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Letters

Tikkun reserves the right to select, edit, and shorten all submissions to the Letters section.

REVISING ISRAELI HISTORY

To the Editor:

Benny Morris claims (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1988) that "at no point during the war did Arab leaders issue a blanket call for Palestine's Arabs to leave their homes and villages and wander into exile." Furthermore, he erroneously states that there was no "Arab radio or press campaign urging or ordering the Palestinians to flee." Indeed, Mr. Morris emphatically states that he has "found no trace of any such broadcasts..."

In contrast to what appears to be the selected research of Mr. Morris, there are quite a number of sources that prove not only that Arab broadcasts were a major factor behind the Palestinian exodus from Israel, but that these broadcasts were under the guiding influence of the Palestinian Arab leadership. One prominent source is the Jordanian daily *Filastin*, which wrote on February 19, 1949: "The Arab states, which had encouraged the Palestinian Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies ... failed

to keep their promises to help these refugees."

In Cyprus, the Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station reported on April 3, 1949, that "it must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem."

Edward Selim Atiyah, the secretary of the Arab League office in London, stated in his book *The Arabs* (Penguin, 1955) that the "wholesale exodus was due partly to the belief of the Arabs, encouraged by the boasting of an unrealistic Arab press and the irresponsible utterances of some of the Arab leaders that it could be only a matter of some weeks before the Jews were defeated by the armies of the Arab States..."

The Research Group for European Migration Problems wrote (REMP Bulletin, Jan./Mar. 1957) that "the Arab League issued orders exhorting the people to seek temporary refuge in neighboring countries, later to return to their abodes in the wake of the victorious Arab armies and obtain their share of the abandoned Jewish property."

Mr. Morris outlandishly claims that there is "no contemporary reference to or citation from such a broadcast ..." encouraging the Palestinians to flee. However, the London weekly *Economist* reported on October 2, 1948: "Of the

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62,000 Arabs who formerly lived in Haifa not more than 5,000 or 6,000 remained. Various factors influenced their decision to seek safety in flight. There is little doubt that the most potent of the factors were the announcements made over the air by the Higher Arab Executive, urging the Arabs to quit."

Perhaps the most sad but tellingly honest perspective was that of the Palestinian refugee who said in *Ad Difaa*—a Jordan daily, on September 6, 1954—"The Arab government told us: Get out so that we can get in. So we got out, but they did not get in."

The above references are just a few of the many records that clearly reveal that Arab leaders used the media to instruct the Palestinians to leave Israel during the war of 1948.

Benny Morris seems quite proud of the so-called new historians' claim that they represent a "maturing" Israel and a "more balanced and a more 'truthful' view of the country's history..." As Mr. Morris so aptly notes, it says in Pirkei Avot: "On three things the world rests: On justice, on truth and on peace." The commentators point out that in order to ensure that the complete truth is revealed, justice requires a total investigation of the entire truth. Mr. Morris has certainly failed to serve justice, and as a result his analysis is far from being totally truthful!

Chaim Marmer
Downsview, Ontario, Canada

To the Editor:

Benny Morris's "Israel: The New Historiography" (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1988) challenges some well-rooted conventional wisdoms of Zionist history and for that it is welcome, but a significant omission takes much away from Morris's analysis. He observes that: "[A]part from the birth of the State of Israel, the major political outcome of the 1948 war was the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem." Not one but two refugee problems were created: a Jewish one and an Arab one. In expressing our concern for the Palestinian refugees and sympathy for their claims, we unintentionally adopt a double standard.

Pleased that the Jews who left and were forced to leave Arab territories were resettled, albeit imperfectly, in Israel, we forget that the responsibility

for resettlement fell, as international law provides that it should have, on Israel. Similarly, responsibility for resettling the Palestinians who left and were forced to leave their homes in Jewish territory lay and continues to lie with Arab governments and their colleagues in the PLO. That responsibility has never been met, other than by attempts to seek retribution against Israel. If Israel is to compensate the Palestinians in land, rights, and money, then Israel should receive an appropriate quid pro quo for its cost, both human and monetary, incurred in resettling the uprooted Jews from Arab lands, not just hedged mutterings from Algiers that mutual coexistence with a truncated Israel might be possible. If Israel is to return the occupied territories, then the Arab nations should compensate the Jews for their lost and taken properties in their former homes. If Israel is to provide the Palestinians in their midst with rights, including the right to self-determination, then the Arab nations must provide similar human rights to Jews and other non-Arab peoples in their midst.

It is time we put our ingrained Jewish sense of equity to work not just in convincing ourselves that the Palestinians deserve far, far better treatment than they receive today (a point with which there should be no quarrel), but in convincing the world that compromise is a two-way street, and that it is time the Arab nations and the PLO abided fully by the traffic rules.

David D. Knoll
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I was very disturbed by Benny Morris's article (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1988). As a person who came to Israel as a fourteen-year-old in 1949 from Holocaust-ravaged Europe, was educated in Israel, served in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the fifties, and whose children served in the IDF in the eighties, I have no choice but to take a very serious look at what Mr. Morris and the persons he quotes have to say. Did some of my friends, and later some of my students, die in battles just because Ben-Gurion was "not in a hurry" to make peace? I hope Mr. Morris can substantiate his statements, which I find to be very serious accusations against Israel's governments, starting with that

of Ben-Gurion.

I strongly disagree with Mr. Morris's statements about the alleged IDF "over-reactions" in Lod in July 1948. He himself admits that the Arabs attacked and started shooting first. Whatever the IDF did to the Arabs in Lod and Ramle was in self-defense. The fact that there are still a significant number of Arabs residing in Lod and Ramle proves the tolerance and generosity of the Israeli people in general and the IDF in particular. The IDF, as a general rule (discounting some "flukes," of which even the U.S. army is not clean), always preserved the *tobar baneshbek*, the cleanliness of arms, in many cases at the expense of the blood of its members.

Daniel Tabak
Fairfax, Virginia

To the Editor:

Benny Morris does himself a grave disservice in "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past," (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1988) by lumping himself with Avi Shlaim (author of *Collusion Across the Jordan*) and Simha Flapan (*The Birth of Israel*). Simply put, there is no comparison between Morris and these authors.

In his own book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Morris does a valuable service by painstakingly going through the archives and reconstructing hundreds of incidents. His tone is impartial, his conclusions are well-grounded, and his goal is to determine historical truth. But the same can hardly be said of the other two authors he discusses.

Shlaim's book suffers from an anti-Israel animus. He makes it his task to discredit those he calls "Zionist historians." In the process, he adopts some dubious positions. To take just one: Shlaim holds that David Ben-Gurion, even as he declared a Jewish-Arab alliance to be one of his main objectives, "deep in his heart, rejoiced at the flight of the Arabs." This is calumny, not serious history.

As for Flapan, the less said the better. His screed is an embarrassment, filled with inaccuracies and anti-Zionist venom. Again, one example: Flapan argues that the Arab states invaded Israel in 1948 not to destroy Israel but to stop King Abdullah of Jordan from achieving his dream of a greater Syria.

This argument is about as preposterous as claiming that Hitler invaded Poland to prevent it from falling into Stalin's hands. Flapan's book may be the worst book on Israel ever issued by a reputable publisher.

Having distinguished so sharply between Morris, and Shlaim and Flapan, I should like to point out one discouraging feature they share in common: all three are very familiar with Israel but have little knowledge and even less interest in the Arab countries. This imbalance leads, almost inevitably, to distortion. The authors see Israel in a vacuum. Like a host of American critics of Israel (Bernard Avishai comes first to mind), they focus so intently on the Israeli polity that they lose sight of the larger context in which Israeli actions take place.

In doing so, they closely resemble those many American historians interested only in the United States. Whoever looks at the cold war only from the American side is almost certain to blame its occurrence on Washington. The same goes for these people's analysis of every other foreign policy issue from the Berlin blockade to the INF treaty. Only with a larger perspective is it possible to understand such an issue in its entirety and judge its rights and wrongs.

Daniel Pipes
Director, Foreign Policy Research
Institute
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Benny Morris responds:

The myth that an Arab radio campaign and blanket calls by Arab leaders to the Arabs of Palestine to leave their homes, villages, and towns in advance of the Arab invasion of May 15, 1948, was a, or the major, cause of the Palestinian exodus is almost as old as the Judean Hills, and perhaps as ineradicable. Israeli and pro-Israeli propagandists have a fistful of quotes that are regularly trotted out in support (see Mr. Marmer's letter).

There was no Arab policy to achieve the exodus of the Palestinians; no outside Arab leader called upon the Arabs of Palestine to leave their homes. Not one of Mr. Marmer's quotes qualifies as solid, contemporary historical evidence to the contrary. Marmer's quotes originate in (1) Israeli propaganda, eventu-

ally picked up by Western officials and journalists (such as the *Economist's* report from October 1948), and their Arab counterparts; and (2) inter-Arab feuding. The Palestinians, in order to justify and explain their weakness and spinelessness after the fact, were eager to blame the Arab leaders outside for their exodus. Similarly, some Arab leaders—such as the late Syrian leader Khalid al-Azm—for reasons of inter-Arab rivalry found it useful to blame other Arab leaders for what had happened in Palestine, including the mass evacuation.

No one has yet been able to produce a contemporary—meaning from April or May 1948—quote or even reference to such a radio call or order by an Arab leader. Israeli intelligence and British and American diplomatic posts in the Middle East monitored Arab radio broadcasts on a daily basis and produced reports quoting from, summarizing, or referring to these broadcasts. Not one Israeli intelligence or British and American report from this period contains such a quote, refers to such a broadcast, or, indeed, mentions the existence of such an Arab policy or a call by an Arab leader to the Palestinians of the sort that allegedly occurred.

The opposite is the case—and I would advise Mr. Marmer to read my book. In early May 1948, the Arab governments, in conjunction with Kaukji's Arab Liberation Army, launched a concerted campaign, on the radio waves and by other means, against the exodus, urging the population in Palestine to stay put and those who had already fled to return to their homes. There are Israeli intelligence reports and British diplomatic cables from those days quoting from these broadcasts or referring to their content. For example, at the end of June 1948, the Israeli intelligence service concluded that "the Arab Higher Committee [in the spring] had decided ... to adopt measures to weaken the exodus by imposing restrictions, penalties, threats, propaganda in the press [and] on the radio. ... [It] especially tried to prevent the flight of army-age young males." On May 6, 1948, the Jewish Agency's Arab section radio-monitoring unit reported, in its daily monitoring report, that the previous day Radio Jerusalem and Damascus Radio had "announced in the name of the High Command: 'Every Arab must defend his home

and property. ... Those who leave their homes will be punished and their homes destroyed.'"

I challenge Mr. Marmer to find a single mention in an Israeli military or civilian government document or in a British and American diplomatic report written in April, May, or June 1948 of an ongoing Arab campaign urging or ordering the Arab population to quit Palestine, citing or quoting from a specific Arab radio broadcast or exhortation by a named Arab leader. There was no such campaign, and Mr. Marmer will find no such quotes. (Mr. Marmer may have noticed that in none of the quotations from later months that he (re)produces is any specific Arab leader, radio broadcast, or date mentioned. Why?)

Let me quickly add to this point that there were certain specific instances in which Arab political or military leaders urged specific communities to quit their homes—in Haifa in April, in various Judean Hills and Jezreel Valley villages in April and May. These cases are dealt with in my book. But there were no blanket orders; there was no general policy of promoted exodus.

I do not think that the Arab refugee problem, created in 1948, can be equated with the Jewish exodus from Arab lands, which took place mainly during the 1950s. The Jewish exodus—from Iraq, Morocco, Egypt, and other Moslem lands—deserves specific and full-scale study, and, no doubt, its historian will one day emerge. But certain things are fairly clear: while there were pogroms in some of the Arab states in 1948, triggered by the Arab-Jewish hostilities in Palestine, there was no mass expulsion of the Jewish communities from the Arab countries. The year 1948 triggered a wave of Jewish emigration from Arab lands, a wave promoted in large measure by Zionist emissaries and broadcasts. But the bulk of Iraqi Jewry left Iraq only in 1950 to 1951; the bulk of Moroccan Jewry, only in the early 1950s and early 1960s. To see these waves of emigration as merely the consequences of the 1948 war would be a vast oversimplification.

In my article in *Tikkun* I did not evince sympathy for the Palestinian refugees or anyone else. My purpose, Mr. Knoll, was not to prompt tears, but to delineate a change in historical perceptions of 1948. It is possible, if and when a settlement is negotiated,

that both exiled Palestinians and Jewish emigrants from Arab lands should be compensated. It is possible that a Palestinian state could and will arise side by side with Israel, on areas from which the IDF withdraws. Perhaps, as part of a comprehensive peace settlement, the terrorized or disadvantaged Jews of Syria and Yemen could gain release from their difficult existence. But all this is politics and really has nothing to do with my article.

As for IDF behavior in Lydda and Ramle in 1948, and elsewhere during the war, I suggest Mr. Tabak read my book. He will discover, among other things, that the population of Ramle did not fire upon the Israeli occupation force in July 1948. Therefore, whatever the merits or demerits of the concurrent expulsion from Lydda, its fate cannot be justified or explained with the same arguments. In general I would say, probably to Mr. Tabak's surprise (outrage?), that the IDF has progressively become a "cleaner" army. Its record, when it comes to *tobal haneshkek*, was far better during the 1967 Six Day War and the 1982-1985 Lebanon war than in 1948—a point rightly and repeatedly made by Lieutenant General (Res.) Rafael Eytan, the much-maligned IDF chief of general staff during the Lebanon war.

I would like to thank Professor Pipes for his kind words about my book. I share some of his misgivings about Flapan's *Birth of Israel* and, to a lesser extent, about Shlaim's *Collusion*. But I am not sure that Pipes is justified in stating that "all three ... have little knowledge and even less interest in the Arab countries."

The fact that all the Arab states' archives are closed to researchers—Arab, Jewish, and gentile—inevitably impairs the writing of Middle East history. This also applies to the 1947-1949 period. The availability of most Israeli state papers, and of large collections of private Israeli political and military papers, and of British state and private papers, almost inevitably leads the historian to rely mainly on non-Arab sources. But this in itself does not necessarily produce distortion. In my book, I tried to make up for the area of darkness created by the absence of contemporary Arab documentation by culling heavily from Israeli intelligence and British and American intelligence and diplomatic reporting about what was happening on "the other

side." I ended up feeling that I had in no small measure succeeded in understanding the thinking and functioning of "the other side" (and not merely Israeli, British, and American views of this side in 1948), and I think Professor Pipes's kind words about my book attest to his agreement with this subjective assessment.

I do not accept Professor Pipes's charge of losing "sight of the larger context." Shlaim does on occasion wander into jarring anti-Israel asides and unmerited anti-Zionist positions. But these problems notwithstanding, his book is a valuable and comprehensive piece of research. No, I do not think Shlaim is in error when writing that Ben-Gurion rejoiced at the Arab exodus in 1948. Indeed, most clear-thinking Israelis did so (though some did so with troubled consciences): the exodus solved the new state's major problem—the potentially catastrophic existence of a massive Arab minority.

Flapan's *Birth* is polemic rather than history. Yet that doesn't mean that everything he writes is wrong. Yes, the Arab leaders—save perhaps for Abdullah—invaded Palestine with the aim of destroying or harming the embryonic Jewish state. But the Syrian and Egyptian leaders were also driven by a desire to block Abdullah's territorial ambitions. People, states, armies often act out of more than one motive.

FOR OUR TREES

To the Editor:

As one associated with the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the agency which has planted 195 million trees throughout Israel since 1901, I take exception to the poem, "For My Tree in Israel," by Julia Vinograd (*Tikkun*, Sept./Oct. 1988).

"There is blood on my tree.... The tears of tear-passed crowds / water the roots...." writes Ms. Vinograd. Actually, her tree may not even be standing in Israel anymore! Due to a new form of terrorism, arson, 1.2 million trees planted by JNF succumbed to flames during the summer of 1988. Arsonists set over twelve hundred fires, ravaging over forty thousand acres at a cost of over \$40 million.

The arsonists set the trees on fire, the poet envisions blood all over them. It's a painful fact that even the trees

cannot be left in peace! When JNF plants trees and creates forests, we provide a better quality of life for all Israelis. Ms. Vinograd, the next time you're in Israel, visit one of the JNF parks on any weekend. You won't see blood and tear gas; you'll see Israelis of many backgrounds, including Arab citizens, enjoying a tranquil atmosphere that's all too rare in the Middle East.

Stuart Paskow
Director of Communication
and Information
Jewish National Fund
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I read a poem recently. The poem was titled "For My Tree in Israel," and was written by Julia Vinograd. I, too, planted a tree in Israel. My tree was planted in loving memory of my young cousin, Danny, who had died of brain cancer. I also feel great pain and fear for the tree I planted. I fear that, like over one million other trees in Israel, it has fallen victim to the deliberate attempts of the destruction by members of the *intifada*.

The history of Israel is clear. It was the Palestinian Arabs who chose the path of war. It is the Arabs who chose terrorism and deceit, arson and stones. The history can not be ignored, despite Ms. Vinograd's desires. We did not choose war, but we will not allow the dream of Israel to be erased so that the Palestinians can have what they have wanted since 1947. Then, as now, they want it all. They cannot have Tel Aviv, they cannot have Jerusalem, and they cannot have Danny's tree.

Paula Stern
Coordinator, Pedagogic Services
Jewish National Fund
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I was most moved by the imagery in Julia Vinograd's poem, "For My Tree

ERRATUM

In "Peace Soon?" by Aaron Back and Gordon Fellman (Vol. 3, No. 6) on page 34, column two, the first complete sentence should read: "It has confined its criticism to statements opposing current Israeli policies, refusing to make a public endorsement of negotiations with the PLO and of a two-state solution."