

FABRICATING ISRAELI
HISTORY
The 'New Historians'

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3 The Collusion that Never Was

The facts of history do not exist for any historian till he creates them.

CARL BECKER

One of the central myths propagated by the 'new historiography' is that 'in 1947 an explicit agreement was reached between the Hashemites and the Zionists on the carving up of Palestine following the termination of the British mandate, and that this agreement laid the foundation for mutual restraint during 1948 and for continuing collaboration in the aftermath of war'.¹ According to this myth, the alleged agreement was reached in a secret meeting on 17 November 1947 between the Acting Head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, Golda Meir, and King Abdullah of Transjordan, and was 'consciously and deliberately intended to frustrate the will of the international community, as expressed through the United Nations General Assembly, in favour of creating an independent Arab States in part of Palestine'.² 'The common ground for the agreement was a mutual objection to the creation of a Palestinian state', runs the myth. 'The Jewish Agency in particular abhorred such a possibility, asserting that the creation of a Palestinian state would perpetuate the ideological conflict in Palestine'.³

Most forcefully articulated by Avi Shlaim's *Collusion Across*

1 Shlaim, *Collusion*, p. 1.

2 Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, p. viii.

3 Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 118.

the Jordan, this myth is predicated on the single episode approach, namely, the identification of an allegedly critical event which has supposedly affected the course of history in a profound way – in this particular case the course of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, if not of the Arab–Israeli conflict. While ostensibly dealing with the 30-year-long record of intermittent covert contacts between Transjordan’s King Abdullah and the Zionist movement, Shlaim’s book effectively focuses on the short period between the run-up to the 1947–49 War and its immediate aftermath. More specifically he traces the clinching of the alleged ‘collusion’ to the Meir–Abdullah conversation.

In an abridged paperback edition published two years later, Shlaim watered down the nature of the alleged Zionist–Hashemite understanding to ‘a clear and explicit if not necessarily binding agreement ... on bypassing the Palestinians and peacefully dividing the territory of the British mandate between themselves’. He also removed the pejorative ‘collusion’ from the book’s title, though insisting that the alleged agreement ‘did involve at least some of the elements associated with collusion’.⁴ In an article published in 1995, Shlaim watered down the nature of the alleged deal still further to an ‘unwritten agreement’, while praising it as ‘a reasonable and realistic strategy for both sides’. Yet he expressed regret for changing the title of the paperback edition. ‘Collusion is as good a word as any to describe the traffic between the Hashemite king and the Zionist movement during the period 1921–51’, he stated, ‘forgetting’ that his thesis unequivocally traced the alleged collusion to the Abdullah–Meir meeting, and not to the intermittent Hashemite–Zionist contacts as a whole.⁵

Needless to say, the notion of an agreement that is ‘not necessarily binding’ constitutes a contradiction in terms

which renders Shlaim’s collusion thesis hollow. There cannot be half an agreement. Either there is one or there is none. The essence of an agreement, both at the personal and at the collective levels, is an understanding that binds all involved parties in one form or another and is considered by them as such, even if the agreement has not yet received full legal formalization. Whether formal or informal, explicit or tacit, written or unwritten, an agreement is always binding in the minds of its makers; otherwise it would not have been reached in the first place.

But leaving aside this contradiction, a careful examination of the very two documents used by Shlaim to substantiate the claim of ‘collusion’ – reports by Ezra Danin and Eliyahu Sasson, two Zionist officials who attended the meeting – will easily reveal that Meir’s response to Abdullah’s territorial ambitions was far less committal than Shlaim lets us believe. Moreover Meir’s own verbal report on the conversation, which Shlaim fails to bring in his book despite his keen awareness of its existence (he cites the part of this report which does not address the November 1947 meeting), proves beyond a shadow of doubt that Palestine was *not* divided on 17 November 1947.

Last but not least, the Jewish Agency with which Abdullah allegedly struck the deal on the ‘division of Palestine’ was totally unaware of the existence of any such deal for months after its alleged conclusion: it did not authorize Meir to ‘divide Palestine’ with the Hashemite King, and it did not approve any such action *post factum*. In fact, Meir’s conversation with Abdullah was never discussed by the Jewish Agency Executive. If Meir reached ‘a clear and explicit if not necessarily binding agreement with King Abdullah on bypassing the Palestinians and peacefully dividing the territory of the British mandate between themselves’⁶ – which she did not – she also bypassed her own movement.

4 Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, pp. viii, 99.

5 Shlaim, ‘The Debate’, pp. 296, 298–9.

6 Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, p. 99.

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THE ABDULLAH-MEIR MEETING:
THE DANIN-SASSON REPORTS

Having established these two methodological flaws in Shlaim's thesis, let the two Zionist accounts of the meeting used by Shlaim – the reports of Ezra Danin and Eliyahu Sasson – speak for themselves. First Danin's report, as narrated by Shlaim:

In the course of the ensuing conversation Abdullah invited his visitors *to join him in thinking aloud*: they had discussed partition in the past and he was interested to know what their current thinking was ... 'Over the past thirty years you have grown and strengthened yourselves and your achievements are many' [he said]. 'It is impossible to ignore you, and it is a duty to compromise with you. Between the Arabs and you there is no quarrel. The quarrel is between the Arabs and the British who brought you here; and between you and the British who have not kept their promises to you. Now, I am convinced that the British are leaving, and we will be left face to face. Any clash between us will be to our own disadvantage. In the past we talked about partition. *I agree to partition that will not shame me before the Arab world when I come out to defend it. My wish is to take this opportunity to suggest to you the idea, for future thought, of an independent Hebrew Republic in part of Palestine within a Transjordan*

state that would include both banks of the Jordan, with me at its head, and in which the economy, the army and the legislature will be joint'.

Noticing the unease evoked by this suggestion, Abdullah stressed that the Hebrew Republic would not be dominated by Transjordan but would simply be part of the Transjordanian monarchy. He did not press for an answer but simply explained that in the event of such a republic being formed, his kingdom could be expanded to embrace Greater Syria and even Saudi Arabia.

Mrs. Meir drew attention to the fact that the Palestine question was under consideration at the UN and that her side was hoping for a resolution that would establish two states, one Jewish and one Arab, and that they wished to speak to the king only about an agreement based on such a resolution. Abdullah said he understood and that it would be desirable to meet again immediately after the UN pronounced its decision in order to discuss how they might co-operate in the light of that decision. At this point Abdullah asked how the Jews would regard an attempt by him to capture the Arab part of Palestine? Mrs. Meir replied that they would view such an attempt in a favourable light, especially if he did not interfere with the establishment of their state and avoided a clash between his forces and theirs and, secondly, if he could declare that his sole purpose was to maintain law and order until the UN could establish a government in that area. Now it was the king's turn to be startled and he answered sharply: 'But I want this area for myself, in order to annex it to my kingdom and do not want to create a new Arab State which would upset my plans and enable the Arabs to ride on me. I want to ride, not to be ridden!' He also brushed aside a suggestion that he might secure his objective by means of a referendum in which his influence would be decisive.

... Asked if he [i.e., Abdullah] would be prepared to sign a written agreement in the event of a common denominator being identified in political, economic and defence matters he replied affirmatively and asked them [i.e., his Jewish interlocutors] to produce a draft. In bringing the meeting to an end he reiterated that concrete discussions could only take place after the UN had made its decision and that they must meet again as soon as the decision was known.²⁶

Sasson's report, as cited by Shlaim, reads as follows:

[Abdullah] will not allow his forces to collide with us nor co-operate with other forces against us. Belittled military power [of] Arab States. Believed would not dare break into Palestine. In case he will decide [to] invade Palestine will concentrate [on] Arab areas with a view to prevent bloodshed, keep law and order, forestall Mufti. Prepared [to] co-operate with us [in] this matter ... Believe position Mufti weakened. Not to be expected head of Arab provisional government with support [of] Arab world. Abdullah ready [to] sign written agreement with us provided we agree [to] assist attach Arab part to Transjordan. Replied we prepared [to] give every assistance within frame [of] UN Charter. Agreed meet after 25th of this month after UN decision.²⁷

Between them the two reports prove the following points:

- As stated by Abdullah at the outset, the conversation was seen as a joint exercise in 'thinking aloud' about the general

²⁶ Shlaim, *Collusion*, pp. 112–13, 115 (emphasis added).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.

principles of a possible Hashemite–Jewish understanding, not as one designed to reach a concrete agreement. Hence his avoiding of pressing for an answer to his preferred option; hence his concluding remarks that no concrete issues could be discussed until after the UN General Assembly had made its decision.

- In Abdullah's thinking, partition 'that will not shame me before the Arab world' meant 'an independent Hebrew Republic in part of Palestine within a Transjordan State that would include both banks of the Jordan with me at its head'. This was the basis of his acquiescence in the partition plan of the Peel Commission in 1937 and the thrust of his message to his Zionist interlocutors, both before and in the wake of the Second World War. And this was no idle talk; Abdullah truly believed that an autonomous Jewish province would greatly benefit his kingdom, mainly through the influx of Jewish funds and technological know-how. As his Prime Minister, Samir al-Rifai, told Brigadier I.N. Clayton of the British Middle East Office (BMEO) in Cairo on 11 December 1947: 'the enlarged Transjordan State with the support of Jewish economy would become the most influential State in the Arab Middle East'.²⁸

It was only upon realizing that this solution was totally unacceptable to the Jews that Abdullah opted for the lesser choice of incorporating the Arab areas of Mandatory Palestine into his kingdom. But even then he did not view the borders set by the United Nations as final and never tired of trying to convince the Jews either to give him some of the territory awarded to them by the UN or even to forego the idea of an independent State, the last such attempt being made in his second meeting with Golda Meir on 11 May 1948, three days before the establishment

²⁸ Clayton to Foreign Office, 12 December 1947, telegram 67, FO 371/62226/E11928.

of the State of Israel and its subsequent invasion by the Arab States.

- Contrary to Shlaim's claim, Abdullah was not prepared to 'commit himself in writing' to the division of Mandatory Palestine between himself and the Jews.²⁹ As shown by Shlaim's own text above, Abdullah was *not* asked by his Jewish interlocutors to sign an agreement on the division of Palestine but rather an agreement in either of the political, economic or defence spheres 'in the event of a common denominator being identified' in any of these matters. It would have been sheer madness, if not political suicide for Abdullah to have committed himself in writing to the division of Mandatory Palestine between himself and the Jews.
- Most importantly, in no way, shape or form did Golda Meir give Abdullah a 'green light' to annex the Arab part of Mandatory Palestine to his kingdom. Quite the reverse in fact. While quiescent in his possible capture – but by no means annexation! – of this area, 'especially if he did not interfere with the establishment of their state and avoided a clash between his forces and theirs', she made it crystal clear that a) she wished to speak only about an agreement based on the imminent UN Partition Resolution; b) the *sole purpose* of Transjordan's intervention in Palestine 'was to maintain law and order until the UN could establish a government in that area', namely, *a short-lived law-enforcement operation aimed at facilitating the establishment of a legitimate Palestinian government*. There is little doubt that the Zionist movement preferred to see Abdullah at the head of this government rather than the extremist Palestinian leader, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, or the Mufti as he was commonly known; hence Meir's suggestion for a referendum

29 Shlaim, *Collusion*, p. 116.

that would establish Abdullah's supremacy in the Arab parts of Mandatory Palestine, both in the eyes of its Palestinian population and the world at large, and would legitimize his claim to rule this area. But the distance from this position to approval of Abdullah's annexation of this territory to his kingdom is very great indeed.

In other words it was the Jewish representative at the meeting who defended Palestinian political rights, by insisting on the ephemerality of the Transjordanian seizure of the Arab parts of Mandatory Palestine as a means to facilitate the establishment of a legitimate government there; and it was the Arab leader who insisted on annexing the area to his kingdom rather than 'create a new Arab State which would upset my plans and enable the Arabs to ride on me'.

Hence Shlaim's conclusion that 'in November 1947 the Jewish Agency succeeded in reaching a clear and explicit if not necessarily binding agreement with King Abdullah on bypassing the Palestinians and peacefully dividing the territory of the British mandate between themselves'³⁰ is both wrong and misleading:

- First, as shown by Shlaim's own account, it was Abdullah and not Meir who sought to bypass the Palestinians and seize their territory. The Jews, after all, were about to be granted their part of Mandatory Palestine by the United Nations within less than two weeks and had no need to receive this territory from a party who did not possess it in the first place. All they wanted was to avert an unnecessary war with this key neighbour and to coexist peacefully with whoever ruled that part of Mandatory Palestine.

30 Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, p. 99.

- Second, as noted above, Meir never gave her consent to the annexation of the Arab part to Transjordan but insisted on a solution concomitant with the UN Partition Resolution. In Danin's words: 'We explained that our matter was being discussed at the UN, that we hoped that it would be decided there to establish two states, one Jewish and one Arab, and that we wished to speak now about an agreement with him [i.e., Abdullah] based on these resolutions'.³¹ In Sasson's words: 'Replied we prepared [to] give every assistance within [the] frame [of the] UN Charter'.³²
- Third, the Jewish Agency could not succeed in reaching an agreement with Abdullah on the division of Palestine for the simple reason that it did not officially seek such an agreement and did not approve it. As noted earlier, Meir's meeting with Abdullah was never discussed by the JAE, and therefore she was not authorized to strike a concrete deal with Abdullah. She was not the Chairperson of the JAE but merely acting head of the Political Department, 'standing in for Moshe Sharett who was conducting the diplomatic struggle for partition at the UN's temporary headquarters in Lake Success'.³³ In this capacity she could do little more than try to convince Abdullah not to violently oppose the impending UN Partition Resolution and to acquaint him to the gist of Zionist thinking – which is precisely what she did.
- Finally, both Danin's and Sasson's reports state unequivocally that no concrete decisions were reached during the meeting. In the words of Danin: 'At the end he [Abdullah] reiterated that concrete matters could only be discussed

³¹ Ezra Danin, 'Siha Im Abdullah, 17.1.47' (Conversation with Abdullah), CZA, S25/4004.

³² Sasson to Shertok, 20 November 1947, CZA, S25/1699.

³³ Shlaim, *Collusion*, p. 110.

after the UN had passed its resolution, and said that we must meet again immediately afterwards'.³⁴

THE OVERLOOKED DOCUMENT:
MEIR'S VERBAL REPORT

But how did Meir herself interpret her understanding with Abdullah? She presented no official report on her conversation to the JAE at the time of the event, which indicates that she deemed that it contained no concrete agreement that needed to be discussed and approved by this highest decision-making institution of the Zionist movement. It was only six months later, on 12 May 1948, in a verbal report to the Provisional State Council on her second meeting with Abdullah (held on the previous day) in which she failed to convince him not to join the imminent Arab attack on the Jewish State, that Meir gave her own account of the November 1947 meeting:

I do not know whether all present here are aware that several months ago, about ten days before the UN Resolution, a meeting with King Abdullah took place with the participation on our part of Sasson, Danin, and myself. The meeting was in Transjordan, though on Jewish territory, that is – he came from Amman to see us. The meeting was conducted on the basis that there was an arrangement and an understanding as to what both of us wanted and that our interests did not collide.

For our part we told him then that we could not promise to help his incursion into the country [i.e., Mandatory Palestine], since we would be obliged to

³⁴ Danin, 'Siha Im Abdullah'.

observe the UN Resolution which, as we already reckoned at the time, would provide for the establishment of two states in Palestine. We could not therefore – so we said – give active support to the violation of this resolution. If he was prepared and willing to confront the world and us with a *fait accompli* – the tradition of friendship between us would continue and we would certainly find a common language on settling those matters that were of interest to both parties.

He then promised us that his friendship towards us still existed and that there could be no confrontation between us. He spoke on his friends and on the other [Arab] states and especially on the Mufti; he dismissed the strength of the other neighbouring states and agreed with us that if we were attacked by Arabs it went without saying that we had to respond.

The meeting was conducted very amicably and without any arguments. During the conversation he said, as if by passing, two things that raised some suspicion, apprehension. But the meeting ended on the understanding that we would meet again after the UN Resolution. The two things that raised suspicion were:

- a) He wanted to know what we thought about the possible inclusion of the Jewish State (the 'Jewish Republic' as he called it) within the Transjordanian Kingdom;
- b) He hoped to have a partition that would not disgrace him [in front of the Arabs].

These two things raised, as already noted, our appre-

hension, and we thought that in due course we would discuss the matter.³⁵

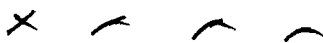
As is clearly evident from Meir's account, Mandatory Palestine *was not* divided in November 1947. There was mutual recognition of the lack of enthusiasm on either side for military confrontation and of the existence of a certain convergence of interests. But no definitive agreement on the future of Palestine was reached. To the contrary, as Meir saw it, Abdullah was made to understand that the decision on whether to confront the world with a *fait accompli* by annexing the Arab parts of Palestine to his kingdom was exclusively his, and that he could expect no Jewish support for such a move. This gist is also borne out by Sasson's and Danin's reports: 'Replied we prepared [to] give every assistance within [the] frame [of the] UN Charter'; 'Mrs. Meir replied that they would view such an attempt in a favourable light... if he could declare that his sole purpose was to maintain law and order until the UN could establish a government in that area.'

Shlaim narrates the part of Meir's report relating to her second meeting with Abdullah; yet, significantly enough, he fails to mention its most critical point for his case, namely Meir's account of her November 1947 conversation in general, and her refusal to help a solution that was non-concomitant with the UN Resolution in particular. Is it because this would have pulled the rug from under his absurd claim that the Zionist movement was seeking to subvert the very UN Resolution which it was so assiduously trying to bring about?

Shlaim's abstention from using Meir's report and his exclusive reliance on Danin's and Sasson's accounts, though not without overlooking their most critical points, is all the more incomprehensible in this particular case since it was Meir after all who allegedly gave Abdullah the 'green light' to annex the

³⁵ Golda Meir's verbal report at the Provisional State Council's meeting of 12 May 1948. *Minhelet Ha-am, Protokolim, 18 April – 13 May 1948* (Provisional State Council, Protocols, 18 April – 13 May 1948) (Jerusalem: Israel State Archives, 1978), vol. I, p. 40.

Arab parts of Mandatory Palestine to his kingdom. Even if Shlaim deems Meir's account of her November 1947 meeting to be unreliable, his minimum obligation still is to introduce it to his readers and to explain his reasons for discounting it. But then there is no particular reason to suspect that Meir's account, given to the Yishuv's 'government' in camera, is less reliable than that of her advisers. Indeed, not only does Shlaim not question the authenticity of Meir's report but he also lauds it as 'nowhere as unsympathetic and unflattering about Abdullah's behaviour as the account she later wrote in her memoirs'.⁵³ If Meir's account of her May 1948 meeting was so fair-minded, then surely the part relating to the November 1947 conversation is no less reliable. Danin who attended the meeting certainly believed so. Yet Shlaim preferred not to bring it in his book.



OLD HAT, 'REVISIONIST' FEATHERS

Not surprisingly, Shlaim's distortion of Meir's reply to Abdullah has been unanimously endorsed by his fellow 'new historians'. Benny Morris, without doing any original research on the subject, warmly endorsed the thesis that the Yishuv and the Hashemites 'had conspired from 1946 to early 1948 to nip the impending UN partition resolution in the bud',⁵⁵

53 *Ibid.*, 18 December 1948, p. 885 (emphasis added).

54 *Ibid.*, 4 January 1949, p. 927.

55 Morris, *1948 and After*, p. 10.

totally 'forgetting' that until February 1947 Britain was the Mandatory Power for Palestine; that until UNSCOP's majority recommendation on partition was published on 31 August 1947, a solution in this vein was by no means a foregone conclusion; that until the General Assembly passed the Partition Resolution on 29 November 1947, there was no absolute certainty that UNSCOP's recommendation would be adopted by the United Nations; and that, above all, this Partition Resolution was what the Zionist movement had been consistently fighting for.

For his part, Ilan Pappé goes further than Shlaim in misrepresenting the record. While Shlaim at least brings Danin's and Sasson's reports more or less in their entirety (though keeping away Meir's own report), Pappé makes no mention of the most significant part in Meir's reply, namely her objection to any agreement non-concomitant with the UN Partition Resolution, and her insistence on the ephemerality of Transjordan's occupation of the Arab parts in Palestine until the establishment of a legal government there. As Pappé put it:

In November 1947, King Abdullah met the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, Golda Meyerson (Meir), and offered the Jews an independent Jewish republic as part of a Hashemite monarchy covering Transjordan and ex-mandatory Palestine. When this was rejected, he asked for the Jewish Agency's consent to his annexing the territories allotted to the Arabs in the UN partition plan. The Jewish Agency representative gave her consent in return for the king's promise not to attack the future Jewish State.⁵⁶

For that purpose in November 1947 a meeting took place between Golda Meyerson (Meir), the acting

56 Ilan Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 10.

head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, and King Abdullah. At this meeting Abdullah presented a new vision of Palestine in which a Jewish republic would be integrated into a newly-formed Hashemite kingdom – consisting of Transjordan and Palestine [as shown earlier, this was not 'a new vision' but rather Abdullah's long-standing solution to the Palestine problem – E.K.]. When, not surprisingly, this was rejected out of hand by the other side, Abdullah asked for Jewish consent to the annexation to Transjordan of the UN-defined Arab States. To this the Jewish Agency representative did give her assent, in return for the king's promise not to attack the Jewish State in the event of a war breaking out.⁵⁷

That the 'new historians' have distorted Meir's reply to Abdullah is scarcely surprising; the interesting point is that 'old historians' have preceded them in doing so. For example, while citing Meir's insistence on the ephemerality of the Transjordanian seizure of the Arab parts of Palestine, Aharon Klieman has been captive of the same misconception as Shlaim and Pappé. 'Thus', he wrote in his study of Hashemite-Zionist relations published two years before Shlaim's book, 'an authorized representative of the [Jewish] Agency and on Ben-Gurion's behalf gave a clear and rather explicit agreement to the Hashemite leader's occupation of the "Arab part" of Western Palestine according to the partition principle, on condition that he would not obstruct the establishment of the Jewish State'.⁵⁸

According to Morris, 'Shlaim's description of the Yishuv-Hashemite relations down to 1951, including the premise of tacit Israeli-Jordanian agreement during 1948' has been by

57 Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 119.

58 Klieman, *Du Kium*, pp. 129-30.

and large accepted by 'the Israeli historiographic community'.⁵⁹ The truth of the matter, as shown by Klieman's above citation, is that it is Shlaim who has been following in the footsteps of 'the Israeli historiographic community' rather than the other way round.⁶⁰

Interestingly enough, Klieman, the quintessential 'Zionist' historian, even goes further than Shlaim in censuring the Hashemite-Jewish 'connection'. While Shlaim views this connection as a 'reasonable and realistic strategy for both sides' Klieman deems it politically imprudent but avoids the pious high moral ground taken by Shlaim. This provides further proof, if such were at all needed, that the difference between 'old' and 'new' historians has nothing to do with access to new facts, and not necessarily even with their interpretation: for in this case both 'old' and 'new' historians have (mis)interpreted a specific historical episode in precisely the same way.

True, there have been a handful of historians who have highlighted the restrictive nature of Meir's response to Abdullah.⁶¹ But even they fail to recognize that a) decisions of such magnitude cannot be made in the course of a single conversation; b) that Meir was not authorized to make a decision of this kind; c) that no agreement that bound the Zionist movement could conceivably be reached without the authorization of the JAE – which was never given; d) that the Jewish Agency showed no awareness of the existence of any such agreement and that Zionist distrust of Abdullah remained unabated for a long time after the Meir-Abdullah meeting; and that e) the Jewish Agency remained undecided between the two options – an independent Palestinian State or Transjordan's annexation of Western Palestine – well after the Meir-

⁵⁹ Morris, *1948 and After*, p. 39.

⁶⁰ For other scholars who have preceded the 'new historians' on the issue of Hashemite-Zionist relations see Chapter 1 fn. 19.

⁶¹ See, for example, Yoav Gelber, *The Alliance of Arms Sinister: Jewish-Transjordanian Relations, 1921-1948* (London: Frank Cass, forthcoming); Ron Pundik, *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Relations between Great Britain and Jordan, 1946-1951* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

Abdullah meeting, with its most influential leaders, David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett, disposed to the former option. Not least, even these more careful historians have overlooked Meir's own account of the meeting, focusing instead on Danin's report.

This in turn brings us back to the conclusion that on this particular historical episode both 'old' and 'new' Israeli historians have unquestioningly been recycling an old and familiar myth, whose broad contours were delineated already 30 years ago, while ignoring the only first-hand account of the person involved. Shlaim is not even 'new' in being wrong.