

BATTLEGROUND

Fact and Fantasy
in Palestine

Samuel Katz



A NATIONAL GENERAL COMPANY

Arab Refugees

Only a George Orwell or a Franz Kafka could have done justice to the story of the Arab refugee problem. For twenty years the world has been indoctrinated with a version of its origins, its scope, the responsibilities for its solution. The intent of this picture is, roughly, that in 1948 the Jewish people launched an attack on the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, drove them out, and thus established the State of Israel. The number of innocent peace-loving Arabs thus turned refugee was—here you may insert any figure that occurs to you, such as a million, one and a half million, two million. Justice demands that the refugees be restored to their homes, and until that day the world (everyone, that is, except the Arab people) must care for their upkeep.

The Arabs are the only declared refugees who became refugees not by the action of their enemies or because of well-grounded fear of their enemies, but by the initiative of their own leaders. For nearly a generation those leaders have willfully kept as many people as they possibly could in degenerating squalor, preventing their rehabilitation, and holding out to all of them the hope of return and of "vengeance" on the Jews of Israel, to whom they have transferred the blame for their plight.

The fabrication can probably most easily be seen in the simple circumstance that at the time the alleged cruel expulsion of Arabs by Zionists was in progress, it passed unnoticed. Foreign newspapermen who covered the war of 1948 on both sides did, indeed, write about the flight of

of Arabs, but even those most hostile to the Jews saw nothing to suggest that it was not voluntary. In the three months during which the major part of the flight took place—April, May, and June, 1948—the *London Times*, at that time [openly] hostile to Zionism, published seven leading articles on the situation in Palestine in addition to extensive news reports and articles. In none was there even a hint of the charge that the Zionists were driving the Arabs from their homes.

More interesting still, no Arab spokesman mentioned the subject. At the height of the flight, on April 27, Jamal Husseini, the Palestine Arab's chief representative at the United Nations, made a long political statement, which was not lacking in hostility toward the Zionists; he did not mention refugees. Three weeks later (while the flight was still in progress) the Secretary General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, made a fiercely worded political statement on Palestine; it contained not a word about refugees.

The Arab refugees were not driven from Palestine by anyone. The vast majority left, whether of their own free will or at the orders or exhortations of their leaders, always with the same reassurance—that their departure would help in the war against Israel. Attacks by Palestinian Arabs on the Jews had begun two days after the United Nations adopted its decision of November 29, 1947, to divide Western Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. The seven neighboring Arab states—Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt—then prepared to invade the country as soon as the birth of the infant State of Israel was announced. Their victory was certain, they claimed, but it would be speeded and made easier if the local Arab population got out of the way. The refugees would come back in the wake of the victorious Arab armies and not only recover their own property but also inherit the houses and farms of the vanquished and annihilated Jews. Between December 1, 1947, and May 15, 1948, the clash was largely between bands of local Arabs, aided in diverse ways by the disintegrating British authority, and the Jewish fighting organizations.

The earliest voluntary refugees were understandably the

wealthier Arabs of the towns, who made a comparatively leisurely departure in December 1947 and in early 1948. At that stage, departure had not yet been proclaimed as a policy or recognized as a potential propaganda weapon. The Jaffa newspaper *Ash Sha'ab* thus wrote on January 30, 1948:

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

The weekly *As Sarih* of Jaffa used even more scathing terms on March 30, 1948, to accuse the inhabitants of Sheikh Munis and other villages in the neighborhood of Tel Aviv of "bringing down disgrace on us all" by "abandoning their villages." On May 5 the Jerusalem correspondent of the London *Times* was reporting: "The Arab streets are curiously deserted and, evidently following the poor example of the more moneyed class there has been an exodus from Jerusalem too, though not to the same extent as in Jaffa and Haifa."

As the local Arab offensive spread during the late winter and early spring of 1948, the Palestinian Arabs were urged to take to the hills, so as to leave the invading Arab armies unencumbered by a civilian population. Before the State of Israel had been formally declared—and while the British still ruled the country—over 200,000 Arabs left their homes in the coastal plain of Palestine.

These exhortations came primarily from their own local leaders. Monsignor George Hakim, then Greek Catholic Bishop of Galilee, the leading Christian personality in Palestine for many years, told a Beirut newspaper in the summer of 1948, before the flight of Arabs had ended:

The refugees were confident that their absence would not last long, and that they would return within a week or two. Their leaders had promised them that the Arab Armies would crush the "Zionist gangs" very quickly and that there was no need for panic or fear of a long exile. [*Sada al Janub*, August 16, 1948]

The exodus was indeed common knowledge. The London weekly *Economist* reported on October 2, 1948:

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

And the Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station from Cyprus stated on April 3, 1949:

It must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem.

Even in retrospect, in an effort to describe the deliberateness of the flight, the leading Arab propagandist of the day, Edward Atiyah (then Secretary of the Arab League Office in London) reaffirmed the facts:

This wholesale exodus was due partly to the belief of the Arabs, encouraged by the boasting of an unrealistic Arab press and the irresponsible utterances of some of the Arab leaders that it could be only a matter of some weeks before the Jews were defeated by the armies of the Arab States and the Palestinian Arabs enabled to re-enter and retake possession of their country. [*The Arabs*, London, 1955, p. 183]

Kenneth Bilby, one of the American correspondents who covered Palestine for several years before and during the war of 1948, soon afterward wrote a book on his experience and observations. In it he reported:

The Arab exodus, initially at least, was encouraged by many Arab leaders, such as Haj Amin el Husseini, the exiled pro-Nazi Mufti of Jerusalem, and by the Arab Higher Committee for Palestine. They viewed the first

wave of Arab setbacks as merely transitory. Let the Palestine Arabs flee into neighboring countries. It would serve to arouse the other Arab peoples to greater effort, and when the Arab invasion struck, the Palestinians could return to their homes and be compensated with the property of Jews driven into the sea. [*New Star in the Near East*, New York, 1950, pp. 30-31]

After the war the Palestine Arab leaders did try to help people—including their own—to forget that it was they who had called for the exodus in the early spring of 1948. They now blamed the leaders of the invading Arab states themselves. These had added their voices to the exodus call, though not until some weeks after the Palestine Arab Higher Committee had taken a stand.

The war was not yet over when Emil Ghoury, Secretary of the Arab High Committee, the official leadership of the Palestinian Arabs, stated in an interview with a Beirut newspaper:

I do not want to impugn anybody but only to help the refugees. The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the action of the Arab States in opposing partition and the Jewish State. The Arab States agreed upon this policy unanimously and they must share in the solution of the problem. [*Daily Telegraph*, September 6, 1948]

In retrospect, the Jordanian newspaper *Falastin* wrote on February 19, 1949:

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

Nimr el Hawari, the Commander of the Palestine Arab Youth Organization, in his book *Sir Am Nakbah* ("The Secret Behind the Disaster", published in Nazareth in 1952), more specifically quoted the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said. Nuri, he wrote, had thundered: "We will smash the country with our guns and obliterate every place the Jews seek shelter in. The Arabs should conduct their

lives and children to safe areas until the fighting has died down."

Equally specifically brought to public notice was the part played by the chief spokesman for the combined Arab states, the Secretary General of the Arab League himself. Habib Issa, in the New York Lebanese daily newspaper *Al Hoda* wrote on June 8, 1951,

The Secretary General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, assured the Arab peoples that the occupation of Palestine and of Tel Aviv would be as simple as a military promenade. . . . He pointed out that they were already on the frontiers and that all the millions the Jews had spent on land and economic development would be easy booty, for it would be a simple matter to throw Jews into the Mediterranean. . . . Brotherly advice was given to the Arabs of Palestine to leave their land, homes, and property and to stay temporarily in neighboring fraternal states, lest the guns of the invading Arab armies mow them down.

As late as 1952 the charge had the official stamp of the Arab Higher Committee. In a memorandum to the Arab League states, the Committee wrote:

Some of the Arab leaders and their ministers in Arab capitals . . . declared that they welcomed the immigration of Palestinian Arabs into the Arab countries until they saved Palestine. Many of the Palestinian Arabs were misled by their declarations. . . . It was natural for those Palestinian Arabs who felt impelled to leave their country to take refuge in Arab lands . . . and to stay in such adjacent places in order to maintain contact with their country so that to return to it would be easy when, according to the promises of many of those responsible in the Arab countries (promises which were given wastefully), the time was ripe. Many were of the opinion that such an opportunity would come in the hours between sunset and sunrise.¹

¹ Published in Cairo. Quoted by Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Refugee in the World* (New York, 1963), pp. 197-198.

Most pointed of all was the comment of one of the refugees themselves, "The Arab governments told us: Get out so that we can get in. So we got out, but they did not get in."²

When the onslaught of the local Arabs had been in progress for over four months, and a month before the planned invasion by the seven Arab states, about half the population still remained in the area mapped out by the United Nations as the Jewish state. Now began the fantastic phase of the exodus. A large part of the population panicked. Suddenly the countryside was filled with rumors and alleged reports of Jewish "atrocities." A highly colored report of a battle near Jerusalem became the driving theme. At the village of Dir Yassin, one of the bases of the Arab forces maintaining pressure on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, an assault by the "dissident" Irgun Zva' Leumi and the FFI (Stern Group) had continued for eight hours before the village was finally captured, and then only with the help of a Palmach³ armored car which arrived on the scene unexpectedly. The element of surprise having been lost, the Arab soldiers could turn every house in the village into a fortress. Jewish casualties amounted to one-third of the attacking force (40 out of 120). The Arabs, barricading themselves in the houses, had omitted to evacuate women and children, many of whom were thus killed during the attack.

The Arab leaders seized on the opportunity to tell an utterly fantastic story of a "massacre," which was disseminated throughout the world by all the arms of British propaganda. The accepted "orthodox" version to this day, it has served enemies of Israel and anti-Semites faithfully.⁴

² Jordan daily *Ad Difa*, September 6, 1954.

³ Palmach—the striking force of the Haganah.

⁴ I have dealt in depth with the Dir Yassin libel in *Days of Fire* (New York, 1968). The Zionist establishment of 1948, in its eagerness to blacken the dissident underground, helped the libel along. Only years later did the Israeli Foreign Office correct the record (in *Israel's Struggle for Peace*, Israel Office of Information, New

The effect of the story was immediate and electric. The British officer who had done most in the years before 1948 to build up the Transjordanian Army, General Habb Pasha, wrote in the London *Daily Mail* on August 12, 1948: "The Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of war." And the refugee leader Dir Yassin, Yunes Ahmed Assad, has soberly recorded that "The Arab exodus from other villages was not caused by the actual battle, but by the exaggerated description spread by Arab leaders to incite them to fight the Jews" (*Al Urdun*, April 9, 1953).

Another quarter of a million Arabs thus left the area of the State of Israel in the late spring and early summer of 1948.

Where they had the opportunity, the Jews tried to prevent the Arabs flight. Bishop Hakim of Galilee confirmed to the Rev. Karl Baehr, Executive Secretary of the American Christian Palestine Committee that the Arabs of Haifa "fled in spite of the fact that the Jewish authorities guaranteed their safety and rights as citizens of Israel."⁵ This episode is described in a report by the Haifa District HQ of the British Palestine Police sent on April 26, 1948 to Police HQ in Jerusalem.

"Every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab populace to stay and carry on with their normal lives, to get their shops and businesses open and to be assured that their lives and interests will be safe." The Jewish effort was in vain. The police report continues: "A large road convoy, escorted by [British] military . . . left Haifa for Beirut yesterday. . . Evacuation by sea goes on

(New York, 1960) and in an extensive statement entitled "Dir Yassin," published on March 16, 1969. An earlier Arab eye-witness account is a stunning refutation of the libel. On the fifth anniversary of the battle, Yunes Ahmed Assad of Dir Yassin wrote in the Jordan daily *Al Urdun* (April 9, 1953): "The Jews never intended to hurt the population of the village but were forced to do so after they met hostile fire from the population which killed the Irgun commander."

⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, June 30, 1949.

steadily." Two days later the Haifa police continued to report. The Jews were "still making every effort to persuade the Arab populace to remain and to settle back into their normal lives in the towns;" as for the Arabs, "another convoy left Tireh for Transjordan, and the evacuation by sea continues. The quays and harbor are still crowded with refugees and their household effects, all omitting no opportunity to get a place on one of the boats leaving Haifa."⁶

This orderly evacuation took place as the outcome of truce negotiations after the Jewish forces had broken the Arab offensive and taken control of the city. The Arab military delegates, refusing the truce, asked for British help in transferring the Arab population to the neighboring Arab countries. The British provided facilities, including trucks.

The voluntary nature of the evacuation was proclaimed a virtue by the leader and chief spokesman of the Palestinian Arabs. While it was in progress, Jamal Husseini, Acting Chairman of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, told the United Nations Security Council:

The Arabs did not want to submit to a truce . . . they rather preferred to abandon their homes, their belongings and everything they possessed in the world and leave the town. This is in fact what they did.⁷

Most of the Arab evacuees did not go so far as the neighboring Arab states. Many went to towns in Judea and Samaria and remained there under Transjordanian rule. Others stopped at Acre, where they could look across the bay at their home town and wait patiently for the day a month later when they would make their triumphant way back in the wake of the victorious Arab armies. The victorious Arab armies never arrived; instead, Acre was

⁶ These documents were in the British police files taken over by the Haganah on the evacuation of Haifa by the British a fortnight later.

⁷ UN Security Council Official Records Third Year N. 62, April 23, 1948, p. 14.

won by the Jewish forces; and the evacuees moved on again. Only now they were to be called "refugees."

The Arab National Committee of Haifa, in a memorandum two years later to the governments of the Arab League, recalled frankly that "the military and civil authorities and the Jewish representative expressed their profound regret at this grave decision [to evacuate]. The [Jewish] Mayor of Haifa made a passionate appeal to the delegation to reconsider its decision."⁸

When the Arab onslaught on Israel failed and the Arab leaders' promise of an early return and a take-over of Jewish property was revealed as an irresponsible, malicious miscalculation, the theme of Israel's responsibility for the flight and the plight of the Arab refugees developed.

The transfer of blame to the Jews was first of all a natural act of self-exculpation by the Arab leaders. It soon became a powerful propaganda weapon in the general war against Israel. Even sophisticated Arab apologists, pressed at times by the courtesies of debate to meet the challenge of the facts, parry the question. Thus, Albert Hourani, in an article in the *London Observer* on September 3, 1967, talks of the "myth that the Arabs left willingly under orders from their leaders." "No more than the most tenuous evidence was produced for this," writes Mr. Hourani. How many of his readers would know the facts, would know that Mr. Hourani's own words represented an act of collaboration in a monstrous fraud perpetuated by the Arab leaders responsible for the refugee problem?

The fraud developed. Its next feature was the inflation of the numbers of the refugees. Mr. Emil Ghoury, Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee during the war, is a typical purveyor. In his 1960 speech at the United Nations he set the number of "expelled" Arabs at two million. The Arab spokesmen who succeeded him in the debate presumably considered this figure too high. On November 25 the Lebanese representative, Nadim Dimchekie, declared that "more than one million Arabs have been expelled." Four days later, the spokesman for Sudan

⁸ Quoted by Schechtmann, p. 192.

struck an average, speaking of the "expulsion of one and a half million Arabs." These speeches are characteristic ever since the policy of falsification was adopted, the figure used by Arab spokesmen has never fallen below a million. The misrepresentation may be epitomized in a comparison of two of Emil Ghoury's statements.

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

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

In 1947 there were approximately one million Arabs in the whole of western Palestine. (British figures, certainly inflated, put the number at 1,200,000; independent calculations claim 800-900,000). Of these, the total number actually living in that part of Palestine which became Israel was, according to the British figure, 561,000.⁹ Not all of them left. After the end of hostilities in 1949, there were 140,000 Arabs in Israel. The total number of Arabs who left could not mathematically have been more than some 420,000.

At the time, before the policy of inflation had been conceived, these were the commonly stated proportions of the problem. At the end of May 1948 Faris el Khoury,

⁹ UN Document A/SPC/SR 209, p. 9.

¹⁰ This figure was compiled by Dr. Oscar K. Rabinowicz on the basis of the statistics in the *British Survey of Palestine*, Vol. I, and published in *Jewish Social Studies*, October 1959, pp. 240-242 (quoted by Schechtman, p. 195).

the Syrian representative on the UN Security Council, estimated their number at 250,000. The even more authoritative Emil Ghoury (who twelve years later talked of two million) announced on September 6, 1948, that by the middle of June, at the time of the first truce, the number of Arabs who had fled was 200,000. "By the time the second truce began (on July 17)," he said, "their number had risen to 300,000."¹¹ Count Bernadotte, the UN Special Representative in Palestine, reporting on September 16, 1948 informed the United Nations that he estimated the number of Arab refugees at 250,000, including 50,000 in Israel territory (UN Document A1648). After July 1948 there was a fourth exodus of some 50,000 Arabs from Galilee and from the Negev.

The inflation may at first have been accidental. The United Nations at once provided the refugees with food, clothes, shelter, and medical attention. There was no system of identification; any Arab could register as a refugee and receive free aid. Immediately a large number of needy Arabs from various Arab countries flocked to the refugee camps, were registered, and thenceforth received their rations. Already by December 1948, when their total could not yet have reached the maximum of 425,000, the Director of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization, Sir Rafael Cilento, reported that he was feeding 750,000 refugees. Seven months later the official figure had increased to a round million in the report of W. de St. Aubin, the United Nations Director of Field Operations.

The inflation of the numbers was helped not only by the understandable readiness of needy and greedy people to take advantage of free upkeep. The International Committee of the Red Cross pressed the United Nations Relief Headquarters to recognize as refugees any destitute Arab in Palestine and to let him have refugee facilities in his own home. The Red Cross Committee made no effort to conceal its purpose; it claimed that it was becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate levels of need "between

¹¹ *Beirut Telegraph*, September 6, 1948.

the refugees and the residents, as the Arab-occupied areas do not produce sufficient food or salable goods to nourish more than a small percentage of the resident population. If this fraudulent addition of 100,000 to the rolls for food and medical care was feasible, it would indeed be "senseless," as the Red Cross communication noted, also to force them "to abandon their homes to be able to get food as refugees." At least 100,000 ordinary Arab citizens in this category thus became refugees *de luxe*.

To round out the picture, both the Jordanian authorities and the Egyptian administration in the Gaza Strip insisted that the refugee rolls include any Arab who could be described as needing support as a result of the war of 1948. Though the United Nations Relief and Works Administration made gestures of protest, it finally accepted this situation, thus becoming a major partner in the deception. Moreover, it submitted to the decision of the host governments to deny it any opportunity to investigate the bona fides of claimant refugees. It was never possible to establish even whether the names on the relief rolls were those of living people or of persons long since dead.

Nor were the relief organizations permitted by the host governments to investigate or to take steps to combat the large-scale forging of and trading in ration cards, which had become a major well-known "racket" throughout the Middle East.

"There is reason to believe," reported the UNRWA Director as early as 1950, "that births are always registered for ration purposes, but deaths are often, if not usually, concealed so that the family may continue to collect rations for the deceased" (UN Document A-1451 pp. 9-10).

Nine years later, the UNRWA Director's report for 1959-1960 equally laconically records that its figures of Arabs receiving relief—1,120,000—do not necessarily reflect the actual refugee population owing to factors such as the high scale of unreported deaths, undetected false registration, etc." (UN Document A/4478 p. 13). In October, 1959 the Director had admitted that ration lists in Jordan alone "are believed to include 150,000 ineligible and many persons who have died."

The result has been the creation of a large, amorphous mass of names, some of them relating to real people, some of them purely fictitious or relating to persons long since dead, a minority relating to people without a home as a result of their or their parents' leaving Palestine in 1948, the majority relating to people who, whatever their origins, are now living and working as ordinary citizens but continuing to draw rations and obtaining medical attention at the expense of the world's taxpayers—all of them comfortably lumped together in official United Nations lists as Arab refugees and vehemently described as "victims of Jewish aggression."

The economic interest of the individual Arab in the perpetuation of the refugee problem and of his free keep is backed by the accumulating vested interest of UNRWA itself to keep itself in being and to expand. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency is thought of as some Olympian, philanthropic body directed and operated by a band of dedicated humanitarians, devoted exclusively to the task of helping suffering refugees. The fact is that the organization consists of some 11,000 officials, of whom all but a handful are Arabs who are themselves inscribed on the rolls as "refugees." They perform the field work; they, that is, hand out the relief. The remaining handful consist of some 120 Americans and Europeans, who man the organization's central offices. Since UNRWA itself is thus a source of livelihood for some 50,000 people, no one connected with it has the slightest interest in seeing its task end or in protesting the fraud and deception it has perpetrated for over twenty years. The myth continues to live and to thrive, feeding on itself.

A strict examination of the reports of UNRWA itself will show that the facts of the fraud are essentially not concealed, rendering the misrepresentation in definitions and figures all the more deliberate. It is a misrepresentation which has been publicly exposed by diligent independent investigators. The American writer Martha Gellhorn publicly made these charges. Somewhat earlier, a detailed analysis of every aspect of the problem, the fruit of study

year after year, had been published by Dr. Walter Pinner who was able consequently to confront the international authorities with the facts and to publish them in two books.¹²

The UNRWA—disregarding its own reports in 1966 set the number of refugees at 1,317,749. In fact, the number of real refugees, as calculated by Dr. Pinner, was 367,000.

The difference of over 950,000 is roughly made up as follows:

Unrecorded deaths	117,000
Ex-refugees resettled in 1948	109,000
Ex-refugees who became self-supporting between 1948 and 1966 (85,000 in Syria, 60,000 in Lebanon, and 80,000 in Jordan)	225,000
Frontier villagers in Jordan (nonrefugees)	15,000
Self-appointed nonrefugees (pre-1948 residents of "West Jordan" and the Gaza Strip registered as refugees)	484,000

Of the real refugees, nearly half were in the Gaza Strip—155,000 out of 367,000. The reason is simple. Control of the Gaza Strip was in the hands of Egypt. While Jordan, Lebanon, and even Syria did not restrict the movement of refugees or obstruct the efforts of the refugees themselves to rehabilitate themselves (provided they did not give up their status as "refugees"),¹³ the Egyptian authorities maintained a strict separation between "refugees" and the ordinary population of the area. The Gaza Strip, wrote Martha Gellhorn, "is not a hell-hole, not a visible disaster. It is worse. It is a jail" (*Atlantic Monthly*, October 1961).

The outline of the refugee problem is sharp and clear—

¹² *How Many Refugees?* (London, 1959); *The Legend of the Arab Refugees* (Tel Aviv, 1967). The figures here given are from the more recent study (p. 45).

¹³ In Lebanon, the one exception, rehabilitated refugees were in fact struck off the relief rolls; but Lebanon is a minor "host" country.

Many of them in the parts of western Palestine annexed by Jordan in 1950, in Syria, and in Lebanon took affairs into their own hands and became more or less self-supporting though, like many hundreds of thousands of their neighbors who had never been refugees in any sense, they continued to supplement their earnings by the free food, free medical supplies, and even the free, if inferior, shelter provided by UNRWA.¹⁴

The remainder—either unwilling or unable to work or forcibly prevented (in Gaza) from establishing themselves—together with their progeny numbered less than 400,000 on the eve of the Six Day War.

Having established the image of a major problem, the Arab governments maintained and projected it. The fact that the vast majority of the Arabs who had actually left the Israeli part of Palestine had integrated into the life of their host country (or had emigrated to seek prosperity in Kuwait or elsewhere) did not disturb the myth. The governments had only to block any official scheme for resettlement of the refugees, so that the relief rolls never decreased, and to insure the continued existence of camps which could be photographed, showing people labeled "refugees" living in circumstances of various degrees of sordidness and squalor.

In the early years after 1948, Arab governments did from time to time pretend to consider plans for the integration of refugees put forward by the United Nations. In 1952 Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, all signed agreements with UNRWA for the execution of a plan for integration which was to cost the United Nations \$200 million. The plan was adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on January 26, 1952. They never took any steps however to implement the plan. Not a single one of the projects it envisaged was ever launched.

¹⁴ "There are numerous instances of full-time Government employees remaining on ration rolls because of the high income scale," states a laconic UNRWA report in 1952. UN Document A/2171, p. 16.

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In the years that followed, other schemes were proposed. Any plan that involved resettlement of the refugees was automatically rejected. The Arab states agreed on one form of aid only—charity, the annual United Nations grant for relief, most of which was spent on people who had no need of it or who had never in any sense been refugees.

If there had in fact been even as many as a million refugees, their integration could have been effected in a few years. In this period vast international experience accumulated in integrating and resettling refugees. Since the Second World War there have been some forty million refugees in the world. The vast majority were either driven physically from their homes—where in some cases their families had lived for hundreds of years—or fled under the immediate threat of physical danger or political oppression.

Immediately after the Second World War some twelve million Germans were physically driven into Germany—West and East—from Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Romania. They left all their property behind. The transfer from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary was carried out with the prior approval of the three great powers participating in the Potsdam Conference—the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States—in the summer of 1945. The expulsion under these international auspices was carried out in such a way that many hundreds of thousands of refugees died in the process.¹⁵ Their property was confiscated; nobody even suggested paying them compensation. The territory of Germany had been reduced by some 20 percent; now its population was forcibly increased by twenty percent.

In the months of chaos which followed the end of the war in Germany, when hunger and suffering predominated, there was for a while some talk of returning at least part of the refugees to Poland and Czechoslovakia. Liber-

¹⁵ The dead numbered two million according to the West German authorities; "well under a million" according to Elizabeth Wiskemann in her *Germany's Eastern Neighbours* (London, 1956).

al President Eduard Beneš of Czechoslovakia replied on May 9, 1947: "If somebody should get the idea that this question has not been definitely settled, we would resolutely call the whole nation to arms." Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov was no less explicit. "The very idea," he said, "of involving millions of people in such experiments [of reversing the process of eviction of Germans from Poland] is unbelievable, quite apart from the cruelty of it both toward the Poles and the Germans themselves."

The French Foreign Minister, Georges Bidault, added his government's opinion. "Poland's new frontier and the transfer of population are accomplished facts," he told the Council of Foreign Ministers in London in November 1947, "and it is no use thinking they can be reversed now."¹⁶

The West German government, confronted with gigantic physical, political, and psychological problems of reconstruction, did not hasten to accept the long-term implications of absorbing millions of refugees. Even five years after the end of the war voices were still raised in the West from time to time, complaining of tardiness in their resettlement. Thereafter the German government set in motion vast housing, education, and labor programs for the reintegration of fellow Germans into the national economy and society. It received no outside help; no international fund was set up; the United Nations Organization never sought, nor was it asked, to deal with the deliberate uprooting—sometimes forcible, always against their will—of twelve million human beings or with the problems attendant on their rehabilitation.

When, at the other end of the world, India was partitioned in 1947, fourteen million people became refugees within a few months. No international agency showed any sign of agitation at the terror-stricken flight of eight million Hindus from Pakistan and of six million Moslems

¹⁶ Molotov in interview with Polish News Agency (PAT), September 17, 1946. Bidault and Beneš quoted in Schechtman, *The Refugee in the World* (New York, 1963), pp. 29–30.

from their homes in India. The Indian and Pakistani leaders made vain appeals to their peoples to stay where they were. They were certainly not to blame for the two-way exodus or for the bloody riots that preceded it. But both the Indian and Pakistani governments at once set about giving the refugees succor and homes. They first of all used the homes forsaken by the refugees who had fled in the opposite direction.

The exchange of populations in itself came to be seen on all sides as a perfectly natural—indeed, as the best—solution to the problem of communal relations in the two states. Neither Pakistan nor India are wealthy countries, and the efforts of both peoples to solve the problem of absorption and integration went on for years. They received no international help; no special funds were set up to help them.

In 1947, after the Second World War, Finland was compelled to give up almost one-eighth of her territory and at the same time to receive nearly half a million Finnish refugees expelled by the Soviet Union. In 1950 the Bulgarians expelled 150,000 Turks, with whom they had last fought a war two generations earlier. These refugees, their property confiscated, were allowed to take personal belongings up to a value of two dollars when they were sent across the frontier into Turkey. The Turkish government, neither the richest nor most efficient government in the world, planned and carried out an absorption program which was completed in two years.

Tens of millions of refugees were thus absorbed by their own people, speaking the same language, with basically similar cultural backgrounds. Some were absorbed by foreign countries which owed them nothing except common humanity. A minority—rather more than a million—was settled in a variety of countries through the efforts of the International Refugee Organization.

The perpetuation of the Arab refugee problem by the Arab states has the same central purpose as its creation: to bring about the destruction of the State of Israel. No Arab leader has ever tried to hide or obscure this aim. All have

repeatedly made it clear that their refusal to absorb refugees into their large, empty, and population-hungry territories stems from their insistence on the right of the refugees "to return to their home," a "right" held to be identical with the right of the Arab people to Palestine. A natural corollary of this right is the destruction of Israel as a state. The perpetuation of the "refugee problem" is part of the same policy that refuses to concede Israel's very right to exist.

"Any discussion aimed at a solution of the Palestine problem not based on assuring the refugees' right to annihilate Israel will be regarded as a desecration of the Arab people and an act of treason," stated a resolution of the Refugee Conference held at Homs, Syria, in 1957. "If Arabs return to Israel—Israel will cease to exist," Gamal Abdel Nasser himself said in an interview in *Zürcher Woche*, September 1, 1961.

The Arab states hoped to achieve the right to introduce into Israel an army (labeled refugees) to blow it up from within as they have failed to destroy it from without.

The cause of the Arab refugees has been maintained with the help of the Western nations and the manipulation of the United Nations Organization by the Arabs and their supporters.

United Nations decisions are based on the quintessence of the interests of the participating nations or, in many cases, on the simple principle of buying political credit. Where a specific issue does not affect a country's interests directly, it votes for the side from which it expects some political benefit tomorrow—such is the basic law of nations. The Arab states would be assured of forty votes at the United Nations even if (as Mr. Abba Eban once pointed out) they introduced a resolution proclaiming that the earth is flat. This circumstance has been exploited to the full by the Arabs. Though they have not taken a stand on the shape of the earth, their successes are impressive nonetheless.

Having set up the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the international statesmen received its yearly re-

ports, ostensibly read them, ignored the falsehoods and fraud they reflected, deplored the plight of the refugees, and passed a new vote of funds which served to perpetuate the problem.

Never was a problem less deserving of international aid—certainly not from the governments who have not considered lifting a finger even in charity for the tens of millions of innocent refugees driven or forced from their homes in all parts of the world—from the Finns in 1945, to the Biafrans in 1967-1969, to the Nilotic Negroes in Sudan and the ten million East Bengalis who fled to India while this book was in preparation. Except for the Germans in Czechoslovakia and Poland whom Hitler used as an excuse for war and who on his defeat were forced into the restricted area of postwar Germany—the Arabs are the only people whose refugees are the product of their own aggression. That aggression, moreover, was designed to nullify a resolution of the United Nations itself. And they are the only people, not excepting the Germans, who deliberately created a refugee problem with the intent to destroy another people.

It was no great problem for the Arab people, with its vast territory and resources, to absorb the 400,000 Arabs who left Israeli territory in Palestine. Even a million would have presented no insuperable problem. In fact, the vast majority of the refugees have been absorbed. The fantastically wealthy oil state of Kuwait has taken in large numbers of Palestinian Arabs who fled, as well as many Arabs who simply emigrated. From Judea and Samaria, the part of western Palestine controlled by Jordan in the years 1948-1967, some 400,000 Arabs emigrated voluntarily, without aid.

The guilt of collusion goes even deeper. The Western statesmen have turned a blind eye to the fact that the Arab states, when they failed to destroy the Jewish state at birth, expelled or forced out large numbers of the Jewish citizens of their own countries. Of 900,000 Jews who were so driven out—and whose property was confiscated—Israel took in and absorbed nearly three-quarters of a million.

All these Jews were private citizens, most of them members of families that had lived in those countries for many generations, some of them for hundreds of years before their Arab oppressors. A central ethnic feature of the whole of what is now called the Middle East and of the North African coast for more than 2,000 years has been the continuity there of Jewish life.

At the time of the rebirth of Jewish statehood in Palestine, approximately one million Jews were living in this area. Arab propagandists usually claim that the Arabs treated "their" Jews with tolerance. This is, generally speaking, untrue. But except in Yemen, it is only comparatively recently that the Arabs became the rulers who could decide on the "treatment" of Jews or of other minorities in their states. That treatment was sad and horrifying. Yet the oppression and discriminatory practices of the period before 1948 are for the most part insignificant in the light of what happened to the Jews of those countries after 1948.

Their agony was not uniform. In Yemen (where Jewish origins are lost in antiquity but certainly go back 2,600 years) the Jews lived for generations as second-class citizens in a primitive, medieval society. Restriction, discrimination, and humiliation had been their lot since the Middle Ages, an era which in Yemen has not yet come to an end. Though they were not expelled after 1948, the danger to their safety was so blatant that the exodus of the whole community was organized from Israel in one large-scale operation in 1949, with the passive consent of the Yemen authorities. Arriving at the transit camps by bus, on foot, or on donkeys from every corner of the mountainous and ragged kingdom, often after much harassment on the way, 48,000 Jews, most of them emaciated and sick and suffering from endemic eye diseases, were evacuated and flown to Israel in what became known as Operation Magic Carpet.

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communities in the Arab countries. Humiliation and discrimination were the Jews' daily lot, then violence and looting and murder, then the closing of the borders to prevent their escape, only to have them suddenly opened again to engender the inevitable hasty empty-handed flight—such in varying degrees of intensity was the pattern. Most gruesome of all was the Jewish experience in Iraq and Egypt which people in the West tend to treat as though they were civilized countries.

In Iraq, the range of repression of the Jews, growing in intensity from 1948, compares only with the worse excesses of the Nazi regime in the 1930's: violent searches, wanton vandalism, confiscation of goods, arbitrary extortion, often under torture; frequently, after release, rearrest and repetition of the process of threat, violence, and extortion. These "processes of law" were covered by the Iraqi Proclamation of Martial Law of May 1948. Its refinements were considerably extended two months later by the simple expedient of adding "Zionism" to the list of capital crimes. Under this amendment to the Iraqi Criminal Code it was sufficient for two Moslems to swear that they knew someone to be sympathetic to Zionism to render him liable to hanging. Though few hangings were in fact carried out, a wave of terror against the Jews followed. In consonance with the spirit of the time, Jews were ousted overnight from government service, deprived of licenses as doctors, and prevented from obtaining new clerical posts. The schools and universities were "cleansed" of Jewish students. Severe restrictions were imposed on Jewish merchants and banks.

For nearly two years this comprehensive persecution continued. At the same time any attempt by a Jew to leave the country for Israel was declared a capital offense. Sentences of hanging, long imprisonment, and—in most cases—confiscation of property were imposed on a large number of Jews who were thus caught. To round out the picture, even Jews who had left in earlier years were tried *in absentia* and sentenced.

Suddenly, in March 1950, the government hastily pushed through the Iraqi Parliament a law enabling Jews

to leave the country, provided they renounced their Iraqi citizenship. Emigrants were allowed to take only small cash sums; the property they left behind in Iraq, however, remained legally theirs. This omission was corrected a year later. In March 1951, after all but a handful of the 130,000 Jews of Iraq had registered for emigration and a substantial number had already left the country, the property of all of them was confiscated.

In Egypt before May 1948 the severities of economic depression and the ousting of people from hardly won positions and status in commerce and the professions were only theoretically mitigated for the Jewish community by the fact that in their early stage they were claimed to be directed against all foreigners and minorities. It was mainly Jews, however, who were the sufferers. Then a law was passed enabling the government to take over the property of anyone whose activities were deemed "prejudicial to the safety and security of the state" or who had been placed "under surveillance." Though this regulation could apply to everyone, it was in fact applied almost exclusively to Jews.

Indiscriminate arrest and imprisonment followed—as well as pogroms in the streets of Cairo, with their inevitable crop of murder and destruction. Here, too, in order to insure the maximum impact of terror, the gates were barred to departure and then suddenly opened in August 1949. Repression was relaxed until 1954, when Abdul Nasser, in the second phase of the "Egyptian revolution," took over power and brought down a new black night on the Jews of Egypt.

Thereafter the regime of oppression, discrimination, and confiscation in a framework of police surveillance spread and deepened. Introduction of the techniques of Nazi Germany was facilitated by the generous employment of former officials of the Nazi regime who had fled contribution. Arbitrary confiscation of property was legalized and emigration was encouraged. The policy was accompanied by automatic sequestration. These measures,

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too, were directed against a few foreigners, but the victims were predominantly Jews born in Egypt.

A conference of World Jewish organizations in January 1957 described how Jews were encouraged to leave Egypt

Large number of Jews of all nationalities have either been served with orders of expulsion, or were subjected to ruthless intimidation to compel them to apply for permission to depart. Hundreds who have reached lands of refuge have testified that they were taken in shackles from prison and concentration camps to board ships. In order to ensure that this deliberate creation of a new refugee problem should not evoke protests from international public opinion, documents proving expulsion were taken away from expellees before departure. Furthermore they were compelled to sign statements certifying that they left voluntarily. The victims of this barbaric process were deprived of their possessions.¹⁷

By 1960 some 80 percent of the 85,000 Jews in Egypt had emigrated, leaving most of their property behind.¹⁸ Most of the rest followed before the Six Day War, and a smaller number emigrated after 1967. Israel absorbed about 50,000.

In varying degrees of harshness some 900,000 human beings were arbitrarily driven or forced out from these and the remaining Arab countries—notably Syria, Algeria, and Morocco. Their number is thus about double that of the Arabs who abandoned their homes in Palestine in 1948. Some 700,000 of them were brought to Israel and were absorbed into the country. Almost all came penniless. Their property, which certainly far exceeded the

¹⁷ *Alliance Review*, New York April 1957.

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