

# TEACHING THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Revised second edition, November 1993

## PART III, LESSON THREE: FOUR TURNING POINTS

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### Teaching Strategy

- Students should be oriented to the concept of Historical Turning Points. They will do this by learning what happened in the four years featured in the Lesson. Use the Four Sevens gimmick to help them learn the dates. Question One in the Student Lesson (p. 45) lists specifics students should know.
- Review the maps of the Palestine Mandate (pre-1948), the UN partition plan of 1947, what Israel controlled after 1948, and what Israel controlled after 1967. Having these displayed somewhere in the room for others to see would be helpful. Someone might do a poster for extra credit.
- Feature population figures of Jews and Palestinians at various turning points. In the Jewish case, people are *coming in*, in the Palestinian case they are *going out*. Understanding the Palestinian situation can be enhanced if someone can generate a "Palestinian population map" to show where they live by proportion, across time. Perhaps a computer fanatic in class could generate a pie chart using the population figures provided. Alternately, a "Shifting Ratio" chart can show how the Jewish: Palestinian proportions changed across time (with dramatic shifts being indicators of fundamental historical turns; 1948 and 1967 would be critical). This could be put on a poster Time Line. Try to help students visualize the concept of political transformation as a measurable process.
- There are two Explanatory Models inherent in the Lesson: Ideology as a driving force, and Objective Conditions as a driving force. In a sense, these are opposing interpretations, but here we see that both contain some truth. Americans generally fall on the ideological side: we tend to believe historical outcomes occur because people of strong will and strong belief act on those beliefs. In other words, people debate and discuss, decide upon the "best" course of action, and act to modify or create reality. The alternative model suggests that people find themselves in situations they don't necessarily understand and didn't necessarily create, but they have to deal with the situation in front of them. Their actions and their beliefs are outgrowths of reality rather than causes of it. The determination of Menachem Begin to settle the Occupied Territories might be an example of the first model: Begin "created facts," to use an Israeli term. The Intifada as an outgrowth of Israeli occupation might be an example of the second: political radicalization grew out of a situation, not out of some cultural or ideological desire to be radical. This is probably too complex to use as the focus of a classroom discussion, but you might be able to bring out these different explanations during your discussion.
- There are various UN documents in this Lesson. Reading those is informative. Also, students can discuss the role of the UN and of international law. We saw in Lesson One that the League of Nations functioned almost as a branch of British and French foreign policy, not as an independent

neutral body. When students see the contrast between UN resolutions and UN policy, their first reaction is to think in moralistic terms, often using words like hypocrisy. Try to get them to think in terms of power: that nations do what they want to do and try to rationalize it later with moralistic statements of good motives. If we assume that power is the basis of politics, then why would the UN (or any government) say one thing but do something else? Would a dictatorship behave differently from democracy in this regard?

- The Jewish settlements are critical to current tensions and to future developments. You have maps of those settlements. Use them to show the difference between Labor and Likud (what Israelis call Strategic versus Political settlements). If you have a relief map of geographic Palestine, use that map to show how terrain is a factor in settlement. Use them to show how Jews and Arabs are now politically and physically face-to-face in a way that was not true in the past.

You should decide whether you want to discuss the role of US funds, public and private, in this process. A considerable amount of US financial support goes to Israel each year: nearly \$4.0 billion in regular aid, \$2.0 billion in subsidized loans per year for five years, about \$500 million a year in tax exempt monies raised through the United Jewish Appeal, \$1.2 billion in Israel bonds, etc. There are also sometimes aid supplements to assist with "special" problems such as the Lebanon War of 1982, and the near bankruptcy of the state in the mid-1980s, the Gulf War, and the redeployment of Israeli soldiers out of Gaza. US policy is that none of this money should be used to support settlements in the occupied territories; the Bush administration alleged that this provision was not being honored. They said American monies were "fungible" in that once they got into a resource pool any expenditure for settlements constituted an American subsidy for settlements regardless of which specific dollar was being spent. The Anti-Defamation League, in a letter to its supporters about US aid, has also written that "Israel's very survival is inextricably linked to America ... and how much it votes ... in the way of foreign aid."

If you can raise this issue (or if students raise it) you must be careful in how you address it. The issue is important because students are asked in Lesson Five to discuss what role the US should play in this conflict, specifically the use of our aid. Students are also citizens who should be knowledgeable about public affairs so they can make informed decisions. This information facilitates both goals. Also, the US and Israel came to a near break in relations in 1991 and 1992 over settlements and whether the US should support a \$10 billion loan through congressional guarantees. An organized effort by Jewish communities across the nation to influence Congress led President Bush to make a public statement against "lobbyists" who threaten the proposed peace talks. The President's statement upset Jews and caused some Israeli and Jewish leaders to call the President an anti-Semite. US funding and Israeli settlements are critically relevant to the whole conflict and should be discussed. At the same time, you must be careful about how you cover this sensitive topic.

- Several discussion questions ask students to think about the American interest and American motives. Most Americans are ideologically pro-Israel and anti-Arab. If you conduct these discussions, try to get students to analyze independent of their predispositions. Sometimes pointing out how people think can help students become detached from their ideology. Public opinion polls show that when asked if they are more supportive of Israel or the Arabs, Americans overwhelmingly support Israel. When asked if they support Israel or Arab country X, the balance becomes more equal, even when X is the Palestinians. What we learn from this is that Americans react ideologically to the word Arab, seeing it in hostile terms. We also have hostile views of Islam, seeing it as irrational, violent, and oppressive of women. As students generate ideas about American interests, put them on the board, with cultural and national interest points listed separately (and cultural support and cultural opposition also separate). Question 10 about possible

US military intervention in 1948 could theoretically generate the following points: It would cost American lives, we should spend the money on our cities, it would strengthen America against Russia, America is a world power that has an obligation to help in areas where there are crises, we should help the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, the Arabs were being driven out and we should have prevented that, the Arabs would have killed the Jews and we should not let them do that. These are a mixture of realpolitik/national interest reasons and cultural/moral reasons.

- Before teaching this, make sure you review the material from Lesson Four. It will be helpful and perhaps you can sneak in some coming information.
- Discussion Topic: The Intifada is triggered by a relatively minor traffic accident, in an atmosphere of extreme tension. Ask students to think of other cases where a minor incident triggers a mass reaction. Examples: In 1967 the Detroit riot (the most deadly in American history until 1992 in Los Angeles) was sparked by a routine police raid on an illegal after-hours drinking establishment (known locally as a Blind Pig). There was no police violence or abuse; the 1968 demonstrations that affected over 100 cities were sparked by the assassination of Martin Luther King; the 1970 student demonstrations that affected or closed most American campuses were sparked by killings at Kent State and Jackson State; finally, the 1992 Los Angeles riot was sparked by the jury decision in the Rodney King beating case.

## Teacher Background

Suppose someone were writing a book on Protracted Intra-National Struggles (i.e., civil wars) rooted in ethnic, religious, or national communities. The book might have chapters on Northern Ireland, South Africa, Sudan, India, Sri Lanka. It would also almost certainly include a chapter on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. In each case, the author would probably outline for the reader the structure of the conflict and how that structure had changed across the decades. Such an outline would be devoid of any ethical or moral arguments about who is right or wrong.

What follows is how such a book might describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The focus is mostly on what happened from the time of the creation of a Jewish state. The discussion also focuses upon Israelis and Palestinians rather than Israelis and Arabs (i.e., especially upon what happened inside historic Palestine). This means certain major events in Israeli-Arab history are barely mentioned (the Suez War of 1956 and the War of 1973), since they were Arab-Israeli clashes, not Israeli-Palestinian.

It helps students to give them some focus in their study. There are four key turning points in this struggle (each ends with a 7, making it easier). The dates are 1947, 1967, 1977, and 1987. At each of these points, the nature of the struggle itself changed in such a way as to be fundamentally different from how it was before. These are forks in the road when history took a different path. Furthermore, in three of the four cases the change occurred in a way that can be measured, something that frees us from deciding who is right or wrong. Measured patterns are also not dependent upon personalities--whether Shamir or Rabin is prime minister of Israel, or whether we like Arafat.

**A Point of Confusion:** Students tend to get confused about the term Palestine. There is reason for this confusion. In 1920 the British used the term Palestine to mean the area on both sides of the Jordan River including Jordan; from 1922 to 1948 Palestine meant everything west of the Jordan River, but not including Jordan; today it means the areas under Israeli occupation (though some people still use the term to mean the geographic area west of the Jordan River, including Israel and the Palestinian territories). In addition, the Occupied Territories have three parts: the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The maps show how these terms evolved.

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## THE PARTITION OF PALESTINE: 1947

In 1936 Palestinians began what is called the Arab Uprising against British colonial authority in Palestine. By 1939, 2287 Arabs, 520 Jews, and 140 Britons had been killed (many scholars believe the true number of Arab deaths is much higher than reported). Also, in what to Palestinians is a double tragedy, Palestinian factions turned on each other later in the revolt so that many Arab deaths were at the hands of other Arabs. In 1937, Britain set up a commission to make recommendations. The Peel Report concluded that Jews and Arabs could never live peacefully together in one state and suggested that Britain partition Palestine into two states, one Jewish, one Arab, with an international enclave around Jerusalem, including Bethlehem. The report casually suggested that a large number of Palestinians (up to 250,000) be forcefully removed from the area of the proposed Jewish state. (The area was the Galilee. The reason Galilee would be Jewish was to give the Jewish state control of the headwaters of the Jordan River, an issue of continuing controversy and tension between Israel and its neighbors, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria). The report was very controversial and before anything could be done World War II intervened. As the war ended, Jewish leaders in Palestine--upset that Britain had limited the number of Jewish refugees that could go to Palestine during the war--began a military campaign to expel Britain. Although much weakened by the war, Britain shifted 80,000 soldiers to Palestine to control the situation but they were not successful. Jewish resistance culminated in the 1946 attack on Jerusalem's King David Hotel, which was used by Britain as its military headquarters. Eighty-eight British soldiers and military employees were killed in this attack, carried out by Menachem Begin and his Irgun Zvai Leumi (Irgun for short) guerrillas.

It is hard to see how a war could have been avoided. As the British Foreign Minister said in February, 1947: "There are in Palestine about 1,200,000 Arabs and 600,000 Jews. For the Jews, the essential point of principle is creation of a sovereign Jewish state. For the Arabs, the essential point of principle is to resist, up to the last, establishment of Jewish sovereignty in any part of Palestine."

When the dust settled in January, 1949 a Jewish state was in place but no Arab state. Three things had happened to the land allocated to the Palestinian state: 1) during the fighting Israel had captured some of the Arab territory (for instance, the area around Lydda and Ramle--or Lod as it is now called). 2) Jordan held onto positions it had protected in what is today called the West Bank. In 1949 Jordan annexed the West Bank, granted full citizenship to the Palestinians therein, and changed its official name from Transjordan to Jordan. While some Palestinians agreed to this arrangement (for example the heads of the Nashashibi and Dajani families), other Palestinian nationalists were so offended by the annexation that they became bitter enemies of the Jordanian ruling family (the Hashemites). One Palestinian extremist assassinated King Abdullah in 1951; later militant groups attempted an uprising against King Hussein in 1970 (the famous Black September Uprising. 3) A small portion of Palestinian territory (the Gaza Strip) was held by Egypt after the fighting ceased and governed by it until 1967. Egypt never annexed Gaza. It was taken by Israel in the 1967 war and is today a part of the Israeli-Occupied Territory.

The creation of a Jewish state resolved one of the major human and political problems of the modern era: the statelessness of the Jewish people. Never again would a Jew under attack be without a place to go for refuge. By 1964, 888,000 Jews came into the new state. Some of these were refugees from World War II; some were pious Jews from Arab states who simply wanted to live in the Holy Land (this was true of many from Morocco); some were pressured to leave by the fact that local Jewish populations in the Arab world were somehow blamed for Israeli actions against Arabs and were now viewed as a possibly disloyal fifth column; and some were Jews getting away from oppressive governments that abused both Jewish and non-Jewish citizens (this was the case in Yemen where a feudal government was

still in power). To the surprise of some Zionist leaders, few Jews from America or Western Europe moved to Israel. Sixty-one percent of those who arrived between 1948-64 were from the Arab world. This created ethnic tensions between the Israeli leaders (almost entirely East European in origin) and the majority Sephardi population. Even today, the Sephardim are disproportionately in the working and lower middle classes. Few Sephardi politicians have achieved national prominence (David Levy was Foreign Minister under Shamir and Yitzhak Navon was President in the early 1980's. Both are of Moroccan origin).

### **A Difficult Topic: The Iraqi Jews:**

The case of the 130,000 Iraqi Jews deserves a special note. They were an ancient, successful community concentrated in Baghdad. The authoritarian Iraqi government was very hostile to the new Jewish state and its supporters and passed a law requiring that Jews who wished to emigrate renounce their citizenship in writing before March 1951 or lose the right to leave. No more than 10,000 did so, some wishing to remain in the land of their birth, others fearing a trap to smoke out Zionists. When bombs exploded in Jewish neighborhoods panic set in and all but 5,000 left. No one ever proved who set off those bombs -- Iraqi extremists are one possibility -- but radical Sephardic Jews in Israel charged that Israeli agents were responsible. The alleged motive was to panic the talented Iraqi Jews into going to Israel to swell the population and help build the new Jewish state. These charges were publicized by a variety of sources from David Hirst, respected correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, to a militant group called the Black Panthers. The Black Panthers say that European Jews dominate Israel and that Jews from the Arab world are less than second class citizens. While these are not mainstream views, they are heard in Israeli political debates even today. Black Panther leader Charlie Bitton is still active in Israeli politics and Foreign Minister David Levy (of Jewish Moroccan origin) temporarily stepped down in 1992, alleging that racist Western Jews in Likud treated him like a "monkey" who just got out of a tree.

The charges of Israeli complicity in the bombings have never been proven and one Israeli politician named in print as one of the alleged bombers won a libel case against the reporter. Still, the allegations reveal serious tensions that sometimes exist between Western and non-Western Jews. Since Jews of non-Western Sephardic origin constitute an absolute majority of Israeli Jews, the issue must be treated seriously but with sensitivity. Many Americans who have never heard these charges and who think of 1948 in terms of Jewish survival find it inconceivable that Jews could do such things to other Jews and are distressed by the very mention of accusations. At the same time, many Arab intellectuals are aware of the allegations and grant them credibility. Historians tend to dance around the legal issue by reporting the charges and avoiding conclusions of what is true. This is probably not a topic to raise, but if it comes up, perhaps the best approach would be to summarize the issues, say the allegations are denied by those involved but are still believed by some accusers, and point out that today the real significance of the debate is that it reveals deep fissures within the Israeli political system between Western and non-Western Jews.

For more information on the Sephardic Jews of Israel, see Shlomo Swirsky, *The Oriental Majority*. For information on the Black Panthers, see Schnall, *Radical Dissent in Israel*. For summaries of the bombing allegations, see Segev in the bibliography and David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*.

### **Jewish Cultural Groups**

The Jews of European origin are called Ashkenazi, the Jews from the Arab word Sephardi (in both cases the plural is formed by adding the letter "m" to the end). In meaning, Ashkenazi refers to Germany and Sephardi refers to Spain. Both words come from references in the Bible which the rabbis decided

referred to those two countries. Historically, the Jews of Germany were the most advanced Jews in Europe and spread their teaching and German dialect (Yiddish) throughout the continent; likewise, the Jews of Spain were the most advanced Jews in the Arab world and spread their Spanish dialect (Ladino) throughout the Arab world. There are other Jewish cultural groups (Persian for example) but the overwhelming number of all world Jews are from one of these two cultural sub-groups. Many Americans are not aware that Spain was once part of the Arab world, indeed, at one time perhaps the most advanced part of the Arab world. Muslims and Jews were expelled in 1492 when Spain was reunited under Catholic leadership and the power of the Arab leaders--called Moors--was broken. The last Arab province was Andalusia (or Granada) in the south.

## **Palestinian Refugees**

There is intense rhetoric involving the tragic events of 1948. Palestinians have argued that there is a systematic campaign of mass expulsion by Israelis. Israelis have alleged that the refugees left of their own will, often with Israelis begging them to stay. They also say there was a plan among Arab states to move the Palestinians out during the fighting with the understanding that after the Jews had been massacred, the Palestinians would be allowed to return and take the vacated property. Claims that there were radio broadcasts from Arab capitals urging Arabs to flee Palestine have never been documented by independent scholarship. Regarding mass expulsion, this was definitely included in Britain's 1937 partition plan and was included in Britain's Labour Party platform of 1945.

Recent Israeli scholarship shows several patterns of departure: 1. When the fighting began many wealthy families temporarily moved women and children across the border for reasons of safety. 2. Many poorer Palestinians fled the fighting or went to visit relatives in Jordan or elsewhere. 3. There were some forced evacuations. Around Lydda and Ramle 50,000 persons were forced at gunpoint to leave. Yitzhak Rabin acknowledged participating in this forced evacuation. 4. After the April 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, there was mass panic. That was when 254 Palestinians--mostly unarmed women, children, and old men were killed at night in their village (the Israelis lost four). The assault was led by Menachem Begin's Irgun; panic came upon Palestinians amidst rumors that more massacres were to occur. Yigael Allon reported that he encouraged such rumors. (See Segev and Morris.) See also the memoirs of Golda Meir and Menachem Begin for differing Israeli perspectives. Meir says that in April, 1948 (when the massacre of Deir Yassin occurred) she personally "stood on the beach in Haifa for hours and literally beseeched the Arabs of that city not to leave" (p. 279); Begin's memoirs on the same time says reports of the Deir Yassin attack produced "a maddened, uncontrollable stampede. Of the about 800,000 Arabs who lived on the present territory of the State of Israel, only some 165,000 are still there. The political and economic significance of this development can hardly be overestimated" (p. 164). Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, supports an expulsion thesis. Professor Walid Khalidi (*Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn, 1988) analyzes and reproduces Israeli military documents (Plan Dalat and Plan Gimel) that address these topics.

The UNRWA uses the following definition of refugee for its administrative purposes: "A Palestinian refugee is a person whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the conflict in 1948, and who, as a result of this conflict, lost both his home and his means of livelihood and took refuge in one of the countries where UNRWA provides relief. Refugees within this definition and the direct descendants of such refugees are eligible for Agency assistance if they are: registered with UNRWA; living in the area of UNRWA operations; and in need."

## **Palestinians in Arab Lands**

In Jordan today perhaps 60% of the population are of Palestinian origin, and perhaps 20% of these live

in refugee camps. In Lebanon, perhaps 10% of the population (400,000) are Palestinian. Even in the West Bank about 40% are refugees and in tiny Gaza the figure approaches 90%. The children and grandchildren of refugees have refugee status. Although most refugees are self-supporting (even in refugee camps), many still live in poverty and are dependent upon the United Nations for assistance. In many places they are politically vulnerable to hostile elements inside their host countries. Many Palestinians have been killed in Lebanon and Jordan, and the Israeli Occupied Territories. And as mentioned, only in Jordan has there been a broad grant of citizenship, so mostly they have little political voice and remain at the pleasure of their host country. During and after the Gulf War, 90% of those in Kuwait (over 350,000 in 1990) were expelled or forced to leave and not allowed to return or remain in liberated Kuwait. The Kuwaiti Palestinians were perhaps the most educated and wealthiest of all Palestinian communities. Note: a large percentage of the Palestinians do not want to accept another citizenship since it might suggest their claim to citizenship in a Palestinian state was being abandoned. The PLO has put its energies into getting internationally-recognized travel documents and non-discriminatory residency rights for refugees, rather than citizenship.

As a rule those in camps are politically very militant. In 1970 they were involved in an uprising against King Hussein. This "Black September" uprising (so called because many Palestinians were killed in it) prompted the United States to prepare for military intervention to save King Hussein when Syria intervened on the side of the Palestinians. In Lebanon, the camps have likewise been the center of political militancy since 1970 when refugee soldiers from Jordan moved into Lebanon. In 1982 two camps--Sabra and Shatilla--were the center of brutal massacres conducted by Lebanese Maronite (Christian) forces at a time when the camps were under Israeli military jurisdiction. The Israeli Kahan Commission blamed key Israeli leaders for complicity in these killings for their failure to act to prevent them. Estimates are that more than 800 Palestinians were killed, with no losses to attacking soldiers (some estimates of Palestinian deaths reach 2,400). These massacres occurred after Palestinian guerrillas had been evacuated to Tunis under an international agreement negotiated and guaranteed by the United States. Marines went into Beirut twice: first to oversee the evacuation, second after the Sabra and Chatilla massacres.

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## **THE SIX DAY WAR: 1967**

### **Results of Occupation**

This unit has steered away from stories of violence experienced by both sides, which may be inflammatory and detract from the goal of analysis and understanding. However, there are some aspects of the post 1967 occupation that are important for students to know since they have shaped the perceptions of each side. Since 1967 the Israeli government has taken control, through various methods, of land that was owned by Palestinians. Usually this has occurred without due compensation, and sometimes with forged documents. Palestinians often appeal against the confiscation of their land in Israeli courts, but the law is written in such a way that they have seldom prevailed. Over 52% of the land in the West Bank and close to 40% of the land in Gaza has come under Israeli control since 1967. This has seriously affected the Palestinians' ability to earn a living since farmland that used to be available is now gone. In addition, houses were demolished if there was a "suspected" culprit. (The house could be blown up *before* a trial took place; recently the rules have changed so that a legal process should take place first.)

Immediately after the end of hostilities, there were many forced expulsions of Palestinians to other countries. Most of the prominent leadership was included in the ouster (the Mayor of Jerusalem, the

President of a University, the Head of the Islamic Waqf, an activist Episcopal priest [later a bishop], newspaper publishers, doctors and lawyers). They were spirited across the border, without a judicial process. Israel says that they posed a threat to the security of the state. Expulsion is a highly emotional issue for Palestinians.

In addition, there have been many instances of what the Palestinians consider "collective punishments," such as the closure of schools, and the long curfews, some for days at a time, which means that those with jobs cannot get to their jobs, those with farm animals cannot feed them, and those with crops cannot care for or harvest them. The Palestinians (and almost the entire world community) claim that the deeds mentioned above are all forbidden by international law (specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which Israel has signed). Israel claims that, while they support the Geneva Convention, it does not apply to their occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

It is important for students to remember that these problems started immediately with the occupation in 1967, not with the Intifada of 1987. By now there are many Palestinian families who have experienced personal tragedies. There are likewise many Israeli families who have reason to be afraid of Palestinians. Almost all young men and women in Israel serve in the reserves, and many have spent time in the West Bank and Gaza, where they experience daily hostility. Many come back with nightmares, and Israeli authorities are concerned at the increased amount of wife and child abuse, divorce, substance abuse, murder and suicide that has entered Israeli society, presumably because of the experiences of the soldiers enforcing the occupation. Similar problems are evident in Palestinians society.

## **Who Started the 1967 War?**

There is still acrimonious debate over who started the war. This is no doubt about the first strike: Israel attacked and destroyed the Egyptian air force on the ground. As one Arab observer said, "It was not a six-day war. It was a six-hour war. The Egyptian air force was destroyed by noon of the first day and then it was a five-and-a-half day mopping up operation."

It was an exaggeration, but it made the point.

The best we can do now is to summarize the issue and the perspectives of various combatants. In addition to issues listed elsewhere, three other factors are sometimes cited. Let us call them Pushing and Shoving, Verbal Belligerence, and Possible Israeli Territorial Desires.

**Pushing and Shoving:** Two Events are often cited as setting the stage for war: Nasser's decision to remove UN forces from the Sinai and his decision to close the Straits of Tiran (the mouth of the Red Sea) at Sharm-el-Sheikh to Israeli shipping. To Nasser these were matters of Egyptian sovereignty: Egypt owned the Sinai and should not have UN troops in its territory. Also, the mouth of the straits were Egyptian territorial waters and Egypt should not be forced to allow ships from an enemy country (Israel) to pass through. To Nasser, these limitations were leftovers from the 1956 Suez war. In the nationalist environment of the day. Egypt considered them imperialist in nature. And, as Egypt pointed out, Israel had refused in 1956 to allow UN peacekeeping troops to be positioned on its side of the border.

From Israel's point of view, a closure of the Straits would cut Israel off from its oil source in Iran and from much of its trade with East Africa and the Orient. This was not a fatal blow since most Israeli trade came through its Mediterranean ports and shipments could be rerouted. But closure and rerouting would cost money and would be a blow to Israeli prestige. Israel also noted that under international law, the Straits were to be open waters. Nasser's decision to order UN forces out of the Sinai and to seize Sharm-el-Sheikh was thus seen as hostile.

Palestinian *fedayeen* (commandos) associated with Fatah had also been conducting raids into Israeli territory from Egypt and Jordan. The Egyptian-controlled PLO was verbally aggressive but was not primarily a military body. The creation of Fatah by Yasser Arafat and others changed this situation and introduced a meaningful armed struggle into Palestinian strategy. Israel reacted to Fatah strikes with strong raids into Gaza and Jordan. Since Israel blamed Fatah's host countries for the raids, their retaliation often struck national armies rather than Palestinian positions. Some of these strikes were criticized even in Israel for being stronger than necessary. These ongoing clashes caused loss of life on all sides and escalated tension. In the north, a face-off occurred. In the 1948 armistice created a neutral zone between Israel and Syria which was not to be unilaterally changed. This zone was at the base of Syria's Golan province bordering Israel's Huleh Valley. Israel had violated the agreement by introducing settlers into the zone. The Syrians had violated it by shelling the Huleh Valley and the more distant Galilee. Both parties claimed to be acting defensively but both were contributing to an environment that made war more likely.

**Verbal Belligerency:** In the weeks before the war, verbal attacks escalated. On the Israeli side, there were statements suggesting that Israel had decided to attack Damascus itself. A May 12 UP story reported that "a highly placed Israeli source said here today that if Syria continued the campaign of sabotage in Israel it would immediately provoke military action aimed at overthrowing the Syrian regime." The story of an anticipated Israeli attack on Syria was widely reported in the Arab world and was given credibility in Moscow, although not in the US. Credible or not, it put pressure on Nasser, the Arab Champion, to rally to Syria's defense. Nasser cited a desire to defend Syria as a reason why Egypt mobilized; the decision of Syria and Egypt to join their armies under one command was linked to this. For his part, Nasser made several statements that contributed to an environment of escalation. He said May 26 that the goal of the coming battle "will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel." On other occasions he spoke of returning to the situation before 1948. (See Laqueur, 89 and 380). Also, Egypt has long felt that having the Negev under Israeli control split the Arab world (Egypt and Jordan) and should be reversed. On the other hand Yitzhak Rabin, head of Israeli forces in 1967, told *Le Monde* later that "I do not think Nasser wanted war. His forces were not sufficient. He knew it and we knew it."

Did Egypt really hope to reverse the 1948 creation of a Jewish state or even "drive the Jews into the sea"? Did Israel plan to attack Damascus itself and overthrow the Syrian regime? Certainly all parties contributed to an environment of fear in which others were seen as mobilizing for some apocalyptic assault. In terms of students, this might be a good point how militant words can achieve a life of their own and can drive events beyond rational thinking.

**Allegations of Israeli Territorial Designs:** Israelis have insisted that in 1967 they were forced into war and took land defensively. But not all Israelis were reluctant to expand their boundaries. The question historians must answer is whether Israel *wanted* to acquire the land they ended up holding: the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, part of the Golan province, and the headwaters of the Jordan River, not to mention the west bank of the Jordan River itself. Certainly Israeli leaders felt their 1948 borders left them with scant breathing space and inadequate security. David Ben-Gurion had suggested in pre-Suez deliberations in 1956 that Jordan be partitioned "with the West Bank going as an autonomous region to Israel and the east bank to Iraq. Lebanon would lose its territory up to the Litani River to Israel and certain other parts would go up to Syria with the remaining territory becoming a Christian state. A pro-Western leader would be installed in Damascus. Israel would also take Sharm-el-Sheikh at the tip of the Sinai peninsula from Egypt." (Neff, 1981: 342-43). Smith adds that in 1967 Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol "if possible wanted to gain control of the headwaters of the Jordan River" (p. 201).

There were also Israelis motivated by religio-nationalist ideology who felt that land beyond the border belonged to the Jewish people as a birthright. Isaac says that the Revisionists (today Likud) "had never

fully accepted the boundaries established by the 1949 armistice" and retained the motto "Israel on both sides of the Jordan". Begin's Herut party as late as 1965 had an election plank that "the right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel in its historical completeness is an eternal and inalienable right," and Begin joined the ruling coalition just before the war. The famous "Zionist Map" used by Jewish leaders during post-World War I negotiations to define their proposed boundaries included all the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, north to include Lebanon's Litani River and Syria's Mount Hermon, east into Jordan up to the desert. Isaac says the "greatest disappointment" of these early Zionists was the loss of the Litani, for which Zionist leaders fought most stubbornly since it was to provide the water which could be channeled to make the deserts bloom and to create the power for industrial development." Until 1948 Shamir's party, now part of Likud, included the boundaries of Genesis 15:18 (the so-called Nile-to-Euphrates promise) in its platform (See Isaac, chapter 2).

**The Case of Jordan:** A final issue is the role of Jordan. Jordan was the weak sister of the region, a small country surrounded by powerful neighbors. Nasser had been openly hostile to the Jordanian regime, speaking of King Hussein with contempt and questioning whether Jordan even had the right to exist. Jordan's inclination was to remain neutral, which it did at the beginning of the war. But Jordan had a defense treaty with Egypt and was obligated to enter the conflict. This entry cost them control of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Three interesting anecdotes are relevant: First, the Israelis asked Jordan to stay neutral and said that had Jordan stayed out they would not have seized Jordanian territory, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Second, King Hussein spoke to Nasser by bugged telephone to ask how the war was going. Nasser told him that Egyptian forces were advancing on all fronts and that the Israelis were falling back. In fact, Nasser knowingly lied. At the time he spoke the Egyptian air force was destroyed and Egyptian units were being crushed in the Sinai. Jordan entered a war that had already been lost. Third, King Hussein was asked in the mid-1970s what he felt was the greatest mistake of his reign. He cited two: entering the 1967 war, which cost him East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and staying out of the 1973 war, which denied him the right to be part of the post-war disengagement accords.

There is no true answer to the question: Who was responsible for the war? We can only observe that there were a mix of motives on all sides, including legitimate defense and definite aggressiveness, and that an environment of belligerency and fear led to a war. Rather than deciding who was responsible, the unit focuses upon how this war between Israel and its Arab neighbors changed the nature of the domestic conflict between Israelis and Palestinians by reuniting historic Palestine, and putting Israelis and Palestinians face to face under a single regime.

Other sources: Walter Laqueur, *Road to War*; Donald Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem*; David Bowen and Laura Drake, "The Syrian-Israeli Border Conflict, 1949-1967," *Middle East Policy* (V1, 1992).

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## **BEGIN BECOMES PRIME MINISTER: 1977**

The events of 1977 are called "the earthquake" by Israelis. The election of that year was won by Menachem Begin's nationalist Likud party. Begin had always been considered too militant and extremist for most Israelis. During Knesset debates David Ben-Gurion would not even refer to Begin by name but would speak of "the member sitting next to Mr. Burg."

Leaving aside what Israeli politicians call each other, Begin was different from previous Prime Ministers in his commitment to hold onto the Occupied Territories permanently, and to settle them with Jewish populations. He felt the land belonged to the Jewish people and always referred to it as Eretz Israel. His

followers vigorously resist the term "Occupied Territories." In cooperation with Ariel Sharon and various religious militants (the best known being Gush Emunim--the Block of the Faithful) he began an aggressive settlement campaign that by 1990 had taken half of the land of the West Bank, 1/3 of Gaza, and had placed 129,000 Jews in and around East Jerusalem in traditionally Palestinian land. (Source: US State Department). Jews also returned to traditional Jewish neighborhoods in old Jerusalem and Hebron.

Settlements had started under the Labour government before 1977 but Labour policy was philosophically different from Likud. While Labour had sometimes cooperated with religious settlers, the thrust of their policy had focused upon security settlements along the Jordan River and on the strategic high points in the West Bank and the Golan province. Labour had carefully avoided the dense population centers of the West Bank and Gaza. For more information on this transition from Labour to Likud, see Ibrahim Mattar, "Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn, 1981.

Likud placed settlements in the very centers of population, particularly in the line running from Jerusalem north through Ramallah to Nablus, and in the line running from Jerusalem south past Bethlehem to Hebron. Settlements were often positioned in "bloks" (Gush in Hebrew) to surround key cities or to be on key roads. This was intended to facilitate military and territorial control. (On the settlement map in the student edition, look at settlements near the cities of Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem, and at the roads between key cities.) In the event of an uprising every road would be cut off and every Palestinian population center surrounded. As Raphael Eitan (former head of the Israeli military, now head of the Tsomet party) said, Palestinians would be like cockroaches in a bottle.

Likud also began putting settlements into the Muslim and Christian Quarters of Old Jerusalem. Labour had expanded the borders of the city well beyond what they had ever been and had created an outer ring of settlements around the city. This in itself had been very controversial. But by traditional agreement among the religious groups, each Quarter of Jerusalem had some measure of self-government, and residence was limited to members of that religious community. Exceptions had to be approved by the religious leaders. Labour had not violated this "Status Quo Agreement," as it is called. But Likud had used religious militants funded by government monies (and often private American contributions) to acquire numerous properties in the Old City. Sometimes "purchases" were fraudulent, with the Israeli purchaser knowingly "buying" from a collaborator who did not have title to the property. These acquisitions were confrontational and led to an escalation of tensions with Muslim and Christian Palestinians.

To Americans the religious nature of the Quarters may seem discriminatory but that is not the logic of the agreement. Religion in Jerusalem is not just a matter of theology but also of community. While we Americans think of individual rights, in Jerusalem they are also concerned about *group* rights. Such rights have been traditionally recognized and are maintained by law. Because of the special nature of Jerusalem (holy to three faiths) cooperation is required and each group has to have areas that it runs in its own way. Someone who wanted to live in another Quarter (for example a Muslim who wanted to move into the Christian Quarter) could petition the Christian authorities for a waiver. Waivers are granted with the proviso that when property is re-sold the authorities have right of first refusal.

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## **THE INTIFADA: 1987**

On December 8, 1987 in Gaza an auto accident occurred that took the lives of four Palestinians. An Israeli vehicle crashed into a crowd of people in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp. Palestinians were

convinced that the crash had been intentional and even reported that the driver had shouted at the crowd as he drove into them. Police investigation of the incident concluded that it was a legitimate accident with no malicious intent. In a sense the cause of the accident is irrelevant. When Trotsky started his famous revolutionary newspaper in the beginning of the century he named it *Iskra* (The Spark) for good reason. He said that when tension in a society reaches a certain level a small incident of no true significance can be the incident that sparks an uprising. People will point to the incident as if it were causal, but it is not. The political environment and the level of social injustice are the key explanatory factors.

Intifada is pronounced in-tee-fah-da, with the emphasis on the third syllable. The word means "shaking off." A Palestinian poet used the following example to explain the root meaning of the word: imagine you are sitting in a chair and someone comes up behind you and puts his arms around your arms as if to restrain you. You jump up and throw your arms out to break the person's grip. This could be called Intifada. Ironically, the word was used in 1984 to describe the revolt of certain Fatah military commanders against Arafat's leadership. Palestinians also call it "The Blessed Intifada". It is called this because it came at a time of much despair when Palestinian leaders had been driven out of the region into Tunis, when the Shamir government was pressing ahead with land confiscations and Jewish settlements, when America and Europe seemed willing to go along with what was happening, and when the Arab leaders seemed more interested in the Iran-Iraq war than Palestine. It was also admired because of the fact that Palestinian youth play a major role in resistance activities, and that initially at least, the Intifada relied upon mass protests rather than guerrilla attacks.

The Intifada is one of the critical events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Future historians will look back on it as a major turning point. Several things came out of the Intifada.

1. Power in the Palestinian nationalist movement was shifted away from the armed groups overseas to the leadership in the Occupied Territories. Local leaders were far more realistic than some of the exiled leaders.
2. There were five major parties or groups among local Palestinians: Arafat's Fatah, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Naif Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Communist Party, and the Islamic Groups (mostly HAMAS and Islamic Jihad). For the first time, these came together into The Unified Leadership of the Uprising (although the Islamic groups soon dropped out). The Unified Leadership began to issue "leaflets" that would appear mysteriously in towns advising activists on theory and strategy.
3. Radicalized populations: Previous resistance had been led by the "usual suspects"--unionists, student activists, urban militants. Merchants, rural people, and intellectuals had been less involved. The Intifada changed that. The merchants became one of the most supportive of all groups, holding regular strikes. Christians and other Palestinian minorities got involved, and the villages became the hard core. The settlement policy in particular had convinced all farmers that they were personally threatened. Their lost lands, and the threat of lost lands radicalized them so that the Intifada became a national uprising.
4. In November, 1988 the PNC (Palestinian National Congress--the parliament of the Palestinian people and the major legislative body of the PLO) met in Algiers. After some debate the delegates voted 85-15% to accept the partition of Palestine based on UN Resolution 181, recognize Israel, renounce terrorism, and call for a negotiated settlement based on UN Resolution 242 and 338. They also declared Palestine to be an independent state. Various officials said that the territory of the state would be the West Bank and Gaza and that its capital would be East Jerusalem. While some radicals opposed this resolution--arguing that Israel was not serious about negotiating and

would never agree to the partitioning of Palestine--the vote passed and the radicals agreed not to resist with violence. The US quickly opened up dialogue with the PLO (broken off some months later when armed Palestinians landed on a beach near Tel Aviv).

5. While Israel is strong enough to defeat any coalition of enemy states the Intifada showed that Israel cannot control a mass Palestinian population that does not accept its authority. In short, the Palestinian territories are not governable, by Israel or Jordan. In 1988 Jordan repudiated any claim to the West Bank. The Israelis also soon came to realize the costs of occupation. At one time, there were more soldiers in the territories than it took to conquer them in 1967, and there were more soldiers based in Gaza than there were Jewish settlers. The financial costs of the occupation soared; serious US-Israeli tensions emerged over the settlements; hundreds of Israeli soldiers protested, and human rights groups criticized Israeli policies, as did some Jewish groups. Measurable social tensions increased among both Israelis and Palestinians, including spouse abuse, substance abuse, violence, suicide.
6. In 1990-91 the Gulf War occurred and in October 1991, talks began at Madrid that brought together Israelis, Syrians, Jordanians, Palestinians, and Lebanese. Holding such talks was a major US policy goal and would not have started without vigorous and persistent urging by the US; however, they are not entirely the result of American pressure. (The talks are of two types: bilateral between Israel and Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestinians, and multilateral on five functional issues: water, refugees, environment, economic development, and security.) The Israelis and Palestinians both have reasons for being interested in a settlement. While the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are not powerful enough to expel the Israeli army, they are at the same time too powerful to be defeated. The occupation has become costly to Israel. Constant mobilization has damaged the economy; the conflict has polarized Israeli society into right and left wings and has generated domestic tensions; violence-prone Israeli vigilante groups defy the government; it has damaged Israel's overseas alliances. It is a mistake to think Israel is now negotiating because of US pressure. Its own agenda is a factor as well.
7. Population of Jerusalem: In 1967 there were 266,000 people of whom 74% were Jewish; in 1990 there are 555,000 people of whom 72% are Jewish. Jews in East Jerusalem have gone from zero in 1967 to 135,000 in 1990. In the Old City itself there are 28,100 people including 2,600 Israelis in the Jewish Quarter, 19,000 Muslims, and 6,500 Christians.

## **A Problem and a Resource**

American culture appears to have exceptional levels of anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice, complicated by the fact that few Americans have Muslim or Arab friends. If you find this in your class, you might want to use the enclosed story by Wafa Unis Shuraydi on page 52. She was a refugee from Lebanon in the 1970s and is now a teacher in Dearborn, Michigan. Her simple yet profound story shows the natural modesty of Muslim girls and also the problems of Arab immigrants in America. Since she writes initially from the perspective of a girl of 15, your students can relate to her.

## **Human Rights Issues**

Numerous groups monitor human rights issues throughout the world. Amnesty International (AI), which won a Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts, is one of these. AI reports serious human rights violations by Israeli authorities in the Occupied Territories. Below are some major areas of AI concern with explanatory discussion. The students have an excerpt from the report, and some data.

**Administrative Detention:** These are persons arrested without ever being charged or even told that they violated a law. Many are political leaders. Some are professors, teachers, peace activists, reporters, doctors, union leaders. AI considers many of these to be Prisoners of Conscience, a special category that they reserve for people who have committed no crime but are under arrest for exercising rights (such as disagreeing with government authorities) that are considered normal under international law.

**Demolitions and Sealings:** When a member of a family commits an act of sabotage or violence, authorities often demolish or seal the home of that person. (Sealing consists of cementing up doors and windows.) AI considers this a human rights violation since other members of the family did not commit whatever act occurred. About 90 demolitions/sealings occurred. There is an Israeli human rights group that protests demolitions by sending support delegations and assistance--blankets, food, etc.--to the families of those whose homes are destroyed.

**Deportations:** Deporting Palestinians to other countries is considered unacceptable by AI. The Fourth Geneva Agreement (1949), which was signed by Israel although Israel denies that it applies to its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, specifies that occupying powers should not deport populations. Observers who hear Israeli militants speak of mass expulsions fear that initial expulsions (for example the 415 deported in late 1992) might be just the beginning. To Palestinians, expulsion is their psychic nightmare drawn from the experience of 1948. They react to talk of expulsion the way Japanese may react to talk of nuclear war.

**Curfew Days:** Frequently whole towns or even whole provinces will be put under curfew so that people cannot go out of their homes. During the 1991 Gulf War almost the whole of the Occupied Territories was under curfew for five weeks, almost uninterrupted. Such curfews are exceptional hardships on families, who could not plant or harvest, feed livestock, work, buy food, attend school, or attend to medical emergencies.

**Intra-Communal fighting:** According to Palestinian sources, 170 Palestinians were killed by other Palestinians in various disputes. Israelis put the number considerably higher. Some of these are executions of alleged collaborators believed to work secretly for Israeli security forces. (In the past, Israel has acknowledged that about half of those killed did indeed have links to their security forces.) Other killings are factional disputes between supporters of different parties or military groups. The PLO has condemned these killings and tried to mediate between the factions.

**Population Figures:** Population figures in the Student Section, p. 46, may be confusing. Here is an explanation of the sources.

The first three rows are from the *Israeli Statistical Abstract* of 1992. The total population figures of 5,090,000 includes Israel proper and a combined (East and West) Jerusalem total of 578,000. Israel says 18.1% of its total population is non-Jewish and in Jerusalem 28% is non-Jewish. They say there are 130,000 Christians in all of Israel, including Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem itself there are 14,700 Christians. Since the *Statistical Abstract* does not distinguish between East and West Jerusalem, the East/West figures are extrapolations from other sources. Figures for East Jerusalem are from the Foundation for Middle East Peace (July, 1992).

Israel estimates there are 1.6 million Palestinians in the Occupied Territories (not including Jerusalem). They estimate there are 120,000 Jews in the West Bank and 3,300 in Gaza. These figures exclude East Jerusalem. In the table, estimates for Israelis in the Occupied Territories are from the US State Department (1992). A study by Israel's Peace Now organization (1992) puts the West Bank figure at 115,000. Peace Now says 270,000 overseas Palestinians also have legal rights to return. These are not in

the above totals.

The State Department says Israel controls 50% of West Bank land and 33% of Gaza. Peace Now says the figures are 60% and 35%. Both studies exclude East Jerusalem.

## **The Bak'aa Refugee Camp in Jordan**

**Notes from a Visit** Six camps were created after the 1967 war including Bak'aa. It is the biggest in the Middle East. About 80% are Refugees from 1948, the rest Displaced Persons from 1967. Many were forced out twice, from Israel in 1948 then from the West Bank in 1967. Bak'aa was built to hold 28,000 but has 100,000. It is Jordan's fourth largest city. People originally lived in tents but the Germans gave money to build shelters. Each family has 100 square meters. UNRWA provides 9 years of education in 16 schools. Jordan runs four secondary schools. There are 15,000 students in primary and 5,000 in secondary schools. There are two health centers: one for mothers and children, one for adults. There is a Physical Therapy center with colorful Disney characters on the walls. UNRWA covers 75% of the health bill. The camp has dirt roads and open sewers. There are many flies. A sewage system and electricity are under construction (I was told this in 1967). There is free lunch for kids under 6 and for older students in need. The size of the camp is 1.4 square kilometers. About 1000 families are on rations (average family size is 7.7). Those with jobs get no benefits. Many residents are from Nablus, Jerusalem, Jericho, Gaza. In the camp they have arranged themselves by village of origin. There are fourth generation refugees in the camp. If there were a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, Displaced Persons could return under international law but not Refugees, who are from Israel proper. Most houses have 3 rooms--2 Bedrooms, kitchen, open courtyard. Five thousand of the inhabitants are Gulf War refugees.

Streets are narrow and unpaved, about ten feet across except for the main street which is filled with businesses. The residential streets have open drains in the middle. Drains are about 6 inches across and 3-4 inches deep, probably for dish water, etc. The camp is on the side of mountain so the streets are hilly. During the rains the roads turn to mud. The main street is filled with cars, people, carts. There is a cacophony of sounds. It would be exciting and fun if not so tragic. Shops I saw: onions, bicycles, welding, tapes, books, TV repair, flour, clocks, lottery, shoes, video. Most stores are probably no more than 10 feet x 20 feet, with doors that pull down and lock at night.

People have Jordanian citizenship and work inside and outside the camp. UN programs are run by Palestinians. Busses take people to cities to work. When people get wealthy, they often remain so there are a range of classes in the camp. They came as communities and want to remain as communities. We note several gold shops. There is no obvious security except locking the door at night. The family and religious structures are strong so there is no crime, robbery, drugs, alcohol, illegitimacy. As we walk past the police station, the officers are playing soccer.

Small kids follow us around, laughing and asking us to take their picture. No one asks for money (but every child wants a ball-point to practice writing). We visit some houses. Most have popular pictures of Mecca or Jerusalem. One friendly woman offers us tea. One family has 8 persons. The mother works for the Ministry of Health as a cleaner. In another case two shelters are joined together and hold four families with 25 people. There is no running water, electricity, or toilet. The door is metal, hangs crooked, and does not close tightly. This is not a problem in the summer, but last winter Amman had two feet of snow. This house would be totally unprotected. In one house a very old man with a naughty laugh says that since his wife died he has been alone. Would my student marry him? Everyone laughs. Another old man walks up to us in some distress, motions to the surrounding situation and repeats Haram, Haram, Haram, which means sin.

I note the absence of hostility and ask our UN escort. He says people want a settlement and are not hostile. But I notice some boys get chased away, and one escort says "you are not safe among these people" without elaborating. Later, a lady is very upset. A friend says "She thinks you are Jews and says she wants peace." At one point a resident is discussing the camps when someone walks up. He looks like someone from an old gangster movie--thin face, unsmiling, sunglasses, cheap suit. The resident begins to speak glowingly of the wonderful plans the government has for Bak'aa--education, roads, electricity. It is obvious this person is secret police--mukhabarat. A friend says, "you go to the camp on your tour, then I will take you." I suspect we are getting a sanitized version. I ask a resident if there was fighting here in 1970 during the Black September uprising and he says nervously "of course!" The government does not trust these people and probably has some under detention or surveillance.

The government has a department of Palestinian Affairs. There is an elected camp Council. We met Mr. Abdul-Hadi, Council head and a PNC member. He is a distinguished gentleman in traditional robe. Speaks no English. He tells us: 1) Palestinians do not dislike Americans but dislike their policies 2) There is a double standard. UN Resolutions on Iraq are implemented but not on Palestine. The US vetoes efforts to help Palestinians. No American would sacrifice his home to foreigners. 3) The Gulf War was costly for America and will cost more in the future. Does the US administration have the courage to do what Eisenhower did in 1956 and force Israel out of occupied land? The answer is in the hands of the American people, not the government. 4) He asks that we tell Americans what he said and how Palestinians live.

*Comment:* I have seen Palestinian camps in Jordan, West Bank, Gaza. I have walked Nairobi's Mathare Valley slum where children grow up in cardboard boxes: I have seen South Africa's Soweto, and have walked through Cairo's City of the Dead, where hundreds of thousands live in a graveyard. The Palestinian camps are not the most unhealthy or the poorest, but are the most depressing. As bad as Bak'aa is, the camps in the West Bank are worse, and the West Bank camps look like heaven compared to Gaza. The situation is a Thorn in the Eye of God.

Personal Observations by Ron Stockton, 1992. Visits in 1987 and 1992.

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## **THE TRAGEDY OF LEBANON**

One of the tragedies of modern times is what happened to Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s. Lebanon was traditionally called the Switzerland of the Middle East for its political neutrality, its sophisticated pluralistic culture, and its fame as a banking and business center. But its own domestic political tensions, compounded by the dispute between the Israelis and Palestinians, combined to create an explosion that tore the country apart.

There is no time to review the background to those events, how the French in the 1930s created a government based on religio-ethnic groups, how the leaders of those groups agreed to divide key government positions up among themselves, and how their agreement to began to break down in the 1950s. What is relevant here is that the Lebanese Civil War began in 1976 when the killing of some Lebanese Christians near Beirut by persons unknown led to a retaliatory attack upon Palestinians. As the fighting escalated, Syria intervened to stabilize the situation (at the invitation of the Lebanese government and with an Arab League blessing, thus making their presence in Lebanon "legal"). The war flared for two years with many casualties and many refugees, both internal and external. The Syrians remained after the fighting diminished.

In 1978, Israel penetrated southern Lebanon up to the Litani River. Their stated goal was to reduce what they saw as a threat from Palestinian *fedayeen*. (The word means those willing to make sacrifices. Guerrilla might be another translation.) The area south of the Litani is a culturally-mixed place with Christians as well as Shiites. Israel created a puppet army (The Southern Lebanese Army or SLA) under a Christian military officer named Major Haddad (succeeded by Major Lahd after Haddad's death from cancer). This so-called Israeli security zone is of undefined size but is roughly 5-15 miles deep and 35-50 miles wide. Israel and the SLA have been faced since then by furious Lebanese resistance led by the Shiite group Hezbollah, known in English as the Party of God. Hezbollah has received support from Iran.

In June, 1982 Israel again invaded Lebanon. There had been a US-brokered truce along the border but the government of Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon felt they saw an opportunity to crush the PLO, forge an alliance with Lebanon, and deal with the occupied territories under more favorable terms. The invasion occurred with the collaboration of a Lebanese government led by the Gemayel family and their Phalangist Party. According to Secretary of State Haig, Begin told the US his objective was limited: to drive the PLO back 40 kilometers, "so that all our civilians in the region of Galilee will be set free of the permanent threat to their lives." It was said that the operation would last 3-4 days. But Begin had not spoken truthfully. In seven days Israel reached Beirut and occupied most of the country except for Beirut itself, the pro-government north, and the Syrian-controlled Bekka Valley. Then came an eighty-day siege of Beirut, where Yasser Arafat and the PLO were entrenched. Rather than enter Beirut with heavy losses, Israel conducted massive air raids, destroying much of the city. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* wrote of "indiscriminate" bombing, a word that angered Israel and its supporters. With television footage showing Beirut in flames, public opinion turned against Israel.

President Reagan criticized Israel on several occasions, first expressing "regret" at civilian deaths, then "outrage," then "revulsion." In his memoirs, he described it this way: "I decided to appeal personally to Begin to stop the fighting and abide by the (US-brokered) cease-fire ... I suggested to Begin that if he didn't, he could expect a drastic change in Israel's relationship with the United States ... Despite our appeals for restraint, the Israelis on August 12 opened a new and even more brutal attack on civilian neighborhoods in Beirut that sickened me and many others in the White House. This provoked me into an angry demand for an end to the bloodletting ... (in a call to Begin) I used the word 'Holocaust' deliberately and said the symbol of his country was becoming 'a picture of a seven month old baby with its arms blown off.'" (Reagan, pp. 425-26).

Under a US-brokered agreement, 800 marines entered Beirut on September 1 to evacuate 15,000 PLO soldiers. The US also guaranteed the safety of unarmed Palestinian refugees left behind. The marines withdrew after 17 days having successfully achieved the first part of its mission. The PLO moved its headquarters to Tunis.

The second entry of the marines into Lebanon was more tragedy than success. Bashir Gemayel, youngest son of aging Christian Phalange leader Pierre Gemayel, was elected President of Lebanon in an election occurring during the presence of the Israeli army. Gemayel was widely hated for various incidents conducted by his militia over the years. On September 14, just prior to taking office, he was killed in a bomb explosion. What happened next is unclear. *Time* magazine reported that Phalange leaders and Ariel Sharon discussed the possibility of revenge. (*Time* lost a libel suit for being unable to prove its report). Whatever the details, Israeli troops entered Beirut and surrounded the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla. On September 18, with Israelis securing the perimeter, Phalangist units went into the camps and conducted a massacre that left perhaps 800 Palestinians dead (some estimates put the numbers at 2400). The Phalange and Israelis suffered no losses.

Three days later, US marines re-entered Lebanon, this time not fully neutral. By the fall of 1983, marines were firing on Lebanese units and the offshore battleship *New Jersey* later shelled Druze positions in the Shuf Mountains. On October 23 Western positions were attacked by bombers, killing 241 US marines and 58 French soldiers. Two weeks later, an attack on Israeli Lebanese Headquarters killed 29 Israelis and 30 prisoners. By December, 1983 Lebanon claimed 19,085 dead, Israel over 368.

If America was shocked by its marine deaths, what followed was even more traumatic. In March, 1985 a group linked to the US attempted to kill religious leader Sheikh Fadlalla by placing a bomb in his apartment building. The sheikh escaped but 80 neighbors died (see Woodward and Wright for details). Then in April, Israel took 1200 Lebanese into Israel, telling the Red Cross these were NOT prisoners of war. The dead in the bombing and the prisoners were all Shiites.

At this point, there were nine foreign armies in Lebanon: American, French, British, Italian, Israeli, Syrian, United Nations, as well as some returning Palestinian units and some Iranians. To the Lebanese it seemed as if their country had ceased to exist. To the Shiites of the south, their land had turned into hell. Soon violent resistance erupted. Shiite political groups began to kidnap western professors and religious leaders; planes were hijacked (Jordanian and Kuwaiti); assassinations occurred. Also, TWA 847 was hijacked by Shiite militants and kept on the tarmac at Beirut airport for over two traumatic, televised weeks. On the Israeli-Palestinian front, the Achille Lauro was hijacked (with one American killed); three Israelis in Cyprus suspected of being intelligence agents were assassinated; and Israel bombed the headquarters in Tunis, killing 80 people. (Arafat was jogging and escaped). Back in the US, Arab-American leader and peace advocate Alex Odeh was assassinated by individuals believed to be right-wing Jewish nationalists.

By February, 1984, the US marines were completely out of Lebanon and in June, 1985 Israeli forces withdrew to their "security zone" in the south. But it was not for several more years that all American hostages were released. And for a decade after the Israeli invasion, the killing continued. A study by the Lebanese government released March 1992 found that between 1975 and 1990 144,000 Lebanese had died in the wars and invasions of that time. This figure does not include Palestinians.

Sources: Alexander Haig, *Caveat*; Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*; Jonathan Randal, *Going All the Way*; George Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*; Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*; Ariel Sharon, *Warrior*; Bob Woodward, *Veil*; Robin Wright, *Sacred Rage*.