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Can the Palestinian Problem Be Solved?
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The essay is a response to the perennial question:
Why have all attempts to solve the Arab-Israel conflict failed?



NO SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

Shmuel Katz
Historian and Political Commentator
Advisor to Israel's Prime Minister, 1977



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No Solution to the Arab-Palestinian "Problem"

In our generation the communications media have become a significant factor in shaping events, far beyond their role as suppliers of information. While this refers mainly to television, the diligence of the press in giving wide coverage to almost any event has been equally effective. The news media do not merely photograph events, they play a role in molding them. In the United States, many observers first noted this fact in connection with the spread of violence there in the sixties. A live television report of violence served as a model and impetus to people who otherwise would not have considered acting violently. One of the reasons for the inflation of the "Palestinian" problem may well be the existence of a special attitude toward the Jews and the State of Israel in the Christian world and its heightened receptiveness to the arguments of the Jewish people's enemies.' But whatever the reasons for this receptiveness, the fact is that the content of the "Palestinian problem," as it is widely perceived, derives from a myth which was engendered in a successful misinformation

' As this was being written (1981), the results were published of a survey conducted in the United States by the public-opinion experts, Yankelevich, Skelly and White, The survey revealed that following a period in which anti-Semitism had declined in the United States, fully 34 percent of all Americans must now be termed anti-Semitic.

campaign. According to this conception, there was a "Palestinian people" whom the Jewish people expelled by force of arms from its historic homeland, on whose ruins the Jews then established the State of Israel. The linchpins of this argument are, on the one hand, that "Palestine" has been the homeland of this Palestinian people for the past 1,300 years, from the time Palestine was conquered by the Muslim Arabs (or, in more far-fetched versions, even earlier); and on the other hand that the Jews are not a nation at all, but a religion, so that not only have they no right to Palestine, they have no right to any national homeland. They took control of Palestine after World War II (so this argument runs) at the initiative and with the help of the Allies, who considered themselves duty-bound to compensate the Jews for the wrongs done them in the European Holocaust.

There is not a word of truth in any of these assertions, yet it is difficult to refute them because anyone who is not well-versed in the history of *Eretz Israel* ("The Land of Israel") will tend to assume that even if these claims are not the whole truth, they must at least be partially true. The essence of the fundamental "Palestinian problem" cannot be understood unless it is grasped that the doctrine employed to promote the Arabs' aspirations is nothing but one vast hoax.

There is no historical "Palestinian people." In Arab history there is no entity called "Palestine." In 1945 Philip K. Hitti, the most renowned Arab historian of our time, appeared before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on the Palestine problem. He was angered by the use of the term "Palestine." He asserted: "Palestine does not exist in history — absolutely not."

Commenting on this, David Ben-Gurion (then chairman of the Jewish Agency) said:

I agree with him entirely; there is no such thing in history as Palestine, absolutely, but when Dr. Hitti speaks of history he means Arab history, he is a specialist in Arab history and he knows his business. In Arab history there is no such thing as Palestine. Arab history was made in Arabia, in Persia, in Spain and North Africa. You will not find Palestine in that history, nor was Arab history made in Palestine. There is not,.

however, only Arab history; there is world history and Jewish history and in that history there is a country by the name of Judea, or as we call it, Eretz Israel, the land of Israel. We have called it Israel since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. There was such a country in history, there was and it is still there. It is a little country, a very little country, but that little country made a very deep impression on world history and on our history. This country made us a people; our people made this country. No other people in the world made this country; this country made no other people in the world. Now again we are beginning to make this country and again this country is beginning to make us.

Indeed unique in the history of nations is the Jewish people's bond to *Eretz Israel*, this land on which the Emperor Hadrian imposed the name "Palestine" following the Bar Kochba Revolt. The Jewish people is at once a nation and an organized religion. Its religion is not a mere codex of faith, it is also a system of rules for everyday behavior, and the national tie to the Land of Israel is an indissoluble element of the Jewish faith and of its religious precepts. After they lost their independence in the wake of the Roman conquest in the year 70, the Jews nourished a dream that their state would rise anew. They proclaimed this every day in their prayers and expressed it in countless ways in every signal event of their lives, happy or sad, from the day of birth to the moment of death. Many of the Jewish people's longings for *Eretz Israel* were focused on Jerusalem. Since antiquity Jerusalem has been both the capital of the Jewish state and the center of the Jewish faith, where its Temple, the heart of its religious ritual, was located. (Hence Jerusalem's sanctity in the Christian conception, for it was there that the drama of Jesus' last days was enacted.) That Jerusalem is holy to the Jews became known in every corner of the earth. Hence the early Arabs called it *Al-Quds*, "the Holy."

For several centuries after the destruction of the Temple, the Jews were the dominant national element in the country. Twice they rebelled against Roman rule, The Bar Kochba revolt was described by Roman historians as the most serious uprising that had ever taken place in the Empire. Its suppression, which was no

easy task, sowed death and destruction on an unprecedented scale among the Jewish population.

The Jews fought alongside the Persian invaders against the Byzantine Christians who succeeded the Romans, and then fought them again, this time alongside the Muslim Arab invaders. Even though their strength was sapped during the period of the Muslim conquest, they were still capable of fighting alongside the Muslims against an even more cruel adversary: the Crusaders. The Arab occupiers who ruled from Damascus were vanquished by other Muslims (mainly Turks) who ruled from Baghdad (the Abbasids) and subsequently by Muslims who ruled from Egypt (the Fatimids). Following the Crusader period, tribes from Central Asia — Seljuks and Mongols — briefly overran the country. Finally, the Mameluks overthrew the Empire and ruled the country from Egypt for 250 years. They in turn were defeated by the Ottoman Turks, who ruled for about 400 years, until the British conquest in 1918.

Throughout all these centuries of slaughter and expulsion, of oppression and intolerable living conditions, the Jewish presence in *Eretz Israel* was never extirpated, nor could the Jews be prevented from leading a rich cultural life. In this entire 1,800-year period, during which fourteen dynasties successively ruled in the Land of Israel, and which included 1,300 years of rule by Muslims of various kinds, it is the Jewish cultural heritage, alone of all the significant cultures that passed through the land, that stands out in bold relief. The final redaction of the *Mishna* biblical commentary took place in *Eretz Israel*, the Jerusalem *Talmud* was compiled there. The scientific configurations of the Hebrew language were formulated in the Land of Israel (Tiberias, in the 10th century), many *midrashim* and liturgical hymns were composed in *Eretz Israel*; the Code of Jewish Law, the *Shulhan Aruch*, was compiled there. Safed, in the 16th century, was the cradle of the *Kabala* and Jewish mysticism.

It is true that after this period of recovery a precipitous deterioration set in during the latter half of the Ottoman rule. Life grew increasingly harsh, and the difficulties faced by the Jews multiplied anew. But the Jewish community in the Land of Israel was augmented by a constant flow of *ohm*, immigrants to the

Land. Immigration to *Eretz Israel*, *aliya*, was unrelenting, and not just in minuscule numbers. It is difficult to grasp how Jews in Medieval times were able to make their way across a hostile Europe, and reach *Eretz Israel*. Many of the potential settlers fell by the wayside, cut down by robbers, by Jew-haters or by disease. But the spirit that moved them to take their life in their hands and seek passage through the very circles of Hell, finds exemplary expression in a letter written by a member of one of the first "modern" *aliya* groups, in 1810 (consisting of disciples of the Vilna *Ga'on*):

Truly, how marvelous it is to live in the good land!
Truly, how wonderful it is to love our land
Even in her ruin there is none to compare with her,
even in her desolation she is unequaled, in her silence there is none like her. Good are her ashes and her stones...²

The Land of Israel, or Palestine, has always been identified by the civilized world as the land of the Jews. Thus, the confluence of a number of factors in Europe — the end of the Napoleonic wars on the one hand and the decline of the Turks on the other, and the development of a fluid and delicate political situation in the Near East — generated a spontaneous Christian movement in Britain for the restoration of the Jews in their land. From the 1830s to the 1880s this subject was ventilated in the press, including prestigious newspapers and periodicals (such as the *Times* and the *Spectator*) and by an impressive array of ranking statesmen and churchmen, all of whom sought to open the way for the restoration of Zion; and a good many practical projects were in fact initiated. Today's observer, glutted by the avalanche of information about "Arab Palestine,"! will be surprised to discover that in the course of that entire lengthy campaign in Britain, not one person — not an Arab, not a Palestinian, not a Turk, not even a hostile European Christian — of whom there was no lack in 19th century Europe — called out: "Stop? That land belongs to the Palestinians."

In the span of all these generations, when the Jewish people

²Avraham Yaari, *Igrot Eretz Israel*, Tel-Aviv, 1943, p. 46,

were absent as a sovereign element in the Land of Israel, no other people rose to proclaim: "Now this is my land." Neither during the Muslim Arab rule, when two mosques were built on the Temple Mount, nor in any other period, did foreigners lift a finger in order to claim the land or to forge a national link between themselves and the Land of Israel. (This assertion needs perhaps to be partially and reservedly qualified with respect to the Crusaders, who did to some extent settle the land.)

Not only was there no evolution of a national affinity, and certainly no Arab or "Palestinian" affinity, it is even impossible to point to any group that settled the land. The 1,700 years of foreign imperial rule, and particularly the centuries of Muslim domination, transformed the fertile Land of Israel, which even after the Destruction of the Temple was able to feed several million people, into a barren waste. There was no one to restore its ruins, no one to give life to its desolation, to offer it even a modicum of the love a people lavish on their homeland.

Researchers and writers from the West who began to visit the country in the final stages of this process — from the end of the 18th century — bitterly lamented the despoiled land. The remarks of the French writer Alphonse de Lamartine are typical:

Outside the gates of Jerusalem we saw indeed no living object, heard no living sound, we found the same void, the same silence ... as we should have expected before the entombed gates of Pompeii or Herculaneum ,, a complete eternal silence reigns in the town, on the highways, in the country the tomb of a whole people,³

Twenty years later, in 1867, Mark Twain wrote:

Desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds —a silent mournful expanse. A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action. We reached Tabor safely.... We never saw a human being on the whole route.... Palestine sits in sackcloth

³ A. de Lamartine, *Recollections of the East*, London, 1845, pp 238. 305.

and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies. Palestine is desolate and unlovely. Palestine is no more of this workaday world.⁴

Against this background the full measure of the perverse Arab and "Palestinian" claim to affinity for Palestine with which Arab propaganda is replete, may be better grasped. This fabrication provides the basis for the "Palestinian Covenant" of the "Palestine Liberation Organization," its founding charter. The simple historical facts are a fitting backdrop for the remarks made by PLO leader Yasir Arafat — and without batting an eyelash -in his speech to the UN General Assembly in November 1974:

Arab people were engaged in farming and building, spreading culture throughout the land for thousands of years, setting an example in the practice of freedom of worship, acting as faithful guardians of the holy places of all religions.⁵

Whence, then, the Arab entity in the Land of Israel in our time? Originating largely in the modern era, it derived chiefly from emigration, beginning in the 19th century, from other countries in the Mediterranean region. For example, under the reign of Sultan Muhammad Ali in Egypt, several thousand Egyptians fled to Palestine to escape conscription. As a result, waves of Egyptians settled in the country, even establishing new villages along the coast. But the main impetus for the Arabs' migration to Palestine was the attraction generated by the organized Jewish settlement activity toward the end of the 19th century. As subjects of the Ottoman Empire, they were able to move freely from one place to another within its bounds.

The British Mandate period saw an intensification of Arab migration to Palestine. The British administration (for its own reasons) allowed them to enter virtually unhindered (and without

⁴ Mark Twain. *Innocents Abroad*. Signet, New p. 216.

⁵ *New York Times*, November 14, 1974. One of the sad facts of the Muslims' rule (from the outset of the Arab conquest], was that the Jews' religious rights were restricted or abolished. Moreover, the Muslims "adopted" the holiest site in Judaism, the Temple Mount, and transformed it to a Muslim holy place.

registration). In 1935, for example, Lord Lugard, a member of the League of Nations Mandates Commission, quoted the governor of the Hauran District (in Syria) as saying that within the span of a few months between 30,000 and 36,000 Hauranians had entered Palestine.⁶ It comes as no surprise to find the following description of the period written by an outside observer:

One always finds in Palestine Arabs who have been in the country only a few weeks or a few months.... Since they are themselves in a strange land, they are the loudest to cry: "Out with the Jews."...Amongst them are to be found representatives of every Arab country: Arabs from Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, the Sudan and Iraq. The Yemenites have had to come the furthest. Arab dhows in the Red Sea took the news of Palestinian prosperity as far as the little Yemenite harbour towns of Hodeida and these dhows brought back enterprising Yemenites to Palestine. These landed at secluded spots on the coast and once they were in the country they could not be expelled. An Arab, after all, is an Arab, no matter whether he comes from Syria or from Yemen. They have no passports or documents to show their place of origin.⁷

The British Royal Commission of 1937 took note of a considerable influx of Arabs into Palestine. Nor did this migration cease during World War II. An official UN publication states:

A considerable movement of people is known to have occurred, particularly during the Second World War years when new opportunities of employment opened up in the towns and on the military works in Palestine. These wartime prospects and, generally, the higher rate of industrialization in Palestine than in neighboring countries attracted many immigrants from those countries, and many of them entered Palestine without their presence being officially recorded.⁸

⁶Protocol of the 27th session of the Mandates Commission, 1935, p. 47

⁷. Ludislas Farrago. *Palestine at the Crossroads*, New York, 1937, p. 17.

⁸ UNRWA Review Information Paper. Beirut. September 1962. p. 6.

The idea of the Arab residents' affinity to a territorial entity called "Palestine," or the notion of the existence of a "Palestinian people," are wholly new conceptions. Even the concept of Arab nationality, which began to develop toward the close of the 19th century, met with resistance among the Arabs. Few Arabs fought as Arabs against the Muslim Turks in World War I. After the war, the proponents of Arab nationalism maintained that the Arabs of Palestine were Syrians. In its official statement to the Anglo-American Committee, in 1946, the Arab representation asserted: "Geographically Palestine is part of Syria; its indigenous inhabitants belong to the Syrian branch of the Arab family of nations."⁹ In 1947 the Arab representatives who appeared before the UN General Assembly again asserted that Palestine was part of Syria, and that the Arabs of Palestine did not "constitute a separate Palestinian entity."

Prior to the renaissance of Israel, the name Palestine was in fact identified with the Jewish people; the Arabs themselves identified with its name only by degrees. Salient proof of the extraordinary success enjoyed by Arab propaganda is the fact that since 1948 its disseminators have succeeded in expunging this fact from the consciousness of many people around the world, and not a few Jews among them.

Every institution which had as part of its name the word "Palestine" was a Jewish body. In Paris, the "Palestine Club" was a Zionist group, its invitations sent out in Hebrew and in French. The Anglo-Palestine Bank was the Zionist bank. *Keren Hayesod* was rendered in English as the United Palestine Appeal. The *Keren Po'alei Eretz Israel* was the Palestine Workers' Fund. The Orchestra, the Electric Company, the Maritime Company, the phosphate works — all of them bore the name "Palestine" and were owned by "Palestinian" Jews. Songs of "Palestine" were sung in the Diaspora as Zionist songs. Arbor Day was celebrated in the Diaspora as Palestine Arbor Day. When Gershon Agronsky (later Agron, editor of the *Palestine Post*) wrote an article for the Zionist periodical *New Palestine* (the organ of the

⁹The Arab Committee for Palestine: Evidence Submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, March 1946.

Zionist Organization of America) he entitled it "The Viewpoint of a Palestinian." With the establishment of the State of Israel and the creation of the "Israeli" political identity, the Jews dropped the term "Palestinian." King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan, himself from the Hejaz, who controlled Eastern Palestine, also decided, at the counseling of the British, to forego the name Palestine for his monarchy. The Arab politicians pounced on the idea — and became Palestinians from days of yore whose homeland was the land of Palestine. The myth now evolved with dizzying success. It is precisely the mendacious aspect of the Palestinian argument that underscores the gravity of the "Palestinian problem." A Land-of-Israel problem does in fact exist, but it is not that of the Palestinian people. It will suffice to review the course of events.

Pre-state Arab resistance to Zionism received its first impetus from the British when they decided, for their own imperialist reasons, to disavow their undertaking to assist in the restoration of Jewish national sovereignty in Palestine. Interestingly, it was the British who already in the early twenties sought — in vain to get the Arabs to use the name "Palestine" and to proclaim themselves "Palestinians."¹⁰ As a matter of fact, affinity to any country at all was alien to the Arabs. Writing in 1917 in a confidential report to *The Arab Bulletin*, T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia"), who did his utmost to foster Arab nationalism, noted:

The words Syria and Syrian are foreign terms. Unless he has learnt English or French, the inhabitant of these parts has no words to describe all his country.... *Sham* is Arabic for the town of Damascus. An Aleppine always calls himself an Aleppine, a Beyrouti a Beyrouti, and so down to the smallest villages. This verbal poverty indicates a political condition. There is no national feeling."

This was all the more true of the residents of Palestine. Their disaffinity was tangibly expressed in 1948, when the majority of

¹⁰The British were thus combating an Arab tendency to affiliate Palestine with Syria {meaning the termination of British rule in Palestine}.

¹¹ *Secret Despatches from Arabia*, London, 1939, pp. 78-79,

the Arab residents abandoned the areas which the UN recommendations had granted the Jewish state. Had the Arab allegation that they were expelled by the Jews not gained such widespread credence throughout the world, it would not be necessary to waste words to expose the absurdity of the claim. There were simply too many witnesses to the events of those days, and even Arabs have confirmed and reconfirmed that no expulsion of Arabs by Jews ever took place. If there were instances of flight in the face of Jewish violence, these were exceptional cases such as are liable to occur in any war.

The flight began as early as the end of December 1947, as the Jaffa Arabic newspaper *Al-Sha'ab* wrote (January 30, 1948):

The first group of our Fifth Column consists of those who abandon their houses and businesses and go to live elsewhere.... At the first sign of trouble they take to their heels to escape sharing the burden of the struggle.

Two months later (March 30) the weekly *A!-Sarih* wrote that the residents of Sheikh Munis and of other villages in the Tel-Aviv area "have brought disgrace on us all" by "abandoning their villages."

On May 5, the Jerusalem correspondent of the *London Times* reported:

The Arab streets are curiously deserted and, evidently following the poor example of the more moneyed class, there has been an exodus from Jerusalem too, though not to the same extent as in Jaffa and Haifa.

A whole series of statements and reports appeared at that time, attributing the entire responsibility for the Arabs' flight to their local leaders.

Monsignor George Hakim, who was then the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Galilee, and for many years the leading Christian personality in Palestine, told the Beirut paper *Sada al Janub*, (August 16, 1948):

The refugees were confident that their absence would not last long, and that they would return within a week or two. Their leaders had promised them that the Arab Armies would crush the "Zionist gangs" very quickly and that there was no need to panic or fear of a long exile.

There was no secret about it. On October 2, the London weekly *The Economist* reported:

Of the 62,000 Arabs who formerly lived in Haifa not more than 5,000 or 6,000 remained. Various factors influenced their decision to seek safety in flight. There is but little doubt that the most potent of the factors were the announcements made over the air by the Higher Arab Executive, urging the Arabs to quit.... it was clearly intimated that those Arabs who remained in Haifa and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades.

And the Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station on Cyprus asserted (April 3, 1949): "It must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem."

This was confirmed by Edward Atiyah, secretary of the Arab League office in London, in his book *The Arabs*, published in London in 1955. And it was affirmed by the well-known correspondent of the *New York Herald Tribune*, Kenneth Bilby, who covered Palestine during the war, in his book *New Star in the Near East* (New York, 1950). While the first voices urging the Arabs to leave came from local leaders, in the second stage similar calls were voiced by the Arab states. At all events, Palestine Arab circles began to impute responsibility for the flight to Arab countries. Thus, Emile Ghoury, secretary of the Arab Higher Committee (the official leadership of the Palestine Arabs) stated in an interview to the Beirut *Daily Telegraph* on September 6, 1948:

The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the action of the Arab States in opposing partition and the

Jewish State. The Arab States agreed upon this policy unanimously and they must share in the solution of the problem.

The Jordanian paper *Falastin* wrote explicitly on February 19, 1949:

The Arab States encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies.

In his book *The Secret Behind the Disaster* (Nazareth, 1952), Nimr el Hawari, the commander of the *Najadah*, the Palestine Arab Youth Organization, quoted what the Iraqi prime minister, Nuri Said, had declared at the outset of the invasion in 1948:

We will smash the country with our guns and obliterate every place where the Jews seek shelter, The Arabs should conduct their wives and children to safety until the fighting has died down.

In 1952 the charge was still being leveled officially by the Arab Higher Committee itself, It wrote that year in a memorandum to the Arab League:

Some of the Arab leaders and their ministers in Arab capitals ... declared that they welcomed the immigration of Palestinian Arabs into the Arab countries until they saved Palestine. Many of the Palestinian Arabs were misled by their declarations.... It was natural for those Palestinian Arabs who felt impelled to leave their country to take refuge in Arab lands ... and to stay in such adjacent places in order to maintain contact with their country, so that to return to it would be easy when, according to the promises of many of those responsible in the Arab countries (promises which were given wastefully) the time was ripe. Many were of the opinion that such an opportunity would come in the hours between sunset and sunrise.

Then, another reason for flight appeared. Panic gripped some of those who still remained. Suddenly, the villages were rife with rumors and alleged reports about Jewish atrocities. The central theme of these tales was a highly partisan description of the battle of Deir Yasin, near Jerusalem.¹²

The British commander of the Arab Legion in Jordan, General Glubb Pasha, wrote:

The Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of the war.¹³

Five years after the event one of the residents of Deir Yassin asserted:

The Arab exodus from other villages was not caused by the actual battle, but by the exaggerated description spread by Arab leaders to incite them to fight the Jews.

It was only after some time had passed that the Arabs came up with the successful notion of casting the blame on the Jews, thus forging the myth that the Jews had expelled the Arabs by force. Subsequently, the formulation was altered: the "refugees" became the "Palestinian people."

The attitude of the media toward the "refugee problem" (and later to the "problem of the dispossessed Palestinian People") provides ample testimony of how their reportage played an active role in inflation, distortion, and sheer fabrication.

While the Zionists' alleged barbaric expulsion of the Arabs was supposedly in progress, no one noticed it. The many foreign

¹²This is not the place to take up the dispute over Deir Yassin. I have dealt with the libel extensively in *Days of Fire* (New York, 1968). A comprehensive investigation was conducted by the American-Jewish historian Joseph A. Heckelman in his book *American Volunteers and Israel's War of Independence*, Ktav, New York, 1974 (see the chapter: "The Massacre that Never Was"), The Israeli Foreign Ministry, after years of silence, published a true account of the event in 1969.

¹³Article in the London Daily Mail, August 12, 1948.

correspondents who covered the 1948 war on both sides neither saw nor heard anything of the kind, not even those who were thoroughly hostile to the Jews. True, they reported the flight of the Arabs, but they did not so much as hint that this was anything but a voluntary exodus. During the three months in which the exodus was at its peak — April, May, June 1948 — the *Times* of London, which was openly inimical to Zionism, published, besides extensive reports and descriptions of the fighting, eleven editorials on the Palestine situation. Not one of these leaders so much as hinted that the Zionists were driving the Arabs out of their homes.¹⁴

This peculiar phenomenon — the mass flight of an agrarian population which seemed to be rooted to its land — requires an explanation. It is understandable that, as the terrors of war approach, the men should send their women and children to safety elsewhere. But in this case it was not just the women and children but also the men who, instead of staying to defend their homes, fled.

At the end of March 1948, six weeks before the invasion by the Arab states (who were waiting for the termination of the British Mandate) and at a time when the *Yishuv* was waging a war against local Arab forces and ostensible outside volunteers, the command of the Arab forces operating in Palestine submitted a report to the Palestine Committee of the Arab League. According to this report, of the 7,700 Arab troops, 5,200 were "volunteers" from the neighboring Arab states (such as the Iraqi unit which was stationed in the village of Deir Yassin). Only one-third were Palestine Arabs. Even if we take a low estimate of the number of Arabs in Western Palestine — 900,000 — there were certainly over 100,000 Arab males aged **18-40** in the country. Participation of Palestine Arabs in the fighting continued to be minimal even after

¹⁴ Equally instructive is the fact that not one Arab spokesman mentioned anything about refugees. At the very height of the exodus, on April 27, Jamal Husseini, the chief representative of the Palestinian Arabs in the UN, delivered a lengthy political statement, studded with enmity toward the Zionists. He made no mention of refugees. Three weeks later (while the flight was still in progress) the secretary general of the Arab League, Azzani Pasha, made a strongly worded angry statement on Palestine, again, not a word about refugees.

the invasion. The reason was obvious. It was cited by Reb Benyamin, one of the heads of the Peace Union, whose members espoused "binationalism," believed in the strength of the Arabs and the weakness of the Jews, and urged the Yishuv to refrain from war at all costs, for defeat was certain.¹⁵ After the exodus, Reb Benyamin and his colleagues admitted that they had erred in their evaluation of the reality. They had miscalculated both the *Yishuv's* military potential and the *Palestine Arabs' unwillingness to risk their lives* (my emphasis).¹⁶ The report of the Iraqi parliamentary committee appointed in 1949 to inquire into the cause of the Arab defeat notes the meager participation of the Palestine Arabs, attributing this to quarrels among their leaders. This theory, however, cannot explain the mass flight,

Considerable weight attaches to the testimony of foreign observers (especially those sympathetic to the Arabs) in this matter. Three weeks after the Arab states invaded Palestine, *the London Times* correspondent in Amman reported:

Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and even Iraq were filled with fugitives from Palestine, many of them young men of military age still carrying arms.... The cafés and hotel lobbies continued to be filled with young effendis whose idea was that though something must be done it should be done by somebody else. Some of them had spent a week or so at the front and on the strength of this they felt entitled to return to less dangerous climes.¹⁷

The Israeli scholar Dr. Gideon Krassel (who also conducted a study on the extraction of the Palestine Arabs) reached the conclusion that the first to flee were the Arabs of Egyptian origin, whereas those whose families had resided in Palestine for some generations, and particularly those around Nazareth and in the Jerusalem hills, were ready to fight — and stayed.¹⁸ (There were

¹⁵For example, Robert Weltsch. *Commentary*, April 1948.

¹⁶ "Problems of the Time," December 17, 1948. Quoted in Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea in Palestine*. Haifa. 1970.

¹⁷Times, June 7, 1948.

¹⁸Interview in *Jerusalem Post*. International Edition, February 18, 1975.

approximately 140,000 Arabs inside the State of Israel at the conclusion of the War of Independence.) The writer and scholar Eliezer Livneh held the same view: "The departing Arab refugees were largely post-World War I immigrants and their offspring."

In the course of time the Arab leadership struck on the felicitous idea of using the refugees as a weapon against Israel. Hence the Arab states' refusal to absorb their refugee brethren in their countries, (declining even to permit their rehabilitation with UN funds),¹⁹ and their strenuous demand that Israel re-settle them. Forging the myth that it was the Zionists who had driven out the Arabs by force, they pressed on in their work unabashedly. One illustration will serve to encapsulate the entire mendacious process. The following remarks were made by Emile Ghoury, secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, twelve years apart:

*Emile Ghoury to the Beirut Daily
Telegraph, September 6, 1948*

I do not want to impugn anybody, but only to help the refugees. The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the action of the Arab States in opposing partition and the Jewish State. The Arab States agreed upon this policy unanimously and they must share in the solution of the problem.

Emile Ghoury in a speech at the UN
Special Political Committee,
November 17, 1960

It has been those [Zionist] acts of terror, accompanied by wholesale depredations, which caused the exodus of the Palestine Arabs.

It might have been possible to block the dissemination of this myth at the very outset. The Western media — which at the time

¹⁹In fact, most of the "refugees" were absorbed in the economies of a number of Arab states, particularly those who remained in the boundaries of Palestine on the eastern side of the Jordan, and by the Persian Gulf oil-producing countries. Officially, however, they continued to be registered as refugees.

had published their own correspondents' on-the-spot reports and had sometimes even added their own comments regarding the exodus — not only failed to challenge this appalling distortion of history, but as time passed actually abetted it. They helped implant this central tenet of the "Palestinian problem" — that the Jews had expelled the Arabs — in the Western public consciousness, and thus were instrumental in garnering sympathy for Arab claims. For their part, the Arabs made no secret of the fact that their purpose in seeking the refugees' resettlement in Israel was to implode the Jewish state. For example, a conference on the refugees held in Aleppo, Syria, in 1975 adopted the following resolution:

Any discussion aimed at a solution of the Palestinian problem not based on assuring the refugees' right to annihilate Israel will be regarded as a desecration of the Arab people and an act of treason.

Gamal Abdel Nasser himself asserted: "If the Arabs return to Israel, Israel will cease to exist."²⁰ It was in those years that the foundations were laid for the new formulation of the "expulsion of a people from its homeland." The shift occurred in the sixties and was dramatically institutionalized after the Six-Day War. It was then that the demand was dropped for the return of the "refugees," to be replaced by the "Palestinian problem" in its present guise. That guise has proved itself to be an effective camouflage for the true content and essence of Arab objectives.

The correct definition of the root of the conflict over the Land of Israel or, in current phraseology, the "heart of the problem" is the determination of the entire Arab nation, under the inspiration of Islam, to rule over the whole area from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean and from the southern border of Turkey to the southern border of the Sudan. This was why they launched a war against the embryonic state, dispatching a vanguard of forces to abort its birth. The Arab states were going to wreak death and destruction in Palestine as the Mongols had in

²⁰Interview in the *Zuricher Woche*, September I, 1961.

the 13th century, Azzam Pasha, the secretary of the Arab League; declared at the time.

The perfectly simple fact — though its ramifications are hard and bitter — is that the failure of the attempt to strangle the nascent state did not weaken by one iota the Arabs' liquidationist design. That design is rooted in Arab history and woven into the very fabric of the Islamic faith. The contemporary Arab objective is not the result of twentieth-century covetousness alone. The Arabs' feeling of lordship over all these vast domains derives from memories of the past or, more precisely, from an imaginary notion of past glory, and it is fed by a desire for vengeance against the Western world. In the Arabs' view, they were humiliated for hundreds of years, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, by the Western Christian powers — even though they, as Muslims, are the bearers of a superior religion. When the Muslims dominated immense stretches of the world, the Jews and the Christians under their rule had a debased and inferior status: they were second-class citizens. By the grace of the Muslim ruler they were granted the status of *dhimmiis*, or a subject minority, of protege citizens whom the ruler protected at will — and they paid special taxes. In the trenchant description of the renowned British Arabist, D.G. Hogarth:

Except in the history of the later Roman Empire, there has been nothing like that unquestioning and frank acceptance of one race as born to power, which was conceded to the Arabs from Persia to Spain. It was not only that Arabs were installed and treated as God's noblemen, but that all sorts and conditions of men of other races Arabised themselves in name and speech:"²¹

Even though the duration of Arab imperial rule was quite brief—slightly over a century — their fertile imagination enabled them to regard themselves retrospectively as partners to the achievements and splendor of their successors, Turks and others, all Muslims.

²¹ Quoted in Elm Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1956.

"The Arab is preoccupied with his past, " writes the sociologist Sania Hamady. "The pleasant memories of its glory serve as a refuge from the painful reality of the present."²² That present was, indeed, bleak. For a millennium they ceased not only to rule, but also to achieve, to create, to build, to act, to strive. They lapsed into a stupor that brought them into the twentieth century as one of the world's most backward peoples. Just thirty years ago, two well-known scholars of Arab culture were able to write: "It is not an exaggeration to say that after so many centuries of immobility the process of agriculture, industry, exchange and learning had become little more than automatic and had resulted in a species of atrophy...."²³ But now, suddenly, in the twinkling of an historical eye, they found themselves almost effortlessly possessed of independence, controlling states with enormous resources and vast territories important in global strategy, ruling over millions of people belonging to non-Arab minorities. Today, even the great powers court them, seeking their favors. By a little effort of the imagination they saw themselves bridging the gap of centuries, winning the recognition of the previously supercilious Western world. Suddenly they could see themselves accepted, with no further cultural effort, as full partners in the complex culture of the twentieth-century world, just as they had shared in laying the foundations for that world in the Middle Ages.

So vaunting is the Arab imagination that it quickly forgot there ever was a gap. They pictured one unbroken generations-long span of grandeur and glory, of Arab life dominating the region conquered by the ancient Arab empire in Asia and Africa. The uncongenial facts of history were expunged as though they had never been, and the prospect the Arabs held up was seen as a direct continuation of what had transpired a thousand years before and more.

But from the very dawn of the new imperial age, that prospect was marred by a disruptive and obstructive intruder: Zionism, which sought Jewish restoration in the Land of Israel.

²²Sania Hamady, *Character and Temperament of the Arabs*, New York .1960. p. 217.

²³ H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen *Islamic Society and the West*, London, 1950, pp. 215-216.

Since the seventh century the Arabs knew the Jews of Palestine as a suppressed and contemptible minority, the subject of constant oppression. The Jews always lived as a vanquished people, shadowed by the memory of their defeat in the year 70. Even though the Christians were also inferior in the Muslim conception, they had the backing of many countries, they had power. But the Jews, oppressed and ostracized even in large parts of the Christian world, had nothing. The Arab himself, even when he was the victim of discrimination, humiliation or maltreatment in a non-Arab Muslim society, always regarded the Jew as being one rung below him.

In terms of the Arab vision, then, the idea of a foreign state —and the more so that of the most despised race of all — "in the heart of the Arab world" was an utter abomination. Its establishment must be blocked, and if established it must be annihilated.

Here, then, in all its unadorned simplicity, is the fundamental truth that underlies the conflict, a truth that has been buried under countless layers of tendentious propaganda. Hundreds, even thousands, of categorical pronouncements, differing only in their wording, affirm and underscore this truth. In May 1946, when the Jewish state was no more than a "threat" on the horizon, leaders of the Arab states meeting at Inshass, Egypt, declared: "The problem of Palestine is not the problem only of the Arabs of Palestine, but of all the Arabs."

"When Palestine is injured," Egyptian president Nasser said in 1953, "each of us is injured in his feelings and in his homeland."²⁴

The very core of the Arabs' objective was set forth by the ruling Ba'ath Party of Syria at its conference in 1966:

The existence of Israel in the heart of the Arab homeland constitutes the main base dividing the eastern part from the western part of the Arab nation,²⁵

This Arab truth was flagrantly exposed in the words of Egypt's

²⁴ Quoted by Y. Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes Toward Israel*, Tel-Aviv, 1972, p. 93.

²⁵ Quoted in Y. Harkabi, *Fatah*, Tel-Aviv, 1969, p. 30.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Butrus Ghali, in a symposium sponsored by the periodical *Al-Siyassa Al-Dawilla* in October 1975: "Palestine is the heart of the Arab homeland before it is the homeland of the Palestinians."

It was simply beyond the comprehension of the Arab leaders in 1948 that they would not defeat the *Yishuv* in very short order.

Superiority in numbers, arms and ammunition, the eager and substantial help of a major world power — Britain — a strategy based on a converging movement on three fronts against a Jewish force largely untrained, poorly armed, and defending a small but densely populated coastal strip — these were surely enough to assure victory and even the slaughter which Arab leaders openly promised. There was a further reason for the Arabs' confidence: they were convinced of their superiority over the Jews as a fighting nation. Had not the Arabs conquered half the world? They had no difficulty in projecting their seventh-century martial excellence as an abiding fact in the twentieth century,

Whoever reads the predictions of the Arabs in 1956, after they had suffered one defeat, and their even more bloodcurdling predictions of victory and destruction of May 1967, after they had suffered two defeats, will recognize the unqualified total certainty of the Arab states in May 1948 that they were about to win a stunning, historic victory and that within a few weeks, or even days, Jewish hopes would be in ruins and Palestine would be inexorably enfolded in the embrace of the reborn Arab empire,

In Arab history, 1948 is the "year of the disaster." The valorous Arabs, masters of the world, were vanquished by a handful of members of the despised community; and the state of these heretics, even if it occupied only part of Palestine, remained —strengthened — in its place. Never did the Arabs show even the slightest intimation of acceptance. On the contrary, their rejection of Israel and their determination to take revenge and undo what had been done, with the final purpose of annihilating the Jewish state, intensified. For it *was* inconceivable that the Jews should have defeated the Arab nation. Manifestly, the work had been done for them by the vastly superior forces of Western imperialism. The simple truth was ignored. The British arms which had been supplied to all the Arab states, the active British collusion in

Trans-Jordan's invasion, the counseling the British gave the Iraqis: all were erased from memory. The American embargo which had prevented arms from reaching the Jews was also consigned to oblivion.²⁶ In the Arab history books the West's help to the Arabs became the West's help to the Jews. The substitution of one word by another supplied the explanation for the disaster of 1948.

In the words of an Arab scholar: "As a result of his determinist orientation, the Arab finds a good excuse to relegate his responsibility to external forces. He attributes the ills of his society, his mistakes and his failures, either to fate, to the devil or to imperialism."²⁷ But from this blatant fabrication, there evolved yet another monstrous link in the anti-Israel myth and in the argument that underlies the "Palestinian problem": that it was Western imperialism, as compensation for the wrongs of the Holocaust in Europe, that forced the Jews on Palestine, although they have no right to it, with the result that "the homeland of the Palestinian people was plundered."

Unquestionably, the Arabs' faith and their religious beliefs lent added potency and an absolute dimension to their purely political faith and to their enmity both to the Jewish state and to the Jewish people — even if the factual basis for this faith was wholly fantastic. The Arab leadership acts out of a religious impulse toward a clear and well-defined goal.

The eradication of the State of Israel means the restoration of Islam to its potency, to its rightful dimensions: in Israel's end lies the confirmation of the truth of Islam.

This faith, this impulse, finds wide expression. An American writer who visited a terrorist camp in Jordan in the summer of 1970 noted the words of a Fatah spokesman:

Since the Zionists, the Arab people have always been divided. The Western world has continuously worked against the peo-

²⁶ Again, in the Six-Day War, Nasser explained his defeat by claiming that the Americans had destroyed his air force. And in 1973, Sadat, whom the United States rescued by pressuring Israel to *agree* to a cease-fire when it was on the brink of a crushing victory, subsequently claimed that he had in fact beaten Israel but had been forced to accept a cease-fire because he did not have the strength to fight against the Americans as well as Israel....

²⁷ Sania Hamady, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

pie of Muhammut... But it was in Muhammut that the Arab peoples created a great empire. We were masters then, while now we are slaves and servants. But brethren, we are still the children of Muhammut. The way is clear. It is armed struggle for the liberation of our Palestine.²⁸

Of all the statements about Israel made under Islamic religious inspiration, perhaps the most significant is the one uttered by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in a sermon he delivered in Cairo's Al-Hussein mosque on April 25, 1972 on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad:

The Jews were the neighbors of the Prophet in Medina... and he negotiated with them. But in the end they proved that they were men of deceit. The most splendid thing that the Prophet Muhammad did was to drive them out of the whole of the Arabian peninsula.... They are a nation of liars and traitors, contrivers of plots, a people born for deeds of treachery.... I promise you ... the defeat of Israeli arrogance and rampaging so that they shall return and be as the Quran said of them "condemned to humiliation and misery".... We shall send them back to their former status.²⁹

The new Arab tactic in the presentation of the "problem" evolved after their defeat in 1967 and because of the new circumstances which arose from Israel's control of all of Western Palestine, A tendency which in the past had been merely amorphous now became the central motif: the pan-Arab nature of the war against Israel must not be emphasized; rather the conflict was to be presented as a clash between Jews depicted as Goliath (even if with the help of "imperialism") and their adversary, the small, wretched David: the Palestinian people. The Egyptian weekly *Al-Mussawar* frankly admitted in 1968:

²⁸ Marshall Frady, "On Jordan's Banks," Harper's, November 28, 1970, p. 105.

²⁹ Quoted in D. F. Green, ed. , *Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel*, Geneva, 1976.

The expulsion of our brothers from their homes should not cause us any anxiety, especially as they were driven into the Arab countries.... The masses of the Palestinian people are only the advance-guard of the Arab nation ... a plan for rousing world opinion in stages, as it would not be able to understand or accept a war by a hundred million Arabs against a small state.

This, then, is the "philosophical" ground for the creation and existence of the "Palestine Liberation Organization," the body that uses violence to achieve the Arab goal. This is a terrorist organization par excellence, with vast resources at its disposal. It is true that within and around the organization diverse interests are at work and sometimes conflict, and that the organization incorporates groups representing special interests, such as the Saiqa, which is an arm of the Syrian army. In addition, the natural tendencies of any such organization to lead a life independent of its progenitors sometimes also cause friction in the Arab community. It was an extreme manifestation of such a tendency that led to an armed confrontation in Jordan in 1970, resulting in the PLO's expulsion from that country.

But the basic fact is that the PLO is the shock troop of the entire Arab nation for achieving its liquidationist design against Israel. That aim, after all, preceded the establishment of the PLO. Already in 1948 Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis and Trans-Jordanian Arabs shed their blood to block the establishment of the Jewish state — at a time when they could have created a Palestinian state without a war. They did so a second time in 1967. The PLO was formally established in 1964, with initial Syrian support. As the organization developed, it received diverse assistance from various Arab states: in training, in diplomatic services, in money and in asylum for its members when they withdrew after a terrorist act such as a hijacking or planting a bomb. Finally, in 1974, the PLO was accorded the full and unreserved recognition of the Arab states as "the sole representative of the Palestinian people."

The chronological order of these developments is highly significant. The PLO was created in order to realize the prevailing Arab dream; but it was the first to codify the goal, formally

limning the mythology — plucked out of thin air — of a historical Palestinian people, and asserting the centrality of the PLO as the representative of the Arab nation and as its sword.

It was then that the Arab leaders met for their seventh conference, in Rabat, Morocco. There, on October 21, 1974, they solemnly proclaimed the PLO to be "the sole representative of the Palestinian people" and explicitly undertook to restore the Palestinian people's rights in accordance with the PLO's definition. They thus committed themselves from the outset to act according to the PLO's interpretation of its national rights. This interpretation, however, was no novelty to the Arab leaders. They were long and well acquainted with it from the "Palestinian Covenant": the liquidation of Israel, an aim which the Arab states themselves had engendered and over which they had fought wars in 1948 and 1967.

It is worth presenting, if only in brief, this objective as it was set forth by the PLO. The following is its essence as summarized by Professor Yehoshafat Harkabi:

The Palestinian Covenant declares as its central tenet a total repudiation of the existence of Israel, and institutionalizes this stand and the theoretical and practical implications that derive from it in an ideological system. The claim that Israel should not exist is implied in almost half of its thirty-three articles, including those that are formulated as definitions and axioms. By definition, the demand for the demise of Israel becomes a matter of an inevitable necessity, a kind of scientific truth. Israel must cease to exist not so much because the Palestinians have an interest in her disappearance, but because this disappearance is derived from the definition of Palestinism as the attribute of both a people and a country. Palestine is the homeland of the Palestinians and must not be separated from the Arab world; and the Palestinians are an integral part of the Arab nation. The *whole* of Palestine must be restored to them and put under their sovereignty, because only in Palestine in its entirety could they realize their self-determination, redeem their personality from alienation and regain their dignity and freedom. This conception is

complemented by the theory, that is also formulated as a definition, that the Jews are not a nation and thus on principle do not deserve to have a state of their own, nor can they as a non-nation maintain it. Precisely because Israel contradicts such axioms both in regard to the territory she has occupied and the essence of the Israeli Jews, it is concluded that its establishment could only have been accomplished in an historical act of aggression and plunder by a despicable movement such as Zionism. Zionism is condemned both because it is racist and linked with imperialism and because its evil deeds flow from its very essence. The abolition of Israel's existence is legal and also beneficial to humanity, the Arabs and the Palestinians. The Covenant thus encompasses intrinsic, moral, utilitarian, volitional, legal and historical arguments, all of which converge into a total negation, as a matter of principle, of the existence of the State of Israel in any form or size. The plethora of arguments in the Covenant as to why Israel should not exist may perhaps have a cumulative effect, impelling the PLO leaders and their public to believe that there is no atrocity that cannot be justified in order to bring about the liquidation of Israel.³⁰

Casting further light on the matter, Professor Harkabi offers this analysis of the Covenant's articles:

The liquidation of Israel or the liberation of Palestine, which in practice are synonymous, are substantiated by the following considerations: a definition in principle and in essence of Palestine and the Palestinians that Palestine is inseparable from the Arab homeland (Article 1); the principle that Palestine is indivisible (Article 2); the Palestinians are the owners of Palestine (Article 3); the Palestinians have the right of self-determination and sovereignty over all of Palestine (Articles 9, 18 and 1.9); the liberation of Palestine will lead to Arab unity — a utilitarian argument (Article 13); the

³⁰ Y. Harkabi. *The Palestinian Covenant and its Meaning*, Israel Government Information Center, Jerusalem. 1977 (Hebrew) pp. 6-7.

liberation of Palestine is a necessity constituting a fateful question for pan-Arabism — a historical conception (Article 14); the liberation of Palestine is an all-Arab national duty to forestall threats of aggression — a utilitarian argument (Argument 15); liberation will bring tranquility and freedom of worship — utilitarian and humanistic argument (Article 16); thus alienation and subjugation of the Palestinians will end — a social and political argument (Articles 17, 18); this is an act of self-defense that will abolish an illegal state of affairs — a legal argument; liberation will make peace and order possible — a utilitarian argument (Article 18), the elimination of the existence of Israel springs from the will of the Palestinians — an arbitrary definition; and from their natural right to their homeland and self-determination in accordance with United Nations principles — a philosophical and legal definition (Article 19); the right to a Jewish National Home is a travesty of international legality and decency, the historical rights of the Jewish people are spurious, the Jews are not a nation — historical and intrinsic arguments (Article 20); the existence of Israel prevents the full liberation of Palestine — a political argument (Article 21); Israel is the incarnation of Zionism, a negative phenomenon that threatens the whole world, whose elimination is required for world order — intrinsic, political and utilitarian arguments.³¹

This doctrine in its entirety was given official approval by all the Arab leaders. As Harkabi writes:

The magic formula uttered by commentators that Arab extremism is merely a display of emotionalism that should not be taken at its face value does not apply with regard to a meticulously drafted and polished doctrinal document such as the Palestinian Covenant. The rejection of Israel in the Covenant is not an emotional outburst or a rhetorical expedient, but a contrived political conception, a carefully worked out doctrine, and a well-built ideology. It is not

³¹*Ibid.* pp. 99-101

hatred but reasoned hostility, on the cognitive and not just the affective level. The Covenant is the soul of the PLO and the PLO is still today the central factor of the Palestinian camp. A declaration of the leaders in the West Bank that the PLO represents them means that the Covenant, with all its absolutist implications, is their guiding light. This applies to the Israeli Arabs who identify with the PLO. Arab states' support of the PLO which reached its climax in the Algiers and Rabat summit meetings, in which they officially undertook to follow the line of policy as formulated by the PLO, means signing a blank check for PLO extremism.³²

There are some in Israel who seek just such magic formulations by handing out grades to various segments of the PLO, as though there were also "moderates" among them. True, some of their individual spokesmen have sporadically uttered remarks to the effect that the PLO would be ready to make do "in the meantime" with a state in Judea and Samaria only — but it was then immediately clarified that the intention is to carry on the war from this base in order to achieve the liberation of "all of Palestine." And to this end the organization is assured of the assistance of all the Rabat signatories.

As this article was being written, the German weekly *Stern* carried an interview with Farouk Qaddumi, a top PLO leader and spokesman and head of its "political department." He reasserted that even if an independent "Palestinian state" were to be established in the "West Bank" and Gaza, the PLO would not recognize Israel and would not let it live in peace. He also said (in accordance with the Covenant) that those Jews who are "true Palestinians" — those, that is, who were in the country before 1948 plus their offspring: he set their total number at 560,000 — would be permitted to remain. "For the rest," he noted, "other arrangements will have to be found."

Another prevalent illusion in Israel (and in the international community) is that Egypt does not share the PLO's goal. Egypt has apparently adopted a moderate tactic. It agreed to sit at the

³² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

negotiating table with Israel (after being guaranteed all of Sinai) and consented to receive Sinai, provided that every Israeli citizen, to the last person, be removed from there. Egypt agreed to sign a peace treaty, providing this did not nullify its commitments to the other Arab states: in practice, to join in a war against Israel. Even after the signing of the peace treaty, Egypt continues to insist, as it did before, on total Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria and Gaza to the 1949 armistice lines, and on recognition of the rights of the Palestinians. What is the nature of those rights? To this, President Sadat replied: "The Palestinians themselves will decide that. After all, Palestine belongs to them." Sadat also asserted and reiterated that Egypt still adhered to its commitment toward the PLO as set forth in Rabat in 1974; after the peace treaty was signed, it was learned that a PLO training course was being held in Egypt, and that the terrorists had opened offices in both Cairo and El Arish.³³

There is, evidently, a moderate stream in Egypt among intellectual circles there, which seeks "peace with the Jews of Israel, provided they relinquish Zionism." This notion was expressed by the participants (all of them from the academic or political worlds) in the symposium from which I have already quoted. Dr. Butrus Ghali voiced a series of rhetorical questions:

Will Israel agree to become part of the region? Or will the nature of the Zionist existence prevent Israel's assimilation in the Arab homeland?... Will Israel become a Jewish nation possessing an Arab character among the united Arab nations? Or are these peace-bearing ideas without foundation in reality, so that the conflict will go on for tens of years and a fifth Arab-Israeli war break out, and then a sixth and a seventh?

On the basis of this outlook, Ghali was asked, in an interview to the *Middle East Review* (Fall 1975):

³³Sadat never repudiated the vilifications of the Jewish people that he uttered on various occasions, nor did he disavow his sermon in the Al-Husseini mosque in 1972, in which he foresaw a fate of humiliation and wretchedness for the Jews.

Assuming that Israel believes — or continues to believe — that its self-determination requires that it maintain its Jewish character, and assuming that a general notion of self-determination in international law would be that Israel, as well as any other state, can determine for itself the nature and development of its political orientation, do you think that the Arab view that you have disclosed to us, which I think is an important one, is one that will improve the possibility for peace in the Middle East? Or is it one that might have to change with your own developing attitude?

To which Ghali replied categorically:

Then we will have no integration of Israel into this region. Assuming that Israel takes this very stiff attitude, defending its sovereignty according to this very radical way of thinking, I think you can have no peace in this region.

This position was further elucidated by a former Egyptian prime minister, Mustafa Khalil, in a guest lecture he delivered at Tel-Aviv University in December 1980. He commenced his talk by asserting that he wished to speak frankly and scientifically, and to point out that "We do not regard the Jews as a nation at all, but as a religion only. The Jewish religion is one of the three great religions, but when it comes to nationality, a Jew can be an Egyptian Jew, a French Jew or a German Jew."

Mr. Khalil went on to predict that Israel would in fact "change." "We wish very much to live as good neighbors with you, but we are taking into account that you will undergo great changes." No special "scientific" expertise is required to perceive that Khalil's remarks and the Palestinian Covenant share a common origin. Nor did Khalil conceal his view of the essence of the conflict, "There was a temporary conflict between us beginning in 1948," he said. The conflict, that is, is not an offshoot of the 1967 "occupation," but originates in the very establishment of the state.

Following the failure of their attempts in 1948 and 1967 to annihilate the Jewish state, the Arabs greatly intensified their

efforts to advance to their goal through the use of propaganda and political pressure. Congruent with their success in reshaping the image of the conflict, an even more important factor came to their aid. As fate would have it, a considerable share of the world's vast oil resources, without which the modern economy cannot function, is located in the Arab states. Since 1973 the Arab states have employed a combination of fear of an oil embargo and a craving for petrodollars as their most effective argument in favor of meeting the demands of the "Palestinians." Under the pressure of Saudi Arabia and the other oil producers, the entire order of international institutions was turned topsy-turvy to enable representatives of the terrorists to appear in them as though they were representatives of a state. Every forum of the UN is open to them — and to the Arab states — to launch virulent attacks on Israel. The problem of the Palestinians has become the central issue in international deliberations. Wars, mass murders, starving millions, the collapse of the world economy: all yield right of way to the "Palestinian problem,"

The Western statesmen who lend a hand to this macabre hoax know the basic facts, yet they bend over backwards to yield to the Arab dictates. Because of the magic potency of their oil and their legendary wealth, the Arabs do not even bother to hide their intentions. Even when their audience believes that they intend only an Israeli return to the 1949 armistice lines, Western statesmen know well that those lines are, by any rational criterion, indefensible. They also know that if Israel were to withdraw, at their demand, to those lines, it would immediately be confronted with a coalition of Arab states (which are arming themselves feverishly) aspiring to liquidate the Jewish state. They know that the Arabs are bound by cooperation pacts aimed against Israel and that all of them are committed to help the PLO achieve its goal.

Nevertheless, they are unrelenting in their demand that Israel yield. There is thus no escaping the conclusion that the calculation of even the moderates among the Western statesmen is a simple one: "Indeed," they reason, "it is a pity about the Jews, but if the choice is between further economic deterioration in our country along with unemployment and severe economic crises whose

outcome cannot be gauged, or the Jews forgoing their country —it is clear where our interest lies." That such thoughts prevail among European and some American statesmen is vividly demonstrated by their reiterated cynical assurance that if only Israel would withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines, they would provide "guarantees" for its security.

This aspect of the evolving situation is significant because Western encouragement, and the recognition that the pressure exerted by the Saudis and the other oil producers will not let up, imbue the Arabs as a whole and the PLO in particular with confidence, and lead the PLO to state its intentions openly. Many Western statesmen, aware of the PLO's determination, have for some time been trying to extract from it a "moderate" pronouncement which will serve as a fig-leaf for their own immoral "pragmatic" position, one that consciously promotes a process liable to cause Israel's extinction. They have not succeeded. The PLO has no need to lie.

But there is an additional factor that strengthens the hand of those in the West who demand Israeli concessions and withdrawals, and encourages the Arabs as well: namely, Jewish faintheartedness. Professor Harkabi wrote a few years ago:

It is true that Israel has presented to the Arabs a kind of bill —"secure and recognized borders" and genuine peace — but the need for secure borders becomes convincing concomitant with proof that one's neighbors have malicious intentions. For without that explanation Israel's territorial demands are liable to appear arbitrary and covetous in nature. The tendency among some Israeli circles to present the Arab stand as moderate has undermined Israel's security claims as well as its moral standing.³⁴

This is of course an understatement. It is not only some Israeli circles" that are involved; in fact, for years, and indeed to this very day, official Israeli information has refrained from presenting the Zionist truth and from refuting the Arab mythology which

³⁴ Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant and its Meaning*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

assumed shape and substance before our very eyes. Naturally, when a vast Arab information apparatus saturates the entire world with the allegation that "the Jews plundered our homeland," and the "accused" for their part, instead of explaining that the conflict stems from precisely the opposite aim — that of the Arabs to dispossess the Jewish people of its homeland — mutter "we want peace"; when in place of a categorical Israeli statement that it is not ready to conduct negotiations with those who disseminate malicious, mendacious propaganda and who are busy plotting Israel's annihilation (as all the Arab spokesmen are), when instead of this Israel declares in every world forum that it is just longing to sit down with the other side: then the impression is necessarily formed that he who is angry, who cries out and who makes claims, is the victim — and that he is in the right.

With time, this Jewish faintheartedness actually intensified and was reinforced as Israel adopted the doctrine that while under no circumstances must negotiations be conducted with the PLO, it is more than permissible to hold talks with the Arab states (whose partner and emissary the PLO is). Thus, out of their own mouths, Israelis — both the government and certain public circles — obscure the fact that Israel's liquidation is a common aim of all the branches of the Arab nation. Certainly, the monstrous distortion of the roots of the conflict — that is, the claim that the "Palestinian problem," or the Palestinians' supposed lack of a homeland, is the "heart of the problem" — is powerfully reinforced when respectable Israelis themselves take up this slogan.

Against this background of Arab absolutist aims; in view of the grotesque fate of Israel's attempts to arrive at a compromise with them in the past, when their military disposition and their international standing were far less impressive; and given the incalculable encouragement and assistance rendered the Arabs' political campaign worldwide — all the talk that Israelis permit themselves about a "compromise" or a "territorial compromise" sounds utterly ludicrous. The concept of a "compromise" does not exist in the political lexicon of Islam, and the Arabs today envisage no other termination of their campaign than Zionism's complete uprooting.

If, despite everything, the faintheartedness among the Jewish people, and particularly the feeling that Western pressure must be yielded to, leads to "partial" Israeli concessions — and what is currently being required is that it return to the 1949 armistice lines — the conflict will reach critical dimensions. Then — again, in response to the pressure of the Arabs, with their oil and their petrodollars — then Western statesmen will no doubt demand that Israel acquiesce in the moderate Arabs' "solution": namely, to forgo its independence and become a religio-cultural sect within an Arab political unit; and if not, no one will be able to prevent the Arabs from launching a war of liquidation against Israel.

That very forecast was given concrete expression by Dr. Butrus Ghali. In December 1978, during the negotiations on the peace treaty with Israel, President Sadat adamantly insisted that an amendment be inserted in the agreed draft which would allow Egypt to fulfil its commitment to go to war against Israel after the signing of the treaty — in accordance with its earlier agreements with the Arab states. Asked at that time (December 1978) under what conditions, for example, he foresaw Egypt being committed to go to war against Israel in the future, Dr. Ghali replied: "Egypt's joining the 1948 war." That is: the Arabs' war against Israel's very existence.

For the Arabs to win such a war would bring ruin on the entire Jewish people, for the Land of Israel is its only home. If the Jews win again, it will be clear that the Arab nation will have to get used to the idea that a minuscule part of it, less than one percent, will have to live as a minority in a non-Arab state — while enjoying full civil rights, having the right to take part in the political life of the country like its other citizens, and being surrounded by their Arab brethren, first of all in Eastern Palestine, or Jordan, but also in the entire vast territory ruled over by the Arab nation.

While such Arab acquiescence today seems to be a dream, the two alternative possibilities cast a searching light on the true tilt of balance of morality between the Jewish people and the Arab nation. At this time — objectively, and notwithstanding the theoretical acrobatics indulged in by persons of good will and by various professors of political science — no solution looms on the horizon for the "problem," however it may be defined.

