

From Time Immemorial: The Resurrection Of A Myth

By Muhammad Hallaj

On October 11, 1984, the *Washington Jewish Week* published a front-page story entitled "A Journey to the Highlands." The article, written by an American Jewish couple, described a tour they had made of Israel and the Arab territories it occupied in 1967, as preparation for their intended immigration. The couple, who planned to settle in the occupied West Bank, portrayed the territory as "sparsely populated." To illustrate how misleading this statement is, the United States, to be as densely populated as the "sparsely populated" West Bank and Gaza, would need close to two billion inhabitants!

Blindness to the existence of Palestinian Arabs is widespread and deeply imbedded. It spans the beginning of Zionist colonization a hundred years ago, when Israel Zangwill first gave the Zionist movement its earliest and most enduring myth about a "land without people for a people without land," until today when Joan Peters in her voluminous book, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*,¹ assures the Zionists and their supporters that they should not feel any guilt for the dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian people.

In the years between Zangwill's slogan and Peters's book, a considerable body of Zionist mythology accumulated and became one of the most audacious attempts in modern

times to suppress and distort reality.

To prove that in the pursuit of their ambitions the Zionists did not victimize another people, Zionist myth-makers often went to absurd limits, evoking Shakespeare's famous remark about the lady who protests too much. David Ben-Gurion's testimony before the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which recommended the partition of Palestine in 1947, is one such illustration. When a committee member disputed Ben-Gurion's assertion that Palestine was empty when the Jews came, and inquired about the fate and whereabouts of the non-Jewish in-

As one Jewish writer, however, has pointed out: "There may be a people without a country, but there is no country without a people."² Consequently, Zionist mythology evolved more palatable and credible versions based upon half-truths as opposed to outright fabrications. Rather than deny the existence of the Palestinians, Zionist mythology sought to diminish them quantitatively and qualitatively. Palestine became a "depopulated" or "sparsely populated" and "neglected" land. "What are Palestinians?", a former Israeli prime minister, Levi Eshkol, angrily responded to an American journalist



Orange grove at Bir Salem, near Ramle. In 1944, this village had 315 acres of irrigated crops and 370 acres of field crops.

Eric Matson Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

habitants of the country, ancient peoples named in the Bible, Ben-Gurion daringly explained that they died. When further pressed with the question, "All of them, and their descendants, have died out?", he replied, "Yes, they disappeared."³

who asked him about Israel's position on Palestinian rights. "When I came here," he continued, "there were 250,000 non-Jews—mainly Arabs and Bedouins. It was desert, more than underdeveloped. Nothing."⁴ Menachem Begin's mentor, Vladimir Jabot-

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About This Issue

Was Palestine ever a land without a people for a people without a land? Are Palestinians a fictitious people?

Last year an American writer, Joan Peters, produced a book which claimed that Palestinians never did constitute an indigenous majority in those areas of Palestine which became Israel in 1948. Ms. Peters recently promoted her book, cross country, on radio, television and in newspaper interviews.

Some reviewers made the effort to check her research line by line, footnote by footnote. One such reviewer, Norman Finkelstein, has concluded that the book is "among the most spectacular frauds ever published on the Arab-Israeli conflict." (For a sampling of the distortions uncovered by Finkelstein, see pages 12 and 13.)

Dr. Muhammad Hallaj's purpose in this issue is to locate the Peters book in the context of 20th century Zionist

writings on the Arab-Israeli conflict. What does the Peters book add to previous Zionist claims? Hallaj's conclusion may surprise Ms. Peters, who tells us it took her seven years to reach her new findings.

Our two book review selections, on page 15, complement our feature article; they are: Sarah Graham-Brown's *Palestinians and Their Society: 1880-1946*, and Isaac Diq's *A Babylon Boyhood*. Details on ordering these and other books are found on page 16.

The next issue of *The Link* will survey various departments of Middle East Studies in United States colleges and universities.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

linsky, described the Palestinians as a "yelling rabble dressed up in gaudy, savage rags."⁵ Ber Borochov, an influential early Zionist theoretician, said the Palestinians "lacked any culture of their own and did not have any outstanding national characteristics."⁶

This mythology is not only intended for public relations purposes, it is also intended to make generations of Israeli Jews more adamant in their rejection of Palestinian rights and to prevent them from being guilty about it. The Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, reported on September 9, 1974, that the Israeli minister of education told Israeli school teachers: "It is important that our youth should know that when we returned to this country we did not find any other nation here and certainly no nation which had lived here for hundreds of years." He continued to explain that the Arabs whom they had encountered were only Egyptian refugees who had arrived in the middle of the 19th century.⁷ Another

writer, who observed that Israeli school children are taught that "nothing has happened in Palestine from the last revolt of Bar Kochba in the first century . . . until Herzl and the birth of Zionism," concluded that "this refusal to admit the existence of anything which is not Jewish in Israel is characteristic of the Zionist spirit."⁸

This is more than propaganda or simply bad history; it is a prescription for violence because it demonizes and dehumanizes a people. Pinhas Lavon, who became Israel's defense minister, could not understand why some people were "upset" about "a particularly brutal" Israeli attack on an Arab village in which homes were dynamited over their inhabitants. Said Lavon: "There's no need to get upset—there was no fine mahogany furniture in the village."⁹

This unremitting campaign to dispossess and displace the Palestinian people is meant to minimize the cruelty involved in the transformation of

Palestine into Israel. Joan Peters's book, *From Time Immemorial*, fits snugly within this deeply rooted Zionist mythology, as do racist novels by Zionist storytellers, such as Leon Uris, who depict Palestinians as a sub-human species without brains, feelings or honor.¹⁰

On its dust jacket, *From Time Immemorial* advertises that it "will forever change the terms of the debate about the conflicting claims of the Arabs and the Jews in the Middle East." And how does Ms. Peters bring about this fateful change? By writing a Zionist *summa theologica*, a compilation of what Noam Chomsky calls "received doctrine," the corpus of Zionist myths about the Arab-Zionist conflict over the fate of Palestine.¹¹ Despite her frequent allusions to new and startling discoveries, Peters discovered very little. What her seven years of research did produce was the gathering and resurrecting of myths which had been the backbone of the Zionist case since the beginning of the century.

Those who follow Zionist literature will recognize the refrains: Arab opposition to Zionism is an Arab version of anti-Semitism, rooted in Islamic intolerance; the Palestinians became homeless refugees because their leaders ordered them to leave their country; the number of refugees is inflated; the refugees are used by the Arabs as a political football; their eviction from Palestine ought to be seen as a reasonable population exchange with Jewish refugees from Arab countries; Zionist colonization in Palestine brought great benefits to the country and surrounding areas; and the Palestinians are a fictitious people. These are the new "facts and conclusions" that Peters claims to have unearthed; they are, in fact, but a rerun of previous Zionist performances. Consider, for example, the book, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine*, written eleven years earlier by Samuel Katz.¹² A long-time associate of Menachem Begin in his terrorist Irgun days, Katz readily acknowledges that his work, which advances the same views expressed by Ms. Peters, merely "brought together" previously existing "knowledge" on the Arab-Israeli conflict. And Begin himself, in a "Forward" to the second

edition (1977), said of Katz's book what some reviewers now say of the Peters's book:

... the book blows away just about all the myths and fantasies that have been disseminated about the conflict over Palestine. To most people *Battleground* surely comes as an eye-opener. I know that even the most knowledgeable people have derived from this book new perceptions—not to mention knowledge—on Jewish history, on the history of Palestine, and on the

Arabs. The chapter on the crucial subject of the "Arab refugees" is a good example. It is an exciting build-up, brick by brick, documented by document, of the truth that the basic Arab claim of "a people driven from their homeland" is a hoax. Almost all the facts are available to any student. In *Battleground* they are brought together; and it is clear at once that our case is an unanswerable one.¹²

There is, it would appear, nothing new under the Zionist sun.

recognition of the nationhood of the Palestinian people, and the corollary view that the conflict in the Middle East was a dispute between Israel and neighboring Arab states. It was a major reverse for Israeli policy which pictured the conflict as a "residual humanitarian problem" of refugees, as one Israeli writer put it, and a question of establishing working relations with surrounding Arab states.¹³

Zionism and Israel could not afford the knowledge of what they had done to the Palestinian people. Israel always suffered from

the haunting realization that in time the world is bound to regard the acts committed against the Palestinian Arabs, at the time of the creation of Israel and subsequently, as constituting grave injustices which must be rectified in the name of humanity and in the interest of peace.¹⁴

The rise of the PLO and the revival of the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict did much to acquaint the world community with "the acts committed" and "the injustices which must be rectified." This has been the greatest challenge to Zionist mythology and the most compelling reason why Zionist publicists feel the need to rehabilitate it periodically, as *From Time Immemorial* hopes to do at this time.

2. The second reason for the recurrent barrage of Zionist myths about the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine is the transformation of the world community and world public opinion which resulted from the decolonization process. Less than one generation after the end of World War II, the world community and its agenda were significantly altered. The struggle for a new and more equitable world economic order and the elimination of apartheid are examples of new concerns which gained prominence in the international political debate. The enfranchisement of previously non-self-governing peoples led to greater sensitivity to the plight of peoples, like the Palestinians, who are still struggling for self-determination and independence. Peoples who have empathized with the Palestinians

The Zionist Need To Rewrite History

Why do Zionists feel compelled to treat the reading public to periodic reruns of their familiar mythology on the Arab-Israeli conflict? The author of *From Time Immemorial* alleges that the Arabs "have flooded the communications media of the world in a subtle and adroit utilization of the art of professional public relations." In his "Forward" to the 1977 edition of *Battleground*, Begin similarly blames "the heavy weight of heavily financed and admittedly efficient Arab propaganda" for the world's ignorance of the facts of the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁵ Katz himself asserts that lying is an Arab trait and that "falsifying history" is an "Arab art."¹⁶

The Arabs' incompetence in the areas of propaganda and public relations are legendary and universally conceded. American journalists who cover the Middle East attribute the prevalence of pro-Israeli and Zionist views in the American media primarily to Arab shortcomings in presenting their case.¹⁶ To attribute understanding of and sympathy for the Palestinian cause to the efficiency of Arab propaganda is totally unconvincing. In fact, until the 1970's, the Arab side of the story on the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the Palestine question in particular was totally unfamiliar and inaccessible to world public opinion. The Zionist

version of reality enjoyed complete monopoly in books and periodicals, in motion pictures and on the air waves.

In the 1970's, Zionist monopoly over information on the conflict began to loosen due to factors which have nothing to do with Arab adroitness in the art of professional public relations. Zionist mythology was being increasingly questioned due to the following factors which converged in the 1960's:

1. The reemergence of the Palestinian national movement, institutionalized in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO not only managed to reorganize the scattered Palestinian society, shattered in 1948, but, through military and diplomatic activities, reintroduced the Palestinians as actors in the Arab-Israeli conflict and reestablished their presence within the community of nations, a process which reached a peak when the PLO was given the status of permanent observer in the United Nations General Assembly in 1974.¹⁷ In fact, one of the primary achievements of the PLO has been "the re-Palestinization" of the Arab-Israeli conflict, an act symbolized by the restoration of "The Question of Palestine" as a regular United Nations agenda item, after having been dropped in 1952. This development endangered the Zionist policy of non-

because they experienced and understood the humiliations of subjection to foreign rule and the injustice of usurpation were finally able to make themselves heard.²⁰

The erosion of Zionist credibility and the nearly total isolation of Israel in international forums today are largely because the contemporary community of nations is no longer the European club which passed for the United Nations and decreed the destruction of Palestine in 1947. Most world community members now have recently shared the colonial experience and, consequently, are more capable of sympathizing with the agony of the Palestinians and are more willing to voice support for their aspirations and struggle.

3. The third important reason why Zionist mythology finds it increasingly difficult to circulate and endure is that it is burdened with justifying a continuing and escalating Israeli onslaught on the Palestinians and their widely recognized rights and aspirations. Israel's occupation of the remnants of Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) in 1967, its subsequent colonization and virtual annexation of these territories, its growing belligerence in the assertion of its regional hegemony, and its recent genocidal rampage in Lebanon depleted Israel's traditional stockpiles of sympathy and support in the world.

More dangerous, from Israel's perspective, is the risk of alienating Jewish public opinion. The long list of prominent Jews, who were driven to doubt and sometimes repelled by Zionist-Israeli behavior, spans the history of the Zionist movement. Even Theodor Herzl's closest associate, Max Nordau, once exclaimed that "we are committing an injustice."²¹ Ahad Ha'am, so troubled by his fellow Zionists, said "if this is the 'Messiah,' then I do not wish to see his coming,"²² a remark seconded many years later by Roberta Strauss Feuerlicht who wrote: "If Zionism is a national liberation movement, many Jews do not wish to be liberated."²³ Moshe Menuhin called Zionism "pagan Judaism,"²⁴ and Professor Israel Shahak described Israel's behavior toward the Palestinians as "biblically-justified genocide."²⁵

Even some of the founders of the state of Israel considered Zionist and Israeli treatment of the Palestinians disquieting. In his diary in 1923, Dr. Arthur Ruppin, Israel's first director of the Zionist office in Palestine and the manager of the early Zionist settlement effort, wrote that "Herzl's conception of the Jewish state was possible only because he ignored the existence of the Arabs," and he said, "I think I shall not be able to continue working for the Zionist movement if Zionism does not acquire a new theoretical foundation."²⁶ Hans Kohn, in a letter to a friend in 1929, expressed his own disillusionment with Zionism: "I believe that it is possible that with English help and later with the help of our own bayonets . . . we will be able to hold on and grow in Palestine . . . Jewish Palestine will have nothing in it of the Zion for which I entered."²⁷ Even a former Israeli prime minister, Moshe Sharett, voiced fear that Israel's behavior "must make the State appear in the eyes of the world as a savage state that does not recognize the principles of justice as they have been established and accepted by contemporary society."²⁸

Israel's behavior has made it in-

creasingly difficult for it to wear the mask designed for it by Zionist mythology. Its dealings with the Palestinians, its growing militarism, its emergence as a principal arms merchant and supporter of authoritarian regimes around the world, its relentless oppression and dispossession of the Palestinians under its occupation, its militant behavior in Lebanon showed it increasingly to be the "savage state" that Moshe Sharett spoke about. Support for Israel became increasingly burdensome to the Jewish conscience, and Zionist publicists needed not only to provide Israel and Zionism with a face-lift for the sake of world opinion, but also to reneforce endangered solidarity from the Jewish people themselves.

These are the reasons for the cyclical efforts to revive Zionist myths about the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine. It is not Arab competence in the field of public relations which makes books such as *From Time Immemorial* necessary, but the fact that Zionist behavior dooms Zionist mythology to carry within it the seeds of its own destruction, which requires periodic transfusions to keep it alive.



Soap factory in Nablus. Twenty-four such factories in Nablus provided the most important export from Palestine in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

An Anthology Of Old Myths

The overall purpose of *From Time Immemorial* is to deny that the Palestinians have rights or valid claims in Palestine or that the Zionist movement had committed any transgression against them. It amplifies the principal Zionist thesis that the Palestine question, in the words of Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations, is "one of the phoniest issues in modern political history." "We are being told day in and day out that the Palestinian Arabs are a nation deprived of self-determination, sovereignty and national independence, a homeless people," Yehuda Blum com-

plained, imploring the world not to believe a word of it.²⁷ Joan Peters's *From Time Immemorial* is a very long "Amen" to Yehuda Blum's prayer.

It is not possible in the space available here to expose the entire collection of errors, distortions, fallacies and even obvious inventions and fabrications which make up the 412 pages of text, 120 pages of footnotes, and other material which the publishers of *From Time Immemorial* vainly describe as a "monumental and fascinating book." For this reason, we will focus on the essentials of Peters's book.

The Myth Of Land Without People

Peters's demographic presentation, the heart of her argument against Palestinian rights, can be summarized as follows: Palestine's population, smaller than commonly believed, consisted largely of recent migrants and immigrants who flocked into Palestine, especially "the Jewish-settled areas" which later became Israel, after the commencement of Jewish immigration and settlement during the last quarter of the 19th century. These people, non-indigenous Palestinians, flooded the country and inflated the size of its population, giving the impression that a large number of Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced due to Jewish immigration and settlement, and to the subsequent establishment of Israel in 1948. Peters "corrects the record" by concluding that not only is the dispossession of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population highly exaggerated, but in reality it was the Jews who

were being displaced, because the influx of Arab immigrants, attracted by the economic prosperity created by Jewish settlers, was depriving the Jews of space for the accommodation of future Jewish immigrants. Peters carries this argument to extreme limits when she concludes that, for that reason, the Arabs were responsible for the Holocaust!

To substantiate her argument, Peters claims that she uncovered information which proves that massive Arab immigration into Palestine was taking place throughout the period, and at the same time a massive migration into the "Jewish-settled areas" was taking place from other parts of Palestine. She castigates the British authorities for having failed to record and stop this Arab invasion during the 30-year period they governed Palestine. Her information, which presumably refutes all official records, is based on one newspaper story. Peters

What Joan Peters claims to show is that Palestine, especially the parts which later became the state of Israel, was desolate and abandoned before Zionist colonization revived the land and attracted Arab immigrants. Therefore, the Palestinians have no right to claim that they were dispossessed and displaced by the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in 1948. This is the crux of her argument.

Her thesis has two primary dimensions, both essential to its validation. One is demographic, through which Ms. Peters suggests that Palestine's population consisted largely of outside migrants rather than indigenous inhabitants. The second is the contention that Palestine was a desolate land which began to attract a population only after Jewish immigration "made the desert bloom." Without substantiating both of these principal claims, Ms. Peters's thesis collapses under its own weight.

writes that "according to the Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, *La Syrie* [newspaper] had published, on August 12, 1934, an interview with Tewfik Bey El-Hurani, Governor of the Hauran. Governor El-Hurani stated that "in the last few months from 30,000 to 36,000 Hauranes [Syrian] had entered Palestine and settled there." (p. 230) The article, elevated by Peters to evidence "verified by an official international document and attested to by a Syrian leader" (p. 231), matures later in the book into "hard evidence." (p. 297)

Ms. Peters, claiming that this reported tip of the iceberg conceals even more astonishing reality, goes on to say:

from spring to summer of 1934, from just one area in only one of the many depressed neighboring Arab countries from which impoverished citizens were known to be emigrating into Palestine . . . more Arabs illegally entered and remained in Palestine than the total number of Jews for twice that length of time . . . (p. 231)

The reader is led to believe that in one year, from all sources, Arab illegal im-



The Masri Company Flour Mills in Nablus (1940) produced 40 tons of flour a day with three shifts working round the clock.

migration into Palestine must have been much more than the 30,000 to 36,000 reported by *La Syrie*, possibly 100,000 or more.

Throughout all this Peters is undisturbed by the fact that the demographic situation in Palestine at this time was the hottest political issue in the Arab-Jewish conflict. Instead she is suggesting that illegal Arab immigration into Palestine in 1934 was equivalent to the entry of 25-30 million illegal immigrants into the United States in one year. Even the figure of 30,000 to 36,000 illegal immigrants, said to have entered Palestine in a few months from the district of Hauran, would equal the entry of 7 to 9 million immigrants into the United States—hardly an unnoticeable event which would take half a century to uncover. The Zionist movement never made an issue of the alleged flood of Arab immigrants because it never happened.

Ms. Peters's whole case is based on the claim that demographic transformations were taking place in Palestine, not least of which was massive Arab immigration lured by improved living conditions brought about by Jewish reclamation of the country. But when it is argued, as many of the sources she cites and discounts do,

that the rate of natural population growth among the Arabs increased as a result of improved living conditions in the country—an argument compatible with the thrust of her presentation—she quickly discredits that argument by saying that Palestine was no different from neighboring Arab countries. "The reported rate of 'natural' increase of Arabs in Palestine," she wrote, "... when compared with Arab groups in similar conditions in neighboring Arab countries, should have been suspect." (p. 260) In other words, when it suits her argument, Jewish immigration made the desert bloom and attracted Arab immigrants, and when it does not suit her argument, the Jewish miracle became irrelevant.

Peters's main argument is that it is not the general demographic situation in Palestine which is most relevant to the Arab-Jewish conflict over the country, but the demographic realities in the parts of Palestine which, in 1948, became the state of Israel. These are the areas she calls "the Jewish settled areas," (designated as areas I, II, and IV on the map on page 246). Her argument is that in these areas Jewish presence was greater than was previously realized; indigenous Arab presence has been

highly exaggerated; a large proportion of the Arab inhabitants of these areas were migrants and their descendants; and, consequently, Arab dispossession and displacement from these areas when they became Israel in 1948 was much less than is usually realized. According to Joan Peters, there was always a Jewish country in Palestine, which was inundated with strangers from surrounding Arab lands.

To support her arguments, Joan Peters misreads her own sources, ignores or debunks all evidence to the contrary; she is highly partisan and selective in her choice of witnesses to corroborate her story; and she arbitrarily delineates territories and peoples to prejudice her conclusions. Even testimony by the founders of the state of Israel carries no weight and is ignored by Peters when their information does not fit her argument. The population figures she accepts from the French geographer Vital Cuignet and which she uses as a primary basis for her conclusions (p. 244) are contradicted by innumerable sources, without the slightest effect on her certainty about her views. Even Abba Eban loses out and is ignored in this recurrent and uneven battle between fact and dogma in her book. Abba Eban had written that at the time of the first Zionist Congress (1897), "some 25,000 Jews lived [in all of Palestine] within a total population of 450,000" people.³⁰ David Ben-Gurion confirms this figure when he says that "fewer of a quarter of one percent of world Jewry lived in Israel [sic] at that time."³¹ But Peters confidently proceeds to construct her case, that very few Palestinians can claim to be indigenous inhabitants, by using the figure of 252,000 Muslims and 60,000 Jews in Palestine in 1895.

Peters, relying primarily on an analysis of the 1893 Ottoman population census, done by Professor Kemal Karpat, compares his data with later population statistics and concludes that a large portion of Arab residents of the parts of Palestine which later became Israel were Arab migrants from other parts of Palestine which remained Arab in 1948. She deduces that these people and their descend-

ants (170,000 people) could not be considered authentic refugees who were displaced by Jewish colonization and the subsequent establishment of Israel. Peters subtracts these 170,000 people from her calculations of authentic refugees, and she also subtracts 57,000 nomads and 37,000 reported immigrants, to reach the conclusion that, since 140,000 Arabs remained in Israel, "only 343,000" refugees can claim that they are indigenous Palestinians. (p. 262) The rest are not displaced refugees, but recent migrants returning to their original homes. Then she diminishes this figure by an unspecified percent-

religious groups, she concludes that as early as 1893, the Jews were the largest community in the areas of Palestine which became Israel in 1948. She de-Palestinizes the Christian population, subtracts them and finds that the Jews "were actually perhaps [sic] a marginal majority [plurality?] of the population." (p. 251) In other words, there was always a Jewish country inside Palestine, inhabited by a Jewish majority and some smaller "non-Jewish" minorities!

Peters was not, however, accurate in her reading of her own sources. Bill Farrell, a law student at Columbia University, compared her data with

that only 9,817 Jews lived in Palestine in 1893, that 58,840 Muslims lived in the Akka district (more than Peters gave for the whole area which became Israel in 1948), and that the Jews were a small minority in every subdistrict in the country, including the ones she called "Jewish-settled areas." According to Farrell's analysis of Kerpat's figures, the largest ratio of Jews to Arabs in any subdistrict in Palestine, in the Tabarya (Tiberias) area, only 799 Jews, comprising less than 13 percent of the population, lived there in 1893. In all other areas, the percentage of Jews was even smaller: 501 Jews, amounting to 3.1 percent, in the Haifa subdistrict, for example.

Moreover, Farrell found that Peters ignored more recent Israeli studies, which show that "the Ottoman census severely undercounted the population of Palestine" by as much as 19 percent in some areas.³³ These findings have also been confirmed by later Ottoman censuses (1911-12 and 1914-15), which make her work unreliable and "inconsistent in view of the great weight Peters puts on the 1893 Ottoman census."³⁴

Long before Peters's publication, Zionists sought to minimize the Palestinian Arab population by hiding them from view. In preparation for a visit to Palestine in 1921 by Winston Churchill, then British colonial secretary and highly supportive of Zionism, the Zionist leaders in Palestine met to work out a strategy. Among the decisions was to ask the government to outlaw demonstrations in Palestine, because "if the Secretary of State were to see only huge Arab crowds while in the country, this, it was feared, might lend some credibility to the politicians' demands to keep the country Arab in the 'national' sense." Also, "special efforts were made to have Mr. Churchill come into contact with as many Jews as possible and to make the Jewish minority disproportionately visible."³⁵

In an attempt to shore up her faulty statistics with the power of logical argument, Peters tries to fault population figures which contradict her thesis (that Arab immigration largely accounts for later Arab population figures) by saying that they overesti-



Glassmaking in Hebron. Before World War I, Hebron glass was exported to Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and as far away as Rumania.

mate, claiming that "a very substantial number" of the 343,000 "authentic" refugees were illegal immigrants, as were their descendants. (pp. 262-263) Therefore, there is really no displacement and no refugee problem.

Her calculations rest on the claim that only 92,000 Arabs, compared to 60,000 Jews, were indigenous and lived in 1893 in the area which later became Israel. Using a device frequently utilized in the book to diminish "non-Jewish" presence by breaking down the Palestinian population into

that of her main source, Kerpat's study, and also discussed Peters's allegation with Kerpat himself. Farrell concluded that:

1. Peters used different and uncomparable geographic areas to make the comparison between the population statistics of 1893.
2. She failed to consult her own source for populations in subdistricts.
3. She neglected to consult other and more recent research done in Israel, which contradicts her findings.³²

Farrell demonstrates, for example,

mate the rate of natural growth among the Arab population. "Between 1893 and 1922," she writes, "the 'Arab' rate of increase of Jewish-settled areas of Western Palestine was so similar to the Jews' rate of increase, which was admittedly due to immigration, that the inferences from those figures alone should have posed certain questions." (p. 260). In other words, since the growth of the Jewish population was mainly due to immigration, the same must have been true for the Arab population. Her problem is that she refuses to concede a higher rate of Arab natural population growth, a phenomenon which is in fact repeating itself in the state of Israel today. The Arab population in Israel has continued to match the growth of the Jewish population after the establishment of Israel, even though only Jews are permitted to immigrate (Law of the Return).³⁶

The period covered in Peters's book is one of rising rates of national population growth throughout the Third World. In the case of Palestine, population growth was enhanced by "the cessation of the military conscription imposed on the country by the Ottoman Empire."³⁷ Between 1922 and 1931, Palestine's Muslim population increased an annual average of 2.84 percent (from 590,900, according to the 1922 census, to 759,712, according to the 1931 census). During 1931 to 1946, it rose by an annual average of 3.1 percent. Corresponding Christian figures are 2.5 percent and 3.1 percent; for the Jews, 8.5 percent and 8.65 percent.³⁸ Peters builds her argument for a hidden illegal Arab immigration on the doubtful assumption of a 1.5 percent rate of natural growth which remained stagnant at a time when it was exploding everywhere else. Fertility and reproduction rates for Palestine Arabs have always been and still are very high compared with those of Jews, especially European Jews who made up the large majority of Jewish settlers before 1948. United Nations Economic Commission for West Asia studies show that in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and the East Bank of Jordan, Palestinians aged 14 or less constitute 49 percent of the total Palestinian population.³⁹ Palestinian fertility levels in Israel and Jor-

dan are 6.85 and 6.55, respectively, and the reproduction rate for Muslims is 3.5 to 4 compared with 1.5 percent for Western Jews. For Christian Arabs and oriental Jews, the rate is 2 percent.⁴⁰ To assume, as Peters does, that Palestine's population suffered from a stagnant rate of natural growth is untenable and not supported by statistics conveniently ignored.

Even if we were to grant her argument regarding the earlier period, the fact remains that even the remnants of Palestinian society which continued to live in "the Jewish-settled areas" which became Israel, suffered dispossession and displacement as a consequence of the establishment of the Jewish state. As a result of continuing confiscation of Arab land, 78 Arab villages in Israel, which owned a total of 1,080,984 dunums of land before Israel was established, had only 376,686 dunums left by 1962.⁴¹ Confiscation of Arab land in Israel never stopped, causing the most serious Arab-Jewish clash in Israel on March 30, 1976, whose victims are now annually remembered by Palestinians throughout the world on Land Day.

The Myth Of Neglected Land

If one leg of Joan Peters's case is the demographic argument, the second is an economic one. And here, her case is more shaky than the first. Joan Peters contends that fewer indigenous Palestinians lived in the area which later became Israel than is generally believed, and that "a very substantial" part of that population consisted of "migrant peasants" who came from elsewhere in search of their fortune in "the Jewish-settled areas." To validate this view, she had to argue that due to Zionist settlement, Palestine was rescued from centuries of neglect and desolation, which explains the demographic transformation she claims.

Here she relies on selective "evidence" consisting primarily of ac-

Years after Israel was established it continued to expel the Arab population, creating more refugees, and to dislocate others, creating "internal refugees." Among the Arab villages and communities affected were Ikrit, Kfar Anan, Kfar Yasif, Khasas, Qatiya, Yanuh, Ghabisiya, Abu Ghosh, Majdal, Kharibet Buweishat, Umm al-Faraj, Kfar Berem, Barwa, and many others.⁴²

Finally, since Peters does not deny that throughout Palestine the Arabs never ceased to be a substantial majority until the war of 1948, she should be asked why the Palestinians should lose their right to self-determination in all of what she calls "Western Palestine"—even if it were true that in one part of it they maintained their status as the majority due to internal migration, which is a natural, widespread and lawful phenomenon in every other society?

It is difficult not to conclude that Joan Peters was intent on justifying a preconceived notion, by misinterpreting her data, by readily accepting doubtful accounts, and by reaching conclusions more specious than her case warrants.

counts by passing European travelers. As before, she makes her case by ignoring opposing reports, and more importantly by omitting more reliable and available studies of the economy of Palestine during that period. The result is that she documents impressionistic, fragmentary and obviously biased stereotypes instead of producing a study.

The book is heavily sprinkled with quotations from European travelers testifying that Palestine was "depopulated," "neglected," "barren," "treeless" and "desolate." She totally ignores equally numerous travelers who testified to the contrary, even when the traveler was a Zionist leader who gave much to the Zionist cause, such as Justice Louis Brandeis.

Brandeis visited Palestine in 1919, and was so impressed by its beauty that, in a letter to his wife on July 10 of that year, he said that the view from the Mount of Olives (Jerusalem) was more beautiful than California and that "all yet say that northern Palestine is far more beautiful."⁴³

Peters did not need to rely on "non-Jewish travelers" for this purpose, because early Jewish settlers reported truthfully on Palestine's condition when they were not contributing for external consumption. David Ben-Gurion relates how a Jewish traveler in the Galilee dreamed of building a Jewish settlement on the lands of an Arab village, "praying for its cultivation by Jewish hands," not because it was neglected and needed to be "redeemed," but because he was "enchanted by the natural beauty." Ben-Gurion continued to say of this Jewish traveler that "when he saw the village, its loveliness won his heart."⁴⁴

In fact, Palestine was always a hospitable homeland for its people. Centuries before the Hebrews migrated and conquered it, it produced an agricultural surplus which made it an early cradle for civilization, and it "gave birth to a unique culture. In this period in Palestine, as far as we know, the earliest permanent villages in the world were built." And in Palestine, urban life was born; it is "the only place in the world where a town is known to date back nine thousand years."⁴⁵ The town is Jericho, one of the present Palestinian cities in the occupied territories.

An Arab traveler in the 10th century said Palestine "is watered by the rains and dew. Its trees and its ploughed lands do not need artificial irrigation; and it is only in Nablus that you find the running waters applied to this purpose."⁴⁶ In 1615 the English poet George Sandys described it as

a land that flowed with milk and honey; in the midst as it were of the habitable world, and under a temperate dime; adorned with beautiful mountains and luxurious vallies; the rocks producing excellent waters; and no part empty of delight or profit.⁴⁷

A British missionary who lived in Bei-

rut and visited Palestine in 1859 described the southern coastal area as "a very ocean of wheat."⁴⁸ The British consul in Jerusalem, James Finn, wrote that "the fields would do credit to English farming."⁴⁹

Lawrence Oliphant, who visited Palestine in 1887, the time which concerns Joan Peters's argument most, wrote in his book *Haiifa, or Life in Modern Palestine* that the Valley of Esdraelon was

a huge green lake of waving wheat, with its village-crowned mounds rising from it like islands; and it presents one of the most striking pictures of luxuriant fertility which it is possible to conceive.⁵⁰

Such testimonies prove the inaccuracy of Peters's assertion that on the desolate state of Palestine before Jewish colonization, "the reporters varied, but not the reports" (p. 158), and they demonstrate the selective nature of her reading. In the same manner, studies of the economic development of Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th centuries prove her conclusions to be untrue.

In the second half of the 19th century, Palestinian agriculture was expanding, making Palestine an important exporter of agricultural commodities to European as well as Middle Eastern countries. Before the period which Peters identifies as the beginning of Jewish settlement, Palestine was undergoing significant economic growth. A well-known German geographer who studied Palestine's economy during the twenty years preceding Jewish settlement concluded that "in the two and a half decades following the Crimean War [1856], Palestine experienced a remarkable economic upswing" based on agriculture, and enjoyed a favorable balance of international trade.⁵¹ "During the period we are concerned with," he wrote, "Palestine produced a relatively large agricultural surplus which was marketed in neighboring countries, such as Egypt and Lebanon, and increasingly exported to Europe."⁵² Palestinian exports included wheat, barley, dura, sesame, olive oil, soap, oranges, vegetables and cotton. Among the European importers of Palestinian produce were France,

England, Turkey, Greece, Italy and Malta.⁵³

Before Jewish settlement began, the orange groves in the Jaffa area produced 36 million oranges in 1880, compared with 33.3 million in 1873.⁵⁴ During the period 1857-1863, Palestine exported an average of 6,050,000 oranges annually, but in the period from 1873 to 1882, the figure went up to 19,650,000 oranges annually.⁵⁵ Palestinian prosperity is also indicated by rising imports of European products, which increased from 14,575,500 Turkish pounds in 1874 to 36,964,663 in 1882.⁵⁶

A study of the subsequent period (1885-1914) confirms that Palestinian agriculture yielded a substantial surplus for export, and helped to finance the crushing Ottoman Public Debt, before any significant contributions were made by the Jewish colonies.⁵⁷ Paul Masson, a French economic historian, said that wheat shipments from the region's ports, especially Acre in Palestine, "helped to save southern France from famine on numerous occasions in the 17th and 18th centuries."⁵⁸ The author of the study, quoting reports of foreign consular officials, indicates that agricultural techniques in Palestine were much more advanced than is generally understood. In 1886, the American consul in Jerusalem, Henry Gillman, "outlined reasons why orange growers in Florida would find it advantageous to adopt Palestinian techniques of grafting directly onto lemon trees."⁵⁹ In 1893, the British Consul advised his government of the value of importing "young trees procured from Jaffa" to improve production in Australia and South Africa.⁶⁰

This economic boom was attributed by another study to improved security in the coastal agricultural regions due to Ottoman efforts to drive Bedouin populations out of Palestine across the Jordan River, and to increasing "European demand for Palestinian citrus fruits and barley."⁶¹ This is hardly the picture of a depopulated, impoverished and desolate land which was nursed to life after 2,000 years of neglect portrayed by Peters.

To clinch her case, however, Joan Peters denies the Arab contribution to the development of Palestine by

making incredible claims on behalf of the economic efforts and impact of early Jewish settlers. She not only exaggerates their numbers, but also their role in the Palestinian economy by stating that Jewish colonists were supporting themselves, while also providing the livelihood of at least ten times their number of Arab workers. Relying on an Israeli account, she says that when the settlement of Rishon LeTzion, started in 1882, reached 40 Jewish families in 1899, it attracted 400 Arab families. (p. 252) Even this 10-1 ratio, she implies, is an underestimate, because "the report from Rishon pointed out that many other Arab villages had sprouted in the same fashion." (p. 253)

Peters wants us to believe that this was not a special case but a prevailing condition. She writes that "the additional 900 Jews on the other fifteen settlements have been followed by 9,000 Arabs into the Jewish area by about 1890-1893." (p. 253) Since Palestine's Arab population at the time of the establishment of Israel was about a million and a quarter, Peters might have claimed that this 10-1 ratio attracted 6 million Arabs to work for the 600,000 Jews who accumulated in Palestine by then. Apparently this ratio became inoperative somewhere along the line, although Peters chooses not to enlighten her readers on this point.

The fact of the matter is that, during the late 19th century and early 20th century, the period when Peters claims large-scale Arab immigration took place into "the Jewish-settled areas" in search of new opportunities, the Jewish community was actually minuscule, lived mostly in cities, and subsisted poorly on contributions from world Jewry who treated Palestine's Jews as a charity case. As Abba Eban said in a statement quoted earlier, many of Palestine's Jews were "pious orthodox Jews" who went to Palestine to worship and die in the Holy Land. Chaim Weizmann, who visited Palestine in 1918 when the British occupied it, testified to this effect when he observed that the greatest worry of Palestinian Jewry, even then, was how Jewish charitable contributions from abroad were being distributed among Palestinian

Jews. He wrote that he was shown, by British censors, the letters from Palestinian Jews to their benefactors in America and elsewhere, and discovered that "Quite 90 percent of them were devoted to complaints about the hardships which writers were enduring at the hands of the Zionist Commission, with frequent hints of maladministration of funds."⁶²

Moreover, the Jews lived primarily in the cities, three-quarters of them in the urban areas of Jerusalem and Jaffa, and most of the others in northern cities such as Haifa, Tiberias and Safad.⁶³ On the eve of World War I, about thirty years after Jewish settlers began their great push to make the desert bloom, according to Peters, only 14 percent of the Jewish colonists lived in rural areas.⁶⁴ And when they acquired Arab land, they did not inherit sand dunes, but planted farmland and orchards. When Jewish settlers acquired 32,000 dunums of land in Petah Tikva, 14,000 of these dunums were orange groves.⁶⁵

The settlements that Jewish colonists began to build were in no condition to exude prosperity and attract Arab workers from far and near in the Arab world, as Peters contends. During his visit to Palestine in 1898, Theodor Herzl recorded the following observations in his diary about the state of Jewish colonies: October

27, 1898, "All of the colonies suffer from fever." October 27, 1898, Rishon Le-Zion, it is disappointing to see "thick dust on the roads, scant verdure." October 31, 1898, Jewish hospital in Jerusalem, "Misery and squalor. Nevertheless I am obliged, for appearance sake, to testify in the visitors' book to its cleanliness. This is how lies originate."⁶⁶

The evidence leaves no doubt that during the period Joan Peters says Jewish immigration was bringing Palestine back from the dead and helping to repopulate the country with Arab immigrants, the exact opposite was the case. It is unfair to the Palestinian people to deny their efforts and accomplishments in the development of their country by attributing it to a few Jewish immigrants who came to it in the late 19th century. It is equally wrong (both from the moral and scholarly points of view) to deny the disruptive impact of massive Jewish immigration in the 20th century which destroyed and displaced Palestinian society. By rehashing the old and familiar, but long-discredited, Zionist myth about the benefits that Jewish colonization brought to a destitute Palestinian people, she merely repeats self-serving Zionist claims and denigrates—even distorts—all evidence to the contrary.

The Myth Of The Happy Natives

Peters raises another old argument that Arab opposition to Zionist colonization was limited to the leaders who feared the consequences of the uplifting and emancipating influence of Jewish immigration (p. 173, 210), an argument necessary to the fiction that the ordinary people could not possibly oppose their Zionist benefactors. Either she ignored or did not know that very early in the Zionist movement, Zionist leaders, especially those who lived in Palestine at the time, knew and admitted that this was nothing but a myth for public

consumption. As early as 1921, for example, a leader of the Jewish colonists in Palestine ridiculed the argument and castigated his colleagues for their deception by saying:

Honey-words ooze from our lips ... It appears as though we would never have come to Palestine, had not the Arabs been here to serve as the objects of our improvements and philanthropy. This falsification will lead to self-deception.⁶⁷

During the same year, Leonard Stein, then political secretary of the Zionist

Executive, agreed that Zionist claims of benefits to the Arabs were nothing but "honey-words." He explained Arab opposition to Zionist colonization by saying that "the situation might have been less acute had Zionist activity brought the Arabs the material advantages they had been invited to accept."⁶⁸ He continued to say that the Zionists, instead, considered the Arabs "as a temporary obstruction to be coaxed or bribed away."⁶⁹ This view, in fact, was so widespread among Zionists, that Chaim Weizmann, usually portrayed as a moderate who cared, wrote a letter to his son in 1918 that said the Palestinians were like "the rocks of Judea" in the way of the Zionist project and "as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path."⁷⁰

To sustain the myth, however, opposition to Zionist colonization had to be blamed on "leaders," as Peters does, or better yet on external influences. Neil Caplan said that Jewish colonists blamed the Jerusalem rebellion in 1920 on British officials who exported their anti-Semitism to the Arabs.⁷¹ When the 1936 Palestinian rebellion broke out, Weizmann attributed it to the influence of the Spanish civil war saying that it was "the mirror of events in Spain."⁷² In a speech made in 1939, he blamed Nazi and Fascist agitation, saying: "Our implacable enemies who persecute the Jews today in the south and centre of Europe continue this persecution in Palestine, using the Arabs as their instruments."⁷³

Unlike Joan Peters who uncritically repeats the arguments about "offendi" and foreign agitation, prominent leaders of Palestinian Jewry, representing both major wings of Zionism from which Israel's contemporary major political parties evolved, admitted that they did not believe what they were saying for external consumption. Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of Revisionist Zionism, as early as 1921 considered conflict with the Arabs inevitable because Zionism was a colonizing movement. In a speech to a Zionist meeting in Prague he said: "I don't know of a single example in history where a country was colonised with the courteous consent of the native population."⁷⁴

David Ben-Gurion was even more explicit in his admission that the Palestinians, by opposing Zionism, were fighting for national survival and against Zionist usurpation of Palestine. He was speaking in 1938, during the 1936-1939 Palestinian revolt, to the leadership of the Mapai political party, which means to the leadership of Palestine's Jewry. Ben-Gurion said:

I want to destroy first of all the illusion among our comrades that the [Palestinian Arab] terror is a matter of a few gangs, financed from abroad... We are facing not terror but a war. It is a national war declared upon us by the Arabs. Terror is one of the means of war.

He continued to say: "This is an active resistance by the Palestinians to what they regard as a usurpation of their homeland by the Jews—that's why they fight." Ben-Gurion conceded the need to tell a different story to foreign public opinion. "In our political argument abroad," he said, "we minimize Arab opposition to us. But let us not ignore the truth among ourselves. I insist on the truth, not out of respect for scientific but political realities." Ben-Gurion admitted that Palestinian resistance to Zionism was an act of self-defense. "Militarily, it is we who are on the defensive," he said, but "politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves." He clarified his view by saying that "the country is theirs, because they inhabit it, whereas we want to come here and settle down, and in their view we want to take away from them their country..." He concluded his remark on this subject by saying "let us not think the terror is a result of Hitler's or Mussolini's propaganda."⁷⁵

Palestinian resistance to Zionism was motivated not only by fear of possible or potential usurpation and displacement, but also by usurpation and displacement already in progress. Joan Peters attempts to show that Palestinians were not being dispossessed and displaced during the interwar period by seeking to discredit the Hope-Simpson Report of 1930, the most thorough field study of the destructive impact of Zionist colonization done by a British expert. Her

common device is to misquote from the report in a way which leaves no doubt that deliberate deception was intended. In his excellent review of *From Time Immemorial*, Norman G. Finkelstein discusses the extent to which Peters went to "doctor" the Hope-Simpson Report. Finkelstein found that after Peters gave her own distorted version of a paragraph from the Report, she

repeatedly refers back to this same doctored material at each critical juncture in the text to clinch her argument. She makes 19—sometimes implicit, more often explicit—references on 12 different pages... to this same paragraph in the Hope-Simpson Report. In each and every one of the 19 citations its content is falsified.⁷⁶

Peters thus dismisses the Report as a "false" document which "contributed substantially to the myth of 'displaced' and 'landless' Arabs brought about by Jews." (p. 296)

Dispossession and displacement, however, did take place and were bound to take place throughout the era of Zionist colonization—before, during and since the establishment of Israel. In their private intercourse, Zionist leaders actually confirmed the findings of the Hope-Simpson Report which Peters seeks to discredit. For example, at the end of May 1930, the same year the Report was published, Arthur Ruppin, who was in charge of Zionist settlement and was well-placed to know the facts, wrote a letter to Hans Kohn in which he admitted that the Zionist plan "to bring the Jews as a second nation into a country which is already settled by a nation" without damaging its interest was fallacious. Zionist land acquisition, he wrote, is already causing the eviction of Arab peasants, and immigration is already causing unemployment.⁷⁷ Perhaps the most remarkable official Zionist admission is found in the statement made by Moshe Shertok before the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947 on behalf of the Jewish Agency. Moshe Shertok (who later changed his name to Sharett) was the head of the political department of the Jewish Agency and, after the es-

Actual Document

1. Hope-Simpson Report (1930)

In Palestine, "... Egyptian labor is being employed in certain individual cases . . ."

"There can be no doubt that there is at present time serious unemployment among Arab craftsmen and among Arab laborers."

"Arab unemployment is serious and general."

2. Peel Commission Report (1937)

"A large proportion of Arab immigrants into Palestine come from the Hauran. These people go in considerable numbers to Haifa where they work in the port. It is, however, important to realize that the extent of the yearly exodus from the Hauran depends mainly on the state of the crops there. In a good year the amount of illegal immigration into Palestine is negligible, confined to the younger members of large families whose presence is not required in the fields. Most persons

in this category probably remain permanently in Palestine, wages there being considerably higher than in Syria. According to an authoritative estimate, as many as 10 or 11 thousand Hauranis may go to Palestine temporarily in search of work in a really bad year. The Deputy Inspector-General of the Criminal Investigation Department has recently estimated that the number of Hauranis illegally in the country is at present time roughly 2,500." (My emphasis—NGF)

3. Anglo-American Survey of Palestine (1945-46)

"As a matter of emergency, official arrangements were made, in October 1942, to bring laborers from Syria and the Lebanon under the auspices of the Army . . . Under this arrangement 3,800 laborers were admitted." (My emphasis—NGF)

"Arab illegal immigration is mainly casual, temporary and seasonal." The Survey observes that, for example, immigration increases in "boom" and emigration in "bust"

periods. To illustrate this particular pattern of temporary immigration, the following example is cited: "[T]he 'boom' conditions in Palestine in the years 1934-36 led to an inward movement in Palestine particularly from Syria. The depression due to the state of public disorder during 1936-39 led to the return of these people and also a substantial outward movement of Palestinian Arabs who thought it prudent to live for a time in Lebanon and Syria."

made sure the *fellahin* continued to lack the means to survive. "At every juncture when the [Mandatory] government attempted to do something for the *fellahin*, the Zionist movement opposed the legislation," as when the Jewish Agency in 1930 successfully lobbied the British Government against the Ordinance on the Protection of Cultivators and blocked legislation to

provide government loans to farmers and tenure security to sharecroppers.⁸¹

Even before World War I, the Zionist movement instituted and enforced a Jewish boycott of Arab workers, denying the displaced Palestinian farmer from employment even as a farm laborer.⁸² Gradually Palestinians were squeezed out of increasingly large areas of their country, areas

establishment of Israel, served as foreign minister and prime minister. In his statement to UNSCOP, he defended Zionist settlement against the charge of displacing Arabs in a language which actually confirms it. After saying that "official inquiries conducted in the past [by Zionist agencies] proved that Jewish agricultural settlement has not resulted in the creation of a class of landless Arabs," he added that although in some cases "tenants who had cultivated the land before have had to be removed," such displaced tenants managed to find agricultural work elsewhere and have not ceased to be peasants.⁷⁵

What Shertok (or Sharett) was saying is that peasants were in fact displaced but suffered no true hardship because they managed to resume their life elsewhere. This attitude was the official policy of the Zionist movement toward the question of Palestinian dispossession and displacement as a consequence of Zionist colonization. Speaking to a meeting of his political party in 1926, Ben-Gurion explained how the Zionist movement justified the displacement of the Palestinians and why it felt no guilt about their dispossession. He argued that "there was no danger of Arabs being landless; they could be transferred to Transjordan and no injustice would be done."⁷⁶ Arthur Ruppin revealed his awareness of the fact that Palestinian farmers were being displaced and squeezed out by Jewish colonists, when he wrote a letter to a friend in 1930 in which he said that "since there is hardly any land which is worth cultivating that is not already being cultivated, it is found that whenever we purchase land and settle it, by necessity its present cultivators are turned away." He continued to say that "the advice we tend to give to the Arabs—to work their land more intensively, in order to manage with a smaller allotment of land—may appear to the Arabs a joke at the expense of the poor. For intensification of farming a fairly large amount of capital is needed, as well as much agricultural knowledge—both of which the *fellahin* [native peasant or laborer] lack."⁸⁰

The Zionist movement, of course,

1. Peters

"[A]ccording to that *Report*, evidence of Arab immigration abounded: 'Egyptian labor is being employed;...' (p. 297)

"Further, Arab unemployment was claimed when in fact such was not the case; according to the *Report*, Arab unemployment figures were inflated." (p. 298).

2. Peters

"The 'Arab immigrants,' particularly 'Hauranis' from Syria, the *Report* stated, 'probably remain permanently in Palestine.' But although the number of Hauranis who illegally immigrated was 'authoritatively estimated' at 10,000-11,000 during a 'bad' year in the Hauran, only the unrealistically, perhaps disingenuously low Government estimate of 2,500 were concluded to be 'in the country at the present time.'" (p. 310)

3. Peters

"What the official Anglo-American *Survey* of 1945-46 definitely disclosed... is that tens of thousands of 'Arab illegal immigrants' [were] recorded as having been 'brought' into... Palestine..." (p. 379, emphasis in original)

"Under the heading 'Arab Illegal Immigration,' a 1945-46 report noted that '... the "boom" conditions in Palestine in the years 1934-36 led to an inward movement into Palestine particularly from Syria.'" (p. 517, footnote 49)

which Peters calls "the Jewish-settled areas." As the Hope-Simpson *Report* put it in 1930:

Actually the result of the purchase of land in Palestine by the Jewish National Fund has been that land became extraterritorial. It ceases to be land from which the Arab can gain any advantage either now or at any time in the future. Not only

1. Finkelstein

(a) Peters doesn't even insert an ellipsis after "employed" to indicate something—in this case, the crucial qualifier—was deleted;

(b) Peters corrects for her "oversight" in the footnote where the quote appears in full.

A nice example of how Peters distills the essence of a document.

2. Finkelstein

(a) recall that Peters must prove not only that massive numbers of Arabs had entered but also that they had settled in Palestine;

(b) in the original text, the Hauranis who "remain permanently" explicitly refers, *not* to the "10,000-11,000 during a 'bad' year," but rather to a "negligible" sum who immigrate in a "good" year;

(c) this particular falsification serves a triple purpose: (i) "documenting" massive illegal Arab settlement in

Palestine, (ii) illustrating the bad faith and untrustworthiness of the British ("unrealistically, perhaps disingenuously low Government estimate of 2,500") and (iii) pointing out the alleged "contradictions" between the "facts" reported in the official British reports and their conclusions. (The *Peel Commission Report*, like every other document of the period, concluded that "Arab illegal immigration is mainly casual, temporary and seasonal.")

3. Finkelstein

(a) a good illustration of how Peters handles figures—"3,800" recorded Arab immigrants becomes "tens of thousands";

(b) Peters' falsified presentation (pp. 378-79) of the—for her purposes—crucial section of the *Survey* in which this quote appears is in a class all its own.

(a) the quote is used in Peters' section headed "Hints of Substantial Unrecorded Immigration"; (b) one of Peters' favorite techniques for falsifying a document: wrenching an observation from its critical context.

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can he never hope to lease or to cultivate it, but, by the stringent [boycott] provisions of the lease of the Jewish National Fund, he is deprived forever from employment on that land.⁸³

Due to Zionist colonization, Palestine was shrinking more and more for its Arab inhabitants. In 1948, under the umbrella of a United Nations

General Assembly resolution and under the cover of war, it ceased to exist and became the state of Israel. Its people became "Arab Refugees." *From Time Immemorial* was written in the hope of erasing even this reminder of the Zionist usurpation of Palestine.

Notes

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3. Robert Weitsch, in *Jüdische Rundschau* of August 14, 1925, quoted in Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-national Idea in Palestine During Mandatory Times* (Haifa: Shikmona Publishing Co., 1970), p. 44.
4. *Neustock* (February 17, 1969).
5. Quoted in Alan R. Taylor, *The Zionist Mind* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974), p. 96.
6. Arie Bober, ed., *The Other Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 37.
7. Quoted in David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London: Futura Macdonald & Co., 1977), p. 265.
8. Roger Garaudy, "Religious and Historical Pretexts of Zionism," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Winter 1977), p. 44.
9. Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: The Armed Prophet* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 178.
10. Leon Uris, *The Haj* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).
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12. Samuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine* (New York: Bantam Books, 1977).
13. *Ibid.*, pp. ix-x.
14. *Ibid.*, p. xi.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
16. See Edmund Ghareeb, *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media* (Washington, DC: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983).
17. See Sameer Y. Abraham, "The Development and Transformation of the Palestine National Movement," in Naseer H. Aruri, *Occupation: Israel Over Palestine* (Belmont, MA: AALG Press, 1983), pp. 391-425.
18. Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 12.
19. John H. Davis, *The Enclave Peace: A Study of the Zionist-Arab Problem* (London: John Murray, 1968), p. 97.
20. On the position of Asian nationalist leaders and movements before independence, see G. H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971).
21. Quoted in Bober, p. 37.
22. Quoted in Taylor, p. 103.
23. *The Fate of the Jews: A People Torn Between Israeli Power and Jewish Ethics* (New York: Times Books, 1983), p. 219.
24. He attributed the remark to Dr. Judah Magnes. See *The Desecration of Judaism in Our Times* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969), p. 107.
25. Israel Shahak, "The Historical Right and the Other Holocaust," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Spring 1981), p. 34.
26. Quoted in Flapan, p. 168.
27. Quoted by Hattis, p. 58.
28. Quoted in Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism* (Belmont, MA: AALG Press, 1980), p. 36.
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33. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128. Reference to Justin McCarthy, "The Population of Syria and Iraq, 1878-1914," *Asian & African Studies* (Haifa University), March 1981.
34. Farrell, *Ibid.*, p. 128.
35. Neil Caplan, *Palestine Jewry and the Arab Question, 1917-1925* (London: Frank Cass, 1978), p. 80.
36. See Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), Table 1, p. 289.
37. Britain, *The Political History of Palestine Under British Administration*, Memorandum submitted to UNSCOP (Jerusalem, 1947), p. 15.
38. Calculated from official Mandatory government statistics reproduced in Henry Cattin, *Palestine, The Arabs and Israel* (London: Longman, 1969), table on p. 21.
39. Quoted in George Kossaiji, "Demographic Characteristics of the Arab Palestinian People," in Khalil Nakhlleh and Elia Zureik, eds., *The Sociology of the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 32.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
41. Jiryis, Table 5, pp. 292-296.
42. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 81-90.
43. Quoted in Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary, Volume 1: 1914-1945* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1970), p. 152.
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46. Quoted in Guy Le Strange, *Palestine Under the Moslems* (1890), reprinted in Beirut: Khayat, 1965, p. 28.
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52. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
53. For Palestinian exports and their value, see *Ibid.*, Table 5, pp. 41-42. For destination of exports, see pages 37 and 40.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
55. *Ibid.*
56. For Palestinian imports, see *Ibid.*, Table 9, p. 48.
57. Marwan R. Bubeiry, "The Agricultural Exports of Southern Palestine, 1885-1914," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Summer 1981), p. 74.
58. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 67.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
61. Reilly, p. 83.
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63. Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine," in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, pp. 142-143.
64. Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab National Movement, 1918-1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), p. 17.
65. Flapan, p. 213.
66. Marvin Lowenthal, ed., *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (New York: Dial Press, 1956), pp. 279-280 and p. 285.
67. Quoted in Caplan, p. 134.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
69. *Ibid.*
70. Text of letter in Flapan, p. 56.
71. Caplan, p. 61.
72. Weizmann, p. 383.
73. Quoted in David Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders* (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1972), p. 209.
74. Quoted in Caplan, p. 113.
75. Quoted in Flapan, pp. 141-142. Emphasis added.
76. Review in *In These Times*, vol. 8, no. 33 (September 5-11, 1984), quotation from p. 12.
77. Letter quoted in Hattis, pp. 48-49.
78. The Jewish Agency for Palestine, p. 271.
79. Flapan, p. 222.
80. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 173.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.
82. See conditions of contracts under which Zionist agencies leased land to Jewish settlers, and which forbade employment of "non-Jews" in Sir John Hope-Simpson, *Palestine: Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, Cond. 3686, 1930), p. 53.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

Book Views

Palestinians and Their Society:

1880-1946

By Sarah Graham-Brown

Quartet Books, 1980, 184 pp., \$14.95.

A Bedouin Boyhood

By Isak Diqis

Universe Books, 1983, 176 pp., \$10.40.

By David Yates

Sarah Graham-Brown's photographic essay gives readers an idea of Palestinian society as it was during the final years of Ottoman rule and throughout the period of the British Mandate. Two-hundred forty-eight photographs accompany a text with chapters on rural and urban life, the Bedouin, transportation, and the political scene of this period, during which relations with an ascendant Europe began to affect Palestinian society directly and to force changes on its population.

Recognizing that any collection of photographs has difficulty portraying, and even runs a clear danger of distorting, as broad and diverse a society as the Palestinians', Graham-Brown uses her introduction as a caveat on the photographers themselves. Many were Christian missionaries, anthropologists, or other outsiders who considered the old-fashioned worthiest of their attention. Graham-Brown obliges them by including samples of one of their favorite subjects, namely, photographs of animals pulling ploughs. She goes on the explain that there were, in fact, rather few tractors in use at that time, and describes the difficulties which curtailed changes in production means, such as the lack of investment capital available to small farmers, who could not afford an unsuccessful experiment. Besides, she adds, such simple ploughs were reliable, easy to repair, and excellently suited to Palestinian terrain.

Posed shots, such as those taken for postcards, have value for many readers as a pictorial dictionary, since many were taken primarily to feature

items which are unknown outside the Middle East. One photograph shows a Bedouin holding a *rahahah*, a one-stringed musical instrument. Others display articles of clothing, such as the *shirwal*, the extremely loose trousers worn by boatman Suleiman Ghirby, and the more familiar *kaffiyeh* and *ighal*, the headdress which became the badge of the nationalist movement, replacing the *fez* of the Ottoman order. Women's dresses and embroidery particular to certain geographical areas are also shown.

Some photographs, such as the night shots of George Matson, reflect a high level of craftsmanship and creative propensity. Even the simplest snapshots serve as points of departure for the author's social study. Treatment is given to Christian and Muslim religious ceremonies and holiday festivities, weddings, dances, and the work of farmers and artisans. There are individual and family portraits, aerial photographs, and newspaper cartoons. Photographs by Hilma Granqvist, the anthropology student in Artas village, are included, as are some photographs from the Bonfils studios, mainly ridiculously posed ones which are used in the introduction as examples of the worst to expect from European photographers.

The chapter on agriculture has photographs of sesame being cured in the open air, sorghum threshing, olive picking and pressing, as well as of wheat fields and irrigated fruit orchards. It was during this period that access to wider markets made Palestinian farmers net exporters. Small industry also flourished, although it was more susceptible to the vicissitudes of the Great Depression and the tariffs that were established to protect home markets during that period. Among the photographs of Gazan rug mills, Hebronite glass factories, and Nablusi soap factories, is a reproduction of an advertisement of a Zionist-owned company touting its olive oil soap as being of "Nablus quality."

Slight treatment is given here to Palestinian Bedouin, who made up barely five percent of the Arab population of Palestine, and were resident mainly in the arid hinterlands. Be-

sides, the Bedouin had become semi-settled and their lifestyle much the same as that of other Palestinian village dwellers. *A Bedouin Boyhood* by Isak Diqis is one man's recounting of his childhood memories as a member of the Diqis tribe in southern Palestine.

It is not a dry, definitive study of Bedouin habits, but more like a collection of short stories irrepressibly revealing the unique traditions and rich legacy of the Palestinian Bedouin. Two chapters present judicial proceedings, one in the case of theft and one of manslaughter. Another describes the sports, feasts, and market days at the end of the Ramadan fast. There are glimpses of Beer al-Saba, [Beersheba] where the author was sent to boarding school by his education-conscious tribe, and a glimpse of pre-war Gaza, where he visited relatives. Throughout are a stream of images of a life which, Diqis recalls, "was always interesting, because something new happened everyday." But at the age of ten, Isak returned during a school holiday to find his tribe's grazing land and grain fields abandoned. Driven by Israeli tanks across the Jordanian lines, his tribe was dispersed into refugee camps and beyond. Several stories mention details of his life working in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, but the ever-pressing yearning for his lost homeland brings unabashedly nostalgic reminiscences of the Wadi al-Hisa and his fellow Diqis tribesmen.

Poignantly written by a natural storyteller, a local colorist who lets tantalizing details flow unforced, *A Bedouin Boyhood* is a timeless work which recalls the undying dignity and humanity of the author's people.

David Yates, a specialist in Middle East Affairs, is on the staff of *Americans for Middle East Understanding*.

Correction

The photo credit for "The Goddess Isis and her God-Child," which appeared in the December, 1984 *Link*, should have noted that the photo was reproduced courtesy of Verlag Philipp Von Zabern.

Books To Order

New Selections

□ George W. Ball, *Error and Betrayal in Lebanon*, Foundation for Middle East Peace, 1984, 158 pp., \$8.95. The former U.S. Undersecretary of State analyzes the confused American Middle East policy that took shape during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and continued until the withdrawal of U.S. Marines from Beirut. Our price, \$5.95.

□ Isak Diq, *A Bedouin Boyhood*, Universe Books, 1983, 176 pp., \$10.40. A vivid portrait of a vanishing and misunderstood culture by a man who began his life as a Palestinian Bedouin at the edge of the Neqab [Negev] Desert. A gifted storyteller, Diq can weave the routine of the daily life of his semi-settled tribe into unforgettable episodes, and contrast those peaceful times with the shock of 1948 and the exile of his people from their land. Our price, \$7.00. See review, page 15.

□ Sarah Graham-Brown, *Palestinians and Their Society: 1880-1946*, Quartet Books, 1980, 184 pp., \$14.95. A photographic essay about the social and economic life of the Palestinian people from the last years of the Ottoman Empire through the era of the British Mandate. Our price, \$4.95. See review, page 15.

□ Christine Moss Helms, *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World*, Brookings Institution, 1984, 215 pp., \$9.95. Examines the evolution of modern Iraq, the Arab Ba'ath party, and the war with Iran. The author

focuses on the forces that influence policy formulation within the Iraqi Government and the concerns of the Iraqi leadership over the last three decades. Our price, \$7.50.

□ John P. Richardson, *The West Bank: A Portrait*, Middle East Institute, 1984, 221 pp., \$9.95. Provides the non-specialist with an overview of the West Bank's history and of the present situation. Our price, \$7.50.

□ Michael Saba, *The Armagoldon Network*, Amana Books, 1984, 288 pp., \$9.95. Narrative recounting of an investigation into the unauthorized dissemination of classified Pentagon documents to Israeli officials, and how the investigation was stopped by high-ranking Americans over the protestations of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Our price, \$5.95.

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