RESPONSE TO FINKELSTEIN
AND MASALHA

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Norman Finkelstein appears to have confused me with Joan Peters. He
views 1948—and, I am sure, most other years—through a thick film of
preconceived notions and prejudices. In describing—in *The Birth of the Pales-
tinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (1988) and *1948 and After* (1990)—what
actually happened in 1948 rather than what generations of Israeli and Pales-
tinians propagandists said had happened, I had hoped that at least some
preconceptions and prejudices, on both sides, might fall away.

It seems that I have had some success in this respect in Israel. Finkelstein
is wrong about the degree of penetration of my work into the Israeli con-
sciousness—the quotations from Yitzhak Rabin, Menahem Milson, and
Amos Kenan notwithstanding.[1] Even before the publication of *Birth* in He-
brew, a high school history textbook—*MiGalut LeKomemiyut* [From Exile to
Establishment/Independence], Vol. I, by David Shahar (1990)— carried a
four-page extract from one of my articles on the Palestinian exodus, origi-
nally published in *Ha'Aretz* in 1989. *Birth* is already required reading in
courses at several Israeli universities.

Would that a similar penetration had occurred on the Palestinian side. To
judge from Finkelstein's and Masalha's critiques of *Birth* and *1948*, this has
not yet happened; clearly, outworn preconceptions and prejudices prevail.

These underlie—and tarnish—Finkelstein's and Masalha's articles. In the
case of Finkelstein, the critique is accompanied and reinforced by innuendo

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and distortion, inevitably reminding one of the method and substance of Shabtai Teveth's critiques of my work.[2] Indeed, it is no accident that Finkelstein quotes Teveth to bolster his own assertions.

With almost unfailing consistency, Palestinian historians, ideologues, and journalists since 1948 have asserted that the exodus of Palestine's Arabs was the result of a pre-planned, systematic policy of expulsion by the Yishuv. Both Finkelstein and Masalha subscribe to this view (Finkelstein: "Palestine's Arabs were expelled systematically and with premeditation . . . Zionist policy throughout was one of expulsion").

In tracing and analyzing the Palestinian exodus between December 1947 and autumn 1949, I discovered a whole range of factors at play. These included the structural weaknesses of Palestinian society (military, political, social, and economic), the devolution of British rule and administration and the breakdown of law and order in the towns over December 1947-May 1948, Arab orders to leave addressed to particular communities or sections of communities (women, children, and old people), lack of food and other supplies, unemployment and high prices, Jewish threats, Jewish attack, Jewish atrocities, Jewish expulsion orders, and fear—a great deal of fear (fear of Jewish attack, fear of Jewish atrocities, fear of life under Jewish rule, fear of the Arab irregular bands, fear of Husayni revenge). I found that different factors and combinations of factors affected different Arab communities in the course of the war. I ended up with a multi-causal explanation in which the primary precipitants of flight, in most places and at most times, were Jewish attack and Arab fears of Jewish attack.

This multi-causal, multi-staged explanation (which is irrefutably supported by the documentation) sits poorly with those—like Finkelstein, Masalha, and Shabtai Teveth—who like their history simple. Teveth argues: Arab orders (at least until mid-May 1948) and Israeli expulsion policy thereafter were responsible for the exodus. And Finkelstein and Masalha argue: Israeli expulsions throughout.

Finkelstein and Masalha share a method: They selectively quote from *Birth* and *1948* what suits their purposes while ignoring and, in Finkelstein's case, ridiculing what doesn't. Neither seems to know anything about 1948 beyond what is to be found in my books and neither marshals sources or material from elsewhere that could serve to contradict my findings (except the odd reference to a newspaper article by Uri Milstein, the odd quote from Teveth, and a word or two by Walid Khalidi). Finkelstein adopts Teveth's critique of my four-stage (or four-and-a-half stage) periodization of the exodus, preferring, like Teveth, the "black and white" division of the exodus into two periods on either side of the 14-15 May 1948 watershed. Before that date, argues Teveth, the Arab exodus was due to "Arab orders"; thereafter, there was an Israeli expulsion policy. Finkelstein, by contrast, argues that an expulsion policy reigned throughout—but that before 14-15 May it was "covert," and thereafter, "overt." Teveth argues that the Haganah-Israel Defense Force (IDF) unleashed a full-fledged policy of expulsion after 15 May in response

to the Arab invasion of Palestine—in a fight to the finish, one doesn't quibble overmuch about means: "they want war, we'll give them war." Finkelstein—for whom the only good Israeli is an evil Israeli—argues that the malevolent Zionists, always bent on expulsion, carried out the policy covertly before 14-15 May in order to avoid provoking Western political-diplomatic intervention, which might have taken the form of reneging on support for Jewish independence. The Yishuv switched to overt expulsion after 14-15 May as the state was "in the bag" and as there was by then no, or almost no, fear of Western intervention: The policy could now be carried out "with virtual impunity," writes Finkelstein.

The only problem with Finkelstein's (and Masalha's and Teveth's) assertions is that they do not conform with what actually happened and they lack any documentary foundation.

No one, including Finkelstein and Masalha, disputes the fact that much of the Arab middle and upper classes fled Palestine—as they had done during 1936-39—between December 1947 and early April 1948. Local leaders, bankers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, shop-keepers and factory-owners, government officials, judges, pharmacists, land-owners—perhaps 75,000 souls in all—moved to the safer climes of Beirut, Nablus, Hebron, Cairo, Amman, to be out of harm's way. Did this flight of the privileged weaken Palestinian society economically, politically, and militarily? Did it undermine the staying power and self-confidence of those left behind, especially the increasingly unemployed masses in the towns and cities? Did it provide a model of escape for those who were to take to their heels in April-June? The evidence all points to the affirmative, and not too much imagination is required to understand the dynamics of the situation.

Were these crucial 75,000 or so expelled by the Yishuv? Were they prevented by the Yishuv (or by the British, who still ruled the country) from returning before mid-April to Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem? Where in this first stage do Finkelstein and Masalha divine the Yishuv's expulsory master plan? True, the wealthy Arabs of Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem suffered from the outbreaks of sniping and bombing, and from the ambushes that characterized the first months of the civil war (much as the Jews of Palestine suffered from these self-same phenomena). But where, in all this, do Finkelstein and Masalha pinpoint the manifestations of an expulsory master plan—or even individual acts of expulsion (except for the unusual case of Arab Caesarea)? On the contrary, December 1947-March 1948 witnessed a number of more or less sincere efforts by Jewish institutions (the Histadrut Arab Worker's Department, Mapam, Jewish local authorities, the Haganah's Intelligence Service in the persons of Ezra Danin and Yehoshua Palmon) to persuade specific Arab communities in the territory earmarked for Jewish statehood, such as Sheikh Muwannis and 'Arab Abu Kishk, to avoid hostilities and stay put. But, of course, Finkelstein and Masalha avoid any mention of these events (see *Birth*, pp. 36-41).

Do the *events* in Palestine during December 1947-March 1948 bear out Finkelstein's and Masalha's contention that the Yishuv entered the war with an expulsory master plan and began implementing it, covertly or overtly, as the hostilities began and spread? Do Finkelstein and Masalha have any evidence proving (or even hinting at) the existence or implementation of such a master plan during this first stage of the exodus? Would it not be more accurate—in the absence of any *evidence* to the contrary—to say that (a) the country was gradually engulfed in a civil war (launched by the Arabs and "expanded" by both sides), (b) that acts of war hit villagers and townspeople from both communities, (c) that these hostilities sowed fear in the hearts of many Arabs, and (d) that those Arab families who could afford it took to their heels (probably for the most part believing, as in 1936-39, that they would return once order was restored by Britain, the UN, or the Arab armies)?

Let us now turn to what I called the fourth stage of the exodus, October-November 1948. True, in the south, in Operation Yoav, Southern Front commander General Yigal Allon made sure that no, or almost no, Arab communities were left behind his line of advance. But what happened in the Galilee at this time, during Operation Hiram? Three to four IDF brigades during 29-31 October 1948 quickly overwhelmed the Arab Salvation Army and local militia defenses and conquered the upper-central Galilee pocket, with its over 60,000 Arab inhabitants and dozens of villages. Atrocities were committed in a handful of villages; the inhabitants of a number of villages were expelled to Lebanon. Unlike the pre-June offensives of the Haganah, which had mostly been poorly-planned, ad hoc affairs, Operation Hiram had been thoroughly planned weeks in advance. The IDF had full control of the territory, the fog of battle thoroughly covered the whole area, and Israel/the IDF could have done in the conquered pocket, during and immediately after the conquest, whatever it wanted with "impunity," as Finkelstein would put it.

Why is it, then—if a policy of expulsion was in place and being implemented—that more than half of the pocket's inhabitants, many of them Muslims, were left in place? Even in (Muslim) villages where atrocities had been committed—Majd al Kurum, Bi'na, Deir al Assad—the inhabitants were not driven out. Why is it—if there was an "overt" policy of expulsion, "executed with ruthless efficiency," according to Finkelstein—that Northern Front Command's brigades failed to order out onto the roads the (Muslim) villagers of Arrabe, Deir Khanam, Sakhnin, and so on? As Ya'acov Shimoni, the acting director of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East Affairs Department, put it (in two internal memoranda to the ministry director general, Walter Eytan, and to Elias Sasson) after touring the newly-conquered era:

> The attitude toward the Arab inhabitants . . . was accidental/haphazard [*mikri*] . . . Here, [inhabitants] were expelled, there, left in place. . . Here, [the IDF] discriminated in favor of the Christians, and there [the IDF] behaved towards the Christians and the Muslims in the same way. . . From

> all the commanders we talked to we heard that during the operations in the
> Galilee . . . they had had no clear instructions, no clear line, concerning
> behaviour towards the Arabs. . . (*Birth*, pp. 226-27)

One might argue, highly improbably, that the commanders had lied to
Shimoni, and that certain officers on 29-31 October had been "remiss," had
forgotten their orders or, displaying moral pangs, had balked at expelling
men, women, and children. But why, then, if expulsion were govern-
ment/IDF policy, was this "oversight" not corrected during the following
days and weeks when a string of Christian (and Muslim) border villages—
Suruh, Tarbikha, Kafr Bir'im, Iqrit, and Mansura—were summarily depopu-
lated in order to create a 10-kilometer-deep Arab-free zone along Israel's
northern border? *There was* a policy to create a 10-kilometer-deep Arab-free
border zone: There is documentary evidence and there is irrefutable "proof"
of this in the form of documented implementation. But where is the proof—
planning documents or documents bearing witness to implementation—of a
blanket, systematic policy of expulsion in the Galilee during Operation Hi-
ram? [It is, perhaps, worth noting that even with regard to the agreed "10-
kilometer strip" policy, implementation was somewhat faulty: Officers
balked, civilian leaders intervened, and a string of mostly Christian Arab vil-
lages remained in place along the border with Lebanon—Jurdiya (Aramshe),
Mi'ilya, Fassuta, Tarshiha, Jish.]

Norman Finkelstein and Nur Masalha, you can't have it both ways: You
can't assert that there was a "ruthlessly efficient," "systematic" policy of ex-
pulsion *and* explain away the tens of thousands of (mostly Muslim) Arabs
who remained in the Galilee—both after July 1948 and after October-No-
vember 1948—as oversights or exceptions or what have you. You can't have
a ruthless and systematic blanket policy of expulsion and yet ignore the
(mainly Muslim) villages of Khirbet Jisr az Zarka, Al Fureidis, and Abu
Ghosh which were left in place, despite IDF pressures and lobbying, along
Israel's main strategic roads during and after the war.[3] Why, if there was a
systematic, efficient policy of expulsion, did the Israeli authorities leave
troublesome or potentially troublesome minority Arab communities in Haifa,
Jaffa, and Acre, not to mention smaller sites such as Lydda, Ramle, and Tar-
shiha, after the mass exodus—when, without doubt, the government/IDF,
cloaked by the enveloping fog of battle, could easily have expelled them?
Surely the expulsion of 5,000 or 10,000 or 15,000 more would have gone
unnoticed in the midst of the flight of 700,000? If 700,000 fled/were driven
out without much world fuss or protest, would the expulsion of a few more
thousand have bothered anyone unduly?

In short, if there was a general policy of expulsion, why, at war's end, were
100,000-160,000 Arabs, most of them Muslims, left in Israel (which at the
time had about 700,000-750,000 Jews)? This Arab minority now numbers
some 700,000 souls. It is clear that Ben-Gurion (and other cabinet ministers)
acted in July 1948 to prevent the expulsion of the Christian inhabitants of
Nazareth—mindful of the possible (public relations) repercussions in Chris-

tendom of an expulsion from the holy city. But was this (public relations, fear of antagonizing the West) the reason for the non-expulsion of the Arabs who remained in Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, Lydda, Ramle, Tarshiha, etc.? Finkelstein might argue that Ben-Gurion left these Arabs in place precisely as "proof" that Israel had not implemented a policy of expulsion. But, surely, a ruthless and perceptive leader like Ben-Gurion—who frequently expressed contempt for world public opinion, UN speeches and resolutions, and American pressures—understood at the end of 1948 that the cost to Israel of leaving a large minority of hostile or potentially hostile Arabs in its midst would be far greater than the public relations cost of expelling the (remaining) lot.

Certainly, Ben-Gurion wanted as few Arabs as possible to remain in Israel. Certainly the majority of the country's political and military leaders were happy to see the Arabs go. Certainly, many officers and officials did what they could to facilitate departure, including occasional expulsions (though, as I pointed out in *Birth*, in most towns and villages the Haganah/IDF had no need to issue expulsion orders as the inhabitants fled before the Jewish troops reached the site; the inhabitants usually fled with the approach of the advancing Jewish column or when the first mortar bombs began to hit their homes).

But between what most people want and policy, there is, and was then, a line of demarcation that Finkelstein, Teveth, Masalha and Co. have failed to erode. The fact that Ben-Gurion wanted something didn't mean that it immediately translated into policy: He may have had private scruples; he certainly worried about his own and the state's good name; he ruled in a democracy, with coalition partners to worry about; he had to take account of Western opinion and policies. In short, the fact that in the late 1930s Ben-Gurion and the majority of the Zionist leaders favored a "transfer" solution to the problem of the prospective Arab minority in the prospective Jewish state, and that during 1948 Ben-Gurion and most of the Yishuv's leaders wished to see as few Arabs remaining as possible, does not mean that the Yishuv adopted and implemented a *policy of expulsion*. One can argue that most Arabs, including, probably, most Egyptians, would like to see Israel disappear; but is that the same thing as saying that it is Egyptian (or Jordanian, or Lebanese) policy to destroy Israel? Most Israelis would like to see the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza Strip disappear; but is that the same thing as saying that it is Israeli policy to kill or expel the Arabs of the territories (or even that most Israelis want to expel or kill these Arab inhabitants)?

Finkelstein/Masalha/Teveth and I have different perceptions of the role of the historian. In tackling 1948, I set out to *understand* and *describe* a certain set of circumstances and a chain of events; Finkelstein/Masalha/Teveth are out to *find culprits* and *lay blame*, as if history is some sort of morality play or judicial proceeding. Finkelstein takes issue with my "temperate conclusions," and charges that I strove for a "happy median." While I admit preferring temperance to intemperance, all I can say is that, coming to the subject of the exodus without any preconceptions (or, for that matter, knowl-

edge), I collected evidence, tried to reconstruct what happened and why things happened as they did, and then drew conclusions. If the conclusions are that the exodus occurred in a number of stages and was due to an accumulation of causes, it is because that is how the process occurred, according to my understanding of the evidence; had I found a Jewish master plan for expulsion, or traces of such a plan, and had the evidence in the different areas at different times demonstrated that a policy of expulsion had been decided upon and was being systematically implemented, then that would have been my finding and conclusion. I found no evidence to support such a view; indeed, I found a great deal of evidence to sustain the multi-staged, multi-causal picture that I painted—a picture that I still believe to be unimpeached (and unimpeachable).

Apart from the large picture, I would like to comment on a number of specific points raised by Finkelstein and Masalha:

• Finkelstein (for no intelligible reason and without offering any proof) disputes my assertion that the second (April-June 1948) wave of refugees was the "main wave" of the exodus. Finkelstein does not question my figure of 200,000-300,000 refugees who fled during these two and a half months, or offer any other figures to show that this was not the "main wave" of the exodus, or that some other wave was. And I did not state—however much Finkelstein would like to "infer" that I did—that this second wave was "representative." To do so would be silly, because the second wave was radically different from the first (December 1947-March 1948) wave, which saw the middle and upper classes leave the country uncoerced; and radically different from the third (mainly 8-18 July) wave, which consisted in great measure of refugees from the war's major expulsion operation, Lydda-Ramle (12-13 July). Finkelstein correctly asserts that I occasionally refer to "April-May" rather than "April-June," because those were the two months in which the overwhelming majority of the April-June wave of refugees fled. But in terms of periodization, April-June, or if you like, April-11 June (the start of the First Truce) is a clear, uniquely definable period. Both Finkelstein and Teveth can stand on their heads and yell as much as they like, but those are the parameters of the period, whose shared, clear symptoms were flight from the mixed cities and major Palestinian towns, and from the border areas (eastern and northwestern Galilee, the Jerusalem Corridor, etc.) as a direct result of Haganah attacks and counterattacks.

• Finkelstein refers to the April 1948 exodus of Haifa's Arabs as "covert expulsion." In *Birth* (pp. 41-45, 73-95) I devote a great deal of space to describing and analyzing the two stages of the flight from Haifa: the departure of much of the middle and upper classes over December 1947-early April 1948, and the mass flight in the week or so following the Haganah offensive of 21-22 April. A great many things happened in Haifa between December and April; a great many things occurred in the town during the last ten days of April. Finkelstein, employing his selectivity filters, notes and focuses on some things while ignoring the rest. Finkelstein ignores the early

flight of the middle and upper classes and its cumulative demoralizing effect
on the remaining masses of the population (by April, before the battle, most
of the town's National Committee members had already fled); ignores the
nexus between the flight of Arab commanders, the breakdown of the Arab
militia's morale during the battle, and the flight of the inhabitants; in effect
ignores the remaining Arab leaders' decision to evacuate the town, an-
nounced in the city hall on the evening of 22 April; and in effect dismisses
the (at this stage in the war, unique) Jewish civilian leaders' pleas for the
Arabs to stay. Finkelstein even ignores my explanation—based on the docu-
mentation—of how and why the remaining Arab leaders had opted for the
solution of evacuation (after the Muslim Husayni supporters, such as Sheikh
'Abd al-Rahman Murad, had made it clear that surrender to the Jews would
be regarded as treachery).[4] In short, Finkelstein, hostage to his preconcep-
tions, prefers to deny the facts and call the whole affair "covert expulsion."

    In my detailed explanation of what happened, I described the Haganah
mortaring of downtown Haifa on the afternoon of 22 April. The Israeli com-
mander, Moshe Carmel, afterwards said that it had been designed to keep up
the pressure on the Arab militiamen and leaders to surrender. Finkelstein,
forever a purveyor of Jewish malice, states flatly—and without an iota of
proof—that the shelling was designed to precipitate an exodus. I described
the Haganah and Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL) pressures on the remaining Arab
inhabitants after 22 April, including the fact that many inhabitants were pre-
vented for several days from returning to their houses; Finkelstein refers to
these events as "atrocities," whereas I found no evidence of any "atrocity"
committed in Arab Haifa during or after its capture. I also described the
shortages of bread, water, electricity, and so on. Certainly, the military com-
manders wanted as few Arabs as possible staying in the town and facilitated
the departure of those who left. Certainly, the cumulative pressures contrib-
uted to the decision of some of the remaining inhabitants to leave. But do
these factors combined with those cited previously—the prior flight of the
Arab elite families, the collapse of Arab militia morale, Jewish pleas that the
inhabitants stay, the Arab leaders' decision to leave—do these add up to
"covert [Jewish] expulsion?" I don't think any reasonable or unprejudiced
person would think so.

    Indeed, many readers—given the prior flight of the Arab elite, the Jewish
civilian leaders' pleas to stay, and the Arab leaders' decision to evacuate—
will no doubt feel that the definition "expulsion," even as a partial explana-
tion, is inappropriate. In talking about Haifa (and the exodus from the town
was *pivotal* to the exodus from all of Palestine), Finkelstein stands on very
shaky ground indeed. "Curiously"—to use a term that Finkelstein overuses
and abuses—I have not yet come across testimony from Haifa refugees who
described their flight as due to "expulsion" (though I am sure an accom-
plished propagandist should be able to unearth one or two).

    Finkelstein may write that "the expressed aim of the wartime *de facto* Zi-
onist leadership was to expel the Arabs," just as he may write that the man in

the moon is blue, but that doesn't make it true. Finkelstein may not like it, but the evidence from the Jewish side that things happened haphazardly through *most* of the war (despite a strong desire by most officials and officers at most times to see as few Arabs remaining in the country as possible) is overwhelming: No guiding hand, no overall directive and policy is evident. Indeed, Yosef Weitz, Bechor Shitrit, and assorted Mapam leaders repeatedly charged from their various perspectives that there was no guiding hand when it came to policy toward the Arabs and the conquered Arab areas (though some Mapam leaders did occasionally charge that Ben-Gurion was covertly unleashing a policy of expulsion, more by omission than commission). On the contrary, there were efforts and interventions and directives *against* expulsions and to a lesser extent against the destruction of villages. No doubt the IDF order of 6 July 1948 (*Birth*, p. 163) prohibiting the expulsion of communities and the destruction of villages without the express order of Ben-Gurion was elicited by Mapam and Shitrit after prolonged struggle with Ben-Gurion against these phenomena; and it is possible that there was something in the nature of lip service in its issuance. But nothing like this can be said of the various ministers' efforts to block the destruction of villages in cabinet debates in May-July 1948, or of the cabinet's repeated rejection of expulsions when specific cases were brought before it (such as Abu Ghosh, Khirbet Jisr a Zarka, and Al Fureidis). Indeed, the cabinet never took a decision to expel "the Arabs" of Palestine. Nor did it ever approve in advance, as far as I have been able to discover, the expulsion of Arab communities during the 1948 war. Nor have I found any trace of a general order from the Haganah/IDF General Staff to expel the Arabs of Palestine, and I think I would have found traces of such an order in the middle and lower level routing of the order down the chain of command, had such an order been issued.

The fact that various Yishuv leaders—Ben-Gurion, Sharett, Weitz—at various times before summer 1948 expressed surprise or astonishment at the Arab exodus should not be dismissed so lightly. Finkelstein is at pains to "prove" that each manifestation of such surprise or astonishment was feigned, play-acting, spurious. This is palpable nonsense. Ben-Gurion may have wished the Arabs to depart and, at certain stages of the conflict, expected them to depart. But even he seems to have been genuinely surprised at the wholesale and instantaneous exodus from the main Arab centers of Jaffa and Haifa. And even if, as I have stressed, Ben-Gurion's diary entries are often duplicitous (and written with an eye to what the future historian will do with these entries), this was certainly not the case with Weitz's *original* diary. Weitz may have (slightly) edited his diaries before their publication in the 1960s, but his original 1948 diary notebooks were written with an almost embarrassing forthrightness and candor. "Let's get rid of this or that Arab community;" "I engineered the exodus from this or that site," he wrote. So why doubt the genuineness of his expressions of surprise and misgivings when confronted with the spectacle of the mass flight from Haifa? Why doubt that he truly suspected an Arab-British plot? For months, Weitz had

tried to persuade the Yishuv leadership—Galili, Ben-Gurion, Sharett—to adopt an overall, "systematic" expulsion policy. He failed, and repeatedly lamented this failure in his diaries.

There can be little doubt, in my mind, that people like Sharett, who had lived for months and years in Arab villages and were fluent Arabic speakers, were astonished at the swiftness and completeness (by summer 1948) of the Arab flight. Why doubt Sharett's sincerity when he expressed surprise at how villagers, whose forebears had roots in the soil going back 300 years, suddenly packed and left?

Finkelstein, though he doesn't say it, is at pains to disprove the Yishuv leaders' surprise at the Arab departure, because surprise means they hadn't expected it, and lack of expectation implies lack of pre-planning or expulsion policy. Put inversely, if the Jews had pre-planned and systematically expelled the Arabs, they would have had no reason to be surprised at the Arab flight.

● In the absence of evidence of Zionist pre-planning or a master plan for expulsion, Palestinian and pro-Palestinian writers, from Walid Khalidi on, have latched on to *Tochnit Dalet* (Plan D), the Haganah plan of early March 1948. Here, they said, was the secret Zionist blueprint for the expulsion. Finkelstein selectively quotes from *Birth* to "prove" this. But the argument is nonsense. Plan D was a military plan and had clear-cut strategic objectives— the readying of the emergent Jewish state for the expected pan-Arab on-slaught in the wake of the British withdrawal. The plan called for the securing of the future country's border areas (to close off the expected invasion routes) and of its internal lines of communication (to guard against the threat of Fifth Column activity by the country's Arab minority while the Haganah was engaged along the borders).

The plan was to have gone into effect in the first half of May. But imple-mentation was brought forward to early April due to the Arab irregulars' pressure on the roads (which threatened to starve out Jewish Jerusalem), the start of the British withdrawal, and the recognition that Britain was not going to intervene to stop the Haganah.

In certain circumstances, Plan D allowed brigade and battalion com-manders to expel villagers and destroy or mine villages hostile or potentially hostile to the Yishuv. But, in general, it instructed commanders to occupy and garrison—not level or depopulate—villages that did not resist and sur-rendered. But as many villages harbored "foreign" or local irregulars, who sniped at neighboring Jewish settlements or ambushed Jewish traffic, the plan legitimized them as targets for Haganah attack (and destruction). The plan nowhere provided for the expulsion of complete Arab urban communi-ties or the destruction of Arab urban neighborhoods. During the plan's im-plementation, in April-May, Haganah commanders were able *ex post facto* to cite the plan in explaining or justifying this or that attack, expulsion, or de-struction of a village. But the expulsion of Palestinian communities was a *by-product* of the plan's objectives, which were strategic and military. Plan D

was not a plan of expulsion but a master plan for the Yishuv's military survival as it prepared for the anticipated invasion by the Arab states' armies. Anyone who reads the plan will quickly appreciate this; anyone who reads Walid Khalidi or Norman Finkelstein on Plan D will not.

As far as the evidence shows, no Haganah commander understood Plan D to be a master plan or warrant for the expulsion of Palestine's Arabs and none, as far as the documentation goes, "anticipated," as Finkelstein asserts, that the result of the plan's implementation would be "the Arabs' flight from Palestine." Indeed, the opposite is probably true: None probably expected the implementation to result in the Arabs' flight from Palestine, just as Stockwell, the British commander in Haifa, failed to anticipate that the Haganah's 36-hour offensive in Haifa—which resulted in 200-300 Arab dead all told— would result in the Arabs' evacuation of the city.

• I am pleased that Finkelstein agrees with my assertion that the "atrocity factor" played a part in propelling the Palestinians out of the country. But why does he call my further assertion—that Arab broadcasts repeating and even exaggerating the atrociousness of what had happened in Dayr Yasin for weeks after the event had a major effect on Arab flight— "curious"? It is all well documented (see *Birth*, p. 114). What is not well-documented, indeed what is not documented at all (and by documentation I don't mean self-serving, *ex post facto* memoirs by this or that politician, but *contemporary* documents) is Finkelstein's assertion that it was Jewish "reports"—where? what? how?—about the Dayr Yasin massacre that had spurred the Arabs into flight. The Jewish media, for understandable reasons, generally *played down* the massacre. Finkelstein, citing no 1948 document (or even interviewee), bases himself on an assertion in an Israeli newspaper by historian Uri Milstein. Surely he can—must!—do better if he wishes to be taken seriously.

Finkelstein writes: "Morris [in his conclusion] revises the meaning of 'the atrocity factor' . . . [Morris] mainly refers not to Zionist brutalities but to Arab premonitions of Jewish retribution." This is dishonesty of a high order. No one—Jew or Arab—has documented more accurately and comprehensively Jewish atrocities committed in 1948, or their effect on flight. By "atrocity factor" I meant and wrote—and still mean and write—that Jewish atrocities were a significant factor in propelling Palestine's Arabs into refugeedom, both directly, by affecting survivors, neighbors, and relatives and indirectly (usually via Arab media reports), by persuading Arabs farther afield that they might share the same fate if overrun by Jewish troops. That the fear of being subjected to atrocities impelled Palestinians into flight is well-documented, and the documentation (Finkelstein: "the flimsiest of evidence") is not limited to *Birth*, pp. 363-64, footnote 2. There is no point in overburdening the reader with citations, but if Finkelstein wants more, and knows Hebrew, let him turn to the Hebrew edition of *Birth*, p. 538, footnote 2. One last point in this connection: Finkelstein asserts that I "sometimes call[ed atrocities] 'excesses' or 'nudging'." He cites *Birth*, p. 350, footnote 37. True, I used the phrase "IDF excesses" (as well as "atrocity," "killings," "rape[s]") in the

footnote; I see nothing wrong with this. I *did not* use the word "nudging" in this footnote or in this connection anywhere in *Birth*. But Finkelstein's (dishonest and reprehensible) point is clear—"Benny Morris uses euphemisms to downplay Zionist culpability."

A last (self-indulgent) question on this point for Finkelstein, who (with relish) quotes Mapam politicians decrying the October massacres by the IDF in operations Hiram and Yoav as "Nazi acts": What Arab politician or scholar ever decried Palestinian atrocities against Jews in 1948 (the massacre at the Haifa oil refinery in December 1948, the massacre of the doctors and nurses convoy to Mount Scopus in Jerusalem in April 1948, and the massacre of the prisoners in the Etzion Bloc in May 1948) as "Nazi acts"? Indeed, what Arab (or pro-Arab) politician or scholar found such atrocities worthy of remark or study?

• Finkelstein's endnotes suffer from some of the faults that characterize his text. His reference (endnote 4) to the various estimates of the number of Palestinians who became refugees in 1948 ("curiously") omits my concluding estimate of "600,000-760,000," (*Birth*, pp. 297–98) based on the British Foreign Office analysis of September 1949. Instead, he offers us two other estimates, "British Government" (810,000) and "British Foreign Office" (711,000). I wonder why? And I can only repeat that Israel "sincerely believed that the Arab (and United Nations) figures were 'inflated' "—for example, by the continued registration of people who had died. This does not contradict the certainty that Israel's official estimate of "520,000" was artificially low (as Walter Eytan understood).

• Me'ir Pa'il is not considered by anyone I respect as a "widely respected Israeli historian of the 1948 war." Most of Finkelstein's other "sources" (except *Birth* and *1948*) are equally dubious. Michael Palumbo's *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, though using one or two UN files (which I subsequently consulted and culled from for the Hebrew version of *Birth*), is propaganda, not history, and has rightly been consigned to oblivion or ignored by reviewers and serious historians. Uri Milstein has written several good volumes of military history on 1948 (which Finkelstein is unfamiliar with or does not cite) but he has also produced unsubstantiated journalistic hyperbole and nonsense (such as the one newspaper article Finkelstein does cite).

• Why does Finkelstein assert that the villagers of Balad ash Sheikh in April 1948 were "threatened with a Haganah massacre"? Who made this threat or commented that such a threat existed? When? Where is that "threat" documented? How about, "the inhabitants of Israel are 'threatened' with a massacre by the PLO should Israel hand over the West Bank to PLO rule"? Who? When? What?

• Masalha "charges" that *Birth* and *1948* are "based . . . predominantly . . . on official Israeli archival and non-archival material . . . [and Morris's] work . . . rests on carefully released partial documentation. . ." In writing *Birth* and *1948*, I used the *state* archives of Israel, Britain, and the U.S., the archives of (Yishuv) political parties, and private papers collections, some memoirs, and

some secondary works. Masalha misleads his readers when he speaks of "carefully released partial documentation." Israel's declassification policy is relatively (relative to Britain, for example) liberal, and the revelations in *Birth* and *1948* are proof of this. I was able to see a great deal of material, much of it highly sensitive. Unfortunately, much military material and cabinet protocols do remain closed, inevitably hampering the researcher. But I believe I saw enough material, military and civilian, to obtain an accurate picture of what happened even if I did not always get all the detail I could have wished regarding a particular locality on a particular date. Far more unfortunate, of course, was the inaccessibility of any Arab state papers; all Arab state archives for the 1948 period are firmly closed to non-Arab and Arab scholars alike. Perhaps Masalha would do better to level his implied criticism of state archival policies at Arab states, rather than Israel?

• Masalha asserts that the "new historians" "are a fringe group" in Israel. Masalha, clearly, is unfamiliar with the Israeli scene. The principal conclusions of the "new historians"—the multi-causal explanation of the Palestinian exodus; Israel's relative inflexibility and lack of eagerness in the 1949-51 contacts and peace talks with Jordan's King Abdullah and with Syria's Husni Za'im; etc.—are by now more or less the coin of the realm in Israeli historiography. Even an establishment historian, such as Itamar Rabinovich of Tel Aviv University, while attacking the "new historiography," was unable to avoid adopting most of its findings and conclusions in his recently published *The Road Not Taken: Early Arab-Israeli Negotiations* (Oxford University Press, 1991). The work of Avraham Sela of the Hebrew University is similarly prone.

• Finkelstein winds up his article by pointing to real or imagined discrepancies between my descriptions (in *Birth* and *1948*) of the causes of flight from a dozen or so villages and the attribution of the causes in "Map 2" and its key (in *Birth*). Finkelstein kicks off by admitting that some of his assertions may be incorrect, but—typically—he tucks away the admission in an endnote (no. 27) so that many readers might miss it. Secondly, he cheats by informing the reader of only *three*—"M" (Zionist attack), "A" (Arab orders), and "E" (Jewish expulsion)— of the six causes given for Arab flight. He omits any mention of the other three causes in the key—"F" (fear of Jewish attack), "W" (Jewish psychological warfare), and "C" (the influence of the fall of, or exodus from, a neighboring town). Mention of these is presumably omitted because of Finkelstein's preference for clearcut, simplistic history, black or white, expulsion or Arab orders; no grey areas for "historians" such as Finkelstein.

Regarding one or two of the villages, Finkelstein probably has a point; I could have given more than one cause for the exodus. But—as stated in the explanation to the key (*Birth*, p. viii), which Finkelstein appears to have missed—I felt that I should restrict myself, in the code lettering, to the main cause or causes that propelled into refugeedom the great majority of the population of each particular site. Otherwise, the whole key would be rendered

meaningless, because a combination of most of the causes could probably be said to have affected, to some degree, the eventual exodus from each site. The idea was to point to the *main* cause(s) of flight of *most* of the population from each site. In most of the cases cited, Finkelstein is merely being quarrelsome, or trying to pull the wool over his readers' eyes with simulated scholarship. I wouldn't want to bore the readers with a lengthy exposition of what I wrote in each case in *Birth* and *1948*, what Finkelstein says I did, and my explanation of how he has twisted, distorted, and hoodwinked. But let me briefly analyze two of these cases:

—*Beisan* (Beit Shean): In *1948* (p. 84) I wrote that the IDF Intelligence Service report of 30 June 1948 attributed the Arab exodus from the town to the influence of the fall of Arab Haifa, fear, and Haganah conquest (C, M, and F). "Correcting" the intelligence report, I added that several hundred of the town's 6,000 inhabitants were expelled. In *Birth* (pp. 105–7), this description was expanded somewhat (*Birth* was written after the essay in *1948*), with greater emphasis on the expulsion of the remainder population. Since the vast majority—say, 75–90 percent—of the population left because of C, M, and F, I omitted from the map key an E (expulsion). Perhaps I could have added it. But as I devoted two whole paragraphs (*Birth*, pp. 106–7) to describing the expulsion of the 10–25 percent remainder population, I felt that the subject was covered. Certainly, it cannot honestly be claimed or implied—as Finkelstein does—that I ignored or hid the expulsions from Beisan.

—*Fajja*: Finkelstein makes a similar twisted pitch regarding this small Arab village outside Petah Tikva. The IDF Intelligence Service report of 30 June 1948 (and other sources) attributed the Fajja exodus to Haganah pressure and psychological warfare ("whispering propaganda," as it was then called). In the map key, I attributed the exodus from Fajja to W (psychological warfare). Finkelstein again suggests that I should more properly have categorized the Fajja exodus as E (expulsion). Why? What does Finkelstein know about the exodus from Fajja that I (*Birth* and *1948*) don't know? What evidence does he have that an expulsion (E) occurred there rather than an intimidation using psychological warfare (W)? None—and he offers none. Yet Finkelstein prefers black or white; hence, "Morris should have written E (expulsion)." And the implication left hanging in the air is: "Ah ha! Once again I have caught Benny Morris trying to hide an expulsion by the vicious Zionists!" Finkelstein indulges in the same sort of trickery with respect to Abu Zureiq, 'Ijzim, 'Ein Ghazal, Jaba, Beit Naqquba, and so on. I have rarely come across such spurious, twisted scholarship (except, perhaps, in Joan Peters). Unless my memory fails me, even Teveth did not stoop to such rascality.

Those interested in taking a more charitable tack might say that a problem of definition underlies much—perhaps most—of Finkelstein's critique of my work. He cannot, does not, accept my definition of expulsion and my dis-

tinctions between expulsions and other orders of behavior or circumstance
that precipitated flight. His definition of expulsion is very "liberal," mine
narrower and more severe. Naturally, I believe mine is more accurate and
fairer. In *Birth* and *1948* I referred to an expulsion when a
Haganah/IDF/IZL/LHI* unit entered or conquered a town or village and
then ordered its inhabitants to leave, usually within a given time period (one
hour, three hours). This is what happened to the majority of the inhabitants
of Miska, Lydda and Ramle, Tarbikha and Suruh, the remaining inhabitants
of Beisan, and so on.

From the wider historical perspective, one may also regard Israel's barring
of a refugee return to villages and towns—hours, days, or weeks after flight—
as an expulsory element, and one which *was* official Israeli government/IDF
policy. One cannot, in my view, regard as an "expulsion" the flight of a
village's or town's inhabitants when the Haganah/IDF approached or when
Jewish units launched an assault on the site, usually accompanied by a pre-
liminary mortar barrage. Flight due to such assault I defined as flight due to
Jewish military attack; flight due to the fear of such assault I defined as just
that. The fact that Jewish commanders often hoped (because they didn't like
Arabs, because they preferred not to have to leave a garrison behind after
conquest) that as a by-product of their attack and conquest the Arab inhabit-
ants would flee is beside the main point. The flight was caused by the attack,
not an expulsion order; and commanders' "hopes" (everyone harbors secret
or not so secret hopes) is not tantamount to government policy. Similarly, I
defined as flight due to Jewish psychological warfare the flight of inhabitants
after Jewish intelligence agents "warned" them that they had best decamp
and move to Jordan because a Haganah assault was on its way, and they
could expect some very nasty treatment at the hands of their conquerors.
Admittedly, in certain cases, a mixture of such (and other) causes obtained.
Admittedly, in a few specific cases, it is difficult to distinguish clearly be-
tween Jewish military assault and expulsion, because the evidence is not
clear or because events at the site during the crucial hours were complex. But
generally, these distinctions are clear and pertinent, and, I believe, accurate
and worth making.

Though he never dares openly to question the validity of these distinctions,
Finkelstein clearly is unhappy with them, and prefers, for his own reasons
(which are probably not related to a search for historical accuracy), to regard
every flight as expulsory.

*   *   *

Clearly, Palestinians for decades have described the exodus as one great,
pre-planned, ruthless expulsion in order to besmirch the "robber state"
Israel. But I suspect that an interesting psychological-political mechanism
among Palestinians (and their supporters) was also at play. A perverse hint

* Hebrew acronym for "Fighters for the Freedom of Israel."

of this mechanism was afforded by Ben-Gurion, when he told the People's Council on 4 May 1948: The Arabs had abandoned "cities . . . with great ease . . . it was revealed with overwhelming clarity which people is bound with strong bonds to this land."

The Palestinians during 1948 and more emphatically afterwards *needed*, for reasons of self-respect, honor, and guilt, to assert that external causes had compelled their flight. The simplest available explanation was "Jewish expulsion," though there were Palestinians who later remained glued to the alternative explanation, "Arab orders," for much the same reason. If the simple Palestinian town-dweller and villager was ordered out by the Egyptian or Syrian or Jordanian government and army commanders, what could he do? If he was ordered out or kicked out by brutal Jewish soldiers, what could he do? The Palestinian thus emerges blameless, which he clearly does not— at least in his own eyes—if he fled without being compelled by Jewish attack or atrocity or order, or by Arab orders to this effect. If he fled before smelling a whiff of grapeshot or before seeing the whites of the eyes of the first Palmahnik, then he displayed an insufficiency of basic patriotism, an insufficient attachment (*sumud*) to his land (and honor), an insufficiency of plain courage. If he fled under no dire compulsion, then the Palestinian refugee emerges as a coward and something of a fool— and one with a deservedly great burden of shame and guilt vis-à-vis his progeny for abandoning and losing *their* home and homeland.

Hence the Palestinian need to assert, demonstrate, "prove" that the refugees did not flee but were pushed, brutally pushed, out by the Jews, or, at the very least, "ordered" out by the Arab leaders. Occasionally, too, the British—local generals, presiding politicians—are blamed, and for the same reason. (The British are usually held to blame in connection with Tiberias and Haifa.) Someone in authority had told them to go—what could the poor Palestinian peasant do? Can he be held to account or blamed? What applies to the individual Palestinian refugee applies to the Palestinian people as a whole: If they were led down the garden path into an unwinnable conflict with the militarily superior Jews by stupid leaders (Palestinian or external Arab), can they be blamed? If they fled as a result of calls to leave by Arab leaders, can they be blamed? If, as a people, they were overwhelmed, after a brave struggle, by superior Zionist forces, and brutally driven from their homes, with the help of Whitehall and local British troops or officials, can they be accused of cowardice or foolishness?

Before concluding, let me just record a small protest at the tone of some of Finkelstein's remarks. He has a line in innuendo and invective not dissimilar from Teveth's. To sample some of the gems: ". . . Morris, whose credulity apparently . . . knows no limits"; Morris's "exercise in sophistry"; Morris's "disingenuous distinction"; Morris's "highly misleading" account; "idiosyncratic bookkeeping"; Morris's "apologetics [that] . . . bear close comparison with the style of the 'old' historians." Why not write, simply, "Morris the

liar"? In any case, I don't think such remarks are justified or appropriate to civilized academic argumentation.

Having said all this, let me add that in the Hebrew version of *Birth* (published in March 1991), I changed the first paragraph of the "Conclusion," which Finkelstein, Masalha, and most other reviewers and critics found quoteworthy, to read:

> The Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterised the first Israeli-Arab war; in part, it was the result of deliberate, not to say malevolent, actions of Jewish commanders and politicians; in smaller part, Arab commanders and politicians were responsible for its creation, through acts of commission and omission.

I was impelled to make this change—which, I should imagine, Finkelstein and Masalha will find pleasing—by my discovery, after completing *Birth* in mid-1986, of fresh Israeli and UN documentation that tended to amplify and magnify the role of the Yishuv in the Palestinian exodus in certain parts of the country (Jezreel Valley, Majdal, etc.). I incorporated some of this new material in the Hebrew version of the book and in *1948 and After*; other fresh material will be incorporated in the softcover edition of *1948*, when it appears.

NOTES

1. Here, incidentally, Finkelstein furnishes some telling evidence of his shortcomings as an historian: He fails to understand what people can reasonably be expected to see and know (and say) in different countries at different times. The first two quotes are from magazines published in *March-April* and *May 1988*, and the third from *February 1989*. *Birth* was published in English in *March-April 1988*, copies reaching Israel a few weeks later; my first articles in Hebrew on the Palestinian exodus appeared in *Ha'Aretz* in *May-June 1989*; *Birth* appeared, at last, in Hebrew only in *March 1991*. Should Finkelstein really have hoped that *Birth*'s impact would be felt in Israel by the time Rabin and Milson made their statements in *Moment* and the *Jewish Frontier* (Spring 1988)? And what, really, did Finkelstein expect a former Israeli prime minister (and operational commander in 1948) to say in an interview in an American Jewish magazine? And shouldn't an expert on 1948 of Finkelstein's stature have noticed that there was no "82nd Regiment" (there were and are no "regiments" in the IDF but rather battalions and brigades) in Lydda on 11-13 July 1948 (in fact, the 82nd Battalion, 8th Brigade conquered Lydda *airport*)? Or that Lydda was "conquered" by the 3rd Battalion of the Palmah's Yiftah Brigade (with the support of a company from the 1st Battalion)? And shouldn't he know that Kenan, a veteran of the LHI, is not an "acclaimed Israeli author,"

but an idiosyncratic *Yediot Aharonot* columnist and a food writer (chiefly French cuisine)? Kenan, incidentally, reached on the telephone, denied that he had written that there was no expulsion in Lydda: "of course there was," he said.

2. *Ha'Aretz*, 7, 14, 21 April and 19 May 1989; *Commentary*, September 1989; *Middle Eastern Studies*, April 1990.

3. For the cases of Abu Ghosh, Beit Naqquba, 'Ein Rafa, Khirbet Jisr a Zarka, and Al Fureidis (along the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv and Tel Aviv-Haifa roads), see chapter 7 of *1948*, which is among the many things that Finkelstein and Masalha ignore.

4. For Finkelstein, the reasons for the Arab leaders' decision to evacuate Haifa "remain obscure." Everything else about 1948 is crystal clear to Finkelstein, clearer to him than to me. He is chock-full of certainties and explanations (all, needless to say, based on the evidence amassed in *Birth* and *1948*). But suddenly, at one point—the point on the evening of 22 April at which the Arab leaders of Haifa announced the evacuation of the town's Arab population—Finkelstein clams up. Suddenly, astonishingly, he is at a loss for words. Ignoring my evidence and explanation, he doesn't even offer a conjecture as to why the Arab leaders of Haifa opted for mass evacuation.