since relations between them, as often as not, were clouded by clan and family feuds..."

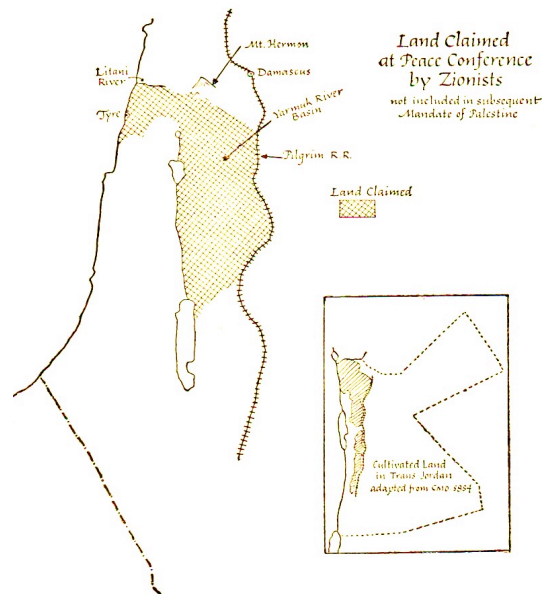
In short, the Palestinians had no significant military capacity. They were a typical colonial society. Already before May 1948, they had suffered at least 5,000 casualties. While the Israelis talked of the threat of an Arab-inflicted holocaust, "They were fully aware that the Arab war rhetoric was in no way matched by any serious preparation on the ground."

Fourth, in every category, the Zionists had overwhelming superiority. Since much of the information in this section was sternly denied for years I have checked what I have collected against the two major and more recent Israeli accounts, both of which were derived from Israeli military and political archives.⁴

⁴ For years honest discussion of the Palestinian refugee issue was virtually impossible in print -- being almost certain either or both to get the historian labeled as an anti-Semite or to cause his books to be effectively banned in book stores. (Both happened to me.) It came as a "bomb shell" when the Israeli journalist, Benny Morris, published *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). He had been given access to the Israeli archives -- the first time ever -- and used them to document, at least partially, the Israeli expulsion of the Palestinians. In a second edition of his book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) he took a less neutral position on the issues he had discussed. Morris had set out his contention that "The Palestine refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterised the fist Israeli-Arab war..." Other Israeli scholars, notably Ilan Pappé in his *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2006), expanded, corrected and developed the research of Morris. Pappé shows conclusively that what Morris saw as more or less accidental -- the exodus of the Palestinian people -- was a strategy inherent in Zionism from the beginning and implemented deliberately, brutally and effectively according to what in the Israeli archives is known as "Plan D" (*Tochnit Dalet*) I have drawn extensively on both books for this part of my essay because, drawn as they are on Israeli government and army sources, they are incontrovertible. I have, of course, drawn also on a variety of other, including British official, sources.

From Ottoman times, the Jewish community, the *Yishuv*, had thought of itself as a proto-government and from the establishment of the League of Nations Mandate "all institutions were built with an eye to conversions into institutions of state." The British government dealt with and recognized the "Jewish Agency" as a de facto government which is how the Yishuv regarded it. Thus, it was able to make decisions that would be carried out. It had departments headed by ministers under a leader, David Ben-Gurion, who was virtually a head of state. The *Yishuv* was literate, highly motivated, relatively wealthy and able also to draw upon European and American financial, political and personnel support. In short, it was a modern Western society and one with a multi-state capability.

The *Yishuv* had long had an agreed strategy: from the late Nineteenth century, the Zionist leaders worked toward making Palestine into a *Judenstaat*. While in public, they disguised their long-term objective, using the subterfuge homeland (*heimstätte*), among themselves their aim was never in doubt. There was never, in private communications, serious consideration of either a bi-national state in which Arabs would also live or a smaller state in a partitioned Palestine. At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the Zionists claimed the southern part of what became Lebanon and most of the agricultural area of what became Trans-Jordan⁵ as well as the major sources of water for the Mandate area.



The basic element of Zionist strategy was spelled out by the Zionist leader, David Ben-Gurion just after the publication of the Royal Commission Report in 1937 when he

⁵ Trans-Jordan was divided from the Mandate of Palestine in 1922 to resolve the dilemma created by the French when they invaded Syria and overthrew its newly proclaimed independence. The brother of the deposed ruler of Syria, Amir Abdullah, had marched into what became Trans-Jordan intending to fight the French. To stop him, the British in effect bought him off by establishing him in Amman. The British also asserted that this action would honor the commitments made to the Arabs to recognize their independence. Jordan was not to be subject to the Balfour Declaration and Jews were forbidden to buy land there.

wrote privately to his son, "We must expel [the Palestinian] Arabs and take their places...and if we have to use force -- not to dispossess the Arabs of the Negev and Transjordan, but to guarantee our own right to settle in those places -- then we have force at our disposal."

The force at the disposal of the *Yushiv* began to be established in 1920 when the collectives (Hebrew: *kibbutzim*) set up semi-formal and part-time security guards units (Hebrew: *HaShomer*). In 1936, in response to the Arab nationalist revolt, the British enrolled some 5,000 Jews into what became the paramilitary wing of the Jewish community. This evolved into the Haganah that would evolve into the Israel Defense Force. Under a British military expert, the soldiers were trained in guerrilla and counterinsurgency warfare. In what may have been the first punitive mission against a Palestinian village -- a kind of tactic the British had long used in India and along the Northwest Frontier to suppress nationalist revolts -- a joint British-Haganah expedition in June 1938 attacked a Palestinian village on the Lebanese border.

During the early part of the Second World War, when a German break-through appeared likely, the British enrolled, trained and equipped Jewish military formations and incorporated individual Jews into its Middle East intelligence organization. By about 1942, some 15,000 men were serving in the British army in some capacity. In addition, fearing what might happen if the British were unable to hold off Erwin Romel's *Deutsches Afrikakorps*, the Jewish Agency in 1941 formed a "special forces" corps or shock troops known as Palmach (Hebrew: *p'lugot mahatz*).

But the Jewish leadership never forgot that its long-term enemy was Britain. Ben-Gurion and others soft-pedaled the long term and emphasized self-restraint (Hebrew: *havlagah*). This policy provoked a revolt within the Haganah by a group that came to be known as the *Irgun Zva'i Leumi*. The Irgun was inspired by Ben-Gurion's rival, Vladimir Jabotinsky, who set out what was then the extreme right wing of the Zionist movement (and later became today's Likud Party). It favored an all-out war on both the Palestinians and the British. (The Irgun in turn would be split when Abraham Stern led about 200 of its members to form an even more radical and violent group called the *Lohamei Herut Yisraeli* or "Stern Gang.") These radical, terrorist groups, although differing somewhat in their philosophy, remained under the control of the Haganah High Command. While the Zionists publicly denied it, the British published (Cmd. 6873) intercepted Jewish Agency telegrams proving that it was using Irgun and the Stern Gang to carry out actions it wished to disavow. As one telegram put it

We have come to a working arrangement with the dissident organisations, according to which we shall assign certain tasks to them under our command. They will act only according to our plan.

Perhaps the most remarkable element of the growing power of the *Yishuv* was in the field of intelligence. Already in 1933, a rudimentary organization had been created. A professor at the Hebrew University proposed that the Jewish National Fund make an inventory of Palestinian villages. His idea called for a dynamic, constantly up-dated, "map" of Palestinian society. It was a mammoth task. As Jews from Iraq and other Arabic-speaking countries began to arrive, they were often assigned to this organization; then in 1944 a training school was established at Shefeya to train Hebrew-speaking operatives in Arabic and Palestinian culture and who were sent into every Palestinian village to identify

potential enemies, map entry routes, inventory weapons, etc. In short, the agents produced an "appreciation" comparable to the CIA's National Intelligence Studies but were much more detailed. They shaped the 1946-1949 campaign and determined the outcome.

The Jewish Agency and overseas Zionist organizations also recruited European and American volunteers. These men and women were much more numerous than the Arab volunteers. More important, they included highly trained people, some of whom had flown for the RAF or the USAF, commanded ships of war in the Royal Navy or the US Navy or worked in high technology intelligence (such as code breaking and wireless interception).

By May 1948, the Haganah numbered 35,700 standing troops of whom 2,200 were the Special Forces of Palmach. That is, as Benny Morris pointed out, the *Yishuv* army numbered some 5,500 *more* soldiers than the combined strength of the regular Arab armies and paramilitary Palestinian forces. In addition, Haganah could draw on 9,500 members of the paramilitary youth corps. By July 1948, when the Haganah was renamed the Israel Defense Force, it had 63,000 men under arms. Perhaps more important than numbers, it had a command and control capability that allowed it to conduct division-size or multiple-brigade, operations. No Arab force even remotely approached its power.

The size and organization of manpower was matched by weaponry. While the British embargoed arms sales to both sides, their actions particularly affected the Arabs. Meanwhile, the *Yishuv* got around the British embargo in four ways: first, it worked with the local Communist Party to effect an arms purchase deal with Czechoslovakia and the USSR; second, it used some of the money it received from Jewish organizations in Europe and America to buy arms; third, it raided British army depots in Palestine and Europe; and, fourth, it had already begun producing in its own workshops such weapons as mortars, sub-machineguns, heavy machineguns, and the particularly devastating and terrifying flame throwers. These activities gave the *Yishuv* an overwhelming advantage. Finally, it achieved "aerial superiority" when, on March 27, 1948, it employed its first airplanes, some provided by South Africa and others stolen from the RAF. As the Jewish army chief of staff Yigael Yadin proudly told Israeli officers in the last weeks of March 1948, "Today we have all the arms we need; they are already aboard ships, and the British are leaving and then we bring in the weapons, and the whole situation at the fronts will change."

III The Expulsion of the Palestinians and the War

Expulsion of the Palestinians began *before* large scale fighting between the Jewish forces and Palestinian paramilitaries and at least three months *before* the withdrawal of the British forces and the arrival of Egyptian, Iraqi and Trans-Jordanian army units. From late 1947 until 1949, it was expulsion that set the terms of combat.

Beginning in October 1947, *Yishuv* leader (and later Prime Minister) David Ben-Gurion established a sort of *politburo* that came to be known as "the Consultancy" to guide the armed forces into action to establish the *Judenstaat*.⁶

⁶ A detailed account of the "Consultancy" with the plans and the actions it called for is far too long to be included here. It is laid out with citations in Ilan Pappé, *op. cit.* pages 27-28, 39-126. The existence of all of these plans and what they called for was vigorously denied for half a century.

The Consultancy inherited a plan of action to take over the Mandate that had been drawn up already in 1937. This was known as Plan A. In 1946, Ben-Gurion ordered the intelligence unit of the Haganah to revise the plan. Various changes and refinements were made in Plan B and what became known as Plan C (Hebrew: *Tachnit Gimel*) emerged.

Plan C laid out the strategy of the various military forces of the *Yishuv* "against rural and urban Palestine the moment the British were gone." The envisaged offensive called for "killing the Palestinian political leadership, killing Palestinian "inciters" and financial supporters, killing those Palestinians acting against the Jews, killing senior Palestinian officers and officials in the Mandate regime, damaging Palestinian transportation, damaging sources of Palestine economy (water wells, mills), attacking Palestinian villages and clubs, coffee house, meeting places, etc..." according to the intelligence studies that were already drawn up. (Map below: Palestinian villages c. 1947 in area to be assigned to Israel by 1949 armistice. Drawn from Salman Abu Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine, 1917-1966*; London: Palestine Land Society, 2010.)



A refined version, Plan D (Hebrew: *Tochnit Dalet*), was approved on March 10, 1948. As Ilan Pappé wrote, it "sealed the fate of the Palestinians within the territory the Zionist Leaders had set their eyes on for their future Jewish state...[it] called for their systematic and total expulsion from their homeland...Each brigade commander received a list [based on the intelligence "map"] of the villages or neighbourhoods that had to be occupied, destroyed and their inhabitant expelled, with exact dates.

These operations can be carried out in the following manner: either by destroying villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in the rubble) [to prevent the villagers from returning]...in case of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.

Beginning in April 1948, as the British troops were withdrawn, area by area, attacks on villages were increased. Ben-Gurion put aside the UN partition plan and ordered his troops to carry out the ethnic cleansing of all of Palestine. "Every brigade assigned to the operation was asked to prepare to move into *Mazev Dalet*, State D, that is, to ready themselves to implement the orders of Plan D: 'You will move to State Dalet, for an operative implementation of Plan Dalet,'" was the opening sentence to each. And then

the villages which you will capture, cleanse [Hebrew: *tihur*] or destroy will be decided according to consultation with our advisors on Arab affairs and the intelligence officers.

"Judging by the end result" as Ilan Pappé has written, "this advice was not to spare a single village...the operational orders did not except any village for any reason. With this the blueprint was converted into military order to begin destroying villages." Eventually, of the roughly 700 Palestinian villages in what became Israel, 531 were to be destroyed in addition to 30 which had already been destroyed. (About 600 villages remained in "Arab Palestine," that is, on the West Bank -- which was held by the Jordan Legion -- and in Gaza -- which was held by Egyptian forces.) Before the British withdrawal had been completed about 250,000 villagers had already been uprooted.

The Palmach commander Yigal Allon's words were transcribed in the diary of David Ben-Gurion:

There is a need now for strong and brutal reaction. We need to be accurate about timing, place and those we hit. If we accuse a family -- we need to harm them without mercy, women and children included. Otherwise, this is not an effective reaction. During the operation there is no need to distinguish between guilty and not guilty.

The best-known attack was by the Irgun and the Stern Gang, operating under the orders of (and in conjunction with) the Haganah, on the Palestinian village of Deir Yasin on April 9. The attack replayed the Nazi destruction of Lidice.⁷ Ilan Pappé summarized:

"As they burst into the village the Jewish soldiers sprayed the houses with machine-gun fire, killing many of the inhabitants. The remaining villagers were then gathered in one place and murdered in cold blood, their bodies abused while a number of the women were raped and then killed..." One survivor, then a boy of twelve later recalled,

They took us out one after the other, shot an old man and when one of his daughters cried, she was shot too. Then they called my brother Muhammad, and shot him in front [of] us, and when my mother yelled, bending over him -- carrying my little sister Hudra in her hands, still breastfeeding her -- they shot her too.

⁷ Already before the destruction of Deir Yasin, a member of the Defense Committee (Yosef Sepir) had warned his colleagues that the non-Jewish world might see the destruction of villages as an echo of the German destruction of the little Czech farming village of Lidice on June 10, 1942 in retaliation for the murder of SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich. At Lidice, all the adult males and most of women were then murdered and the site was plowed under to be "forever blotted from memory." The comparison of the two may be odious but it is hard to avoid.

Terror is of little use if it is not known; so the Irgun called a press conference to announce the slaughter at Deir Yasin. What happened in Deir Yasin was repeated time after time and became a part of the "Whispering campaign" that was employed by the Haganah intelligence agency to stimulate Palestinian flight. The villagers were, of course, terrified and so exactly carried into effect what the campaign sought. As General Yigal Allon of Palmach said "The tactic reached its goal completely...wide areas were cleaned."

Following Deir Yasin, Ben-Gurion telegraphed Amir Abdullah of Trans-Jordan to disclaim responsibility. More important, a "disinformation" campaign in America sought to blame the Arab states for the expulsion of the Palestinians. One, fairly typical, demarche was a pamphlet submitted to the UNGA and widely quoted in the American press in December 1951. Its author and publisher were not named, but some pages of the pamphlet were signed by a number of notable Americans including Reinhold Niebuhr, Archibald MacLeish, Paul Porter (who had headed the Palestine Conciliation Commission), former President Roosevelt's principal foreign affairs adviser, Sumner Welles, together with various senior churchmen and academicians. Attached to their message was backup material. The pamphlet's key charge was that "The record shows that it was an evacuation planned by the Arab war leaders and the Arab Higher Committee for the three-fold purpose of: 1. Clearing the roads of the villages for an advance of the Arab regular armies; 2. Demonstrating the inability of Jews and Arabs to live side by side. [and] 3. Disrupting services following the end of the mandate." Those who questioned the account given in this and similar materials published in the campaign were charged as anti-Semites.

As the enormity of the human tragedy of Palestine began to be realized, if not by the public at least by governments, the UN Security Council decided to appoint a negotiator to try to stop the fighting. It turned to Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte whose record included saving some 31,000 people, including 1,615 Jews, from German concentration camps during the Second World War. He was unanimously appointed (UNSC Resolution 186) on May 14, 1948 to mediate the war, and the outstanding Afro-American scholar and official, Ralph Bunche was assigned as his deputy. Working from Cyprus, Bernadotte negotiated 2 truces and outlined plans both for settlement of the war and for the creation of a United Nations agency to care for the refugees.

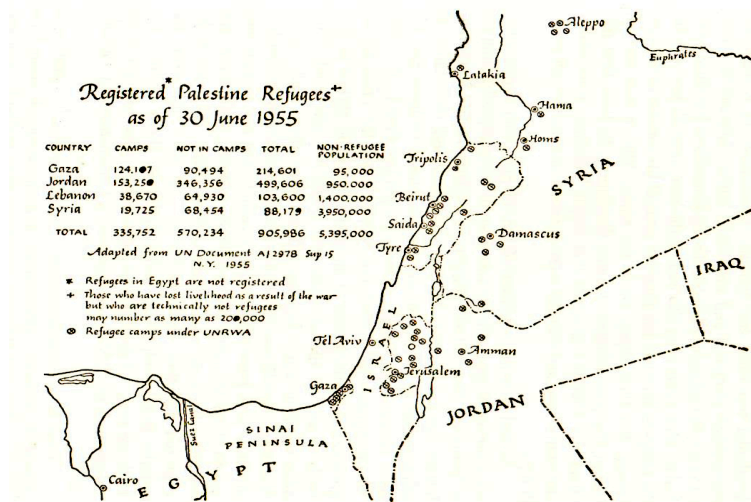
As they evolved, the "Bernadotte Plans" called for a two state solution -- a Jewish state and an Arab state -- with economic union. Bernadotte also proposed readjusting frontiers according to population -- that is, the Jewish state would have to give up substantial areas (including the Negev) which were overwhelmingly settled by Arabs -- and he called for Jerusalem to be given a special status as a multi-faith world heritage site. (The UNGA voted in December 1949 to internationalize the city in Resolution 194.) On the issue of the Palestinian refugees, Bernadotte was even more outspoken. To the fury of the Jewish leaders, he reported to the UN on September 16, 1948 that

It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and, indeed, at least offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries.

Folke Bernadotte was murdered the next day by a hit squad of the Stern Gang, allegedly on orders of its leader and later Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Bernadotte's task was taken up by his deputy, Ralph Bunche. Bunche wisely recognized the two realities of the Arab side of the Palestine war: the first was that the Palestinian people, now scattered over virtually the whole of Western Asia had no ability to negotiate on their own behalf, and the second was that the Arab states, their self-proclaimed protectors, were incapable of working together. So during the spring and summer of 1949, Bunche worked separately with Israel and each of the four Arab states -- Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Trans-Jordan, which from April 1949 was known as Jordan. Iraq had withdrawn from the war and did not take part in the negotiations to bring about an end to the fighting. For his work, he was awarded the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize.

Bernadotte's and Bunche's lasting legacy was the creation of a UN organization to care for the refugees. Relief efforts were begun in the summer of 1948 and in April 1950 a new organization, UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was created. It began its long life with 896,690 Palestinians on its rolls. While the intent was to create opportunities for at least some of them to start new lives, the grim reality was that they could only be kept alive. They each received assistance of less than \$27 yearly for food, medicine, clothing and shelter.⁸ (map below shows UN refugee camps as of 1955)



UN relief provided an average of 1,600 calories of food/day. But, if the physical diet was meager, the emotional diet was noxious. It consisted of a blend of exaggerated memories and unrealistic hopes. Few refugees could find jobs. Idleness was a dry rot in adults. And a new generation was born that knew little beyond camp life. Within a few years over half the refugees were less than 15 years of age. They were becoming the modern version of Moses's followers' time in the Wilderness.

⁸ In 1950, I spent two weeks in one of the camps in Lebanon talking with the refugees and wrote articles for on what I learned. In one of the articles I described an encounter with a young man who had been paralyzed. Lying in his cot, he entertained and was waited on by a group of children. He built for them a model airplane and arranged that it dropped pebbles on his bed. As he told it and as I described it, the children played as though being killed by the bombs, something they had observed in real life. But the editors at *The Christian Science Monitor*, echoing the prevalent American view of the war had the children only "seeking shelter from the bombs."

IV The Palestinians and the Arab States Attempt to Leave the Wilderness

The Palestinian and Arab states' "Time in the Wilderness" lasted many years. The Palestinians emerged from their expulsion a beaten, humiliated, divided people. The miserable refugee camps recreated the divisions of villages. Each *watan* remained just a piece of the little "nations" (Arabic: *awtan* the plural of *watan*). Those who sought to deal with "the Palestine problem" had to deal not with the Palestinians but with the Arab states. But the Arab states were themselves, in the Biblical phrase, broken reeds "whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it..." As the Palestinian nationalist leader and a founder of the League of Arab States, Musa Alami wrote,

In the face of the enemy the Arabs were not a state, but petty states; groups, not a nation; each fearing and anxiously watching the other and intriguing against it. What concerned them most and guided their policy was not to win the war and save Palestine...but to prevent their neighbors from being predominant, even though nothing remained except the offal and bones.

Such public opinion as there was (and such press as was free to express it) turned bitterly against the rulers of the states. Demonstrations broke out, government officials including the prime minister and chief of police of Egypt were assassinated while riots, attempted bombings and threats were almost daily occurrences. In Syria, the government was overthrown in an army coup d'état in 1949, and its leader was quickly ousted by another group. In Jordan on July 1951, the newly proclaimed king was murdered by a Palestinian. Then, on January 26, 1952, "Black Friday," mobs raced through Cairo, burning, pillaging and killing. It became obvious that no Arab government could cope.

Recognition that more was wrong with Arab society than government was spreading. Explicit was the conviction that corruption, poverty and backwardness were both the inheritance of decades of imperialism and also that they were the results of structural defects in Arab society. These defects were not *caused* by events in Palestine, but they were *intensified* by the shock of the Arab defeat there. Arabs everywhere agitated for change. Each state cracked down on its critics but, ironically, the divisions of the "Arab World" into states -- one of the sources of Arab weakness -- made criticism of neighbors attractive to rival governments. "...a new wind blows," wrote a long-time English colonial administrator. "Poverty and ignorance can lie down more or less happily together, but not poverty and education. That nowadays is likely to be an explosive mixture."

The explosive mixture was first set off in Egypt. On July 23, 1952, the "Free Officers," under the leadership of Gamal Abdul Nasser, who as a young officer had experienced humiliation in Egypt's campaign in Gaza, ousted the King.

Nasser was not an uncritical supporter of the Palestinians. He was, however, a dedicated believer in Arab nationalism. For him the Palestinian and Egyptian emphasis on the village "nation," the *watan*, was a part of the Arab problem; what was needed, he thought, was to move beyond that narrow concept toward "pan-Arabism" (Arabic: *qawmiyah*). Only if the Arabs could rise above parochialism, as the Jews had done with their national ideology,⁹ Zionism, could they play a significant role in world affairs, achieve a minimum degree of security or even overcome the humiliation of Palestine.

⁹ See Shlomo Sand's ground-breaking *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2009).

So, while Nasser dealt, or tried to deal, with a variety of domestic Egyptian and Arab World issues during his lifetime as well as with stormy relations with Britain, France and the United States, Palestine was never far from his mind.

Indeed, it could not be. If he or other Arab leaders forgot, Israel and the Western states reminded them sharply. When US Secretary of State visited the Middle East in 1953, seeking to enlist the Arab states' kings, dictators and presidents in his anti-Soviet crusade, he found them turning always from what he saw as the threat of the USSR to what they thought of as the threat of Israel. Despite the armistice of 1949, the borders of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt were constantly being breached by raids and counter-raids, intelligence probes, commando attacks and "massive retaliations." They numbered in the thousands. All along the frontiers of Israel was a "no man's land." The UN established a "Mixed Armistice Commission" to assess blame and to try to stop acts of aggression, It was not effective. So some in America thought that a new approach must be found. And some thought that it had to be sought in Egypt.

The Israeli military intelligence organization was worried that Secretary Dulles' obsession with the Soviet threat might lead him to promote some sort of rapprochement with Egypt. To head this off, the Israelis, with the help of members of the Egyptian Jewish community, decided to undertake a "spoiling" operation in the spring and summer of 1954. Code named "Operation Susannah" and popularly known as the "Lavon Affair," the operation carried out a number of bombings and other acts of terrorism in Egypt. Included among them was the bombing of the US Information Agency (USIA) building in Alexandria. The plan was to blame the attack on the Muslim Brotherhood; its aim was to turn Americans against Egypt by demonstrating that the Egyptians were dangerous terrorists. The attack was botched and the agents were caught. Israel denied the episode, information on it was suppressed, but the Israeli government resigned. It implicitly admitted its involvement when in 2005, it decorated the attackers.

Raids and counterattacks continued. One seminal Israeli raid was in February 1955 when the Israeli army attacked the Egyptian military headquarters in Gaza and killed more than 60 Egyptian soldiers. Apparently that raid so alarmed the Egyptians that they realized that they needed more and better military equipment. Since the Western powers were supplying Israel, Egypt turned to the Soviet Union, just as the Zionists had done eight years before. That move, in turn, alarmed the Eisenhower administration. Briefly put,¹⁰ it set in motion a sequence of events in which the US (on July 20, 1956) withdrew its offer to help finance the major Egyptian development project, the High Dam; in riposte (on July 26) Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal; after a fruitless series of talks, Israel, joined by Britain and France, attacked Egypt (on October 29). That was the Suez Crisis.

Both the shape of the British-French-Israeli "collusion" and the results of their action were then obscure, but President Eisenhower memorably spoke of the existence of "one law" under which all nations must live. To the annoyance of Secretary Dulles, he forced the three states to withdraw. America's brief turn against Israel resulted in the UN proclaimed ceasefire of November 7 and the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) to act as a buffer between Israel and Egypt.

¹⁰ Recounting the sequence of events in these years would lead me far afield and excessively lengthen this account so I refer the reader to my book, *The Arab World Today* which is the 5th edition of my book, *The United States and the Arab World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

Those who ultimately paid for the attack were the Jewish minority communities of the Arab countries. Then suspect as active or potential traitors in the increasingly nationalistic Arab societies, long-time resident Jewish communities came under pressure. Many Jews, with Israeli help and encouragement, left. Some went to Israel.

On the other side, the Suez war made Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser the Arab hero. This suggested to Dulles that Nasser might be turned into the leader of a move toward peace. To find out, Dulles sent one of Eisenhower's close friends, Robert Anderson (who later would become Secretary of the Treasury), to discuss terms with Nasser. The meeting was a disaster: neither Anderson nor Nasser understood what the other was saying. So the meetings were short, the understandings limited and the decisions evasive. The "Anderson Mission" was diplomacy at its worst. But, since both sides realized that disclosure of the talks could be politically ruinous, they agreed to keep them secret.¹¹

Failure of the talks was followed by a new round of coups, revolts and regional wars. The late 1950s was a time of Arab political upsets (particularly the Iraqi coup d'état of 1958¹²) and also a time of American lethargy as Mr. Dulles's anti-Soviet pacts fell apart. Only the Israelis seemed to know what they wanted and how to get it.

Yet, it appeared to the incoming Kennedy Administration in 1961 that at least in one respect John Foster Dulles had been right: only President Nasser was capable of making peace. So President Kennedy put an ambassador who was known and liked by the Egyptians into Cairo, sent the most "liberal" man in his entourage (Governor Chester Bowles) and me to talk openly with Nasser and instructed me to prepare a draft Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. (It was the first of three I was to draft in years to come.)

At the time, most observers and certainly the American officials regarded the Palestinians as mere bystanders. They were not thought of as having any serious capacity to make either war or peace.

V Israel Moves Further Ahead

Israel countered Palestinian paramilitary actions with its own program of assassinations. They were equally ugly but were more effective: Mossad, for example, tracked down and killed all the Palestinians who had been involved in the Munich attack and often succeeded, through blackmail, intimidation of families and other means in turning members of the Palestinian groups into spies. Judging by the accounts of their leaders, these groups were either or both penetrated by Israeli agents or the leaders were so afraid that they had been that they were constantly purging their members. Conversely, the Palestinians do not appear ever to have penetrated any part of the *Yishuv*, its military

¹¹ Still treated as "Top Secret" and tightly restricted, the CIA account of the talks was one of the first batches of papers I read when I joined the Government in 1961. The price of super secrecy was evident in them: no one had time or scope to figure out what the other was saying, as Nasser admitted to the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt. It was evident in the papers that Anderson did not understand what Nasser was saying. As a colleague of mine quipped, "if I had been part of that mission, I would want it to be kept secret too!"

¹² The Iraqi coup was predicted by Richard Nolte (a later US ambassador to Egypt) and me in a widely read article in *Foreign Affairs*, "Toward a Policy for the Middle East", that appeared two weeks before the coup. We also suggested a different mode of foreign policy that was to influence the subsequent Kennedy administration.

command or its intelligence forces. (Parenthetically, it is worth noting that Israeli intelligence was so effective that the CIA underwrote its activities, probably to about \$100 million/yearly to gain at least some access to its findings and in return also shared with the Israelis its own "take.")

Benefitting from enormous infusions of American money (in the years from 1947-1973 amounting in various forms to over \$100 billion or roughly \$33,000 for each man, woman and child) and the arrival of about 1,500,000 Jewish immigrants¹³, Israel underwent an almost total transformation of what had been the British mandate.

As I have pointed out above the modernizing capacity of the *Yishuv* was evident already in 1947. It was made more so in the wars fought between the Arabs and Israel in 1956 and 1967. In each encounter, the Arabs were defeated decisively. Israel had capacities of a different order. Not only did it have sophisticated command and control techniques, including ground control for aircraft, but, given its social cohesion, it could increase its army from a standing force of no more than 50,000 to 300,000 in about 48 hours.¹⁴

Its first major task was to create a unified Jewish society from a deeply divided population. The Oriental Jews, as the Israeli-American scholar Nadav Safran wrote, "differed sharply in relevant historical background, culture, education, motivation, and even physical appearance from the European Jews." Perhaps even more significant was their historical memory. Whereas European Jews had long suffered from anti-Semitism, the Oriental Jews lived as self governing "nations" (Turkish: *milleyet*) in protected environments.¹⁵ And, of course, they knew nothing of the Holocaust. So, one aspect of the "nation building" of Israel was to transfer to them the European Jewish experience. As several observers have commented, this involved the creation of a "Holocaust Industry."

In addition to the constant and powerful emphasis on the Holocaust as a unifying historical memory, the Hebrew language was made into a powerful nationalizing force. To prosper in Israel, one had to speak, read and write Hebrew. Not unlike America, where immigrants dropped their former languages, dress and habits to become "American," so in Israel arriving Jews rushed to become Israelis. Education was the seedbed of the new nationalism and new nationhood.

¹³ Nine in ten Jewish immigrants were from Eastern Europe. Approximately 260,000 Jews emigrated. Records do not make clear what portion of the emigrants "defected" or merely established themselves as dual citizens in America and elsewhere. It does not appear that many actually gave up their connection with Israel; so the number 1.5 million is probably a truer indicator of the growth of the population than figures usually cited.

¹⁴ I once was taken by the Israeli government to visit a tank brigade south of Tel Aviv that was maintained by only 200-300 men but could be put into action with 3,000 men in a few hours.

¹⁵ As Nadav Safran rather ponderously wrote, they "lived within a surrounding society that was itself organized for the most part on a regional and communal basis. Even where the host society's traditional structure had began to crumble under the impact of nationalism and modernization, the bulk of the Jews had not yet been called upon to make the kind of drastic adjustments to that society that gave rise to the sort of dilemmas European Jews faced." *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 91-92. That is, the cause of Zionism, anti-Semitism, was a Western, not a Middle Eastern, phenomenon.

Education had always been among the most laudable features of the Jewish experience. The Western Jewish society was virtually completely literate, and from the beginning, it had more engineers, physicists chemists, doctors and technicians than all of the Arab states and the Palestinian society combined. But among the Oriental Jews, more than half of the women and a quarter of the men were illiterate and by 1973 only one in each person in each 50 had graduated from university.

The founding of world-class universities and research institutions was the crown jewel of Israel. Begun in the Mandate and fed by the universities and research centers, was a powerful military-industrial complex which enabled Israel to become one of the world's major suppliers of weapons. From the 1950s, it was subsidized by the United States which purchased equipment from it and shared technology with it. And, where the sharing was not complete enough, Israeli agents penetrated American¹⁶ (and other nations') security to obtain advanced and particularly dangerous weapons. The nuclear weapons technology of both America and France were successfully targeted. From at least 1961, Israel had acquired nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

In the field of foreign affairs, Israel used its arms industry and intelligence expertise to build relationships in both black African countries and white (Boer) ruled South Africa. Its main concern, however, was with the United States where it developed powerful alliances with lobbying groups.¹⁷

From the Israeli perspective, perhaps the most important change was (and remains) the wiping out of Palestine. Hundreds of villages were plowed under, the farm lands of many were converted into parks, old buildings, mosques and churches were bulldozed, roadways were changed, new maps were produced that no longer showed the old landmarks. In a lecture, reported in *Haaretz* April 3, 1969, Moshe Dayan acknowledged this policy, saying that "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I don't blame you, since these [old] geography books no longer exist. Not only the books do not exist -- the Arab villages are not there either."¹⁸ Some Israelis even denied the existence of the Palestinians. Prime Minister Golda Meir was quoted in the London *Sunday Times* (June 15, 1969) as saying that "There was no such thing as Palestinians...They did not exist."

VI The Palestinian Try To Regain The Initiative

Much has been written about the ugliness, drama and diversity of the events of the 1950s and 1960s and of the brutality, audaciousness and variety of the actors.¹⁹ So

¹⁶ Like the Israeli spy, Jonathan Pollard.

¹⁷ This activity was the subject of a series of hearings conducted in 1963 by the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs under the chairmanship of Senator William Fulbright on Israeli established and sponsored lobby groups that were considered to be foreign agents.

¹⁸ Foreign journalists who tried to find the old villages, like *Observer* correspondent Sarah Helm and BBC and *Guardian* correspondent Michael Adams were attacked as anti-Semites and had trouble even publishing their accounts. See Christopher Mayhew and Michael Adams' *Publish It Not* (London: Longman, 1975).

¹⁹ There is, of course, a vast literature on this topic. Much of the intelligence information is "tactical," dealing with how to apprehend or kill the various actors. Most have faded from memory and for my present purpose little would be gained by trying to detail their members and actions.

complete is the focus on them that the underlying themes are often obscured. Since the events are only of transient interest, I will concentrate on the themes.

As I have written, the Palestinians could be likened to Moses' followers, former slaves whom he sought to turn into a warlike people by keeping them for two generations in the wilderness. Like all analogies, the comparison is not exact, but it is suggestive: the Palestinians had not been slaves but were a colonial people who had not yet received the stimulus of nationalism, and, while the camps in which they had been gathered were not exactly a "wilderness," they were as isolated and as destitute as Moses had intended for his people. Moses thought his people needed 40 years to be transformed; by roughly 1967, the Palestinians had suffered 20 years. In those years, three themes become evident.

The first theme is that during those first 20 years the Palestinians recreated the diversity and mutual incompatibility of the Palestinian village society and also were shaped by the diversity and regional differences of the camps. Moses was right: 20 years was not long enough for a new and unified society to emerge. After 20 years, they were still unable to work together. Their Israeli enemies profited from and encouraged their mutual hostilities, but the Palestinians lent themselves, almost eagerly, to the Israeli objective.

The second theme is the effect of the brutality of the conflict. From at least 1950, warfare along the frontiers had been endemic. It had also been as ugly as the Seventeenth century European Thirty Years War. Not only abduction, torture, rape and murder of men, women and children, but also mutilation filled the reports of the UN Mixed Armistice Commission. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of these events in shaping the attitudes toward one another of the Palestinians and the Israelis. Starkly put, the Israelis regarded the Palestinians as *untermenschen* while the Palestinians regarded the Israelis as monsters.²⁰ Wounds were constantly opened and rubbed raw by thousands of incidents year after year.

The third theme is that during those years, few of the Palestinians had found "space" in which they could be peacefully active. Some actually prospered, at least financially, by moving to the oil-rich countries of the Gulf but at the cost of withdrawing from their people. Even the most successful realized that they had no future in their diaspora. They had acquired only what the Jews called a *nachtagsl* and the Arabs knew as a *mahal* -- a temporary resting place. And, as they competed with natives for jobs, contracts, and wealth, the Palestinians found themselves the objects of local hostilities similar to those the Jews had suffered in Europe. While foreign propagandists insisted that the Arab states "absorb" them, the natives regarded them not only as foreigners but also as reminders of the Arab disgrace (Arabic: *nakbah*) in the 1948-1949 war.

Since there was no forum in which they could be constructively active, those Palestinians whose names we remember turned to the weapon of the weak, terrorism. Middle Easterners would be hypocritical to claim the high ground of morality on terrorism. On terrorism, the Jews had led the way, and the Palestinians eagerly followed in their footsteps. Terrorism is undoubtedly an ugly policy, but when other means of action are not available it has been adopted by people of every race, creed and ideology.²¹ Some of the

²⁰ Although he was not writing about this conflict, Franz Fanon caught the "flavor" of the bitter confrontation in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*.

²¹ I offer proof of this in my book *Violent Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007)

former Israeli terrorists, having won, had become the Israeli government, and following their path the former Algerian terrorists were on the way to becoming the Algerian government. In a way, both were to become role models for at least some Palestinians.

By the 1960s, however, it was evident to the Palestinians that the small and ephemeral rival groups of anti-Israeli paramilitaries (Arabic: *fedayeen*) were not effective either politically or militarily. The reason why is simple. France could afford to leave Algeria -- indeed it could not afford to stay -- but the Israelis had nowhere to go and were determined to stay. So the dozens of Palestinian groups engaged in fruitless bouts of violence. The best known were the September 1970 "Hijack war" by the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," the "Black September" attack of September 1972 on the Israeli Olympic team in Munich in revenge for the destruction of two Palestinian villages, the flamboyant murders of the Venezuelan "Carlos the Jackal" and other incidences.

That these actions were pointless and drew opprobrium upon all the Arabs had become evident to the Arab states. Then, in September 1963, the Arab states collectively agreed to form the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It is note worthy that it was the states (from above) rather than the Palestinians (from within) that took this step. But, a group of some 400 Palestinians under the auspices of King Husain of Jordan met in Jerusalem where they took the step of actually setting up the organization. The objectives of the PLO were set in terms that the Palestinians generally approved -- elimination of Zionism, destruction of Israel, self-determination for the Palestinians and the right of return to the Palestinian homeland.

The PLO "constitution" did not proclaim statehood. It would be a decade before it demanded that status. Initially, indeed, the PLO was only a confederation of different, even opposing, Palestinian groups and could operate only on the sufferance of non-Palestinians. The closest they came to having a territorial state was that they were recognized as having a notional claim to territory under Israeli occupation; Jordan did not recognize their authority on the West Bank nor did Egypt recognize their authority in Gaza. In effect, the PLO was relegated to a sort of observer status on the issue of Palestine.

The largest component -- eventually reaching about 80% of the membership -- of the PLO was FATAH (the reverse acronym of the Arabic: *Harakat at-Tahrir al-Falastini*). While its origins and early activities are necessarily obscure, we know that it grew out of meetings of a group of Palestinian refugees in Gaza led by Yasir (spelled in the Western press Yasser) Arafat. Arafat had been born in Gaza and, although he spent his early life in poverty, he trained as an engineer. He could have secured a job in the oil-rich Arab states, but he set his sight on Palestine. Having studied in Egypt, he probably joined the Muslim Brotherhood. Then forced to leave in 1954, he spent the next ten years moving through the refugee camps, recruiting followers and broadcasting his message "that the Palestinians had to take their destiny into their own hands and start harassing Israel."²² As their group coalesced, the members set about indoctrinating the Palestinian community with a series of pamphlets. Their fundamental thesis was that the only feasible action of the Palestinians was guerrilla warfare. In this, Arafat and most Palestinians, drew on the lesson of the Algerian war of national liberation. Thus, they argued that the role of the conventional Arab

²² Yahosifat Harkabi, *Fedayeen Action and Arab Strategy*, (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1968). General Harkabi was head of Israeli military intelligence and a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was probably the best outside observer of FATAH.

states' armies was largely irrelevant, just as the so-called External Army of the Algerians (which had sat out the war in Tunisia and Morocco) had been; what counted in Algeria and would count in the Palestine conflict, they believed, was the informal or guerrilla forces that were known in Algeria as the for "neighborhood" or "popular" (Arabic: *wilaya*) forces.

Beginning in 1966, the paramilitary forces of, FATAH carried out raids on Israel from bases in Syria. Arafat's tactics were to work between, indeed to survive between, the Arab states while his strategy was to force them to engage Israel while he built Palestinian national consciousness. Israel's strategy was to split FATAH from the states; so it repeatedly warned Syria that it risked a massive Israeli retaliation. In the first days of May 1967, Soviet intelligence passed to the Egyptian government information that Israel was preparing to attack, and this estimate seemed confirmed by a speech on May 12 by the Israeli prime minister. Old enmities between the Arab states, no matter how bitter, were brushed aside as the crisis expanded. Even Kuwait, usually a cautious observer rather than an active participant, put its tiny armed forces at the disposal of the Egypt, all the members of the Arab League declared their support. The Middle East rushed toward war.

VII Moves Toward War and the 1967 War

Here I must turn back from FATAH to the Arab states and particularly to Egypt.

During the years following the 1956 Israeli-French-British attack on Egypt at Suez, Egypt had built a much larger, better trained army, equipped with Soviet arms. But, it seemed to me at the time, that it had two fatal weaknesses: first it was divided. Most of the best units of the army were then in Yemen fighting the royalist guerrillas. Second, its command structure was rigid and lacked initiative whereas the Israeli army, like Romel's *Deutsches Afrikakorps* or Patton's Third Army, was flexible. Egypt's was essentially a Second World War army whereas Israel had an ultra modern force with access to communications intelligence. But Nasser had accepted the assurance of his principal military adviser that the army was so strong that the Israelis would not dare attack it. He should have known better.

That assessment led Nasser to play the dangerous game of brinkmanship which he was not equipped to play. He was partly pushed beyond reason by the Syrian and Jordanian governments and to a lesser extent by the Palestinians. They taunted him for cowardly hiding behind the UN force (UNEF) that patrolled the Sinai Peninsula. Partly in an emotional personal reaction, Nasser decided to replace UNEF with Egyptian troops. The flashpoint was at the Straits of Tiran which was legally Egyptian -- the ship channel, Enterprise Passage, is just 500 meters off the Egyptian mainland, -- but it was of crucial importance to Israel as the only access to its port at Elath. Foolishly, Nasser "miscalculated." He announced that

Under no circumstances will we allow the Israeli flag to pass through the Gulf of Aqaba. The Jews threaten war. We tell them you are welcome. We are ready for war, but under no circumstances will we abandon any of our rights. This water is ours.

All of the angers, frustrations and humiliations of the Arabs for the previous twenty years show in that emotional statement. For Israel, it was tantamount to a declaration of war. But for the strenuous urging of the US government, Israel would have immediately attacked. Remarkably, the governments of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet

Union each tried to pressure Nasser into backing down. At the time, I warned that he would not or perhaps even could not. He was less able to do so when the normally cautious King of Jordan embraced him and Egypt's policy.

Meanwhile, President Johnson told the Israeli government that he was prepared to break the blockade with American naval power. He urged restraint. He thought Israel agreed. Astonishingly (at least to me), the senior US government officials believed as late as the evening of Saturday June 3 that the crisis had passed,²³

Two hours after dawn on Monday, June 5, fighter bombers of the Israeli Air Force caught on the ground and largely destroyed the Egyptian Air Force. With mastery of the air, the Israeli army crushed the Egyptian forces in Sinai; then it turned on Jordan and threw the Jordanian army back across the Jordan river; and in a furious assault it destroyed the bulk of the Syrian army and reached the suburbs of Damascus.

Incidental to the attack against the Arabs was an Israeli attack on America.²⁴

It was the aftermath of the 1967 war that seemed to give FATAH its opening. In that second disaster for the Palestinian people, 175,000 refugees were forced to flee again and 350,000 more Palestinians were turned into refugees. The refugee community grew to some 1,375, 915. And, from the bitter defeats of the armies of Syria, Jordan and Egypt, the Palestinians drew the lesson that they were on their own.

Israel's very victory appeared, paradoxically, to create a new vulnerability: having battled for a strategically secure frontier, Israel had acquired a strategically insecure population. Arafat saw this in the context of what was then exciting to the Palestinians, the Algerian defeat of the French. In that struggle less than 13,000 Algerians defeated 485,000

²³ Walt Rostow, who was then head of the National Security Council arranged a briefing for me on Saturday June 3 with the senior State Department officers, all of whom asserted that the danger of war had passed. I thought this was nonsense and wrote a memorandum explaining why. Rostow promised to give my analysis to the President and secretaries of State and Defense. In it, I predicted that Israel would attack within 72 hours. I was wrong. War began in 36 hours.

²⁴ On June 8, 1967, Israel attempted to sink the US Navy ship, the "Liberty" -- the first time since Pearl Harbor that an American naval ship was attacked in peacetime. The attack showed both that the Israelis were prepared to "bite the hand that fed them" and that the US government was willing to be bitten without even saying 'ouch.'²⁴ The Israelis were then executing bound Egyptian prisoners of war (which they discussed on the radio and were being overheard on the Liberty) and had attacked a UN convoy. Obviously, they did not wish to be found out. Johnson called back aircraft that were going to the aid of the Americans because he didn't want to stop the Israelis. While the Israelis, lamely, said the attack was an accident, they knew the ship was part of the US Navy; they inspected it for 8 hours before Israeli jets and ships fired into it with machineguns, cannon and rockets and set it afire with napalm and launched torpedoes at it. Clearly, they were attempting to sink it and the fact that they particularly targeted the life rafts suggests that they hoped there would be no survivors. They killed 34 US service men and wounded 171. The surviving crew members were threatened with courts-martial if they discussed what had happened and the key intelligence materials including intercept tapes were kept secret for the next 35 years. Other than the drama and the pain, what is the long-term import of this incident? If I were an Israeli policy planner, as I have been an American policy planner, I would discount all future American protests and warnings. After all, if the US government did not react strongly to an attack on one of its ships and the killing of uniformed sailors, it would not react forcefully to lesser provocations. Apparently, that message has not was not lost on Prime Ministers Sharon and Netanyahu.

French soldiers -- that is, by using guerrilla tactics, they wore down the French and got them to leave. Arafat thought the Palestinians might be able to do the same. Arafat and his colleagues recognized that even the diversity of the refugee camps could be turned into an asset. Scattered as they were around the frontiers of Israel, guerrillas could move among them and elude Israeli forces. Yet, as they discovered when the Israelis attacked their base at Karamah on March 21, 1968, this was not always to be possible. They still had not solved the problems of communications security and counterintelligence.

The following map shows the areas seized by Israel in the October 1967 war.



The war was a disaster for the Arabs and particularly for the Palestinians: In these encounters, the Arab states armies suffered the loss of about 25,000 men which, given their populations was proportionally equivalent to the loss of about 5 million Americans. As I said, about, 175,000 Palestinian refugees were forced to flee once again and 350,000 additional people were turned into refugees. The humiliating defeats infected the "Arab street," as journalists like to call the general public, with a sullen and tenacious hatred.

As a result of my accurate prediction of the war and because of my relationship with McGeorge Bundy to whom Johnson turned over the Middle East problem, I was called to the White House on June 5²⁵ to write a plan for a ceasefire and a subsequent peace treaty. Johnson made both tasks impossible by deciding not to allow negotiations with the Egyptians. That was to be one of the several opportunities to bring the long war to an end. For better or for worse, it was missed and the fighting spread.

²⁵ I had resigned from the Policy Planning Council in 1965 and was then Professor of History at the University of Chicago and President of the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs. A amusing personal note: I had purposely not kept up my security clearance because I wanted to be free to write completely independently. So when I arrived at the White House, I could not get it. I had to be escorted to the office that was assigned to me. It had been Lyndon Johnson's office when he was Vice President. But all the furniture had been taken out so I spent the first few hours sitting on the floor. I took this as proof that, unlike the 1956 Suez crisis, there was no "collusion" on the 1967 war. I was given, I believe, access to all the materials the President and Bundy were receiving. But my stay lasted only a day. When Johnson decided not to negotiate, I returned to Chicago.

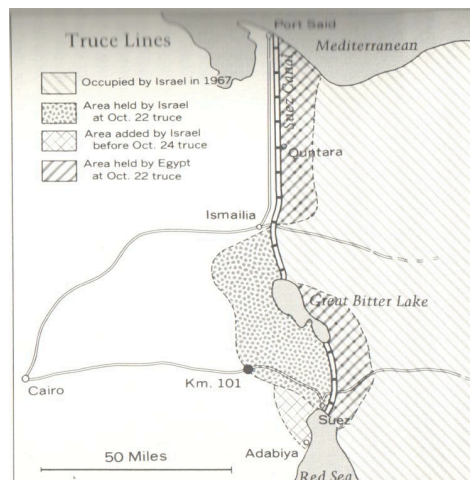
Arafat saw the defeat of the Arab states and particularly of Jordan as an opportunity. Rather than being led (and unified) by the states, he thought, the Palestinians could lead (and unify) the Arab governments. Nasser appeared to be a spent force; Asaad in Syria had proven vacillating; King Husain's covert deals with Israel had not saved him; and Lebanon seemed irrelevant. Arafat's FATAH took control of the PLO. He felt that the very losses the Palestinians had suffered were forging them into a nation. He was ready to move.

To be successful, Arafat believed, confrontation with Israel had to be a war of attrition. It was bitterly fought at first, but bore most of the cost. And the cost was too high for Jordan to bear. He feared that the PLO would take over Jordan and turn it into a Palestinian state (rather than, as he was prepared to allow, the Palestinians becoming Jordanians). On June 9, 1968 there was an attempt to assassinate him. That attack was followed by others on the royal palace and the national radio station. Next the PLO demanded that the King dismiss his uncle as commander of the armed forces. The King complied. The final act in the drama was the hijacking of four commercial jets whose passengers were held hostage in the second week of September. It was a hijack too far. The king had to respond or abdicate. He responded. He turned his largely bedouin army on the PLO. To them, the Palestinian cause was irrelevant while loyalty to the king was obligatory.

The Jordan army rampaged through the refugee camps in what came to be called "Black September." In two weeks, they killed between 5,000 and 10,000 Palestinians and virtually crushed the PLO. But, wisely, Husain gave the PLO an out: he flew to Cairo to sign a deal with Arafat. The deal was that the PLO would leave Jordan. Arafat decided to move operations to Lebanon where some 300,000 Palestinians lived in refugee camps.

Glad to get the PLO out of Jordan, and smarting from further attacks such as the Munich Massacre on September 5, the Israelis were not disposed to allow it free rein in Lebanon. They attacked the Beirut airport in December 1968 and began a series of further operations in the following months designed to force the Lebanese government to suppress Arafat's followers.

Meanwhile, along the Suez Canal what amounted to "low intensity" war continued. The two armies were just a "stone's throw" apart along the narrow waterway.



Sniping, augmented by commando raids, was backed up by artillery barrages. Neither side could move forward, but neither would retreat. Casualties were mounting steadily without any discernable result for either side.

The Israelis realized that nothing was being gained and they wanted to achieve a ceasefire; so Prime Minister Meir asked me to be the mediator with President Nasser. I did and the ceasefire was achieved shortly before his death.²⁶

In my next essay in this series I will discuss the events that followed and led through the 1973 war, the attempts at peace and eventually to the wars in Gaza.

William R. Polk
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William R. Polk, MA (Oxford) PhD (Harvard) was teaching at Harvard when President Kennedy invited him to become a Member of the Policy Planning Council, responsible for North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia He served for 4 years under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, During that time he was a member of the three-men Crisis Management Committee during the Cuban Missile Crisis and head of the interdepartmental task force that helped to end the Franco-Algerian war. From 1965 he was Professor of History at the University of Chicago, founding director of the Middle Eastern Studies Center and Founder and President of the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs. At the request of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, he negotiated with President Gamal Abdul Nasser the cease fire that ended Israeli-Egyptian fighting on the Suez Canal in 1970. He is the author of some 17 books on world affairs, including *The United States and the Arab World*; *The Elusive Peace, the Middle East in the Twentieth Century*; *Understanding Iraq*; *Out of Iraq* (with Senator George McGovern); *Understanding Iran*; *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency and Terrorism*; *Neighbors and Strangers: The Fundamentals of Foreign Affairs* and numerous articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *The Atlantic*, *Harpers*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and *Le Monde Diplomatique*. He has lectured at many universities and at the Council on Foreign Relations, Chatham House, Sciences Po, the Soviet Academy of Sciences and has appeared frequently on NPR, the BBC, CBS and other networks. His most recent books, both available on Amazon, are *Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change* and *Distant Thunder: Reflections on the Dangers of Our Times*.

²⁶ I tell the story of how it happened in my *Personal History* (Washington: Panda Press, 2013, distributed by Amazon.)