

pire. The truth, however, is that Mr. Reagan as President has never shown the slightest inclination to pursue such an ambitious strategy.

Certainly he means what he says when he speaks of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," and I think he also genuinely believes that Communism is a passing aberration destined someday to disappear. But that consummation so devoutly to be wished he is evidently willing to leave to heaven. To the Oval Office, while he occupies it, he assigns a much more modest task, which is to get the United States back into the business of doing at least *something* to contain Soviet expansionism after a period when we stood by and helplessly watched the Soviets achieve overall military superiority and a new global reach extending into the Middle East, Africa, and especially Central America. As against those who wish to continue doing nothing (or actually to support and even sponsor the establishment of Communist regimes in Central America and other parts of the Third World on the theory that if we do so they will all turn out to be Titoist), Mr. Reagan's idea is to restore the military balance and simultaneously renegotiate the same kind of arrangement with the Soviets that Mr. Nixon thought he had achieved in 1972.

Thus, far from trying to exacerbate the Polish crisis by declaring Poland in default, Mr. Reagan actually helped the Soviets stabilize the situation there; nor has he done much to strengthen the forces in Afghanistan and Angola fighting to free themselves from Soviet imperial domination. As for the hard line he has taken with the Sandinistas and the guerrillas in El Salvador, it does not at all go beyond the bounds of "hard-headed détente." For as Mr. Nixon himself makes clear in *Real Peace*, keeping Soviet influence out of Central America is an essential element of a hard-headed détente, the obverse of our refraining from efforts to destabilize East Europe.

READING Mr. Haig's book, I found myself astonished anew that even

a policy with such limited objectives should be so controversial, that an administration as prudent as Mr. Reagan's should be attacked as reckless, that a President so cautious in the use of force as Ronald Reagan (see Lebanon) should be called trigger-happy. There is no good reason why the policy Mr. Haig describes and defends—and which remains the policy of the Reagan administration—should not command the support of mainstream Democrats. It is, after all, a policy whose lineage can be traced directly back to Harry Truman, differing from containment mainly in its greater modesty and moderation; and in attacking it as though it were descended from Douglas MacArthur, the Democrats today sound more and more like Henry Wallace. That détente, even hard-headed détente, should now be considered the hard-line position is a reminder of how influential the forces of appeasement have become in shaping the terms of our public discourse, and how far we have traveled as a nation from the bipartisan consensus on containment we once enjoyed and that we still need if we are to cope even minimally with the Soviet threat. It is because Mr. Haig throws so intense, if indirect, a light on this sorry condition that his book is so painful to read.

### Refugees?

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL: THE ORIGINS OF THE ARAB-JEWISH CONFLICT OVER PALESTINE. By JOAN PETERS. *Harper & Row*. 601 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

JOAN PETERS began this book planning to write about the Arabs who fled Palestine in 1948-49, when armies of the Arab states attempted to destroy the fledgling state of Israel. In the course of research on this subject, she came across a "seemingly casual" discrepancy be-

DANIEL PIPES, lecturer on history at Harvard University, contributed "The Media and the Middle East" to our June issue. His most recent book is *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power*.

tween the standard definition of a refugee and the definition used for the Palestinian Arabs. In other cases, a refugee is someone forced to leave a permanent or habitual home. In this case, however, it is someone who had lived in Palestine for just two years before the flight that began in 1948.

This discrepancy made little impression on her at first, Miss Peters recounts. But as she continued, the anomaly of the Palestinians "began to nag and unravel" the outline of her book. Why a separate definition for the Palestinians? What was it about them that had to be incorporated in the official description of eligibility for refugee status? Reading historical materials about Palestine in the years before 1948, Miss Peters came across a statement by Winston Churchill that she says opened her eyes to the situation in Palestine. In 1939 Churchill challenged the common notion that Jewish immigration into Palestine had uprooted its Arab residents. To the contrary, according to him, "So far from being persecuted, the Arabs have crowded into the country and multiplied till their population has increased more than even all world Jewry could lift up the Jewish population."

Arabs crowded into Palestine? As Miss Peters pursued this angle she found a fund of obscure information that confirmed Churchill's observation. Drawing on census statistics and a great number of contemporary accounts, she pieced together the dimensions of Arab immigration into Palestine before 1948. Although others have noted this phenomenon, she is the first to document it, to attempt to quantify it, and to draw conclusions from it. Her historical detective work has produced startling results which should materially influence the future course of the debate about the Palestinian problem.

Before entering into the statistics and reports Miss Peters uses to put forward her argument, however, I should enter a word of caution about *From Time Immemorial*. The author is not a historian or someone practiced in writing on politics, and she tends to let her passions carry her away. As a result, the book suffers from chaotic

presentation and an excess of partisanship, faults which seriously mar its impact. But they do not diminish the importance of the facts presented. Despite its drawbacks, *From Time Immemorial* contains a wealth of information which is well worth the effort to uncover.

MAKING use of work done by Kemal Karpat in the Ottoman records, Miss Peters ascertains the non-Jewish population in 1893 of the area that would later form Palestine under the British Mandate. She then divides this area into three parts: one without Jewish settlement, one with light Jewish settlement, and one with heavy Jewish settlement. She compares the non-Jewish population of each of these parts in 1893 and 1947, on the eve of Israel's independence. In the area of no Jewish settlement, the non-Jewish population stood in 1893 at 337,200; in 1947 it was 730,000, a growth of 116 percent. In the area of light Jewish settlement, the non-Jewish population grew in the same period from 38,900 to 110,900 or 185 percent. Finally, in the area of heavy Jewish settlement, the non-Jewish population grew from 92,300 in 1893 to 462,000 in 1947—or 401 percent. From these figures Miss Peters concludes that "the Arab population appears to have increased in direct proportion to the Jewish presence."

The great variance in the figures usually gets obscured because the three regions are lumped together and counted as a single unit. Population in the whole area of Mandatory Palestine grew 178 percent in fifty-four years. This increase can be accounted for through natural reproduction alone; it therefore raises few questions. But 401 percent cannot be explained in this way, much less the vast difference in growth rates among the three divisions.

How, then, to account for the varying rates? By the movement of peoples. Although the Jews alone moved to Palestine for ideological reasons, they were not alone in emigrating there. Arabs joined them in large numbers, from the first *aliyah* in 1882 to the creation of Israel in 1948. "The Arabs were moving into

the very areas where Jewish settlement had preceded them and was luring them." Arab immigration received much less attention because both the Turkish and British administrators (before and after 1917, respectively) took little interest in them. Under the latter, for instance, "there was not even a serious gauge for considering the incidence of Arab immigration into Palestine." The return of Zionists to the land of their ancestors was

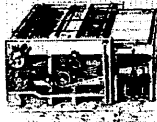
a topic of nearly universal fascination, both positive and negative. Arabs crossing newly-established and artificial boundaries caught no one's interest.

As a result, officials in Palestine counted only a small percentage of the Arab immigrants. British records for 1934 show only 1,734 non-Jews as legal immigrants and about 3,000 as illegals. Yet, according to a newspaper interview in August 1934 with the governor of the Hauran

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By William Leggett

Compiled, Edited, and with a Foreword  
By Lawrence H. White

William Leggett, writing for the *New York Evening Post*, the *Examiner*, and the *Plaindealer* in the 1830's based his editorial views on the principle of equal rights to liberty and property.

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district in Syria, "In the last few months from 30,000 to 36,000 Hauranese had entered Palestine and settled there." In 1947, British officials had counted only 37,000 Arabs as the aggregate of non-Jewish immigrants in Palestine since 1917—hardly more than had come from one district of Syria in less than one year alone.

Non-Jewish immigrants came from all parts of the Middle East, including Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Transjordan (as Jordan was once known), Saudi Arabia, the Yemens, Egypt, Sudan, and Libya. Thanks to British unconcern, Arab immigrants were generally left alone and allowed to settle in Mandatory Palestine. So many Arabs came, Miss Peters estimates, that "if all those Jews and all those Arabs who arrived in . . . Palestine between 1893 and 1948 had remained, and if they were forced to leave now, a dual exodus of at least equal proportion would in all probability take place. Palestine would be depopulated once again."

Some British administrators complained about the laxness toward Arab immigration, but to little avail. The author devotes sixteen pages to the memoranda sent in the latter part of 1937 by the British consul in Damascus, Colonel Gilbert MacKereth, in which he urges a more effective patrolling of Palestine's borders. MacKereth failed in this because British concern with immigration remained always focused on the Jews.

What took hundreds of thousands of Arabs to Palestine? Economic opportunity. The Zionists brought the skills and resources of Europe. Like other Europeans settling scarcely populated areas in recent times—in Australia, Southern Africa, or the American West—the Jews in Palestine initiated economic activities that created jobs and wealth on a level far beyond that of the indigenous peoples. In response, large numbers of Arabs moved toward the settlers to find employment.

The conventional picture has it that Jewish immigrants bought up Arab properties, forcing the former owners into unemployment. Miss Peters argues exactly the contrary, that the Jews created new oppor-

tunities which attracted emigrants from distant places. To the extent that there was unemployment among the Arabs, it was mostly among the recent arrivals.

This reversal of the usual interpretation implies a wholly different way of seeing the Arab position in Mandatory Palestine. As Winston Churchill observed, "It is very difficult to make a case out for the misery of the Arabs if at the same time their compatriots from adjoining states could not be kept from going in to share that misery." The data unearthed by Joan Peters indicate that Arabs benefited economically so much by the presence of Jewish settlers from Europe that they traveled hundreds of miles to get closer to them.

In turn, this explains why the definition of a refugee from Palestine in 1948 is a person who lived there for just two years: because many Arab residents in 1948 had immigrated so recently. The usual definition would have cut out a substantial portion of the persons who later claimed to be refugees from Palestine.

Thus, the "Palestinian problem" lacks firm grounding. Many of those who now consider themselves Palestinian refugees were either immigrants themselves before 1948 or the children of immigrants. This historical fact reduces their claim to the land of Israel; it also reinforces the point that the real problem in the Middle East has little to do with Palestinian-Arab rights.

### Paint & Politics

HOW NEW YORK STOLE THE IDEA OF MODERN ART: ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, FREEDOM, AND THE COLD WAR. By SERGE GUILBAUT. Translated by ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER. University of Chicago Press. 276 pp. \$22.50.

Reviewed by LIONEL ABEL

LOOKING back at the art scene in New York City as shaped during the war years and early 50's, a critic might well find much to crit-

LIONEL ABEL's new memoir, *The Intellectual Follies*, will be published in the fall by Norton. Sections from the book have appeared in COMMENTARY.

icize in past descriptions of the Abstract Expressionist movement, both by those who championed and by those who opposed it; he might also raise questions about the motives of the artists involved, as of their champions and their detractors. And if such an inquiry were pursued with an informed sympathy and a readiness to cover a wide range of fact—as we find, for example, in T. J. Clark's essay "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art" in the September 1982 issue of *Critical Inquiry*—the results might be clarifying. But Serge Guilbaut's review of the art movement during those years is hardly an inquiry; it is much more like a prosecutor's brief. The motives of those who championed the Abstract Expressionists are not scrutinized, or searched out, but "revealed" in all of what the author takes to be their political misguidedness. The actual works of the painters are not even once described, nor are there photographs of them to remind the reader that so much agitation and disagreement is about actual paintings. The artists are of course mentioned, but almost always in connection with some manifesto they had drawn up, never in connection with some painting one of them had actually taken the trouble to bring off. Barnett Newman, for example, is mentioned almost as frequently as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, though Newman, who later produced some remarkable canvases (among them the lovely *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow & Blue*), was known during the critical years of the movement mainly for his formulation of the demands and resolves of artists with whom he was associated.

And there is worse. Serge Guilbaut's title is *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, and the subtitle is "Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War." Now the title is patently a fraud, for there is nothing in the text to suggest that anything whatever was stolen, or that Abstract Expressionism is in fact the *idea* of modern art. Some reviewers have seen the title as a yielding to commercialism. They have not reacted