

# The Israeli Massacre

Peace in Galilee?

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## Introduction

Various technical and resource problems delayed publication of this issue of the FE (see article elsewhere). Hence, the sweep of events in the Middle East has already rendered some of the focus and information in this article a bit out of date. Atrocity has followed atrocity, and the situation has become even more dangerous and volatile. With the introduction of Reagan's "peace initiative," a scheme which would essentially leave the Palestinians at the mercy of their old nemesis King Hussein of Jordan, Begin and his supporters have proved themselves utterly intransigent by launching plans for further settlement of the West Bank by Zionist settlers. Begin, his face red with excitement, declared before Israeli parliament in a Hitler-like tirade, "The world will witness whose dedication will win...If someone tried to take Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] from us, we will tell him: Judea and Samaria for the Jewish people for all generations."

Since then, Israeli-backed Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel was killed and Israeli troops took West Beirut, nearly setting off an international conflict of unpredictable results by invading the Soviet embassy. Later, with tacit Israeli collusion and approval, right-wing Lebanese militiamen, armed and deployed by the Israelis, attacked two Palestinian refugee camps and slaughtered hundreds of unarmed non-combatants. This latest crime has done more to tarnish the image of Israel than any previous episode of the war, though it should be kept in mind that even this vicious massacre took far fewer lives than the Israeli saturation bombings of Tyre, Sidon and West Beirut. Now the United States is reintroducing U.S. Marines, which can only heighten tensions in the region.

The hypocritical tears shed by the U.S. over the "excesses" of its client state should be seen for what they are: a cynical maneuver which seeks to move the Begin government aside now that it has completed its dirty work and re-install the more "reasonable" Zionists of the Israeli Labor Party which have historically been more responsive to their master's bidding. The situation is similar to the Begin/Shamir role in the 1948 war: the irresponsible right-wingers of the Irgun and the Stern Gang commit the atrocities and the terror, are properly chastised by Ben-Gurion, and then move aside so the mainstream politicians, while still wringing their hands at what was done, can assume power untainted by the Deir Yassins and Shatilla-Sabras.

Zionism itself—and all nationalist-statist ideologies of the region—must be fought. The racist and exclusivist nature of Zionism will never allow a genuine internationalist and liberatory Jewish opposition to arise and will only promise more war and destruction and the eventual annihilation of the Israeli

people. Pan-Arabism, on the other hand, only serves to enchain the Arab peoples to the reactionary, murderous military and monarchist regimes under which they presently suffer. Only a widespread internationalist perspective shared by Arab and Jew and expressed in social practice—admittedly a remote possibility at this time—can ever bring peace.

As these lines are being written, the PLO forces are being evacuated from West Beirut, and the latest phase of Menachem Begin's "divinely inspired" (his words) holocaust in Lebanon is winding down. This unmitigated slaughter, "a beautiful moment...that will be remembered for generations," according to Begin, has left hundreds of thousands homeless, and tens of thousands killed and wounded. The indiscriminate cluster bombing and phosphorus bombing of towns, villages and refugee camps, interspersed by cease-fires which seemed to be called only to allow the Israelis time to reload, belies the hypocritical claims of the Israeli military machine that it attempted to spare civilians in its drive to annihilate the PLO. Rather, it became clear throughout the invasion and the siege of West Beirut, cynically called "Operation Peace in Galilee," that Begin and Sharon were intent upon killing as many Palestinians as possible.

A correspondent reported in the June 21 edition of Newsweek magazine, "After the terror bombing and indiscriminate shelling, no one could count the bodies buried in the rubble of Lebanon's coastal cities." Doctor Christopher Giannanou, a Canadian physician who worked for the Palestine Red Cross, described the leveling of the Ain El Helweh refugee camp by Israeli bombs. "It was razed to the ground by fire from aircraft, from battleships, tanks and artillery...The hospital was hit five or six times by artillery fire...How many people were left in shelters or buried in the rubble it is impossible to estimate. We felt we were living in an apocalypse. It was a scene of complete devastation. Not a building was left standing...Some areas were so badly hit even nature itself seemed to have been injured." (quoted in the *Village Voice*, 7/13/82)

Alongside the bombardment of the refugee camps and towns of southern Lebanon came a vicious propaganda barrage on the part of Zionists and apologists for Israel which blamed the victims for the slaughter perpetrated by the religio-militarist empire of "Eretz (Greater) Israel." Defending the carpet bombing of non-military and military targets alike, supporters of Israel accused the Palestinians of using the civilian Population as a shield (thus, somehow, justifying the obliteration of this "shield" by Zionist gunners). West Beirut, in which several hundred thousand Palestinians live, was being "held hostage" by the "terrorists." Israeli radio broadcasts and leaflets dropped from planes declared to the populace, "Get Out!" and one Israeli commander claimed, "The civilian population of Beirut has been given the opportunity to evacuate and whosoever decides to stay takes full responsibility on himself." But almost all observers agreed that Palestinians were being turned back or arrested when those who could' attempted to flee. According to John Yemma of the *Christian Science Monitor*, "Red Cross workers at the Antilles headquarters north of Beirut said that Palestinians simply were not being allowed to cross the lines." (8/9/82)

At the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in New York, Begin, the Middle East's most notorious terrorist, crowed that his invasion was a war of national defense, "the noblest concept of mankind." And before the Israeli Knesset Foreign and Security Committee, he justified the massive bombings of Lebanon by invoking as a precedent the bombings of Coventry and Dresden during World War II. A letter in the Israeli newspaper *Al Hamishmar* responded that apart from the fact that the bombing of Dresden was protested even before the end of the war, as for the bombing of Coventry, "How does a Jewish Minister dare to rely on such a murderous Nazi precedent? We, who oppose the war and the oppression in the occupied territories, are very careful not to hint at the growing resemblance between the acts of Begin, Sharon and Rafal and of what they say, to the worst nations in history, and here Begin comes and uses their crimes as a precedent" (cited by Alexander Cockburn in the *Village Voice*, 8/3/82)

Despite the howlings of the Zionist chorus about the gangsterism and terrorism of Palestinian guerrillas and splinter groups (which has dwindled continually over the last few years—seventeen persons died from terrorism-related incidents in Israel last year), the acts of the scattered bands of terrorists could never compete, in all their collective ferocity, with the armed might of the Israeli State, its Armed Forces, its police and security apparatus.

For years we have seen the "reprisals" of the racist Israeli State when an official would be attacked or a paramilitary settlement fired on—usually in the form of bombings of refugee camps, and not in the biblical manner of an-eye-for-an-eye, but more akin to the Nazi method of a hundred or two hundred for one. (One example is the

shoot-out between Palestinian commandos and West German police in Munich at the 1972 Olympics in which the commandos and eleven hostages were killed. The State of Israel immediately mounted a “reprisal raid” on southern Lebanon which killed three hundred people.)

The invasion wasn't even self defense, in any case. Sharon admitted that he had been planning it from the day he took office and Israel had massed troops along the border for weeks in advance awaiting a pretext to invade. This was at a time when the PLO was most ready to negotiate. But Begin's stubborn refusal to recognize the PLO, his approval of the construction of settlements on the West Bank (in violation of the Camp David Accords), and his harassment and victimization of even the most moderate Palestinian forces in Gaza and on the West Bank, are all ample evidence that Begin and his gang were not in the least interested in negotiation, in autonomy for Palestinians or in peace. Their attitude is summed up by Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, who emerged from a meeting with U.S. Special Envoy Philip Habib to stress, “No arrangement, no agreement, no deal is possible.” Meanwhile his troops shelled West Beirut, in their attempt to drive the Palestinians into the sea. The only arrangement acceptable to the Begin-Sharon clique is one in keeping with their goals of military and imperial expansion. The fate of the West Bank, in particular, is tied to events in Lebanon.

Begin's lifelong ambition, as Israeli writer Yael Lotan pointed out in the August 7–14 issue of *The Nation*, has been “to bring all western Palestine (Eretz Israel in Hebrew) under Jewish domination—to achieve which he must break down Palestinian resistance.” Part of the strategy in southern Lebanon, apart from the desire to smash the PLO militarily (and therefore, think the Zionists, politically) and to kill a lot of unruly Palestinians, is to hurt the PLO enough so that its influence will diminish in the occupied territories when they are annexed by Israel. The future of the area south of the Litani River (historically coveted by the Israelis) is also in question. The Israelis have said little about their own withdrawal after the exit of the PLO. They will probably hold on to sections of Lebanon while confronting the Syrians in the east. Begin's strategy is in keeping with the original colonialist project of Zionism, reflected in the statement of David Ben-Gurion: “To maintain the status quo will not do. We have set up a dynamic state bent on expansion.”

## Origins of the Zionist State

This expansionist drive, established upon a racist, nationalist ideology of Jewish “manifest destiny,” is not an aberration, as those who lament Begin's squandering of Israel's “moral capital” in his brutal war would have us believe. Despite Labor Zionist and liberal mystifications, this drive lies at the roots of Zionism and the creation of the European colonial settler State of Israel. Zionism is an integral part of the nineteenth century development of reactionary nationalist movements—and its revenge. The Jews, stateless, landless cosmopolitans, the victims of every nationalism in Europe, were themselves to be turned on others as an advance guard of imperialism in the Middle East.

As the Situationists wrote in 1967,

“Since its origins the Zionist movement has been the contrary of the revolutionary solution to what used to be called the Jewish Question. A direct product of European capitalism, it did not aim at the overthrow of a society that needed to persecute Jews, but at the creation of a Jewish national entity that would be protected from the anti-Semitic aberrations of decadent capitalism; it aimed not at the abolition of injustice, but at its transfer...The success of Zionism and its corollary, the creation of the state of Israel, is merely a miserable by-product of the triumph of world counter-revolution. To ‘socialism in a single country’ came the echo ‘justice for a single people’ and ‘equality in a single kibbutz.’ It was with Rothschild capital that the colonization of Palestine was organized and with European surplus-value that the first kibbutzim were set up. The Jews recreated for themselves all the fanaticism and segregation of which they had been victims. Those who had suffered mere toleration in their society were to struggle to become in another country owners disposing of the right to tolerate others. The prolonged sleep of proletarian internationalism once more brought forth a monster. The basic injustice against the Palestinian Arabs came back to roost with the Jews themselves: the State of the Chosen People was

nothing but one more class, society in which all the anomalies of the old societies were recreated...”  
 (“Two Local Wars,” October 1967)

The career of Theodore Herzl, the founder of the organized world Zionist movement, shows clearly the bourgeois nationalist and colonialist nature of Zionism. Herzl spent his life petitioning the various heads of Europe, including Bismark, British imperialist architect Cecil Rhodes, the Czar of Russia and his pogromist minister Von Plehve, the Pope and the Turkish Sultan for funds and support to create a Jewish colonial settler state in Palestine. Such a project would serve two fundamental purposes: it would siphon off the revolutionary Jewish masses and create a European outpost in the Middle East, where the Zionist state would “form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism” (Herzl, *A Jewish State*, London, 1896, p. 29)

This imperialist bulwark of civilization took the same form in Palestine in relation to the indigenous people there that such projects did everywhere (South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Americas), fulfilling the definition that Stanley Diamond has given for civilization, which is conquest abroad and repression at home. And the colonization process was the same. Ahad Ha’am, a famous Jewish writer, wrote in 1891 on a visit to Palestine, that the Jewish settlers “treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause and even boast of these deeds; and nobody among us opposes this despicable inclination.” In 1907 the Hebrew journal *Ha Shiloah* wrote, “Unless we want to deceive ourselves deliberately, we have to admit that we have thrown people out of their miserable lodgings and taken away their sustenance.” Karl Kautsky noted in 1921 that “Little more attention was paid to the Arabs than was paid to the Indians in North America.”

Through land purchases from absentee landlords, the Jewish settlers forced small farmers and sharecroppers off land that they had inhabited for generations, and justified such usurpations with their “holy book.” Such colonization was to continue in an even more brutal form after the 1948 war when the newly formed state employed the Absentee Property Law to dispossess thousands of their land, their shops, and their orchards. Sharon’s refusal to compromise, to even admit that his enemy exists, comes from this long tradition of racist colonial violence, reflected in the words of Yoseph Weitz, who was head of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department when he wrote in 1940:

“Between ourselves, it must be clear that there is no room in this country for both peoples...the only solution is Eretz Israel [Greater Israel], at least the Western Israel [west] of Jordan River], without Arabs, and there is no other way but to transfer them all—not one village, not one tribe should be left.”  
 (cited by Noam Chomsky in *Peace In the Middle East?*)

At the end of World War I Palestine was nearly 95% Palestinian-Arab. Money from Europe, support from Great Britain, and land purchases and provocations had driven almost 2,000 Palestinian families from the land by 1929. During 1947 through 1948, three-quarters of a million people were driven from their homes (see related article, “Zionism Victorious” on 1948 War in this issue). Of the approximately 400 Jewish settlements established after 1948, some 350 were on Palestinian refugee property. Two-thirds of cultivated land was originally Palestinian-owned. By 1958, a quarter of a million acres of land were expropriated from Palestinians who had remained in Israel. As Moshe Dayan said later, “There is not a single Jewish settlement that was not established in the place of a former Arab Village.” The Zionists “made the desert bloom” by stealing the orchards, the gardens and the pastures from their original owners. This same genocidal, culturcidal policy remains in operation today. \*

## **A Palestinian State?**

Zionist ideology exploited the genuine and legitimate desires of the Jewish people to escape the cauldron of violence and extermination which was Europe and which led to the annihilation of millions of European Jews. But the horrible irony of the search for security in the creation of a national state on stolen lands was that such a situation was bound to create greater and greater dangers and insecurities with higher stakes at every turn. Not only did Zionism become the blighted mirror image of all the oppressive national state ideologies which immiserated and

murdered the Jews; it set the stage for a never-ending insecurity within a garrison state, constantly threatened by the surrounding hostile states which saw it as an incursion into their own “national destinies.”

More than this, it created still another wave of victims, its own Jews, landless and stateless people who would threaten its legitimacy as long as they existed and contested it for the lands it claimed. And these new Jews, these Palestinian refugees, dispersed and despised, show no sign of giving up their desires to return to their homeland and their patrimony.

The victory of the Zionist State and the betrayals of the reactionary Arab regimes gave birth to a Palestinian nationalist movement which was the mirror image of the Zionist movement, similar in its nationalist ideology with a socialist tinge, its dependence on various nation states for support, and its methods of military struggle and terrorism. Now two national movements face each other, arms in hand: one powerful, with an army and a police and the backing of the world’s most powerful imperialist nation; the other outgunned, betrayed by all its backers, on the run and desperate. Even the moderate call for a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza which Begin rejects would not be sufficient to resolve this complex problem.

As Noam Chomsky has pointed out, such a state would come to be a kind of bantustan, an exploited reservation for cheap labor under the domination of Israel, Syria and Jordan. In fact, such a Palestinian state would come to resemble the state of Israel—repressive, authoritarian, economically, politically and militarily dependent on the superpowers and in economic rivalry and social confrontation with bordering countries.

The creation of another capitalist state with its own army and its police would be no solution to the present conflict, even though the State of Israel and the proto-state of the PLO may eventually come to terms over such an agreement (though with the fascist Begin clique in power, even that is extremely unlikely).

As the *Bulletin for Jewish-Arab Cooperation* pointed out in 1948, “In a long-range political sense, we can say that the only alternative to a war between nations is not a static peace...but a war between classes, between ruled and ruler, of the Jewish and Arab workers and peasants against the two upper classes, against the fascist parties of both nations, and the British or other outside interests that want to control the area.” (cited by Chomsky, pp. 85–6)

Such a possibility is remote, but it exists. This war, which was an attempt like the Falklands/Malvinas adventure to draw attention away from glaring economic problems and growing crisis at home, was protested by a significant section of the Israeli population. A breach is becoming possible, and the opportunity exists for the Palestinians to follow a course of internationalist, libertarian struggle. But the Palestinians will not likely follow this latest wave of violence with such a perspective—they have been too mutilated, and the cycle of bloodshed and war will probably continue.

Despite the cynical claims of Begin and Sharon that their pogrom against the Palestinians improves the prospects for peace, the underlying problem has only been aggravated. The four million Palestinians, whether they are in large military formations in one small geographic area or not, and in spite of the statist illusions of the PLO politicians and their continuous capitulations to murderous, equally pogromist Arab regimes, are a volatile, revolutionary, unassimilable people who pose the question of power and polarize societies wherever they go.

This was true in Jordan and led to their slaughter and expulsion by Hashemite troops in 1970. It was also true in Lebanon, where they contributed to the polarization of the society along class, political, religious and tribal lines and caused the collapse of that fragile and deformed creation of French imperialism. It is also true in Syria, which explains the unwillingness of the Syrians to defend their “Arab brothers” during the latest Israeli invasion and their intervention against the Palestinians and Muslim leftists on the side of the rightist Christian militias during the Lebanon civil war in 1976.

The PLO columns are being evacuated to various countries, and Sharon already brags of defeating them militarily and politically, adding that a peace treaty may soon be signed with Lebanon. Begin declared to a group of American Jews in Jerusalem, “Very soon the fighting will be finished, and then perhaps that famous verse from the Book of Judges will be brought into realization: “There shall be peace in the land for forty years.”” (New York Times, 8/22/82) But their military “final solution” of the Palestinian problem will not work.

In 1970 Nathan Yalin-Mor, a member of the Zionist terrorist Stern Gang in the 1940s who later became an advocate of Arab-Jewish reconciliation, observed, “Without the Palestinians being part of, and partner in, any political settlement as an autonomous body, no solution will be of lasting value. A new selling out of the Palestinian people would amount to planting a time bomb to explode after a few years.” As Chomsky points out, “In general, each mil-

itary success simply reconstitutes the struggle at a higher level of military force...a higher level of potential danger to all concerned. From the Israeli point of view, this is a losing strategy. Israel can win every conflict but the last."

## Breaking the Circle

The dubious military victory of the Israeli armed forces has only raised the stakes in a deadly game of confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, between the various states in the region, and ultimately between the superpowers. Israeli troops now face the USSR-backed Syrians in the Bekaa Valley; the ascendancy of the fascist chieftain Bachir Gemayel to the presidency in an election boycotted by Muslims portends future blood feuds and civil war; and now U.S. Marines have gone in against the formal protests of the Soviet Union.

Despite Begin's optimism, the crisis is deepening pulling more forces and more unpredictable factors into the maelstrom. As one commentator told *Newsweek* magazine, "In a sense, it's really out of control." (6/28/82) The potential for greater conflict is obvious, and brings to mind Israeli writer Uri Avneri's warnings made in 1968. "Nuclear weapons, missiles of all types, are nearing the Semitic scene," he wrote in his book *Israel Without Zionists*. "Their advent is inevitable. If the vicious circle is not broken, and broken soon, it will lead, with the preordained certainty of a Greek tragedy, toward a holocaust that will bury Tel Aviv and Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem."

Somehow this vicious circle must be broken, but it will never be broken by the Zionist state. Nor is it likely to be broken by a defensive, increasingly desperate Palestinian population, led by a militarized racket with statist aspirations. The nationalist and statist solutions being proposed from various quarters would perhaps at best only postpone a wider conflict.

The veteran terrorist, Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, stated that "The PLO and peace are mutually exclusive." But in reality it is the state which is inimical to peace. No one who loves human freedom could ever deny the right of Jews to travel to Palestine and live there out of a centuries-long yearning to return to the sacred places of their ancestral memory and their tradition, any more than one could say, deny Gypsies passage to India to find the origins of their long wanderings. Rather, only in a world with open frontiers and the abolition of the nation state and its border police, a world of free passage without necessity of passport and papers, can national conflict be resolved and human community be established.

The desire for one's homeland is not the same as the desire to construct a national state upon the stolen lands of another people. Hence, it is not the recognition of the right to exist of the Zionist state (which the Zionists have demanded and which the PLO has essentially done) which is the key to the resolution of national conflict in Palestine, but the destruction of all national states and the mutual recognition by Israeli Jew and Palestinian Arab of the humanity and the legitimate aspirations of the other.

This means as a fundamental precondition the recognition of the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland, and the admittedly problematic question of the stolen lands—a question not resolved in monetary, but in human, personal and communitarian terms. A section of the Jewish Labor Movement understood this when they declared in 1924: "The main and most reliable means of strengthening peace and mutual understanding between the Jewish people and the Arab people...is the accord, alliance, and joint effort of Jewish and Arab workers in town and country" (cited by Chomsky, p. 38).

Such a perspective seems impossible today—so much blood has been shed, so many crimes committed, so many lasting hatreds sown. And the situation holds little promise for a humane solution to the conflict in the foreseeable future. The nazis who presently rule in Jerusalem enjoy widespread support for their unyielding, arrogant campaigns. The Palestinians, on the other hand, have been rendered more destitute and desperate than ever and may become even more captive to the most militarist and authoritarian tendencies of the PLO.

But a radical break must be made in which unending national conflicts can be transformed into class war against the capitalist nation states, or the situation will only worsen and spread until the proxies involve the superpowers directly and local wars become global wars. The road ahead is unclear, but somehow the fundamental human problems underlying this festering sore which is the Middle East must be challenged, and the protagonists and victims must find a way to move beyond the fatal cycle of conquest and war. To do any less will be to accept the inevitability of the most dire and tragic of catastrophes.

## Note

\* Don Peretz wrote in the September 1969 issue of the Israeli magazine *New Outlook* that as a result of the 1948 war, “Whole Arab cities—such as Jaffa, Acre, Lydda, Ramie, Baysan, and Maida—388 towns and villages, and large parts of others, containing nearly a quarter of all buildings standing in Israel during 1948, were taken over by new Jewish immigrants. Ten thousand former Arab shops, businesses and stores were left in Jewish hands as well as some 30,000 acres of groves that supplied at least a quarter of the new state’s scarce foreign currency earnings from citrus. Acquisition of this former Palestinian Arab property helped greatly to make the Jewish state economically viable and to speed up the early influx of refugees and immigrants from Europe.” Zionist propaganda, on the other hand, has always portrayed Palestine as an uninhabited desert before the arrival of the Jews, for example, the notorious declaration made by the American-born Golda Meir:

“It is not as though there was a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.”

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