

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland* by Michael Palumbo

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But if thy heart turn away, and thou wilt not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them . . . ye shall surely perish; ye shall not prolong your days upon the land. (Deut. 30: 17–19)

To which may be added only a solemn “Amen!”

NOTES

1. See Roselle Tekiner, “Jewish Nationality Status as the Basis for Institutionalized Racial Discrimination in Israel,” *American-Arab Affairs* 17 (Summer 1986): 79–98 (published by the American-Arab Affairs Council, Washington, D.C.).

2. See Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism, A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary* (Belmont, Mass.: AAUG Press, 1980), 41ff.

3. For a good summary and chronology of PLO peace proposals, see Afif Safieh, “Palestine Peace Diplomacy: No One is Listening,” *Al-Fajr*, 13 February 1987, p. 6. For the text of the U.S.-Soviet statement, see *Department of State Bulletin*, 7 November 1977, pp. 639–40. For an excellent brief summary of the “Carter period” and the Israeli reaction, see Cheryl Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 209–13.

Michael Palumbo. *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987. 233 plus xix pp. Hardcover £12.95.

Reviewed by **Ibrahim Abu-Lughod**

Palestine's dismemberment in 1948, referred to as the *nakbah* (catastrophe)—hence Palumbo's title—was carried out by force majeure with varying assistance from Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union rendered to the highly organized and clearheaded Zionist forces in situ. The Palestinian Arabs who lost the battle were perhaps the only exception to the general rule of decolonization: whereas most people of the colonized Third World were then achieving their independence, not only did the Palestinians lose their battle for independence but more than half of them were forcibly evicted from their national homeland. Equally remarkable about this event is its portrayal by Israel, then as now. Israel dates its “independence” (one wonders from whom?) from that point, and officially absolves itself of any responsibility for thwarting Palestinian independence and sovereignty and for the Palestinians' expulsion.

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Despite the increasing evidence presented by Israeli revisionists which clearly demonstrates that the Zionist leadership and Israel were determined to expel the Palestinians from all areas that came under Israel's control, Israel's apologists (most recently, in the discredited work by Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 1984) still hold to the allegation that Palestinians either left of their own free will or were called upon to leave by their own leadership. This historic allegation was exposed for the myth it was early on by both Walid Khalidi and Erskine Childers (both cited by Palumbo).

The Palestinians, who have experienced the expulsion, not only in 1948 but in 1967 and onward, do not need research to explain it. They know the circumstances of their dispersion and its meaning. Despite its overwhelming significance as a historic experience and its implication for their contemporary resistance, the Palestinian narration of those events is conspicuous by its meagerness. Busailah, Nazzal (cited by Palumbo) and Shoufani have shared their experiences as they lived them or have researched the experiences of other Palestinians. Contrasting their accounts with the official Israeli allegations or with fictional accounts inspired by the Israeli story (such as Leon Uris's racist account in *The Hajj*) clearly illustrates the chasm that separates the Palestinian and Israeli "realities."

Palumbo's work is an important contribution to the general understanding of the circumstances of the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. He analyzes the expulsion against the general background of the Zionist movement and its belief system, anchored as it is in European, generally racist-colonial, thought, in order to show the relationship between the policies pursued in 1948 and the general thrust of the Zionist movement that historically sought to establish a Jewish state free of its Palestinian Arabs. The connection is important: it shows that Israel's allegation cannot be sustained on theoretical grounds. The documentary record of the Zionist movement is consistent on the issue of "relocating" the Palestinian Arabs as a necessary condition for the establishment of a Jewish Israeli state. Failing to obtain a commitment to "relocate" the Palestinian Arabs—a commitment the Zionists sought from Britain, from some Arabs, etc.—they clearly had to use force to accomplish the same end. This is what they were doing before 1948 when they purchased lands from absentee landlords—a point observed by some Royal Commissions.

But the major expulsions took place in 1948. Palumbo deals with the expulsion systematically, by location: Deir Yassin, Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem, the North-Safad, Acre and the Galilee and the Ramle-Lyddá region. He details the circumstances of each expulsion, the use of various violent techniques resorted to by Zionist/Israeli forces to accomplish the purpose, always paying attention to the enunciated policy espoused by the leadership. The conclusion is clear: the expulsion was deliberate and had to be accomplished by coercive techniques, which the Israeli army under the command of Yadin, Dayan, Rabin and Allon pursued with brutality to bring about a desired demographic and political end,

namely, a Jewish state free of its Palestinian Arabs. Palumbo notes Israel's concern with the fate of Palestinians who did remain within Israel; Israel's leadership discussed the possibility of "population exchange" of Israel's Arabs with Jews from Arab countries so that Israel would be free entirely of its Palestinian population. (Perhaps this is the origin of the thesis of an "exchange of population" analyzed by A. Shiblak in his *Lure of Zion*, 1985.)

Palumbo's narration and analysis are based upon rich archival material—Israeli, Zionist, British and United Nations. While Palumbo occasionally refers to an oral interview with an affected Palestinian, it is clear that he relied upon and reconciled the conflicting accounts as they are culled from the documentary record. Had he utilized Arabic sources and/or a more extensive universe of "oral history," his portrayal would have been even sharper, more authentic and more reflective of the Palestinian interpretation of the circumstances of the Catastrophe.

NOTE

1. See Amnon Kapeliouk's analytical/bibliographic article "New Light on the Israeli-Arab Conflict and the Refugee Problem and its Origins," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 3 (1987): 16–24.

Joseph Weiler. *Israel and the Creation of a Palestinian State: A European Perspective*. London: Croom Helm, 1985. 160 pp.

Reviewed by **Andrej Kreutz**

The subtitle of Joseph Weiler's book *Israel and the Creation of a Palestinian State: A European Perspective* is somewhat misleading. The author, a professor of law at the European University Institute in Florence, does not present an analysis of the European community's vantage point on the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma.¹ Nor does he refer to the opinions of any Western European states or political forces, which in fact he has already castigated for their allegedly "pro-Arab" leanings.² In addition, he cannot be considered an impartial, objective scholar: his pro-Israel sympathy and constant support of Israeli moral and political legitimacy are pervasive and persistent throughout the work. His attitude toward the Palestinians and their claims, on the other hand, is genuinely rather ambiguous and at best not without hesitation. He justifies the Balfour Declaration and its inclu-

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