

NORMAN G. FINKELSTEIN

THE RISE & FALL OF PALESTINE

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE INTIFADA YEARS

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A Personal Account of the *Intifada* Years



NORMAN G. FINKELSTEIN



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To Samira and Moussa

As in the last days of Pompeii, there was disintegration; restraints and prohibitions disappeared. . . . I knew about people who were corrupt and I didn't always condemn them because the accepted norm was: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." . . . There were, however, also instances of moral dignity. People sought a way to us, wanted to help us. Citizens without any political affiliation . . . There were a lot of instances of dignified behavior, an expression of solidarity of simple people who weren't members of a movement. . . . [W]hen we were in danger, we always found people to hide us. . . . There was a class of people in the ghetto who lived the good life all the time. These were smugglers and the economic collaborators, not the collaborators, the bastards, the Gestapo agents. These smugglers and economic opportunists were another level of collaborator. Perhaps we could say — with grief and bitterness — this group also included the leadership of the political parties: they had plenty of money, which they got from various sources. . . . At any rate, they didn't go hungry.

Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory:
Chronicles of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*

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Key Abbreviations and Foreign Terms



ADC	American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
CRM	Citizen's Rights Movement
GSS	General Security Services
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
<i>jaysh</i>	Israeli army
MEW	Middle East Watch
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestine National Council
<i>shebab</i>	young Palestinian militants
UNC	Unified National Command

Author's Note



I first traveled to Palestine in August 1988 as part of an American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) human rights delegation. Two chance encounters — with Samira Mikhail of Beit Sahour and Moussa Abu Hashhash of Fawwar refugee camp — developed into enduring friendships as I returned to Palestine in successive years at their invitation. Samira and Moussa trusted me to enter their lives and experience Palestine without blinders. All they wanted in return was that I truthfully report what I witnessed. I have done so to the best of my ability; I hope I have not disappointed them. What follows is a chronicle of those visits as well as the intervening tragedy in the Gulf. Chapters 1, 2, 4, and the epilogue were written after trips to the West Bank in, respectively, August 1988, August 1989, August 1991, and December 1993. Chapter 3 was written on the eve of the Gulf “war” in December 1990 (appendix 1 in January 1992, appendix 2 in November 1992). Aside from minor additions, I have decided to reproduce the original manuscripts more or less intact so as to better preserve the spirit of those remarkable times.

Acknowledgments



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Chronology



- | | |
|----------------|---|
| December 1987 | <i>Intifada</i> begins as Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza revolt against twenty-year-long Israeli occupation |
| November 1988 | Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers formally ratifies a two-state settlement of Israel-Palestine conflict |
| August 1990 | Iraq invades Kuwait |
| January 1991 | U.S.-led assault on Iraq begins |
| February 1991 | Iraq withdraws from Kuwait |
| October 1991 | Madrid peace talks convene to resolve Israel-Palestine conflict |
| September 1993 | Israel and PLO sign Oslo accord |

Dramatis Personae



Samira Mikhail is an English teacher from Beit Sahour
Stephan, Rana, Rita, and **Basil** are, respectively, Samira's husband and three children

Moussa Abu Hashhash is an English teacher from Fawwar camp
Afaf, Marwa, Urwa, and **Arwa** are, respectively, Moussa's wife and three children

George Hanna is a Bir Zeit University physicist from Beit Sahour

Mufid Hanna and **Nadim Issa** are youths from Beit Sahour

Esmail Abu Hashhash is a mathematics teacher from Fawwar camp

Caid El-Janazreh is an agricultural engineer from Fawwar camp

Chapter 1

The Truth from Palestine, Revisited



Nearly a century ago, the Zionist writer Ahad Ha'am observed in his classic essay, "The Truth from Palestine," that the Zionist movement had failed to grasp the challenge posed by Palestine's indigenous population:

We tend to believe abroad that all Arabs are desert barbarians, an asinine people who does not see or understand what is going on around them. This is a cardinal mistake. The Arab, like all Semites, has a sharp mind and is full of cunning. . . . The Arabs . . . understand very well what we want and what we do in the country; but they behave as if they do not notice it because at present they do not see any danger for themselves or their future in what we are doing. . . . But when the day will come in which the life of our people in the Land of Israel will develop to such a degree that they will push aside the local population by little or by much, then it will not easily give up its place.¹

Regarding the pervasive belief among Zionist settlers that "the only language the Arabs understand is force," Ahad Ha'am went on to warn:

One thing we certainly should have learned from our past and present history, and that is not to create anger among the local population against us. . . . We have to treat the local population with love and respect, justly and rightly. And what do our brethren in the Land of Israel do? Exactly the opposite! . . . They behave toward the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, infringe upon their boundaries, hit them shamefully without reason, and even brag about it. Our brethren are right when they say that the Arab honors only those who show valor and fortitude; but this is the case only when he feels that the other side has justice on his side. It is very different when the Arab thinks that his opponent's actions are iniquitous and unlawful; in that case he may keep his anger to himself for a long time, but it will dwell in his heart and in the long run he will prove himself to be vengeful and full of retribution.²

I

We were standing on a balcony in the Tel al-Zaatar neighborhood (renamed after the Palestinian refugee camp martyred during the Lebanese civil war) of Beit Sahour when Samira Mikhail slipped outside to join us. Like the rest of

us, she immediately turned her head toward the awful ritual unfolding some fifty yards ahead.

Even by the stringent standards of the *intifada*, Beit Sahour, a Palestinian-Christian town just south of Bethlehem, enjoyed an unusual reputation for militancy. As the *intifada* began in December 1987, it was the first Palestinian community to stop paying taxes to the occupying authorities and also took impressive steps toward popular self-government and economic independence.

This Sunday morning, rumor had it that in response to an Israeli order expelling twenty-five more residents from Gaza, there would be an “action” in Beit Sahour after church services. I had arrived early with a photographer friend, but, although noontime was fast approaching, we still didn’t see anything unusual. Suddenly, several children — the average age of the *intifada* vanguard couldn’t have been more than twelve years because the “older generation” of teenagers and young adults were by then either in jail or hiding out — began piling stones in the street. Past experience suggested that, any minute, the *jaysh* (Israeli army) would drive up in jeeps and all hell would break loose.

The stone “barricade,” erected on a side street deep inside the town, was a purely symbolic gesture of defiance and self-affirmation. And it was precisely for this reason that Israelis could be expected to react ruthlessly to it, determined as they were — it was stated officially — to “once again put the fear of death” into the Palestinians and “wipe the smile” off their faces.

In fact, every expression of Palestinian “violence” I witnessed during my stay in the occupied territories was little more than symbolic, though the same could not be said for the force used to suppress it. Once, at Jalazoun refugee camp, children were burning a tire off the main road inside the camp when a car (with a blue Palestinian license plate)* pulled up next to it. The doors swung open, and four men (either settlers or the army in plainclothes) jumped out, shooting with abandon in every direction. The boy beside me was shot in the back, the bullet exiting from his navel. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF), stationed immediately outside the camp, moved in and imposed a curfew. Next day the *Jerusalem Post* reported that the army had fired in self-defense.

Of course, the army often did not wait for or need a pretext to strike. Indeed, the most salient feature of the Israeli occupation was the lawlessness and unpredictability of the terror. For fairly long stretches of time, the rhythms of Palestinian life might be left undisturbed. The terror was omnipresent but latent; it underlay daily life without displacing it. Soon enough,

*In the occupied territories, Palestinians were issued blue license plates while Jews were issued yellow plates.

however, the terror struck with a heavy hand — or, as the Israelis put it, “iron fist.” Their most common form of violence in the refugee camps was the pogroms. Entering the camps after dusk, soldiers or settlers sprayed them with bullets and tear gas, banged on doors and smashed windows and solar heaters, broke into homes, then beat a swift retreat (usually with a hostage or two). A couple of nights before I returned to the United States, the army besieged Jalazoun camp in the dead of night. Slapping a curfew on Jalazoun, they ordered the inhabitants of three homes to clear out their life’s belongings in fifteen minutes (neighbors were prohibited from assisting them), then demolished the stone structures. No warning. No explanation. No legal recourse. Within minutes of entering the camp the next morning, the delegation I was traveling with, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), was ordered to leave as army bullhorns blared out from the hilltop — oddly, in English — that Jalazoun was being put under curfew (i.e., taken hostage) yet again. There was not even a pretense of an excuse. The camp was sealed and, it seemed likely, would be subjected to yet another reign of terror — the typical punishment for exposing the underside of “beautiful Israel” to the outside world. (The day before, the army had even denied entry to a visiting delegation of U.S. congressional aides.) Even so, the refugees in Jalazoun stubbornly refused to accept the notion that Israel’s brutal repression was nobody’s business.

No facet of Palestinian life escaped the arbitrariness of Israeli rule. In East Jerusalem,* I watched as police ordered youngsters to dump their freshly cut vegetables into garbage bins. Nearby, an elderly Palestinian woman struggling to keep a police officer from overturning her basket of goods was viciously kicked in the forehead by a second cop on horseback. A Hebronite who refused to call Arafat a prostitute was clubbed in the ankle. At the Allenby Bridge connecting the West Bank with Jordan, Israel routinely harassed and denied entry to Arabs traveling thousands of miles to visit their loved ones. And perhaps not only Arabs. I too was denied entry into Israel. (If the State Department were to be believed, I could claim the curious distinction of being the first Jew ever barred from entering Israel. Eventually I made my way in via Greece.) No explanation. No opportunity to confront the official who turned thumbs down on me. As an Israeli soldier deposited me on the Jordanian border, he did, however, proffer a gratuitous piece of advice: “Next time, go to temple and pray, especially on Yom Kippur.” Such were the intriguing ways of Israel’s (secular) democracy.

*Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the June 1967 war and soon thereafter illegally annexed it.

II

The Beit Sahour villagers in the side street abutting the makeshift stone barricade motioned us inside their homes. They wanted my photographer friend, especially, to have the best possible view of the action. Media consciousness was very high in the occupied territories. The success of the *intifada*, everyone seemed convinced, would hinge crucially on world opinion. With whomever I talked, the first question was invariably what the people in the United States were thinking about the uprising. The apparent belief was that, if the truth were known, outside pressure would be brought to bear on Israel. Publicity, the Palestinians hoped, would also constrain the terror. One sensed an acute awareness that, should the cameras disappear, Israel might resort to a couple of “demonstration bloodbaths” to suppress the revolt. And Palestinians wanted, simply as a matter of personal dignity, to set the record straight for the outside world. Almost every horror tale told to me was punctuated with the refrain: “And they say we’re terrorists!” or “And they call themselves a democracy!”

Rushing from one house to the next, we finally stood poised within, as it were, a stone’s throw of the diminutive, prepubescent — and courageous — insurrectionists. Waiting for the jeeps to roll in (the *jaysh* was stationed outside every village and camp, usually on some forbidding hilltop, to monitor and suppress any visible expressions of “insubordination”), I posed my by-then-standard set of questions to the assembled crowd. Samira volunteered to serve as my translator and main interlocutor. Because of both the precision of her responses and the effort she made to report differences of opinion, I suspected that Samira held a position of political responsibility. She also spoke meticulous English. Indeed, many Palestinians are fluent in English (in this respect, Arafat, with his barely coherent English, is not the best representative of the population in the occupied territories) and a third language as well, but Samira’s English was, if simple, uniquely expressive.

“How many Palestinians in Beit Sahour have been imprisoned?” I asked. “Not more than 200 and not less than 150,” she replied. (Villagers I queried earlier put the figure at 300.) “What is your opinion of the PLO?” Samira hesitated, first feeling out my views, then giving a guarded response. “I will decide after the Palestine National Council [PNC] meets. The *intifada* is like a stream. It needs the PLO to guide it. If the PLO does not reach a consensus, I am closing my door on the *intifada*.” The concern (and anxiety) about the outcome of the PNC meeting scheduled for November 1988 was palpable throughout the West Bank.

Generally, the PLO’s stock did not seem high in the West Bank. Complaints about its corruption and incompetence abounded. Camp residents told

me that PLO monies earmarked for them were never received. The Palestinian bourgeoisie was allegedly the sole beneficiary of PLO funds set aside for home mortgages. One Palestinian cited a recent Israeli radio report that Arafat was a millionaire — which Arafat didn't deny, asserting only that he had been a millionaire before joining the PLO. (Arafat's assertion was apparently not true.) West Bankers pointed to Arafat's own admission that they had done more for the "Palestinian revolution" in eight months than the PLO had done in twenty years. A Palestinian living in Jordan insisted that Palestinians "hate" Arafat. Only a tiny handful of Palestinians I met used such strong language; one suggested he was a "bit stupid." What was certain was that my Jordanian acquaintance loathed Arafat, even the beard, which he alleged Arafat cultivated to appease the Islamicists. (Arafat's unappealing appearance apparently *did* disturb many Palestinians.)

Yet, *no one* I met suggested that the Palestine conflict could be resolved without the PLO. "It's the only organization we have," Moussa Abu Hashash, my Communist host in Hebron, observed. "We're stuck with it," my old Palestinian classmate now teaching at Bir Zeit University noted with resignation. Indeed, even the widely despised, Israeli-appointed Palestinian mayor of Hebron, who maintained that in their heart of hearts "100% of the Palestinians want King Hussein as their leader" (he was the first and only Palestinian I met who expressed anything except disdain for Jordan's King Hussein), stated that only the PLO could negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians.

Hussein reportedly severed his ties with the occupied territories partly for fear that Palestinians had become so "unruly" that they would no longer defer to his royal majesty. Indeed, in the wake of the *intifada*, Palestinians evinced a healthy skepticism of *all* political authority. They no longer wished to be "represented" by anyone. So miserable had been their historical experience with delegated — or, more exactly, alienated — leaderships that Palestinians wanted to represent themselves directly. Pundits would no doubt have dismissed this vision as naively anarchist, but it was perhaps a testament to the political maturity of the *intifada*. (It was difficult to imagine camp children deferring to *any* adult authority, a fact many Palestinians granted *was* a problem.)

The Palestinians I met, including refugees from the 1948 war, overwhelmingly — but not unanimously — favored a two-state settlement of the conflict. Indeed, many West Bankers hoped the PLO would issue a declaration to that effect at the November meeting of the PNC.³ I asked Moussa if he would accept a demilitarized Palestinian state. "In principle," he replied, "no. Independence means independence. Why should we have to settle for less than the real thing? But, in practice, yes, I'll accept it. Israel uses 'security' to deny us our rights. I don't want to play into their hands."

III

Standing with me on a balcony in Beit Sahour, Samira gestured to the top of the hill. The *jaysh* had commandeered a Palestinian car that they then drove into town. The “battle” was joined. Children chased after the car. Samira immediately left her place on the balcony to observe the action closer up; indeed, from directly in front of the soldiers. Ducking inside the house, I peeked through curtained windows and a door left slightly ajar. The action was over as quickly as it had begun. One child wounded in the leg, a second one taken prisoner. The commandeered Palestinian car proved to be a decoy. The IDF had slipped in from behind as the children tailed the vehicle. Elderly women were now stooped in the streets as the *jaysh* ordered them to clear away the stones.

As Samira rushed off to prepare lunch for her children, I asked if we could speak a while longer. She consented, instructing Rita, her ten-year-old daughter, to direct my photographer friend to his car and then me to her home. Along the way, a jeep passed and Rita’s face tightened with fear. It was the only time during my entire stay that I witnessed a Palestinian of any age show fear of the army.

Samira’s home was, even by American standards, quite comfortable: handsome furnishings and the most modern appliances and conveniences, the crucial exception being the lack of a telephone. In these respects, it was fairly typical of dwellings outside the refugee camps. (Even the camp residences, at any rate in the West Bank, were solidly built, spotlessly clean, and not without modern amenities, if horribly overcrowded. What made the camps so ghastly was the squalid ambience: open sewage, unpaved streets, unspeakable congestion. As a Palestinian acquaintance succinctly put it: “There is no life in the camps.” Even this observation had to be qualified, however. Palestinians I met who had resettled in “suburban” communities lamented the loss of the camps’ rich social life and the atomization of their new living arrangements.) My personal “standard-of-living” index was the television. Many Palestinian homes I entered were equipped with the latest, wide-screen, color models, which cost several times more than they did in the United States. Yet television was the only diversion for Palestinians, which perhaps accounted for the huge investment made in the best ones. At any rate, I was told that the one cinema in Bethlehem had recently closed down, not because of the *intifada*, as I facilely assumed, but rather because “everyone now has a VCR”!

Samira lived with her three children and extended family. Forced to seek employment in Abu Dhabi, her husband, Stephan, visited only on rare occasions. Two of Samira’s brothers, her brother-in-law, and her cousin were in jail. Her brothers had to serve a ten-year sentence. I didn’t ask why, though

she hinted the charges were political. (Arrest was as arbitrary as the terror in the occupied territories. Moussa had been imprisoned because, as he ironically put it, he had *refused* to join Fateh. His brother had made a clumsy effort to recruit him by mail from Jordan. Moussa, however, was a committed Communist. Highly critical of the PLO mainstream represented by Fateh, he confided in me one night that Arafat was a “disaster” for the Palestinian people. The entreaties of Moussa’s brother had thus fallen on deaf ears. That, however, didn’t deter Israeli authorities from dispatching Moussa to the notorious transit camp, Dhahriyyah — to enter he had to walk a gauntlet of club-swinging guards, and to exit he had to get on all fours and bark like a dog — and subsequently to the equally notorious detention center, Ketziot.) Samira’s sister-in-law, who lived in Peru for several years, was unable to return home because the Israeli authorities decreed that she had ceased to be a Palestinian.

Samira graduated from Bethlehem University seventh in her class with a degree in English. As we became friends, I wondered why she hadn’t ranked first in her class. Samira replied that it was difficult to attend college and raise three children. Because of her brothers’ imprisonment, she had not been able to find any teaching post; even the International Red Cross refused her a job. Samira was planning to teach the neighborhood children in her home. The Israelis had closed the schools in Beit Sahour — officially because the town refused to pay taxes. Samira gave daily lessons to her own children, pasting a star on each page they successfully completed “for reinforcement.”

At some point, Samira asked if Americans would be interested in learning about the evolution of her own feelings toward Israelis. “Certainly,” I replied. From the account that followed it became apparent that she had given much thought to the Palestine conflict, reprocessing its meaning at each crucial juncture. In all honesty, I had not been prepared for such sustained reflections from Palestinians. I had anticipated meeting decent but unsophisticated folk, more objects of my sympathy than individuals with whom I could fully identify, let alone to whom I would have to defer in some sense (except in the “courage” department). And indeed, my expectations proved to be generally valid, inasmuch as most Palestinians were like average working people everywhere, but not entirely so. I also met Palestinians whose refinement of sensibility and intellect prepared them to articulate the special insights into the human condition that occupations afford. Awful as it is, nothing can so deepen wisdom and build character as bearing personal witness to evil. Moussa, who had undergone torture and humiliation in Dhahriyyah and Ketziot, claimed — and his demeanor fully confirmed it — not to harbor the slightest bitterness or malice toward Israelis. “Hate,” he said, “is a wasteful emotion.”

IV

Samira began her reminiscences with the June 1967 war, when she was ten years old:

When Israel entered the West Bank, my grandmother was struck with terror, fearing there would be a repeat of 1948 with all the massacres and bloodshed. She offered us her life savings so we could flee to Jordan, but my family decided to stay put. From that moment on, however, I was filled with a terrible fright of war and violence.

Soon after the occupation, I became very friendly with three Jewish families. These friendships caused me to think about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Why couldn't there be peace between us? Why couldn't we live together? I became convinced that peace and friendship between Arabs and Jews was possible.

Things began to unravel about the time of the Lebanon War. A member of one of the Jewish families I had befriended went to fight there. When he returned, I asked how he could do such a thing. How could he call us his friends and still go and kill Palestinians? He replied that I didn't understand: Israel was at war with the Palestinians; the war was a fact which he couldn't alter; like it or not, we had to accept it.

What he said caused me to think. Maybe he was right. Maybe I was living in a dreamworld. Maybe peace between us was impossible. I started to read about the history of the conflict. Many more questions came to mind. Why did my husband have to go so far away to work? Why shouldn't my sister-in-law be allowed to live in the land where she was born?

In 1985, the Israeli soldiers came to my house. They took away my two brothers. At the start of the *intifada*, the soldiers wrecked my home, smashing all the glass and breaking all the furniture. The officer in charge was a monster, a monster. I said to him that the Nazis taught you how to be savages and now you are teaching us. But, when we are strong enough to invade your homes, we will not just destroy the glass and furniture, but we will break your bones and skulls.

I often see that same officer in the marketplace. Whenever I see him, I wish I had a steel ball. [She motioned a sphere with her hands.] If I did, I would kill him. I really would. I would crack his skull. I am trying hard to control the monster in me, but I am almost ready to take a weapon and start killing. I mean it, I can do it.

Samira wondered if I could understand how she felt. Taking a big chance, I decided to seize this opportunity to reveal that I was Jewish.

From the moment I joined the ADC delegation my view was that there was no point in going if I didn't disclose to my Palestinian hosts that I was a Jew. The decision was a purely personal one. Jewish members of previous delegations had concealed their backgrounds. That made no sense to me, however. I knew that the first thing people back home would want to know was, Did I reveal that I was Jewish? and, How did the Palestinians react?

For much of the trip, my Jewishness actually proved a boon. Israel had

widely publicized the fact that my entry had been barred. I thus became an instant folk-hero and “martyr for the cause” in the occupied territories. Wherever I went, Palestinians proclaimed — with more than a touch of exaggeration — that now I knew what it was like to be a Palestinian. Indeed, inasmuch as Israel had turned me away, Palestinians assumed that I must be on their side, which was all that counted.

The German Social-Democratic leader August Bebel once called anti-Semitism the “socialism of fools.” It was also a luxury of fools. The Palestinians I met were not fools. And their current plight was too desperate to indulge such a luxury. Jews were loathed not because they were Jews but because Jews oppressed them. All the Palestinians I spoke with expressed a willingness to live at peace with Jews. Many insisted that the strife between the two communities dated only from the arrival of the Zionists. I could not judge the sincerity of these testimonies, but they certainly seemed to be authentic. One camp resident volunteered, “We don’t want to push the Israelis into the sea, but we don’t want them to push us into the desert either.” No doubt the Islamicists in Gaza would have given me a very hard time, but I never made it there. (Gaza was under continuous Israeli assault or curfew during my stay.) I did pass several evenings with Islamicists from Hebron arguing about God and religion. These were not particularly fruitful exchanges (Are debates about God between believers and nonbelievers ever very fruitful?), but neither was there animus between us. The precondition for civil discourse in the West Bank was condemnation of the occupation. Beyond that, everything was up for grabs.

If pressed, older Palestinians usually admitted to having known at least one decent Jew. Palestinian teenagers recounted stories about their amiable relations with Jews on the beaches of Tel Aviv. Jews became monsters, one adolescent suggested, only when they donned the army fatigues. Palestinians also knew about the “peace movement” in Israel, although few seemed especially impressed by it — rightfully so, in my opinion. When I returned from what was billed as a militant Israeli peace demonstration near Ketziot, a Palestinian asked, “How was it, a picnic?” Alas, he wasn’t far off the mark — and a small picnic at that. I met one Palestinian woman unusually hostile to Jews (she was also basically apolitical) who worked in Tel Aviv. Had any Israeli, I queried, ever personally expressed regrets for what the government was doing? She said no. Would such an apology have made a difference to her? “Of course,” she replied.

The only group in Palestinian society that viewed Jews uniformly as anathema was children. Tell a youngster, or worse, a group of youngsters, that you were Jewish and more likely than not you would be stoned. The children had known only one kind of Jew: the *jaysh* (or settler, there was no distinguishing

between them). Indeed, for Palestinians below a certain age, Jew, Israeli, and soldier were synonymous. To try to differentiate among them was to engage in a meaningless abstraction: the interchangeability of terms mirrored the reality of their experience.

But the reality was subject to alteration. Word quickly spread in one Hebron neighborhood where I was staying that a good Jew was living there. In the morning, all the children greeted me with “Shalom.” Once, a boy of seven years was staring at me very strangely as I awoke from a nap. I reached out to touch him. He asked quizzically: “*Jaysh?*” He couldn’t make sense of me. Evidently, he had been told I was Jewish but I wasn’t a soldier and I didn’t act like one. My former Palestinian classmate told me that when his daughter saw Arafat in military uniform on television, she pointed to the screen and exclaimed, “*Yahud*” (Jew). Nothing so baffled her, he said, as learning that the people in civilian dress outside his home village in Israel were Jewish. Soon after my return to the United States, I received a touching letter from Samira in which she commented that her family and neighbors thought I was “the kindest Jew they have ever met.”

Moussa begged me to stay longer *because* I was Jewish. Being a “decent Jew,” I served as a kind of living vindication of his “proletarian internationalist” convictions. He was anxious to put me on display for his friends and relatives, who were dubious that such a creature actually existed. I did not reveal to every family I met that I was Jewish, but not because I was afraid of anti-Semitic outbursts. Timing and circumstances were not always right. Sometimes it felt almost like a distraction. Why burden and complicate the moment with the “Jewish question”? That wasn’t my main reason for exercising discretion, however. Palestinians were wary — and they had every reason to be — of being taken in by agents. Were I to admit in the midst of an interview (one of my responsibilities was to take affidavits on human rights violations) that I was a Jew, my interlocutor would more than likely suspect something was awry. On the other hand, I couldn’t very well barge into a Palestinian home announcing that I was Jewish. It wasn’t as if Palestinians didn’t have an excellent *prima facie* case for distrusting Jews.

V

I told Samira that, as a Jew, it was not difficult for me to understand her rage. Fully forty years had elapsed since my parents passed through the Nazi holocaust, yet their bitterness had not at all abated. The revelation that I was Jewish struck Samira like a thunderbolt. Why hadn’t I told her earlier? “If I told you right away I was a Jew, I doubt you would have confided in me.” She conceded that I was correct. But, I continued, I couldn’t conceal the fact any longer. “I owe it to you to be as brutally honest with you as you are with me.”

And in any case, although I didn't say so, I felt welling up in me a personal — and political — compulsion to confront her with my “Jewishness.”

I asked Samira not to translate my confession to her family, which had been following our dialogue intently. She refused, stating that she wouldn't think of keeping anything from them. Her father-in-law reacted with shock and disbelief, uncertainly tossing a crumpled sheet of paper in my direction.

Disclaiming responsibility for the fact that I was a Jew, I pointed out that I was Jewish merely because my parents were Jewish, exactly as she was Palestinian because her parents were Palestinian. It was my fate, not my choice. And, just as I did not take credit for Albert Einstein's brilliance, so I had to refuse liability for the Lebanon War. Actually, I was not entirely convinced by my own argument. I, as a Jew, *could* be held culpable for what Israel was doing to the Palestinians. Israel won sympathy and masked its systematic violations of human rights in no small part by exploiting the memory of the Jewish people's martyrdom. To mute criticism, it claimed to be acting in our name and in the name of our tragedy. Many decent people, Jews and non-Jews, deferred to that claim, turning a blind eye to the suffering of the Palestinians. Jews who chose silence therefore passively collaborated in Israel's crimes, for their silence left Israel unchallenged and unimpeached.

On the other hand, I admitted that I couldn't blame Samira for hating Jews, for abstractly bracketing me with her persecutors. My parents, both of whom survived the Warsaw Ghetto and the death camps, loathed Germans, whom they refused as a matter of principle to distinguish from Nazis. (Indeed, my father once recommended a book on World War II precisely because the Russian author did *not* make such a distinction.) The Germans they had concretely known *were* Nazis. The Jews Samira concretely knew *were* oppressors. Could I demand of her what I did not demand of my own mother and father? Certain extraordinary souls could make the philosophically “correct” discriminations (Moussa appeared to be one), but most mortals could not. And, didn't the State of Israel itself maintain that there was no distinguishing between itself and the Jewish people? That Israel was the “State of the Jews”? Didn't Jews themselves avow that to be a Jew was to be a Zionist? That being Jewish meant above all embracing the State of Israel? If Israel and world Jewry refused such distinctions, how could I be indignant when Palestinians took them at their word? And, beyond this perhaps theoretical identity of Zionists, Israelis, and Jews, Jews *had* overwhelmingly supported — or refused to publicly dissent from — Israel's terroristic war against the Palestinians, recoiling only at moments when it proved too embarrassing.

My confession clearly put Samira and her family on edge. I asked if they wanted me to leave, but then had the good sense to take out a letter provided by the ADC for each of its delegates that detailed our intentions and

requested that all courtesies be extended to us. Samira's uncle, who was familiar with the ADC, insisted that I stay, as did her father-in-law when he learned that, after all, I was one of the "good" Jews, "like the Israelis in Peace Now."* Evidently pleased with the outcome, Samira explained that she had been forced to await their approval, which, in Palestinian homes, was determinant.

To demonstrate that their welcome was no mere formality, the family prepared a sumptuous feast in my honor. Samira's father-in-law wouldn't let me go without two or three extra helpings. I was unable to rise to the festive occasion, however, having sunk into a mournful silence, a mixture of shame and awkwardness. In an odd reversal of roles, Samira tried to lift the spirits of her Jewish visitor with *intifada* humor. One "joke" recounted how several Palestinians pasted a Palestinian flag on the head of a donkey and an Israeli flag on its rear end. Spotting the donkey, Israeli soldiers desperately sought to apprehend it, but without success. Finally, they shot it dead. The next morning, Arabic newspapers carried a picture of the dead ass above the caption, "Another casualty of the *intifada*."

VI

As we stood talking, Samira pointed at the *jaysh* through the window. They were forcing a child into the humiliating ritual of pulling down the Palestinian flags that demonstrators had hoisted during the action. Samira ran onto the balcony. "*Boussou! Boussou!*" — "Kiss the flag! Kiss the flag!" — she shouted in a defiant, almost wild voice. I stood petrified, certain that the soldiers would open fire in her direction. No doubt Samira sensed the danger. Yet for all her fears — and she was the only person I met that summer who freely admitted to being fearful — Samira seemed to dread death less than further abasement at the hands of the Israelis. She did not think of herself as brave, though by my standard she certainly was. She felt fear but had conquered it.

I witnessed this bravery without bravado wherever I went. When the Israelis announced their intention to incarcerate the leaders of all the popular committees, Esmail, a deceptively timid mathematician who headed the Fawwar camp teachers' union, became visibly distressed. Half-jokingly, I suggested that he quit the union. "No, no," he whispered, "I could never do that." As we fled a hail of bullets in Jalazoun camp, a teenage girl stopped short to comfort the photographer, who had dropped to the ground. When the boy beside me, clutching his wound, screamed in agony, elderly women rushed from their homes to his rescue. (I stood hunched behind a wall, frozen.) Moussa, faced with the likelihood of yet another arrest, told me

*Peace Now is the main Israeli peace organization.

without conceit, "So let them kill me." Asked how much longer he could endure the repression, a Beit Sahouran replied mock-dramatically, "Etcetera and etcetera and etcetera." I watched each day as children confronted the *jaysh* knowing full well that one of them would likely be shot, perhaps killed, yet undeterred by the prospect. Ironically, the Israeli occupation trained Palestinians to resist almost from the cradle. While I was walking along the road one morning with Moussa and his one-and-a-half-year-old son, Urwa, a jeep drove by. "Jaysh!" Urwa cried, as he picked up a stone and threw it in the direction of the vehicle.

As stirring as the Palestinians' heroism was their grim determination to stay the course. It was impossible to guess how much longer Palestinians could continue to bear up under Israeli terror. And Israel, surely, had many more cards up its sleeve. What was certain was that Palestinians would not easily concede defeat. In the first place (and this was a facet of the *intifada* that went almost unreported in the United States), so intolerable had been the status quo ante that many Palestinians couldn't conceive of returning to it. As one villager put it, "We know what the past was like. The future is still open. We'll take our chances on the future." Second, there was a pervasive fear that a return to the status quo ante was no longer even a live option. The premonition was that, so incensed had Israel become at the contumacy of the Palestinians that, if the *intifada* ended, the occupiers would exact a terrible toll in retribution. A psychological barrier also precluded a return to the past. Israel aimed not merely to dominate and exploit Palestinians but to humiliate and denationalize them. Indeed, what set apart Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza was the unremitting effort to degrade the captive population. Palestinians had finally straightened their backbones. They finally dared to look the Israeli soldiers directly in the eyes. This renewed sense of self-respect was the most salient "conquest" of the *intifada*. It was hard to imagine Palestinians again with backs bent and gazes averted. Yet Israel would apparently abide nothing less.

All the same, the level of commitment to the *intifada* was plainly uneven. A spacious villa in Bethlehem was firebombed, I was told, because the owner had refused to close his business on general strike days. The financial hardships imposed by Israel had convinced several families to consider emigrating. My contact in Bethlehem, a multilingual eighteen-year-old who fancied himself the next Elvis Presley, planned to resettle in Australia. One reason for this trend was that in the West Bank even the most cautious were not necessarily safe. The strapping first son of a prosperous Arab family in East Jerusalem had honored his parents' plea to avoid trouble, but that didn't prevent the Israelis from rounding him up with his classmates and arbitrarily choosing one of them to beat to a pulp publicly.

One of Israel's big mistakes in the occupied territories was to forget that Palestinians too were human, that they too prized dignity. The humanity of Palestinians expressed itself in small ways as well as big. Posing for my camera, older Palestinians stood with their backs fully erect, as if their proud bearings would compensate for all the indignities life had heaped on them. Yet Israel believed — or, at any rate, behaved as if — there were no limits to how far it could push Palestinians. They were now reaping the whirlwind. Palestinians had been pushed over the edge. As a neighbor put it, "If you keep pouring water in a glass, at some point it has to overflow." To be sure, everyone I met, including activists, expressed astonishment at the kind of collective discipline and courage, and the nearly superhuman self-restraint, the Palestinians had displayed those past nine months, freely granting that it came as a total surprise.

When, contrary to any rational calculus, the Warsaw Ghetto fighters revolted against their German oppressors, history recorded that they did it as a matter of honor and self-respect. When, contrary to any rational calculus, Palestinians revolted against their Israeli oppressors, Israeli writer Meron Benvenisti and other pundits dismissed it as "euphoria." Some people couldn't abide that a Palestinian was capable of the same nobility of human spirit as a Jew: a Palestinian with pride had to be suffering from a psychological disorder.

VII

As I prepared to leave the West Bank, Samira urged me to stay in touch. She especially wanted to know about my efforts in the United States on behalf of the Palestinians. Her Jewish friend's decision to fight in Lebanon had permanently scarred her; she evidently experienced it as a deep personal betrayal. Yet I suspected that she still desperately wanted to believe that not *all* Jews were evil. She was waiting for me to supply the evidence.

Such evidence would not likely be forthcoming in the West Bank. Aside from soldiers, the only Jews one saw were settlers. With rifles slung across their backs, they were easy enough to spot. One settler stood beside me in the Hebron marketplace with unwieldy packages in both his arms. Any five-year-old could easily have snatched his weapon. The only purpose it could have served was psychological — to underscore *his* power and authority as against the impotence of Palestinians. Not all the eighty thousand settlers were religious zealots, however. Fully three-quarters of them, I was told, relocated in the West Bank for strictly economic reasons — in particular, for the cheap, state-subsidized housing available there. Moussa had befriended two such Israelis living in the Kiryat Arba settlement outside Hebron. His arrest so frightened them, however, that they abruptly severed their connection with him. The settlers of Beit Hadassah had imprisoned themselves in a one-

block strip jutting like a dagger into the heart of Hebron. I asked a Palestinian friend if he could fathom what made the settlers tick. He replied: “How can I understand them if they don’t even understand themselves?” A disproportionate number of these “ideological settlers” were recent arrivals from the United States. The Israeli civil liberties lawyer Lea Tsemel once remarked to an American audience, “You should know that, after munitions, your second biggest export to Israel is Jewish nuts.”

Resembling medieval fortresses, the Jewish settlements sprawled across West Bank hilltops, forming unseemly excrescences on the landscape.⁴ The settlements could easily have passed for densely packed bedroom suburbs, except that no city organically complemented them. Driving past one such settlement, a Palestinian with a conventional notion of human community bemusedly observed: “No factories, no jobs.”

Aside from the scattered settler outposts, the West Bank remained homogeneously Palestinian. I had anticipated that the “Jewish” impact on the territories would be pervasive. Yet by virtually any measure it manifestly was not. It was hard to comprehend how any sane Jew could think that the West Bank was part of Israel. That so many Jews *did* believe that the occupied territories belonged to them by “historical right” — that Jews were “of” the land whereas Palestinians were merely “on” the land, as a Palestinian incredulously, but accurately, reported the Zionist view — revealed only that they had suffered a terrific rupture with reality.

One morning, a representative from the progressive Citizen’s Rights Movement came to lecture our ADC delegation. Politically, he supported a Palestinian state, negotiations with the PLO, and even reductions in U.S. aid to pressure Israel. On ideological questions, however, he was much less forthcoming. Indeed, he was genuinely nonplussed that many Americans readily conceded that the European colonists of the New World had committed a gross injustice against the indigenous population — one that couldn’t be undone, but a gross injustice nonetheless. He maintained that, inasmuch as some ten thousand Jews had lived in Palestine uninterrupted, the Zionists had a “historical right” to establish a state there. I parried that if ten thousand mostly anti-Zionist Jews validated the Zionists’ claim to Palestine in 1880, then eighty thousand — in no small part fanatically Zionist — Jews confirmed the Zionists’ claim to the occupied territories. Yet didn’t his party dispute precisely that claim? He also announced his intention to lecture in the United States the next month under the auspices of the New Israel Fund, which “collects money for good projects, like agricultural settlements.” I suggested that something must be seriously amiss if a country’s economy was forever in crisis and on the dole, yet fully one-seventh of its population — to wit, *five hundred thousand* Israelis — annually took vacations abroad. I asked

a veteran Israeli peace activist what would happen if the United States tried to force a two-state settlement on Israel by cutting its massive subsidies. “You would be surprised,” she replied, “how quickly people fall into line when their bread is no longer being buttered.”

VIII

So huge was the rift separating the two sides of the Green Line (the pre-June 1967 border) that, traversing it, one felt like a traitor. Besides attending the demonstration at Ketziot detention center in the Negev, my only physical contact with Israel was a stroll along Ben Yehudah Street in West Jerusalem. What I saw could easily have passed for a scene from Greenwich Village in New York City, with the idle cafe chatter and art exhibitions, teenagers romancing. . . . Given the regime of terror I had just witnessed a few hundred yards away, I could perhaps have been forgiven for finding the gaiety and carefree indifference of Ben Yehudah Street an obscenity.

Whatever else the Israelis along Ben Yehudah Street may have been doing, one thing they most assuredly were *not* doing was suffering. The received wisdom that the occupation was a “tragedy for both peoples” may be morally reassuring; factually, however, it is an absurdity. Where were the curfews, the pogroms, the sieges on Ben Yehudah Street? True, the Uzi was ubiquitous, but not because of a commensurate threat to security. The number of Israelis killed at the hands of Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories between 1982 and 1986 totaled slightly over thirty. That is a sum roughly equal to the number of homicides in any given week in New York City. Yet one of every ten strollers in Greenwich Village does not tote a machine pistol. In a profoundly macho culture like Israel’s, the public display of one’s weaponry perhaps satisfies deep psychological impulses. For a government intent on manipulating the security anxieties of its citizenry, brandishing arms also serves to reinforce a siege mentality.

Only in one highly qualified sense was the Palestine conflict a tragedy for the Jewish people. Just as Germans for generations to come would have to bear the burden of Nazism, so Jews for many generations to come would have to bear the burden of Israel’s merciless assault against the Palestinian people. Just as Germany’s name was now inextricably linked, not just with Beethoven and Brecht, but with Hitler and Himmler, so the Jewish people’s name would now be inextricably linked, not just with Marx and Menuhin, but with Sharon and Shamir. Israel’s terroristic war against the Palestinians had also besmirched the memory of the six million Jewish martyrs. That was a crime, not a tragedy.

Ready to depart, I told Samira how anxious I was to get back to the United States, to put this nightmarish episode behind me. Gently but pointedly, she replied, "When you return home, you can rest. Everything you witnessed here will soon seem like a bad dream. But where am I supposed to go? When will I find peace?"

Chapter 2

The Ordinary, the Awful, and the Sublime



I

A ten-minute drive from Bethlehem, Beit Sahour is a labyrinthine town of solid new stone structures rising out of a deep valley with terraced hills.

Its fifteen thousand, mostly Christian, residents inhabited a universe poised between the traditional and the modern, the balance, however, moving tentatively toward the modern. A married woman was still expected to live with and attend to her husband's family. Marriages were not arranged, however, and a woman was not expected to wed until her early twenties, whereas women in the last generation had often been married off in their early teens. Samira's father-in-law was visibly shocked that I was still single and didn't even live with my parents. "But who makes them breakfast in the morning?" he wondered. The family hearth was still a married woman's first responsibility, but married women were, more and more, joining the workforce, as were single women. Seeing me do the dishes one night, Samira's six-year-old son, Basil, remarked that it was a "sin" for men to do housework (at any rate, so said his grandmother), but on housecleaning days he happily joined in with his mother and sisters. The teenage girls and boys in the English class I taught had nearly the same career ambitions — to become a doctor, lawyer, or chemical engineer — with virtually all the girls declaring that husbands should assist with domestic chores. About half of the boys agreed with them, although only a few of their fathers did help out. Women wore bikinis at the beach, but their husbands anxiously watched for furtive glances from strangers. It did not seem a hyper-libidinous culture, but not an exceptionally repressed one either. Women and men sported the most stylish, if not the most titillating, fashions. Men did not typically ogle women, and women did not typically primp for men. Radiating an aura of wholesome innocence, teenagers, although paired off, did not seem sexually obsessed, let alone jaded. A husband working abroad could allow an unmarried male to be the guest of his family, but his spouse would

not pass even a single night away from home without first obtaining his permission.

Moussa, my Communist friend from Fawwar camp in Hebron, never tired of lamenting the “backwardness” of social relations among his compatriots (especially between the sexes) as compared to the West. He had, I kept insisting, a somewhat idealized view of life in the West (no doubt influenced by a simplified Marxist notion of “progress”), seeing only the emancipatory effects of modernity but not the anomie and loneliness, broken marriages and single-parent households, prurience and violence, substance abuse and child abuse, that attended it. When I suggested that a society installing metal-detectors in its grade schools could not reasonably be deemed “free,” he shot back that “freedom comes with a price.” Moussa could not be faulted for hypocrisy, however. One night Samira had Moussa’s family over for dinner. His daughter and son immediately proceeded to turn the whole house upside down, reducing Basil to tears (“I can’t play with them. They’re crazy!”) and inciting Samira’s father-in-law to rage. Moussa, of course, didn’t believe in disciplining children. (I couldn’t help but recall the scene in A. S. Neill’s *Summerhill* when a mother surged with pride as her daughter stomped on Neill’s grand piano and then leapt for the sofa. “The perfect Neillian child!” the parent exclaimed, as Neill stood aghast.) Much to the consternation of Samira’s family, which had never before seen a wife publicly rebuke her husband, Moussa’s spouse, Afaf, ruthlessly criticized his “liberated” philosophy over dinner. Throughout, Moussa faithfully and dispassionately translated her insults for me — which, I suggested, made him an exceptionally liberated male even by stringent American standards.

During the first years of Israeli occupation, Beit Sahour had witnessed an unprecedented economic boom. Many residents looked back wistfully on those days when money and food were plentiful, weddings were lavish affairs held at the best hotels in Bethlehem, and weekends were spent on family outings at the Dead Sea or Tabariya (Lake Tiberias), teenagers preferring the Tel Aviv beach or late-night bars in Jerusalem. Politics had been an esoteric pursuit, the province of university students and intellectuals. During the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Samira ruefully recalled, Palestinians watched the carnage on the nightly news and wept bitter tears — but did nothing. It was true that several score residents of Beit Sahour were rounded up by the Israelis for political activism in 1985. It was also true that some still bitterly recalled the oppressiveness of the Israeli presence. “I do not remember ever feeling completely happy under the occupation,” Samira’s brother reflected. “Occupation means no freedom.” But, in general, little thought had been given then to Arafat’s doings, let alone the doings of radicals like George Habash, the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

(Habash has since become probably the more popular of the two leaders in Beit Sahour.)

In the mid-seventies, but especially after the Likud bloc's accession to power in 1977, things began to sour in Beit Sahour. Israel began to pursue with greater vigor its dual strategy of "slow transfer" (coaxing the educated and professional elites to leave) and "proletarianization" (reducing the remnant to a reserve army of labor for its own economy). Despite these policies, Israel's record on human rights abuses, including house demolitions, deportations, and torture, actually improved under Prime Minister Begin. For Israel at any rate, the initial balance sheet had been encouraging, with some twenty thousand Palestinians emigrating annually, due both to Israeli pressures and to the overall economic downturn that set in during the early 1980s in the West Bank and Gaza. But, as opportunities dried up in the Gulf states and Jordan put severe travel restrictions in place, emigration began to slow. Israel then turned the screws still tighter in the West Bank and Gaza in order to strangle the Palestinians' nascent autonomous economy, already hard hit by the recession and the loss of remittances from the Gulf. In Beit Sahour, the assault mainly took the form of a massive escalation in taxes.

Taxation first became an issue in the mid-1970s when Israel introduced, apparently in violation of international law (although Israel's High Court predictably ruled otherwise), a new value-added tax in the West Bank and Gaza. Tax collection was not ruthlessly pursued until a decade later, however, when Israel sought to fully exploit the political utility of tax policy. To cite one example, a factory owner living next door to Samira was ordered in 1985 to pay one hundred thousand dollars in back taxes — a sum, he said, greater than his total gross revenues for the previous decade. Palestinians saw Israeli policy as unjust, not only on account of the sheer magnitude of the assessments, but also on account of the scanty services provided in return. Government schools were dilapidated; medical care was abysmal. So far as the amenities of "civilization" were concerned, Beit Sahour was the most barren of wastelands: one searched in vain for a public park, public library, public museum, public pool. Whenever six-year-old Basil watched the commercial on Jordanian television advertising a fantasy amusement park, he turned morose. Samira told me every parent in Beit Sahour faced the same problem. After winning statehood, Samira declared, the first order of the day would be to build a recreational center for the children.

Nearly everyone in Beit Sahour agreed that taxation caused the *intifada*. "If tax policy had continued as it was until 1985," my neighbor averred, "there would not have been an *intifada* for one hundred years." Asked to name the most offensive feature of the occupation, one of the *shebab* (young militants) retorted, "The taxes." Indeed, suspension of tax payments was among the first

and most popular acts of the *intifada* in Beit Sahour. (Inasmuch as this step was taken without taking fully into account Israel's ability to coerce compliance, this turned out to be a partial mistake politically.) Another resident even suggested that, were Israel to reduce the tax burden, the *intifada* would immediately end.

This probably was not true. In a dynamic not unfamiliar to students of U.S. history, the call for "no taxation without representation" had metamorphosed into the more comprehensive demand for self-determination and statehood. Having seized the imagination of nearly all Palestinians in Beit Sahour, this demand had now taken on a life of its own. Political consciousness and participation had, since the *intifada*, spread among previously apolitical or inactive segments of Beit Sahour's population. As George Hanna, a physicist at Bir Zeit University, put it, "Before the *intifada*, only idealists took up the struggle. They gave their all, but it didn't add up to very much. Now, everyone gives only a little bit, but the result is much more impressive."

II

In August 1989, everyone I spoke with in Beit Sahour commented at some point on how different things were from when I had last visited exactly a year before. The near-absence of mass public protest was the most obvious change. In the first months of the *intifada*, huge demonstrations — in which, as Moussa nostalgically recalled, mothers joined their children at makeshift barricades, singing patriotic songs and stoning soldiers — had been, symbolically at least, the heart of the uprising. Confrontations in Beit Sahour now mainly took the form of ambushes as the *shebab* stoned soldiers and settlers a dozen or so times each day from rooftops.

The lack of mass public protests in Beit Sahour did not in itself signal a crisis in the *intifada*. From the start the *intifada* had tended to develop unevenly. Early on, for instance, Bethlehem had looked to Beit Sahour for inspiration, but the roles had reversed as more and more Bethlehem became the site of massive violent confrontations with the army. The eye of the *intifada* storm had moved north, with the cities of Tulkarm, Jenin, and Nablus putting up the stiffest "active" resistance (along with Gaza, of course).

More importantly, in its original form, the *intifada* couldn't have long endured. To survive, it had to find a shape that permitted daily life to go on. Uninterrupted mass demonstrations did not allow for this. For similar reasons, Palestinians no longer ran to find out what had happened every time they heard gunfire. They patiently awaited the news from relatives and friends or from the afternoon radio broadcast, *Al-Quds*, which recounted all of the previous day's happenings. The interest and concern were still there, but without the frenetic pace.

In addition, as the repression mounted, ambushes became the most logical choice of tactics. In the early months of the *intifada*, openly confronting the army did not mean courting certain death. Sometimes the soldiers fired warning shots or aimed only to injure; now, they shot to kill. Multiple ambushes also proved nearly as costly for Israel as the earlier mass demonstrations. Finally, “passive” resistance could be every bit as militant — and entail almost as many risks, though of a different sort — as “active” confrontation.

Consider tax resistance. More than 90 percent of the villagers in Beit Sahour still refused to pay taxes, even though in the West Bank as a whole the percentage had fallen to around 50 percent. Israel had brought to bear the full weight of its coercive apparatus to break the tax strike, but to almost no avail. A pharmacist was ordered to place his full inventory, valued at \$150,000, in the sun to rot. A baker had his ovens confiscated. For refusing the option of not paying his taxes but only signing a statement that said he had, a contractor was given six months’ administrative detention. The *intifada* was not passing through a crisis, Professor Hanna of Bir Zeit consequently reasoned, but rather had been routinized. It was perhaps less spectacular, more prosaic, yet the *intifada* had now assumed a shape that would enable it to endure for years, which Hanna believed it had to for the Palestinians to succeed.

But for all the logic of the new strategy, it was undeniable that morale had plummeted. A year before, Palestinians had evinced much enthusiasm and optimism; now, they displayed much despair and foreboding. Multiple factors accounted for this demoralization.

a. Economic Disarray. The economy of the West Bank and Gaza had fallen on very hard times. Palestinians had been hard hit by the precipitous devaluation of the Jordanian dinar. Fifty kilos of sugar that had cost five dinars two years earlier had jumped to thirty dinars. Thousands of breadwinners languished in jail; unemployment had soared to fully 30 percent. Due to the uncertain future, foreign capital that had flowed into the occupied territories for construction and other projects had dried up. As indigenous workers replaced Palestinians, employment prospects in the Gulf grew dimmer. Palestinians with professional degrees had to perform menial labor or go without work. Remittances from abroad also declined drastically. Forced to return home after the arrest of his two sons, Samira’s father forfeited a lucrative contracting career in the Gulf. With scarcely enough money to cover basic needs, life had been reduced to the grinding monotony of poverty. “All we do,” complained one Beit Sahouran, “is eat, sleep, work. No cinemas, no trips.” On the other hand, as Palestinians increasingly took to producing basic goods themselves, the boycott of Israeli products continued. Beit Sahourans proudly displayed milk that had been processed in Jericho. Moussa now managed a chicken farm, complete with three incubators, in his front yard.

b. *Political Wrangling.* The political realm was a much more fractured — indeed, embattled — terrain. The consensus within the Palestinian movement was showing signs of strain. The Unified National Command (UNC) was no longer quite so unified. One of its constituent organizations, Islamic Jihadi, had started issuing separate leaflets. An election proposal from the Israeli government had evoked heated disagreement. Yasir Arafat's mainstream Fateh organization itself was said to speak with a dozen different voices. The local popular committees had, in many places, splintered along party lines. The Islamic movement, Hamas, was steadily gaining ground. Much of the *intifada's* popular energy had been dissipated by the PLO's "diplomatic initiative." As they focused on the negotiations in Tunis, Fateh and even the Communist Party were doing less and less grassroots organizational work. (Moussa had recently quit the Communist Party in disgust because "all it does is wait for the *shebab* to throw stones.") Indeed, Palestinians generally admitted to biding their time as the U.S.-PLO "dialogue" unfolded — or purportedly unfolded. Arafat's effort to subordinate the internal Palestinian leadership to his rule had undermined the spontaneous, democratic character of the *intifada*. Yet, and the point bears emphasizing, the PLO was, overwhelmingly, still regarded as the unique institutional embodiment of Palestinian nationalism. Palestinians desperately clung to it as the only vehicle capable of delivering them a state.

c. *Mood Swings.* In the first heady days of the *intifada*, many Palestinians believed that an independent state was at most a few months off. The buoyancy of Israeli society had been grossly underestimated. The opening of the so-called dialogue with the United States triggered a second spasm of optimism. Moussa, who was then in jail, recalled that most of his fellow political prisoners expected imminent release. The real basis of the American "strategic partnership" with Israel was generally not well understood by Palestinians (except in the left parties that had been much less sanguine about the talks in Tunis). The U.S. government was scored for hypocrisy, inconsistency, indecisiveness, kowtowing to the Jews — but not for acting self-consciously from its perceived self-interest. Indeed, Palestinians perhaps took comfort in the illusion that the United States didn't have real stakes in its alliance with Israel. Arafat's naive depiction of Israel as the U.S.'s "spoiled baby" did not help matters much. (Was the Shah's Iran a "spoiled baby" as well?) Nor, for that matter, did his idiotic prediction, repeated with numbing regularity, that it was "fifteen minutes to midnight." Palestinians needed and were politically astute enough to handle the hard facts; they had no need of and were too politically astute for paternalistic mythmakers. One had only to compare the lyrics of the *intifada's* songs, with their clever and well-aimed barbs ridiculing the United States, King Hussein, the Islamic League, and so on, to the hack-

neyed lyrics of the earlier anthems to realize just how much more politically mature Palestinians had become, even if they still harbored illusions about the United States.

In any event, the pendulum had now begun to swing in the reverse direction as Palestinians succumbed to pessimism. Acutely aware of their political isolation, Palestinians viewed the future skeptically so long as the regional balance of forces didn't change. They also suspected — rightly — that the *intifada* was no longer putting much pressure on Israeli society. Capturing the overall mood, my next-door neighbor quipped one night: "It took over ten years for Egypt and Israel to resolve the Taba dispute, and who cares about Taba? Can you imagine how long it will take to resolve Jerusalem?"*

d. Repression. The first point to make is just how relentlessly draconian the Israeli repression was. Unlike, say, the United States during the Indochinese War or France during the Algerian War, Israel made no pretense — not even a halfhearted, token, or cosmetic one — of wanting to capture the "hearts and minds" of Palestinians. Israel's arsenal stocked no carrots, only sticks. Indeed, if anything, Israel administered gratuitous doses of violence and humiliation, so much so that its policy often seemed to verge on the irrational. Consider that breaking Palestinian resistance and reestablishing control of the occupied territories was Israel's first priority. Yet its tactics often backfired. By imposing penalties that struck hardest at the politically fickle middle and upper classes (e.g., restrictions on movement and international phone communication), Israel actually facilitated Palestinian national unity.

All the same, as Professor Hanna put it, "The Israelis, even if they haven't broken the *intifada*, are learning to handle it." With grassroots leadership devolving upon a less able cadre, due to the massive detentions, many popular committees had suffered a loss of *élan*. In 1989, the second year of the *intifada*, some fifteen thousand activists were being held by Israeli authorities. In the words of one Israeli officer, "We have arrested the captains and left free the generals." It was a rare family indeed in which no member had been jailed. Samira's two brothers were still doing time. (Following Israel's abduction of a Muslim cleric in south Lebanon, rumors had been rife that Samira's brothers would be swapped in a prisoner exchange. Samira anticipated a party to celebrate their release, but the night before I left for home we learned that one of her brothers had been brutally beaten by prison guards and placed in solitary confinement.) Indeed, many had served multiple prison terms. Moussa had "visited," as Palestinians put it, Ketziot detention center three times and Dhahriyyah once. Moussa's three brothers were still being held by the Israelis,

*A tiny strip of sand (less than a square kilometer in area) at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, Taba was the subject of intense and acrimonious negotiations following Camp David.

causing no end of grief for his “rapidly aging” mother. The green identity card was Israel’s newest device for restricting the movements of Palestinians. Each of the six thousand or so “malefactors” thus far issued one could not travel outside his village and the nearest town.

Still, Palestinians were not at all times and in all places overtly gripped by fear. The reasonable question was, Why not? So disconcerted had the rhythms of the occupation left me that I at first dreaded coming home each day from Talitha Kumi, the school where I taught English. Tucked away in a mountain retreat seemingly far removed from the grimness of the occupation, Talitha Kumi felt like a kind of sanctuary of normalcy. I had gone to Beit Sahour to experience the daily realities of the occupation, yet I was soon grasping every opportunity to escape them.

Fear did, of course, always lurk in the background. It was the overarching reality for every Palestinian. Fear over what the future held (or did not hold), fear for one’s family. Samira complained of a recurring nightmare in which her children were snatched away by soldiers. Palestinians did not overcome such fears but learned to control them, more or less. The one fear that all Palestinians had conquered was fear of Israeli soldiers, if not of their guns. Palestinians no longer cowered before the Israeli *Übermenschen*; the *intifada* had dealt a shattering and perhaps fatal blow to the IDF’s awesome image.

Fear was also bound to become at some point a stark reality. The fear, for example, that Samira’s ten-year-old daughter, Rita, felt when soldiers, rifles pointed, chased her and her friends down the street as they sang national songs; the fear that Moussa felt when he was put in solitary confinement for eighteen days and imagined that the jailers had forgotten about him; the fear that I felt as a dozen heavily armed soldiers barged into my apartment at 2:00 A.M. The next night I could barely sleep. Every time I slipped into a dream state I “heard” the soldiers pounding on the door. “Come in! Come in!” I kept yelling as I jumped out of bed.

The most immediate fear had to do with collaborators. Israel’s “Department of Dirty Tricks” had been working overtime to sow discord in the occupied territories. In a village neighboring Beit Sahour, a woman was drugged, stripped naked, and photographed by a collaborator who then threatened to distribute the pictures if she didn’t cooperate. The woman courageously told her family what had happened. They killed the collaborator, but not before killing her out of shame. Samira wouldn’t go anywhere — not the dentist, not the hairdresser, not even an acquaintance’s home — alone. Self-anointed “leaders” of the *intifada*, with no genuine nationalist credentials from the past, also aroused distrust, not to say loathing, among Palestinians. Violence directed against collaborators evoked much less pity in the occupied territories than in Israel or the United States. Israel Shahak, professor emeritus of He-

brew University, reminded readers in an Israeli periodical that neither he nor his fellow Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto harbored any regrets — far from it! — when the Jewish Fighting Organization “killed every Jewish collaborator it could find” on the eve of the uprising. A leaflet distributed by the UNC did caution Palestinians to exercise circumspection in handling collaborators. No doubt there had been innocent victims. But that was just as much the case in the Warsaw Ghetto. In an interview some years back, my mother, also a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, recalled with horror the execution of even “suspected” traitors: “Whoever had a gun could kill and be killed without a trial. There were terrible things. You cannot imagine what went on.”¹

Yet fear did not get the better of decency. What should I do, I asked, if one of the *shebab* sought refuge in my apartment at night? “Of course, let him in,” Samira’s mother-in-law replied. “We Palestinians would never close the door on our children.” Nor — if my experience was any indication — on an adult stranger. One night I lost my way home. It was pitch black outside. I did not know Arabic and could easily be mistaken for an Israeli. But, desperate as I was, I asked a Palestinian family seated on their porch if they knew where the Mikhails lived. No luck. They called to their neighbors. A commotion ensued as a crowd began to gather. Finally, someone recognized the name. A woman pointed the way, but I couldn’t follow her directions. It was a considerable distance away. She then sent her two children (they couldn’t have been more than seven and eight years of age) to guide this stranger safely through the night to his destination.

Indeed, fear generally did not paralyze daily existence. There were exceptions, of course. As word spread that the houses in our neighborhood would be searched for weapons, Samira’s brother-in-law paced the front room nervously. (The only purpose of these alleged searches was to terrorize. Ample warning had been given every resident and the soldiers knew it — which didn’t prevent them from ransacking homes.) The army had publicly shamed him a year earlier, and ever since he lived in mortal dread that the humiliating spectacle would be repeated. After bearing witness to a particularly gruesome massacre in Bethlehem several days later, he jerked his car out of the garage and drove off in a half-crazed state. The occupation was visibly getting to him. And his infant daughters. At every sound of gunfire, they burst into hysterical sobbing and had to be consoled.

Even as the dialectic of repression and resistance played itself out a stone’s throw from one’s doorstep, life did, however, generally go on. As soldiers down below shot at the elusive *shebab*, fifteen-year-old Nadim Issa nonchalantly chatted with me on the rooftop. Oblivious to the bullets exploding just outside the large picture window in her kitchen, Samira prepared dinner. As the *shebab* erected a barricade several feet away, a dozen or so neighbors eat-

ing falafel calmly awaited the soldiers' attack. No one ducked; no one ran for cover.

Life went on as it did for basically two reasons. First, it went on because of the sheer heroism of the Palestinians, on the one hand, and the tacit — if not fixed — limits of Israel's repression, on the other. When soldiers demanding entry banged on Samira's door in the dead of night, she replied with icy sarcasm to the commanding officer, "You are, of course, *most* welcome, but please do not make too much noise because my children will be frightened." The irony as she uttered "*most*" was like the twist of a dagger in the heart. The officer retreated. Samira later admitted to being terribly scared as she relived the nights her brothers were taken away and her home was ransacked. Knowing as she did, however, that the soldiers exploited any sign of weakness, Samira had learned to keep her poise. Courage? Yes. But the soldiers also did not force their way into the house.

On another occasion, Samira's mother-in-law loudly protested as the infamous Border Guards brutally beat a Palestinian youth simply because his identity card was green. *They* were not mere reservists, the Border Guards reminded her, but real, tough soldiers. "No one is stronger than God," she shot back. Bravery? Yes. But the Border Guards also did not shoot her for her insolence. In a word, limits *were* observed in the repression. This is not to say that humiliation and violence weren't also inflicted capriciously. Stopped by the army on his way to work, an American-educated psychologist was forced to drink his car's water to prove it wasn't gasoline. Chosen at random and savagely beaten by the army after a stone-throwing incident, a thirteen-year-old boy was then ordered to pay a one-thousand-shekel fine. Nonetheless, Israel was not waging a total war; it had not, as yet, crossed that threshold.

Second, life went on in Palestine because life *always* goes on. It went on in the Warsaw Ghetto. It went on in the Nazi concentration camps. It goes on in South Lebanon and in the South Bronx. One night Samira couldn't decide what dress to wear for delivering the morning benediction at school. Sitting in the shade, men passed the sleepy, oppressively hot afternoons playing endless rounds of backgammon. Every evening Samira's mother-in-law was glued to the television for her favorite Egyptian soap opera. Human beings are evidently endowed with an almost infinite capacity to tolerate repression and adapt to brutalizing conditions. Both pessimists and optimists about human nature could find comfort in this fact. I remember my disgust on reading Simone de Beauvoir's memoir of the German occupation of France. De Beauvoir recounted jealously eyeing a chic new scarf and the abject despair of an acquaintance whose hair was falling out — this on the very same pages that told of her close friends in the Resistance and of Jewish descent being deported, never to return. Even if what she wrote were true, I had thought,

publicly admitting to it was still unseemly. Now I saw that her point was precisely that, even in extremis, the banal remained a part of life.

III

Much of my stay in Beit Sahour was spent in the company of the *shebab*. Having worked for many years with teenagers in New York City, I was curious to learn what made these adolescents tick. And the youth of Palestine stood very much in the forefront of the resistance. Without understanding them it was impossible to understand the *intifada*.

Surprisingly, not a few adult Palestinians dismissed the *shebab* with condescension. Ridiculing the *shebab*'s stone throwing as a "hobby," Samira's brother attributed it to boredom from the prolonged school closure. Ever the Marxist, Moussa faulted the *shebab*'s naïveté, truly believing that their peers in the United States were much more politically savvy. (When one of his students ventured the opinion that, if Palestinians struggled hard enough and "if God willed it," they would win, Moussa, an unreconstructed atheist, could barely conceal his contempt. No American adolescent, he was certain, would ever have uttered something so patently silly.) A psychiatrist tried to persuade me that, like teenagers everywhere, the *shebab* had merely been seeking excitement to vent their surplus energy. In the United States, the outlet was destructive: drugs and fast cars. In Palestine, it was constructive: the national struggle. Things were that simple, or so he believed.

Indeed, a cynical observer could find evidence to support such conclusions. When Beit Sahour's record of resistance was announced on the *Al-Quds* broadcast, it evoked cheers, as if for the "home team," from the teenagers hovering around Samira's radio. The arrival of a UNC leaflet stirred much enthusiasm from the teenagers assembled in Samira's dining room, yet only Samira took the trouble to read it carefully.

No doubt Palestinian youth, like teenagers everywhere, possessed boundless energy. Surely, however, the more significant point is to what end these energies were put. One could not speak about a "thirst for adventure" in the abstract anymore than one could speak about a "thirst for power" in the abstract without caricaturing and trivializing reality. Yet if it wasn't true that the *shebab* were just like all other adolescents, it also wasn't true that they were a species apart. Palestinian youth were not one-dimensional heroes and heroines. The girls next door claimed to fear not for themselves but only for innocent bystanders as they stoned the shooting soldiers. At a local rehabilitation center, I asked three *shebab* with permanent spinal injuries if they ever despaired. (Senator Peter Domenici of New Mexico abruptly walked in as I was interviewing the three — and just as abruptly walked out. "What's the hurry?" one of the youths called out. "You just came." Little did she know

that she had just witnessed the creation of another congressional “expert” on the *intifada*.) “No,” they replied, “we are happy just to be alive. The spirit of the *intifada* sustains us.” I later asked a local psychologist if this was true. Emphatically denying it, he rued that they — indeed, *all* Palestinian youth — had been suffering terribly inside, and he worried very much for the future when all the repressed hurt boiled over. The pain of the injured *was*, in the first months of the *intifada*, mitigated by the praise showered on them, but this was no longer the case. “The psychologist is right,” Samira nodded. “They must be furious inside at the injustice and insanity of it all. I sometimes resent having to sacrifice just a little of my life for my own children. Yet it is right that I should have to sacrifice for them. But is it right that I should have to sacrifice my whole life just because I don’t want my family beaten and humiliated?”

One evening I quietly spoke with Nadim Issa, an amiable and fairly typical Palestinian teenager living next door to the Mikhails:

“What do you think about at night?”

“At the beginning of the *intifada*, I thought a lot about taking the state and what life would be like afterwards. We all imagined that we would take it in a few months. Now, the state is a more distant dream. It may take six or even seven years. I don’t think about anything at night anymore. I just fall asleep.”

“Why is a state so important to you? You are only fifteen years old. Shouldn’t you be thinking about parties and having fun?”

“We think everything will be better after a state. Even parties.”

“You may be twenty-two years old before there is a Palestinian state. You will have lost some of the best years of your life.”

“But my little cousins — the next generation — they will have the state.”

“But what about you? Don’t you resent missing so much of your youth?”

“For me, it is only seven years. It is not my life. My friend Edmond was shot dead by the army. So long as I live, I will never forget that.”

“Do you think about death a lot?”

“Yes, of course. I am afraid of death. I wonder sometimes whether, if I am killed, my death will have a purpose. Whether we will ever take the state.”

“Do you think about girls, love?”

“Sure, we all think about those things. Everyone else has a girlfriend. I am still looking for someone who understands me. She doesn’t have to be beautiful so long as she understands me.”

“What is it about you that girls don’t understand?”

He paused and then shook his head in frustration. “I don’t know. I can’t explain it.”

Education was every Palestinian youth’s first priority. Hence Israel’s decision early in the *intifada* to close the schools. Indeed, the damage inflicted on Palestinian morale by the school closing was considered so devastating that Israel was willing to pay the price of leaving the *shebab* with more free time to stone the soldiers. When the UNC announced a general strike one day,

I asked Samira's two daughters if they weren't glad for the unexpected holiday. "No," they vehemently replied, "we've had enough holidays!" So anxious were her children for classes to resume during Israel's year-long closure of the schools, Samira recalled, that many days they were reduced to tears.

Although not totally unrepresentative, the students in my English classes at Talitha Kumi were clearly the intellectual cream of Beit Sahour and neighboring Beit Jala. English was, already in first grade, a required course at Talitha Kumi (in government-run schools, classes in English began only in the fifth grade), and the twelve- and thirteen-year-olds in my prep (junior high) classes were already assigned abridged editions of *Oliver Twist* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. They could understand, if not yet speak (with a few notable exceptions), fluent English. Since it was a Lutheran school, Talitha Kumi also required German. Lamenting one day the poor performance of her students, a native German instructor unfavorably compared them with students in her own country. German was, after all, their *third* language, I noted; she was unmoved. I shuddered to think what she would have said after teaching at an American school. For a grammar lesson devoted to proper nouns, Samira (with whom I co-taught) asked the class to name a river. Several hands immediately flew up. I assumed everyone would say the Jordan. The first student answered the Thames. The next answered the Seine. The third answered the Nile, and the fourth, finally, the Jordan. If the same question were asked of a typical American student, I later suggested to Samira, with luck he would answer the Mississippi and, with no luck, the Atlantic Ocean. She thought I was only making a joke.

Asked during a free period their preferred resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the class quickly came alive. (It goes, or should go, without saying that virtually all Palestinians would have *accepted*, if not necessarily *preferred*, the two-state settlement.) There were as many different ideals proposed as there were pupils in the class. The majority seemed to favor some version of a democratic secular state in all of historical Palestine. One student bitterly denounced Hamas because it "wants to create a Muslim state like in Saudi Arabia and Iran." Another openly dissented after one of her classmates asserted that all Jews should be forced to leave: "The Jews have a right to be here. They have nowhere else to go." (The class did not know I was Jewish.) A third girl was full of praise for Peace Now (which, she believed, "cares more about us than many Palestinians do") and scoffed at the notion of a Palestinian state in all of Palestine: "How can we demand everything when we have nothing?"

Politics was both a passion and a way of life for Palestinian youth. Surging with enthusiasm and soaring with pride, students sang after me an English rendition of Schiller's verses to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."² Handing Samira's

daughters my Polaroid camera, I instructed them to take pictures of whatever pleased their fancy. They returned that night with several shots of a Palestinian flag, one shot of a map of Palestine, one of a wall on which was scrawled in English, "In this time we must have one idea to return to the land," one of the Arab Women's Union, two of several preteens playing "jaysh and shebab" (the most popular children's game since the *intifada*), one of a barricaded street, and one of the deserted shopping district as merchants honored the commercial strike. A teenage girl shyly showed me her just completed needlework in the national colors — a green, white, and black dove against a red background. The girl's sister joined Samira's family one evening to "celebrate" her eighteenth birthday — by fasting. On her last birthday the army had killed a close friend. We should, I suggested, at least sing songs. Agreeing, they first sang the Palestinian national anthem (Samira's eldest daughter, Rana, exclaimed that "every morning should begin this way!") and then several patriotic and traditional Palestinian tunes. Only one Palestinian youth I met spoke in slogans — "You can kill the revolutionaries but you can't kill the revolution," he told me one night — and this perhaps had something to do with the fact that, as a fugitive from Israeli "justice," he was nervously anticipating arrest and torture.

One question I quickly learned not to ask adolescents was, What are your plans for the weekend? There was no weekend in Palestine. The tedium was unbroken as each day merged mutely with the next. No trips to Israel — too dangerous in the current lynch-mob atmosphere; no outdoor team sports — the army routinely fired on youths forming crowds; no jogging — the army routinely fired on youths seen running. (Rejecting my proposal that I ask the local Israeli commander to let teenagers jog around Shepherds' Field, Samira explained: "Because it implies that the army has the right to withhold permission, we would never make such a request.") Not uncommon before the *intifada*, substance abuse had, in the year since the revolt began, also dropped off to near zero. For Palestinians, I was told, there could be no greater shame than having a family member involved with illegal drugs. Samira told the strange story of a Beit Sahouran mother who, as her son was handed a ten-year prison sentence for plotting armed resistance to the occupation, waxed rhapsodic. He had been acting suspiciously for a long time; rumor had it that he was in cahoots with drug dealers. What a relief, then, to learn that it was politics!

The one diversion Palestinian youth did indulge was the folk-art of *debkeh* dancing. Less a social occasion, however, than a chance to assert Palestinian identity, *debkeh* gatherings were typically organized around party affiliations. One girl at a PFLP gathering freely admitted to being miserable since the *intifada* began. "Life was so much happier before. Now there is no fun, no

trips.” “So,” I asked, “wouldn’t you prefer to see the *intifada* just end?” “No,” she quickly replied, “not if we don’t get a state. Otherwise, all the death, all the suffering would have been in vain.” Many of the *shebab* in their late teens and early twenties queried me about studying in the United States. No one begrudged them this ambition: after all, colleges were closed and job prospects were nil. It was pointless for them to stick around. One unusually gifted young man was preparing to leave for Texas, where his uncle lived. Samira lamented this loss “to his classmates.” I added: “to his nation.” The irony couldn’t have been more perfect. The United States bankrolled the torture of Palestinians, yet the cream of Palestinian youth, fleeing the torture, eventually enrolled in American universities, many remaining and enriching U.S. society with their skills. Who said you couldn’t have your cake and eat it too?

The *intifada* had both fortified and frayed Palestinian communal bonds. The atomizing tendencies at play in recent years had been checked and reversed; but new cross-generational stresses and strains had emerged. Recognizing how degrading the occupation was and how morally compromised they were for having tolerated it so long, parents could not and would not deny their children’s right to struggle for a better life. Yet they also agonized over their children’s safety. Why couldn’t Arabs take death in stride like Westerners? Samira wondered aloud one night. Why did death so traumatize them? I couldn’t help but smile. Didn’t she know that it was *Arabs*, not Westerners, who were supposed to be inured to death?

Occasionally, activist youth left home, drifting from house to house for shelter at night, on account of parental restrictions. Intergenerational tensions had reached such a pitch during my stay that the local psychologist was asked to chair a meeting between the *shebab* and their elders. Since no adults would publicly admit, however, that fear for their children had gotten the better of political commitment, the dialogue proved a nonstarter.

Several months after returning home, I showed my family a video of Beit Sahour. Samira was seen beaming as her six-year-old son, Basil, described his drawing of soldiers clashing with the *shebab*. My mother, I later wrote Samira, was visibly upset. Samira replied as follows:

My satisfaction was not because of the drawing but because of Basil’s ability to explain it. In fact, the first time I saw these drawings I was deeply shocked that my child was involved in this terrible situation and had lost his childhood so early. I know that, normally, my child should draw a butterfly, a bird, a flower, a cat, a car, or anything that children like to draw. Please tell me, What shall I do to keep my child away from what is going on? Even if I did succeed in keeping him away, would it really help? Sooner or later he will understand that we are under occupation. Is it fair to ask me to show grief and sorrow when my child expresses the present in his drawings while Israelis keep taking their small children to a museum to see what happened in the past? In that museum,

children are fed with hatred and when they grow up they connect the present with the past and let this hatred out. Innocent people like us are the victims. I do not take my children to such museums. They witness the suffering and the humiliation of their people every day in the street.

IV

Sustaining the *intifada*'s momentum was not so much enthusiasm or even inertia but the absence of an alternative. How could Palestinians retreat? "It's as if we are ascending a rope ladder," to quote Professor Hanna's evocative metaphor, "and each time we climb a rung the one just below burns away." A return to the status quo ante was unthinkable for Palestinians. As excruciating as the occupation had been before the *intifada*, it was intolerable now, after so much sacrifice and after glimpsing a life of human dignity. And every Palestinian knew that if this battle were lost, it would be — in Moussa's words — "a political catastrophe, setting back the national struggle at least twenty years."

Indeed, for Israel as well a return to the status quo ante was unthinkable. Things had gotten out of hand. The old system obviously hadn't worked: there was too much freedom. Israel intended to install a system of what Professor Shahak called "computerized slavery" in the occupied territories. The aim was to establish a regime that would monitor and regulate every detail of Palestinian life. That is, total control. Hence the battle raging in Gaza over Israel's imposition of computerized, magnetic ID cards. And hence, an extraordinary item buried in the *New York Times*: "In the West Bank, Arabs refused to set their clocks back an hour, to the time observed in Israel, which went off daylight time on Sunday. Residents said they would continue to observe 'Palestine time' for two weeks. . . . Private West Bank schools opened an hour earlier than instructed by the Israeli authorities, despite threats that the army would detain students caught going to school on 'Palestine time.'" In its quest for absolute domination of the occupied territories, Israel was determined to put at its command, if not the heartbeat, then at least the timepiece of every Palestinian.

As Israel pursued its obsessive goals, however, it didn't have a totally free hand. For example, if it had barred all traffic of goods and labor between the occupied territories and Israel, the Likud government could have delivered a crushing blow to the *intifada*. But Israel itself had become so dependent on such ties that, for the moment, this was not an option.

In August 1989, one could not predict with any certainty how the struggle would unfold. Basically, four alternative, if not mutually exclusive, scenarios seemed plausible. All were premised on the reasonable assumption that nothing substantive would come of the PLO's "diplomatic initiative" for a two-state settlement and the attendant "dialogue" with the United States.

a. *Random Violence.* As the political leadership became discredited and total despair set in, the *intifada* could deteriorate into purely destructive violence. The danger, as Professor Hanna put it, was that “the struggle for rights would degenerate into a struggle for revenge.” One Palestinian invoked the image of Samson and the Temple. Another said Israel would be wise to negotiate now before the hate ran so deep that Palestinians wouldn’t even consider such an option and the wounds ran so deep that they would never heal. Such a time did not seem so far off. The survivors of Auschwitz, Primo Levi once observed, typically fell into two categories. First, those for whom “the suffering was traumatic but devoid of meaning, like a misfortune or an illness. For them, the memory is extraneous, a painful object which intruded into their lives and which they have sought — or still seek — to eliminate.” And second, those for whom “remembering is a duty. They do not want to forget, and above all they do not want the world to forget, because they understand that their experiences were not meaningless, that the camps were not an accident, an unforeseen historical happening.”³

Samira (like my mother) belonged to this second category. She had seen too much; it had touched her too profoundly; and she had comprehended it too well. Most Palestinians of her generation seemed, however, to fall into the first group. As Samira herself confidently predicted, “Once there is peace, Palestinians will forgive and forget. That is our nature.” I was not so sanguine about the children, however. Having borne witness to much more suffering, this new generation was much more embittered and hardened than the one that preceded it. An eight-year-old whose father had been in jail the past four years was forever given to revolutionary exhortations. One morning over breakfast, he urged, in all earnestness, that Palestinians “escalate the armed resistance if the Zionists do not stop killing our children.” He was a “man” of action as well. The day before he had just missed hitting a group of soldiers with a gas grenade they had accidentally dropped. Similarly, when an American-trained psychologist gestured in gratitude to a Jew who had given him the right-of-way, he suffered a sharp rebuke from his three-year-old son: “Don’t wave to him! He is a soldier.”

b. *Spread of the Islamic Movement.* Hoping Hamas would simply go away, the PLO at first ignored it. Now, the PLO was counseling Palestinians to cooperate with Hamas. When one of Arafat’s lieutenants acclaimed Hamas in a Jordanian newspaper as “one of the purest streams of the *intifada*,” many of the mostly Christian residents of Beit Sahour reacted with shock and indignation. One sociologist guessed that a third of West Bank residents supported Hamas. His view was that Hamas had its finger closer to the people’s pulse. For example, Hamas understood the overwhelming popular support for the continuation of education. Hamas had helped force open government schools

in Gaza even as they were closed in the West Bank. It opposed the UNC's call for students to honor general strike days. Professor Hanna disputed the one-third estimate. Even in Hamas's stronghold, Gaza, he recalled, Palestinians had overwhelmingly endorsed the November 1988 declaration of the PNC calling for a state alongside Israel, notwithstanding Hamas's opposition. Professor Hanna put Hamas's strength at 10 percent in the West Bank and 20 percent in Gaza.

With its notorious record of opportunism, Hamas could cut a self-serving deal with Israel, one falling well short of the creation of a Palestinian state. At all events Israel hoped so; thus its promotion of Hamas's cause. In 1989, the danger did not loom large; Hamas was too feeble. Cautioning, however, that Hamas's full potential had not yet been exhausted, Professor Hanna speculated that, if conditions continued to deteriorate, it could gain momentum. Hamas, the sociologist observed, was a creature of crises: "It is like a parasite that thrives on political vacuums and despair."

c. *Counterfeit Sovereignty.* Another possibility was that the PLO mainstream would consent to a "compromise" formula, one that gave Palestinians a flag, a national anthem, and nothing else. Apparently, the PLO was already toying with this idea. Everyone in Beit Sahour peremptorily dismissed Israel's election proposal as an irrelevant sham — everyone, that is, except the Fateh representative. Convinced that elections were the next item on the political agenda, he went on to predict that Palestinians would then be offered a state "on condition that it be immediately federated with Jordan." Most Palestinians, he said, would accept this proposal, if only after some coaxing by the PLO. "People," the Fateh bureaucrat opined, "need to be led." Even he entered the caveat, however, that without an overall framework pointing toward sovereignty, elections were unacceptable.

Indeed, the longer the stalemate on the ground endured, the more likely the pseudostate scenario became. International diplomacy, not the *intifada*, had been the PLO's strategic priority. This derogation of the struggle on the ground was closely related to the PLO's historical lack of connection with and confidence in mass popular movements. Thus, the PLO saw the *intifada* as at best a lever to be applied in the diplomatic game, not the game's cornerstone. It was as if Arafat believed that Israel and the United States could be seduced into conceding a state to the Palestinians. How else was one to interpret the PLO's coy response to Israel's election proposal that, though the fact was nowhere reported in the U.S. media, explicitly precluded a Palestinian state? Just get me to the negotiating table and I'll finagle you the state, Arafat seemed to be saying. This was, of course, pure nonsense. Israel and the United States only understood and responded to force; for the time being, that meant, above all, the *intifada*. Yet the PLO's obsession with diplomacy

had deprived the *intifada* of precious material resources. And the *intifada*'s momentum had been deflected by this obsession: Palestinians looked to Tunis, Washington, and even Jerusalem (but only to the Labor Party, of course!) for a miraculous breakthrough. Such was the dynamic of the PLO's strategy that the longer the political stalemate continued, the weaker the *intifada* (and hence the PLO's confidence in it) became. The PLO's temptation to cut its losses and opt for a spurious state could thus eventually become irresistible.

Inasmuch as Palestinians arguably couldn't do any better, the PLO's embrace of a counterfeit sovereignty was yet more likely. There was no reason to assume that Palestinians could hold out indefinitely. The repression was taking a terrific toll. Palestine was not a rudimentary society. Yet as Israel turned the screws ever tighter, Palestinians had to endure deprivation that pushed them toward premodern conditions. As Professor Shahak recalled, Palestinians would not have been the first people in history to succumb to the grinding force of a war of attrition.

As the PLO bureaucracy in Tunis played with such a "compromise," Israel sought to cultivate an internal Palestinian leadership that would advocate it. This strategy of Israel's perhaps accounted for a curious episode I witnessed one evening in Jerusalem. Leading an Arab Study Group roundtable, Helena Cobban of the prestigious Brookings Institution expatiated on the bankruptcy of armed struggle and the virtues of civil disobedience. "What the Palestinians need now is clear slogans like the Bolsheviks in 1917," Cobban offered. "Maybe, 'No to the occupation, yes to the PLO, yes to statehood.'" The motive behind Cobban's performance was obvious enough. By slaying Palestinian sacred cows like violent resistance before a Palestinian audience, Cobban shored up her reputation back in the United States as a sympathetic but *not* uncritical observer of Palestinian politics. The more intriguing question was why the Palestinians themselves played along with the charade. True, they did vigorously dissent from her "thesis," preaching the right and value of armed struggle. Yet none denounced the presentation for the opportunistic farce it plainly was. Were these Palestinian intellectuals, unable to resist the allurements of power and privilege, currying favor with Cobban even as they struck militant poses? And in granting them the special dispensation of openly advocating violent resistance, was Israel grooming a Palestinian elite — indeed, an elite with seeming radical credentials — fatally beholden to Zionist strategies for peace?

Skeptical, not to say suspicious, of such overtures, dissident Palestinian intellectuals scoffed at establishing professional contacts under Israeli aegis. For example, while he endorsed joint political action, even personal relations, with Israeli scholars, a Bir Zeit scientist nonetheless opposed normalization of professional ties. "Israel," he suggested, "wants the outside world to believe

things aren't so bad — that, despite all, business goes on as usual. That's the real reason we are invited to conferences and to collaborate on research." A Palestinian psychologist confirmed that "all we get from Israeli academics is sympathy and pity, but they do nothing for us. They want our names to get funding for worse-than-useless research projects. Imagine! I was asked to exchange my data on depression in the refugee camps for data on depression in the settlements!"

d. Escalating Resistance. In another scenario, the PLO mainstream could decide to publicly concede what it had no doubt already acknowledged in private: that the "dialogue" with the United States in which it had invested so much energy and hope was a dead end, indeed, that the United States intended it merely as a diversion to allow Israel more time to crush the *intifada*. Having staked so much of his credibility on the dialogue, Arafat would have to weather a torrent of ridicule; his political enemies would try to capitalize on the failed gambit. Yet as Arafat denounced American "perfidy" and urged an escalation of the resistance, Palestinians would probably still close ranks behind him. This seemed the most likely scenario *in the short term*. More civil disobedience, perhaps even a complete severance of ties with Israel. And more violent resistance.

One question put to me with unexpected frequency by Palestinians was my opinion of a fatal bus incident in July 1989. Driven to despair after he witnessed the savage beating of a family member by the army, a Gazan overturned an Egged bus in Israel, causing many civilian deaths. No Palestinian I met condoned the incident, but none categorically condemned it either. The most common sentiment was that, although wrong, it perhaps sent Israel the message that Palestinians were being pushed dangerously close to madness by the repression. When she personally witnessed the grief of relatives of the deceased, Samira, who admitted to being happy at first, burst into tears.

My own view was that, morally, the act was plainly indefensible but scarcely cause for righteous indignation. Consider the case of Herschel Grynszpan, whose murder of a secretary at the German embassy in Paris in 1938 served as the pretext for Kristallnacht. Driven to despair after learning of his family's brutal expulsion by the Nazis, Grynszpan decided on the fatal act to "avenge my parents who are living in misery in Germany, . . . to protest in such a way that the whole world hears my protest, . . . to avenge persecution by the filthy Germans." In words that would perhaps resonate for many a Palestinian, Grynszpan pleaded under interrogation: "Being a Jew is not a crime. I am not a dog. I have a right to live and the Jewish people have a right to exist on this earth. Wherever I have been I have been chased like an animal."⁴ One searches the Nazi holocaust literature in vain for an unequivocal — even an equivocal — condemnation of the murder Grynszpan

committed. Indeed, Grynspan is often presented as a hero of sorts for vindicating the humiliation and abuse of his family. The day after the bus incident, on the other hand, Prime Minister Shamir denounced it as “an act of murder, the fruit of a horrible mind full of hatred.” Goebbels condemned Grynspan in similar terms.

Palestinians hotly debated whether to escalate violent resistance to the army and “civil” administration in the occupied territories. A firebomb attack on tax collectors in Ramallah, for example, elicited wide discussion and approval. Next to the soldier, the tax collector was the most hated symbol of the occupation. In Beit Sahour, tax collectors usually swooped down on Sunday mornings when the *shebab* were in church. As word spread that they were entering town, stores immediately shut down. Some said that the genius of the *intifada* was to achieve a near-perfect balance of violence and nonviolence, thereby neutralizing Israel’s most potent weapon, the army. An escalation of the armed resistance would upset this precarious balance and provide Israel with the perfect pretext to unleash its military might. A bloodbath would surely ensue. On the other side, it was argued that Israel understood only violent force and that, in any event, Israel didn’t have to await pretexts: when it was ready to commit a bloodbath, it would find or, if need be, fabricate one.

Only tactical and strategic considerations emerged in the debate over violent resistance. One sensed no strictly ethical qualms among Palestinians about resorting to armed force. Mubarak Awad, the self-styled Palestinian Gandhi expelled by Israel, was perhaps not the only Palestinian pacifist, but there did not seem to be many more like him. When I urged the students in my English class to sing the “Ode to Joy” “like angels,” Samira interjected: “like soldiers.” When I proposed to Samira that I also teach the students the pacifist lyrics of “Down by the Riverside,” she demurred: it was “not relevant to us now.” Asked to select a passage from the Bible for the morning benediction at school, Samira immediately ruled out “the one about turning the other cheek.”

There were constant reminders of the egregious double standard on violence to which Palestinians were held. As a female settler swaggered in front of our school bus, pistol in hand, the driver lamented, “Pity us. A Jewish woman can carry a gun, and we are not even allowed a stone.” The firebomb attack on tax collectors in Ramallah drew from Samira the verdict, “It’s only fair.” Her reaction brought to mind something my mother once said. Asked why the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto launched the armed resistance when plainly all was already lost, my mother replied, “Our feeling was that, if we must die, some Germans must also go. They, too, had to pay a price.”

Samira did pause one afternoon to reflect on her irrepressible glee as the *shebab* stoned soldiers outside our window. “Am I losing my humanity?” she

wondered aloud. Perhaps so, I thought, but not anymore than most of us would in similar circumstances. A few weeks earlier I had read Arno Mayer's remarkable account of the Nazi holocaust, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* In the book's final chapter, Mayer recalls the avenging fury of the Soviet Red Army: they moved as if — in the words of Soviet novelist Ilya Ehrenburg — “all the trenches, graves, and ravines filled with corpses of the innocents advanced on Berlin, [along with] the boots and shoes and babies' slippers of those murdered and gassed at Maidanek.” Ehrenburg enjoined the Red Army to exact “not an eye for an eye, but two eyes for one eye.” Criticizing Ehrenburg's call for blind vengeance, Stalin underlined that “not all Germans are Nazis.”⁵ Yet in the margin next to Ehrenburg's injunction, I had penciled in “Yes!” Both my parents had been in Maidanek, and most of my family perished there.

Yet when probed, as I repeatedly was, about my opinion of violent resistance, I found myself succumbing to an uncharacteristic reticence, and not only because I was unsure whether such a tactic was politically prudent. For it was as if I were being asked whether I, as a *Jew*, sanctioned the killing of *fellow Jews*. I felt very uneasy with these terms of reference. If I sanctioned the right of Palestinians to resist the Israeli occupation with armed force, and I unequivocally did, it was because I believed *every* people had that right. As Gandhi put it when the Palestinians revolted in 1936, “According to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds.” But to cast the issue in *Jewish* terms was, in my view, to “tribalize” and therefore falsify it. It put me very much on the defensive. In *these* terms, as the benediction of a Jew for killing other Jews, to condone armed resistance *did* seem like a kind of self-loathing.

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Hardly an eyebrow was raised as Palestinians learned that I was a Jew. One teacher at Talitha Kumi, I later learned, had concealed her displeasure. The typical reaction was indifference. Once word had been passed to the *shebab* in Beit Sahour that I was “OK,” the matter was put to rest. Why, I kept pestering Nadim Issa one afternoon, did he chat with me so easily? I was, after all, an American and a Jew. “First we ask questions,” he replied simply, “then we judge.” Attending a baptism ceremony with a neighbor, I was approached by one of the guests. The neighbor casually introduced me as a Jew from the United States. I regretted so nonchalant a mention that I was Jewish until I realized that no one even reacted. “I do not expect the United States to be evenhanded between the Jews and Palestinians,” the headmistress of Talitha Kumi said after learning I was Jewish, “but why must they drive us into the ground?”

Sometimes, this reasonableness bordered on the incomprehensible. As we sat in his Hebron office, a Palestinian real estate agent I had met the previous summer insisted that Arabs and Israelis were both victims of the “capital monopolies” in the United States. I asked how his son, Ahmed, was doing. “My son? He was just released from six months’ administrative detention. He didn’t do anything. But — never mind.” Later I talked to Ahmed. Like his father, he was a Communist. In 1985, he went to study in the Soviet Union on a four-year scholarship. He was very taken with what he saw and experienced there. A new world had opened up. But then the old world came crashing in. Returning home after one year to renew his papers, Ahmed was arrested and thrown into solitary confinement. He was subsequently imprisoned six more times. A few years earlier Ahmed’s horizons had stretched beyond the steppes of Soviet Asia; now forced to carry a green identity card, he was restricted to Hebron. Ahmed, too, maintained that both Jews and Arabs had been victimized by U.S. imperialism. I envied, even as I found difficult to fathom, his ability to be so “politically correct.” He even put in some good words for the soldiers: “In prison, they aren’t all bad; occasionally, one will make a decent gesture.” I couldn’t agree. The moment an Israeli donned an army uniform, agreeing to terrorize children as he broke into Palestinian homes in the dead of night (and no Israeli soldier would refuse such an order), he had lost 95 percent of his humanity. As to the other 5 percent, it didn’t interest me, although I could understand why it interested Ahmed.⁶

Only on three occasions did the “Jewish question” become a sore point. Once, tensions heightened as several members of a *debkeh* troupe fell into an acrimonious debate. “Ideologically,” Mufid Hanna proclaimed, “I support George Habash, but tactically I agree with Abu Moussa,” the murderous leader of a Syrian-backed Palestinian splinter group. Another fellow challenged him: “In other words, you want to kill all the Jews?” “No, only the fascist Jews,” he shot back. Several faces turned to me. I said he should feel free to speak; after all, I was there to listen and learn. “Presumably,” I added to let him know I was Jewish, “you are not going to kill me right now.” Although visibly embarrassed, Mufid, who perhaps not incidentally had been savaged many times by the soldiers, didn’t retract his words. Nonetheless, as we were leaving he leaned over and whispered in my ear, “We don’t want to kill the Jews. But, tell me, what choice do we have?”⁷

Elias asked one evening whether I thought the Palestinians needed a Hitler to “really teach the Jews a lesson.” I tried to persuade Elias (who was basically apolitical) that Hitler was not the answer. At the dinner table later that night, however, he persisted in his questioning. I broke into a sweat. “How can you even ask me such a question?” I finally blurted out. “I am Jewish. Nearly my whole family was incinerated by the Nazis.” Suddenly an unusually

loud burst of gunfire sounded outside. Shaking his head in disgust, Samira's father-in-law exclaimed, "That's what we get from the Jews!" Samira finally intervened: "No Palestinian wants a Hitler. But, truthfully, sometimes we do wish he had killed all the Jews." I wanted to explain why this was wrong. But just at that moment, the army banged on the door. Apparently, someone on the roof had whistled. The *shebab* used whistling sounds to communicate with one another at night. Fearing what could happen to them at the hands of the soldiers, the teenagers seated around the table tensed up. This time, the soldiers found the real "culprits." But I realized then that it was futile to attempt rationally to discuss the "Jewish question." Insane situations produce insane reactions. Something Noam Chomsky once wrote came back to me: Don't expect someone to recognize your humanity when your boot is on his neck. My parents, I was quite certain, would have waxed euphoric if, in 1943, they had been told that every last German was about to be killed. Why should I have expected a more elevated morality from the Palestinians? If they did rise to a higher moral plane, I would have been the first to applaud them. And if they didn't, so be it. I would hold Palestinians fast to my ethical standards only after Israel had removed its boot. And, in all candor, fully forty years after the Nazi Judeocide, I still didn't expect my parents to be "objective" about the "German question."

After dinner Samira and I discussed the Palestine conflict. I told her that in my view, history, however unjust, could not be undone. Israel was, for better or for worse, a fact. The Palestinian claim to Israel was as unrealistic as a hypothetical Native American claim to all of North America. A historical claim superseded even the most indisputable moral one. Indeed, the cruel truth was that might ultimately did make right, since conquest bequeathed a legitimate title to land.

Samira took offense. Why was I comparing the Palestinians with the Indians and the Israelis with the Americans? The proper analogy was between Israelis and Indians, on the one side, and Palestinians and Americans, on the other. After all, it was the Israelis who were wanting to usurp the land they occupied hundreds of years ago. I saw her point. But then she said, "For the first time, I see the Jew and the Israeli in you." Now it was my turn to take offense. On the one hand, if she saw the Jew in me, it was fine since, after all, I *was* a Jew. On the other hand, it was unfair to write me off as the enemy just because we disagreed. I was reaching for the truth. Sometimes I committed errors in reasoning. It didn't make me an enemy; it just made me mistaken. That was the only time Samira and I came close to clashing, and, in truth, it wasn't very close at all.

For three weeks, I was treated with decency and generosity by Samira and her family. I was a virtual stranger, an American and a Jew. Although they

were strapped financially, they still took me in. As I sat on the porch sobbing one night, Samira came out to comfort me. I had snapped. Shaking my head, I kept repeating that it wasn't fair. In an odd reversal of roles, Samira reminded me that Palestinians weren't the only people in the world to have suffered from injustice. True enough. And yet, in one distinctive sense, the martyrdom of the Palestinians *was* worse. It was usual for victims of injustice not to be accorded sympathy. Yet Israel had managed so successfully to invert reality that Palestinians had been collectively demonized. As we talked that night, my mind kept flashing back to a student in my English class. His face was perpetually lit up by a boyishly innocent, if slightly devilish, grin. Except once. What, he asked, did Americans think of Palestinians? Before I could reply, he sputtered with barely suppressed rage, "They think we're animals, don't they?" I didn't have it in me to tell him it was true.

My last day in Palestine was not a pleasant one. We awakened to the news that guards had viciously crushed a peaceful protest at Jened maximum-security prison. Among those reportedly injured and thrown into solitary confinement was Samira's brother. Samira asked me to view the videotape of a documentary that Israeli television had shown of Jened. Billed by the producers as a "five-star hotel," the prison was said to provide such marvelous accommodations that "Palestinians kill Israelis just to get in." The footage of the prison focused on the daily exercise period, with the inmates playing table tennis and basketball, and a dialogue between the prisoners' committee and the eminently humane and reasonable Israeli warden. In a word, it was exactly the kind of documentary one would have expected of a *state*-owned and *state*-managed television network.

Ironically, the film caused an uproar in Israel as the public denounced the warden's undue magnanimity. The prison regime was consequently tightened even more, prompting the inmates' latest protest. "Five-star hotel," Samira kept muttering under her breath all day long. Just as in 1985, when the families of inmates marched outside the prison, plans for a demonstration were already in the works. The inmates broke down in tears, Samira's brother later wrote her, when they heard the chanting outside. They weren't alone! By far the cruelest revelation of the Nazi holocaust, my mother once reflected, was that no one seemed to care. More incomprehensible than the bestiality of the Nazis was the silence of everyone else. "What a difference it would have made," my mother sighed, "if I had heard people crying out — even if only to heaven, even if only in despair."

In the afternoon, news arrived of a massacre in Bethlehem. Infiltrating a crowd of protesters, an Israeli undercover squad disguised as tourists shot five Palestinian youths point-blank. One lay dead; the four wounded were pulled by their hair along the pavement to the army depot. As the terrified crowd

dispersed, the civilian-clad assassins laughed and joked with the assassins in uniform.

Where were the pundits to agonize over this act of terrorism? Where was Robert Silvers's anguish over "the agony in *Israel*"? Where was Meron Benvenisti's wisdom that this is not a brutal occupation but a "primordial, irreconcilable, endemic shepherd's war"? Where was Pulitzer-Prize winner Thomas Friedman's tough insight that "you're all bandits. . . . I know — I lived with you"? Where was *Times* cultural commissar Walter Goodman's caution that the Palestinians' "tales of atrocities" haven't been verified?⁸ Above all, where was Elie Wiesel's agony over the hapless fate of Israel and the Jews?

Weren't they all clamoring about the murder of several hundred unarmed Chinese youth in Tiananmen Square, but not about the murder of several hundred unarmed Palestinian youth? Weren't they protesting the incarceration of several thousand Chinese political prisoners (from a population of one billion), but not the incarceration of several thousand Palestinian political prisoners (from a population of two million)? Weren't they singing paeans to the Chinese people's struggle for democracy, but not to the Palestinians' struggle for what John Stuart Mill called the most basic of democratic freedoms, namely, the right "to determine with which of the collective bodies of human beings [one] chooses to associate"?



As Israeli fighter jets sped overhead several times each day, Palestine's natural serenity was shattered by sonic booms. Such flights were banned within Israel proper. Palestinians, I was told, had never gotten used to them. Nerves still rattled and frayed as buildings quaked to their foundations. A journalist friend asked after my return to the United States for a metaphor that captured the impact of Israel's occupation on Palestinian life. The sonic booms, which brutally jolted Palestine from its center of gravity, immediately leapt to mind.

Chapter 3

A Double Standard in the Application of International Law



In the wake of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, the *New York Times* ran in the lead editorial a comprehensive indictment of Iraq entitled "The World v. Saddam Hussein." It argued that the Iraqi leader was becoming a war criminal in the "classic Nuremberg sense." Indeed, the *Times* editors suggested that, having violated "most of the Nuremberg Principles" with his "crimes against peace," "war crimes," and "crimes against humanity," Hussein was in a league of war criminals virtually all his own.¹

In this chapter, I do not want to contest the *Times's* indictment of Saddam Hussein. Rather, I want to apply the same Nuremberg standard to Israel and consider the results. Such a comparison shows that Israel was guilty of the same abuses of international law for which Iraq was justly condemned, a fact that was almost never recognized — and indeed was often actively denied — by Washington and the U.S. media. The argument I will make is *not* that Israel was worse than Iraq but that it was the beneficiary of a double standard. To indicate what, amid the carefully orchestrated hysteria, a sober analysis would have shown, I have largely restricted myself to the documentation that was available on the eve of the U.S.-led assault.

I. "Crimes against Peace"

The first count of the *Times's* indictment against Hussein was his "crimes against peace" — for example, the invasion of Kuwait.

One may have thought that comparison with Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was obvious. And indeed, the *Times* elsewhere took up the comparison in order to inform readers that there was a "crucial difference" between the two cases: "Kuwait had not attacked Iraq, while southern Lebanon was home to Palestinian bases that had repeatedly shelled Israeli territory." The same "crucial difference" was suggested in a *Newsweek* chronology that pointed to "PLO shelling of northern Israel from southern Lebanon" as the impetus behind Israel's "full-scale invasion."²

This was not, however, the way knowledgeable Israelis recalled the events

leading up to the Lebanon War. In *Dilemmas of Security*, Israeli political scientist Avner Yaniv reported that the Israeli invasion “had been preceded by more than a year of effective ceasefire with the PLO.” Former chief of Israeli military intelligence Yehoshafat Harkabi similarly observed in *Israel’s Fateful Hour* that the Israeli government “lied to the public by grossly exaggerating the terrorist acts conducted from Lebanon.” Citing former defense minister Yitzhak Rabin’s testimony before the Knesset, Harkabi reported that, for the duration of the cease-fire that preceded the Lebanon invasion, Israel’s northern settlements had been attacked only twice, and both these attacks were preceded by Israeli air assaults against Lebanon. (Only the second of the two PLO attacks resulted in an Israeli casualty, and that attack followed an Israeli strike that left as many as two hundred civilians dead, including sixty occupants of a Palestinian children’s hospital near Sabra camp.)³

There was, to be sure, more than one “crucial difference” between the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The attack on Kuwait was prompted by, among other things, Kuwait’s unwillingness to negotiate what even the *Times* conceded were legitimate claims by Iraq, for instance, Kuwait’s theft of oil from the shared Rumaila field. Yet the attack on Lebanon was launched despite — indeed, precisely because of — the PLO’s *willingness* to negotiate all of Israel’s legitimate claims. On the eve of the Lebanon War, according to Yaniv, the PLO had embarked on a “far more compromising approach toward the Zionist state than previously.” And, inasmuch as Arafat was no longer wedded to extremist demands but was “basically moderate,” the U.S. administration was pressing Israel “to deal with the PLO directly.” “Israel,” Yaniv concluded, “had essentially two options” in the summer of 1982: “a political move leading to a historical compromise with the PLO, or preemptive military action against it.” To fend off the PLO’s “peace offensive” (Yaniv’s phrase), Israel chose military action. In effect, the “raison d’être” of Israel’s invasion was to block a two-state settlement of the conflict. Harkabi similarly maintained that “[c]alling the Lebanon War ‘The War for the Peace of Galilee’ is more than a misnomer. It would have been more honest to call it ‘The War to Safeguard the Occupation of the West Bank.’”⁴

The second “crucial difference” between the Iraqi and Israeli aggressions can be quantified with almost mathematical precision. Some two hundred Kuwaitis reportedly perished in the course of the Iraqi invasion. Approximately *twenty thousand* Palestinians and Lebanese perished in the course of the Israeli invasion.⁵ There was fully a hundredfold difference between the two invasions. And as the media waxed indignant over Iraq’s use of horrific chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds, they should have remembered as well Israel’s use, probably illegal, of cluster bombs and phosphorus shells during the Lebanon War. In his epic memoir, *Pity the Nation*, veteran Brit-

ish correspondent Robert Fisk described two Lebanese infant victims of the phosphorus shells:

Dr. Shamaa's story was a dreadful one and her voice broke as she told it. "I had to take the babies and put them in buckets of water to put out the flames," she said. "When I took them out half an hour later, they were still burning. Even in the mortuary, they smouldered for hours." Next morning, Amal Shamaa took the tiny corpses out of the mortuary for burial. To her horror, they again burst into flames.⁶

Whatever the validity of Iraq's claims about oilfields shared with Kuwait, its territorial claim against Kuwait lacked legitimacy. Although the colonial borders demarcated by Great Britain did Iraq an injustice, they were still internationally sanctioned and could not be undone by armed force.⁷ Pointing to Saddam Hussein's (alleged) view that extant borders were "artificial lines drawn in the sand," the *Times* suggested that the "question of boundaries is one example" of how the Iraqi leader and "the rest of the world have misunderstood each other."⁸ Yet Israeli leaders also upheld an unorthodox conception of boundaries. Deeming the Jewish people's right to the Land of Israel, including the occupied territories and Jordan, "permanent" and "not subject to any higher authority," Likud leaders adduced the Bible to establish title. To justify Israel's claim to the West Bank, Labor Party leader Shimon Peres similarly observed that "there is no argument in Israel about our historic rights in the Land of Israel. The past is immutable and the Bible is the decisive document in determining the fate of our Land." Sanctioning the use of armed force to achieve the Jewish people's biblical borders, Israeli founding father, David Ben-Gurion, envisaged that the future state would incorporate the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, the Golan Heights, and Lebanon. Consider, moreover, the following passage:

The boundaries of Near East countries were fixed largely by the Great Powers after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. None of the current borders are sanctified by more than 70 years of history; lines were drawn arbitrarily and with little regard for economic or strategic necessity... Many boundary lines... [were] fixed by Great Powers in the service of their own interests.

The above quote came not from an official Iraqi publication justifying the conquest of Kuwait but from an official Zionist publication justifying the conquest of the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai. Indeed, in the wake of the June 1967 war, no lesser a personage than Israeli UN representative Abba Eban defended the right of territorial conquest. The United Nations Charter's principle of the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force," Eban alleged, did not apply to the Middle East, where "territorial agreements" had always been based on "military considerations alone."⁹

II. "War Crimes"

The second count of the *Times's* indictment against Saddam Hussein was for war crimes, for example, the taking of hostages.

Yet Israel, too, took hostages. The only difference was one of (Western) perceptions. As Fisk observed:

[W]hy was it that Western hostages were called "hostages" — which they were — while Lebanese Shia Muslim prisoners held in an Israeli-controlled jail in southern Lebanon were referred to by journalists as "prisoners"? These Lebanese were also held illegally, without charge and — according to one of the militia leaders who controls their lives — as hostages for the good conduct of their fellow villagers in southern Lebanon. Both the International Red Cross and Amnesty International have expressed grave concern at the use of torture in this jail at the village of Khiam, torture against both men and women. I interviewed some of the released prisoners who spoke of the use of torture with electricity applied to their genitals. The freedom of these men and women in Khiam was said to be part of the price of the freedom of Western hostages in Beirut. Yet still we persisted in our reports in calling the Lebanese "prisoners," the Westerners "hostages."¹⁰

No image served better to reveal Saddam Hussein's iniquity than his televised interrogation of the five-year-old British hostage, Stuart Lockwood. But Iraq was not the only country that took children hostage. The Israeli army, reported an Israeli publication under the headline "Hostages," was introducing a new method of punishment to quell the *intifada*. Dubbed "aggressive evacuation," it targeted children as young as eight years old who were randomly snatched from insurgent villages, beaten, and detained until their parents paid "ransom money in cash." The good news was that, according to the article, it was all perfectly legal and that "in the future the father will be arrested together with the child."¹¹

Iraq, of course, didn't just take children hostage; it tortured and killed them as well.¹² As did Israel. A thousand-page Save the Children study, *The Status of Palestinian Children during the Uprising*, exhaustively documented the "indiscriminate beating, teargassing, and shooting of children." More than 150 Palestinian children had been killed since the beginning of the *intifada*, including at least 37 below the age of six. The average age was ten. A majority, the study found, were not even participating in a stone-throwing demonstration when shot dead, and four-fifths of the gunshot victims were "obstructed or delayed by the army" as they sought emergency medical treatment. Funerals were "violently disrupted or interfered with" by the army. More than fifty thousand Palestinian children required medical attention for tear-gas inhalation, multiple fractures, and so on, during the first two years of the *intifada*; nearly half were ten years old or younger. The study also found that "the vast

majority of soldiers responsible for the child casualties have been neither censured nor punished." Indeed, only the few cases that received press coverage were even being investigated.¹³

A B'Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) study, *Violence against Minors in Police Detention*, found that "illegal violence against minors, . . . many [of whom] are innocent of any crime, . . . occurs on a large scale." Severe beatings, including "slapping, punching, kicking, hair pulling, beatings with clubs or with iron rods, pushing into walls and onto floors," were said to be "very common." The study also highlighted more novel methods for interrogating minors:

Beating the detainee as he is suspended in a closed sack covering the head and tied around the knees; tying the detainee in a twisted position to an outdoor pipe with hands behind the back for hours and, sometimes, in the rain, at night, and during the hot daytime hours; confining the detainee, sometimes for a few days, in the "lock-up" — a dark, smelly and suffocating cell one and a half by one and a half meters [five by five feet]; placing the detainee, sometimes for many hours, in the "closet" — a narrow cell the height of a person in which one can stand but not move; and depositing the tied-up detainee for many hours in the "grave" — a kind of box, closed by a door from the top, with only enough room to crouch and no toilet.¹⁴

Israeli press and human rights reports put flesh and blood on the data. The 1 April 1988 issue of *Hotam* reported the case of a ten-year-old beaten so black and blue during an army interrogation that he was left "looking like a steak." The soldiers "weren't bothered" even when they later learned that the boy was deaf, mute, and mentally retarded. The 13 July 1988 issue of *Koteret Rashit* reported the "disappearance of 25 children" and jail threats to their parents for "annoying" the army about the children's whereabouts. The 19 August 1988 issue of *Hadashot* featured three photos of a blindfolded six-year-old in an army jeep. The caption reported that many children his age would be held in detention until "ransoms" of several hundred dollars were paid, and that, as they were carted away, the children often urinated in their pants "from fear." Under the heading "Deliberate Murder," the August 1989 bulletin of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights reported that the Israeli army (apparently sharpshooters from "special units") had targeted an "increasing" number of Palestinian children in leadership roles. "Carefully chosen," the victim was usually shot in the head or heart and died almost instantaneously. Dr. Haim Gordon of the Israeli Association for Human Rights reported the case of an eight-year-old tortured by soldiers after refusing to reveal which of his friends had thrown stones. Stripped naked, hung by his legs and brutally beaten, the boy was then pushed to the edge of a rooftop before being released (cited in the January 1990 bulletin of the Israeli League). The

15 January 1990 issue of *Hadashot* reported the case of a thirteen-year-old who was thrown into detention after his fingers were deliberately broken and who was then left without any medical treatment or food because his father was unable to pay the ransom of 750 dollars. The 26 January 1990 issue of *Davar* reported the case of a sixteen-year-old girl who was beaten by a club-wielding policeman (“He even tried to push the club between my legs”) and then thrashed in prison for refusing to sign a confession. The 29 June 1990 issue of *Hotam* reported the case of a thirteen-year-old detainee who, refusing to supply incriminating evidence against his brother, was “smashed” in the face, had “bruise marks on his entire body,” was not allowed to drink or eat “for hours,” and was forced to “urinate and defecate in his pants.”

Reporting on the grisly fate of Palestinians as young as fourteen arrested on “suspicion of stone-throwing,” the 24 February 1992 issue of *Hadashot* quoted an inside source at the Hebron detention center:

What happened there . . . was plain horror: they would break their clubs on the prisoners’ bodies, hit them in the genitals, tie a prisoner up on the cold floor and play soccer with him — literally kick and roll him around. Then they’d give him electric shocks, using the generator or a field telephone, and then push him out to stand for hours in the cold and rain. . . . They would crush the prisoners, . . . turning them into lumps of meat.

Another source inside the center was quoted to the effect that the “tortures recall what is being inflicted in the cellars of Damascus’s prisons.”

III. “Crimes against Humanity”

The third count of the *Times*’s indictment against Saddam Hussein was for “crimes against humanity,” for example, murder, deportation, persecution, and inhuman acts.¹⁵

Iraq was indisputably guilty of massive human rights abuses. Consider the summary for “Iraq” in Amnesty International’s 1990 *Report*:

Thousands of political prisoners, among them prisoners of conscience, continued to be detained without charge or trial or imprisoned after trials which reportedly did not satisfy international fair trial standards. Torture of political prisoners remained widespread. “Disappearances” were reported and the government did not clarify the fate and whereabouts of thousands who “disappeared” in previous years. Many of the “disappeared” were believed to have been killed. Executions were also reported. Some of those executed apparently had sought from the authorities benefits announced under official amnesties. In most cases it was unclear whether they had received any form of trial.

Yet compare the summary for “Israel and the Occupied Territories” in the same report:

About 25,000 Palestinians, including prisoners of conscience, were arrested in connection with the *intifada* (uprising) in the Occupied Territories. Over 4,000 served periods in administrative detention without charge or trial. Several thousand others were tried by military courts. By the end of the year over 13,000 people were still in prisons or detention centres. At least 45 Israeli prisoners of conscience were held, most of whom were conscientious objectors to military service. Thousands of Palestinians were beaten while in the hands of Israeli forces or were tortured or ill-treated in detention centres. At least eight were reported to have died as a result. Over 260 unarmed Palestinian civilians, including children, were shot dead by Israeli forces, often in circumstances suggesting excessive use of force or deliberate killings. Others died in incidents where tear-gas was possibly deliberately misused. Official investigations into abuses appeared inadequate. One person remained under sentence of death.¹⁶

The reasonable inference seems to be that there was no substantive difference between the two entries.¹⁷ The argument is often made, however, that comparisons of this sort overlook a crucial distinction: Iraq was an arbitrary police state whereas Israel was a democracy governed by the rule of law. A first and basic point to make¹⁸ is that the Israeli government did not even recognize the applicability to the occupied territories of the relevant international law such as the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention (of which Israel was a signatory) and the 1979 United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.¹⁹

Furthermore, Israel's High Court proved to be a willing accomplice of the conquest regime in the West Bank and Gaza. The Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibited the destruction of private property except "where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations" and also explicitly forbade collective punishment. Yet the High Court ruled that house demolitions in the occupied territories were permissible, even claiming that "there is no basis to the claim that house demolition is a collective punishment."²⁰ The Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibited "*individual* or mass forcible transfers as well as deportations" (emphasis added). Yet the High Court ruled that this convention was not relevant to the occupied territories and, in any event, applied only to mass deportations.²¹ The Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibited an occupying power from resettling its "own civilian population in the territory it occupies." Yet the High Court either ruled that Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza were legal or refused to hear challenges to their legality.²² International law stipulated that an occupier could not institute new taxes in the territory under its control. Yet the High Court ruled that the arbitrary value-added tax imposed on the occupied territories in 1976 was permissible.²³ Repeatedly deferring to the "security" rationale of the military authorities, the High Court upheld only one

challenge to the more than twelve hundred arbitrary "military orders" that were legally binding in the occupied territories.²⁴

Israeli military courts had jurisdiction over all "security-related" (and most significant civil) cases involving Palestinians in the occupied territories. Suspects could be detained without trial for a period of eighteen days. The decision to renew detention was typically based on information supplied by the military prosecutor. Applications for release on bail were "almost never accepted." Suspects had "absolutely no right of legal representation." When representation was allowed, the lawyer was not permitted to visit his client until the interrogation had been completed. Trial proceedings barely rose to the level of farce. The "overwhelming majority" of convictions were decided on the basis of confessions "usually obtained under duress" and "almost invariably written in Hebrew," a language "few Palestinians could speak or read." Administrative detention allowed for imprisonment without charge, evidence, or trial for as much as a year.²⁵

Official Israeli rules of engagement allowed for the killing of a Palestinian simply for wearing a mask, hoisting a flag, erecting a barricade (which often consisted of no more than a few rocks and overturned garbage bins), or ignoring an order to halt. They also allowed for the virtually unrestricted use of lethal plastic bullets and the summary execution of "wanted" Palestinians. All these orders were in contravention of international law that sanctioned the use of lethal force only in life-threatening situations and then only if there was no recourse except to lethal force.²⁶ As Middle East Watch concluded, official Israeli policies and practices "effectively condone[] the unjustified killing of Palestinians."²⁷

The guidelines just cited on the use of lethal force were the official ones. The unofficial or *de facto* rules of engagement were yet more lax, as was evident from the record on investigations and convictions of Israelis accused of killings. More than seven hundred Palestinians had been, in the course of the *intifada* through December 1989, shot dead by Israeli security forces. Yet not one Israeli soldier was indicted on a murder charge, and only two were indicted on manslaughter charges. A tiny handful were indicted on lesser charges such as illegal use of weapons. The fewer than ten soldiers convicted in connection with killings of Palestinians received punishments ranging from an official reprimand to eighteen months' imprisonment. (One two-year sentence was vacated on appeal.) By way of contrast, Amnesty International reported that Palestinians received sentences of up to five years' imprisonment for simply throwing a stone.²⁸

Reviewing the notorious case of a Gazan brutally beaten to death by Israeli soldiers (none of the accused was indicted on a major criminal charge or served more than five months in prison), the prominent Israeli advocate Avig-

dor Feldman concluded: "The illegality in the Territories is total. Everyone — regardless of echelon, regardless of disagreement on every other conceivable topic — is of a mind on one matter: the value of an Arab's life is equal to zero."²⁹

Returning for a moment to the case of Iraq, human rights monitors reserved special condemnation for Iraq's lengthy record of population expulsion and resettlement. The regime expelled as many as two hundred thousand mostly Shia Muslims and drove tens of thousands of Kurds into exile. As many as eight hundred thousand Kurds were forcibly resettled within Iraq, and the majority of Kurdish villages were razed. Moreover, reports on the eve of the U.S.-led attack in January 1991 told of the expulsion of Kuwaitis from and the relocation of Iraqi civilians in Kuwait; widespread looting and destruction (especially house demolitions) by the Iraqi occupiers were also reported. Yet in all these respects, Iraq was simply stealing a leaf from the book of its neighbor Israel.³⁰

Between 1947 and 1949, some 750,000 Palestinians were expelled as Israel declared its independence, and in June 1967 some 300,000 more Palestinians fled or were driven into exile as Israel conquered the West Bank and Gaza. Hundreds of villages were systematically razed and erased from the map.³¹ In the course of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza after June 1967, over 1,000 Palestinians — including women and children — were deported without charges or trial, and over 2,000 Palestinian homes were demolished or sealed without charges or trial. Fully 50 percent of the land and 80 percent of the precious water reserves were confiscated by the Israeli government. And as deported Palestinians languished in exile, some 100,000 Jews settled in the West Bank and Gaza.³² All these measures — and many more routinely taken by Israel in the occupied territories — were, as one Israeli periodical euphemistically put it, "very far from the norms of international law" (*Hotam*, 4 August 1989).

Israel grossed about one billion dollars annually from its controlled market and tourism in the occupied territories. More than one hundred thousand West Bank and Gaza Palestinians — a third of all Palestinian wage earners — were forced to seek employment in Israel as "hewers of wood and drawers of water," many illegally kept in rooms locked from the outside at night and paid a subminimum wage. In violation of international law, Israel compelled Palestinians to pay in taxes far more than they received in services and investments. Meron Benvenisti very conservatively estimated the illegal "occupation tax" (his phrase) at more than seven hundred million dollars or two-and-a-half times Israel's total investment in the Palestinian economic infrastructure during the entire occupation period. In the course of the *intifada*, the Israeli government resorted to arbitrary tax assessments both as a

means of looting the occupied region and, in the words of B'Tselem, as an "instrument of bureaucratic violence" to reimpose the conquest regime. When the village of Beit Sahour nonviolently protested the taxation system, Israeli troops surrounded it and sealed it off from the outside world. The siege was finally lifted after six weeks, but not before the Israelis had carted off and later put up for public auction 1.5 million dollars in property — including children's toys, blankets, pencils, soft-drink containers, and many rolls of toilet paper. A 6 November 1989 Security Council resolution "strongly deploring... the ransacking of the homes of inhabitants... and the illegal and arbitrary confiscation of... property and valuables" in Beit Sahour was vetoed by a lone U.S. vote.³³

Iraq was evidently not the only country guilty of "crimes against humanity." In the words of Amnesty International, Israel too was "apparently not willing to enforce international human rights standards."³⁴

IV. The "Newly United" United Nations

Recall the title of the *Times* editorial, "The World v. Saddam Hussein." This theme became a staple of commentary on the 1990–91 Gulf crisis. Scarcely a day passed without the media or Bush administration officials invoking the moral authority of international opinion against Iraq. The standard refrain was that, in President Bush's words, "this is not a matter between Iraq and the United States of America. It is between Iraq and the entire world community."³⁵

The evidence of a global consensus was, of course, the succession of Security Council resolutions condemning Iraq. Indeed, this was purportedly the silver lining of the cloud hanging over the Gulf. With the end of the Cold War (and concomitantly, the Soviet veto) and in the face of Iraq's egregious violations of international norms and law, the "newly united" United Nations was finally functioning as it had been designed to. "The level of world cooperation and condemnation of Iraq is unprecedented," Mr. Bush informed a joint session of Congress. "We're now in sight of a United Nations that performs as envisioned by its founders."³⁶

Yet the historical record reveals that this was not the first time the United Nations had reached a consensus on a regional conflict. It was the first time in recent memory, however, that the United States had displayed such deference to international opinion. The United Nations has, for years, agreed that Israel was guilty of the very same transgressions against international law for which Iraq stood condemned. The difference was that, in the Iraqi case, the United States gladly joined the international consensus whereas, in the Israeli case, it sought to derail, downplay, or even defy the international consensus.

Consider the UN resolutions on the two conflicts.³⁷

Aggression. On 2 August 1990, the Security Council condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and on 16 September 1990, it condemned Iraq's "aggressive acts" against diplomatic missions in Kuwait. The Security Council had likewise adopted, during the previous fifteen years, fully eleven resolutions condemning Israeli aggression against Lebanon and other Arab countries. Four more such resolutions were vetoed by a lone U.S. vote. The General Assembly also overwhelmingly condemned Israeli aggression; for example, 143 countries supported a December 1982 resolution deploring Israel's invasion of Lebanon, with only the United States and Israel casting negative votes.

Annexation. On 9 August 1990, the Security Council declared Iraq's annexation of Kuwait "null and void" under international law. In August 1980, the Security Council likewise declared Israel's annexation of Jerusalem "null and void" under international law, and in December 1981, it declared Israel's annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights "null and void" under international law. On a related issue, the Security Council condemned Israeli settlements in the occupied territories in March 1979 as "a serious obstruction to achieving... peace in the Middle East." The General Assembly also repeatedly condemned the Israeli annexation of Jerusalem (a December 1980 resolution was supported by 143 countries with only Israel casting a negative vote), the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights (a December 1988 resolution was supported by 149 countries with only Israel casting a negative vote), and the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories (a December 1988 resolution was supported by 149 countries with only Israel casting a negative vote).

Occupation. The 2 August 1990 Security Council resolution condemning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Baghdad's forces. In the same manner, three Security Council resolutions demanded Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon. Moreover, only the United States vetoed Security Council resolutions in January 1976 and April 1980 calling for Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders as part of a two-state settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The General Assembly repeatedly deplored the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (a December 1985 resolution was supported by 153 countries with only the United States and Israel casting negative votes) and urged a two-state settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict under the auspices of an international peace conference (a December 1989 resolution was supported by 151 countries with only the United States, Israel, and Dominica casting negative votes).³⁸

Human Rights Violations. On 18 August 1990, the Security Council condemned Iraq's detention of foreigners, and on 29 October 1990, it condemned Iraq's hostage taking and mistreatment of Kuwaitis. The Security Council re-

peatedly condemned Israeli human rights practices as well, including seven resolutions deploring its deportation of Palestinians living in the occupied territories and two resolutions deploring its "opening of fire . . . resulting in the killing and wounding of defenceless Palestinian civilians." A lone U.S. veto blocked the adoption of fully fourteen more such Security Council resolutions in the 1980s alone. The General Assembly similarly condemned Israeli human rights practices, including Israel's refusal to recognize the applicability of the Geneva Conventions in the occupied territories (a December 1988 resolution was supported by 148 countries with only Israel casting a negative vote), its forcible removal and resettlement of Palestinian refugees living in the occupied territories (a December 1988 resolution was supported by 152 countries with only the United States and Israel casting negative votes), its "arbitrary detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians" (a December 1988 resolution was supported by 150 countries with only the United States and Israel casting negative votes), and its "continued massacre" of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories (an October 1989 resolution was supported by 141 countries with only the United States and Israel casting negative votes).

Sanctions. On 6 August 1990, the Security Council authorized an arms and economic embargo against Iraq. It added an air embargo on 25 September and on 29 November authorized the "use of all necessary means" (after 15 January 1991). The Security Council tried several times to authorize sanctions against Israel, but the United States, using its veto power and standing alone in opposition, blocked the way. In January 1982, the United States alone opposed a Security Council resolution calling for an arms and economic embargo against Israel for its annexation of the Golan Heights. In June 1982, the United States alone opposed a Security Council resolution threatening sanctions against Israel for its failure to withdraw from Lebanon. In August 1982, the United States alone opposed a Security Council resolution urging an arms embargo "as a first step" against Israel for its failure to withdraw from Lebanon. And in August 1983, the United States alone opposed a Security Council resolution threatening sanctions against Israel for its settlements policy.

Each time the Security Council adopted a resolution condemning Iraq it was the lead front-page story and subject of much commentary. Compare how the two leading national newspapers covered the resolutions against Israel.

In 1989, the Security Council deliberated on five resolutions condemning Israel. Two were adopted and three vetoed by a lone U.S. vote. The *Washington Post* index for 1989 does not list any of these deliberations in its extensive entry for "United Nations Resolutions," and only three of the resolutions received even fleeting mention in the paper's daily "Around the World" column.

Consider coverage in the *New York Times*. In December 1986, the Security Council adopted a resolution “strongly deplor[ing]” Israel’s killing and wounding of “defenceless [Palestinian] students.” The newspaper of record did not report the story.³⁹ Coincidentally, it did carry a major front-page article on the United Nations just as the Security Council was deliberating this resolution. Entitled “A Tempest in a Carafe: UN Debates Ice Water Question,” it reported that a UN committee was debating the “implications of restoring drinking water jugs” to offices (8 December 1986). In January 1988, a Security Council resolution “call[ing] again upon Israel to desist forthwith from its policies and practices which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people” was vetoed by a lone U.S. vote. The *Times* did not report the story. Ironically, as the Security Council was deliberating this resolution, the *Times* did feature an article entitled “Israeli General Describes Charges of Brutal Beatings as ‘Just Stories’” (29 January 1988). In May 1988, a Security Council resolution “condemn[ing] the recent invasion by Israeli forces of southern Lebanon” was vetoed by a lone U.S. vote. Again, the newspaper of record did not report the story. However, just as the Security Council debated the resolution, the *Times* did feature an article entitled “Lebanon Again — And the Israelis Are Quiet” (8 May 1988), reporting that, because the “Lebanon experience in 1982” had so wounded *Israel*, many Israelis were reluctant to talk about the army’s “latest victory.” In November 1989, a Security Council resolution “strongly deplor[ing]” Israel’s “siege of towns, the ransacking of the homes of inhabitants, . . . and the illegal and arbitrary confiscation of their property and valuables” in the occupied territories was vetoed by a lone U.S. vote. The newspaper of record did report this story, on the inside pages in three paragraphs. It also chose to run an editorial that same day entitled “A Welcome Inch in the Mideast” (8 November 1988) that urged “praise” for Prime Minister Shamir for advancing the peace process.

As mentioned above, in December 1989, 151 countries supported a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a two-state settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict under the auspices of an international peace conference, with only the U.S., Israel, and Dominica casting negative votes. The *New York Times* did not report the story. Instead, it featured an article on these same General Assembly proceedings entitled “U.N. Puts Off Its Vote on P.L.O.,” reporting that, under “broad international” pressure, the Arab states had deferred a General Assembly vote on recognizing the PLO as representative of a Palestinian state. The “broad international” support for a two-state settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict and an international peace conference was not deemed newsworthy.

Moral authority is indivisible; it cannot be selectively invoked. Yet the consensus of the United Nations was acclaimed in the Iraq-Kuwait conflict and

contemptuously dismissed or simply ignored in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.⁴⁰

Appendix 1

Watching Rights, Wrongly

“Who will guard the guardians?” — Juvenal

Middle East Watch’s *Needless Deaths in the Gulf War*⁴¹ was the most authoritative assessment of the Gulf “war” in light of the laws of armed conflict. To be sure, MEW understood the scope of its mandate to include investigation only of civilian casualties and damage done to civilian objects. Those interested in a legal assessment of military casualties (and the damage wrought on the natural environment) had to look elsewhere.⁴² We did learn, however, that the “allied coalition” suffered “mercifully few” casualties (1). MEW did not editorialize about or, for that matter, even allude to the Iraqi soldiers killed.

The report’s assessment generally conformed to the picture presented by the mainstream media. It also undoubtedly sat well with the Bush administration and the Pentagon. The “allied” bombing campaign, we were told, was “in many if not most respects . . . consistent with [its] stated intent to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties.” At worst, the laws of war “appear” to have been violated only in “some instances” (4). Iraq’s missile attacks, by contrast, were repeatedly scored as “flatly violat[ing],” and “serious” and “blatant” violations of, “humanitarian law” (20–21, 317, 381).⁴³

These conclusions, even if valid, would still require two crucial qualifications. First, they no more proved the virtue of the “allied coalition” than they did the iniquity of the Iraqi regime. Given the vast preponderance of force at the disposal of the “allies,” they were never, in the words of MEW, “driven by urgent military imperatives to take steps that might have imposed greater risk on civilians” (3).⁴⁴ Contrariwise, Iraq’s recourse to terrorism was the predictable, if deplorable, reaction of an outclassed belligerent.

Second, these conclusions are strictly relative to the total force brought to bear by each of the two sides. For example, MEW put the number of Iraqi civilian casualties resulting from the U.S.-led offensive at between twenty-five hundred and three thousand.⁴⁵ Combined Israeli and Saudi civilian casualties from the Scud missile attacks, by contrast, were put in the low teens (19, 317). I will have much more to say about these figures, and civilian damage generally, further on. For the moment, however, I want to stress that, even by MEW’s reckoning, the “allies” were by a wide margin the principal *absolute* vi-

olator of humanitarian law. This fact is easily missed, especially given MEW's wildly skewed depiction of Iraq as a full-fledged, if less than evenly matched, belligerent in the Gulf "war," a point to which I will also return presently.

One of MEW's central contentions, however, is plainly invalid. It is not true that the "allied coalition" generally adhered to the laws of war during the Gulf conflict. At any rate, the evidence presented in *Needless Deaths* does not sustain such a conclusion. Rather, judging by the material MEW assembled, one is forced to conclude that U.S. violations of humanitarian law were staggering in breadth as well as depth.

The purpose of this appendix is to demonstrate that MEW reached its apologetic conclusions by applying to the "allies" and Iraq a double standard. Specifically, in the two basic areas of humanitarian law examined by MEW, "means and methods of attacks" and "objects attacked," Iraq was held to an unusually stringent standard and the "allied coalition" to an unusually lax one. Indeed, I will argue that a double standard permeates virtually every facet of the report.

I

"Means and methods of attack" refers, *inter alia*, to the scheduling of attacks and the types of weapons deployed. Both the "allied coalition" and Iraq, for instance, were taken to task by MEW for attacking targets at times of day that tended to maximize civilian casualties (89, 382). Here I want to focus, however, on the matter of the weaponry used. MEW observed that humanitarian law prohibits the deployment of weapons that "do not have the technological capability to distinguish between civilian objects and military targets in populated civilian areas" (401). Accordingly, it condemned Iraq's use of the highly inaccurate Scud missile against urban areas in Israel and Saudi Arabia (21–22, 382–83).

Iraq was not alone in deploying indiscriminate weapons in urban areas, however. For, contrary to official and mainstream media pretenses, precision-guided or "smart" bombs accounted for only 7,400 tons (8.8 percent) of the approximately 84,200 tons of ordnance dropped by the "allied coalition" on Iraq and Kuwait. "Dumb" bombs, *which had an accuracy rate of only 25 percent*, thus accounted for about 77,000 tons (more than 90 percent) of the ordnance used (114–15).⁴⁶ Furthermore, MEW observed that "some of these precision munitions reportedly were used against Iraqi military targets in the Kuwaiti theater of operations, away from any civilian population, leaving an even smaller percentage for use in populated areas" (114). MEW deemed that a "key" and "critical" question was the following: "[W]hat percent of the total number of targets located in proximity to civilian areas were executed with dumb bombs?" (90, 121). It went on to say that "in the absence of additional

information from the Pentagon on this subject, it is impossible to assess the allies' compliance with the laws of war in this respect" (90). To be sure, circumstantial evidence suggested that, in cities like Basra (where the "allies" were less constrained by potentially adverse publicity since few reporters ventured outside Baghdad), the use of indiscriminate weaponry was widespread (273–74).⁴⁷ In any event, MEW's overall conclusion that the "allies" generally adhered to the laws of war would, in light of the above admission, appear to be doubtful at best.

One further observation is in order. There is evidently no objective measure to judge whether or not a weapon is "discriminate." MEW effectively used state-of-the-art weaponry as its standard. But such a measure barred all but the most technologically advanced powers from engaging targets in urban areas. Thus, MEW even condemned Iraq for a Scud attack that struck a legitimate military site in Saudi Arabia's capital city, Riyadh, since "the direct hit does not alter the indiscriminate nature of the weapon used" (395–96; cf. 382–33). MEW did not acknowledge, however, such a bias in its interpretation of humanitarian law; it pretended to apply an objective and neutral standard. Finally, in extenuation of the "allied coalition's" extensive recourse to indiscriminate weapons, MEW noted that "cost and availability" were "factors in the preference for dumb bombs" (6). No such concession was granted in the case of Iraq, however, where it seemingly applied with much greater force.

II

The laws of war also put definite limits on legitimate targets of attack. They proscribe the targeting of civilians and civilian objects to achieve a political objective. No object indispensable for the sustenance of the civilian population can be targeted. An object qualifies as a legitimate target only if it contributes effectively to the enemy's military action and its destruction offers a definite military advantage. Where attacks on legitimate military targets unavoidably involve the loss of civilian life and/or damage to civilian objects, humanitarian law requires that the harm done not be excessive relative to the military objective. On the other hand, no attack on a legitimate military target can justify extensive civilian losses and damages. (For a general review of these aspects of humanitarian law, see part 1 of *Needless Deaths*, "The Legal Standards.")

Accordingly, MEW condemned Iraq for directing missiles at Israeli and Saudi civilian targets "with a deliberate desire to cause as much civilian damage and suffering as possible" and "terrorize the civilian population." One "purpose of Iraq's attacks," according to MEW, "was unquestionably to goad Israeli forces into actively joining the conflict and, thereby, split the Arab

members of the coalition." It thereby "flatly violate[d]" the humanitarian law prohibition on targeting civilians to achieve a political objective (381–82, 318, 332–33, 20–21).

Consider now the United States and its "allies." They were taken to task (if perhaps in more cautious language) for targeting civilian vehicles on highways in Iraq and for the destruction of a post office and bus station here and a residential dwelling and bank there (see esp. chap. 5, "The View from the Ground: Eyewitness Accounts of Civilian Casualties and Damage"). It was apparently on the basis of these incidents (and the Ameriyya air raid shelter disaster, which left two to three hundred civilians dead [see 128–47]) that MEW computed Iraqi civilian deaths at between twenty-five hundred and three thousand and concluded that the "allied coalition" adhered, save in "some instances," to the laws of war (19). What MEW failed to note, however, was that reprehensible as these violations of humanitarian law were, they paled beside the methodical and intentional devastation of Iraq's critical civilian infrastructure and the concomitant (and predictable) massive destruction of civilian life. MEW did document these colossal violations of the laws of war but, inexplicably, ignored them in the report's central conclusions. In effect, MEW disregarded the major human rights crimes and focused instead on relatively minor infractions of humanitarian law. The result was a near-total whitewash of the U.S. administration and the Pentagon. In the words of the UN mission that visited Iraq in March 1991, the "allied" assault wrought

near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology. (153)

In violation of the laws of war that protect objects basic to the survival of the civilian population, food, agricultural, and water-treatment facilities were destroyed (8–9, 160–71). Crucially, the Iraqi electrical-generating system was crippled. By the end of the war only two of Iraq's twenty electrical plants were functioning, generating less than 4 percent of the prewar output. Inasmuch as Iraq was "reliant on electrical power for essential services such as water purification and distribution, sewage removal and treatment, the operation of hospitals and medical laboratories, and agricultural production," this destruction had "devastating" consequences for the civilian population (172, 171; see 9–10, 171–93). True, the Iraqi electrical system was an integrated grid, but that did not make it a legitimate military target. In the first place, MEW itself persuasively argued that the electrical plants probably did not contribute effectively to Iraq's military action and their destruction probably did not offer

a definite military advantage to the “allies” (187–90). A second and decisive consideration is that no object can be targeted if its destruction would result in the massive loss of civilian life.

To judge by the evidence cited by MEW, the human misery caused by the devastation of Iraq’s civilian infrastructure was massive indeed. A UNICEF representative posted in Iraq noted that the “vicious circle” of poor hygiene, contaminated water, and poor diet left about 100,000 Iraqi children under one year of age susceptible to diarrhea and dehydration (10). A visiting Harvard medical team estimated that approximately 170,000 children under the age of five would die in the coming year from gastroenteritis, cholera, typhoid, and malnutrition as a result of the “allied” assault, in particular “the destruction of electrical generating plants . . . and the consequent failure of water purification and sewage treatment systems” (184–85). (It is one of the singular oddities of *Needless Deaths* that, in a report that is nothing if not tediously redundant, citing the same quotes over and over again, the extraordinary UNICEF and Harvard figures are mentioned only once and almost in passing. Next to them, incidentally, the two hundred to three hundred deaths resulting from the attack on the Ameriyya shelter, deemed by MEW the “most tragic” civilian disaster of the war and accordingly examined in minute detail, did not even amount to a blip on the screen.)⁴⁸

What is more, the human catastrophe was predictable. Indeed, it was *premeditated*. MEW reported that the “grave” repercussions for civilian health of targeting the power source for water, sewer, and refuse disposal facilities were documented in “meticulous detail” in the United States Strategic Bombing Survey of Germany and Japan during World War II. Thus, U.S. military planners of the air war should have “readily anticipated” the calamity that ensued in Iraq (177–80). And it was anticipated, eagerly.⁴⁹ The point was to inflict enough human torment that Saddam would be forced from power or put at the mercy of the United States. MEW reported, for example, that “U.S. Air Force officials involved in planning the air war have indicated that one purpose of destroying the electrical system was to harm civilians and thus encourage them to overthrow Saddam Hussein.” It cited one air force planner’s statement to the *Washington Post* that the targeting of the plants was intended to send a message to the Iraqi people: “We’re not going to tolerate Saddam Hussein or his regime. Fix that, and we’ll fix your electricity” (10–11; see 82–87).⁵⁰

I do not see how the above passages from *Needless Deaths* can be reconciled with MEW’s main finding. The most essential Iraqi civilian infrastructure was comprehensively destroyed. The predictable result was massive destruction of Iraqi civilian life. The avowed purpose of this devastation of Iraqi civilians and civilian objects was to achieve the political objective of unseating Saddam or

forcing him to comply with American diktat. In each instance, the “allies” were guilty of an egregious violation of humanitarian law. Indeed, consider MEW’s critical observation that

insofar as the civilian population is concerned, it makes little or no difference whether [a civilian facility] is attacked and destroyed, or is made inoperable by the destruction of the electrical plant supplying it power. In either case, civilians suffer the same effects — they are denied the use of a public utility indispensable for their survival. (187)

MEW thus conceded that the “allies” effectively bombed hospitals and sewage treatment and water purification plants, which are the kinds of war crimes that would have led to hanging at Nuremberg. Yet MEW concluded that the “allied” bombing campaign was “in many if not most respects . . . consistent with [its] stated intent to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties” and that the laws of war “appear” to have been violated only in “some instances” (4).

III

The same double standard that indicted Iraq for “flatly violat[ing],” and “serious” and “blatant” violations of, humanitarian law, on the one hand, and the “allies” merely for transgressions in “some instances” of it, on the other, informed every aspect of *Needless Deaths*. Consider the following typical examples.

a. MEW was not averse to imputing the most malevolent motives to Iraqi conduct during the Gulf “war.” Thus, the “obvious reason” of avoiding “allied” aerial surveillance did not, for MEW, sufficiently explain Iraq’s decision to fire the Scuds at night. It darkly speculated that, since the targeted Israeli residential neighborhoods were most populated after dusk, Iraq “may also” have launched nighttime attacks to maximize civilian casualties. Likewise, MEW reasoned that, since many Scuds hit Tel Aviv but none the largely Arab-populated municipality of Jafó one kilometer to the south, the missiles had been aimed with “care” at Jewish civilians in Israel. Yet MEW then condemned the Scud as wildly inaccurate “since 50 percent of the missiles would not come within even one kilometer of the target” (381–83).

MEW also interpreted the motives of the “allies,” but with opposite results. Thus, it reported an “allied” attack on an “isolated” Bedouin encampment (the nearest highway was sixty miles away, the nearest military installation seventy miles, and the nearest town one hundred miles away) that left fourteen civilians dead. This would seem to have been a clear-cut case of an indiscriminate attack on Iraqi civilians, but not for MEW. For “although it is difficult to understand how it reasonably could be expected” that Iraqi mobile missile-launchers and accompanying vehicles “could travel easily over

desert roads so distant from major highways,” MEW “assumes” that the attacking aircraft “were seeking to destroy concealed” Scuds in the Bedouin tents (228–30; see 13–14).

Consider, finally, Israel. MEW noted in passing that, in the case of each Scud missile that landed in the West Bank, intercepting Patriot missiles were “not fired.” Recall, incidentally, that under international law Israel, as the occupying power, was duty bound to “take all the measures in its power” to “ensure as far as possible” the safety of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.⁵¹ MEW reported without any comment at all that the IDF “was said to be investigating” why no effort was made to defend the occupied territories from Scud attacks. (368–70)

b. MEW repeatedly condemned Iraq for “terrorism” against a civilian population on account of press releases filled with “utterly ghoulish language” that it issued after each Scud missile attack (22–23, 323, 328, 383–84, 386, 397, 402). I will leave to one side the aptness of characterizing *ex post facto* descriptions of a missile attack, however “ghoulish,” as terrorism. The larger question is this: Why didn’t MEW also condemn the “allied coalition,” which caused the massive destruction of civilian life to achieve a political objective, for “terrorism”? Rather, the strongest condemnation made by MEW in this regard concerned the “allied coalition’s” targeting of Iraqi “civilian morale” (86–87). MEW also observed:

Although technically there may be a distinction between morale and terror bombing, they are, in practice, treated the same. It has often been observed that what is morale bombing to the attacking force is terror bombing to the civilians who are targeted. (32)

Revealingly, in its assessment of Iraqi press statements following the Scud attacks, MEW took the perspective of the “civilians who are targeted” and called the attacks “terrorism,” whereas in its assessment of bombing by the “allied coalition,” it took the perspective of the “attacking force” and deemed the attacks “morale bombing.”

On a related matter, Iraqi press statements were typically dismissed by MEW as “an outpouring of rhetoric,” “rhetorical bravado,” “propaganda,” “bombast,” “a flourish of characteristic rhetoric,” and so on, designed for the consumption of the “Arab masses” (22, 324, 327–29, 333, 355, 367, 391). Yet MEW never used such charged language to characterize “allied” press statements. The closest MEW came to criticism of the “allied coalition” was an occasional reference to “elaborately rehearsed military briefings” or the Bush administration’s “carefully constructed image of perfection” or a Pentagon report that “misleadingly reinforces” the “allied coalition’s” perspective

(1–2, 117; see 14). Consider, however, the following typical quotations cited in *Needless Deaths*:

“We’re being very, very careful in our direction of attacks to avoid damage of any kind to civilian installations.” — General Schwarzkopf, January 27 (91–92)

“I think I should point out right here that we never had any intention of destroying all of Iraqi electrical power.” — General Schwarzkopf, January 30 (175)

“We are doing everything possible and with great success to minimize collateral damage.” — President Bush, February 5 (93)

“We are going to such great lengths to target military facilities and military installations and to not try to do any damage to civilian targets.” — White House spokesperson Marlin Fitzwater, February 11 (81)

“We knew this to be a military command-and-control facility and targeted it for that reason. . . . We targeted it, we bombed it very accurately, we bombed a building that had barbed wire around it, not an indication of a bomb shelter. We bombed a building that had a camouflage roof painted on it for whatever reason, again, [it] didn’t look like a bomb shelter.” — Lieutenant General Thomas Kelly of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the bombing of the Ameriyya air raid shelter, February 13 (134)

Each of these statements was flatly contradicted by the evidence assembled in *Needless Deaths*. Why, then, didn’t MEW dismiss them as propaganda designed for public consumption? Indeed, had MEW attended at all to the real meaning of these words, it would not even have labeled them as propaganda but simply as lies, and flagrant ones at that.

c. Not only did MEW refrain from plainly denouncing the Bush administration’s lies, it sustained the administration’s central myth that what unfolded in the Gulf between 17 January and 28 February was a “war.”⁵²

Consider the following statistics:⁵³

	<i>“Allied Coalition”</i>	<i>Iraq</i>
military casualties	350	56,000–115,000
civilian casualties	14	115,000
tonnage of ordnance sustained	20	84,200

Notwithstanding this wildly imbalanced balance sheet, MEW managed to devote almost a third of its findings on the Gulf “war” (100 pages) to the Iraqi missile attacks. In order to fill this space, MEW devoted page after page to the copious documentation of Scud attacks that caused “no casualties or damage” (366–68, 378, 379–80, 392–93, 396–98). Indeed, one page was even given over to a Scud “attack” that apparently never happened (371)! Had MEW been at equal pains to document the consequences of the dropping of 84,200 tons of ordnance by the “allies,” *Needless Deaths* would have filled not sev-

eral hundred but *several hundred thousand* pages. As it was, *Needless Deaths* perpetuated the Bush administration's central myth that Iraq was a powerful and dangerous adversary. The truth is that what unfolded in the Gulf between 17 January and 28 February 1991 was not at all a "war" but, as several commentators honestly observed, a "slaughter." Its fundamental goal — the systematic destruction of Iraq's essential civilian infrastructure — was a "form of biological warfare, designed to ensure long-term suffering and death among civilians so that the US would be in a good position to attain its political goals for the region."⁵⁴ An average reader of *Needless Deaths* would hardly come away from the report with an understanding of this basic truth.

Appendix 2

Israel's "Higher Standard"

As I have attempted to show in this chapter, Israel has benefited from a double standard in international affairs. Yet the commonplace complaint in the West has been that it *suffered* from one. Thus, at a June 1992 Jerusalem Foundation fund-raiser, Professor Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins University and CBS news-anchor Dan Rather both faulted the media for holding Israel to, in Rather's words, "a higher standard. . . . One is kidding oneself to believe it is otherwise."⁵⁵ To understand the absolute baselessness of such a claim, consider how the *New York Times* covered, in the preceding decade (1981–91), the issue of torture.

Torture became an important topic of discussion in the 1980s as Amnesty International mounted a major campaign to publicize and so curtail it. The *New York Times* ran a large number of feature stories on every aspect of torture. In its Middle East coverage, the *Times* devoted at least one article almost every year to torture in Iran for the period under consideration, for a total of twenty-six. In the same period, fifteen articles targeted torture in Turkey; fourteen were devoted to torture in Iraq; and eight focused on Egypt. All told, the *Times* devoted well over eighty pieces to torture in the Middle East, Israel aside.

Consider how the case of Israel was treated. Except for a brief period under Prime Minister Begin, torture was practiced continuously from the early 1970s against Palestinian detainees. By 1977 its use was definitively documented by a team of British investigative reporters. An exhaustive July 1991 Amnesty International study concluded that

torture or ill-treatment seem to be virtually institutionalized during the arrest and interrogation procedures preceding the detainee's appearance before a mili-

tary court. The practices relating in particular to interrogation procedures have been officially endorsed or are generally condoned, and therefore effectively encouraged, by the authorities. They clearly have a direct impact on the possibility of having a fair trial, mainly by leading to coerced confessions which are difficult to challenge in court.

Amnesty International also observed that, when brought to trial, most Palestinian detainees arrested for “terrorist” offenses and tortured by the Shin Bet (General Security Services) “have been accused of offenses such as membership in unlawful associations or throwing stones. They have also included prisoners of conscience such as people arrested solely for raising a flag.” On a related point, *Haaretz* columnist B. Michael noted that there wasn’t a single recorded case in which the Shin Bet’s use of torture was prompted by a “ticking bomb” scenario: “In every instance of a Palestinian lodging a formal complaint about torture, the Shin Bet justified its use in order to extract a confession about something that had already happened, not about something that was about to happen.”

Released a few months before Amnesty’s findings, an equally exhaustive March 1991 study by B’Tselem (Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) reached similar conclusions. It found that, to extract confessions, “torture” had been “carried out in a widespread and routine way by agents of the Shin Bet (General Security Services).” The report also implicated Israeli military judges and medical personnel as “secret accessories” to these “criminal offenses” and “grave violations” of professional ethics. Methods of torture included:

Hoarding for prolonged periods; enforced standing for long periods, sometimes in an enclosed space, hands bound behind the backs and legs tied (“al-Shabah”); being bound in other painful ways (such as the “banana” position); prolonged periods of painful confinement in small, specially constructed cells (the “closet” or “refrigerator”); and severe and prolonged beating on all parts of the body.

Such torture, B’Tselem continued, was practiced against “only suspects whose guilt cannot be presumed.” Indeed, “nearly 50% of interrogations end up with no charges being pressed, or any other steps taken against the detainee.” Every Palestinian in the B’Tselem sample was tortured or ill-treated during interrogation; *not one* was charged with a serious offense involving violence. Although the “prohibition against torture is absolute” under international law, the study further stressed, the 1987 Landau Commission “ended up legitimating the use of torture” with its sanction (in a manner specified only in a secret annex) of “moderate physical force”: “[T]he use of torture and ill-treatment follows logically from its recommendations.”

In a follow-up study published one year later, B’Tselem reported that, despite the “immediate and extensive attention” given its original findings, “the

picture is much the same as we revealed a year ago." A Middle East Watch report observed that only "in one instance did the mistreatment of a Palestinian in custody lead to actual time in prison for GSS [General Security Services] interrogators." Due to a "unique combination of circumstances," the state did prosecute and convict two GSS interrogators. For the torture death of twenty-seven-year-old Khaled Ali, they were sentenced to six months in prison on a charge of "negligence."

Reporting on Israeli reaction to the copiously documented and widely publicized allegations of torture, Hebrew University criminologist Stanley Cohen summarized:

Within the tiny (and diminishing) liberal enclaves of Israeli society, there is the self-serving myth that "things like this can't happen here" — and if they do, they are isolated abuses that will be dealt with properly. The ideological Right . . . perceives any attempt to expose gross human-rights violations as anti-Israel propaganda. The rest of the society — the majority of which has no moral unease about what happens to Palestinians and will justify anything in the name of national security — pays no attention to such talk.⁵⁶

Returning to the *Times*, it has probably devoted as much space to coverage of Israel as to the entire Arab world combined. Yet for the full decade under consideration (1981–91), the *Times* found space for only five items on Israeli torture of Palestinian detainees:

1986

sixty words, inside page

Reporting that Israel will investigate Amnesty International allegations of torture, the *Times* concludes that (quoting a justice ministry official) "Israel investigates each complaint in a most detailed way."

1987

several paragraphs, inside page

The *Times* reports that, in a major national scandal, an official Israeli inquiry found that the Shin Bet had committed perjury in denying the use of torture against "terrorist suspects." The *Times* quotes Israeli editorials acclaiming the "courageous [Landau Commission] report." Recall this is the report that, in B'Tselem's words, "ended up legitimating torture."

"Think Piece" by the Times's resident expert on the Middle East, Thomas Friedman

To set the context for a proper understanding of Israel's use of torture, Friedman opens on a foreboding note: "There is a war going on here . . ." — a point that the torture regime in Iraq would have no doubt also wanted to make. He goes on to observe that, unlike wars elsewhere, however, "[t]he toll is measured not in the destruction of buildings but in the damage done to people's souls and in the erosion of norms of behavior" — not, as one might naively have imagined, in the damage done to the bones of Palestinians.

Discussing the Landau Commission report, Friedman observes that the Shin Bet had lied about its use of torture against “Palestinians suspected of engaging in, or planning, bombings and other violent attacks against Israelis,” even though, as seen above, fully 50 percent of those tortured were let go without even being charged with a crime, and there wasn’t a single recorded instance of a “ticking bomb” scenario prompting Shin Bet torture.

To account for the “complacency” with which Israelis received the Landau report, Friedman suggests that, “after all,” the tortured Palestinians “would have been more than ready to trade places with their interrogators,” another point that Iraq’s torturers would no doubt want to make. Friedman also finds “something healthy” in the fact that Israel, unlike Syria, “would undertake such an investigation,” although the investigation concluded with the not-so-healthy recommendation to *sanction* torture.

Friedman also approvingly quotes one Israeli’s insight that the depth of the occupation’s “corruption” was measured in the Shin Bet’s “telling lies at the very heart of the Israeli democracy: its courts,” and not, say, in the Shin Bet’s breaking of Palestinian bones.⁵⁷

1990

one-hundred-word item, inside page

Israelis are debating, the *Times* reports, whether or not to prosecute several police officers for torture.

several paragraphs, inside page

A number of Palestinians protesting the death of a detainee, the *Times* reports, were killed or wounded. It then points up the reporter’s dilemma: prison officials claim the detainee committed suicide whereas “Palestinians have long maintained that the Shin Bet . . . uses beatings and even torture to force confessions.” One useful bit of information for resolving the dilemma not mentioned is that not only Palestinians but *every major human rights organization* that has examined Israel maintains that the Shin Bet uses torture to force confessions. Palestinians stubbornly “insisted that the dead Palestinian had been perfectly healthy” when taken into custody, the *Times* concludes with an odd touch of irony, “despite” the fact that he was known to have participated in “political activities.”

These five items are a complete catalog of *Times* coverage, for the period 1981–91, of Israeli torture. Not once did the *Times* even hint at the not trivial fact that Israel’s torture of Palestinian detainees in the occupied territories is “virtually institutionalized” (Amnesty International) and “systematic and routine” (B’Tselem).

Recall news-anchor Dan Rather’s assertion at the Jerusalem Foundation fund-raiser that “one is kidding oneself to believe” that “Israel isn’t held to a higher standard” in the media. Who’s kidding whom?

Chapter 4

Why Palestinians Cheered the Scud Missiles



I

“Why not?” Caid replied, more perplexed than annoyed by my question. Indeed, few Palestinians seemed even to be aware that cheering the Scud missiles was a “controversial” issue. As I approached, on my arrival in Beit Sahour after the Gulf devastation, the Mikhail home, Abu Issa (Samira’s father-in-law) excitedly beckoned me from the balcony to come upstairs. Issa’s first impulse after the usual greetings was to describe, as he hissed like a missile, a wide arc in the air. Everyone in the room laughed appreciatively, Issa then flashing a wide grin. It was one of the few moments during that summer when people seemed genuinely, if ever so ephemerally, lighthearted.

“So, why did you cheer the Scud missiles?” I again asked Caid, an agricultural engineer living in Fawwar camp near Hebron. Outside, Israeli soldiers were indiscriminately lobbing tear-gas canisters and sound bombs into dwellings as they announced yet another curfew. Everyone in Caid’s home was hugging the walls, except a three-year-old perched on the window sill. “Stone them!” the infant shouted, shaking her fist. The Scud attacks, Caid replied, were the first time he saw panic in the eyes of Israelis. “I wanted them to experience the same fright they caused me.” Moussa’s six-year-old daughter, Marwa, was “happy Saddam sent missiles to Israel” because “Israel killed many of us, put Baba in prison, and beat us.” Repeatedly humiliated and tortured, Moussa had put in several stints of administrative detention, the last time apparently for having me as a guest in his home.

The “sweet taste of revenge” is perhaps not the most elevated of human sensibilities; but it is also not a uniquely Palestinian one. Consider the American reaction to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. “Japan’s surprise attack,” John Dower reports in *War without Mercy*, “provoked a rage bordering on the genocidal among Americans.” Rallying his men under such slogans as “Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs,” Admiral William Halsey, commander of the South Pacific, vowed after Pearl Harbor that, by the end of the war,

Japanese would be spoken only in hell. More than one in ten Americans, according to public opinion polls, consistently supported the “extermination” of the Japanese as a people, while a comparable percentage were in favor of severe retribution after Japan had been defeated (“eye for an eye,” “punishment, torture,” etc.). The firebombing of Tokyo in March 1945, which left some one hundred thousand civilians dead — “scorched and boiled and baked to death,” in the words of the mastermind of the new strategy, Major General Curtis LeMay — and more than a million people homeless, evoked “no sustained protest,” according to Dower. Indeed, there was “scarcely a murmur of protest on the home front,” with the Allied air raids, “one of the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history,” to quote Douglas MacArthur’s key aide, “widely accepted as just retribution.” The United States should continue bombing Japan “until we have destroyed about half the Japanese civilian population,” Elliott Roosevelt, the president’s son and confidant, advised in 1945. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents in a December 1945 *Fortune* magazine poll wished that the United States had the opportunity to use “many more” atomic bombs before Japan surrendered.¹

II

“You can’t blame us for cheering,” protested Nasser, “when Israel is torturing us.” We were sitting in a rehabilitation center Nasser administered for Palestinian youth who had been permanently disabled by the beatings or bullets of Israeli soldiers. “It’s not our fault if we hate the Israelis, it’s their fault.” The “politically correct” response was that Israeli citizens should not be held accountable for the crimes of the Israeli state. It was also, in my view, a politically invalid response.

Collective responsibility is a notoriously imprecise concept. Yet three points along a spectrum can be marked off that are less open to dispute. At one extreme is a dictatorship in which the citizenry has no say in state policy or intervenes at extreme personal risk. The midpoint is a representative democracy in which the citizenry is able to shape state policy. It may not actually do so, but the means are there if it chooses to. At the other extreme is a democracy in which virtually the entire citizenry in addition to influencing state policy is mobilized to carry out its execution as well. One example is a democratic state with a conscripted citizen-army. Moving from one end of the spectrum to the other, collective responsibility evidently increases. Consider now Israel, which is arguably located at the democratic extreme of the spectrum.

Contrary to widespread belief, Israel’s citizenry has generally supported the most repressive measures applied against Palestinians. As Israel wreaked havoc on Lebanon in June 1982, public opinion polls found that Ariel

Sharon's popularity had soared with 56 percent of the respondents ranking him the "best suited to be Defense Minister" (an increase of 14 points from the prewar month of May), as had the popularity of Begin with 51 percent ranking him "best suited to be Prime Minister" (an increase of 11 points from the prewar month of May). More than 80 percent viewed the invasion as fully justified. Indeed, as Israel's battering of Beirut in mid-August 1982 reached new heights of savagery, polls still showed that more than one of every two Israelis would vote to reelect the Begin-Sharon government, and more than 80 percent still supported the Lebanon invasion. Only when the domestic costs proved too onerous, initially, because of the worldwide outcry against the Sabra-Chatila massacres that threatened to isolate Israel internationally and, later, due to the escalating military casualties, did Israelis turn against the Lebanon invasion. Similarly, as Israel's repression of the *intifada* reached new levels of brutality in mid-1989, a poll found that more than 70 percent of Israelis believed there was no contradiction between the army's handling of the uprising and "the nation's democratic values," and more than half believed that the army should deploy yet "stronger measures" to quell the remarkably nonviolent Palestinian revolt. Only one in four supported any reduction in the levels of Israeli violence.

Indeed, the little public dissent from Israel's murderous policies was largely symbolic. Referring to Peace Now, the mainstream opposition movement, General (Res.) Mattityahu Peled, a political activist and professor of Arabic literature at Tel Aviv University, observed that "it's one of the worst things that ever happened to us." He continued:

Nice people in Israel who feel unhappy with the situation but are not prepared to do anything about it, they get together twice or three times a year, and as the saying goes here, they give their conscience to the laundry. They get it back cleaned up, and they go back home happy and satisfied. There is nothing more to it than that. They stand at a demonstration. They shout a few slogans. They go home satisfied that they have done the job, but they are not prepared to shake the system. So this is a substitute for real action.²

Yet Israelis had to bear not only the responsibility that redounds on citizens in a democratic state that pursues criminal policies but also the much larger share of responsibility that falls to a mobilized citizenry who directly implement the criminal policies of a democratic state. Recalling his stint as a guard in Gaza Beach, "one of the best" Israeli internment camps for Palestinians, Israeli journalist Ari Shavit expatiated on this crucial point with rare candor and insight:

Most [Palestinians] are awaiting trial; most were arrested because they were throwing stones or were said to be members of illegal organizations. Many are in their teens. Among them, here and there, are some boys who are small and

appear to be very young. . . . The prison has twelve guard towers. Some Israeli soldiers are struck — and deeply shaken — by the similarity between these and certain other towers, about which they have learned at school. . . . [T]he unjust analogy with those other camps of fifty years ago won't go away. . . . And I, too, who have always abhorred this analogy, who have always argued bitterly with anyone who so much as hints at it, I can no longer stop myself. The associations are too strong. . . . Like a believer whose faith is cracking, I go over and over again in my mind the long list of arguments, the list of differences. . . . But then I realize[] that the problem is not in the similarity — for no one can seriously think that there is a real similarity — but that there isn't enough lack of similarity. The problem is that the lack of similarity isn't strong enough to silence once and for all the evil echoes, the accusing images. Maybe the Shin Bet [secret police] is to blame for this — for the arrests it makes and what it does to those arrested. For almost every night, after it has managed, in its interrogations, to “break” a certain number of young men, the Shin Bet delivers to the [soldiers] a list with the names of the friends of the young men. . . . [Then] the soldiers . . . go out almost every night to the city and . . . come back with children of fifteen or sixteen years of age. The children grit their teeth. Their eyes bulge from their sockets. In not a few cases they have already been beaten. . . . And soldiers crowd together in the “reception room” to look at them when they undress. To look at them in their underwear, to look at them as they tremble with fear. And sometimes they kick them — one kick more, before they put on their new prison clothes. . . . Or maybe the doctor is to blame. You wake him up in the middle of the night to treat one of those just brought in — a young man, bare-foot, wounded, who looks as if he's having an epileptic fit, who tells you that they beat him just now on the back and the stomach and over the heart. There are ugly red marks all over his body. The doctor turns to the young man and shouts at him. In a loud, raging voice he says: May you die! And then he turns to me with a laugh: May they all die! Or maybe the screams are to blame. At the end of the watch, . . . you sometimes hear horrible screams . . . from the other side of the . . . fence of the interrogation section, . . . hair-raising human screams. Literally hair-raising. . . . In Gaza our General Security Services therefore amount to a Secret Police, our internment facilities are cleanly run Gulags. Our soldiers are jailers, our interrogators torturers. In Gaza it's all straightforward and clear. There's no place to hide.

And just who were these “jailers” and “torturers”? Shavit continues with his description:

I am here doing my annual reserve service, like any other Israeli man. . . . * What is happening here is that an entire population of our reservists — bank clerks, insurance agents, electronic engineers, technicians, retailers, students — carries out the task of imprisoning another entire population, theirs — tile layers, plasterers, lab workers, journalists, clergy, students. This is something without parallel in any part of the world today that is thought to be decent. And you

*Generally, Israeli Jews between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one serve two to three years in the armed forces. Israeli Jewish males then do at least sixty-two days active duty annually in reserve units until age fifty-five, spending altogether nine years in uniform.

are a partner in it. You comply. . . . Only one out of sixty of us refuse to do guard duty in the interrogation section. Only four or five look troubled. Most of the rest get accustomed to it very quickly. . . . And these people, your friends, ordinary Israelis, . . . these good people who are solid citizens, . . . undergo here, without the slightest difficulty, the silent metamorphosis that is required of them. . . . I make a quick calculation. I estimate that several hundred young men at least must do reserve duty in this internment camp each year. So in all camps of this type, the number of reservists each year must amount to at least several thousand. Thus in the forty months of *intifada*, more than ten thousand Israeli citizens in uniform have walked between the fences, have heard the screams, have seen the young being led in and out. One out of every hundred Israeli men has been here (or maybe one out of seventy, or one out of fifty). And the country has been quiet. Has flourished. . . . Ten thousand (if not fifteen thousand, if not twenty thousand) Israelis have done their work faithfully — have opened the heavy iron doors of the isolation cell and then closed it. Have led the man from the interrogation chamber to the clinic, from the clinic back to the interrogation chamber. They have looked close up at people shitting in terror, pissing in fear. And not one among them has begun a hunger strike in front of the house of the prime minister. Not one among them that I know of has said, This will not happen. Not in a Jewish state.³

Members of Peace Now and kindred spirits in the Israeli “peace camp” professed that, while doing service in Lebanon and the occupied territories, *they*, at any rate, were filled with anguish. Yet how one feels is clearly of subsidiary importance to what one *does*: a murderer is still a murderer whether he kills with a heavy heart or a light one. This hypocrisy was not lost on everyone. Declaring his intention to “emigrate from Israel tomorrow,” Yehuda Ya’ari, the highly respected editor of *Kibbutz*, issued a scathing attack on the duplicity of Peace Now, which, he said, coupled the most elevated of ideals with the basest of actions:

I am emigrating because Peace Now serves Arik Sharon. . . . They flash their brass, serving as battalion commanders in repressive missions, and then righteously and hypocritically lecture before their regular audience of a few thousand. . . . When they receive an order to disperse [Palestinian] gatherings or imprison hundreds of thousands in their homes, they obey it in the name of democracy — which is good for one people and unnecessary for another people. And, in the name of Israel’s security, . . . they destroy the home of an entire family, even if only one of its members is suspected of something, leaving children and a wife and elderly parents outside. Between one rally and another, between one slogan and another, between one great speech and another, . . . they uproot orchards and awaken sleeping children.⁴

The asymmetry of the Palestinian and Israeli positions must also be kept in mind. The worst that can be said of Palestinians is that they cheered while *others* fired lethal weapons at Israel. The best that can be said of Israelis is that they anguished while *they themselves* fired lethal weapons at Palestinians.

The Palestinian “worst case” would seem to be legally and ethically rather less culpable than the Israeli “best case.”

Strongly opposed to “refusal” or civil disobedience, Peace Now and the “left”-leaning Citizen’s Rights Movement (CRM) held that, if called upon to serve in the army, Israelis must do so. One rationale of popular CRM leader Yossi Sarid and the “peace camp” generally was that “peaceniks” were less likely, in the course of duty, to commit criminal acts. Yet, as an Israeli commentator observed, most of the 140 Palestinian children shot dead during the *intifada* were victims, not of malevolence, but of “good-natured soldiers who meticulously fulfilled the rules of engagement.” The root cause of the blood-letting was the army’s “presence in the towns and villages with the declared intention of suppressing a popular uprising of an occupied people.” Such a presence “guarantees that children, women, old and young people, will be killed wholesale. That’s the way it is and one must either join in or refuse.” Brimming with disgust at the sight of Palestinians “shouting like lunatics ‘Allah Akbar’ as the evil Scud missiles fell on our heads,” Sarid pointed up this telling contrast: “When a stray bullet kills one of their children, it also tugs at our heart, but when a missile is deliberately fired at our children, it fills their hearts with joy.” It is not certain that the Palestinians who “shouted like lunatics” were rejoicing at the thought of dead Israeli children. What is certain, however, is that by not sanctioning the right to refuse army service, Sarid (like the mainstream Israeli “peace camp” generally) sanctioned the murder of Palestinian children, albeit with an anguished heart.⁵

The public display of anguish at performing an onerous but appointed duty is typically an exercise in self-extenuation and self-exoneration: *I suffer, therefore I am good*. The unacknowledged net effect is to make one a more effective killer, because one becomes a killer with a clean conscience. Indeed, as shown elsewhere, the Nazis were particularly adept at this sort of ritualized spectacle. Not every Israeli, however, was seduced by these manipulative outpourings of angst or was unaware of the sinister purposes they served. Ridiculing as a kind of “kitsch” the “shooting and crying” literature that proliferated in Israel after the June 1967 war, philosopher Avishai Margalit went on to suggest that this “self-righteous” sentimentality could also be “evil”: it turned the “fighting soldier into an object of complete innocence,” and the “enemy” became “all the more deserving of severe punishment.” Another Israeli writer considered the exemplary case of Major General Amram Mitzna, whose brooding good looks made him a favorite among Israeli (and American) Jews. Presiding over many of the worst Israeli atrocities during the *intifada*, Mitzna was “quite practiced when it comes to putting on a mournful expression and rolling his eyes like someone engaged in performing a difficult task for his ungrateful country.” “Despite the serious emotional difficulties involved in the

task," the Israeli writer continued, "Mitzna keeps a stiff upper lip and remains unperturbed. . . . Every time [a Palestinian] is shot in the back, he sheds tears and every time [a Palestinian] is killed, he gives a sermon about his moral rectitude which, because of bitter reality, cannot but get sullied." "This whole spectacle," concluded the writer,

is so repulsive, hypocritical and feeble that it finally makes you want to call on [Mitzna] to forthrightly face the dilemma: Do you want to shoot or do you want to cry? It is true that a general must carry out the orders of the political echelon. But he still has a choice. He can resign and, in so doing, end his responsibility for the children shot in the back, the brutality, the humiliations, the harassment, the physical and psychological torture. . . . Just don't let him send us people to whisper that he's the best of the lot, and that if he leaves, a real murderer will take his place. The "killers" who arrive on the job with a bad record are usually much more careful than those who are supposedly "one of us." They also don't blur the picture with crocodile tears.⁶

Israel's anguished posturing was lapped up by the willfully gullible American media. Its never-ending "image problem" was thus kept within manageable bounds. "Israel in Torment" read the *Newsweek* headline after the Sabra-Chatila massacres. A secondary headline proclaimed "The Anguish of American Jews," while an inside report dwelt upon "the troubled soul of Israel." As Israel unleashed an unprecedentedly brutal wave of repression to crush the first stirrings of the *intifada*, the *New York Times's* headline read, "Israel's New Violent Tactic Takes Toll on Both Sides," and the *New York Review of Books* blazoned across its front page, "The Agony in Israel."⁷

Asked if she was let down by the Palestinian reaction to the Gulf crisis, CRM leader Shulamith Aloni responded:

Why should I be disappointed? Have I done anything for them? Has the Israeli Left done anything for them? The Israeli Left are loyal citizens of Israel, supporting the establishment and upholding the security system. Sometimes we think we are different. That we have done something for the Palestinians. . . . We felt we did a lot. De facto, we did not. The government continues to rule in the Territories — suppressing human rights, destroying, killing — and we have a share in it because we have not gone into revolt. We obey the law. We serve in the army. . . . In short, we abide by the rules of the democratic game. And therefore, we are partners. . . . all of us. We are a figleaf for Israeli democracy. . . . The Palestinians have no obligation towards us. We have done nothing for them and they do not owe us anything.⁸

III

To explain the Palestinian cheers, Moussa emphasized the escalating brutality of the occupation. He recalled that neither he nor his friends had ever

approved of attacks on Israeli civilians. Yet, during the terrible months following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Moussa admitted, attitudes changed. As Israel tightened its control over the occupied territories and the rest of the world stood by silently, indeed approvingly, the accumulated hatred of Palestinians crystallized into a yearning for revenge.

The worst measure was the protracted, strictly enforced curfew. The West Bank and Gaza became, in the words of an Israeli journalist, "one vast internment camp." Most Palestinians were confined to their homes for fully forty-five days, with the curfew lifted only two to three hours every three to four days. In Gaza, the curfew was lifted only once a week for two hours, and only women were permitted to leave their homes. Deheishe refugee camp was placed under curfew almost continuously for nearly one hundred days. Pointing to the calm that prevailed when it was intermittently lifted, Moussa deemed the curfew totally unjust. "Security considerations," concurred Meron Benvenisti, "could not justify" the curfew and attendant repression: "No one had any doubt that the government was imposing a collective punishment in reaction to the Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein." Even during temporary respites from the curfew, Palestinians were forbidden to travel from one district to the next without special passes. Comparing interdistrict travel to "passing through the Seven Gates of Hell," one supporter of the right-wing Likud bloc recalled that the soldiers who did duty with him in the West Bank "were so consumed with hate that they tried every means to harass and humiliate." Palestinians with authorization to travel were held at roadblocks for hours at a time, while soldiers "ordered the drivers to take the seats out of their cars, remove the spare tire, and play their cassettes — one at a time."⁹

With educational institutions ordered shut, the Palestinian school year was severely truncated for the fourth time in as many years. (Israeli schools resumed a partial schedule by the second week of the war and a full schedule soon thereafter.) Health services collapsed. Due to the curfew, Palestinian medical personnel could not reach their places of work, nor could Palestinians in need of medical care call an ambulance or drive to a hospital. On-duty soldiers would routinely withhold transit passes from Palestinians seeking medical care, doubting that they were in fact ill. "What kind of situation have we reached," the same Likudnik asked, "when simple soldiers diagnose the medical condition of residents?" And "when a doctor traveling during the curfew was caught, they made him stand with his hands up against a wall for an hour-and-a-half until they decided what to do with him." Al-Muqassed Hospital in Jerusalem registered only 150 births during the protracted curfew, as against an average of 500 in a normal month.¹⁰

Economic activity also ground to a halt. Laborers employed in Israel or local industry could not travel to work. Farmers could not harvest their crops.

Average daily losses during the curfew were minimally estimated at more than five million dollars in the West Bank and Gaza. Moussa's biggest worry was his family in Fawwar. With no one working, they didn't even have money to purchase flour. Conditions teetered on the catastrophic. "Even if they do not consciously seek to starve the Palestinians," an Israeli journalist suggested, "some senior Israeli officers are still prepared to abandon the starving to the mercy of Allah." Indeed, a Nablus-bound convoy of Israeli and Palestinian doctors on a mission to deliver formula to "hungry babies... suffering real starvation" was repeatedly harassed by Israeli military authorities. Even as the military conflict wound down, the civilian situation continued to deteriorate. Seeking to "sound the alarm bells... of every decent person," an Israeli journalist reported from Gaza the "terrible facts" of the "massive unemployment" that was "rapidly turning the Strip... into a disaster area on the brink of hunger and beyond it." He added: "Half-starving children are already crying in the street at night because of hunger. Desperate parents with empty pockets stand by helplessly, nourishing feelings of hatred and revenge as they count pennies for a pita and vegetables and worry about buying milk tomorrow." "A day will come," the correspondent warned, "when the Israeli government — all of us — will be asked to answer the question: Where were you and what did you do when the Strip became a ghetto, when its 700,000 residents were fenced off and the unemployed fought for a piece of bread for their starving children?"¹¹

Palestinians charged with breaking curfew (they numbered nearly two thousand) received fines ranging from \$250 to \$500. Even in good times the fine would have been onerous since the average monthly wage of a Palestinian worker is \$500. Most could not afford to pay and were jailed for as many as six weeks. Military authorities used the occasion of the curfew to demand the payment of taxes that were not even due until the coming year. The journalist reporting from Gaza observed that

the Israeli government not only doesn't lift a finger to prevent the unprecedented deterioration, but even makes matters worse by sending revenue collectors to hound these unfortunate people whose pockets are already empty. ... Everyone is doing his job, everyone is obeying orders. The thousand arms of the government perform a thousand actions... with impenetrable indifference — and the result is a terrible catastrophe: methodical starvation of the residents of the Strip.

One Gazan put the situation starkly: "You are killing us without guns. Killing us with regulations, forms, instructions."¹²

Besides the curfew, the memory that most disturbed Palestinians was the question of the gas masks. When I left the occupied territories in late August 1990, Iraq had invaded Kuwait and the danger of war throughout the region

loomed large. Israel had already begun distributing gas masks to its own citizens. With a mixture of cynicism and despair, Samira anticipated that, if war did break out, Israelis would enjoy some protection, "while we will be left to die like rats." Back in the United States, I gave voice to her concerns. They were uniformly dismissed, however, as the macabre fantasy of someone whose bitterness had gotten the better of her good judgment. Israel would never be so cruel or callous. Yet after all, Samira wasn't so far off the mark. Alleging that "the areas of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip are not the target of possible Iraqi missile attacks," the Israeli government initially refused to provide Palestinians with gas masks. This rationale did not prevent, however, the distribution of masks to all the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories. Even after the Israeli High Court reversed the government's decision and several Iraqi missiles had indeed struck the West Bank, only 3 percent of the Palestinians received masks. No Palestinian child was given one. Palestinians thus had to contemplate the cruel prospect of breathing easily as their children perished. Residents of Tulkarm refugee camp chose to die together with their loved ones; they refused the masks. The U.S. media bombarded viewers with poignant images of Israeli children donning gas masks. Yet, as Pacifica news-anchor Amy Goodman put it in a rare public dissent, "The one image worse than Israeli children with gas masks was Palestinian children without them." After seeing Israeli infants with gas masks on television, Moussa's three-year-old daughter became so terrified that she tearfully begged for one. Doubting that a mask would be of much use in the event of a gas attack, Moussa nonetheless laid out the hundreds of dollars that it cost to "give Arwa security." Well after the conflict ended, Moussa told me that his infant son Urwa still pleaded for one.¹³

Ironically, Palestinians cheered the Gulf conflagration as retribution against their Israeli tormentors, yet as we have seen Palestinians suffered far more than Israelis as a result of the conflict. Consider the basic question of loss of life. According to official Israeli casualty figures, one person was killed outright, and twelve additional deaths resulted indirectly from the Scud attacks. Yet B'Tselem (Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) reported that, in the month of January 1991 alone, fifteen Palestinians were killed outright by Israeli security forces, including five children. "The especially high number of children," the human rights organization cautioned, "should be noted." Transfixed as the Western media were by the trauma of Israeli children, it never was.¹⁴

IV

"We suffered terribly during the Gulf War," Samira confided one evening, "but I cannot remember a time when we Palestinians were happier." Samira's

two brothers still languished in jail. Her brother-in-law had just been released from jail, but her sister-in-law was then fighting deportation. Forced to seek employment abroad, Samira's husband was living, as he had been for the past decade, in the Gulf. "Every time I saw a Scud missile in the sky headed for Israel, I saw hope. Each missile equaled hope." Using her index and middle fingers to indicate parity, Samira explained: "Hope that Israel would finally be forced to negotiate and the nightmare of the occupation would finally end."

I heard this sentiment expressed, in one form or another, over and over again. "It wasn't that we wanted the Scuds to kill Israelis," a neighbor said. "We just wanted them to feel scared enough that they would finally make peace." Another Beit Sahouran said, "We thought the Scuds would make Israel understand that real security comes with peace, not with land." "We hoped the Scuds would show Israel," said a third, "that there was a price to be paid for continuing to torture us."

If pressed on the matter of civilian casualties, most Palestinians, Samira believed, would have had second thoughts about the Scud attacks. Indeed, according to Moussa, Palestinians took for granted that the attacks were largely symbolic: for, if they were doing real damage, Israel would surely have retaliated. Nonetheless, the Scuds were cheered because Palestinians had become convinced that Israel understood only the language of force. Israel would negotiate peace only if and when it had to reckon with the consequences of not negotiating peace. George Hanna, the Bir Zeit University physicist, maintained that by urging Palestinians to beg Israel for peace, to first kneel and then appeal to Israel's ethical sense, the Israeli "left" had for years, wittingly or unwittingly, misled Palestinians. The Israeli right, Hanna suggested, was much more realistic about its society: Israel deferred to power, not morality.

The historical record fully bears out this pessimistic assessment. As shown elsewhere, Anwar Sadat offered Israel peace in 1971 on the very same terms as the 1977 Camp David accords. Israel ignored him. It went to the negotiating table with Sadat only after Egypt proved itself, in the October 1973 war, a military force to reckon with. Similarly, the Israeli army partially withdrew from Lebanon in 1985 only after the Hizbollah's "systematic . . . attacks, with a mounting toll of casualties." And although the PLO mainstream had offered Israel, since the mid-1970s, a two-state settlement, only after the outbreak of the *intifada* did Israel first begin to consider it seriously. Once the Palestinian revolt was crushed, all Israeli interest in the two-state settlement vanished.¹⁵

Saddam Hussein was cheered for much the same reason that the Scuds were. On the eve of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, morale in Palestine had reached a nadir. For three years Palestinians had resisted Israel's brutal repression, yet they had nothing to show for it. Many despaired of being able

to determine their own fate. One index of this sense of hopelessness was the absence of *any* resistance to the curfew during the Gulf “war.” Palestinians were also losing faith in the importance of international opinion. They always knew, a Jerusalem economist related, that children with stones could not defeat the Israeli army. The *intifada* was seen first and foremost as an appeal to the world’s conscience. The world community failed to answer that call. Palestinians were not, of course, the first to (mis)place their hopes in humanity. In his memoir of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Yitzhak Zuckerman recalled that “people were thinking the same thing: if the world only knew . . . [A]s soon as the world hears what is going on, things will change. And the truth was that when the world did find out, it was silent.” Three years of *intifada*, then, had left Palestinians feeling impotent as well as cynical. Into this political and moral void stepped Saddam Hussein. For despairing Palestinians, he was the right person in the right place at the right time.¹⁶

Convinced that “only a strongman” could solve their problems, Palestinians, Samira’s brother Talal explained, naturally cheered Saddam on. “He seemed incredibly powerful, and we felt incredibly weak. The match couldn’t have been more perfect.” In the aftermath of the Gulf disaster, many Palestinians claimed that they hadn’t supported Saddam’s invasion. That was only a half-truth. The other half was that they didn’t oppose it. The fact was, most simply didn’t care. In August 1990, no one, if pressed far enough, was willing to defend Saddam’s action. Indeed, they couldn’t. Of all people, Palestinians were perhaps the worst placed to coherently justify an invasion, occupation, and annexation. Ultimately, they dismissed all arguments except those based on *realpolitik*. No one cared a whit about morality when it came to Palestinians. Why, then, should Palestinians lose sleep over morality when it came to the Kuwaitis? “It was as if we Palestinians were trapped in a well screaming for help,” a psychologist from Hebron analogized. “The whole world is peering down at us. It hears our pleas but does nothing. Then along comes Saddam. A brutal dictator? Yes, we all knew that. But he extends a helping hand. Did you really expect us to refuse it?” Saddam also won praise as the first Arab leader to support Palestinians not just with bluster but with action. By attacking the Israeli heartland and openly defying the United States, Saddam had restored to Arabs their human dignity.

The Palestinian response to the Gulf crisis, an Israeli columnist argued, was as predictable as it was unremarkable:

With the *intifada* going nowhere, the U.S. “dialogue” with the PLO a waste of time, and the world standing idly by — naturally, you grasp at every straw, even if the straw is actually poisoned bait. You become excited at the sight of an Arab leader who dares to confront all the world and is shaking it from one end to the other, even if you can’t imagine living under his rule in your worst nightmare.

An Arab state is suddenly treated like a big power with whom it is not at all easy to deal. This does something to the collective “ego.” The enthusiasm for Saddam is really the frustration with America, with Europe, and with the Israeli left — with all of us who failed to draw back the occupation regime even one inch.

The Palestinian pact with the “devil,” the columnist further noted, was not without ample precedent. There was the deal former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir’s Stern Gang tried to strike with Hitler to fight the British, “yet, even the most wicked would not say that it wanted Hitler to rule here.” And “although the nature of Stalin’s regime was perfectly well understood and no one would have wanted under any circumstances to live in Soviet Russia,” there was nevertheless a worldwide mobilization behind the Soviet dictator as the one bulwark against Nazism. Indeed, Jews figured among Stalin’s most fervent partisans. Unlike elsewhere in wartime Europe, Soviet historian Moshe Lewin observes, in Stalin’s Russia, Jews were not “condemned to die” simply for being Jewish. Hence, Jews “disproportionately” favored the Soviet dictator. Stalin invaded, occupied, and annexed the Baltic States on the eve of the World War II. He presided over the cruelest of tyrannies. But, relatively speaking, he was “good for the Jews.” So they cheered him on.¹⁷

V

“Why did the world condemn us for cheering the attack on Israel,” a Hebron student bitterly asked, “but not Israelis for cheering the attack on Iraq?” The simple answer, I suggested, was that Palestinians were, not for the first time, the victims of a double standard.

Israeli support for the U.S.-led attack on Iraq was as unanimous as Palestinian support for the Scud missile attack on Israel. Indeed, the destruction of Iraq won a special plaudit from Israel’s “peace camp.” Maintaining that this war was “different,” Peace Now urged that it “not be denounced” and that all peace initiatives be suspended until its “successful” conclusion. The international antiwar movement was publicly rebuked for “being suspicious about America’s interests in the region” (A. B. Yehoshua), and the specter of a “second Auschwitz” was invoked to justify the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq (Amos Oz). Yet all the counts of the indictment against Iraq, including “crimes against peace,” “war crimes,” and “crimes against humanity,” applied with equal force to Israel. It would seem that Saddam was as justified in attacking Israel as the United States was in attacking Iraq. The Iraqi leader could surely point to many more UN resolutions ignored by Israel than were ignored by him. Indeed, one could argue that, by waiting many years, not the six months that George Bush allowed, before attempting to enforce UN resolutions, Saddam displayed remarkable restraint. True, he could not

point to a Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force, but plainly that was not a matter of principle: operating as he did on the limited budget of a Third World country, Saddam simply could not afford the vast sums the United States used to bribe the members of the Security Council. One may also wish to argue that Saddam was not really concerned with the fate of the Palestinians when he assaulted Israel. True enough. The attack on Israel had about as much to do with the fate of the Palestinians as . . . the attack on Iraq had to do with the fate of the Kuwaitis.¹⁸

Consider, moreover, the comparative destruction wrought by the Gulf conflagration on Israel and Iraq. As a result of the thirty-nine Scud missile attacks, about a dozen Israelis directly or indirectly died. Property damage was estimated at 50 to 150 million dollars. Yet in the course of the U.S.-led attack, the equivalent of seven Hiroshima-sized bombs were dropped. The number of Iraqis directly or indirectly killed ran to more than 150,000. Two-thirds were civilian casualties, overwhelmingly children. Property damage was estimated at 100 to 200 billion dollars. And as the reports of thousands of Iraqis premeditatedly buried alive yet further testified, the U.S.-led assault was very far from a "clean" war. Indeed, the Israelis (along with many others in the West) effectively cheered, not the defeat of a belligerent, but the wreck of a civilization. What the Palestinians effectively cheered didn't even amount, by comparison, to a slap on the wrist.¹⁹

"We Palestinians also remember," Talal said, "who started the war between Israel and Iraq." He was referring to Israel's destruction of the Iraqi atomic reactor in 1981, justified by the unique moral doctrine that only Israel among Middle Eastern states had the right to threaten its neighbors with nuclear annihilation. Indeed, as Saddam Hussein stood poised to launch the Scud missiles at Tel Aviv, his list of legitimate grievances against Israel was lengthy. In a "coldly calculated" and "cynical enterprise" to weaken Iraq, Ian Black and Benny Morris recounted, beginning in 1968 and continuing through the early 1970s, Israel subsidized and directly fomented civil insurrection among the Iraqi Kurds and sabotaged efforts at a negotiated settlement between the Kurdish leaders and Baghdad. Andrew and Leslie Cockburn reported that, exactly as Iraq alleged during the Gulf crisis, Israel "had planned an attack on Iraq's nonconventional capabilities" a year before. "To the intense disappointment of the raiding party," however, the "White House refused to grant permission." As President Bush geared up for "Desert Storm," the Cockburns continued, "The reaction from Israel . . . was enthusiastic. Israeli spokesmen urged the president to show no mercy against Saddam." Already in the first month of the Gulf buildup, Israel called on the United States, as a *Haaretz* headline put it, to "Strike Now." Israeli president Chaim Herzog even urged, according to a *Times* (London) dispatch in October, that the United States

use nuclear weapons. Israeli foreign minister David Levy reportedly threatened U.S. and European officials in December that, in the event that the United States failed to “obliterate” the Iraqi military arsenal, Israel would unilaterally attack Iraq. Israeli commentators speculated that, by pressuring the United States to launch an immediate attack, Levy’s threat was perhaps an effort to preempt a negotiated settlement. “From the first minutes of the war,” the Cockburns reported, it was Israeli-made bombs that “were falling on Iraq.” Of course, Israel had its legitimate grievances against Iraq, notably, Baghdad’s harboring of Palestinian terrorists. The balance of legitimate grievances would seem to be clearly on the Iraqi side, however. In any event, Israel’s pose of wounded innocence as the Iraqi missiles landed on Tel Aviv was pure hypocrisy.²⁰

VI

Palestinians were still reluctant, even after the disastrous climax of the Gulf crisis, to criticize Saddam. Doubting, for instance, the reported small number of U.S. casualties, some continued to cling to illusions about the fighting itself. Indeed, Palestinians were understandably skeptical of all American pronouncements about Desert Storm. On the one hand, Palestinians conceded even they were taken in by U.S. propaganda claims that Saddam had assembled an awesome military machine. On the other hand, as Palestinians could plainly see from their rooftops, the Patriot missiles were not performing the breathtaking technical feats that “allied” news broadcasts repeatedly boasted. Subsequent studies in fact showed that at best one Patriot missile successfully intercepted a Scud and that Israel would perhaps have been better off if the fabled Patriots, which caused much of the property damage, had not been deployed.²¹

Even when acknowledging the full breadth of the political and military defeat suffered by Iraq, Palestinians still refused to openly repudiate Saddam. He did, after all, rise to the defense of the Palestinians, even if for purely opportunistic reasons. No one I met had any illusions about Saddam’s real motives when he raised the issue of “linkage” between the Kuwaiti and Palestinian occupations and, later, fired the Scuds at Israel. Maybe stabbing Saddam in the back was now the politically opportune thing to do, but Palestinians declined, as a point of honor, to do so. On a deeper level, to fully acknowledge Saddam’s opportunism, Palestinians would have had to admit that, yet again, their martyrdom was cruelly exploited by an Arab leader. This Palestinians could not do, if only because it made the support they lent Saddam during the Gulf crisis look so foolish. Finally, Palestinians still believed that, between Iraq and the U.S.-led alliance arrayed against it, the right, even if politically disastrous, course was to support Iraq. In this regard, Palestinians joined per-

haps most of world opinion (assuming that the world includes the two-thirds of humanity living outside Europe and North America), which recoiled at the prospects heralded by the U.S. victory and Bush's "new world order."²²

Saddam's "tactical" blunders did, to be sure, come in for some criticism. Comparing Saddam unfavorably with Lenin, Caid recalled that, to preserve the gains of the October Revolution, the Soviet leader sensibly agreed to the humiliating terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Generally, however, Palestinians would not go even this small distance. More indicative of Palestinian sentiment, although in an exaggerated form, were the views of Samira's father, Ghassan. He kept insisting that Saddam had handled the Gulf crisis brilliantly. But, I said, all Saddam's calculations were wrong. He did not think the United States would fight. It did. He did not think the Soviet Union would go along. It did. He did not think the Arab states would openly ally with the United States and Israel against Iraq. They did. He believed that Israel would enter the war if Iraq attacked. It didn't. He expected the Arab masses to pour into the streets if Iraq held out long enough. They didn't. So where was Saddam's brilliance? "Saddam was right; the world was wrong," Ghassan shot back defiantly. The expression on his face, however, was one of total despair and frustration.

Not every Palestinian cheered the Scud missile attacks, Samira quietly remarked one evening. "There were," she continued, "a few exceptions. Myself, for example. I did not go to the rooftop. When I heard my family whistling, I got this sick feeling inside me. That we were all becoming monsters, beasts." Saddam's decision to withdraw from Kuwait triggered, however, a sudden reversal of attitude. There was no longer any hope that Iraq would force Israel's hand. The occupation would continue. "I slowly climbed the stairs to the roof," Samira recollected, "and glared at the blackness of the sky. It was as if I were possessed. I wanted to see millions of rockets headed for Tel Aviv. I wanted to see the whole world destroyed. Including us."

• • •

I later asked my mother, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and Maidanek concentration camp, her thoughts as news filtered back during the war that the Russians were bombing German cities. "I wanted the Germans to die," she replied without hesitation. "I knew I wouldn't live, so I wanted them to die, too. We cheered the Russians. We wanted them to destroy anything and everything German. We wished them death every second of the day because we faced death every second of the day."

Epilogue

The End of Palestine?



I. Oslo

In the aftermath of the June 1967 war, the international community reached consensus for a comprehensive settlement of the Israel-Arab conflict. Embodied in Security Council Resolution 242, the settlement called for “withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” in accordance with the principle of the “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war” and Arab recognition of Israel in accordance with the principle that “every State in the area” had a right to “live in security.” To take account of Palestinian national aspirations, the international consensus was, toward the mid-1970s, crucially modified. As Israel withdrew to its pre-1967 borders, Palestinians were to exercise, within the framework of a sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza, the right of self-determination. Affirmed in a broad range of fora over the past two decades, the international consensus was annually ratified at the United Nations. A 1989 General Assembly resolution effectively calling for a two-state settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict, for example, garnered the support of 151 nations, with only the United States, Israel, and Dominica registering dissent.¹

Statelessness is perhaps the most abject condition in the modern world. Not only human rights but, as Hannah Arendt poignantly showed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, elementary human dignity as well can find protection and expression only within the framework of a nation-state. To overcome the condition of statelessness, one of two options must be available: citizenship in a unitary “secular” state or sovereignty in a separate “ethnic” state. Early on, the Palestinian leadership formally advocated a nondenominational state in all of historic Palestine. Whether it was truly wedded to such a vision is open to question. Arguably, even the “left” exponents of Palestinian nationalism conceived the democratic, secular state as a kind of Zionism in reverse: a numerical majority meant that the state would belong to the Arabs, with Jews at best tolerated as pseudocitizens.

By the mid-1970s, the Palestinian mainstream, as well as the major Arab powers, fell in with the international consensus supporting an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Indeed, as seen in chapter 3 above, it was Yasir Arafat's acceptance of the two-state settlement that triggered Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Affirming "Security Council Resolution[] 242 and... the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, first and foremost among which is the right to self-determination," the PNC, in November 1988 at Algiers, officially aligned itself with the world community.²

Yet Israel, with crucial U.S. support, blocked a two-state solution or indeed any just settlement of the conflict. Firmly opposing mutual recognition on a parity basis, both of Israel's main political alignments held as an article of ideological faith that Palestinians should neither be granted citizenship within a unitary Israeli state nor exercise self-determination in an independent state. Likud favored extending Israeli sovereignty over the whole of the occupied territories, with expulsion the implied fate for Palestinians. Labor advocated the annexation of roughly half the West Bank and Gaza (including the crucial water resources), with the areas of "dense Arab settlement" consigned to an ersatz autonomy.³

All efforts to resolve the Middle East conflict thus foundered on the shoals of Israeli-U.S. rejectionism. The political stalemate, however, was not matched by a stalemate on the ground. So rapidly did Israel "build facts" in the West Bank and Gaza through the constant expansion of Jewish settlements that the two-state solution itself was threatened with obsolescence. What remained of Palestine was being methodically effaced from the map. Rising in revolt in December 1987, Palestinians attempted to break the political impasse. In its first year, the *intifada* seemed to verge on success. As the cost of occupation sharply increased because of massive troop deployments, a badly tarnished international image, and so on, one heard faint whispers in Israel, and even among American Jews, that a Palestinian state was perhaps inevitable. Even before the Gulf "war" in 1991, however, the *intifada* had begun to lose momentum. Repression took a terrific toll. And what Israel didn't do to destroy the *intifada*, the PLO did, stifling the democratic impulses of the uprising and squandering Palestinian resources in a fruitless diplomatic game. By 1989, one could predict that the PLO would eventually accept a "counterfeit sovereignty" that gave Palestinians "a flag, a national anthem, and nothing else." At the time, these last words were meant metaphorically; as it happened, they proved to be literally true.

In the wake of the Gulf disaster, Palestinian fortunes touched rock bottom. The PLO's reluctance to join the U.S.-engineered "coalition" was cheaply exploited to extract new concessions from it. With Saddam's defeat, a shattering

blow was dealt to the remnants of secular nationalism in the Arab world. The Soviet bloc, which had been the only impediment to the U.S.'s seamless global hegemony, collapsed. Once a tentative instrument of Third World aspirations, the United Nations metamorphosed into a certain instrument of U.S. power. The moment seemed ripe to inflict a fatal wound on hopes for a sovereign Palestinian state. Whence the Oslo initiative.

The options open to Palestinians, by summer 1993, ranged from bad to insupportable. Resistance seemed futile as the *intifada* became a dead letter. Palestinians could choose only between "unilateral autonomy," letting Israel do as it pleased but with no formal sanction, and official surrender. There was, however, a price to be paid for not formally acknowledging defeat. As allegations of PLO incompetence and corruption multiplied, the reputation of Arafat's organization among Palestinians steeply declined. Arafat had to strike a deal — *any* deal — to pull the PLO back from the precipice. And if in defeat Palestinians held fast to the right of self-determination, they could no longer even count on crumbs from the master's table as a bribe. What Palestinians themselves would have elected if presented with the two alternatives is a moot question. With Nelson Mandela's mantle well beyond reach, Arafat — feigning "no alternative" — grasped at Chief Buthelesi's. Going beyond an official surrender, Arafat tendered the PLO's services as *enforcer* for the conquest regime.

The Oslo agreement signified the PLO's total capitulation to Israeli-U.S. rejectionism.⁴ It was, as Edward Said tersely observed, "a Palestinian Versailles." By signing, Arafat annulled the basic rights of Palestinians hitherto upheld by the international consensus. The Oslo text made no mention of a Palestinian right to self-determination or statehood. Rather, it specified that a final settlement would be based only on UN Resolution 242, which offers the Palestinians nothing. Further, the United States would effectively "interpret" the meaning of 242. Since the early 1970s, U.S. administrations have de facto deferred to the Israeli view, as against the rest of world opinion, that 242 calls for only a partial Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories.

If the Oslo agreement signaled the PLO's surrender, the subsequent exchange of letters between Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Arafat marked the PLO's actual alignment with Israeli power. Arafat committed his organization to imposing, regardless of popular sentiment, the Oslo accord. Indeed, it was precisely for this reason that Rabin entered into the pact with Arafat. Israel sought a return to the halcyon days before the *intifada* when a network of Palestinian collaborators helped operate a relatively cost-free conquest regime. Meron Benvenisti's authoritative assessment of Oslo and the subsequent Israeli-PLO agreements merits quotation:

[Arafat] committed an act of surrender. . . . The Palestinians . . . legitimized the continued presence of the occupier. . . . [T]he occupation continues, albeit by remote control, and with the consent of the Palestinian people, represented by their "sole representative," the PLO. The economic agreements reinforce the impression of total capitulation. . . . For the Israelis, it is a peace without pain or sacrifice, a bargain proposition. . . . It goes without saying that "cooperation" based on the current power relationship is no more than permanent Israeli domination in disguise, and that Palestinian self-rule is merely a euphemism for bantustanization.⁵

The likeliest prospect for the future is Israel's gradual absorption of large swaths of the West Bank and Gaza. Trapped in a cantonized homeland that is integrated as a service sector of the world economy, Palestinians will be delivered to the mercies of an Israeli-U.S.-World Bank consortium. Stripped of every shred of meaningful sovereignty, Palestinian "autonomy" is an extreme projection of the fate that the major industrial powers have in mind for all the world's lesser peoples. It is the Third World's "nightmare scenario."

The lesson of Palestine is as old as history: applied without mercy or scruple, force works.

II. Present, Past, Future

In December 1993, I decided to retrace my steps for the epilogue to this book. Moussa's home seemed the right place to begin the journey back to the future. "Never," Moussa confided in me the night I arrived, "have I been so depressed."

"In the first years of the *intifada*," Moussa explained, "Israel tried to break us physically, with clubs. Now they are trying to break us psychologically." Earlier that winter Hebron had been placed under a nine-day, round-the-clock curfew. Beside himself with frustration, Moussa, only thirty-eight years old, suffered an apparent stroke. When I arrived, Hebron was still under a curfew from 7:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M. It was widely rumored that Arafat, fearful of a disruptive incident while negotiating with Israel, had tacitly acquiesced in the curfew. As the curfew hour approached, guests in Moussa's home would glance with growing apprehension at the clock. The biggest fear was that Israel would never lift the night curfew. In a society as tightly knit as Palestine's, one that thrived on community and in which community was now the only diversion from the unrelieved tedium of daily life, the curfew was a silent torture.

Compounding the curfew was the border closure. Arabs without a special pass were barred from entering East Jerusalem, although Jewish settlers passed freely. At a checkpoint on Jerusalem's outskirts, a long queue of Palestinians waited as Israeli soldiers checked for Arab "illegals" in desperate search

of work. Not only were the main Palestinian civic institutions such as Al-Makassed Hospital located in Jerusalem, but the main arteries to other West Bank locations passed through it as well. Between the closure and Israel's incremental expansion of "Greater Jerusalem," the West Bank was effectively bisected, with one canton to the north and one to the south of Jerusalem. Before the closure, it took an hour or so to get from Hebron to Ramallah; after it, one had to allow two and one-half hours to travel what was called the "Arab road."

One night I was forced to take the "Arab road" from Jerusalem to Beit Sahour. Narrow and treacherous, the serpentine path wound along a mountainside, one side plunging deep into an abyss. There was a heavy fog. At each bump of the old bus my palms got clammy. What should have been a thirty-minute trip turned into a two-hour ordeal.

Once, when I attended a bimonthly "dialogue" between activists from Peace Now and Beit Sahour, I broached the closure issue. A recent Russian emigré defended closure as a necessary "security" precaution. Suppose, I speculated, a New York City mayor barred black people from entering Manhattan after a spate of interracial murders committed by black people from the outer boroughs. Wouldn't protests be swift and justified? Why then, I asked, was the policy defensible in Israel? The Peace Now activists reacted forthrightly to my analogy. "How can you compare the two situations? Israel is surrounded by twenty Arab countries," and so on. "There is always this noble white man trying to persuade the Indians to give up and leave," a Palestinian who had seen many American westerns once told me. "I don't know why, but he always reminds me of Peace Now."

Jewish settlements continued to spring up at a frenetic pace. A year after the Oslo accord of September 1993, Israel's control of West Bank land reached about 75 percent, up from 65 percent when the accord was signed, and government funding for settlements had increased by 70 percent. The settlements were no longer remote fortresses on distant hilltops. A recent spin-off of the Kiryat Arba settlement, Kiryat "Five" was encroaching farther and farther on Moussa's neighborhood. Meanwhile, settler rampages had become routine. "Since Evil, to the anti-Semite, is incarnated in unarmed and harmless men," Jean-Paul Sartre observed in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, "the anti-Semite never finds himself under the painful necessity of being heroic. It is fun to be an anti-Semite. One can beat and torture Jews without fear." To grasp the mentality of many settlers, one had only to substitute "Jew" for "anti-Semite" and "Arabs" for "Jews."⁶

Hebronites preferred the Israeli army's presence, if only not to leave an open field for the trigger-happy settlers. Seldom, however, did the army actively intervene to deter settler violence. Nor were Israeli soldiers immune

to violent outbursts. Driving to work one day, Moussa misunderstood a soldier's gesture while directing traffic. "I could have killed you for that," the soldier shouted in a rage as he demanded Moussa pull over. Shaking his head, Moussa later reflected: "How cheap Palestinian life is for an Israeli."

The relentless economic squeeze was steadily grinding down the Palestinians. Meron Benvenisti reported:

Between 1988 and 1991, there had been an annual decline of some 20 percent in the territories' GNP. . . . As a percentage of the work force, the unemployment rate reached 30–40 percent. Hundreds of millions of dollars that had been sent to the territories by Palestinians employed in Arab countries stopped coming, and after the Gulf War, the aid given to the territories by the Gulf countries, tens of millions of dollars, was cut off.⁷

Asking a college student what he or she intended to do after graduation invariably evoked the same ironic grin. Job prospects were nil. Not having drawn a salary for months from the secondary school where he taught, Moussa decided to open a small discount store to make ends meet. The curfew, however, was fatal to business. Unsure what the future might bring, Hebronites were reluctant to spend their savings. Refugee camps bore the brunt of the economic catastrophe. Closure meant death by slow increments. With economic development in the West Bank barred by the occupation authorities, thousands of Palestinians from Fawwar camp used to seek employment in Israel. Only a handful could do so in 1993.⁸ Of Moussa's seven able-bodied brothers, five had no work. They just sat around all day, listless. I tried one night to engage Moussa's family in a conversation about politics. In previous years such exchanges had quickly become animated debates. This time the room fell silent after a few moments. The expression on one face after another lapsed into the same dull, desolate, vacant stare.

Samira was jubilant over her husband Stephan's return after a seventeen-year stint in the Gulf. Her happiness was not, however, unalloyed. Unable to find work in Palestine, Stephan was constantly depressed and irritable. "For my husband," Samira explained, "not working means dying." Samira was now the family's sole breadwinner, with Stephan doing housework, homework with the kids, and gardening. Even in the most unconventional of households, this coerced reversal of roles would put terrible strains on family members. Yet Samira would not hear of her husband again seeking employment abroad.

Initially, most Palestinians greeted the Oslo accord with elation. Few, however, had actually read it. No one I met in Beit Sahour had seen an unabridged version. In Hebron, only the political activists had read the full document. Avowing that they had perused the complete text, student leaders at Bir Zeit University nonetheless conceded that most students at this bellwether of Palestinian nationalism probably had not. What was certain was

that the PLO made no effort to publicize the real contents of the agreement. People seemed genuinely surprised and interested when I cited crucial passages.

Many people were apparently seduced by the PLO's specious claim that Oslo prefigured a Palestinian state. On the eve of the White House signing ceremony in September, a Palestinian leader announced that parents of political prisoners should soon expect very joyful news. Samira's mother broke into tears. Two of her sons had been in jail the past nine years. But the promised prisoner release never happened. "How they use us," Samira said in disgust. Fed up with the lies of the PLO leadership, more than a few Palestinians now relied exclusively on Israeli broadcasts for news and information. Seething, Samira pointed to Rabin as the one leader she trusted: "He speaks the truth to his people."

Most Palestinians probably had not been lulled by soothing official pronouncements. The accord that had been secretly negotiated by Arafat and Rabin, they knew, signaled that the struggle for Palestinian sovereignty had been lost. Still, they did not disown it. Fed up, they wanted the nightmare to end. Oslo meant a return to the less dire status quo ante. And with promises of massive foreign aid and investment, it seemed that, even if a state hadn't been won, the future was not that dim. Moussa quit the People's (formerly Communist) Party after it backed the agreement. The party's decision, he said, was a total betrayal of his and its own principles. Yet Moussa sheepishly admitted that sometimes he too couldn't help thinking that "anything is better than what we have now."

Behind the initial euphoria, Samira suspected, Palestinians felt anguish. "You can't imagine how exaggerated the Oslo festivities were," she remarked. "It was as if Palestinians were trying to convince themselves of something they didn't really believe." Perhaps that was also why celebrants vented such fury at the occasional naysayer. To stifle any lingering qualms, they wanted every last Palestinian to join in; even one dissenting presence was enough to awaken doubt. Palestinians didn't want to admit that they had lost, so they pretended that they had won. And, it bears repeating, they also celebrated because they were desperate enough to celebrate anything.

As Beit Sahourans marched under the balcony of the Mikhail home, Samira's sister-in-law began to sob uncontrollably. They didn't deserve, she cried, the sacrifices of her husband, who still languished in prison. Watching the Washington ceremony on television, Caid succumbed to mournful tears. On the other side, the Oslo announcement put former collaborators in an exuberant state. An infamous collaborator, who some time later was found dead, led the celebration in Hebron. Rewards were not long in coming. Arafat placed many collaborators on the PLO payroll. One of Hebron's

most despised collaborators had fatally shot a Palestinian youth. Feting him in Tunis, Arafat pronounced, "What's past is past." What, Moussa wondered aloud, did the dead youth's mother think of Arafat's royal absolution?

By the time I arrived in December 1993, support for Oslo had fallen off precipitously. Although Arafat's Fateh organization and allied parties still backed the agreement, they were hard-pressed to make a positive argument for it. One Fateh supporter, lounging in a handsomely appointed photography studio (his brother headed the Hebron Fateh organization), chafed at my skepticism. "Israel is tired and intends to leave. I know. The soldiers told me so!" Every effort to defend Oslo from its detractors quickly reverted to the same handful of vacuous clichés: "We must go with history," "We have no alternative, no choice," "We must hope," and so on.

Even Fateh's support for Oslo carried precious little conviction. A thin Pollyannaish veneer covered a granite core of cynicism. Arafat's organization had become — perhaps always was — a vast patronage system. It exuded corruption. Poised as Palestinians were on desperation's precipice, the organization managed to corrupt many. If only to breathe, one had to inhale the foul odor of Fateh. Loathing Fateh, Nur nonetheless joined it to get money for college tuition and books. One notoriously inept professor, threatened with dismissal, joined Fateh to keep his position and later received a departmental promotion. To study cinematography on an Israeli kibbutz, Walid had to fulfill one prerequisite: join Fateh. Why, I asked Talal, did Beit Sahourans loudly cheer Arafat's name at a demonstration? "Because their pockets are now full." One could argue in extenuation that many on the Fateh payroll had put in very long prison stints. Moussa, however, was unswayed: "It was still a choice. Some ex-prisoners took the bribe; others didn't. I didn't." Indeed, one was struck less by how many Palestinians jumped at the Fateh bait — times *were* tough, they *had* suffered — than by how many found the wherewithal to reject it. But what Fateh couldn't get by hook, it got by crook. To carry the Hebron University student council elections, several hundred youths (including alumni) were given tuition payments to register and vote Fateh. Fateh was also not above using the dual allure of sex and employment to secure the needed votes.

During my December 1993 visit, estimates of opposition to Oslo varied widely, and it was anyone's guess which one was right. It was also not always clear what accounted for the dissent, the letter of the agreement or the failure to implement it. Most objections seemed to be based on the failure of implementation. If money had come pouring in from foreign donors, dissension within Palestinian ranks would perhaps have dissipated, if only temporarily. But at this moment the discontent was real enough, and Arafat was usually the butt of it. Politically astute Palestinians confided with total conviction

the oddest rumors. Arafat was really a Jew. Arafat's father and uncle had been assassinated for collaboration with the British, and Oslo was Arafat's revenge. Arafat belonged to the same Mossad spy ring that infiltrated the Syrian high command. (On hearing this last item, Moussa observed, "An Israeli agent wouldn't be so stupid.") Also making the rounds were numberless Arafat jokes, most of them obscene. "Why did Arafat's wife refuse to accompany him to the White House signing ceremony? Because she was afraid Arafat would give her away also." Asked what he longed for most, an unemployed former Fateh militant laconically replied, "Arafat's death." Not all sniping at Arafat sprang from disinterested motives. More than one Bir Zeit professor bristled because Arafat had passed him or her up for an appointment.

Not only Arafat but also Palestine's most durable and potent emblem, the flag, had fallen into disrepute. Indeed, a visitor could not but be struck by how few Palestinian flags were on display in the West Bank. So many Palestinians had lost their lives or been imprisoned for hoisting the flag. At long last legal, it was hardly to be seen. "For many people, it's not the same flag," Moussa explained. "The day Oslo was signed," Nadim Issa angrily confessed, "I was ashamed of the Palestinian flag. I hated it." "After Oslo," spat Caid, "the flag meant nothing." Worse, it represented defeat, betrayal, self-deception. One almost knew that a home displaying a Palestinian flag belonged to a Fateh member, to a former collaborator, or to someone slightly ridiculous. Indeed, the irony was that all Palestinians got for years of struggle and sacrifice was a worthless symbol: instead of a state they got a flag. The flag without a state was a cruel tease, a fluttering mock. This new symbolism was not lost on Israelis. As a sign of protest and mourning, anti-Oslo demonstrators raised, beside the Palestinian one, a black flag. An Israeli commander demanded that the organizers hand over the flag. Reluctantly they complied, surrendering the Palestinian flag. "No," he said, "you can keep that one. I want the black flag."

The reversal of fortunes suffered by Arafat and the flag signaled a sea change in Palestinian society generally. For six breathless years, Palestinians had ridden an emotional roller-coaster, with steep ascents to new peaks of exhilaration quickly followed by free fall toward abject despair: the buoyant first year of the *intifada*, then the dark realization that statehood was not imminent; Saddam's promise to liberate Palestine, then the nightmare of Iraq's methodical destruction; the high hopes of Madrid, then the paltry returns of Oslo; and finally, nothing, a cavernous void. The result was a society in existential crisis, demoralized, depoliticized, and depressed.

Although usually pessimistic about short-term prospects, Moussa had never been without hope. There were always possibilities beyond the horizon. Now,

Moussa's pessimism projected beyond the immediate future: the *whole* future was, for him, a big blank. Indeed, he was more and more succumbing to bouts, not only of despair, but of self-pity totally out of character for him. Similarly, a secondary school teacher whom I asked about the political situation kept turning the conversation to a Sharon Stone film. "Don't you want to discuss politics?" I asked in exasperation. "What for? We talk, we talk, we talk, and they do what they want anyway." "Politics," his colleague agreed, "is no longer in our hands. Three years ago, we had a say. But now it's all up to Rabin, Arafat, and the United States." No one I met had a New Year's wish. Asked if she didn't want to wish for an end to the occupation, Moussa's wife, Afaf, shook her head no: "I won't fool myself."

Many Palestinians planned or, at any rate, wanted to leave the occupied territories. Indeed, if immigration quotas in the West (especially the United States) were relaxed, the Palestine question would perhaps have resolved itself overnight. Huddling with friends around the radio, Rana used to raise a cheer as Monte Carlo news announced acts of resistance in Beit Sahour. Now she wanted to leave for Germany. Recalling the summer spent there as a scholarship student, Rana wistfully sighed, "They live a real life." Nadim Issa used to lie awake at night dreaming of a Palestinian state. Once, he recoiled in anger at the mere suggestion that many Palestinians might one day opt to emigrate. Asked recently about his future plans, Nadim nonchalantly replied that, if no jobs opened up in Bethlehem, "maybe I'll resettle outside." Contemptuous of the fabled allurements of the West, Nur used to want only to be near his family and friends in Fawwar camp. But the relentless, dreary years of unemployment had gotten to him. Begging my help to obtain a visa, Nur pleaded, "It's my last hope." Grasping at the straw of a secret codicil to the Oslo accord that gave Palestinians more than was officially promised, a secondary school principal stated flatly, "If not, we will leave." Scornful as she was of Palestinians who had forsaken the political struggle, Samira admitted that she, too, had casually broached with close friends the prospect of moving elsewhere in the Arab world: "Everyone started to laugh, but then the room fell silent."

Not all Palestinians were given to scanning distant horizons. Those who weren't, however, generally did not see beyond the tips of their own noses. Personal initiative had displaced collective action as the route to salvation: *saue qui peut*. "Arafat gave everything away. The land, our future," Nadim Issa observed somewhat defensively, "so everyone is now looking out for himself. Is that wrong?" "For sure," he added, "I'm not risking my life for an autonomy!" Indeed, for the mostly middle- and upper-class Palestinians who sought a niche in the economy as it took off — or was supposed to take off — the future did not seem altogether bleak. But it was a future that excluded

collective struggle to gain collective rights. Several years back, Mufid Hanna had wanted only to kill “fascist Jews.” Now a successful video producer, he mused: “You must set yourself a personal goal. You must live for it. And if you achieve it, that’s happiness.” Politics, at any rate, the way it was practiced in Palestine, filled him with loathing. “We were all pawns,” Mufid hyperbolized. “Arafat said throw stones, we threw stones. He said stop, we stopped. These leaders, they all did us a lot of harm. We never used our own minds. We didn’t think for ourselves. Arafat is not God. Habash is not God.” Pointing his index fingers to his temples, Mufid proclaimed: “I am God.”

Those few Palestinians still committed to the struggle seemed driven more by piety than conviction. Indeed, it was a mechanical commitment, one without passion or deep roots. Asked if he still had hope, Adnan, a Bethlehem University student-“activist,” replied, “Maybe 3 percent.” Nowadays, he mostly lounged around his room reading novels. Only a handful of souls bothered to show up when Samira’s family tried to rally support for political prisoners. Yet a subsequent demonstration in Beit Sahour to free the prisoners did pull out a very large crowd. It was the media presence, Samira hissed. “They only came for the cameras.”

The main exception to all of the disaffection was Hamas, the Islamic movement. Utterly indifferent to reality, Hamas still struggled and still anticipated victory. Indeed, that was probably its greatest strength, for to contemplate reality was to succumb to it. Hamas did not fret over the betrayal of the Arab states, the Oslo accord, the on-again, off-again negotiations. . . . Its gaze was fixed on the occupation forces; it never lost sight of them; all its energies were harnessed to defeat them. “We know Rabin’s secret plan is to turn the *intifada* into a fratricidal struggle,” a Hamas leader from al-Najah University observed. “That’s why he wants the Palestinian police force. To cause a civil war. But we will only attack the Israelis. We won’t fall into the trap.” How will Hamas avoid it? I asked. That was a very difficult question, he granted, “but Allah will show us the way.”

Like the Communist movement in times past, Hamas’s momentum came from the “knowledge” that, beneath the bleak surface, “deeper forces” were at work. For Communists, it was “iron laws of history”; for Islamicists, it was Allah. Hamas militants exuded the confident patience of the former Communists: the millennium would perhaps not arrive in their lifetimes, but come it will “in the long run.” Reminded of Lord Keynes’s famous quip that “in the long run, we are all dead,” an Islamicist humbly replied: “But we owe it to future generations to keep struggling.” Hamas was able to muster support not because of its ideology, which was simplistic, but because it *acted*. Asked what the Islamic movement would have done differently had it led the *intifada*, a Hamas leader replied, “We would have killed thirty, not three,

settlers." Recruits came chiefly from the poor and uneducated classes. The choice was a relatively straightforward one: eat one's self up with frustration and bitterness, or fight.

Palestinians generally seemed of two, very conflicted, minds about Hamas. On the one hand, it was admired as the only real force resisting the occupation. Hamas's sustained military operations against the army and settlers commanded near-universal support and respect. "The settlers may now think twice before killing us," Moussa suggested. (The severe Israeli punitive measures had not yet dampened Palestinian enthusiasm for Hamas actions.) On the other hand, the fear was that Hamas might prove too successful. Palestinians wanted Hamas to resist, but not to actually win, since that would mean Islamic rule. Hamas was fine as a means, awful as an end. Indeed, for many Palestinians, a Hamas victory would mean *the* end. One could not help but admire the sobriety, austerity, integrity, and single-mindedness of Hamas. It was also singularly attentive to the real-life needs of the people. Hence, its increasing popularity even at such a secular bastion as Bir Zeit University. In these respects, it was again very reminiscent of the Communist movement. But, alas, like the Communists, it could also be very intolerant and very undemocratic.

Asked to estimate Hamas's strength, Jamal replied with a blend of reserve and confidence, "It's growing." (One of the four hundred Islamicists expelled en masse in December 1992, Jamal, a highly respected Hamas leader in Hebron, had only recently returned from exile.) Asked why so many Palestinians seemed fearful of Hamas, he insisted, "They don't understand us." "But," I went on — Jamal, incidentally, knew that I was a Jew — "isn't it true that Hamas infringes on personal freedoms?" Demurring, he pointed to the example of Hebron where women had not been forced to wear the veil. But wasn't that because Hamas wasn't yet strong enough in Hebron to impose its values? "We only interfere when the national struggle is put at risk."

Perhaps so. But Hamas's conception of what jeopardized the national struggle could be very sectarian. Revelers at a Christmas celebration ignored Hamas's ultimatum not to party; all the cars parked outside were later found vandalized. The morning after Elias's lavish wedding celebration, a threat with Hamas's signature was found spray-painted on the reception grounds. By opening, amid the gloom and tedium, a cinema, I kept suggesting, an entrepreneur could probably turn a handsome profit. "But Hamas will burn it down," was the stock response. Early on in the *intifada*, a national consensus had indeed crystallized against any and all manner of conviviality. The ban served both as a testament to the moral seriousness of the uprising and as a gesture of deference to those who had perished in it. But that consensus had long since broken down. People wanted to live. One could sympathize

with Hamas's effort to keep alive the esprit of the *intifada*, but not with the methods it used to do so.

Asked whether an Islamic state would brook an opposition committed to winning power democratically, a Hamas member replied: "No state relinquishes its power peacefully. We will fight any party bent on taking power just as the American state fought the Communists." The analogy was instructive, if unfortunate. Although opposed to the *fatwa* hanging over Salman Rushdie's head, he suggested that "there is a difference between tolerating an antagonistic opinion, on the one hand, and an opinion that insults and causes hurt, on the other." "Don't many states in the world," he again argued with an impeccable analogy, "have laws on the books against the incitement of racial and religious hatred? The death sentence may be wrong, but not the principle behind it."

Hamas inspired in Mufid Hanna only dread: "How can I support it? Soon it will be my enemy. In fact, my first enemy is Hamas, not Israel. With Israel I can eventually live. But with Hamas, never."

"Palestinians no longer sentimentalize the *intifada*," Esmail, the deceptively fragile union leader from Fawwar, suggested. "Rather, they try to analyze it as an objective, national experience." This was not to say, however, that such reflection was without passion.

Expressing a pervasive sentiment, Nadim Issa emphatically declared: "We destroyed the *intifada*." The "we" typically referred to Arafat's PLO. "Bad leadership, not the Israeli repression," maintained a Beit Sahour activist, "wrecked the struggle." Palestinians, he said, could have chosen between two equally viable options: the Beit Sahour example of nonviolent tax resistance or the Gaza example of violent confrontation. "Israel wasn't fully successful in defeating either of these challenges. But what did Arafat do? He adopted the strategy of concessions, of trying to please everyone. And what did we get in return? The compliment that the Palestinians were — as one U.S. official told Hanan Ashrawi — 'the most flexible delegation!'" Moussa faulted the PLO not for deflecting the momentum of the *intifada* but rather for pointlessly prolonging it. Palestinians were initially prepared to give more of themselves, but the PLO, putting all faith in diplomacy, demanded less. Arafat then acted as if the *intifada* could go on forever, as if Palestinians possessed an infinite capacity for sacrifice. "No one," Moussa underlined, "took the time factor into account. The PLO should have suspended the revolt after the first or at most the second year. Instead, leaflets came to make the most unrealistic demands. There was talk about 'accelerating' and 'developing' the *intifada*, but no one said how. People were deceived into believing the *intifada* was continuing when it was already over. In the end, the *intifada* was a comedy."

Alongside political ineptitude, the PLO was widely reproached for its cor-

rupting influence. Connecting the defeat of the *intifada* in Beit Sahour to PLO subsidies during the tax strike, Samira recalled: “As the money came pouring in from Tunis, people ceased criticizing Arafat. He bought our allegiance. We took the money and paid with our freedom. People fell silent — but not without shame.” Indeed, as he guiltily pocketed the bribes, a proud Beit Sahouran I had known gradually withdrew into a shell. “We spoiled everything, every principle,” lamented Esmail. “Our feelings, our attitudes — they were all corrupted by money and power. I trust far fewer people now.” Yet, except for its magnitude, especially at the institutional level, the corruption did not come as a shock to Esmail: “You must remember that everyone, individually or en masse, participated in the *intifada*. And it is unnatural to suppose that everyone will remain loyal to values and principles.”

Although a political activist from an early age, Moussa acknowledged that the *intifada* was a real revelation of just how dirty a game politics was. “I was still an innocent before the *intifada*. I never imagined that the leadership would even use the blood of the people for personal advantage. They grabbed everything and left us, the army of the *intifada*, nothing.” What galled most was the ease with which principles were purchased. “I was certain the Communist Party would remain firm. But Arafat bought it off too. The Communists no longer believe a word they say; they just say it for the money.” Discounting all Palestinian organizations, Moussa solemnly stated: “They are committing a crime against the history of Palestine. I can’t belong to any political party anymore. None expresses my or the people’s interests. I must belong to the people.” Indeed, “Experience has shown,” Moussa believed, “that the people can be trusted. Many did become corrupt. But most did not.” And it was the relentless pressures of occupation that accounted for much of the moral decay. “You can’t expect people to exhibit normal values and attitudes in the circumstances we lived the last few years. We are ordinary people; we aren’t saints.” “First give me something to eat,” his wife, Afaf, interjected, “and then ask me to be moral!”

Israel also did its best to multiply the corrosive effects of occupation. Incompetent miscreants were appointed to fill the top posts in all Palestinian social institutions. To head the Hebron education ministry, for example, Israel recruited an infamous extortionist with only a high-school diploma. On the other hand, to keep hold of the levers of power, Arafat put many of these same officials on the PLO payroll. When the *intifada* began, the Tunis leadership fought hard against a genuine housecleaning. “The officials were corrupt, undemocratic — but they were in Arafat’s pocket,” said Moussa. “The *intifada* failed because Palestinian institutions were not transformed. The PLO wouldn’t make an *intifada* against itself.”

Moussa was convinced that most Palestinians secretly wished the *intifada*

had never happened. "If I had a chance to do it over," he forthrightly admitted, "I would oppose the *intifada*. Our life was much better before." Indeed, asked to list its main achievements, Moussa was nonplussed: "I never thought of any positive outcome from the *intifada*." But on a moment's reflection he added, "Like any experience, the advantage is that you learned lessons." "Although Palestinians suffered on account of the *intifada*," Esmail countered, "we were already rapidly losing ground before it. That, after all, was what sparked the *intifada*. We mustn't lose sight of the real source of our misery — not the *intifada* but the occupation."

Reckoning the *intifada* as the "brightest moment" in Palestinian history, Samira cautiously continued: "It was right and it was just. And it worked very well. The bad thing was that our expectations were exaggerated. People were full of hope. They believed the revolt would lead to a state." Not everyone thought this way, she qualified, but those who knew better were not strong enough politically to set the *intifada* on a more radical course, "to make a real revolution." Critical of her own illusions on this score, Samira remembered: "I didn't want to listen to the truth. I miscalculated Israel's stubbornness. I thought that after a few years of *intifada* — protests, stone throwing — the Israelis would withdraw. I was very naive. I thought the Israelis were more easy. I should have listened to the few sounds telling the truth. I won't trick myself again."

"Ultimately," Samira concluded, "Palestinians surrendered not because they were bad people but because of the limits of their ability to fight and think." Yet even Samira now wished the *intifada* had never happened. "It was better six years ago, living under occupation but without the peace talks." Alluding to the Oslo accord, she bitterly observed: "At least back then, Israelis did not have a legal document giving them rights to our land. Six years ago, they were called occupiers. And now? We are no longer even allowed to say that we are under occupation."

My first night in Beit Sahour I was met by Samira's daughter, Rana. Suggesting that much had changed since my last visit, Rana emphasized that no one, including herself, cared about politics anymore. People had given up. Did she then believe that the *intifada* had been a waste? Locked for several moments in thought, Rana finally shook her head no: "At least we tried."



The political issue that aroused most fears and hopes among Palestinians was democracy. A discussion of the political future quickly metamorphosed into one about the prospects for democracy. One could not but admire the extraordinary value Palestinians attached to a way of life that they had seldom had an opportunity to experience. It should perhaps be added that the rev-

erence Palestinians paid to democracy was not mere ritual. They believed in, and wanted, the substance, not just the rhetoric, of democracy.

"My first responsibility," Samira said, "is to teach democracy to my children and students. Not by lectures, but by practicing it. This is what we as a people lack." Palestinian society, she maintained, had to be revamped from its foundations. The tyranny of the household especially had to be challenged. A society could not be democratic unless the family was democratic. "So long as we blindly follow the commands of our grandfathers and uncles, or accept 'that's the way it is' when we question an order, Palestine will never be a democracy." Indeed, censuring the male-centered household as "a school of despotism," John Stuart Mill, in his essay "The Subjection of Women," went on to suggest that "if justly constituted, the family would be the real school of the virtues of freedom." Perhaps it was more than coincidental that Samira was just then reading Mill's "On Liberty."

"True, compared to other Arab societies, we are very democratic," Samira acknowledged. "At least we have open discussion here." Yet, she continued, the standard was not a particularly impressive one, and Palestinians only just rose above it. "We talk. But we also threaten and kill." One night Mufid Hanna and I found ourselves caught between two rival gangs of Fateh and PFLP supporters about to face off armed with wooden clubs. "That's our problem," Mufid scoffed. "People think with clubs." I later mentioned the incident to Rana. "That's why I don't want a Palestinian state," she whispered in a plaintive voice. "Really, I want Israel to stay. We will end up killing each other."

On the debit side of the democracy ledger, one also had to record a resurgence, in mostly Christian Beit Sahour, of anti-Muslim animus. It used to be that one made jokes at the expense of the "backward" Muslims of Hebron. Now one more frequently jeered at them in repugnance. It was perhaps a measure of the angst of a community whose numbers were dwindling (many Christians had already emigrated, and many more were expected to follow) while the ranks of the Islamic movement swelled. It was perhaps also a measure of the fragmentation of the unity of purpose that once animated the *intifada*. The bigotry and provincialism submerged in spontaneous national enthusiasm for the revolt had resurfaced. Young men from Hebron were constantly reviled as predators stalking Beit Sahouran girls. Adnan wouldn't tell his family that he had fallen in love with a Muslim. "My father would throw me out of the house. Not even my friends would accept it. No one in Beit Sahour would." Adnan's father was far from a benighted villager: a retired schoolmaster, he had recently added Spanish to his extensive linguistic repertoire in order to read Cervantes in the original.⁹

Pointing to spirited elections that took place in the teachers union, Moussa

maintained that “if given a chance, we can be democratic.” One could also cite the remarkable tolerance displayed at his secondary school. Every conceivable viewpoint along the political spectrum — from Fateh to Hamas, from militant communism to polite indifference — was represented on the faculty. Yet discussion never became so heated as to overstep the bounds of civility. This was also true of student government meetings at Bir Zeit University. One wishes the same could be said of a faculty or student assembly at a typical American university. Indeed, even aggressive questioning by a Jew from the United States generally elicited a cordial and candid reply from Palestinians.

If the prospect for Palestinian democracy seemed dim, it was not so much due to the weakness of the foundation as to the oppressive weight of a rotten superstructure. I viewed a mock news broadcast produced by the incipient Palestinian television network. The video featured fact-filled reports on Israel’s confiscation of West Bank land and water and a feisty debate between a proponent and opponent of the Oslo accord. “That’s democracy,” one producer declared with pride and enthusiasm as the others nodded in approval. But with Arafat in charge, all the producers agreed, the nightly news format was too predictable: “Arafat in the bathroom, Arafat in the living room, Arafat in the kitchen. The end.” Notably, not once was Arafat’s name even mentioned in the simulated news.

Had Palestinians won a state in the first years of the *intifada*, Moussa speculated, democracy may have begun to sink roots. “At least, there wasn’t a basic conflict of interest between the leadership and the masses.” But the PLO now acted at Israel’s behest and so did not, and could not, represent the Palestinian people. “Oslo betrays our basic aspirations and denies our basic rights. Arafat’s job is to impose Oslo. How then can there be democracy?”

Even more than they mourned Arafat’s apostasy, Palestinians feared its consequences. What they dreaded most was the Palestinian police force that would soon be at Arafat’s command. No one denied that Palestinians, like any other people, had the capacity to brutalize each other. Recalling his prison days, Moussa pointed to the grisly tortures administered by fellow inmates on alleged Palestinian collaborators. There was also no gainsaying that Arafat would be ready and able to tap that capacity. Already, Fateh had begun to clamp down on dissent. Palestinians refusing to join the Oslo celebrations were viciously assaulted. An ex-political prisoner studying at Bethlehem University made the mistake of posting a picture of PFLP leader George Habash on his door. Dozens of Fateh activists mangled him. “They will be the Palestinian police,” Omar jeered from his hospital bed. After his release, Fateh continued to hound him at school, spreading malicious rumors that he had contracted syphilis. As a result, Omar planned to leave Bethlehem University, and Palestine, for good.

Attributing the fear of Arafat's police to Israeli propaganda, Bir Zeit vice president Ibrahim Abu-Lughod suggested that Palestinians had unconsciously internalized Israel's racist assumptions about "Arab backwardness and savagery." Yet the issue was plainly not the nature of Palestinians but rather the nature of the office Palestinians were being recruited to fill. Force of circumstance would *cause* the Palestinian police to be brutal. For what was their purpose if not to facilitate Israel's occupation? Indeed, Israeli minister of police Moshe Shahal announced that the Palestinian police force would be welcome "even if Rabin and Arafat can't reach an agreement."

More disturbing to many Palestinians was the fact that the repressive authority would function with impunity. The constraints imposed by international public opinion on Israel, albeit feeble, did mitigate somewhat the occupation's brutality. Now Israel would be able to hide behind the Palestinian facade. One could already imagine Israeli officials feigning anguished impotence at the sight of "Arabs killing Arabs." A Hamas leader at Bir Zeit anticipated that, adding the Palestinian police to the Israeli occupation, "the people's oppression will double." "With the Israelis," Stephan pointed out, "you can say what you want so long as you do nothing. But when Arafat's police come, you won't be able to speak up even at home." Nur agreed, avowing that "as things appear now, I would prefer the Israelis to stay." The sentiment was near-universal. (One notable exception was George Hanna of Bir Zeit, who suggested that a large, armed police force may be Arafat's one bargaining chip if and when, at the end of the five-year "interim" stage of Oslo, Israel offers Palestinians nothing.) Pointing to the unhappy precedent of the Jordanian occupation, Moussa recalled that King Hussein's police would smash the radios of Palestinians tuning in foreign news broadcasts. The application for service in the Palestinian police did not bode well for the future either. One question asked, "Which is more important to you, human rights or the state?" and another wanted to know, "Who will you be more loyal to, the law or the state?" The correct answer in both cases was apparently "the state," as in the Arafat credo: "L'état, c'est moi."

All opposition to Fateh rule, an Arafat crony thundered one night from Tunis, would be ruthlessly crushed. "Instead of recruiting an army of soldiers to repress us," a Hebron tailor pathetically joked the next day, Arafat should "recruit an army of psychiatrists to deal with all our illnesses from the occupation." Long active in the Communist Party, the tailor had spent seven years in prison. "I never considered taking up arms against Israel, but I may have to against the Palestinian police." "The way Fateh is acting," he later despaired, "although Israel could never get me to leave Palestine, I may be forced to now." Even a member of a party aligned with Fateh conceded that "four years from now we will probably all be in jail."

“Our most important aims in the future struggle,” Esmail enumerated, “will be democracy, human rights, freedom.” He feared, however, the price Palestinians would have to pay before achieving them: “More violence against the occupation — and also against some Palestinians.” Moussa was equally somber about prospects after Oslo. “If things get worse politically, I am not one of those who will stop talking. I won’t go with the crowd. Maybe they will destroy me economically, maybe physically. But if they repress us, I won’t be silent.”

“I pity Palestinians now more than ever before,” Samira reflected one evening. “It seems that they are very simple and naive. I thought they were more educated and smarter.” “I don’t like speaking about my people this way,” she defensively continued, “and I may even regret it one day. But it is hard for me to accept how limited a vision Palestinians have. Despite everything they see and hear, they still believe something will come of Oslo. Maybe I shouldn’t blame them. Maybe they have suffered so much that all they want is to be rid of the hard times. Maybe the burden was too much. Maybe we shouldn’t expect more, especially with the whole world against the Palestinians.” Ruefully recalling her words a few days later, Samira added: “I was perhaps too hard on the Palestinians. I want to believe that one day they will free themselves from the illusions they are now living. I still have hope.” Summoning the memory of her two imprisoned brothers, Samira solemnly repeated, “As long as we have Jalal and Jamal and the hundreds, thousands, like them in jail, I still have hope.” On 25 June 1994 Samira dropped me a brief note: “Jamal and Jalal are at home now. They were released last Thursday.”



“For the first time I feel old.” I had asked Moussa what was the biggest change in his life since we last met two and one-half years earlier. “These past thirty-eight years should have been the best ones in my life. Yet I honestly cannot remember a single happy day. Actually, I now have trouble recollecting anything. Today I strained for five minutes but still couldn’t remember what happened yesterday.” Did Moussa regret his life’s choices? “It used to be that I was indifferent to worldly concerns: enough money for food, for clothes. . . . Not anymore. But I still believe in the same things. Once I was offered a very good position with the United Nations offices here. I passed it up on account of a principle. The principle was a petty one, but I still stuck by it. Was I right or wrong? I’m no longer sure.” “At the beginning of our marriage,” Moussa’s wife, Afaf, remembered, “Moussa was never at home. He had complete faith in politics.” Today, she believed, Moussa trusted people less: “Moussa now belongs to the family.” “But,” Moussa mildly interjected, “I still also belong to the people.”

Moussa displayed far less ambivalence on the subject of Israelis: "I hate them. I didn't used to.¹⁰ Now I do. They are monsters." "I am now more convinced than ever before," his lifelong friend and comrade, Esmail, agreed, "that not one Israeli thinks in a human spirit. They are only human when Palestinians give them everything they want. The only good Palestinian for an Israeli is a collaborator."

"History," Moussa brooded, "will not forgive what was done to the innocent people of Palestine. The struggle was unfair. That's why we lost. Other peoples have lost battles, wars. But we lost everything. We lost everything because everyone was against us. Even our leadership."

III. History's Verdict

A notable feature of the "ferment of the '60s," Noam Chomsky observed, was that it raised the "cultural and moral" awareness of many U.S. citizens. Perhaps the most striking example is current perceptions of the European conquest of the Americas. In marked contrast to even the recent past, few today would find justice, let alone nobility, in that chapter of world history. One may anticipate that Israelis, too, will some day rue what was done to the indigenous population of Palestine. Indeed, the process as well as the rationalizations of conquest were remarkably similar in the two cases.¹¹

In his monumental narrative *The Winning of the West*, Theodore Roosevelt celebrated as "the most striking feature in the world's history" and "the most far-reaching in its effects and its importance," the "spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces." No "period of race expansion" had ever been "either so broad or so rapid." Nor, it would seem, so just. The land was virginal; the native population had no substantive legal claim to it. White settlers "had moved into an uninhabited waste. . . . [T]he land is really owned by no one. . . . The settler ousts no one from the land. The truth is, the Indians never had any real title to the soil."¹²

Yet in Roosevelt's interpretation, the wheel of progress, not justice, loomed largest — or, more exactly, progress was the true measure of justice. It was a "shortsighted view" to "speak of all wars of conquest as necessarily evil." A "conquest may be fraught with evil or with good for mankind, according to the comparative worth of the conquering and conquered peoples." In the case of North America, the colonists rightfully "claimed the continent as their heritage" and "battled on behalf of the destiny of the race" as they conquered it. "The continent was predestined to be the inheritance of their children and their children's children." For "in the interests of mankind" and "civilization," it was "all-important" that North America be won by such a "masterful people."

Roosevelt believed that "it is for the good of the world that the English-

speaking race in all its branches should hold as much of the world's surface as possible." He acknowledged "it mean[t] the infliction and suffering of hideous woe and misery," but such was the price of progress: "The world would probably not have gone forward at all, had it not been for the displacement or submersion of savage and barbaric peoples as a consequence of the armed settlement in strange lands of the races who hold in their hands the fate of the years." Indeed, the "throes of agony" of the "inferior race" were "yet the birth-pangs of a new and vigorous people." In the great scheme of things, then, no crime had been committed against the indigenous population of North America. "The settler and pioneer have at bottom justice on their side; this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages." Roosevelt was explicit about the genocidal implications of this principle: "The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized man under a debt to him." Any contrary claim was idle chatter:

It is indeed a warped, perverse, and silly morality which would forbid a course of conquest that has turned whole continents into the seats of mighty and flourishing civilized nations. All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they hold joint ownership.

In sum, "[I]f we fail to act on the 'superior people' theory, . . . barbarism and savagery and squalid obstruction will prevail over most of the globe."¹³

Winston Churchill's justification for the Jewish conquest of Palestine echoed Roosevelt's argument. Comparing the Palestinian Arab to a dog in a manger, Churchill maintained:

I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, or at any rate, a more worldly-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place.¹⁴

The ultimate saving grace, for Roosevelt, was that the U.S. conquest was, of course, the most benign of all: "No other conquering or colonizing nation has ever treated savage owners of the soil with such generosity as has the United States." Exemplary of the "generosity" of the U.S. government was the fate of the Cherokee Indians. Indeed, in its main lineaments, the Cherokee displacement typified the fate of many conquered peoples, Palestinians

included. For that reason a detailed examination of the fate of the Cherokee nation in its relations with frontier settlers and the U.S. government serves as a useful parallel to the fate of the Palestinians in their contest with Jewish settlers and Israel. Although the two processes are widely separated by time, place, and culture, there are striking similarities in the rhetoric, tactics, legal justifications, and deployment of violence by the two conquest regimes.¹⁵

On the eve of the European invasion, the Cherokee nation numbered perhaps as many as 30,000 and occupied some 124,000 square miles. By the early nineteenth century, its population had dwindled to under 13,000 and its territory to no more than 17,000 square miles. Within another century, the Cherokee nation was almost completely dispossessed, and its population had still not reached the preinvasion level.¹⁶

The Cherokee first made contact with an English settlement in the mid-seventeenth century. The Virginia colony had recently concluded a protracted and deadly conflict with the Powhatans, which prefigured the fate of the Cherokees. It is not too far-fetched to find in the Second Anglo-Powhatan War an early prototype of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 as well. Using an Indian attack as a pretext, the Virginia colony declared war and, in the words of Kirkpatrick Sale, “finally enacted the policy of all-out land confiscation and population removal it had been hoping to effect.” As one colonist recalled:

We, who hitherto have had possession of no more ground then their waste, and our purchase . . . may now by right of Warre, and law of Nations, invade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy us: whereby wee shall enjoy their cultivated places . . . and possess[] the fruits of others labours. Now their cleared grounds in all their villages (which are situate in the fruitfulest places of the land) shall be inhabited by us.¹⁷

Eschewing assimilation with the native population, the early English colonists (unlike the French and Spanish) enacted a policy of separate development.¹⁸ Official rhetoric notwithstanding, the same basic approach was pursued by Americans before and after the Revolution. “Virtually every American president since the formation of the government,” reports Ronald Satz, “had seriously considered the feasibility of transferring the Indians to areas outside the geographical limits of the United States.” George Washington, for example, envisaged a “Chinese wall” to keep whites and Indians apart.¹⁹

In 1721, through a treaty with the colony of South Carolina, the Cherokee were forced to cede land for the first time in their history. Written into this and each successive compact was a variation of the same theme of “perpetual peace henceforth” between the United States and the Cherokee nation. As Cherokee leader Richard Mack Bettis wryly observed, “Each statement of friendship is followed by a description of what the government is taking from

the Tribe.” Summarizing the pre-Revolutionary era, James Mooney writes that “the tide of [white] emigration . . . surged across the mountains in spite of every effort to restrain it, and the period . . . is principally notable for a number of treaty cessions by the Indians, each in fruitless endeavor to fix a permanent barrier between themselves and the advancing wave of white settlement.”²⁰

Yet to focus exclusively on treaty violations is to miss the more important half of the story. For the treaties themselves were, and had to be, the results of coercion. “Government officials,” observes Satz, “used force, bribery, deception, and threats, among other things, to convince the Indian leaders to sign land cession treaties.” These tactics bespoke the overarching truth that only with the application of force could the white settlers hope to wrest the land from the indigenous population. In words that Zionist leaders in Palestine would echo a decade later, Roosevelt acknowledged that

under the actual conditions of settlement wars were inevitable, for if it is admitted that the land of the Indians had to be taken and that the continent had to be settled by white men, it must further be admitted that the settlement could not have taken place save after war. . . . [U]nder no combination of circumstances was it possible to obtain possession of the country save as the result of war, or of a peace obtained by the fear of war.

Accordingly, Roosevelt maintained that the distinction between cessions obtained by treaty, on the one hand, and by war, on the other, was artificial. In *either* case, the historian of the American West freely admitted (unlike Zionist historians), they were acts of conquest:

Looked at from the standpoint of the ultimate result, there was little difference to the Indian whether the land was taken by treaty or by war. . . . No treaty could be satisfactory to the whites, no treaty served the needs of humanity and civilization, unless it gave the land to the Americans as unreservedly as any successful war. As a matter of fact, the lands we have won from the Indians have been won as much by treaty as by war; but it was almost always war, or else the menace and possibility of war, that secured the treaty.²¹

Cherokee resistance to settler expansion was typically denounced as “savagery” — yesterday’s terrorism. “As the Indians desperately fought to preserve the lands they lived on from white encroachment,” Reginald Horsman notes, “their ‘savage’ actions were used to condemn them. . . . [T]he violence engendered by the white advance was used to condemn the Indians who had been provoked to resist.” Deploring the use of the epithet “Indian atrocities” in official documents to designate Cherokee resistance, Helen Hunt Jackson reflects: “To very few who read those records does it occur that the Indians who committed those ‘atrocities’ were simply ejecting by force, and in the contests arising from this forcible ejection, killing men who had usurped and stolen their lands. . . . What would a community of white men, situated precisely as

these Cherokees were, have done?" Indeed, in a not unfamiliar confounding of terminology, the settler outrages that attended the encroachments were acclaimed as "manly and soldierly," and "the language of self-defense," in Michael Paul Rogin's formulation, was used by the settlers to "obscure[] aggressive intentions."²²

With settler aggrandizement, on the eve of the War of Independence, proceeding apace, the Cherokee nation made common cause with the British. "Looking back," Roosevelt frankly acknowledged, "it is easy to see that the Indians were the natural foes to the American people, and therefore the natural allies of the British Government. . . . Alarmed by the encroachments of the whites [the Cherokee] promptly took up the tomahawk at the bidding of the British." Preparing to join ranks with King George, a Cherokee warrior lamented that his people "had but a small spot of ground left for them to stand upon and that it seemed to be the intention of the white people to destroy them from being a people."²³

The American War of Independence, like Israel's, was also a ruthless war of conquest. It possessed a "twofold character," as Roosevelt put it, "wherein on the one hand the Americans won by conquest and colonization new lands for their children" (the "whole Ohio Valley, as well as the Illinois"), and "on the other wrought out their national independence of the British king." Using the outbreak of hostilities as a pretext, American settlers waged a "merciless" war against the Cherokee. "No aboriginal practice was too barbarous for the white men to adopt," writes Thurman Wilkins. "They even developed refinements of their own." Posting bounties, the revolutionary authorities, according to Mooney, "officially encouraged the barbarous custom of scalping." "In spite of all the bitterness, which the war aroused," he adds significantly, "there seems to be no record of any scalping of Tories or other whites by the Americans." (The same racist double standard inheres throughout American history. Regarding U.S. atrocities during the war with Japan, John Dower observes that "it is virtually inconceivable . . . that teeth, ears, and skulls could have been collected from German or Italian war dead and publicized in the Anglo-American countries without provoking an uproar.") The Carolina Whig leader William Henry Drayton exploited "the renewed hostile acts of a few young men" in 1776 to "provide[] instructions for genocide" against the Cherokee. Continental commanders were ordered to "make smooth work as you go — that is you cut up every Indian corn field, and burn every Indian town." Recalling a surprise daybreak attack on a Cherokee village in 1782, the commanding officer boasted that, as the villagers attempted to flee,

the troops broke generally in squads and pursued, cutting down Indians with their swords. If one blow failed in the object, a second and 3rd from some of the others did the work. One William Green, a very large and powerful man

had a sword of great size and would cleft upon the head of the flying Indians like so many pumpkins. Young Zack Clarke, not more than 17 or 18, . . . particularly distinguished himself in pursuing and killing the enemy.

The outstanding young killer, Zack Clarke, later became governor of Georgia. Writing to John Hancock, one officer recounted how parties of settlers had gathered to massacre even friendly Indians at their hunting grounds and that it was “not uncommon to hear even those who ought to know better, express an ardent desire for an Indian war, on account of the fine lands those poor people possess.”²⁴

Casting themselves as innocent victims desperate for peace, American colonists maintained that the war they had fought with the Cherokee was one of self-defense. Israel in 1948 (and after) was reading from an old script. Negotiating with Carolinian settlers in 1777, the Cherokee leader Corn Tassel took a jaundiced view of American protestations: “You only want our land and not to make peace.” Indeed, Americans pressed for the cession of Cherokee territory conquered in the course of the Revolutionary War. The Cherokee nation couldn’t grasp, however, why the flight of the indigenous population in the heat of battle gave Americans title to the land: “I don’t see how they can claim the land by that, for we drove the white people from their houses too.” But force of logic proved no match for the logic of force. Recalling the negotiations with Britain that ended the War of Independence, Roosevelt observed:

It was the actual occupation and holding of the country that gave our diplomats their vantage-ground. The peace of 1783, as far as our western limits were affected, did nothing more than secure us undisturbed possession of lands from which it had proved impossible to oust us. . . . [W]e got what we did get only because we had won and held it.

Roosevelt’s strategy of what the Zionists later called “building facts” was not hampered by a fastidiousness about legalities. “No treaties,” he said, “can ever be regarded as binding in perpetuity; . . . circumstances may arise which render it not only expedient, but imperative and honorable, to abrogate them.” The Zionist version of these sentiments was epitomized in Ben-Gurion’s well-known admonition that “it does not matter what the Gentiles say, what matters is what the Jews do” — or, as Golda Meir put it, Israel’s “borders are where Jews live, not where there is a line on a map.”²⁵

The first treaty signed by the Cherokee with the new government of the United States at Hopewell, South Carolina (1775), forced on them massive new cessions of land. Promising that “the hatchet” would “be forever buried between the United States and the Cherokee,” the treaty only spurred the white settlers to further encroach on Cherokee territory. Although Secretary

of War Henry Knox denounced “the disgraceful violations of the Treaty of Hopewell,” the U.S. government still demanded new cessions from the Cherokee in the Treaty of Holston (1791; “Perpetual peace declared between the United States and the Cherokee Nation . . . The United States solemnly guarantees to the Cherokees all their lands not herein ceded”); and yet again in the Treaty of Tellico (1798; “Peace and friendship are renewed and declared perpetual. . . . Boundaries of the Cherokee to remain the same where not altered by this treaty. The Cherokee cede . . .”). Between 1785 and 1835, fully sixteen such “perpetual” treaties of “peace and friendship” that “solemnly guaranteed” the “lands not herein ceded” were signed between the Cherokee and the U.S. government.²⁶

Rapidly assimilating the conventions and trappings of “civilization,” the Cherokee nation had evolved, by 1830, into a predominantly agricultural society with a constitutional structure that made it a “mirror image of the American Republic.” “The Cherokees,” observed the U.S. superintendent of Indian trade, “are in advance of all other tribes. They may be considered as a civilized people.” Addressing the cabinet, John C. Calhoun reported that the Cherokee were “all cultivators, with a representative government, judicial courts, Lancaster schools, and permanent property.” Calhoun made plain, however, that, far from being a boon, “the progress of the Cherokees in civilization” was a “great difficulty.” For, in heeding the call to “civilize” themselves, the Cherokee had, it was believed, also become “firmly attached to the soil.” The United States was bent, however, not on assimilating but expelling them. The Cherokee nation had evidently taken official U.S. nostrums too literally. In the ensuing congressional debate on Cherokee removal, a Rhode Island senator declaimed: “Ill-fated Indians! Barbarism and attempts at civilization are alike fatal to your rights but attempts at civilization are more fatal of the two.”²⁷

Beginning with Jefferson, all U.S. administrations and main opposition leaders viewed transfer west of the Mississippi as the “chief means” (to use Benny Morris’s formulation in the Palestine context) for resolving the Cherokee question. The Southern states coveted the immense tracts of valuable topsoil, virgin lumber, and mineral reserves (gold was discovered in the late 1820s) in the Cherokee territory. Yet the Cherokee had publicly pledged to stand steadfast against further encroachments. “The doom of the Cherokee was sealed,” Helen Hunt Jackson observed, “on the day when they declared, once for all, officially as a nation, that they would not sell another foot of land.” A series of measures was approved by Congress to facilitate the removal of the Cherokee. These legislative enactments culminated in the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which, although couched in voluntarist language, was “well understood” to mean that the Cherokee “would have no choice.” The

expulsion, moreover, was to be comprehensive. Not only Cherokee farming tribal land but also those few owning private plots were slated for removal. Last-ditch proposals by the Cherokee leadership to dissolve the nation and join the Union as private citizens and small freeholders, thus releasing substantial tribal land for sale, fell on deaf ears. Recalling that the Cherokee had been advised to “assume white ways” for a secure future, Secretary of War James Barbour underlined the hypocrisy of the efforts underway to expel them: “They see that our professions are insincere; that our promises have been broken, that the happiness of the Indians is a cheap sacrifice to the acquisition of new lands.”²⁸

Pursuant to the “complete expulsion” of the Cherokee, de Tocqueville observed, the southern states enacted “tyrannous” measures and issued “arbitrary” decrees. The aim — as with Israel’s repressive rule of the West Bank and Gazan Palestinians — was “to reduce them to despair and force them to go away.” The basic strategy was succinctly articulated later by Andrew Jackson, who sought to expel the Cherokee with the imprimatur of the rule of law: “You must get clear of them by legislation. Take judicial jurisdiction over their country; build fires around them, and do indirectly what you cannot do directly.”

With the extension of Georgia law to tribal lands, the Cherokee were left — in the words of a congressional sympathizer — “at the mercy of fire-brand and dagger of every unprincipled wretch in the community.” White settlers “took possession of Indian land, stock, and improvements, forced the Indians to sign leases, drove them into the woods, and acquired a bonanza in cleared land. Protesting Indians were threatened or flogged.” “The natives,” reported de Tocqueville, “are daily the victims of abuse of force.” Another contemporary lamented that the Cherokee “are brow beat, and cowed, and imposed upon, and depressed with the feeling that they have no adequate protection in the United States and no capacity for self protection in themselves.” “Oppression,” wrote Grant Foreman in his standard account, “was employed mercilessly to break the spirit of the Cherokee who refused to leave their homes.” The state of Georgia even claimed exclusive legal title to exploit the invaluable mineral resources located in Cherokee lands — in particular, the newly discovered gold deposits. By a similar adjudication of rights, title to develop the invaluable water resources in the occupied territories has been granted almost exclusively to Israelis.²⁹

In words rich with contemporary resonance, the Cherokee nation, and sympathetic whites as well, publicly decried the removal campaign. To the ultimatum of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun that they concede Georgia’s sovereignty or else depart, the Cherokee replied: “We beg leave to observe and remind you that the Cherokees are not foreigners but original inhabitants

of the United States; and that the states by which they are now surrounded have been created out of land which was once theirs." In a petition to Congress, the Cherokee questioned: "[W]hat better right [can] a nation have to a country than the right of inheritance and immemorial possession? . . . What crime have we committed which could deprive us of our homeland?" Recalling that "we are the invaders of no one's authority, nor have we deprived any one of his unalienable privileges," a Cherokee "memorial" asked, "[H]ow then shall we directly confess the right of another people to our land by leaving it forever?" "We have been called a poor, ignorant, and degraded people," it added, "but there is not a man within our limits so ignorant as not to know that he has a right to live on the land of his fathers." A second "memorial" recalled the "indignities, imprisonment, persecution, and even death" suffered at the hands of Georgians "though the Cherokee have committed no offense whatever, save, and except that of seeking to enjoy what belongs to them, and refusing to yield it up to those who have no pretense of title to it." A sympathetic white urged "the people of Georgia, and the people of the United States [to] reflect whether they would be willing to receive the same treatment with which the Cherokee are threatened. Would they be content to go into exile . . .?" Or, as the Cherokee unaffectedly put it in the second memorial, "We intreat those to whom the foregoing paragraphs are addressed, to remember the great law of life, 'Do to others as ye would that others should do to you.'" Foreign observers were especially attuned to the hypocritical pieties of American civilization, touting its democratic pedigree while riding roughshod over the indigenous population. Pointing to the "treacherous policy" of Indian removal as revelatory of America's true nature, the English traveler Frances Trollope gibed: "You will see them one hour lecturing their mob on the indefeasible rights of man and the next driving from their homes the children of the soil."³⁰

Cherokee removal culminated under the administration of Andrew Jackson. Jackson shrouded the act of conquest in a thick, if familiar, fog of exculpatory ideology.³¹ "It seems now to be an established fact," alleged Jackson, that the Cherokee "cannot live in contact with a civilized community and prosper." Until the Cherokee mastered the arts of civilization, the U.S. government's "moral duty" was, accordingly, to effect removal. Only thus could it "protect, . . . preserve and perpetuate" the Cherokee. Yet Cherokee society had been acclaimed, only a few years before, as a "mirror image of the American Republic." The Cherokee were "being driven" out, a visiting English scientist observed, "not because they cannot be civilized but because a pseudo set of civilized beings, who are too strong for them, want their possessions."³²

In a related argument, Jackson maintained that the national government

was powerless in the face of settler encroachments. Removal was necessary to preempt frontier violence. Disputes did arise, in the early years of the republic, between the national government and settlers. Yet even then, tensions were often more apparent than real, a quarrel over means rather than ends. Thus federal officials, according to Bernard Sheehan, “had no qualms about finally obtaining the Indian lands, but . . . did not see how the orderly occupation of the continent . . . would be advanced by giving over national policy to the initiative of the frontiersmen.” And ultimately, the settlers could always count on government support. Harsh critic as he was of federal passivity, Roosevelt nonetheless acknowledged:

Though the nation might be lukewarm originally, and might wish to prevent the settlers from trespassing on the Indian lands or entering into an Indian war, yet when the war had become of real moment and when victory was doubtful, the national power was sure to be used in favor of the hard-pressed . . . wilderness vanguard of the American people.

To the victims of settler encroachment, federal pleas of impotence rang hollow. “Are Congress,” asked the Cherokee, “who conquered the King of Great Britain, unable to remove those people?” Once Jackson took office, in any case, the national government worked hand-in-glove with the frontiersmen. Jackson “insisted on the spontaneous, popular character of white expansion,” reports Rogin, in order to “obscure the essential role[] played by . . . government policy decisions.” In effect, Jackson was “using intruders . . . to force the tribes to cede their land.” Although the national government displayed “less of cupidity and violence” than the frontiersmen, de Tocqueville concluded, they were “equally lacking in good faith.” Tactical approaches differed, but both were “means to the same end.” One may discern the identical pattern of intermittently ambivalent but, for all the posturing on both sides, ultimately collusive relations between Israel’s national government (be it Labor or Likud) and the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories.³³

Yet although they worked “to the same end” of expulsion, “wilderness vanguard” and “national power” were not always animated by the selfsame impulses. For, bearing as it did the brunt of indigenous resistance to the ever-aggrandizing frontier, the “wilderness vanguard” frequently displayed a pathological cast of mind. Defiant steadfastness on one side evoked a veritable paroxysm of loathing on the other. A future governor of the Northwest Territory noted with “astonishment” that the settlers were “actuated by the most savage cruelty, wantonly perpetrating crimes that are a disgrace to humanity.” William Henry Harrison, no stranger himself to war and violence, despaired that many frontier inhabitants “consider the murdering of Indians in the highest degree meritorious.” The settlers “have the most rancorous

antipathy to the whole race of Indians," an English observer reported, "and nothing is more common than to hear them talk of extirpating them totally from the face of the earth, men, women, and children." Although sparing no effort to extenuate the barbaric hatreds that drove, and the barbaric deeds committed by, the settlers, Roosevelt nonetheless also acknowledged that they "regarded their foes as beasts rather than men," "speedily sunk almost to the level of their barbarous foes, in point of hideous brutality," "barely considered an Indian as a human being," "grew to think of even the most peaceful Indians as merely sleeping wild beasts," "regarded all Indians with sullen enmity, and could not be persuaded to distinguish the good and the bad," "despis[ed] all men not of their own color," and so on.³⁴ The Hebron massacre of February 1994, in which tens of Palestinians praying in a mosque were gunned down by a Jewish settler, and the attendant "rejoicing and jubilation" in the Jewish settlements similarly attested that race hatred spurs and is spurred by conquest. Pressed by a journalist to express regret over the mosque murders, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, "the father of the settlement movement," replied "in total seriousness," "I am sorry for everything that gets killed. I am not only sorry for dead Arabs. I am also sorry for dead flies."

The ideological affinity between the West Bank and American West settlers can be yet more firmly established. Recalling the theological wellsprings of the frontier settler's worldview, Roosevelt wrote:

Many of the best of the backwoodsmen were Bible-readers, but they were brought up in a creed that made much of the Old Testament, and laid slight stress on pity, truth, or mercy. They looked at their foes as the Hebrew prophets looked at the enemies of Israel. What were the abominations because of which the Canaanites were destroyed before Joshua, compared with the abominations of the red savages whose lands they, another chosen people, should in their turn inherit? They believed that the Lord was king for ever and ever, and they believed that they were but obeying His commandment as they strove mightily to bring about the day when the heathen should have perished out of the land. . . . There was many a stern frontier zealot who deemed all the red men, good and bad, corn ripe for the reaping.

It is perhaps also to the point of the analogy that, according to Roosevelt, the frontier settlements tended to attract the most depraved types — "the class . . . always to be found hanging round the outskirts of civilization," "men of lawless, brutal spirit who are found in every community and who flock to places where the reign of order is lax . . . to follow the bent of their inclinations unchecked," "desperadoes [who] were often mere beasts of prey." Indeed, U.S. officials generally looked upon the frontier settlers as a "lower order of people," a sentiment many Israelis echo regarding the Jewish settlers.³⁵

Alongside Cherokee backwardness and federal powerlessness, Jackson in-

voked a hodgepodge of standard conquest myths to justify expulsion. The Cherokee cannot “be allowed on tracts of country on which they have neither dwelt nor made improvements,” Jackson argued, “merely because they have seen them from the mountains or passed them in the chase.” In the Zionist idiom, inasmuch as the Arab indigenes were primitive and peripatetic “bedouins,” they had no real title to the soil. Cherokee removal, Jackson anticipated, “will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters” — it would, in the imagery of Zionism, allow for the “desert to bloom.” Guilty of “murdering women and children,” the Cherokee, like the “Arab terrorists” of Zionist ideology, effectively forfeited their political rights: “They are incapable,” maintained Jackson, “of self-government by any of those rules of right which civilization teaches.” By securing the Cherokee’s “right to live under their own laws,” Jackson avowed, removal would preserve the cultural integrity of the Cherokee nation. By “concentrating the development of national life,” Zionism claimed, the “population transfer” of Arabs, far from being “morally flawed,” would fulfill a “noble human vision.” Removal was opposed to the interests, not of the ordinary Cherokee, but only of the corrupt tribal leaders who had deceived and browbeaten the “masses”: “Were the Indians — I mean the real Indians, the natives of the forest — left to themselves,” Jackson averred, they “would freely make this election” to leave. Spearheading opposition to Jewish settlement, in official Zionist rhetoric, were not the “earthy fellahs” or “masses of Arab workers” (“natural allies,” it was alleged, of Zionism) but, rather, the “scheming Arab effendis.” And, ultimately, inasmuch as it would “strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions,” Cherokee expulsion, insisted Jackson, was vital for American “national security” — just as the expulsion of Palestinians was vital for Israel’s “national security.” If, as Samuel Johnson memorably quipped, “patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels,” then security is the last refuge of scoundrel states.³⁶

Jackson’s concerted campaign of intimidation and assault eventually bore fruit. Cherokee resistance was broken. Indeed, what ensued prefigured in even the smallest details the road to Oslo. A leading faction of the Cherokee leadership (but not John Ross, the tribal chief) capitulated to Jackson. Although claiming no alternative (“An unbending iron necessity tells us we must leave. . . . There is but one path of safety, one road to future existence as a Nation”), the “Treaty Party” seems to have really been actuated by personal ambition. At any rate, Cherokee removal was sealed in 1835 as the “Treaty Party” signed the New Echota accord, promising yet again that “the land herein guaranteed to the Cherokee shall never . . . be included within the limits of jurisdiction of any State or Territory” and that “perpetual peace shall

exist between the United States and the Cherokee." Few Cherokee actually ratified or, for that matter, supported the agreement. Writing the secretary of war, the U.S. army officer charged with implementing the expulsion protested:

That paper...called a treaty is no treaty at all, because not sanctioned by the great body of the Cherokee and made without their participation and assent.... I now warn you and the President that if this paper...called a treaty is...ratified you will bring trouble upon the government and eventually destroy [the Cherokee] nation. The Cherokee are a peaceable, harmless people, but you may drive them to desperation, and this treaty can not be carried into effect except by the strong arm of force.

For the U.S. government (as well as its Cherokee collaborators), democratic niceties were beside the point. "Nineteen-twentieths of the Cherokees," opined the governor of Georgia, "are too ignorant and depraved to entitle their opinions to any weight or consideration in such matters." In the wake of the New Echota accord, the Cherokee embarked on a campaign of nonviolent resistance. Yet the "Treaty Party" continued to sing the praises of New Echota and colluded with the U.S. government in crushing Cherokee opposition. A bloody struggle erupted, with "murders and assassinations and other acts of outlawry, amounting almost to civil war."³⁷

With all but a handful of Cherokee standing fast, the U.S. army intervened in 1838 to finish the job. The tragedy that now unfolded — the "Trail of Tears" — "may well exceed in weight of grief and pathos any other passage in American history." "It is mournful to see how reluctantly these people go away," a Moravian missionary wrote. "Even the stoutest hearts melt into tears when they turn their faces towards the setting sun — & I am sure that this land will be bedewed with a Nation's tears — if not with their blood." "I fought through the civil war and have seen men shot to pieces and slaughtered by thousands," a Georgia volunteer who served with the Confederacy recalled, "but the Cherokee removal was the cruelest work I ever knew."

A century later, the former vice chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, Count Folke Bernadotte, said of the Palestinian survivors of the "Lydda Death March," an expulsion ordered by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and executed by Chief of Operations Yitzhak Rabin, that "I have made the acquaintance of a great many refugee camps; but never have I seen a more ghastly sight than that which met my eyes here." Of the roughly fifteen thousand Cherokee forced into exile, perhaps as many as *half* perished. As seen through the eyes of the U.S. secretary of war, however, the Trail of Tears was a "generous and enlightened policy...ably and judiciously carried into effect...with promptness and praiseworthy humanity.... [The Cherokee] had been treated with kind and grateful feelings,...not without violence, but with very proper regard for [their] interests." The commissioner

of Indian affairs similarly saluted the Cherokee expulsion as “a striking example of the liberality of the Government. . . . Good feeling has been preserved, and we have quietly and gently transported . . . friends to the west bank of the Mississippi.” With “sincere pleasure,” President Martin Van Buren apprised Congress in December 1838 of “the entire removal of the Cherokee Nation. . . . They have emigrated without any apparent reluctance.” Addressing the People’s Council in 1948, Ben-Gurion plainly broke no new ground when he said of the Arabs brutally expelled from Palestine that they had abandoned “cities . . . with great ease, . . . even though no danger of destruction or massacre confronted them.”³⁸

Recalling that Cherokee removal had been accomplished behind the facade of treaties (“by the most chaste affection for legal formalities”), de Tocqueville mocked that the United States had achieved its ends “without violating a single one of the great principles of morality in the eyes of the world. It is impossible to destroy men with more respect to the laws of humanity.”³⁹

Like the proverbial phoenix rising from the ashes, the Cherokee nation took wing yet again after the Trail of Tears. The feat was all the more remarkable given the dimness of Cherokee prospects under Jackson’s proposed “self-rule.” Indeed, in laying the blueprint for Palestinian “self-rule,” Israel seems almost to have stolen a page from Jackson’s book. Situated in what is now northeastern Oklahoma, the new Cherokee homeland was nearly all, in the words of a federal official, “unfit for cultivation, . . . entirely worthless.” The autonomy promised the Cherokee was hemmed in on every side. The “presence of federal agents and military attachments,” “economic coercion,” including U.S. government “control of purse strings” to crucial Cherokee funds, and the precedence of U.S. law “in all cases involving Indians and whites” combined to “emasculate tribal sovereignty.” The Cherokee nation was also wracked by a “bloody civil war,” with “arson and assassination commonplace,” fought largely between the factions that supported and opposed the New Echota accord. As news of this internecine conflict traveled east, the “common theme” of newspapers that once pretended to sympathy for the Cherokee was that the “most civilized tribe in America” had “reverted to barbarism.” The civil war among the Cherokee, observes William G. McLoughlin, “fit only too easily into the stereotypical picture of the supposed innate and ineradicable savagery and thievery of Indians.” As the Oslo accord gives way inevitably to violent civil strife among Palestinians, the same “eastern newspapers” will no doubt strike the same pose of despair over Arab “barbarism.”⁴⁰

In the face of a half-century of “continuous efforts” by the U.S. government to “remove them,” the Cherokee concluded, according to McLoughlin, that the “original hope that they might be integrated as equals . . . was impossible.”

At best, they were “doomed to become second-class citizens.” There was no alternative but to “rely on their own leaders and sustain their own autonomy.” Accordingly, the Cherokee “used the European concept of nationhood to defend their freedom and their land base.” And, despite its attenuated sovereignty and the daunting obstacles strewn in its path, the Cherokee nation did manage to survive and even thrive, if only temporarily. Indeed, by the 1850s the Cherokee nation was prospering as never before, “a showcase for foreign visitors of the progress indians could make in ‘civilization’ and ‘Christianization.’” Acclaimed as the “Athens of the West,” the Cherokee nation enjoyed a “standard of living as high as if not higher than their neighbors in Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri” and a literacy standard that was “undoubtedly superior.” All told, the Cherokee “presented as progressive a community . . . as could have been found” anywhere on the frontier. Once more, however, it was crushed beneath the juggernaut of an “imperialistic policy” that by midcentury “could not be stayed.” Already on the eve of Cherokee removal from Georgia, de Tocqueville had predicted that “no doubt within a few years that same population which is now pressing around them will again be on their tracks.” In a preplay of the fate of the Palestinians during and after the Gulf “war,” the Cherokee’s alleged “treacherous” support of the Confederacy was used as a pretext to extract concessions that had already been coveted (by railroad interests, land speculators, and ordinary settlers) before the Civil War. Indeed, the renewed policy of encroachments was initiated by President Lincoln. By the terms of the 1866 Treaty of Fort Smith, the Cherokee were forced to surrender more land and open the remainder to the railroads. The United States did, of course, also “guarantee to the Cherokees the quiet and peaceable possession of their country,” and so on, and so on.⁴¹

The turn of this century marked the beginning of the end of the Cherokee nation. Pressures mounted, starting in the 1870s, to open up all of Cherokee territory to white settlement. As the land-grabbing railway companies moved in, a flood of white settlers followed in their wake. Thus commenced the fragmenting of the last remnants of the Cherokee homeland. With the hindsight of recent Palestinian history, one reads these accounts with a sense of *déjà vu*. “Some of the white settlers,” reports McLoughlin, seized “land already claimed by the Cherokee, and when the Cherokee protested, the intruders simply drove them off by force. . . . Frontier whites generally regarded Indian land that was unsettled as open to their settlement.” Settlers believed, in the words of a U.S. army officer, that “all unoccupied land belonging to the Indians is, or should be, free booty.” As in Jackson’s day, the federal government “refused to carry out its obligation to remove” the settlers “until their numbers became so great and their behavior so uncontrollable that they undermined all efforts to maintain order.” Settler resistance, in turn, served the

federal government as a pretext to further subvert Cherokee sovereignty. On the few occasions when settlers were removed, it was only “so that Congress could develop a more orderly structure for opening up the lands to white settlement.” The Cherokee harbored no illusions about the plans afoot. Comparing the fate of his nation to the Trojans (“It was the contents of the wooden horse emptied inside the walls of Troy that enabled the Greeks to take that ancient city”), a Cherokee leader linked the illegal settlements effectively sanctioned by the federal government to a policy of “absorption and disintegration [which] seems to have been substituted for the old doctrine of extermination.”⁴²

A cry was eventually raised to divide among individual tribal members a part of Cherokee communal holdings and to open up for white settlement the so-called surplus (estimated at fully two-thirds the total). Eastern “philanthropists” and “humanitarians” were especially adamant that the Cherokee abolish tribal tenure and institute private ownership: “common property and civilization,” it was said, could not “coexist”; “selfishness” was “at the bottom of civilization.” By century’s turn, the Cherokee nation had acquiesced in the allotment of its lands in severalty. Not long after, even the modest plots granted each Cherokee fell into the hands of whites. Once Cherokee communal land was broken up, Angie Debo observes in her classic account, an “orgy of exploitation” ensued that was “almost beyond belief. Within a generation these Indians, who had owned and governed a region greater in area and potential wealth than many an American state, were almost stripped of their holdings, and were rescued from starvation only through public charity.” “One could be certain in approaching an Indian settlement,” recalls Debo, “to find only worthless land.” The robbery of Cherokee lands and ultimate destruction of the Cherokee nation, incidentally, were crucially facilitated by Cherokee collaborators who, together with a small class of Cherokee entrepreneurs, “continued to prosper under the new conditions.”⁴³

Stripped of its territorial base, the Cherokee nation lost in short order the last semblances of sovereignty. The U.S. government rapidly extended its jurisdiction at the expense of substantive tribal functions. Once “hopelessly outnumbered” by white settlers, the Cherokee were incorporated into the American republic as citizens of the new state of Oklahoma. (On the eve of Oklahoma’s admission in 1907, the Cherokee constituted only 5 percent of the population.) “Measured by any objective standard,” two historians observe, “the events of allotment and statehood were a monumental disaster”—for the Cherokee, that is. Bringing the story up to the present, McLoughlin concludes: “The Cherokee have no land base today. . . . Though they have legal recognition as a tribe and elect their own chief, they lack sovereignty. They have left a remarkable record of their struggle against overwhelming

odds to remain a sovereign people.” One hopes against hope that a similar epitaph will not be written for the people of Palestine.⁴⁴

In *A Century of Dishonor*, a remarkable study published just as the Cherokee nation was confronting its last, fateful trials, Helen Hunt Jackson foresaw that “there will come a time in the remote future” when the U.S. government’s “record of . . . perfidy” to the Cherokee “will seem well-nigh incredible.” Indeed, few today would want to defend the U.S. record. Perhaps Israelis, too, will one day look back with incredulity at what was done to Palestine.⁴⁵



Before leaving Beit Sahour I asked Samira if she had any last words. “I would like to tell you a story,” she replied after several minutes of visibly intense reflection:

Three or four years ago, a young Lebanese girl visited Beit Sahour. We talked about the situation in Lebanon. She recalled the frightening experience in 1982 when the Israelis invaded south Lebanon. She lost some of her relatives and suffered a lot. I felt ashamed of myself. I felt somehow that being a Palestinian meant that I was responsible for her suffering. Especially when she said that “we were living peacefully in our land. Then the Syrians, the Israelis, and the Palestinians came and fought on our land, and we had to pay the price.” Now I am quite sure that the Palestinians did not mean to cause suffering for the Lebanese. They, too, were victims. They were there for a noble cause. Fighting to end the occupation. But, I think, no matter how noble your cause is, you shouldn’t save it at another’s expense. I am very sure the coming generation of Israelis will be ashamed, too. Israelis now think they are serving a noble cause. They are defending their state. They want to have their state, they want peace. But they are oppressing others. Time will come when Israelis will read about their history, how they occupied the land, and how they established their state. It won’t seem a noble cause. I think so. I hope so. If they have any morality, they will be ashamed of what they did.

I left Palestine before dawn in mid-January 1994. Moussa accompanied me down the long, sloped side street to the main road. The children wanted to see me off, but we decided not to wake them. Halfway down, we heard a rapid clip-clop sound behind. Cutting through the thick morning fog was the tiny figure of six-year-old Urwa. Slightly hunched, Moussa stood silently by with his son as the cab readied to take me to the airport. Bidding our good-byes, I realized from Moussa’s forlorn expression that the same questions were running through his mind as mine. Would I one day return, or was this the end of our friendship? Indeed, was it the end of Palestine?

What is history but the obituary of nations?

—Georgia congressman, 1830,
advocating Cherokee removal

*Some of them would die and most of them would turn into human dust and
the waste of society. . . .*

—Israeli foreign ministry, circa 1948,
advocating the permanent exile of Palestinian refugees



Chapter 1: The Truth from Palestine, Revisited

1. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism* (New York, 1981), 123.
2. *Ibid.*, 123–24.
3. It did. For the November 1988 PNC meeting, see Norman G. Finkelstein, “Israel and the ‘Scourge’ of Palestinian Moderation,” *New Politics* (summer 1989).
4. Indeed the British MP Ian Gilmour inferred from these grotesque structures a sinister message: “In their ugliness and unsuitability, surprising in a country which has such artistic skills at its disposal, they seem to be saying: ‘We know we are intruders, but don’t care, because we are determined to crush not just the Palestinians but their landscape too.’ They have succeeded only too well” (*London Review of Books*, “Diary,” 23 May 1996).

Chapter 2: The Ordinary, the Awful, and the Sublime

1. In his memoir, *A Surplus of Memory* (Berkeley, 1993), Yitzhak Zuckerman, a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, expatiated at great length on the question of Jewish collaborators in the ghetto. Underlining the crucial role they filled in the Nazi killing machine, Zuckerman wrote:

[C]learly the Germans wouldn’t have done the job so easily or so fast, without the Jewish police. Because the Jews would certainly have run away from the Germans, but, when they saw a Jewish policeman, it didn’t occur to them that he would lead them to their death. And the Jewish police knew... what Treblinka was, since it was the Jewish police themselves who brought the information about the slaughter taking place there. You might say they took part in building Treblinka, and there is documented evidence of that... When there were hundreds of thousands of Jews in Warsaw, the Germans couldn’t have taken the transports to Treblinka without the help of the Jews themselves. It was the Jewish policemen who caught and took out the masses of Jews... [W]hen a simple Jew saw a Jewish policeman calling him, it was hard for him to imagine that his brother would lead him to death... We didn’t figure that the Germans would put in the Jewish element, that Jews would lead Jews to death... In many cases, there were mixed forces of Jews and Germans. Here too, the ugliest and most provocative jobs were done by Jewish policemen, as guides and active

assistants. . . . There isn't another chapter in Jewish history in which the murderers themselves were basically Jews. . . . We hadn't foreseen the magnitude of the [Jewish] police force working against the Jews. Suddenly a mass of thousands appeared against us, a disciplined force, with commanders, filling a decisive function in the German mission of destroying the ghetto. (192, 208, 209, 210, 212)

The Jewish collaborators could not, according to Zuckerman, adduce any grounds for moral exculpation:

[T]here's supposedly a "legal" argument that anyone who didn't follow orders was threatened with death. But what danger faced the [Jewish] police force? At most, what happened to all Jews. . . . There are attempts to defend them, there are those who say they had no choice. . . . Of course they had no choice — from the moment they decided to be policemen. . . . [T]here weren't any "decent" policemen because decent men took off the uniform and became simple Jews. . . . For [Jewish] collaborators and Gestapo agents, there's nothing to say! Every last one of them should have been destroyed! (192, 207, 244, 269)

Not killing the Jewish collaborators sooner was judged by Zuckerman the resistance's most inexcusable error:

What do I think is our great guilt. . . ? Our guilt was that immediately, from the first day, we didn't begin our harsh war against the Jewish police! . . . All we had to do was kill them. If a few of them had been killed, others would have been afraid to join the police. They should have been hanged on lamp poles. . . . I never forgave myself for not doing what we should have. . . . Later, when we did start going that way, it was too late. . . . [O]ur great failure, our disgrace [was that] we could have dealt with the Jewish police and we didn't. (192, 207)

Once the Jewish resistance to the Nazi occupation commenced, the first priority was to "concentrate[] on the elimination of Jewish traitors." Zuckerman emphasized that

the war had to start with the police, with collaborators, with the Jews. . . . [I]t would have been impossible to fight the Germans without ending the internal treason. . . . I'm sure that wherever there is internal treason, war must begin by destroying it. . . . It was hard for us to swallow emotionally that our war had to begin with the Jewish policemen, since we had our sights trained on the Germans. (208, 209, 210)

Leaflets were accordingly distributed throughout the ghetto announcing that the "whole [Jewish] police force has been sentenced to death." Zuckerman's account includes a precise inventory of Jewish collaborators — in the police as well as the Judenrat (Jewish Council) — methodically hunted down and killed by the Jewish Fighting Organization (202–3, 245, 269).

2. The verses are as follows:

Brother, sing your country's anthem,
Sing your land's undying fame.

Light the wondrous tale of nations
With your people's golden name.

Tell your father's noble story,
Raise on high your country's flag.
Join then in the final glory,
Brother, lift your flag with mine.

Build the road of peace before us,
Build it wide and deep and long.
Speed the slow and check the earnest,
Help the weak and guide the strong.

None shall push aside another,
None shall let another fall.
Work together, all my brothers,
All for one and one for all.

3. Primo Levi, *The Reawakening* (New York, 1986), 207.

4. Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died* (New York, 1967), 222.

5. Arno Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* (New York, 1988), 422.

6. In the commission of even the most heinous crimes, perpetrators will invariably display a very broad spectrum of behaviors. The overarching guilt of *all* of them is, however, taken for granted. Survivors of Auschwitz, for example, remembered with gratitude this or that kind act of a Nazi doctor. "Anyone who has never experienced the camp," recalled one inmate, "cannot know how much real value such things have for morale." Yet, who would argue that such a gesture morally compensated for the Nazi doctor's participation in the selections? See Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York, 1986), 195, 227, 315.

7. Soon after leaving Beit Sahour I received a letter from Mufid that read in part: "I think that I will not forget you because you impact me as a first Jew friend. . . . In the past I knew the Jew as an Occupier, as a soldier, as an inhuman being, but now I know one Jew as friend. . . . Really, you are the first Jew who I meet as a friend. Because of that I think I will not forget this special friendship between a Palestinian and American Jew. I know that we are different in many things. But this is not enough reason to be enemies. So maybe we will be friends if our destiny help us to see each other again."

8. "The Agony in Israel," *New York Review of Books*, 7 January 1988, emphasis added; Meron Benvenisti, *New York Times Magazine*, 16 October 1988; Thomas Friedman, *Publishers Weekly*, 14 July 1989; Walter Goodman, *New York Times*, 6 September 1989.

Chapter 3: A Double Standard in the Application of International Law

1. "The World v. Saddam Hussein," *New York Times*, 25 August 1990.

2. *New York Times*, 16 August 1990; *Newsweek*, 27 August 1990.

3. Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security* (Oxford, 1987), 21; Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Israel's Fateful Hour* (New York, 1986), 99; Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*

(Boston, 1983), 197; Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* (New York, 1990), 197, 232. In his most recent memoir, Abba Eban recalls that “the entry of the IDF into Lebanon actually came not in response to PLO action but rather in response to PLO passivity. For nearly a year a cease-fire agreement negotiated between Israel and the PLO by the United States... had been generally respected... Arafat and his senior aides were desperately anxious to maintain their Lebanese foothold without incurring a major Israeli strike.” Eban continues that Defense Minister Ariel Sharon had already formulated plans in August 1981 to invade Lebanon “not as a response to Arab actions but as a deliberate act of choice on his part... His grand design depended on the PLO violating the cease-fire agreement, not the PLO preserving it. What Sharon needed was a *casus belli*.” Tacitly conceding that the Lebanon invasion was an illegal war of aggression, Eban nonetheless publicly *supported* it. Touring the frontlines, “I found myself surrounded by young soldiers who wanted to know whether I thought the war... was the kind of operation that they could carry out in clear conscience... [F]aced by the young faces of soldiers, some of whom could hardly contain their fears, I found it emotionally impossible to do anything but give them the feeling that the enterprise on which they had embarked was worthy of their support and, if necessary, their sacrifice. I could not imagine that any Israeli leader with normal sensibilities could have given any other answer” (*Personal Witness* [New York, 1992], 605–8). One is reminded of Julien Benda’s scathing indictment in *Treason of the Intellectuals* (New York, 1969) of those who “would not submit their patriotism to any check on the part of their judgment, proclaiming... that ‘even if the country is wrong, we must think it in the right’” (52).

4. *New York Times*, 16 September 1990; Yaniv, *Dilemmas*, 20–23, 50–54, 67–70, 87–89, 101, 105, 113, 143; Harkabi, *Israel’s Fateful Hour*, 101. For the Israeli Mossad’s anxiety over, and machinations to abort, the PLO’s “peace offensive,” see also Victor Ostrovsky, *By Way of Deception* (New York, 1990), 247–56. For “safeguarding the occupation” as Israel’s real aim in the Lebanon War, see also Meron Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies* (New York, 1995), 79; Major General Avraham Tamir, *A Soldier in Search of Peace* (New York, 1988), 93, 116, 117, 122; and Shimon Shamir, “Israeli Views of Egypt and the Peace Process,” in *The Middle East*, ed. William Quandt (Washington, D.C., 1988), 207.

5. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 12 August 1990; Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, 221. For discussion of casualty figures, see Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 257, 418–19, which notes that “not one serious statistic ever came from the PLO”; Fisk put the number of victims of Israeli action at 17,825 between 4 June and the end of September 1982.

6. Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 277–78, 282–84; see also Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, 214–15, 224–26, 229. For a careful discussion of the conventions on weaponry in the context of the Lebanon War, see W. Thomas Mallison and Sally V. Mallison, *The Palestine Problem in International Law and World Order* (London, 1986), 376–87. The authors conclude that Israel’s indiscriminate use of cluster bombs and phosphorus shells in populated areas was “contrary to international law.”

7. I would want to enter three stipulations, however. First, the World Court never ruled on Iraq’s long-standing territorial claims against Kuwait. Conceivably, Iraq’s use of force was not altogether illegal. R. Y. Jennings made the general point in his classic study, *The Acquisition of Territory in International Law* (New York, 1963), that “where the State that has seized territory from another by the use of apparently illegal force is found to have the better title,... the use of force would be found to be justified,

because international law in no wise prohibits the use of force by a State within its own territory" (66). Second, even if Iraq did not have a valid claim on, say, the deserted islands providing access to the Gulf, there were ample precedents for a political settlement that awarded territory to a party without legal title to it. Consider the Israel-Palestine conflict. The 1947 Palestine Partition Resolution allotted Israel 56 percent of Palestine; by the end of the first Arab-Israeli war, Israel had conquered fully 77 percent of Palestine. Yet the two-state settlement proposed by the General Assembly and the PLO in recent years called on Israel to withdraw only from the West Bank and Gaza, thus ceding Israel the territory occupied in violation of the Partition Resolution to which it had no valid title. (As Jennings [*Acquisition of Territory*, 55] pointed out, a state does not acquire legal rights to territory even if conquered in a war of self-defense.) Finally, if, as the U.S. administration insisted, Iraq's aggression could not be "rewarded" by any concessions, why was Israel's aggression against Lebanon "rewarded" (with crucial U.S. support) by the PLO's forced evacuation from Beirut and a coercive "peace treaty" with Lebanon that included the de facto cession of southern Lebanon to Israel? (On the latter point, see Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 480–82.)

8. *New York Times*, 26 August 1990.

9. Noam Chomsky, "The Palestinian Uprising," *Zeta*, May 1988; Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, 54; Shabtei Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* (Oxford, 1987), 187–90; Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel* (New York, 1987), 31; Mordecai S. Chertoff, ed., *Zionism: A Basic Reader* (New York, 1975), 83; Security Council, United Nations, *Security Council Official Records, Twenty-Second Year*, 13 November 1967, 1373rd meeting.

10. Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 435; cf. Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors* (New York, 1986), 97–98. For Israel's "brutal police state" in south Lebanon, replete with death squads, torture chambers, and alliances with such "psychopathic" personalities as Etienne Saqr, whose militiamen displayed the ears of Muslim prisoners on their belts (Saqr's official motto read "It is the duty of each Lebanese to kill one Palestinian"), see chap. 15 of Fisk, *Pity the Nation*.

11. *Koteret Rashit*, 3 August 1988.

12. See Amnesty International's grisly document, *Iraq: Children — Innocent Victims of Political Repression* (New York, n.d.).

13. Anne Elizabeth Nixon, *The Status of Palestinian Children during the Uprising* (New York, 1990). The study was commissioned by the Ford Foundation. A "child" was defined as someone under sixteen years of age.

14. B'Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *Violence against Minors in Police Detention* (Jerusalem, 1990). A "minor" was defined as a child between the ages of twelve and eighteen. Even this exemplary human rights organization occasionally revealed a moral blind spot. Consider the insight of B'Tselem and Hebrew University faculty member Charlie Greenbaum that "[t]he most damaging and dangerous effect of police violence falls not on the minors, nor on the police, but on us, those who prefer not to know," and B'Tselem and Knesset member Amnon Rubinstein's report preface that put "responsibility for this state of affairs . . . first and foremost with those who send the children out into violent confrontations with IDF soldiers." The latter argument, incidentally, was not without instructive precedent. Martin Luther King Jr.'s biographer Taylor Branch recalled that, as the Birmingham police turned attack dogs and fire hoses on protesting

black children, "Birmingham's white leaders scrambled to head off a swell of public sympathy . . . by denouncing [the] use of children." Birmingham's mayor declared that "irresponsible and unthinking agitators" had made "tools" of children to threaten lives and property. "The respectable people of Birmingham, white or colored, did not create this danger," he continued. "We are not contributing to it. We are innocent victims. . . . I cannot condone, and you cannot condone, the use of children to these ends." King's reply, equally resonant in the Palestinian case, was that "this tender solicitude for Negro children had never produced much concern over their consignment to miserable schools or other injuries of segregation" (Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters* [New York, 1988], 761–62).

15. To simplify the exposition of material, I discuss here certain topics — for example, plunder of private property — that perhaps belong in the section on war crimes. In any event, the distinction between war crimes and crimes against humanity was not entirely clear at Nuremberg. See Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial* (New York, 1984), 87.

16. Amnesty International, *1990 Report* (New York, 1990). For the comparable record of Iraqi human rights abuses in Kuwait, see Amnesty International, *Iraq/Occupied Kuwait: Human Rights Violations Since August 2, 1990* (New York, December 1990), and *News from Middle East Watch* (New York, September 1990, 16 November 1990). Human rights organizations estimated that, in the course of the Iraqi occupation, several hundred Kuwaitis were killed and several thousand subjected to arbitrary arrest.

17. Recall, however, Citizen's Rights Movement leader Yossi Sarid's (in)famous denunciation of the PLO for supporting Iraq: "Compared with the crimes of Saddam Hussein, the sins of the Israeli government might appear as white as snow. When you read the black pages on Iraq in the white pages of *Amnesty International*, you arrive at the conclusion that Sharon and Rabin are almost the righteous of the nations of the world" ("Let Them Look for Me," *Haaretz*, 17 August 1990). The charitable interpretation, I suppose, is that Sarid never read the Amnesty International report.

18. I leave to one side the even more basic point that Noam Chomsky suggested to me: "Suppose a perfect democracy and the world's most horrible police state carry out a particular crime. It is idiotic to argue that it is unfair to compare the two crimes for this reason, except in one respect: it is more odious in the case of the perfect democracy, because those who actually perpetrated the crime were under much less danger if they simply refused, so their moral culpability is far greater. Apart from that, a crime does not cease to be a crime if it is carried out by a democracy. The argument scarcely reaches the level of ridiculous. The fact that one hears it so commonly is just another tribute to the bottomless wells of human irrationality" (personal communication).

19. Raja Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law* (Washington, 1988), xi–xiii; Mallison and Mallison, *Palestine Problem*, chap. 6. Israel did recognize the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention during the first months of the occupation but in October 1967 quietly deleted any reference to it. Thenceforth, Israel's formal position was that, while not accepting the convention *de jure*, it carried out the humanitarian provisions *de facto*. Inasmuch as deportations, collective punishments, house demolitions, and the establishment of settlements all violated the humanitarian provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, this claim was patently false. Pointing especially to the decisions handed down by Israel's High Court (on which more presently), Israeli civil

liberties advocate Avigdor Feldman concluded that “no legal source has suffered so much erosion and become so empty of content” as the Geneva Convention (“The Bone-Breaking Codex,” *Haaretz*, 10 October 1990). On the 1979 United Nations Code of Conduct, see especially Middle East Watch, *The Israeli Army and the Intifada* (New York, 1990), 7–8.

20. B’Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *Annual Report 1989* (Jerusalem, 1989), 41–43. The B’Tselem report also noted that “[t]he Court has rejected each and every petition it received concerning house demolitions, and has accepted all claims of security concerns which underlie a demolition or a sealing.” The International Committee of the Red Cross, which is the guardian of the Geneva Convention, explicitly prohibited the “destruction of property . . . as a punishment or deterrent,” yet the Israeli High Court ruled in March 1986 that house demolitions were justified as a deterrent (see Al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man, *Punishing a Nation* [Boston, 1990], 137–38).

21. B’Tselem, *Annual Report 1989*, 53–54; Al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man, *Punishing a Nation*, 126. The B’Tselem report also noted that, although deportees had the right to petition the High Court, “[s]o far, the High Court has rejected all the petitions submitted to it on this subject and has approved all of the deportations.”

22. Shehadeh, *Occupier’s Law*, 12, 18–22, 28, 32. A single exception — the Elon Moreh case — proved in practice to be no exception at all (see *ibid.*). The High Court also ruled that the Jewish settlers constituted part of the local population of the occupied territories. Inasmuch as international law allowed for actions by the occupier that benefited the local population, Palestinian resources could thenceforth be seized for the settlers’ benefit. The court’s decision — in the words of Shehadeh — “stands international law on its head, since it makes [the Jewish settlers] part of the ‘protected population,’ whose interests, as distinct from those of the occupier, international law sets out to protect” (*ibid.*, 219; see 110–11).

23. Al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man, *Punishing a Nation*, 242; B’Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *The System of Taxation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip* (Jerusalem, 1990), 9.

24. One such military order required a permit for “a march of ten or more people together; or the assembling for the purpose of marching together from one place to another for a political purpose; or for a matter which can be interpreted as a political matter whether or not they were in fact walking and whether or not they had congregated.” Violation was punishable by a ten-year imprisonment. The one challenge upheld by the High Court was to an order empowering the military governor to appoint the executive board of a lawyers’ union on the West Bank. The court ruled that the union did have the right to elect its own board — but this right too had to be balanced against security requirements (see John Quigley, *Palestine and Israel* [Durham, N.C., 1990], 201–2; Shehadeh, *Occupier’s Law*, 95–100, 224, 226). Israel’s multiplication of ordinances to cloak with the mantle of legitimacy a fundamentally illegitimate enterprise is not without instructive precedent. In the course of an “insidious process that . . . constantly had recourse to the law . . . to enforce injustices,” a historian of the Nazi holocaust recalls, “no fewer than 1,970 laws, decrees, orders and statutes were issued at national, state and municipal level” against the Jews, “bearing witness to an undescrivable fetish for order” (Lothar Kettenacker, “Hitler’s Final Solution and Its Rationalization,” in *The Policies of Genocide*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld [London, 1986], 76–77).

25. Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law*, chap. 4, 222–24 (the quoted phrases appear on 86, 87, 222). For the mockery of justice in military trials, see Avigdor Feldman, "Quick, Slow and Dead," *Hadashot*, 1 January 1988, and Danny Rubinstein, "The Difference between a Military Band and a Symphony Orchestra in the Supreme Court of Nablus," *Davar*, 1 January 1988. Through June 1993, four hundred thousand Palestinians, or one-fifth of the West Bank/Gaza population, had been detained or imprisoned. Regarding Israel's massive use of administrative detention, one may recall that the Nazis' resort to this practice signaled the total breakdown of legality in Germany (see Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* [New York, 1975], 397–98, and Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society* [Oxford, 1990], 28).

26. B'Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *The Use of Firearms* (Jerusalem, 1990), 22–28; Michal Sela, "The War of Flags," *Davar*, 24 October 1990. On the specific issue of plastic bullets, see B'Tselem, *Use of Firearms*, 14–21, which characterized this ammunition as "lethal in every respect." See also Middle East Watch, *Israeli Army and the Intifada*, chap. 1. On the deployment of death squads, see Al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man, *Punishing a Nation*, 30–34, and, more recently, B'Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *Activity of the Undercover Units in the Occupied Territories* (Jerusalem, 1992), and Middle East Watch, *A License to Kill* (New York, 1993). On a related issue, *Use of Firearms* reported that, of the nineteen Israeli soldiers and civilians killed in the occupied territories during the *intifada*, only one had been killed confronting a demonstration, and "[i]n every case the death resulted from an attack by an individual or by a small group." These figures demonstrated "that no direct correlation exists between the intensity of the danger to life and the circumstances in which soldiers may open fire" (54).

27. Middle East Watch, *Israeli Army and the Intifada*, 13. See Amnesty International, *Killings by Israeli Forces* (New York, January 1990): "[T]he Israeli authorities are effectively condoning, perhaps even encouraging extrajudicial executions as a means of controlling the unrest."

28. Amnesty International's 1989 and 1990 yearbooks; Middle East Watch, *Israeli Army and the Intifada*, chap. 2; B'Tselem, *Use of Firearms*, 42–51. For a convincing refutation of the alibi that there were so few indictments because the offending soldiers had acted within official guidelines, see *Use of Firearms*.

29. Avigdor Feldman, *Haaretz*, 2 June 1989.

30. Middle East Watch, *Human Rights in Iraq* (New York, 1990), 95–142; Amnesty International, *Iraq/Turkey* (New York, 1990); *New York Times*, 17 and 29 September 1990. See also references cited in note 16 above. Amnesty estimated that three hundred thousand Kuwaitis as well as several hundred thousand foreign nationals had become refugees as a result of the Iraqi invasion.

31. For the 1948 expulsion, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London, 1995), chap. 3. The Israeli government eventually confiscated all the land of the Palestinian refugees living outside the 1949 armistice lines and 65 percent of the land of Palestinians living inside them. The total value of lost Palestinian property in contemporary dollars was variously reckoned in the billions. On these points, see Quigley, *Palestine and Israel*, 84–85, 109–11, 212.

32. Al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man, *Punishing a Nation*, 123–28, 133–39; Goga Kogan, "The Invisible Transfer," *Hotam*, 15 September 1989; Gabi Nitzan, "The Transfer Has Begun and Proceeds without a Hitch," "The Transfer Continues in

Total Silence,” and “What’s New with Rabin’s Transfer,” *Hadashot*, 20 September 1989, 27 September 1989, and 18 October 1989, respectively; Ronit Matalon, “To the Bridge in a Taxi,” *Haaretz*, 10 October 1989; Senabel Press Service, *Transfer Policy in Action* (Jerusalem, 1990); Shehadeh, *Occupier’s Law*, pt. 1 (“The Alienation of the Land in the West Bank”), and 213–18; Reuben Pedhazur, “Water from the Boulder of Contention” and “The Common Faucet,” *Haaretz*, 25 April 1989 and 3 May 1989, respectively; Nadav Shragai, “They Call It Expansionism,” *Haaretz*, 22 June 1990.

33. Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, 46; Aryeh Egozi, “Slaves at Night — Workers during the Day,” *Yediot Ahronot*, 6 March 1986; Meron Benvenisti, 1986 *Report — Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social and Political Developments in the West Bank* (Boulder, Colo., 1987), 19; B’Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *The System of Taxation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip* (Jerusalem, 1990) (the quoted phrase appears on 40); Craig Forman, “Spirit of Palestinian Uprising Remains Alive in Town That Defied Israel with a Tax Boycott,” *Wall Street Journal*, 20 September 1990; Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, *Report* (Jerusalem, November 1989), 2. The above-cited B’Tselem study was especially informative on Israel’s use of the taxation system as — in the words of the subtitle — “an instrument for the enforcement of authority during the uprising.” It disingenuously suggested, however, that many residents of Beit Sahour had been coerced into honoring the tax strike (34–35).

34. “Oral Statement by Amnesty International on the Israeli Occupied Territories” (before United Nations Commission on Human Rights), in Amnesty International, *Israel and the Occupied Territories: Amnesty International’s Concerns in 1988* (New York, 1989).

35. Bush news conference (*New York Times*, 23 August 1990).

36. Bush address to Congress (*New York Times*, 12 September 1990).

37. The adopted Security Council resolutions can be found in the annual *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council* (United Nations, N.Y.). The vetoed resolutions are only available in the UN archives. The General Assembly resolutions can be found in the annual *Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the General Assembly* (United Nations, N.Y.).

38. A 19 December 1990 *New York Times* editorial, “Israel and Iraq, Unlinked,” maintained that, inasmuch as Iraq occupied Kuwait through aggression while Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza in a war of self-defense, there was “no parallel” between the Iraqi and Israeli occupations. Yet the most basic parallel was that both were occupations. Even if one credited the highly dubious claim that the West Bank and Gaza had been occupied in the course of a defensive war, Israel still had no legal title to them. As Jennings observed in his classic study, “[I]t would be a curious law of self-defense that permitted the defender in the course of his defense to seize and keep the resources and territory of the attacker” (*Acquisition of Territory*, 55). Indeed, Israel itself had effectively conceded this point. In the aftermath of the June 1967 war and Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Security Council adopted Resolution 242. Officially endorsed by the Israeli government, it called inter alia for the “[w]ithdrawal of Israel armed forces” in accordance with the principle — listed first in the preambular paragraphs — of “*the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.*” Recall further that President Bush invoked precisely this principle in his condemnation of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait: “The acquisition of territory by

force is unacceptable" (*New York Times*, 9 August 1990). For the background to the June 1967 war and UN Resolution 242, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 5.

39. The *Times* made a passing reference to this resolution a year later (see 23 December 1987).

40. In this respect, Israel was as vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy as the United States. Israel repeatedly invoked the authority of the November 1947 General Assembly resolution (181) recommending its statehood. (It passed with thirty-three in favor, thirteen opposed, and ten abstaining — and not without considerable U.S. arm-twisting.) The Israeli declaration of independence referred to the legitimacy conferred on the state by 181, as did Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, who deemed it a "grant of independence." In an address before the General Assembly, Abba Eban called Israel "the first state to be given birth by the United Nations." Yet Israel typically ridiculed subsequent General Assembly resolutions that seemed to command as much if not more authority — for example, the December 1989 resolution calling for a two-state settlement and an international peace conference, passed with 151 in support, 3 opposed, and 1 abstaining.

41. Middle East Watch (MEW), *Needless Deaths in the Gulf War* (New York, 1991). Unless otherwise indicated, all page references are to this report.

42. See Greenpeace International, *On Impact: Modern Warfare and the Environment — A Case Study of the Gulf War* (London, 1991).

43. The above-cited Greenpeace study reached roughly the same conclusions. Thus, "allied conduct" was said to have fallen "within the limits of the laws of war as they are." Indeed, the U.S.-led coalition was praised for making a "real effort to get their unfortunate calling over as quickly as possible" and "paving the way for positive new standards for humanitarian and military conduct." Iraq, on the other hand, was condemned for "human terror and vindictive destruction, much of it in direct violation of virtually all standards of international law," "treachery," "direct violations of the laws of armed conflict," "gross behavior," and so on. To its credit, Greenpeace did nonetheless suggest that the lopsidedness of the "allied" offensive and victory "called into question" both the legitimacy of all the devastation inflicted on Iraq and the adequacy of humanitarian law to capture the destructive capacity of the kind of war waged against Iraq: in effect, the "allies" may have acted in strict accordance with the letter of the law and still waged an immoral war (*ibid.*, 21, 135–36, 145–49).

44. In referring to the "repudiation of civilian attacks, albeit perhaps only in the context of an otherwise highly successful war," Greenpeace suggested much the same point (*ibid.*, 145).

45. In *On Impact*, Greenpeace put Iraqi civilian deaths at 5,000 to 15,000 (15). It subsequently revised the figure downward, estimating 2,500 to 3,000 Iraqi civilian deaths from the air war (Greenpeace, *The Gulf War One Year Later: The Human Effects* [London, 8 January 1992]).

46. The exact meaning of the "accuracy rate" is not clear. One United States Army general told Greenpeace that "[t]here's a certain amount of mythology about missing the target. We're much better now at hitting aim points than in World War II and Vietnam. We expect miss distances in the 10- to 20-meter category rather than 100 to 200 meters" (*On Impact*, 82). On the other hand, Middle East Watch reported that, according to a former United States Army colonel, the unguided bombs "were the same dumb iron bombs that fell on Berlin, Pyongyang and Hanoi" (MEW, *Needless Deaths*, 115). On related matters, see *ibid.*, 113–14.

47. In an interview with Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, Colonel John A. Warden III, the deputy director of strategy, doctrine, and plans for the United States Air Force, who was responsible for strategic planning on the air staff, stated flatly that precision weapons were not used in Basra, only dumb bombs (private communication).

48. An updated report on the damage wrought by the "allied" assault and the continuing sanctions on Iraqi civilian life was issued by an "international study team" in October 1991. Entitled *Health and Welfare in Iraq after the Gulf War*, its main conclusions were as follows. The mortality rate of children under five years of age was 380 percent greater than before the onset of the Gulf crisis, increasing from 27.8 to 104.4 deaths per thousand live births. There were "significant levels of malnutrition" for the one-to-two-year age group, which "has lived most of its life under conditions of war, unrest, and sanctions." Water-borne diseases, including typhoid, gastroenteritis, and cholera, were "epidemic." Health facilities were operating at "only a fraction of pre-crisis levels." The "damaged and ill-repaired power generation system" had and would continue to have a "profoundly negative impact" on "water purification and wastewater treatment and public health infrastructure generally." "Much" of Iraq's water and water purification facilities were functioning "at only a fraction of pre-Gulf crisis levels or not at all." If trends continued, "the entire water treatment and delivery system will deteriorate to the point of collapse." "Most" of Iraq's population of eighteen million was being directly exposed to water-borne disease in their potable water supply. The Iraqi economy was "currently paralysed by the lack of raw materials, spare parts, power supply, infrastructural service and government revenue." The "level of stress" experienced by Iraqi children was "the highest the authors of this report have seen in 10 years of conflict-related research." It "far surpasses levels obtained by the authors during their own research in Mozambique, Uganda and Sudan" (International Study Team, *Health and Welfare in Iraq after the Gulf War* [New York, October 1991]).

49. Two weeks into the assault on Iraq, General Schwarzkopf, the U.S. commander in the Gulf region, claimed at a press briefing that "we never had any intention of destroying all of Iraqi electrical power. Because of our interest in making sure that civilians did not suffer unduly, we felt we had to leave some of the electrical power in effect, and we've done that." Yet, as Middle East Watch pointed out, "the allied attacks continued" — including the destruction, following General Schwarzkopf's statement, of two of Iraq's critical hydroelectric facilities, not hit by "allied" bombers until early February. Indeed, Schwarzkopf reported at the briefing that 25 percent of Iraq's electrical-generating facilities had been rendered "completely inoperative" and an additional 50 percent "degraded" to date. Yet by the time the air assault was over, Iraq had lost fully 95 percent of its prewar electrical-generating capacity (MEW, *Needless Deaths*, 10, 79, 186, 191). See Reuters dispatch, "Iraqis Question Bombings of Basra Plant," reporting that, after the biggest power plant in southern Iraq was bombed, Basra "came close to drowning in its own filth." The power plant was then bombed twelve more times. It was "completely incapacitated" after the first attack, according to the chief engineer, "[s]o we thought that would be it, there would be no further attacks. But they came back and struck again, and again, and again." The final raid came on 28 February, half an hour before the cease-fire. By then, most of the facility was a "scrap heap" (*Detroit Free Press*, 27 January 1992). Middle East Watch also quoted the head of a Red Cross delegation sent to Iraq to the effect

that "I am absolutely sure that no Pentagon planner calculated the impact bombing the electrical system would have on . . . public health" (MEW, *Needless Deaths*, 186). No evidence is cited and, given the record assembled by Middle East Watch, the statement cannot be taken seriously.

50. See MEW, *Needless Deaths*, 191–92: "Air Force officers . . . indicated that the targeting of Iraq's infrastructure was related to an effort to 'accelerate the effect of sanctions.' Col. John A. Warden III, the deputy director of strategy, doctrine, and plans for the Air Force, acknowledged that the crippling of Iraq's electricity-generating system 'gives us long-term leverage.' He explained it this way: 'Saddam Hussein cannot restore his own electricity. He needs help. If there are political objectives that the U.N. coalition has, it can say, "Saddam, when you agree to do these things, we will allow people to come in and fix your electricity."' "

51. Hague Convention (1907), Article 43, Section 3 (Military Authority over the Territory of the Hostile State).

52. Indeed, the very first sentence of *Needless Deaths*, averring that the aim of the "U.S.-led international military campaign" was to "oust Iraq from Kuwait" (1), is simply a peddling of administration propaganda. Middle East Watch's own evidence plainly refuted this claim. Thus it reported that, even the night after Baghdad Radio announced that Iraqi troops had been ordered to leave Kuwait and move to the positions they occupied prior to 1 August 1990, Baghdad was still being mercilessly bombed, one resident describing the raids as a "sleepless night of horror" (255–56). For the much more plausible interpretation that the real aim of the assault on Iraq was to cut Saddam, whose "independent nationalism threatened US interests," down to size, see Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* (New York, 1992), chap. 6 (the quotation is at 211), and epilogue.

53. The figures for Iraqi military and civilian casualties come from Michael Cranna, ed., *The True Cost of Conflict* (New York, 1994), 26; Beth Osborne Daponte, "A Case Study in Estimating Casualties from War and Its Aftermath: The Persian Gulf War," *PSR Quarterly* 3 (June 1993); and Greenpeace, *The Gulf War One Year Later*. The figures for Iraqi military and civilian casualties do not include those killed in the postwar violence, estimated at 35,000. The figure for Israeli civilian casualties includes 1 death directly by a missile and another 12 from indirect causes such as heart attacks. One Saudi was killed. The figure for Iraqi civilian casualties includes 3,500 deaths from direct war effects and 111,000 deaths from postwar adverse health effects. The other figures are from MEW, *Needless Deaths*, and Greenpeace, *On Impact*.

54. Noam Chomsky, "Aftermath," *Zeta*, October 1991; Jonathan Schell, "A Terrible War But No Contest," *Newsday*, 20 January 1991, cited in Greenpeace, *On Impact*, 147. For the slaughter of Third World peoples as the underside of Western civilization, see *Exterminate All the Brutes* (New York, 1996), where Sven Lindqvist notes that "the art of killing from a distance became a European specialty from early on." Lindqvist quotes Winston Churchill celebrating the late nineteenth-century European slaughter of Africans (in the 1898 Battle of Omdurman, forty-eight British as against *eleven thousand* Sudanese were killed) as

the last link in the long chain of those spectacular conflicts whose vivid and majestic splendour has done so much to invest war with glamour. . . . Of course we should win. Of course we should mow them down. . . . [It was] full of fascinating

thrills. It was not like the Great War. Nobody expected to be killed. . . . To the great mass of those who took part . . . in those vanished light-hearted days, this was only a sporting element in a splendid game.

Yet "it seemed an unfair advantage," Churchill also acknowledged, "to strike thus cruelly when they could not reply." Churchill's "old-fashioned concept of honour and fair play," Lindqvist observes, "had still not been superseded by the modern understanding that technical superiority provides a natural right to annihilate the enemy even when he is defenceless" (46–63). Consider in this light Israel's April 1996 attack on Lebanon, a reduced-scale replay of the Gulf slaughter. "Just as in the Gulf war," an Israeli journalist commented, "a strip of land was pounded without the attacking side suffering any losses" (Danny Rabinowitz, "The Manipulated Reporting of the High-Tech 'Grapes of Wrath' War," *Haaretz*, 18 April 1996). He might have added that, in accordance with the "modern understanding," Prime Minister Shimon Peres *proudly boasted* that Israel suffered not a single casualty in the course of the carnage that left nearly two hundred Lebanese dead.

55. Featuring Ajami and former secretary of state Henry Kissinger as guest speakers, the fund-raiser was moderated by Rather. It achieved immediate notoriety on account of Kissinger's ethnic slur that "you can't really believe anything an Arab says" and Ajami's equally offensive plea that he "be spared the ceremony of eating with a Bedouin." For discussion, see *Extra*, October/November 1992, and Norman G. Finkelstein, "A Reply to Henry Kissinger and Fouad Ajami," *The Link*, December 1992.

56. Amnesty International, *The Military Justice System in the Occupied Territories* (New York, July 1991); B. Michael, *Haaretz*, 6 November 1987; B'Tselem (Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *The Interrogation of Palestinians during the Intifada* (Jerusalem, March 1991); idem, *The Interrogation of Palestinians during the Intifada: Follow-up to March 1991 B'Tselem Report* (Jerusalem, March 1992); Middle East Watch, *Israeli Interrogation Methods under Fire after Death of Detained Palestinian* (New York, March 1992); Stanley Cohen, "Talking about Torture," *Tikkun* (November-December 1991). Cohen, who coauthored the B'Tselem reports on torture, estimated that "each year at least 6,000" Palestinian detainees suffered some form of torture. Putting aside the "majority of the population" whose "silence indicates a passive acquiescence" in the torture of Palestinians, Cohen points up the unique hypocrisy of Israeli liberals: "In most of the democratic world, torture is a quintessentially mainstream liberal issue. . . . But in Israel, the identifiably liberal sectors of the community play no part in the campaign against torture. . . . The liberal discourse in Israel is much closer to the official government position than it should be." Cohen also underlines the egregious moral dereliction of Israelis generally: "I want to stress the particularly Israeli context. Most important here is the absence of any real fear of speaking out. . . . The contours of civil liberties are more or less intact. . . . The major inhibition that exists to speaking out in other societies — the fear that you will be next in line, that you will be punished yourself, therefore it is prudent to keep silent — do not exist here" ("The Social Response to Torture," in *Torture, Human Rights, Medical Ethics and the Case of Israel*, ed. Neve Gordon and Ruchama Marton [London, 1995], 20, 23, 25). For the findings of the *Times* (London) investigative team, see B'Tselem, *Interrogation of Palestinians during the Intifada*, chap. 5. Landau was a former Supreme Court president, and the commission he

chaired was charged with investigating allegations that the Shin Bet had used physical force to extract confessions. For excerpts from the Landau report and a brilliant demolition of it by the Israeli legal scholar Mordechai Kremnitzer, see *Israel Law Review* (spring-summer 1989). Israel, incidentally, traveled a path as well-trodden as it was notorious in the matter of torture. A full discussion of this topic would require a separate monograph. Suffice it to say that the Landau report was, in the particulars of its argument (and even phraseology), a direct, lineal descendant of the 1937 report of the Nazi Ministry of Justice and the Gestapo and the 1955 *Wuillaume Report*, which sanctioned torture in, respectively, Germany and Algeria. For the Nazi precedent, see Ingo Müller, *Hitler's Justice* (Cambridge, 1991), 177–80. For the Algerian precedent, see Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *La raison d'état* (Paris, 1962), 55–68. The Amnesty International and B'Tselem findings were fully corroborated in June 1994 by Human Rights Watch/Middle East in a book-length study, *Torture and Ill-Treatment: Israel's Interrogation of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories* (New York). Its main findings were that Israel “engage[s] in a systematic pattern of ill-treatment and torture . . . when trying to extract from Palestinian security suspects confessions or information about third parties”; “Israel’s ill-treatment of Palestinians under interrogation is notable for the enormous number of persons who have experienced it”; and “Israel’s political leadership cannot claim ignorance that ill-treatment is the norm in interrogation centers. The number of victims is too large, and the abuses are too systematic.” Significantly, the study added that ill-treatment and torture “have continued on a systematic basis since Yitzhak Rabin became prime minister — and even since September 1993, when the current government co-signed with the Palestinian Liberation Organization a Declaration of Principles on negotiating Israeli-Palestinian peace.” On the latter point, see B'Tselem’s November 1994 follow-up report, *Torture during Interrogations*: “[N]otwithstanding recent political developments in the region, it is difficult to discern any improvement as regards these matters. The habitual use of torture in the interrogation of Palestinians continues.” Indeed, B'Tselem suggested that, with the cabinet’s apparent approval in November 1994 of yet “additional methods of pressure during interrogations of Palestinians,” matters had worsened. Dismissing the “repeated claim that ‘pressure’ was used against detainees because of the need to prevent murderous attacks,” the B'Tselem follow-up observed that it was “a mere pretext . . . in the overwhelming majority of cases in which detainees are tortured.” Note in this connection Amnesty International’s insight that “although detainees are most often subjected to torture on the ostensible grounds that they are withholding information,” the real purpose is to “demonstrate to doubters that a regime has the means and the will to crush opposition.” Israeli practices have by now contributed to the lexicon of torture. “Palestinian hanging,” a generic “severe torture,” has been described by Amnesty as “suspending the victim by the wrists behind the back,” causing “intolerable strain on the shoulder joints, which may become dislocated and the victim often faints after a few minutes.” The “precursor” of “Palestinian hanging,” Amnesty reports, was the “sophisticated torture techniques” developed in the Middle Ages, “including the method known in Germany as *Aufziehen*, elsewhere as *strappando* (‘the queen of torments’)” (Duncan Forest, ed., for Amnesty International, *A Glimpse of Hell* [London, 1996], 21–22, 111–12, 116, 127).

57. See philosopher Haim Gordon of Ben Gurion University: “According to Moshe Landau and his commission, to brutally torture and physically abuse Palestinian prisoners is permissible — just don’t lie about it in court!” (“Political Evil: Legalized and

Concealed Sadism,” in *Torture, Human Rights*, 17). One may recall the notorious Nazi court conviction of an SS officer not for his murder of Jews but inter alia for “taking and showing photographs of the incidents, . . . which could pose the gravest risks to the security of the Reich” (Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *The Good Old Days* [New York, 1991], 196–207).

Chapter 4: Why Palestinians Cheered the Scud Missiles

1. John Dower, *War without Mercy* (New York, 1986), 36, 40–41, 53–55.

2. Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security* (New York, 1987), 127–28; Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle* (Boston, 1983), 253–54; *New York Times*, 2 April 1989; *Progressive*, October 1991. For background to Peace Now, see Reuven Kaminer, *The Politics of Protest* (Brighton, England, 1996). Kaminer shows that aside from an occasional flyer, Peace Now never substantively departed from the Labor Party program. Thus, even after the PLO formally endorsed a two-state settlement in November 1988, Peace Now still did not support the Palestinian right to statehood, calling on Israel merely to recognize “the national existence of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, to be realized in a manner agreed upon by both sides,” and explicitly upheld Israel’s unilateral annexation of Jerusalem (“Undivided Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel . . .”) (113–14, 163). Kaminer’s study also chronicles the principled and courageous, if marginal, dissent of the Israeli left.

3. Ari Shavit, “On Gaza Beach,” *New York Review of Books*, 18 July 1991. For an early acknowledgment by the Israeli left that “it is impossible to handle the occupation without taking into account its totality, which makes us all, really, its collaborators,” see Kaminer, *Politics of Protest*, 58. In his critically acclaimed study, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* (New York, 1996), Daniel Jonah Goldhagen defines a “perpetrator” of the Nazi holocaust as

anyone who knowingly contributed in some intimate way to the mass slaughter of Jews. . . . This includes all people who themselves took the lives of Jews, and all those who set the scene for the final lethal act, whose help was instrumental in bringing about the deaths of Jews. So anyone who shot Jews as part of a killing squad was a perpetrator. Those who rounded up these same Jews, deported them (with the knowledge of their fate) to a killing location, or cordoned off the area where their compatriots shot them were also perpetrators, even if they themselves did not do the actual killing. Perpetrators include railroad engineers and administrators who knew that they were transporting Jews to their deaths. . . .

Indeed, Goldhagen explicitly argues that deporting and actually murdering Jews were “functional equivalents” (164–65, 196, 523 n. 3). To judge by this standard, any Israeli who facilitated the arrest, transport, or detention of a Palestinian stone-thrower — that is, nearly every adult Israeli male — is a “perpetrator” of torture against children.

4. Yehuda Ya’ari, “Tirue Alarm/The Body’s Place Means Nothing,” *Davar*, 22 September 1989. See also Kaminer, *Politics of Protest*, 57.

5. Gabi Nitzan, “Against Refusal/For Refusal,” *Hadashot*, 3 August 1990; Yossi Sarid, “Don’t Bother Looking for Me,” *Haaretz*, 31 January 1991. For the vehement

opposition of the mainstream “peace camp” — including Peace Now, the CRM, and the left-wing kibbutzim — to “refusal,” see Kaminer, *Politics of Protest*, chaps. 5, 9. A soldier no longer had the option not to commit a war crime, an Israeli defending “refusal” observed,

once the order is not only the whim of some extremist commander but is a norm expressing the evil intentions of the highest political echelons. In such a case, even the most just and sensitive soldier is forced to become a partner, at least passively, in the crime. Even if he refuses to torture the stone-throwers he has caught, he cannot prevent them from being beaten, sometimes to death, in the detention compound. In such a situation, there is, of course, no point in complaining. Under such circumstances, refusal to serve in the territories becomes legitimate, indeed, compulsory. The thirties in Europe have taught us that the majority has no authority to impose on the minority the perpetration of war crimes — and that the minority must not only refuse, but should also revolt by force against such an order. (Moshe Negbi, “How Fair Is It to Refuse?” *Hadashot*, 3 August 1990)

6. For the Nazis’ public displays of angst, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London, 1995), chap. 4; Avishai Margalit, “The Kitsch of Israel,” *The New York Review of Books*, 24 November 1988; Amnon Denker, “To Shoot or to Cry,” *Hadashot*, 23 January 1989. Recall in this connection that the Nuremberg defendants typically invoked the alibi that “if someone else had been in my position the disaster would have been greater” (see Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial* [New York, 1984], 172, 303, and Martin Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary* [New York, 1995], 245).

7. *Newsweek* headlines cited in Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* (New York, 1990), 401. Fisk comments: “These expressions were instructive; anyone in west Beirut might have concluded that it was the *Palestinians* — not the Israelis — who were in ‘torment,’ and that it was the survivors of Sabra and Chatila — not American Jews — who were chiefly experiencing ‘anguish.’ If Israel had a ‘troubled soul,’ then what were the feelings of the Palestinians who had been betrayed by America’s promise of protection for the civilians left behind by the PLO?” The other headlines are from *New York Times*, 22 January 1988 and *New York Review of Books*, 7 January 1988. On this general point, see Meron Benvenisti on Israeli reaction to the October 1992 Al-Aqsa Mosque massacre: “The trauma was serious. They were reacting, not to the number of Arab victims, but rather to the damage to their self-image, and their reputation to the world” (*Intimate Enemies* [New York, 1995], 14).

8. Tom Segev, “They Won’t Have to Look for Shulamith Aloni,” *Haaretz*, 24 August 1990.

9. B’Tselem, *Human Rights in the Occupied Territories during the War in the Persian Gulf* (Jerusalem, February 1991), 2–5; Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, 133; Moshe Engbi, “We Do Not Think about Them and Their Suffering,” *Hadashot*, 15 February 1991; Yizhar Be’er, “Why Harass Them?” *Haaretz*, 24 March 1991; Danny Rubinstein, “The Territories Are Being Punished,” *Haaretz*, 18 February 1991. (B’Tselem claimed that, at any rate, by the “fourth week of the war,” security grounds could no longer justify the curfew.)

10. B’Tselem, *Human Rights*, 5, 10–12; Be’er, “Why Harass Them?”

11. B'Tselem, *Human Rights*, 7–9; Negbi, “We Do Not Think”; Vered Levy, “Sealed Palestinian Room,” *Al Hamishmar*, 22 February 1991; Oded Lifshitz, “You Are Killing Us without Guns,” *Hotam*, 26 April 1991.

12. B'Tselem, *Human Rights*, 4, 6; Rubinstein, “The Territories Are Being Punished”; Lifshitz, “You Are Killing Us.”

13. B'Tselem, *Human Rights*, 17–21; Michal Sela, “No Gasmasks for Palestinians: A System of Double Morality,” *Davar*, 10 February 1991. Pacifica news-anchor Amy Goodman quoted from the *Sally Jessy Raphael* program, 28 January 1991.

14. Information Department of the Consulate General of Israel in New York, “For Your Information: Scud Missile Attacks on Israel” (28 February 1991); B'Tselem, *Human Rights*, 23.

15. For Sadat's 1971 peace initiative, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 6; and Avraham Tamir, *A Soldier in Search of Peace* (New York, 1988), 157–58. On the historical record of Arab/Palestinian peace initiatives and Israeli rejectionism, see especially Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, chap. 3; and idem, *Necessary Illusions* (Boston, 1989), 287–320. The May 1990 findings of pollsters Giora Goldberg, Gad Barzilai, and Efraim Inbar, reported in *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion* (Jerusalem, 1991), fully corroborate the conclusions presented here: (1) “The intifada led many Israelis to adopt more dovish attitudes than they held before. . . . One possible explanation of the growing support for dovish positions is the feeling that the war against the intifada cannot be won.” Thus, “there is a clear increase in the support for talking with the PLO” and “a clear trend for greater support for a Palestinian state.” (2) These more dovish attitudes did *not* correlate with diminishing fears of the threat posed to Israeli security by a Palestinian state. Not Palestinian avowals of peace but, rather, Palestinian acts of resistance compelled a change of heart among Israelis. Despite an increasing dovishness, however, fewer than 10 percent of Israelis actually supported the international consensus calling for a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and a fully independent Palestinian state (even among Labor Party supporters, the figure was still a meager 13 percent). Indeed, a larger percentage of Israelis favored the “forceful expulsion of the Arabs.” The authors also recall that “the majority of the Israeli public supported the [June 1982] war in Lebanon until the great price for achieving the goals of the war became apparent” (5, 19, 22–23, 39–40, 48). Public reaction to Prime Minister Peres's April 1996 attack on Lebanon basically conformed to the above pattern. Israelis questioned the wisdom of the carnage only after the international outcry over the Qana massacre, in which more than one hundred Lebanese civilians were killed. To be sure, the Israeli artillery unit responsible for the massacre reportedly “did not for one minute regret the firing.” “One more Arab, one less Arab,” said the captain. “Arabs, you know, there are millions of them” (Gil Riva, “The Soldiers Who Fired at Qana Did Not Care about the Massacre,” *Kol Ha'ir*, 10 May 1996). There is, incidentally, ample precedent in the annals of conquest for the cast of popular Israeli opinion. Ian Kershaw reports that as Hitler's army invaded Poland, Germans evinced “few moral scruples about the brutal devastation.” The Berlin diarist William Shirer noted: “I have still to find a German, even among those who don't like the regime, who sees anything wrong in the German destruction of Poland. . . . As long as the Germans are successful and do not have to pull in their belts too much, this will not be an unpopular war.” Popular opinion turned against Hitler's war of conquest and supported a negotiated settlement only after the defeat suffered at Stalingrad. To ex-

tend the analogy, one may note that, on the eve of World War II, Germans were not at all enthused over the prospect of war and believed Hitler was equally committed to peace. Yet Hitler managed to convince them that “a ring of hostile nations” threatened national security and that war had been “forced” on Germany. Consider, finally, that Germans came to admire the hitherto despised Slav *Untermenschen* only after the stubborn resistance and military victories of the Red Army and Russian people. Winning on the battlefield is, for conquered peoples, the precondition for winning the conquerors’ respect (Ian Kershaw, *The “Hitler” Myth* [Oxford, 1987], 123, 128, 136, 143–45, 156, 187, 192–93, 200–201; Marlis G. Steinert, *Hitler’s War and the Germans* [Athens, Ohio, 1977], 38–39, 41–42, 50–52, 163–64, 194, 209–10, 213, 239, 333, 337).

16. Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory* (Berkeley, 1993), 164–65; see 439.

17. Boaz Evron, “The Excited among Us,” *Yediot Ahronot*, 24 August 1990; Moshe Lewin, *Nation*, 30 September 1991. In a rare acknowledgment in the scholarly literature on the Nazi holocaust, historian Arno Mayer points out that Stalin admitted as many as 350,000 Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe and even granted them Soviet citizenship, “this at a time when elsewhere such refugees were driven back or interned for being either enemy aliens, stateless, or without visas”; and he indirectly contributed to the rescue of some 1.5 million Jews who were evacuated from Soviet territory captured by the Nazis. The United States, by comparison, admitted only 20,000 Jewish refugees and indirectly contributed to the rescue of perhaps a couple of hundred thousand (Arno Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* [New York, 1988], 187, 198, 257). See David Wyman’s disingenuous conclusion in his much-acclaimed *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York, 1984) that “[p]oor though it was, the American rescue record was better than that of Great Britain, Russia, or the other Allied nations” (x, xi; emphasis added).

18. Hanna Kim, “Israel’s Left-wing All-stars vs. the Rest of the World,” *Hadashot*, 29 January 1991; Gabi Nitzan, “While the Patriots Whistle, the Muses Sing,” *Hadashot*, 1 February and 8 February 1991; Lilly Galilee, “Peace Now vs. the European [Peace] Movements over Their Attitude to the Gulf War,” *Haaretz*, 30 January 1991; “Roundtable on the Gulf War,” *Tikkun*, March–April 1991 (including Shulamith Aloni and Amos Oz); Kaminer, *Politics of Protest*, chaps. 12–13 (Peace Now quotes on 203–4). Regarding the bribery in the Security Council, historian Theodore Draper reports:

The UN votes were not without their cost. From the cases that we know about, others may be inferred. About \$7 billion by the United States and \$6.7 billion by the Gulf states are said to have been written off Egypt’s debts. Syria was the beneficiary of \$200 million from the European Community, a Japanese loan of \$500 million, and more than \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia and other Arab states, though none of the 18,000 Syrian troops in Saudi Arabia actually fought. Turkey protected its \$500 million a year in military aid. The Soviet Union received \$1 billion in aid from Saudi Arabia and credit guarantees from the United States. Yemen was cut off from \$70 million in foreign aid for voting the wrong way. After the delegate from Yemen received some applause for his negative vote, Secretary Baker said: “I hope he enjoyed that applause, because this will turn out to be the most expensive vote he ever cast.” For not exercising its veto, China’s foreign minister was given a reception at the White House after

suffering diplomatic isolation for a year and a half following the Tiananmen Square massacre. (Theodore Draper, "The True History of the Gulf War," *New York Review of Books*, 30 January 1992)

On the comparative record of Israel and Iraq, see chap. 3 above. On the U.S.'s real motives in the Gulf crisis, see the Chomsky reference in n. 52 for chap. 3 above.

19. For the statistical data, see chap. 3 above, appendix 2; Tel Aviv Foundation, "Update" (September 1991); the "Economic Division" of the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C. Patrick J. Sloyan, "Buried Alive," *Newsday*, 12 September 1991.

20. Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars* (New York, 1991), 327–30, 332–37; Andrew Cockburn and Leslie Cockburn, *Dangerous Liaison* (New York, 1991), 346, 351, 353 (the *Times* (London) dispatch is cited on 353); Uzi Benziman, "Strike Now," *Haaretz*, 31 August 1990; Akiva Eldar, *Haaretz*, 5 December 1990; Shlomo Ginossar, "How Tall Can We Stand?" *Davar*, 7 December 1990.

21. "Patriot's Scud Busting Record Is Challenged," *Science*, 3 May 1991; *New York Times*, 21 November 1993; Theodore A. Postal, "Lessons of the Gulf War Experience with Patriot," *International Security* (winter 1991–21). From the balcony of the Tel Aviv Hilton, the Cockburns described the *opéra bouffe* as the Patriots sought to intercept an incoming Scud attack: the first Patriot "self-destructed" as it "burst into a shower of white-hot metal that then plummeted down onto the city"; the second "streaked across the night sky, flying so low it could easily have plowed into one of the high-rise office towers, before it slammed into the city"; the third "exploded in a sudden glow of red light"; and the fourth "shot up... and then almost immediately doubled back along its path and crashed to earth not far from a popular restaurant named Mandy's." "The soothing official pronouncement at the regular midnight military briefing in the Hilton," the authors added, "was that seven Scuds had approached Tel Aviv and that all had been shot down" (347–48).

22. On Third World opinion of the Gulf War, see Noam Chomsky, "Aftermath," *Zeta*, October 1991.

Epilogue: The End of Palestine?

1. For background to 242, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London, 1995), chap. 5. For an authoritative discussion of the real — as against media-contrived — "peace process," see Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle* (Boston, 1983), chap. 3; for updated references, see Chomsky in note 4 below. The United States supported, until the early 1970s, the consensus interpretation of 242 calling for full Israeli withdrawal (see chaps. 5–6 of *Image and Reality*). The United States also apparently did not "exclude [the] principle of a Palestinian state" during these years (DAG 1/5.2.2.1.2, appendix 6, box 3, H63, "Record of a Meeting with Secretary of State Rogers held at United Nations Headquarters on 16 October 1970" [United Nations Archives]).

2. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951), chap. 9. For an unexpected affirmation that citizenship and sovereignty are the "only two democratic options," see Abba Eban, *Personal Witness* (New York, 1992), 599–600. For the Zionist conception of state and citizenship, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 1. The "Zionism in reverse" formulation is based on extensive discussions the

author had with Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) militants in the West Bank; for documentary evidence, see Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (New York, 1982), 430 n. 2. For the Algiers meeting and Israel's reaction, see Norman G. Finkelstein, "Israel and the 'Scourge' of Palestinian Moderation," *New Politics* (summer 1989).

3. The essential Labor Party position has deep roots in Zionism. Already in 1956 Ben-Gurion proposed that "the West Bank must be organized as an autonomous Arab territory linked economically to Israel while Israel manages its defence and foreign policies" (Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, 221 n. 59; for similar, if somewhat vaguer, formulations in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war, see Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan* [New York, 1988], 382, 497–98; for post-June 1967, see Reuven Pedatzur, "Coming Back Full Circle," *Middle East Journal* [spring 1995]: 269–91). Even mainstream Israelis likened to the "bantustan model" the "proposals that would grant autonomy to the Palestinian Arabs within a limited scope, while denying them full participation in the Israeli parliamentary system" (Eban, *Personal Witness*, 619). Indeed, inasmuch as autonomy technically refers to special rights *in addition to*, not in lieu of, citizenship, Israel's so-called autonomy proposals are an egregious misnomer; see Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York, 1983), 120.

4. The most plausible analyses I have seen of the Oslo accord are Shlomo Avineri, "Sidestepping Dependency," *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 1994): 12–15; Meron Benvenisti, "An Agreement of Surrender" and "The Taba Interim Agreement, Another Capitulation by Arafat," *Haaretz*, 12 May 1994 and 6 July 1995, respectively; idem, *Intimate Enemies* (New York, 1995), chap. 6; Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New* (New York, 1994), pt. 3; idem, *Powers and Prospects* (Boston, 1996), chap. 6; Baruch Kimmerling, "The Flood after the Rainbow," *Haaretz*, 1 August 1995; Sara Roy, "Separation or Integration," *Middle East Journal* (winter 1994): 11–30; Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession* (New York, 1994), introduction and epilogue; idem, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York, 1996); Haydar 'Abd al-Shafi, "The Oslo Agreement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (autumn 1993); and Israel Shahak, "The Real Significance of the Oslo Agreement," September 1993 (Xerox). In what follows, I refer mainly to these accounts. For fuller treatment of my views, see "Whither the 'Peace Process'?" *New Left Review* 218 (July-August 1996).

5. Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, chap. 6, *passim*. Perceptive analysts (Benvenisti, Shahak) noted that Arafat's capitulation to Israel went considerably beyond Egypt's at Camp David and the subsequent "autonomy" talks. Yet even Camp David, it is widely agreed, failed to protect basic Palestinian rights. In this connection, former president Jimmy Carter's evaluation of Israeli "autonomy" proposals is worth recalling: "If you have a military governor, and if the population is allowed self-rule just as long as it behaves, but the military governor can restore Israeli control whenever he wants, then this has no meaning." Indeed, Carter suggested that "if I were an Arab, I would prefer the present Israeli occupation" to such a proposal. These, however, are precisely the terms Arafat agreed to. On Camp David offering Palestinians next to nothing, see William Quandt, *Camp David* (Washington, 1986), 255, 323, 326; and Shimon Shamir, "Israeli Views of Egypt and the Peace Process," *The Middle East*, ed. William Quandt (Washington, 1988), 198. On Carter's assessment, see Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith* (New York, 1982), 377; Quandt, *Camp David*, 157; and Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (New York, 1983), 200.

6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York, 1965).

7. Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, 160.

8. See Benvenisti: “[T]he economic loss to the inhabitants of the occupied territories [from the closure] was about \$100 million a month, two-thirds of that from the loss of work in Israel (which until the closure had accounted for a third of the territories’ GNP)” (*Intimate Enemies*, 181).

9. Adnan later sent me an unusual wedding announcement: “My girlfriend and I made a final decision to challenge all the customs and norms in our society, and to break the barrier of religious discrimination. Love in our society must be revolutionized, and we decided to be the revolutionaries. We will face a lot of troubles, but we made the decision, and it’s over. The marriage will take place in the summer, hopefully.” In the event, it didn’t.

10. This is true. See p. 7 above.

11. Noam Chomsky, *Year 501* (Boston, 1993), 288.

12. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York, 1889), 1:17–18, 21; see 1:117–18, 273. See also Theodore Roosevelt, *Thomas Hart Benton* (New York, 1926), 38: “For the simple truth is that the Indians had no possible title to most of the lands we took, not even that of occupancy, and at the most were in possession merely by virtue of having butchered the previous inhabitants.” Denying that “we have robbed the original Indian occupants of their lands,” Roosevelt also pointed to the generous sums allegedly given in compensation (*Benton*, 111–12).

13. Roosevelt, *Winning*, 4:200, 65, 7, 201; 1:118–19, 4:54–56; see 1:121. “It is for the good of the world . . .” and “if we fail to act on . . .” are from Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, 1951), respectively, 2:1176–77 and 8:946. See also Roosevelt, *Benton*, 28. Roosevelt invoked a similar argument to justify the conquest of Texas from Mexico:

It was out of the question to expect [Texans] to submit to the mastery of the weaker race, which they were supplanting. . . . It may as well be frankly admitted that the conduct of the American frontiersmen all through this contest can be justified on no possible plea of international morality or law. Still, we cannot judge by the same standard we should apply to the dealings between highly civilized powers of approximately the same grade of virtue and intelligence. (*Benton*, 114–15; see *Letters*, 2:1233–34)

Roosevelt apparently meant literally that the Indians were feral creatures. Thus, he depicts the “wilderness” as “infested by the savages” (*Winning*, 2:121), refers in the same breath to the “endless campaigns against savage men and savage beasts” (*ibid.*), and most remarkably, avows that the “hounds and other watch dogs” used by the frontiersmen were “all accustomed to contests with wild beasts; and by instinct and training they mortally hated Indians” (*ibid.*, 4:261; see 2:276: “[A]ll tame animals dreaded the sight or smell of an Indian as they did that of a wild beast, and by their alarm often warned the settlers and thus saved their lives”). This view of Roosevelt’s, incidentally, resolves the apparent paradox between his depiction of North America, on one hand, as “already held by powerful Indian tribes and confederacies,” and, on the other, as “waste solitudes” (*Benton*, 6, 171). Inasmuch as they were “wild beasts,” Indians no more occupied the land than the other faunae did. Responding to a correspondent’s concern that, because of the “comparative mercifulness of modern warfare, . . . the inferior races will not be exterminated or dispossessed bodily by the superior,” Roosevelt, for whom hope apparently sprang eternal, reassuringly replied

that, if American experience were any guide, the “superior races” were still quite capable of genocide:

[D]on't you think that this mercifulness would disappear instantly if any of the inferior races began to encroach on the limits of the superior? What occurs in our Southern States at the least sign of a race war between the blacks and whites seems to me to foreshadow what would occur on a much bigger scale if any black or yellow people should really menace the whites. An insurrectionary movement of blacks in any one of our Southern States is always abortive, . . . and any manifestation of it is apt to be accompanied by some atrocity which at once arouses the whites to a rage of furious anger and terror, and they put down the revolt absolutely mercilessly. In the same way an Indian outbreak on the frontier would to this day mean something approaching to a war of extermination. (*Letters*, 1:376–77)

For Roosevelt's racist rationale for conquest generally, and of North America in particular, see Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge, La., 1980). So thoroughly did modern conquest regimes assimilate the indigenous population with animal life that, for example, the Royal Society of Tasmania, responsible for classifying the flora and fauna of the Australian island state, claimed title over the corpse of the last aboriginal male suffering extermination. See Robert Travers, *The Tasmanians* (Melbourne, 1968), 220–21.

14. Cited in Clive Ponting, *Churchill* (London, 1994), 254. Zionist settlement, Lord Balfour similarly reckoned, was “rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land” (Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* [Bloomington, Ind., 1965], 5). Israel's first president and the most revered Zionist statesman, Chaim Weizmann, blandly observed that the British had informed him that in Palestine “there are a few hundred thousand Negroes, but that is a matter of no significance” (Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* [New York, 1992], 435). Roosevelt, as one might expect, strongly supported the Jewish conquest of Palestine (see *Letters*, 8:1350, 1372). What distinguished Roosevelt and Churchill from their more “idealist” contemporaries like Woodrow Wilson, at any rate, in Roosevelt's eyes, was a tad less hypocrisy:

They keep portions of their conscience in separate watertight compartments. They wish one compartment in which to stow all the phrases about “absolute self-determination for all peoples.” In a totally different compartment they stow the actual facts of the treatment of those peoples, which, more or less justly, are in the event found unfit for self-determination. They love the fine language; they know it cannot be translated into fact; and so they applaud hypocritical promises, and cynical repudiation of the promises. To propose in any real sense to give African savages more than a consultative and subordinate share in their own affairs is, at present, simply silly. Yet, there are any number of people, including Wilson very often, and Lloyd George not infrequently, who like to use language which means this or nothing. In the same way at this moment the United States has deprived and is depriving Haiti and Santo Domingo of self-determination. It has destroyed democracy in these two little festering black republics. It is ruling them by marines, and you don't find, and no one else can

find, a published word from the President [Wilson] even relating to what has been done. (*Letters*, 8:1400–1401)

15. Roosevelt, *Winning*, 4:54.

16. William L. Anderson, ed., *Cherokee Removal* (Athens, Ga., 1991), vii; Russell Thornton, "The Demography of the Trail of Tears Period," in Anderson, *Cherokee Removal*, 77; James Mooney, *Historical Sketch of the Cherokee* (Chicago, 1975), 155.

17. Charles C. Royce, *The Cherokee Nation of Indians* (Chicago, 1975), 10; Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* (New York, 1990), 292–93. For Zionist aims on the eve of the 1948 war, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 3.

18. Roosevelt, *Winning*, 1:28–29 (the English policy of "killing or driving off the natives" is compared favorably by Roosevelt with the "Spaniards [who] simply sat down in the midst of a much more numerous aboriginal population"); Mooney, *Historical Sketch*, 89.

19. Thomas Jefferson is generally claimed as the single exception. An enlightened cosmopolitan, he was supposedly committed to the assimilation of Indians once they had become "civilized." Official Jeffersonian policy did embrace assimilation, but, to judge from less public pronouncements, "civilization" — that is, transforming Indians into agriculturalists and consumers of manufactured goods — was meant to facilitate not assimilation but expropriation. Official Jeffersonian avowals proved, in any case, a dead letter: using the Indians' lack of "civilization" as a pretext, expulsion remained the operative policy. Yet it is also true that, inasmuch as official U.S. doctrine did not explicitly preclude the assimilation of non-Anglo-Saxons, Indians could still work within the governing ideological framework to make assimilation practical policy — as, say, African-Americans eventually did. Indeed, even Roosevelt could conceive the Cherokee "gradually becoming citizens of the States in which they were." In this respect, the American case differs fundamentally from the Israeli one: ethnic exclusivism is not a departure from the ideal but the ideal itself in Zionist ideology. For Jefferson, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge, 1979), 104–8, 114–15, 191–92; Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children* (New York, 1975), 179; Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln, Neb., 1976), 2, 6; Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction* (New York, 1973), 168, 244; Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages* (Seattle, 1979), 55, 60–63. The Roosevelt quote is from *Benton*, 38. For the Zionist versus the democratic ideal, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 1.

20. Royce's *Cherokee Nation* is the authoritative study of the treaty-making process. The quote from Bettis is on p. xi of Royce's book. Mooney, *Historical Sketch*, 35–36.

21. Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 1; Roosevelt, *Winning*, 4:32, 53; see 1:116; 4:52; and idem, *Benton*, 37. For corruption in the making of treaties with the Cherokee, see Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy* (New York, 1970), 35–43, 94, 142; see also Mooney, *Historical Sketch*, 36. For the admission by Zionist leaders that "the claims and desires of the two parties were irreconcilable" and the disingenuous thesis of Zionist historiography that force was not at the core of Jewish settlement, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 4. One may add that the underlying realities of conquest acknowledged by Roosevelt apply generally. Thus, in his study of the European conquest of Africa, Thomas Pakenham observes that the "new colonies and protectorates had been won by right of conquest...or extorted by threat of force....The blank treaty forms meant little to an African, especially when look-

ing down the barrel of an Englishman's gun" (*The Scramble for Africa* [New York, 1991], 581).

22. Horsman, *Race*, 114–15, 111; see 204; Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor* (New York, 1881), 265; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 133. Such ideologically loaded locutions inform the full gamut of Israeli historiography. Thus, in *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956* (Oxford, 1993), "revisionist" historian Benny Morris reckons as "defensive responses" Israel's "killing, torturing, beating and raping" of thousands of unarmed, often starving, Palestinian refugees seeking to harvest the crops they had sown, salvage lost property, return home, or visit family; and as "retaliatory policy" Israel's indiscriminate mass killing of innocent Palestinian civilians to deter Palestinian "economic infiltration" or avenge Palestinian armed assaults, and even when the actual purpose of Israeli strikes — increasingly so from mid-1954 — was, far from "retaliation," to goad Egypt into war. Palestinians who kill Israelis from motives of revenge or even in self-defense (Israel pursued a "shoot-to-kill" and "take-no-prisoners" policy on its borders), by contrast, are uniformly labeled "terrorists" by Morris. For Morris and "revisionist" scholarship generally, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 3. For the "language of self-defense" as a cover for aggression, see also *Image and Reality*, chap. 4.

23. Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths* (New York, 1993), 217–28; Samuel Carter III, *Cherokee Sunset* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), 10; Roosevelt, *Winning*, 2:77, 74.

24. Roosevelt, *Winning*, 2:37, 280; see also 2:70; Mooney, *Historical Sketch*, 41, 43; Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 9; John Dower, *War without Mercy* (New York, 1986), 66; Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 192–93, 202; Horsman, *Race*, 110; James M. O'Donnell, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1973), 52. Censuring the British for aligning with the Indians, Roosevelt accused them of

engag[ing] in what was essentially an effort to exterminate the borderers. They were not endeavoring merely to defeat the armed bodies of the enemy. They were explicitly bidden . . . to push back the frontier, to expel the settlers from the country. . . . It brings out in bold relief the fact that in the west the war of the Revolution was an effort on the part of Great Britain to stop the westward growth of the English race in America, and to keep the region beyond the Alleghenies as a region where only savages should dwell. (*Winning*, 2:140)

Thus, the British stood condemned for defending the indigenous population from alien encroachments, while the white settlers seeking to "push back the frontier, to expel" the Indians were presumably not "engaging in what was essentially an effort to exterminate." The logic is impeccable once one recalls that the "westward growth of the [American] English race" hugely transcended in importance the attendant genocide of the Indians — who, in any case, were "only savages." Indeed, Roosevelt explicitly spells out this argument in a subsequent passage: "The success of the British was incompatible with the good of mankind in general, and of the English-speaking races in particular; for they strove to prop up savagery, and to bar the westward march of the settler-folk whose destiny it was to make ready the continent for civilization. . . . To encourage the Indians to hold their own against the Americans, and to keep back the settlers, meant to encourage a war of savagery against the border vanguard of white civilization" (*Winning*, 4:228–29). For Israeli atrocities in the 1948 war, including against "friendly" Arab villages, see chaps. 3–4

of Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*; for Israel's grisly record through the 1956 war, see Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, esp. 166–72.

25. Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 221, 219; Roosevelt, *Winning*, 3:283, 289; 4:54; Amnon Kapeliouk, *Israel: La fin des mythes* (Paris, 1975), 220, 21. Morris notes that in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war, Israel already sought to expand its borders by staking out new frontier settlements, the operative principle being that “wherever Israeli settlements were, there would be Israeli territory; wherever Israeli settlement ended, there would be the country's frontiers” (*Israel's Border Wars*, 121). For Israel's preference for conquered land over peace in the aftermath of the 1948 and 1967 wars, see chaps. 3 and 6 of Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*. The Roosevelt doctrine that treaties ought to be honored according to “circumstances” was ratified by Hitler in his September 1939 gloss initiating World War II: “[A]greements are to be kept only as long as they serve a certain purpose” (Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial* [New York, 1984], 152).

26. Mooney, *Historical Sketch*, 43–45 (the quote from Knox is on 58); Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 21–46.

27. Douglas C. Wilms, “Cherokee Land Use in Georgia before Removal,” in Anderson, *Cherokee Removal*; and Anderson's introduction to *Cherokee Removal*, x; Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 185–96; the quote from Calhoun is in Horsman, *Race*, 195–96; de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, 1976), 335; Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 259.

28. Hunt Jackson, *Century of Dishonor*, 272; Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 54 (for the stormy debate surrounding the Indian Removal Act and the text, see chap. 1 and 296–98 of Satz's book); Ronald N. Satz, “Rhetoric vs. Reality,” in Anderson, *Cherokee Removal*, 41; Horsman, *Race*, 193–95, 201 (quote from Barbour on 199); Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 211, 214–15; Carter, *Cherokee Sunset*, 127, 153, 168; Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 152. Even as his mind was firmly set on mass expulsion, President Andrew Jackson disingenuously avowed that “the Indians may leave . . . or not, as they choose,” that the Cherokee could elect to “submit to the laws of the States, receiving, like other citizens, protection in their persons and property, . . . [and] ere long become merged in the mass of our population,” and so on (Louis Filler and Allen Guttman, eds., *The Removal of the Cherokee Nation* [Lexington, Ky., 1962], 52, 17). The states coveting Cherokee land did not, incidentally, suffer from a density of population or lack of natural endowments—rather the contrary (see de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 335; and Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 95–96). For Benny Morris's formulation of “transferring the Arabs out” as the “chief means” envisaged by the Zionist movement to “assur[e] the stability and ‘Jewishness’ of the proposed Jewish state,” and discussion, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chaps. 3–4.

29. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 335, 334; Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 175; Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 202–3; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 219–20; Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, Okla., 1932), 251–52; see 248–49; and Hunt Jackson, *Century of Dishonor*, 277. On the use of land confiscation, restrictions on economic development, denial of basic rights, and so on, to “build fires around” the Palestinians in the occupied territories, see Raja Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law* (Washington, D.C., 1985). Shehadeh reports that “throughout the 16 years of occupation no more than five permits were given to Palestinian residents to dig wells” (154). Currently, “Israelis on either side of the Green Line consume more than three-quarters of the West Bank's water potential” (Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies*, 68). In the early 1950s,

Israel pursued a similar “policy of terrorism and frightfulness” (Glubb Pasha) to drive its Arab minority into exile. “Israel is for the Jews,” a U.S. consular official at the time observed, “and Israel intends to make it so uncomfortable for all Arabs now in Israel that eventually they will desire to emigrate” (Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 157–58, 163–64; citing Dayan among many others, Morris notes that “during the immediate post-1948 period, talk of ‘transferring’ Israel’s Arab minority was relatively common in Israel” and supported by nearly the “entire nation”).

30. Citations from Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 154–55, 207; de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 338; Filler and Guttmann, *Removal of the Cherokee Nation*, 47; Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 155; Satz, “Rhetoric vs. Reality,” 43.

31. Jackson’s chief means of exoneration was simply to invert reality. Thus Rogin observes that Jackson “needed to ground acquisitiveness on moral bedrock. The more egregious the activity, the more he engaged in falsification of memory, denial, militant self-righteousness, and projection of his own motivations onto others.” Regarding Jackson’s refusal to negotiate a territorial compromise on the grounds that “an Indian . . . will claim everything and anything,” Rogin comments: “Give in to them on this land and they will begin to claim the neighboring, wrote Jackson, substituting an imaginary process of Indian expansion for the actual history of white expansion. It was pure projection. All Jackson’s affidavits and legal claims simply papered over an unlimited white appetite for land, grounded in no legitimate title. Such unlimited hunger generated the fantasies of unlimited Indian claims in which Jackson indulged.” And again: “Disguising his motives, Jackson accused the Indians of designs actually his own. . . . He . . . favored war. The expanding frontier invaded Indian boundaries, and whites wanted war as much as or more than Indians. . . . Was the ‘Savage Tribe that will neither adhere to Treaties, nor the Law of Nations’ the Cherokees or the American Scotch-Irish? Jackson’s language suggests a primitive identification with the Indians in which he ascribed to them characteristics of his own people. He was talking about himself” (Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 171–72, 133). As shown in chap. 4 of Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, these same mechanisms, transforming the sordid reality of aggression into a benign image of self-defense, were at play throughout the Zionist conquest of Palestine. To cite a recently documented example, in the early 1950s, Israel publicly maintained that the Arab states were bent on war. Yet, as Morris’s study *Israel's Border Wars* demonstrates, both Egypt and Jordan did all they possibly could to avert a conflict until provocations became intolerable. Indeed, it was Ben-Gurion’s “favorite general,” Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan (alongside the prime minister himself, as well as other senior staff officers), who “wanted war, and periodically . . . hoped that a given retaliatory strike would embarrass or provoke the Arab state attacked into itself retaliating, giving Israel cause to escalate the shooting until war resulted—a war in which Israel could realize such major strategic objectives as the conquest of the West Bank or Sinai, or the destruction of the Egyptian army” (Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 178–79, 229; see also Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan*, 444–45, 570–72).

32. Carter, *Cherokee Sunset*, 192; Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 43. See William G. McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1993), 3; and Horsman, *Race*, 192.

33. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 269; Roosevelt, *Winning*, 5:130; see 1:118; 4:116, 118; 5:21, 97, 126, 127; 6:65; Hunt Jackson, *Century of Dishonor*, 263; see 268; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 220; see 131, 222; de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 337; see 334, but see also 335 for a more muted assessment of federal policy; see

also Horsman, *Race*, 105, 114, 193, 200. Responding to Easterners critical of their encroachments, the frontiersmen, according to Roosevelt, recalled that “all the settlements in America had . . . been extended” in like manner (*Winning*, 4:199). One is reminded of former Israeli prime minister Begin’s reply to Israeli critics that settlements in the West Bank and Gaza were no more or less moral than the original Zionist settlements that culminated in the founding of Israel; see Geoffrey Aronson, *Creating Facts* (Washington, D.C., 1987), 301–2. For the ultimate confluence of aims between Israel’s national government (whether Labor or Likud) and the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, see Aronson’s study; see also Eban, *Personal Witness*, 470, 583; and Golda Meir, *My Life* (New York, 1975), 405.

34. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 267 (citing Harrison), 266; Horsman, *Race*, 110, 112; Roosevelt, *Winning*, 1:126; 4:57; 3:11–14; 2:129–30; 1:115–17, 218–19, 122. Another effect of the “long-continued and harassing border warfare,” Roosevelt observes, was that

it gave a distinct military cast to [the settlers’] way of looking at territory which did not belong to [them], . . . a belligerent, or, more properly speaking, piratical way . . . [which] was at the root of the doctrine of “manifest destiny.” . . . [The settlers] looked upon all the lands hemming in the United States as territory which they or their children should some day inherit; for they were a race of masterful spirit, and accustomed to regard with easy tolerance any but the most flagrant violations of law. (*Benton*, 12–15)

Roosevelt’s depiction is equally apt for the Jewish settlers of Palestine. To put the best face on settler atrocities, Roosevelt pointed up the foe’s bestiality:

Not only were the Indians very terrible in battle, they were cruel beyond belief in victory; and the gloomy annals of the border warfare are stained with their darkest hues because it was a war in which helpless women and children suffered the same hideous fate that so often befell their husbands and fathers. It was a war waged by savages against armed settlers, whose families followed them into the wilderness. Such a war is inevitably bloody and cruel; but the inhuman love of cruelty for cruelty’s sake, which marks the red Indian above all other savages, rendered these wars more terrible than any others. For the hideous, unimaginable, unthinkable tortures practised by the red men on their captured foes, and on their foes’ tender women and helpless children, were such as read of in no other struggle. . . . It was inevitable — indeed it was in many instances proper — that such deeds should awake in the breasts of the whites the grimmest, wildest spirit of revenge and hatred. (*Winning*, 1:115–17; see 1:124; 3:10–12, 109; 4:124–25, 201; *Letters*, 2:991)

One should add that, for Roosevelt, the frontiersmen’s brutality was also a sign, albeit negative, of racial health: it sprang from the youth and vigor of their “barbarian” stock (see *Winning*, 5:119; *Letters*, 2:1100; 5:139–40; *Benton*, 115). The plea of exceptional circumstances and the exceptional iniquity of the foe to excuse atrocities is a commonplace of conquest regimes. Thus Israel’s Landau Commission sanctioned the systematic torture of Palestinian prisoners in the name of “the unique needs of the struggle against HTA [Hostile Terrorist Activity].” (For the Landau Commission, see chap. 3, appendix 2, above.) Indeed, Amnesty International points to “the

fight against terrorism” as “one of those catch-all terms” that “provide cover for torturers . . . and all manner of normally unacceptable behavior” (see Duncan Forest, ed., for Amnesty International, *A Glimpse of Hell* [London, 1996], 127). Belgium rationalized its enormities in the Congo on the ground that the native “only respects the law of force, knows no other persuasion than terror,” and “human life had no value for him . . . ; pillage, murder, and cannibalism constituted, until yesterday, daily life” (Edmund D. Morel, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* [New York, 1905], 144). In the Nazi case, atrocities on the eastern front were justified by the fight against “Asiatic barbarism” — “the Russian soldier is . . . prepared to commit any vile act, be it murder or treachery” — that forced Germans to adopt “harsh measures.” As historian Omer Bartov observes: “No amount of evidence to the contrary could undermine this logic, which conveniently shifted the responsibility for the murderous Nazi policies in the East to their victims” (*Hitler's Army* [Oxford, 1991], 130–32).

35. Roosevelt, *Winning*, 3:21; see 2:84. For the American frontier attracting the “worst representatives of the white man's society,” see also Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 266. For the Hebron massacre, see Israel Shahak, “The Background and Consequences of the Massacre in Hebron,” 11 March, 1994 (Xerox). For the indiscriminateness of Jewish settler violence and the collusion of “every branch of the [Israeli] government and legal system” in the violence, see B'Tselem (Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), *Law Enforcement vis-à-vis Israeli Civilians in the Occupied Territories* (Jerusalem, March 1994). For the enthusiastic response in Israeli settlements to the Hebron massacre, see “From the Hebrew Press,” translations by Israel Shahak, April/May 1994. “Rejoicing . . .” was the headline in *Yediot Ahronot*, 27 February 1994. The Levinger quote is from the same issue. “Father of . . .” is from Robert I. Friedman, *Zealots for Zion* (New York, 1992), 3. Fully half of the residents of Kiryat Arba (the settlement from which the murderer Baruch Goldstein hailed) reportedly approved the “fine deed in Hebron,” while “condemning the massacre was seen there as an act of treason.” Comparing him to Samson, Kiryat Arba's chief rabbi acclaimed Goldstein as a “martyr,” and the head of the settlement's Hesder yeshiva eulogized Goldstein as “a man full of brotherly love who did everything for the honor of the Jews and the Sanctity of God's name” (*Yerushalaim*, 4 March 1994; *Davar*, 4 March 1994; *Maariv*, 27 February 1994; *Yediot Ahronot*, 18 March 1994). Within Israel proper, however, Goldstein was denounced as a “fascist doctor . . . from Brooklyn” who, raised “on the teachings not only of Rabbi Kahane but of Doctor Mengele as well,” merited induction in the “international order of Nazis”; and the settlement of Kiryat Arba as “a twin city of a section of Brooklyn, New York, where U.S. Jewish hooligans established their capital.” Kiryat Arba, incidentally, was, as *Davar* recalled (27 February 1994), “the Labor party's progeny, . . . wholly conceived by one of its historic leaders, Yigal Allon”; for details, see Friedman, *Zealots for Zion*, 16–17. Indeed, Israeli commentary typically ridiculed the West Bank and Gaza settlers as the dregs of Jewish — in particular, American Jewish — society: “Kahanist goons,” “the crazy Jews of Brooklyn,” “Jewish Nazis,” “freaks,” “pyromaniacs,” a “bunch of madmen,” “thugs,” “Jewish pogromists,” and so on. For the racist antipathies that animated, and the concomitant enormities committed by, the early Zionist settlers, as well as the apologetic spin put on this era of Zionist history by quasi-official Israeli scholars, see chap. 4 of Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*.

36. Filler and Guttman, *Removal of the Cherokee Nation*, 17, 49; Rogin, *Fa-*

thers and Children, 213, 181–83, 224; Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 126. Pointing up the cynical use, in early U.S. history, of the “security” argument, Albert Weinberg observes:

American imperialism . . . was directed by the philosophy of the natural right to security. Subordinating to their own right to security another people’s right to liberty and equality, Americans apparently considered that no natural right of another was alienable except on one occasion — that on which it conflicted with the always inalienable rights of Americans themselves. (*Manifest Destiny* [Baltimore, 1935], 37)

In the name of Israel’s alleged security needs, Palestinians are similarly expected to forfeit their “natural right to liberty and equality.” The Nazis invoked security to justify their annihilatory racial crusade in the East. Note in this connection that a nonideological, eminently reasonable, indeed moral and humane, argument can be and typically is contrived to justify even the most insane and heinous undertakings. “The rational legitimation of something inherently irrational,” observes Lothar Kettenacker, “played an important part in translating anti-semitic propaganda into the reality of genocide.” “A pseudo-moral justification,” Hans Mommsen similarly suggests, “was needed as a precondition for the systematic implementation of the Final Solution. Inhumanity had first to be declared as ‘humanity’ before it could be put into technocratic practice, with moral inhibitions thereafter reduced to a minimum” (Lothar Kettenacker, “Hitler’s Final Solution and Its Rationalization,” 79–81, 87–89, and Hans Mommsen, “The Realization of the Unthinkable,” in *The Policies of Genocide*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld [London, 1986], 110, 112, 122–23, 125–26). One is reminded of Benjamin Franklin’s quip, “So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or to make a reason for everything one has a mind to do.” For the “beduin” stereotype, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 4; for transfer as a “noble human vision,” and effendis as behind opposition to Zionism, see chap. 1; for expulsion of Palestinians, see chap. 3.

37. Carter, *Cherokee Sunset*, 175, 189, 196; John R. Finger, “The Impact of Removal on the North Carolina Cherokees,” in Anderson, *Cherokee Removal*, 100; Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 266–69; Mooney, *Historical Sketch*, 115, 120, 145; Theda Perdue, “The Conflict Within,” in Anderson, *Cherokee Removal*, 70; Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 126, 156, 162–63; Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 99; Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 230–33, 239, 259–60. Echoing the Georgian governor’s sentiments, a leader of the “Treaty Party” suggested that

if one hundred persons are ignorant of their true situation and are so completely blinded as not to see the destruction that awaits them, we can see strong reasons to justify the action of a minority of fifty persons to do what the majority would do if they understood their condition, to save a nation from political thralldom and moral degradation. (Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 163)

One may suppose that the PLO leadership similarly rationalized on the eve of Oslo.

38. Carter, *Cherokee Sunset*, 211, 262 (citing Van Buren); Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 124; Thornton, 80, 93; Folke Bernadotte, *To Jerusalem* (London, 1951), 200. For the “Lydda Death March,” and Ben-Gurion, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, chap. 3. Roosevelt concluded that, although it “worked hardship in individual instances,” Cherokee removal “was probably a necessity” and “on the whole . . . did not

in the least retard the civilization of the tribe, which was fully paid for its losses" (Benton, 111; see 38).

39. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 339.

40. McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, 37, 42–43, 55, 266; Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 142–45, 229–30; Rennard Strickland and William M. Strickland, "Beyond the Trail of Tears," in Anderson, *Cherokee Removal*, 113; Morris L. Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation, 1838–1907* (Norman, Okla., 1948), chap. 3; Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 322–23. Leaders of the "Treaty Party" were among those first assassinated. The "popular estimation," according to Wilkins, was that they were traitors deserving of "execution" (*Cherokee Tragedy*, 326). For the comparable restrictions put on Palestinian "self-rule" in the Oslo and subsequent Israel-PLO agreements, see sources cited in note 4 above.

41. McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, xiii, 6, 68, 202; Royce, *Cherokee Nation*, 214; Strickland and Strickland, "Beyond the Trail of Tears," 114–17; de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 336; Wardell, *Political History*, 110, 116, 187. For the Cherokees' ambivalent stance in the Civil War, see McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, chaps. 6–8, and Wardell, *Political History*, chaps. 7–10. The worst that could be said of the Cherokee leader John Ross's brief dalliance (neutrality having failed) with the Confederacy, Wardell concludes, was that "he was an opportunist, but for no ulterior motive" except to "save his people and preserve his Nation at any cost" (*Political History*, 133, 135; see McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, 181, 190) — a verdict that more or less applies to Arafat as well in the Gulf conflict (see Philip Mattar, "The PLO and the Gulf Crisis," *The Middle East Journal* [winter 1994]: 31–46).

42. Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run* (Princeton, N.J., 1940), 29; McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, 256, 272–73, 284–87, 363–74; Strickland and Strickland, "Beyond the Trail of Tears," 118, 120; Wardell, *Political History*, 256–72, 288.

43. Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, x, xii, 22–23, 94, 126, 353, 376 (for the robbery of Cherokee allotments, see esp. chap. 4); McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, 40, 237, 280, 363, 376; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, 181; Strickland and Strickland, "Beyond the Trail of Tears," 122, 126; Takaki, *Iron Cages*, 188–91; Roosevelt, *Letters*, 4:812.

44. Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, 63f, 170, 258; McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, 368, 380; Wardell, *Political History*, 320, 333; Strickland and Strickland, "Beyond the Trail of Tears," 122, 125.

45. Hunt Jackson, *Century of Dishonor*, 270. Roosevelt ridiculed "the purely sentimental historians" who "take no account of the difficulties under which we labored, nor of the countless wrongs and provocations we endured." Such is the lament of every apologist of conquest: we *too* suffered! Roosevelt reserved for a special drubbing Helen Hunt Jackson's book (*Century of Dishonor*): "worse than valueless, . . . thoroughly untrustworthy from cover to cover" (*Winning*, 1:277–78). Roosevelt's own remarkable verdict on the fate of the Native Americans deserves mention:

As a nation, our Indian policy is to be blamed, because of the weakness it displayed, because of its shortsightedness, and its occasional leaning to the policy of sentimental humanitarians; and we have often promised what was impossible to perform; but there has been no wilful wrong-doing. (*Winning*, 1:276; see Benton, 38–39; for Roosevelt's ruefulness about the Cherokee, see *Winning*, 1:273 and 6:63–64; also Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt*, 70–71, 78–79)

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