ISRAEL'S VICIOUS CIRCLE

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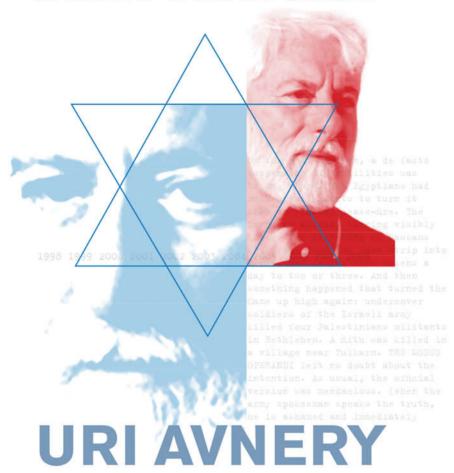army spokesman speaks the truth,
he is ashamed and immediately

URI AVNERY

Ten Years of Writings on Israel and Palestine

EDITED BY SARA R. POWELL

Israel's Vicious Circle

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All footnotes and commentary outside the original essays are by Sara Powell (ed.). They do not necessarily represent Uri Avnery's views.
  All articles were originally written in Hebrew by Uri Avnery for an Israeli audience; they were originally edited in the English translation by Chris Costello. "Truth against truth" by Uri Avnery was originally published in pamphlet form by Gush Shalom.

RACHEL

Wife, editor of the original Hebrew text, invaluable critic

"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." (Jeremiah 2:2)

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Foreword

In the early days of the State of Israel, one of our most prominent journalists was an editor who always strove to give the public exactly what it wanted to hear. More than once, when he had inadvertently diverged from the public mood, he presented the opposite view the very next day. In some cases, he even switched his positions the same day, from one edition to another.

Abba Eban, the sharp-tongued Israeli foreign minister, once threatened him: "If you don't stop attacking me, I shall publish a collection of all your articles!" The attacks stopped at once.

In the spring of 1954, I started a weekly column with the Hebrew title *Hanidon*, which can be rendered as "re:," "concerning," "in the matter of." Not having missed a single week since then, I must have published something like 2,810 articles, comprising some 4 million words. If somebody threatened to publish all of them, I would just tell them: "Make sure you don't omit any."

I am in the happy position of having nothing to fear from such a threat. I have not trimmed my views to match the general mood. I have never believed that it is a commentator's job to "reflect" public opinion. Rather, it is our duty to tell the truth, as we see it.

In the old days, that was the role of the prophet. In biblical times, a prophet was not a person who foretold the future, but one who stood at the gate of the town and berated the people for their faults and the rulers for their misdeeds.

This did not make for popularity. One of these unfortunates, Jeremiah, cried out: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them does curse me." (Jeremiah 15:10)

When Judea was in danger of being defeated by Babylon, the ministers beseeched the king: "Let this man be put to death, for thus he

weakeneth the hands of the men of war … this man seeketh not the welfare of this people but the hurt." So they took him and threw him into a dungeon full of mire. (Jeremiah 38:4)

Far be it from me to compare myself to such an august figure, but he has served me as a model to emulate. I have always admired his courage and his steadfastness, even though he was a bit of an egomaniac. Humility hardly goes with the job, neither then or now.

This book consists of essays written during the last few years. They were not penned in the proverbial ivory tower by a detached professor. They were composed in the thick of the struggle, by someone very much involved. Perhaps I would phrase some sentences differently today. I was certainly wrong in some assessments. But I have not asked the editor of this volume to change, add or omit a single word. For all of them give testimony to the emotions and thoughts of the moment.

A few words about myself: I am an Israeli. I consider myself an Israeli patriot. Those who seek the destruction of the State of Israel will find no comfort here. All my criticism, even when extreme—especially when extreme—stems from love.

From the first hour of the state, when I heard the Declaration of Independence on the radio as my unit was preparing for battle, I was in opposition—not because I am "against," but because I am "for." In my mind's eye, I see an alternative model of the state. In the words of Thoreau, I hear a different drummer. A drummer calling for a different Israel, an Israel one can be proud of—moral, democratic, secular, progressive, egalitarian, not lording it over another people, at peace with its neighbors, an integral part of the region which is our extended fatherland, in the front line of humanity's struggle for a better world.

I believe in this other Israel. I believe that it will come about. I hope that I shall see it with my own eyes. With the approach of my 85th birthday, there is not too much time left.

Uri Avnery
Tel Aviv, spring 2008

Introduction by Sara R. Powell

My name is Sara Powell and I am honored to have been asked to edit a compilation of Uri Avnery's writings. Avnery is the pre-eminent Israeli peace activist—co-founder of Gush Shalom, the largest Israeli peace organization, and largely responsible for the fact that Palestinian and Israeli officials are able to negotiate with each other for an end to their decades-long conflict. His is one of the most powerful voices calling out to other Israelis to pay attention to what is being done in their name and to take responsibility for it. Moreover, through translating his essays into English, and making them available through collections such as this, and on the Internet, Avnery is introducing many citizens of the world to a situation that has been frequently misrepresented and misunderstood. The fact that his is an Israeli voice documenting the problems of Israeli occupation makes his observations difficult to refute. His life and his work authenticate the unpopular truth he tells, and his engaging style draws in even those who have no direct interest in the region. Moreover, he has been—and continues to be—actively, physically engaged in (sometimes dangerous) demonstrations and direct action for many years. He has also been—and continues to be—an inspiration for all those interested in peace and justice in Israel and Palestine.

I first became aware that there was an issue surrounding Palestinians and Israelis as a small child in Beirut, Lebanon, in the early 1960s. My notions of the situation were, of course, fuzzy and unformed; I only knew that there were nice people I knew who, because they were Palestinian, could not go back home. The issue was discussed at the family dinner table, but I absorbed little of the details of the debate.

Later, as an adolescent in Tehran, Iran, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I learned more about the issue in school—where we studied the history of the region, Israel and various Palestinian organizations,

including Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP)—and in the tension that revolved around US embassy life (my father was a career Foreign Service Officer working for the US Department of State).[1] I watched as the Embassy began to fortify itself, as ticking packages were treated like bombs only to be revealed as toy clocks mailed by doting grandparents. I remember the first searches at airports. It was the age of the letter bomb. It was the age of hijacking.

It was during this time that my growing political awareness—especially following close on the worldwide youth movements that peaked in 1968, the shock of the Israeli success in the 1967 war, and the effect of the relatively new Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) particularly under the leadership of Yassir Arafat—as well as my own experience in the Middle East led me to a lifelong interest in the region in general, and to interest and activism specifically with regard to the issue of Palestine and Israel.

Like Uri Avnery, I have a passionate interest in educating the public with regard to an ongoing critical situation and contributing whatever I can to finding a just solution. It is my honor to be able to present this volume of Avnery's monumental contribution to this cause.

The image of the vicious circle is a theme Uri Avnery uses often in his essays on the various relationships between Israel and the rest of the world, particularly Palestine, and it is apt. There are vicious circles of attack, counter-attack and escalation. There are vicious circles of peace process, failure to progress and renewed animosity. There are even vicious physical circles in the sense of the Separation Wall surrounding Palestinian territory or of unwelcoming Arab governments surrounding the state of Israel. However, by spring 2008, it has become clear that the circles have become spirals—downward spirals—and that they are even more vicious. All aspects of the situation themselves spiral viciously through Avnery's writing, forming an intertwined, subtle picture of the whole.

Although I have endeavored to present a full picture, this book is not meant to be a definitive history of the Arab–Israeli conflict. It is a compilation of (mostly) recent essays by one of the major figures participating in the attempt to break the cycle of violence and counter-violence that has continued throughout virtually the entire existence of Israel. Sometimes an official participant and sometimes an ex-officio contributor, Uri Avnery has performed many roles from his earliest days as a teen activist in the Irgun through his young adulthood as a member of the army to the last few decades as a peace activist. Avnery

served in the Knesset, co-founded Gush Shalom, and was the first Israeli to have contact with the PLO. He has been advocating that Israel conduct negotiations with the PLO for a comprehensive peace that includes Palestine's aspirations for its own state ever since, but his efforts toward peace started during his youth.

In my attempt to edit the unique voice of Avnery my goal was to introduce a broader audience to one of the most prominent and thoughtful participants in the decades-long Israeli fight for a state and its concomitant occupation of Palestine—itself a unique world situation—with a selection that exemplifies his position, and to place both Avnery and the situation between Palestine and Israel in the larger Middle East context to which it belongs, as well as to place it in a global context. Avnery works to educate the public that Israel and Palestine are caught in a vicious circle, largely—though not entirely—kept within the circle by Israeli policy and Israeli action. Moreover, he makes the point that the situation is one of the most critical in a region becoming more and more desperate, which is in itself part of a global order that seems to be spinning out of control. For the reader already familiar with Avnery, I have tried to choose work that represents both some of the best of his oeuvre and pieces that present an overall view of his almost lifelong mission of bringing peace with justice to Palestine and Israel, and with the hope that this project may play some part in the advancement of that goal. I share Avnery's views that a just peace must be achieved in the near future.

In order to appreciate the singular perspective of Avnery's views, it is necessary to read the brief autobiographical sketches and personal remembrances that he often uses as an introductory allegory to the political analysis that comprises his weekly column.

The reader learns about Avnery's parents, his own "angry young man" period during the late 1940s, his growing sensitivity to the "other": the indigenous Palestinians. Avnery tantalizes his readers with hints of secret, intense—life and death—meetings. His autobiographical books read almost like novels.

What really grips the reader, though, is that this is no fiction and that Avnery bluntly describes what he has witnessed, and actively participated in, over the past 70 years.

He joined the Zionist underground—Avnery says terrorist—organization in 1938, just shy of his 15th birthday, as an ardent nationalist. After three years he left the organization because of its anti-Arab political stance and its methodology. By 1946 he founded the *Eretz Yisrael Hatzira*, or Young Palestine, movement and edited its publication *ba-Ma'avak* (Struggle). His was among the first in a bevy of Israeli

voices calling for unity and cooperation between the Zionist immigrant community trying to wrest out a homeland and the native Palestinians, among whom he saw another oppressed community akin to his own. Despite his desire for a Semitic alliance between the Jewish and Arab communities (he proposed an essentially formal alliance of a Semitic region), he joined the army at the onset of the Israeli War of Independence, the Palestinian *Nakba*.

Although always a Zionist in the sense that he adheres to the idea of a Jewish nation state, Avnery continued his quest for peace and mutual respect between the two peoples now inhabiting the historic land of Palestine, predicated on the idea of two states—Palestinian and Israeli—as Semitic allies. This idea of a Semitic alliance forms an essential part of Avnery's views on Zionism. He considers himself a post-Zionist, a term he coined to describe those in favor of a Jewish nation state in the context of being part of a regional Semitic whole, secular with a culturally Jewish character, as opposed to early Zionism, which saw the Jewish nation state as an essentially European state, a bulwark against the barbarous hordes as expressed in Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky's article "The iron wall," which Avnery discusses in his October 2007 article in this volume, "The mother of all pretexts." In his essay "Omelets into eggs," included here, Avnery presents his views on Zionism; for a full discussion of Avnery's theory, see his book, *Israel Without Zionists: A Plea for Peace in the Middle East* (Macmillan, 1968). In addition to his participant/eyewitness perspective, it is this post-Zionism—his Jewish nationalism coupled with his ardent support of Palestinian rights and nationalism—that makes Avnery's voice so unique.

In beginning the collection with essays focused on Judaism, Zionism, and anti-Semitism, I have tried to place Avnery within the context of the thought that shaped him, and even now is at the root of his fundamental belief system. He has completely internalized the concept synonymous with post-Holocaust Zionism—"never again"—as, of course, all peoples and governments should. He is in the minority, though, through his inclusive interpretation of "never again." He means never again for anyone, not just a select few.

Seen through Avnery's Israeli eyes, his graphic depiction of Israel's occupation of Palestine is striking. In his inimitable forthright style, Avnery tells it like he sees it—bleak, cruel, corrupting, even sadistic. Avnery does not mince words to spare his country, but neither does he spare Palestinians from censure. Any person, with no previous knowledge of the situation in Israel and Palestine, could read Avnery and absorb a good sense of the nature of the issue, without the usual spin of either narrative. That is one reason his voice is so important. Even

an expert, though, can gain insight from Avnery's unique eyewitness/participant status.

Often the press misrepresents and the world misunderstands the situation in Palestine and Israel. Avnery not only paints a vivid picture of the grim occupation, he tells an enraging story of power and duplicity in the negotiation process toward peace. It is indeed a vicious circle as each Palestinian concession becomes the base point for the next round of talks, and the percentage of historic Palestine left for a state dwindles steadily, both on the ground and around the negotiating table.

Though there are those on both sides of the issue who fight the status quo, Israel, powerful in its own right, receives virtually unqualified support from the United States—the world's current evil empire at the height of its power and madness. Nonetheless, voices like Avnery's are rippling through the world. Access to the Internet has raised awareness of this issue in particular, but of world issues in general, throughout a great deal of the world's population. It is in the US empire where the effects of this dissemination of knowledge about the hitherto little-known (because vastly misrepresented) issue of Palestine and Israel are having the greatest effect.

Following on polls that are finding a growing sympathy for Palestinians, Israel is scrambling to regain its spot as the victim deserving of special treatment. Every trick, from a "rebranding campaign" touting the wonders of being an Ethiopian Israeli soccer player (when Ethiopian Jews face racism in Israel) to the nasty, vicious attacks by groups like Campus Watch on intellectuals speaking a truth about the current nature of the Israeli state, is being vigorously pursued in the attempt to keep Palestinians isolated and powerless. Nonetheless, the situation is changing. World public opinion is shifting. The question is: Will it shift enough, quickly enough, to throw the vicious circle off its course?

The circle must break; the world is reaching a crisis point that cannot entirely be avoided, and the situation in Israel and Palestine is a central issue. How it will play out remains to be seen. I do not agree with all Avnery's positions, most notably his position with regard to the question of one or two states. I tend toward one state because the two peoples are intricately and inextricably entwined on the same land, because the right of return is a moral and legal right, and because I am repelled by the notion of any state built on exclusivity, including the one in which I live.

Concomitantly, I also think that Israelis—many of whom know no other home—cannot and should not be displaced; Palestinian Arabs have no inherent right to exclusivity either. In several of his writings,

including a May 2007 piece "One state: solution or Utopia," which concludes Chapter 1, Avnery alludes to an ideal notion of internationalism wherein borders and nationalism are no longer relevant. While agreeing that the notion is idealist, I think ideals are worth working toward. I think Avnery would agree. However, in the world of realpolitik, Avnery argues that the Jewish state is central to most Israelis, and indeed, many Jews worldwide. In addition to the above-mentioned remarks, Avnery's essay "A new consensus," also included in this volume, sheds further light on his position.

Of course, the only tenable peace will have to be arrived at by the parties involved—Israel and Palestine—and the world should support whatever deal the majority of both sides agree to, always providing of course that negotiations are fair. Avnery's voice has always been strong in demanding good faith.

I have great admiration and respect for Avnery's courage, fortitude and unwavering commitment to bringing peace with justice to the troubled peoples of Israel and Palestine. I have endeavored to be true to Avnery in this collection while telling the truth as I see it, too. The footnotes and all commentary outside the original essays are my additions to the work. I hope this collection of his essays contributes to peace in Avnery's home and am honored and grateful to have been given the opportunity to contribute whatever small amount I could. I am especially grateful to Uri Avnery for his work, both written and active, to Roger van Zwanenberg for his trust and encouragement, and to the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs for so much. Further thanks go to Chris Costello who has volunteered many hours to edit Avnery's English translations from his original Hebrew, and who generously sent me copies of some of his work. Any deficiencies within this book, however, are my own. Avnery's voice speaks for itself. I hope here, it speaks to you.

SRP

"Truth Against Truth"
A Completely Different Look at the
Israeli–Palestinian Conflict
An Introduction by Uri Avnery

- The Arabs believed that the Jews had been implanted in Palestine by Western imperialism, in order to subjugate the Arab world. The Zionists, on the other hand, were convinced that the Arab resistance to the Zionist enterprise was simply the consequence of the murderous nature of the Arabs and of Islam.
- The Israeli public must recognize that besides all the positive aspects of the Zionist enterprise, a terrible injustice has been inflicted on the Palestinian people.
- This requires a readiness to hear and understand the other side's position in this historical conflict, in order to bridge the two national experiences and unify them in a joint narrative.

The tyranny of myths

1. The violent confrontation that broke out in October 2000 and was called the "al-Aqsa Intifada" is but another stage of the historical conflict that began with the creation of the Zionist Movement at the end of the nineteenth century.
2. A fifth generation of Israelis and Palestinians has already been born into this conflict. The entire mental and material world of this generation has been shaped by this confrontation, which dominates all spheres of their lives.
3. In the course of this long conflict, as in every war, an enormous mass of myths, historical falsifications, propaganda slogans, and prejudices has accumulated on both sides.
4. The behavior of each of the two sides to the conflict is shaped by their historical narrative, the way they view the history of the conflict over the last 120 years. The Zionist historical version and

the Palestinian historical version contradict each other entirely, both in the general picture and in almost every detail.

5. From the beginning of the conflict up to the present day, the Zionist/Israeli leadership has acted in total disregard of the Palestinian narrative. Even when it wished to reach a solution, such efforts were doomed to failure because of ignorance of the national aspirations, traumas, fears, and hopes of the Palestinian people. Something similar happened on the other side, even if there is no symmetry between the two sides.

6. The settlement of such a prolonged historical conflict is possible only when each side is able to understand the mental-political world of the other and is ready to speak as equal to equal, "eye to eye." Contemptuous, power-oriented, overbearing, insensitive, and ignorant attitudes prevent an agreed solution.

7. "Leftist" Israeli governments that, at times, aroused much hope were afflicted with such attitudes as much as "rightist" ones, causing a wide gap between their initial promise and their disastrous performance. (An example is Ehud Barak's term in office.)

8. A large part of the old peace movement (also known as "the Zionist left" or "the sane camp"), such as Peace Now, is also beset by some of these attitudes, and so collapses in times of crisis.

9. Therefore, the first task of a new Israeli peace camp is to free itself from false and from one-sided views.

10. This does not mean that the Israeli narrative should automatically be rejected and the Palestinian narrative unquestioningly accepted, or the other way round. But it does require a readiness to hear and understand the other side's position in this historical conflict, in order to bridge the two national experiences and unify them in a joint narrative.

11. Any other way will lead to a perpetuation of the conflict, with periods of ostensible tranquility and conciliation frequently interrupted by violent hostilities between the two nations and between Israel and the Arab world. Given the pace of development of weapons of mass destruction, further rounds of hostility could lead to the annihilation of both sides to the conflict.

The root of the conflict

12. The core of the conflict is the confrontation between the Israeli-Jewish nation and the Palestinian-Arab nation. It is essentially a national conflict, even if it has religious, social, and other aspects.

13. The Zionist Movement was essentially a Jewish reaction to the emergence of the national movements in Europe, all of which were more or less anti-Semitic. Having been rejected by the European nations, some of the Jews decided to establish themselves as a separate nation and, following the new European model, to set up a national state of their own, where they could be masters of their own fate.

14. Traditional and religious motives drew the Zionist Movement to Palestine (*Eretz Israel* in Hebrew) and the decision was made to establish the Jewish state in this land. The maxim was: "A land without a people for a people without a land." This maxim was not only conceived in ignorance, but also reflected the general arrogance towards non-European peoples that prevailed in Europe at that time.

15. Palestine was not an empty land—not at the end of the nineteenth century, nor at any other period. At that time, there were half a million people living in Palestine, 90 percent of them Arabs. This population objected, of course, to the incursion of foreign settlers into their land.

16. The Arab National Movement emerged almost simultaneously with the Zionist Movement, initially to fight the Ottoman Empire and later the colonial regimes built on its ruins at the end of World War I. A separate Arab-Palestinian national movement developed in the country after the British created a separate state called "Palestine," and in the course of the struggle against Zionist infiltration.

17. Since the end of World War I, there has been an ongoing struggle between two national movements, the Jewish-Zionist and the Palestinian-Arab, both of which aspire to accomplish their goals—which are entirely incompatible—within the same territory. This situation remains unchanged to this day.

18. As persecution of the Jews in Europe intensified, and as the countries of the world closed their gates to the Jews attempting to flee the inferno, so the Zionist Movement gained strength. Nazi anti-Semitism turned the Zionist Utopia into a realizable modern enterprise by causing a mass immigration of trained manpower, intellectuals, technology, and capital to Palestine. The Holocaust, which took the lives of about 6 million Jews, gave tremendous moral and political force to the Zionist claim, leading to the establishment of the State of Israel.

19. The Palestinian nation, witnessing the growth of the Jewish population in their land, could not comprehend why they should

be expected to pay the price for crimes committed against the Jews by Europeans. They violently objected to further Jewish immigration and to the acquisition of land by the Jews.

20. The struggle between the two nations in the country appeared in the emotional sphere as the "war of the traumas." The Israeli-Hebrew nation carried with them the old trauma of the persecution of the Jews in Europe: massacres, mass expulsions, the Inquisition, pogroms and the Holocaust. They lived with the consciousness of being an eternal victim. The clash with the Arab-Palestinian nation appeared to them as just a continuation of anti-Semitic persecution.

21. The Arab-Palestinian nation carried with them the memories of the long-lasting colonial oppression, with its insults and humiliations, especially when compared with the background of the historical memories from the glorious days of the Caliphs. They, too, lived with the consciousness of being victims, and the *Nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948 appeared to them as the continuation of the oppression and humiliation by Western colonialists.

22. The complete blindness of each of the two nations to the national existence of the other inevitably led to false and distorted perceptions that took root deep in their collective consciousness. These perceptions continue to affect their attitudes toward each other to the present day.

23. The Arabs believed that the Jews had been implanted in Palestine by Western imperialism, in order to subjugate the Arab world and control its natural resources. This conviction was supported by the fact that the Zionist Movement, from the outset, strove for an alliance with at least one Western power, in order to overcome Arab resistance (Germany in the days of Herzl, Britain from the time of the Uganda plan and the Balfour Declaration until the end of the Mandate, the Soviet Union in 1948, France from the 1950s until the 1967 war, the United States from then on). This resulted in practical cooperation and a community of interests between the Zionist enterprise and imperialist and colonialist powers, directed against the Arab national movement.

24. The Zionists, on the other hand, were convinced that the Arab resistance to the Zionist enterprise—which was intended to save the Jews from the flames of Europe—was simply the consequence of the murderous nature of the Arabs and of Islam. In their eyes, Arab fighters were "gangs," and the uprisings of the time were "riots."

25. Actually, the most extreme Zionist leader, Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, was almost alone in having recognized by the 1920s that the Arab resistance to the Zionist settlement was an inevitable, natural, and, from its own point of view, just reaction of a "native" people defending their country against foreign invaders. Jabotinsky also recognized that the Arabs in the country were a distinct national entity and derided the attempts to bribe the leaders of other Arab countries in order to put an end to the Palestinian Arab resistance. However, Jabotinsky's solution was to erect an "iron wall" against the Arabs and to crush their resistance by force.

26. These completely contradictory perceptions of the facts permeate every single aspect of the conflict. For example, the Jews interpreted their struggle for "Jewish Labor" as a progressive social effort to transform a people of intellectuals, merchants, middlemen, and speculators into one of workers and farmers. The Arabs, on the other hand, saw it as a racist effort by the Zionists to dispossess them, to exclude them from the labor market, and to create on their land an Arab-free, separatist Jewish economy.

27. The Zionists were proud of their "redemption of the land." They had purchased it at full price with money collected from Jews around the world. *Olim* (new immigrants, literally pilgrims), many of whom had been intellectuals and merchants in their former lives, now earned their living by hard manual labor. They believed that they had achieved all this by peaceful means and without dispossessing a single Arab. For the Arabs this was a cruel narrative of dispossession and expulsion: the Jews acquired lands from Arab absentee landowners living in the cities of Palestine and abroad, and then forcibly evicted the peasants who had been farming this land for generations. To help them in this effort, the Zionists engaged the Turkish and, later, the British police. The Arab masses looked on in despair as their land was taken from them.

28. Against the Zionist claim of having successfully "made the desert bloom," the Arabs cited the testimonies of European travelers who had, for several centuries, described Palestine as a comparatively populous and flourishing land, the equal of any of its regional neighbors.

Independence and disaster

29. The contrast between the two national versions reached a peak in the war of 1948, which was called "the War of Independence" or

even "the War of Liberation" by the Jews, and "*al Nakba*," the catastrophe, by the Arabs.

30. As the conflict intensified in the region, and with the resounding impact of the Holocaust, the United Nations decided to divide the country into two states, Jewish and Arab. Jerusalem and its environs were to remain a separate entity, under international jurisdiction. The Jews were allotted 55 percent of the land, including the unpopulated Negev desert.

31. Most of the Zionist Movement accepted the partition resolution, convinced that the crucial issue was to establish a firm foundation for Jewish sovereignty. In closed meetings, David Ben-Gurion never concealed his intention to expand, at the first opportunity, the territory given to the Jews. That is why Israel's Declaration of Independence did not define the state's borders and Israel has not defined its borders to this day.

32. The Arab world did not accept the partition plan and regarded it as a vile attempt by the United Nations, which at the time was essentially a club of Western and Communist nations, to divide a country that did not belong to it. Handing over more than half of the country to the Jewish minority, which comprised a mere third of the population, made it all the more unforgivable in their eyes.

33. The war initiated by the Arabs after the partition plan was, inevitably, an "ethnic" war: a war in which each side seeks to conquer as much land as possible and evict the population of the other side. Such a campaign (which later came to be known as "ethnic cleansing") always involves expulsions and atrocities.

34. The war of 1948 was a direct continuation of the Zionist–Arab conflict, and each side sought to fulfill its historical aims. The Jews wanted to establish a homogeneous national state that would be as large as possible. The Arabs wanted to eradicate the Zionist Jewish entity that had been established in Palestine.

35. Both sides practiced ethnic cleansing as an integral part of the fighting. Almost no Arabs remained in the territories captured by the Jews and no Jews at all remained in territories captured by the Arabs. However, as the territories captured by the Jews were very large while the Arabs managed to conquer only small areas (such as the Etzion Bloc, the Jewish quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem), the result was one-sided. (The ideas of "population exchange" and "transfer" were raised in Zionist organizations as early as the 1930s. Effectively this meant the expulsion of the Arab population from the country. On the other side, many

among the Arabs believed that the Zionists should go back to wherever they came from.)

What happened in 1948 was an "ethnic" war, as described above.

36. The myth of "the few against the many" was created on the Jewish side to describe the stand of the Jewish community of 650,000 against the entire Arab world of over 100 million. The Jewish community lost 1 percent of its people in the war. The Arab side saw an entirely different picture: a fragmented Arab population with no national leadership to speak of, with no unified command over its meager forces, poorly equipped with mostly obsolete weapons, facing an extremely well-organized Jewish community that was highly trained in the use of the weapons that were flowing to it (especially from the Soviet bloc). The neighboring Arab countries betrayed the Palestinians, and when they finally did send their armies into Palestine, they mainly operated in competition with each other, with no coordination and no common plan. From the social and military points of view, the fighting capabilities of the Israeli side were far superior to those of the Arab states, which had hardly emerged from the colonial era.

37. According to the United Nations plan, the Jewish state was supposed to receive 55 percent of Palestine, in which the Arabs would constitute almost half of the population. During the war, the Jewish state expanded its territory and ended up with 78 percent of the area of Palestine, which was left almost empty of Arabs. The Arab populations of Nazareth and some villages in the Galilee area remained almost by chance; the villages in the Triangle were given to Israel as part of a deal by King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan, and their Arab inhabitants could not, therefore, be driven out.

38. In the war, some 750,000 Palestinians were uprooted. Some of them found themselves in the battle zone and fled, as civilians do in every war. Some were driven away by acts of terror, such as the Deir-Yassin massacre.[2] Others were systematically expelled in the course of the ethnic cleansing.

39. No less important than the expulsion itself is the fact that the refugees were not allowed to return to their homes when the fighting was over, as is usual after a conventional war. Quite the contrary, the new State of Israel saw the removal of the Arabs very much as a blessing and proceeded to completely erase some 450 Arab villages. New Jewish villages were built on the ruins, often

adopting a Hebrew version of the former name. The abandoned neighborhoods in the towns were filled with masses of new immigrants. In Israeli textbooks, all mention of the former inhabitants was eliminated.

A Jewish state

40. The signing of the armistice agreements at the beginning of 1949 did not put an end to the historical conflict. On the contrary, it raised it to a new and more intense level.

41. The new State of Israel dedicated its early years to the consolidation of its character as a homogeneous "Jewish state." Huge areas of land were expropriated from the "absentees" (the refugees who were not allowed back), from those officially designated as "present absentees" (Arabs who had stayed in Israel but were not accorded Israeli citizenship) and even from the Arab citizens of Israel, most of whose lands were taken over. On these lands, a dense network of Jewish communities was created. Jewish immigrants were invited and even induced to come en masse. This great effort increased the state's population several times over in just a few years.

42. At the same time, the state pursued a vigorous policy of obliterating the Palestinian national entity. With Israeli assistance, the monarch of Trans-Jordan, Abdullah, assumed control over the West Bank and since then there has been, in effect, an Israeli military guarantee for the existence of what became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

43. The main rationale for the alliance between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom, which has already existed for three generations, is to prevent the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state, which was—and still is—considered by the Israeli leadership a potential obstacle to the realization of the Zionist objective.

44. A historic change occurred at the end of the 1950s on the Palestinian side when Yassir Arafat and his associates founded the Palestinian Liberation Movement (Fatah), not only to conduct the fight against Israel but also to free the Palestinian cause from the hegemony of the Arab governments. It was no accident that this movement emerged after the failure of the great pan-Arab wave, whose most renowned representative was Gamal Abd-el-Nasser. Up to this point many Palestinians had hoped to be absorbed into a united pan-Arab nation. When this hope faded away, the separate national Palestinian identity reasserted itself.

45. In the early 1960s, Gamal Abd-el-Nasser set up the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), mainly in order to forestall independent Palestinian actions that might involve him in an undesired war with Israel. The organization was intended to impose Egyptian control on the Palestinians. However, after the Arab debacle in the June 1967 war, Fatah, under Yassir Arafat, took control over the PLO, which has been the sole representative of the Palestinian people ever since.

The Six-Day War

46. Like everything else that has happened in the last 120 years, the June 1967 war is seen in a very different light by the two sides. According to the Israeli myth, it was a desperate war of defense, which miraculously left a lot of land in Israel's hands. According to the Palestinian myth, Israel drew the leaders of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan into a war Israel was interested in, which was aimed right from the beginning at capturing what was left of Palestine.

47. Many Israelis believe that the "Six-Day War" is the root of all evil and that it was only then that the peace-loving and progressive Israel turned into a conqueror and an occupier. This conviction allows them to maintain the absolute purity of Zionism and the State of Israel up to that point in history, and preserve their old myths. There is no truth to this legend.

48. The war of 1967 was yet another phase of the old struggle between the two national movements. It did not change the essence; it only changed the circumstances. The essential objectives of the Zionist Movement—a Jewish state, expansion, and settlement—were furthered by the addition of yet more territory. The particular circumstances of this war made complete ethnic cleansing impossible, but several hundred thousand Palestinians were nevertheless expelled.

49. The 1947 partition plan allotted to Israel 55 percent of Palestine; an additional 23 percent was captured in the 1948 war and now the remaining 22 percent, across the "Green Line" (the pre-1967 armistice line), was also captured. In 1967 Israel inadvertently united under its rule all the parts of the Palestinian people that remained in the country (including some of the refugees).

50. As soon as the war ended, the movement to settle the occupied territories began. Almost all the Israeli political factions participated in this movement, from the messianic-nationalistic "Gush Emunim" to the "leftist" United Kibbutz Movement. The

first settlers were supported by most politicians, left and right, from Yigal Alon (advocate of the Jewish settlement in Hebron) to Shimon Peres (the Kedumim settlement).

51. The fact that all governments of Israel cultivated and advanced the settlements, albeit to different extents, proves that the urge to implant new settlements was particular to no specific ideological camp and extended to the entire Zionist Movement. The impression that only a small minority has been driving the settlement activity forward is an illusion. Only an intense effort of all parts of the government, including all ministries, from 1967 onwards, could have produced the legislative, strategic, and budgetary infrastructure required for such a long-lasting and expensive endeavor.

52. The legislative infrastructure operates on the misleading assumption that the Occupation Authority is the owner of "government-owned lands," although these are the essential land reserves of the Palestinian population. It goes without saying that the settlement activity contravenes international law.

53. The dispute between the proponents of "Greater Israel" and those of "territorial compromise" is essentially a dispute about the way to achieve the shared basic Zionist aspiration: a homogeneous Jewish state in as large a territory as possible, but without a "ticking demographic bomb." The proponents of "compromise" emphasize the demographic issue and want to prevent the inclusion of the Palestinian population in the Israeli state. The "Greater Israel" adherents place the emphasis on the geographic issue and believe—privately or publicly—that it is possible to expel the non-Jewish population from the country (code name: "Transfer").

54. The general staff of the Israeli army played an important role in the planning and building of the settlements. It created the map of the settlements (identified with Ariel Sharon): blocs of settlements and bypass roads along lateral and longitudinal axes, chopping the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into pieces and imprisoning the Palestinians in isolated enclaves, each of which is surrounded by settlements and the occupation forces.

55. The Palestinians employed several methods of resistance, mainly raids across the Jordanian and Lebanese borders and attacks inside Israel and throughout the world. These acts are considered "terror" by Israelis, while the Palestinians see them as the legitimate resistance of an occupied people. While the Israelis considered the PLO leadership, headed by Yassir Arafat, as a