

## Deir Yassin Remembered

### The Event

Early in the morning of Friday, April 9, 1948, commandos of the Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin, and the Stern Gang attacked Deir Yassin, a village with about 750 Palestinian residents. It was several weeks before the end of the British Mandate. The village lay outside of the area that the United Nations recommended be included in a future Jewish State. Deir Yassin had a peaceful reputation, had cooperated with the Jewish Agency, and was even said by a Jewish newspaper to have driven out some Arab militants. But it was located on high ground in the corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and one plan, kept secret until years afterwards, called for it to be destroyed and the residents evacuated to make way for a small airfield that would supply the beleaguered Jewish residents of Jerusalem.

By noon over 200 people, half of them women and children, had been systematically murdered. Four commandos died at the hands of resisting Palestinians using old Mausers and muskets. Twenty-five male villagers were loaded into trucks, paraded through the Zakhron Yosef quarter in Jerusalem, and then taken to a stone quarry along the road between Givat Shaul and Deir Yassin and shot to death. The remaining residents were driven to Arab East Jerusalem.

### Of Massacres and Memorials

By

**Daniel A. McGowan**

*Professor of Economics  
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That evening the Irgunists and the Sternists escorted a party of foreign correspondents to a house at Givat Shaul, a nearby Jewish settlement founded in 1906. Over tea and cookies they amplified the details of the operation and justified it, saying Deir Yassin had become a concentration point for Arabs, including Syrians and Iraqis, planning to attack the western sub-

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**About This Issue**

For the professor of economics it was a matter of parity: If his college was going to pull its investments out of South Africa because of its apartheid, why not pull them out of Israel for the same reason?

That question led to other questions about Israel — which led protective friends to inquire, with good reason, if he had tenure.

That was 1985. In 1989, Dan McGowan went to Palestine. On his return to Geneva, New York, he changed his license plate to INTIFADA. Then, to raise awareness of the Palestinian Catastrophe well beyond his college community, he came up with yet another idea.

I first met Dan McGowan in 1995 at an American-Arab Anti-Discrimination conference in Washington D.C. He was sitting behind a small table — paid for with his own money — quietly promoting his extraordinary project. By 1996, he had enlisted the support of Edward Said and Hanan Ashrawi — not, however, the support of Elie Wiesel or Simon Wiesenthal.

We invited Dan McGowan to write this issue's feature article because it is both the story of what happened in Palestine that 9th of April 1948, and of what happened at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, where Professor McGowan dared to speak publicly of what he had seen in Palestine — a daunting experience, he would discover, whether or not one had tenure.

His story also underscores the importance of meeting Palestinians when one travels to Palestine. Most Americans who go on Holy Land tours never meet Palestinians, being told it's too dangerous. The truth of the matter is that for years religious, academic and human rights groups have been leading tours to the West Bank and Gaza, visiting Palestinian universities, sharing the hospitality of Palestinian families, joining in prayer with Palestinian coreligionists, patronizing Palestinian craft stores, and, like Dan McGowan, learning Palestinian history.

AMEU has contacted 30 of these tour leaders and has compiled a directory of the travel agencies and tour guides they use and the best hotels and hospices they stay in. To obtain a copy of this directory, see page 16.

AMEU's book and video selections are found on pages 14 - 15.

**John F. Mahoney**  
**Executive Director**

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urbs of Jerusalem. They said that 25 members of the Haganah militia had reinforced the attack and claimed that an Arabic-speaking Jew had warned the villagers over a loudspeaker from an armored car. This was duly reported in *The New York Times* on April 10.

The final body count of 254 was reported by *The New York Times* on April 13, a day after they were finally buried. By then the leaders of the Haganah had distanced themselves from having participated in the attack and issued a statement denouncing the dissidents of Irgun and the Stern Gang, just as they had after the attack on the King David Hotel in July, 1946.

The Haganah leaders admitted that the massacre "disgraced the cause of Jewish fighters and dishonored Jewish arms and the Jewish flag." They played down the fact that their militia had reinforced the terrorists' attack, even though they did not participate in the barbarism and looting during the subsequent "mopping up" operations.

They also played down the fact that, in Begin's words, "Deir Yassin was captured with the knowledge of the Haganah and with the approval of its commander" as a part of its "plan for establishing an airfield."

Ben Gurion even sent an apology to King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan. But this horrific act served the future State of Israel well. According to Begin:

Arabs throughout the country, induced to believe wild tales of "Irgun butchery," were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives. This mass flight soon developed into a maddened, uncontrollable stampede. The political and economic significance of this

development can hardly be overestimated.<sup>2</sup>

Of about 144 houses, 10 were dynamited. The cemetery was later bulldozed and, like hundreds of other Palestinian villages to follow, Deir Yassin was wiped off the map. By September, Orthodox Jewish immigrants from Poland, Rumania, and Slovakia were settled there over the objections of Martin Buber, Cecil Roth

because of its size or its brutality, but because it stands as the starkest early warning of a calculated depopulation of over 400 Arab villages and cities and the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinian inhabitants to make room for survivors of the Holocaust and other Jews from the rest of the world.

Deir Yassin's story is one of two peoples' struggle for the same land. The details are important for both the victor and the victim. In founding *Deir Yassin Remembered*, I was prodded to action in part by these considerations:

- Although most scholars no longer believe the myth that Israel was "a land without people for a people without land," that propaganda is still being taught today. Resurrecting the memory of Deir Yassin serves to dispel such nonsense. Palestinians were dispossessed in 1948 and continue to be dispossessed today in the name of building a Jewish state in Eretz ("Greater") Israel.

- The pernicious and persistent association of "Arab" and "terrorism" by the media is biased. The Irgun and the Stern Gang were unequivocally Jewish radicals who committed terrorist attacks against British, Arab, and Jewish targets, including the massacre at Deir Yassin and the assassination of the first United Nations mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte. Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir led Irgun and Stern, respectively, and both later became Prime Ministers of Israel.

- If Jewish terrorists massacred, robbed and looted at Deir Yassin (as attributed to Jewish sources in *The New York Times*, 4/13/48), who can continue to claim "purity of arms?" That the Haganah, now known

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Daniel A. McGowan

and other Jewish leaders, who believed that the site of the massacre should be left uninhabited. The center of the village was renamed Givat Shaul Bet. As Jerusalem expanded, the land of Deir Yassin became part of the city and is now known simply as the area between Givat Shaul and the settlement of Har Nof on the western slopes of the mountain.

The massacre of Palestinians at Deir Yassin is one of the most significant events in 20th-century Palestinian and Israeli history. This is not

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as the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), supported the Irgunists and the Sternists during the attack on Deir Yassin and then stood by silently while the "dissidents" commenced "mopping up operations" is reminiscent of the "purity" shown by the IDF at Sabra and Shatilla in Lebanon.

● If Jewish claims to property in Eastern Europe are valid—and I believe they are—why are claims to restitution of Palestinian property in Deir Yassin and all the other cities and villages not valid? After the massacre at Deir Yassin the Hagannah promised, "We will maintain the graves and the remaining property and return it to the owners when the time comes." Is it so wrong to ask when that time will come?

The idea of remembering the significance of Deir Yassin and of using the motto of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, "Hope lives when people remember," has caused some Zionists to label the *Deir Yassin Remembered* project "gross beyond description."

The heart of such objections is that "remembering" the Deir Yassin catastrophe and the ethnic cleansing that it precipitated is reminiscent of the Holocaust. We are taught there was only one Holocaust, you spell it with a capital letter and it refers to the persecution of Jews by the Nazis. Palestinians are simply not allowed to have a holocaust. There was a population "transfer" to make room for a truly persecuted people returning to

a land from which they had been driven 2,000 years ago.

It is similar to the way that bias and prejudice against Palestinians cannot be called anti-Semitic, even though Palestinians are clearly of Semitic origin. Anti-Semitism means anti-Jewish; Palestinians don't count.

Even prison camps for Palestinians, like Ketziot in the Negev, which precisely fit the definition of concentration camps, may not be referred to as such without raising the hackles of

King David Hotel an act of terrorism, because they say, and rightly so, that it was carried out by guerrillas attacking the British army headquartered there.

They define terrorism as "soldiers deliberately attacking and killing civilians." By this definition, Deir Yassin was unequivocally a terrorist attack. But since it was perpetrated by Jewish instead of Arab terrorists, it is deliberately ignored. With overwhelming evidence of the atrocities committed, as well as the condemnation

by Jewish leaders from Ben Gurion to Buber to Einstein, denial is problematic. The alternative is silence. *Deir Yassin Remembered* is the opposite of that silence.

It is shocking to interview students at Hebrew University and to discover that most have not even heard of Deir Yassin or the destruction of Palestinian villages in general. Most have visited Yad Vasheh, Israel's national memorial to Holocaust victims and Israel's founding, never realizing that it looks across at Deir Yassin about a mile to the north.

In his essay, "Zionism as a Test Case in the Morality of Nationalism," Elias Baumgarten, a professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan and a member of the Jewish Peace Lobby, concludes by saying:

Acknowledging the violation of Palestinian rights is a prerequisite of a morally acceptable Jewish nationalism. The duty to acknowledge and make restitution also suggests the kind of practical measures Israel should take in the current



Kuwait stamp issued in 1968 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Deir Yassin massacre.

even some very liberal and linguistically savvy people who well understand the distinction between a concentration camp and an extermination camp, like Auschwitz.

Likewise "Arab terrorism" is taken for granted; "Jewish terrorism" borders on blasphemy or anti-Semitism and must be disguised or denied or ignored as much as possible.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, Elie Wiesel, and many others refuse to call the 1946 attack by the Irgun on the

conflict. . . . It should teach in its schools the truth about the destruction of Arab villages in Israel. . . . It should create memorials and commemorative holidays for Palestinian victims. Israel should, in short, create a Jewish nationalism with a transformed relationship both to its own past and, in the present, to the Palestinian people.

## WHY ME?

In 1989 I knew nothing about Deir Yassin and six years later I had started *Deir Yassin Remembered* to work toward building a memorial to the Palestinian victims massacred there on April 9, 1948. People often ask me why. I am not Jewish and I am not Palestinian. It is a project totally unrelated to my fields of study, namely, monetary theory, personal finance, and forensic economics. The work absorbs a monumental amount of time. It has generated financial, social, and academic costs and it has strained personal relationships that had been built over several decades.

It started around 1985 when colleges and universities were overwhelmingly demanding that their pension funds no longer invest in South Africa. As a conservative professor of economics at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York, I disagreed with such prohibitions and political obstructions to the free flow of capital.

I began to ask questions publicly, such as:

If apartheid is evil, why is it bad for South Africa and acceptable for Israel? Why is the expropriation of land for the exclusive use of whites condemned, while the expropriation of land for the exclusive use of Jews condoned? If Krugerrands are to be banned, why not diamonds; does cutting them in Israel remove the Black blood on them?

Such uncomfortable questions for comfortable members of the college community were largely answered by silence. The one exception was the flamboyant Richard Rosenbaum, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Hobart and William Smith Colleges and later a gubernatorial candidate for the state of New York.

In a letter to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Rosenbaum expressed "grave concern . . . that a professor might be teaching students distorted and, in some cases, totally false information." He promised, in writing, to take me "on a mission" to Israel, "in the certain knowledge that anyone with a shred of an open mind would come back a friend of Israel."

But alas, Mr. Rosenbaum could not get Malcolm Hoenlein, the Executive Director, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, to pay for the trip. In renegeing on the offer, Mr. Rosenbaum passed on a parting insult that he said originated with "a wise man" with whom he had shared my correspondence:

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## Looking for Deir Yassin

Palestinians, Israelis, and a few foreign visitors are beginning to take limited tours of some of the Arab villages depopulated in 1948 during the creation of Israel as a Jewish state. The Alternative Information Center (P.O. Box 31417, Jerusalem or [aicmail@trendline.co.il](mailto:aicmail@trendline.co.il)) may be the only group that includes Deir Yassin in its Study Tours of Jerusalem.

There also are special tours led by surviving underground fighters or "battle participants" such as Ezra Yachin and Yehuda Lapidot. The latest of these, led by Lapidot, was sponsored by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and a group of Irgun veterans. This tour usually corresponds with the April 9th anniversary of the "battle" and celebrates it from the radical Zionist perspective. These special tours deny there was a massacre, and greatly inflate the number of Jewish casualties while lowering the number of Palestinians killed. No mention is made of the male prisoners who were put on display in Jerusalem before being taken to the stone quarry between Deir Yassin and Givat Shaul and shot to death.

When ordinary tourists ask about Deir Yassin, the guide will simply deny, often truthfully, ever having heard of it, or respond that there are many other more significant sites in Jerusalem and no time to look for Deir Yassin. In other instances, the question alone brands you as anti-Zionist and therefore the enemy in the guide's eyes. While other tour members remain oblivious, he or she will dismiss your inquiry with a wave and you will be largely shunned for the rest of the trip. The guide need not be Jewish; Christian Zionists are often worse when it comes to queries about Deir Yassin.

At Birzeit University, Dr. Saleh Abdel Jawad, a member of our Board of Advisers, heads a handful of academics who comprise the Center for Research and Documentation of Palestinian Society. Although often referred to as "the Harvard of the West Bank," Birzeit University is very poor. Nevertheless, the Center is able to sponsor an occasional tour of some of the 400 villages which were either depopulated of Arabs or destroyed in 1948.

On one of these tours, I visited 45 villages which most Israelis have never heard about and most Palestinians have never seen. In some places the only remains were a pile of rocks and the prickly, small cacti the Israelis call "sabara." At some sites, beautiful Arab homes were partially destroyed, while at others Israeli Jews were occupying Arab homes. Where memorials existed, they were to Jews fallen in their War of Independence. There were no memorials to Palestinians who fell in the same war, known to them as The Catastrophe.

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"Why take him to Israel; he's obviously a bigot and that experience will make him think he's an informed bigot."

But if Rosenbaum and friends found my questions on the efficacy of divestment and the comparisons with Israel to be offensive, others, like Walter Williams, the John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics at George Mason University, found raising them to be courageous. Invariably they would first ask if I had tenure; when informed that I did, they would encourage me to use it and freely express opinions and beliefs which, although politically incorrect, were well founded or irrefutable.

The South African divestment confrontation caused me to begin to study Israel and to use it in pedagogical examples. When lecturing on international trade, for instance, I would point to the fact that the Israeli diamond industry provided a living for some 20,000 people and accounted for over a fifth of the value of the country's visible foreign trade (1990 figures).

For the United States to ban the sale of Kruggerands was a politically acceptable way to fight apartheid; to ban the sale of diamonds would have caused an uproar.

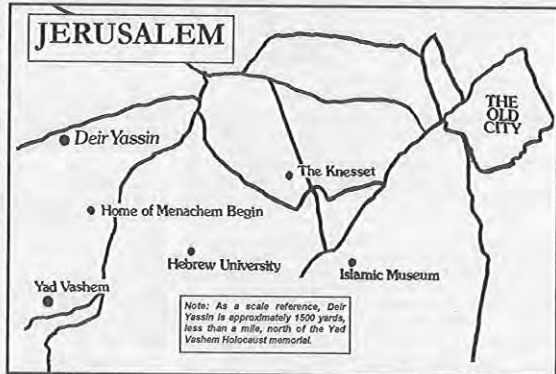
When studying labor markets, I often stimulated discussion by illustrating disequilibria caused by ethnic or religious discrimination. For example, I would point out that when workers from Gaza go to Israel they work largely with no benefits in a country with a very strong labor union orientation, at least for Jews. So it is no surprise that as Palestinians

they are confined to jobs in agriculture, menial construction, and sanitation.

I wanted to study Islam, not extensively, but at least at the introductory level. The religion department at our colleges had five full time faculty and offered 39 courses, ten on Judaism and the Holocaust. But there was no course on Islam.

I was astounded! Not a single course was offered on this major reli-

A unique feature of our colleges is that the faculty is encouraged to teach new courses, especially those that cross disciplines, involve women's studies, and lead to travel abroad. I proposed such a course, called "Palestine and the Palestinian People: Political, Social, and Economic Issues," to begin in the winter semester of 1990. The course was to be a senior forum taught by three professors, a political scientist, an anthropologist, and an economist.



gion to which roughly 25 percent of the world's population subscribe. I compared it to an economics department with no courses in macroeconomic theory or a math department with no calculus.

In response to my queries, the religion department said that Islam was very complicated and that there was no one qualified to teach such a course. One member defended the department's shortcoming, saying the colleges had very few Muslim students, as if that mattered. By that analogy colleges without Russian students have no reason to teach Russian.

The course precisely met the stated curriculum goals and was approved by the committee on academic affairs, despite some Zionist reservations and the administration's insistence that at least one of the professors be Jewish. The latter demand was met by adding a second political scientist who was Jewish, although not a Zionist.

To learn more about Palestinians, I went to my first meeting of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) in the spring of 1989. It was there that I learned of ADC's Eyewitness Israel Program which took small groups of Ameri-

cans to visit Palestine and observe first hand the brutality of the occupation.

I immediately applied for the program and was rejected, probably because I did not fit the stereotypical profile: I was not a doctor, a sociologist, a labor union leader, a minister, or an organizer for human rights. I was a conservative, an economist, and a life-time member of the National Rifle Association and those were not considered good credentials. Nevertheless, I continued to call and write to ADC, eager to go. When another participant dropped out at the last minute, I was ready with passport and money to pay my own way.

While in Palestine I lived in Jabalia, the largest of the refugee camps in Gaza. I visited hospitals and cottage industries and spoke with doctors, social workers, lawyers, and leaders in the intifada. I photographed Israeli patrols shooting live bullets and rubber bullets at children who routinely attacked them with stones.

I went to Hebron, Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Jenin. I tried to visit the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, for which permission was denied, and offered the Israeli lawyer Lea Tsemel \$2,000 to take me to the Ketziot prison camp in the Negev. (She was unable to take me, but she remembered my visit and unhesitatingly joined *Deir Yassin Remembered* when I asked for her help six years later.) I made many contacts among the Palestinians and some among the Israelis.

Teaching a course on the Palestinians at a liberal arts institution is daunting, especially where 20 percent of the students, key people in the administration, and key people on the board of trustees are Jewish.

In 29 previous years of college teaching, I had never been summoned

to the provost's office. In the second week of the term, I was summoned and told that there were grave concerns—a now familiar warning—about the course and that it might "need to be canceled" unless it was immediately given "more balance," meaning, of course, a pro-Israeli spin. I pointed out that the course was already balanced and that canceling the course for such a spurious reason would most certainly

the Zionist propaganda that there were no Arabs living in Palestine when the Jews returned; many students came convinced of the well-worn myth that it was a "land without people for a people without land." You had to get by the propaganda in Golda Meir's claim that there is no such thing as a Palestinian; they are all just Arabs. You had to break the image that the Arabs were Nazis, that Palestinians are inherently anti-

Semitic, and that today's settlers are invariably peace-loving, devoutly religious pioneers. You had to correct the impression that the Six Day War was started by the Palestinians; you had to clarify that a "preemptive strike" is when our side initiates war and a "sneak attack" is when the other side fires first; you had to show that making reference to Israel's attack on the USS Liberty is not a gratuitous, anti-Semitic footnote, but an unresolved piece of American history which has been flushed down the memory hole, where unpleasant things are put to be deliberately forgotten.

To lecture about Palestinians, you inevitably were forced to speak about the Holocaust, to which the Palestinians did not contribute, which was a genocide committed by Christians, and which had nothing to do with Muslims. In spite of Zionist tales of Hitler-meets-the-Mufti, the Palestinians no more collaborated with the Third Reich than did the Stern Gang.

Yet if guilt for the Holocaust cannot be laid on the Palestinians, its horror serves as the final apology for injustices committed by Jews against Palestinians. The apology goes something like this: "Yes, what the Zionists have done, and continue to do, to the Palestinians is not right, but you really can't blame them after all Hitler did to the Jews." It is the ultimate excuse which covers not only Zionist

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Deir Yassin commemorative stamp issued by Saudi Arabia in 1965.

damage the colleges' reputation when the argument was aired in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* or the local press.

But it was not just Zionist criticism by some administrators that made teaching or saying anything positive about the Palestinians difficult. It was a sense of constantly being on guard and of having to back up any statement with a Jewish source.

If you wanted to talk about Palestinian refugees, you first had to refute

# Elie Wiesel and the Sound of Silence

One man who is likely to know the truth about Deir Yassin is Elie Wiesel, undoubtedly the best known Holocaust survivor in the United States today. After 47 years of keeping silent, Professor Wiesel revealed last year in his memoirs that he worked in Paris for the Irgun as a journalist for its publication *Zion in Kamf*. He was privy to Irgun wire dispatches and articles written about Deir Yassin at the time. He could be one of the best sources to answer questions such as:

- Were 254 Palestinians, half of them women and children, murdered in cold blood on April 9, 1948, at Deir Yassin in what was justified by the Irgun and Stern Gang as a "military operation?"
- Did uniformed Iraqi soldiers defend Deir Yassin as claimed today by "battle participants" of the Irgun and the Stern Gang in their "educational" tours of Deir Yassin? And is there any validity to the claims by these same "battle participants" that the village was heavily fortified and had carried out attacks on Jewish convoys?
- Were Palestinian prisoners from Deir Yassin summarily executed after being paraded in Jerusalem? David Hirst, The Institute for Palestine Studies, and others have made this claim, which is implicitly supported by a comparison of The New York Times of April 10, 1948 (over 200 Arabs killed and 40 taken prisoner), and the Times of April 13 (254 reported killed with no mention of prisoners).

Prof. Wiesel also might know of or comment on:

- How the bodies of the victims were burned or buried and by whom, and why nothing was done with the bodies until April 12, three days after the massacre.
- Who the Irgun spokesperson was who justified the operation to The New York Times on April 9, 1948 at the tea and cookie press reception at Givat Shaul.

In Elie Wiesel's many books (from "Night," to "The Forgotten," to "All Rivers Run to the Sea"), his voice and vision can be summarized in two words, "memory" and "silence." He remembers, often with great pain, the memory of the living and the dead; he tells the stories "so they won't be forgotten." And he speaks out against silence regarding injustice and violations of basic human rights; he cries out against racism and the evils of apartheid; he professes to believe that "the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference."

Yet this Nobel Prize laureate, who worked for the Irgun before, during, and after the massacre at Deir Yassin, has nothing to say about it and, except for a few remarks in his Nobel acceptance speech, he has almost nothing to say about Palestinians in general. In three volumes of his collected works, "Against Silence," Deir Yassin is not mentioned once. Even in his memoirs, "All Rivers Run to the Sea," Deir Yassin is not in the index and the lone reference is immediately dismissed in eight short words, "whose bloody details we did not yet know."

There is also no criticism of the apocalyptic fellow radicals of the Stern Gang whose "operational successes comprised robberies to raise funds, and explosions and terrorist attacks against British, Arab, and Jewish targets." Memories of the negative side of these two terrorist groups apparently have been excised. Professor Wiesel's only excuse is, "Israel is something I must serve and help, but not criticize. I will not say bad things about Jews."<sup>8</sup> To hear this great humanitarian and ethicist repeat the words of the ever obedient loyal soldier is frightening.

"Wieselian Silence" concerning Palestinians as victims is antithetical to building peace between the two peoples. From the Palestinian perspective it is dehumanizing and degrading. Palestinians are no less a part of humanity than are Israelis. Palestinians have a history of depopulation, destruction, devastation, and discrimination which cannot be denied by indifference or by false patriotism to a narrow, chauvinist version of Zionism. Martin Buber, Albert Einstein, Israel Shahak, Noam Chomsky, and other great Jewish intellectuals have recognized and acknowledged this. There is no indifference with respect to Palestinians—as victims—by these great men. It was Martin Buber who wrote to Ben Gurion saying:

In Deir Yassin hundreds of innocent men, women, and children were massacred. The Deir Yassin affair is a black stain on the honor of the Jewish nation. The Zionist movement, the army and our government of the time (the Jewish Agency Executive), all felt this acutely and most unequivocally condemned the deed at the time.<sup>9</sup>

Albert Einstein was among the Jewish leaders who publicly expressed shock and outrage over the massacre. He was disdainful of the pride shown by the Irgunists and the Sternists when they "publicized [the massacre] widely, and invited all the foreign correspondents present in the country to view the heaped corpses and the general havoc at Deir Yassin." These same Jewish leaders also condemned the gangs for their "reign of terror in the Palestine Jewish community," noting that "teachers were beaten up for speaking against them, adults were shot for



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behavior immediately after World War II, but every year and every generation since then.

The course, after all, was about *Palestinians*, and it was frustrating to have to get to that subject only after first reviewing the darkest chapter in Jewish history, a chapter which shows Jews to have been far greater victims than any victimization the Palestinians can ever imagine.

The fact is that if every Palestinian in the West Bank and Gaza were executed tomorrow, the number of victims would not equal half of the number of Jews executed in World War II, but so what? Why does a description of the political, social, and economic characteristics of one people have to be prefaced and twisted to fit the history of another? Many courses are given on Jews with no mention of Palestinians; no courses are given on Palestinians without extensive discussion of Jews and Zionism.

In spite of pressure, more subtle

than overt, it is a tribute to Hobart and William Smith Colleges that such a course on the Palestinians was allowed to be taught at all. Yes, I was forced to "balance" the course—the film *Days of Rage* was balanced with *Exodus*, "The Gun and the Olive Branch" was read along with "The Israel-Arab Reader," and Mubarak Awad was "countered" by Phillipa Strum.

But I was allowed to buy "Palestinian" books for the library, although there was no special budget as there is for Judaic Studies. I was even encouraged by the President of the colleges to present a "balancing" speaker when Benjamin Netanyahu visited the campus; Professor Edward Said filled the role with his usual eloquence.

I also was encouraged to invite Hanan Ashrawi to "balance" a presentation by Elie Wiesel. Both were invited to join the Board of Advisers of *Deir Yassin Remembered*; Professor Ashrawi readily accepted; Professor Wiesel has declined even to answer.

not letting their children join them. By gangster methods, beatings, window-smashing and wide-spread robberies, the terrorists intimidated the population and exacted a heavy tribute.<sup>10</sup>

In his book, "Jewish History, Jewish Religion," Israel Shahak, a Holocaust survivor and life-long human rights activist, writes:

But we can derive from this analysis another, more general conclusion about the most effective and horrific means of compulsion to do evil, to cheat and to deceive and, while keeping one's hands quite clean of violence, to corrupt whole peoples and drive them to oppression and murder. (For there can no longer be any doubt that the most horrifying acts of oppression in the West Bank are motivated by Jewish religious fanaticism.) . . . Unlike Stalin's tame scholars, the rabbis—and even more so the scholars attacked here, and with them the whole mob of equally silent middlebrows such as writers, journalists, public figures, who lie and deceive more than they—are not facing the danger of death or concentration camp, but only social pressure; they lie out of patriotism because they believe that it is

[See "Elie Wiesel and the Sound of Silence," pages 8-9.—Ed.]

Teaching a course on Palestinians sparked interest all across the college community. After an Israeli woman artist and close friend of the provost held an art exhibit, I secured support for an exhibit by the Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata. The art department helped with the exhibit; seven pieces of Boullata's work were purchased by people in the local community; and his moving film, *Stranger at Home*, was shown with hardly a dry eye in the audience.

It was trendy at the time for Hobart and William Smith professors to use vanity license plates to stimulate interest in their disciplines. A geology professor's plate read "DEVONIAN;" a science professor's read "BOTANY." The plate on my old Peugeot read "INTIFADA."

People who didn't know *intifada* from *enchilada*, began to recognize the word and to understand its mean-

(Continued on page 10)

their duty to lie for what they conceive to be the Jewish interest. They are *patriotic liars*, and it is the same patriotism which reduces them to silence when confronted with the discrimination and oppression of the Palestinians.<sup>11</sup>

When Elie Wiesel was first asked to join the Board of Advisers of *Deir Yassin Remembered* his employment as a journalist with the *Irgun* had not yet been revealed. His answer was no answer. Repeated phone calls, letters, and faxes were met with what was to become known as *Wieselian Silence*. Remember, according to Wiesel, "the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference." For the past 18 months all requests have been ignored or met with total indifference.

I am reminded of the question put in a letter to Elie Wiesel by Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg of Columbia University: "In the memory of the Holocaust we have been reminded by you that silence is a sin. You have spoken out against indifference and injustice. Why are you making an exception of Israel? Do you think our silence will help Israel? The sacred texts that Jews study and re-study teach the contrary. . . . To be silent gives free reign to the armed zealots of ages past, and of this day."<sup>12</sup> □

(Continued from page 9)

ing, a "shaking off" of occupation and control.

Although some people were nervous about riding in a car with INTIPADA license plates, I drove the car for four years, including trips to New York City, with no incident other than a few finger gestures. Parked in front of the colleges on Main Street, the license plate was said to have turned away some potential students and some potential donors, but there was never pressure to remove it. To the contrary, the plate became a symbol of someone standing up for the human rights of a people others had learned to despise at worst and to ignore at best. It caused me to be invited to present lectures to local community groups and to colleges throughout upstate New York.

## BEYOND KNOWING

I have come to believe that it is not enough "to see the light" regarding Palestinians, their victimization,

and their struggle to survive as a nation. Crying for the world to recognize injustice and to do something is no more a realistic solution for Palestinians than it was for Jews under the Nazis or the Bosnians under the Serbs. The path for Palestinians to follow in achieving human rights and a national state has been blazed by others, including Gandhi and Mandela, and by Jews on so many levels who have built the state of Israel. "Righteous Gentiles" can see the light, work tirelessly for the cause, and even sacrifice their own lives for it, but only the victims, in this case Palestinians, can make the change a reality.

When *Deir Yassin Remembered* was founded, its board was structured to include half Jews, half non-Jews, half men and half women. This was not simply an attempt to be politically correct or to be in keeping with the northeastern liberal arts environment in which its director is employed. Rather, it is based on the belief that both victim and victor need to re-

member Deir Yassin and take part in its memorial.

Nor was the massacre simply "a male thing." Palestinian women and children were brutally massacred and Jewish women took part in the attack and in the subsequent mopping up operations. Jacques de Reynier, a French Red Cross employee who arrived after the massacre, described the Irgunists and Sternists as follows:

All are young men and women, including teenagers, armed to the teeth with pistols, machine guns, grenades, and large cutlasses, most of them covered with blood, in their hands. A young woman, beautiful but with eyes of a murderess, shows me her cutlass, still dripping with blood as she carries it around like a trophy. They are the 'mopping up team,' which probably goes about its business very conscientiously.<sup>4</sup>

Even Nathan Friedman-Yellin, successor to Stern Gang founder Yair

## Funds and The Future

I opened the capital campaign of *Deir Yassin Remembered* (DYR) at an annual convention of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in Washington, D.C. It was May 4, 1995—my 50th birthday—and I hoped it would prove an auspicious inaugural date for a project which may take the rest of my life to complete. Brochures, photographs, and maps were exhibited. T-shirts showing an old map of the location of Deir Yassin were given away with each \$25 donation.

The organization's initial goal is to raise \$100,000 to design a memorial and to petition the Israeli government for a suitable site at Deir Yassin where Palestinians, Israelis, and others can learn about and reflect on the tragedy which occurred there.

The base of the organization's support has come and must continue to come from the Palestinian people in the diaspora, in Israel and in the territories Israel still occupies. Support, of course, is welcome from other quarters as well, and donors already include non-Palestinians in several countries.

With funds in hand, DYR will invite artists and

sculptors around the world to design and build a suitable memorial. From the proposals submitted, the Board of Advisers will select the best project and commission the work to begin.

Simultaneously with the design competition, DYR will begin petitioning the Israeli government for a site. The old buildings now used as a mental hospital at Givat Shaul would be the best location for a memorial and subsequent museum.

*Remember Deir Yassin!* has been used as a slogan of intimidation by Jewish terrorists and as a revengeful battle cry by Arabs. It is time now for it to be turned around. It is time for *Deir Yassin Remembered!* to be the medium for mutual recognition of two people living on the same land. It is time for Palestinians to visit Yad Vashem. It is time for Jews to visit Deir Yassin. It is time for both people to remember the past, each remembering his or her own and that of the other as well.

[For further information or to assist with fund-raising ideas, readers may contact Daniel A. McGowan at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York 14456, telephone 315/781-3418, fax 315/781-3422, E-mail McGowan@HWS.EDU. *Deir Yassin Remembered* is accorded 501(c)(3) status by the IRS and donations are tax-deductible.—Ed.]

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Stern, condemned the "shocking" murder of women, termed the attack a "massacre," and said it was "too cruel." He complained that it was not authorized by the leadership and that it spoiled "our image" in the eyes of the Soviet Union. Others, like his Sternist rival, Yisrael Scheib (Eldad), and Menachem Begin insisted that without Deir Yassin "the State of Israel could never have been established."<sup>8</sup>

Today there are 17 members on the DYR board, three short of our goal. The board represents a remarkable collection of leaders with one common thread—a strong conviction that the memory of Deir Yassin should be preserved.

Given the small number of board members, its diversity is astounding—Muslims, Jews, Christians and agnostics, some very rich, some very poor. There are politicians turned academics and academics turned politicians. There are those with tenure and security and others whose involvement could cost them their jobs and endanger their families. All stand ready to rebuff criticisms of anti-Semitism or self-hatred. They seek to restore the tradition of critical thinking demonstrated by Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, and Martin Buber, and the moral vision of the Jewish people seeking justice for all. They want to open the doors of the silent side of Elie Wiesel and others who systematically ignore the injustices against the Palestinians.

Most Israelis and most visitors to Israel do not go to Deir Yassin. Tour guides in Jerusalem are mostly Jewish or Christian and they do not know, or do not care to know, its location and the true story of the massacre. Most of our board members also have not been there. Yet Deir Yassin remains largely intact in the form of a mental hospital in the Givat Shaul district of West Jerusalem. The remaining Palestinian buildings are beautiful, quite distinctive in style and color from other buildings in the area.

They are surrounded by the Orthodox Jewish settlement of Har Nof and the industrial area of Givat Shaul.

There are no markers, no plaques, and no memorials at Deir Yassin; parking is a problem and access to the mental hospital grounds is, understandably, restricted. But tourists today can help keep memory alive and reinforce our efforts to memorialize Deir Yassin by asking about and visiting the site.

Most visitors and virtually all politicians visit the most famous Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem. Literally, *Yad Vashem* means "a monument and a name," figuratively "a monument and a memorial." The name is drawn from Isaiah where God says to those who keep his covenant, "I will give them . . . a monument and a name . . . an everlasting name that shall never be effaced." Conceived in 1942 and codified in the 1953 "Law of Remembrance of Shoah and Heroism—Yad Vashem," this memorial park is Israel's preeminent national shrine.

One of the most important tasks of Yad Vashem has been to record the names of every Jewish victim of the Germans to perpetuate the memory of the martyrs whose graves are unknown and unmarked. In his book, "The Texture of Memory," James Young writes, "The function of memory in this project is precisely what it has always been for the Jewish nation; in addition to bringing home the 'national lessons' of the Holocaust, memory would work to bind present and past generations, to unify a world outlook, to create a vicariously shared national experience."<sup>9</sup>

Of course, this is exactly the underlying task of *Deir Yassin Remembered* in its quest to build a memorial. For Palestinians, whose culture and history are largely oral, passed down in stories from generation to generation, the memory of Deir Yassin is paramount and cannot be denied. While there are those who would belittle it when compared to the scope of

the Holocaust, to paraphrase Young: "The function of memory in this project is precisely what it has always been for the Palestinian nation; in addition to bringing home the 'national lessons' of The Catastrophe of 1948, memory works to bind present and past generations, to unify a world outlook, to create a vicariously shared national experience."

It is a chilling fact that the Deir Yassin massacre took place within sight of Yad Vashem. The irony is breathtaking.

Did those who conceived of the noble and necessary project of building the most important Holocaust memorial realize that the site they had chosen was tainted by brutalities of the past? While the idea of Yad Vashem was conceived long before the massacre, construction began years after it. Were the ghosts of Deir Yassin ignored or simply bulldozed over? In dedication ceremonies at Yad Vashem, did no one ever look to the north and remember Deir Yassin? Did no one speak of it? Were its martyrs so deeply buried that their cries for justice could never be heard? □

## ENDNOTES

1. Menachem Begin, "The Revolt," London, W. H. Allen, 1964, pp. 162-165.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The New York Times, 13 March 1948, p. 7.
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8. Quoted by Marc Bruzonsky in *Mid-East Realities*, Nov. 17, 1995.
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10. The New York Times, Dec. 4 1948, p. 12.
11. Israel Shahak, "Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of 3,000 Years," London, Pluto Press, p. 29.
12. Quoted by Michael Goldberg in "Why Should Jews Survive?," Oxford University Press, 1996.

# "Suffer the Little Children . . ."

**W**hile many children were killed at Deir Yassin, many more were orphaned. Fifty-five Deir Yassin orphans were trucked to Jerusalem on the day of the massacre and literally dumped in the Old City. They were rescued by Miss Hind Husseini. In her own words:

*I was walking along the streets of the Old City when I came upon a group of the most wretched children. They had been carried from their homes, snatched from the protecting arms of their parents, and thrown into the streets of the Old City. They stood huddled together against the lofty walls of the Holy City, casting terrified looks toward Heaven as if supplicating and praying for an end to that horrible nightmare. Those innocent puzzled eyes glittering with tears made everyone wonder how such outrages could be committed against humanity in an age of enlightenment and knowledge.*

At first she fed and sheltered these children in two rooms inside the Old City. Then on April 25, 1948, she founded an orphanage and school, *Dar El Tifl El Arabi* (Home of the Arab Child), in her home. Before 1967, additional buildings were constructed and today *Dar El Tifl* cares for 350 orphans and 1,600 day students. Miss Husseini directed its activities for 46 years, until her death in 1994. *Dar El Tifl* remains in its original location behind East Jerusalem's American Colony Hotel and across from the now famous Orient House, where representatives of the Palestinian National Authority have offices.

One of the most famous orphans is Mubarak Awad, whose father was killed in the 1948 war, although not at Deir Yassin. Awad is known as "The Gandhi of the West Bank" for his advocacy of non-violent resistance, and the peaceful demonstrations he led for basic human rights, demonstrations that resulted in his deportation from Israel. He is a member of the Board of Advisers of *Deir Yassin Remembered*. Other orphans have become profes-

sors, doctors, dentists, lawyers, social workers, nurses, and secretaries.

My daughter, Kristina, age 25, and I visited the school last December. We inquired about the original orphans from Deir Yassin and were welcomed to examine the book, now nearly a half-century old, which contains the records and photographs of every child who ever attended the school. Kristina's attention was drawn to a picture of a

young girl whose mother and father were victims at Deir Yassin. "I have seen this face before," she said. We looked together at the fading brown portrait before us, then at each other, coming to the simultaneous realization that the young girl bore a striking resemblance to Anne Frank. Blasphemy? No, just the truth.

The story of Anne Frank, a child whose courage and loving spirit rose above the mad and evil world around her, came to us again when we saw Jewish settlers massed outside. Yigal

Amir, who later would assassinate Prime Minister Rabin, was an organizer of the settler demonstration, which was targeted at offices of the Palestine National Authority in Orient House, across the street from *Dar El Tifl*. However, Amir and the settlers lost no opportunity to intimidate and terrify the school children. In a letter to friends of the institution, Mahira Dajani, who heads *Dar El Tifl*'s Board of Trustees, wrote this description of the mayhem:

*The scholastic year 1995/1996 was the worst year in the history of Dar El Tifl. We have tried to teach our children the love of peace and to train them to accept*

*peaceful co-existence as a reality and to forget the evils of war. The presence of settlers outside the school gate changed the children's outlook on life as a whole. The settlers harassed the children in many ways, including: uttering filthy words and making lewd gestures, throwing rotten fruit and empty bottles at the school gate and inside the school grounds, trespassing onto the school grounds repeatedly so that the school has been forced to erect a wire fence*

## Of Orphans and Origins



over the wall. The cost of the fence was NIS 5,000 (\$1,700), money which could have been spent on the children's needs. Additional harassment [included] . . . prevention of anyone entering or leaving the premises [and] the arrest and interrogation of the school president. . . . [Orphans] were chased and threatened by settlers, and the school nurse and warden were threatened with death.

The Israeli settlers my daughter and I witnessed displayed the bullying, brown-shirt attitude which has come to characterize them in the media. They are the same people, often hiding behind a claim of religious righteousness,

who carry banners such as, "The Promised Land Is for Us, The Chosen People," and who demand that Jerusalem and all of Eretz Israel be made "Arabrein" or cleansed of all Arabs.

Like the Jewish terrorists of the Irgun and the Stern Gang, many of these settlers are proud of the "battle" of Deir Yassin. When one of our Jewish board members spoke against the discrimination shown by Israel against Palestinians, a belligerent settler-type told her, "Shut up! Stop saying bad things about Israel or we'll Deir Yassin you." It was the first time I had heard "Deir Yassin" used as a verb, but the implication was clearly a threat to massacre, not to do battle. □

Founded to care for the 55 children left homeless when their parents were killed in the Deir Yassin massacre, the Dar El Tifl orphanage in East Jerusalem continues in operation today with 350 orphans and 1,600 day students. Western visitors are often welcomed with the peace sign and the singing of "We Shall Overcome." Page 12—Israeli settlers demonstrate in front of Dar El Tifl.

—Photos Courtesy of American Near East Refugee Aid



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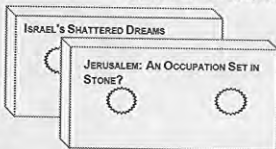
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