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Politics by Other Means by Benny Morris

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Again, Pappé's errors are not merely a matter of sloppiness born of a contempt for that leaven of dullards, "the facts." The book is also awash with errors resulting from the writer's ideological preferences, his interest in blackening the Zionists and whitening the Palestinians. His description of the events of 1920 (in which Pappé proves the dictum that necessity--in this case, an ideological imperative--is the mother of invention) is surely a classic of the genre:

In April 1920, a Nabi Musa rally [a Muslim celebration commemorating the prophet Moses] clashed with the most aggressive of the Zionist organizations, Beitar, whose members marched provocatively in the streets of Arab Jerusalem at the time of the feast, and a day of violence ended with deaths on both sides.... A [British] commission of inquiry, the Palin Commission, concluded the obvious: that there was growing dissatisfaction among the Palestinian elite with the British pro-Zionist ... policy.

In fact, Pappé's evenhandedness, while morally commendable, is out of place. There was no "provocative" Jewish march through Arab Jerusalem; there was no march at all. What occurred was an unprovoked assault on Jewish passersby and shops by a politically and religiously inflamed Muslim mob. The subsequent British investigation, embodied in the Palin Report, found that a Muslim Arab religious procession, incited by, among others, Haj Amin al Husseini and Arif al-Arif (a Palestinian journalist), had attacked Jews along Jaffa Road in Jewish (West) Jerusalem and then inside the Old City. Beitar, the youth movement of the right-wing Revisionist Movement, was founded in 1923, so clearly it could not have had a hand in the events of 1920. (Even a postmodernist can see that!) The Palin Report, acknowledging the pogrom for what it was, stated that "all the evidence goes to show that these [Arab] attacks were of a cowardly and treacherous description, mostly against old men, women and children--frequently in the back" (though, to round out the picture, Palin did attribute the rising tide of Arab anger to Britain's pro-Zionist policy).

Brazen inaccuracy similarly marks Pappé's treatment of the

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Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. Pappe writes that the Arab Higher Committee had tried to "negotiate a principled settlement with the Jewish Agency" (it did not); that in "October 1936" the AHC "declared a general strike" (it was declared in May, 1936 and ended in October); that "in August [1937]" Palestinians assassinated "Major Andrew," the British acting Galilee district commissioner (his name was Lewis Andrews, he was a civilian, and he was assassinated in September); and that "quite a few" of the Palestinian dead in the 1936-1939 rebellion were women (there are no accurate figures, but there can be no doubt that only a handful of the three thousand to six thousand Palestinian dead were women, who generally took no part in the rioting and the fighting).

Pappe writes that "in the 1969 election, the moderate Eshkol could not prevail against the more inflexible Golda Meir" (Eshkol simply died in office, and his party, Mapai, selected Meir as his successor, and later, in the general elections of 1969, the incumbent prime minister Meir, heading the Mapai list, ran against, and beat, a collection of right-wing, religious, and left-wing parties); that there were one million Palestinians living outside Palestine by the end of the 1948 war (the number was no more than three hundred thousand); that "the fida'iyyun [literally, self-sacrificers or guerrillas] ... activities initially consisted of attempts to retrieve lost property" (this was probably true of infiltrating Palestinian refugees, but the fida'iyyun, set up by Egypt only in 1954-1955, from the first were engaged in intelligence and terrorist activities, not in property retrieval); that "Lebanon was destroyed in [Israeli] carpet bombing from the air and shelling from the ground" in 1982 (Lebanon was not destroyed, though several neighborhoods in a number of cities were badly damaged, and there was no "carpet bombing"). Again, the list is endless.

Where Pappe's ideological bent is not responsible for outright inventions and errors, it leads instead to narrative lopsidedness. He devotes a full seven pages to instances of Zionist-Arab cooperation and co-existence (which he calls "cohabitation") during the Arab revolt of 1936- 1939, but only two pages to the actual revolt and its consequences. Surely the revolt itself was far more important than the handful of concurrent inconsequential Arab-Jewish contacts aiming at coexistence. And Pappe devotes a mere sixteen pages to the revolutionary upheaval of the 1948 war--surely the central event in Palestine's modern history--and two of those pages are maps. Still, 1948 does relatively well in this regard: the 1973 war--which Pappe describes as a "devastating Israeli defeat," echoing Arab propaganda, and the "bloodiest Arab-Israeli confrontation" (in fact, the war of 1947-1949 was bloodier)--gets about half a page. I should add also that Hafez Assad of Syria did not embark on the 1973 war in order to resume the peace process with Israel; he simply wanted to re-conquer the Golan Heights (and perhaps thus to avoid entering a peace process).

strategy for the military vote.

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Pappe dedicates his book to "Ido and Yonatan, my two lovely boys. May they live not only in a modern Palestine, but also in a peaceful one." His choice of the term "Palestine" rather than "Israel" would seem to indicate that Pappe is looking forward to a polity that will emerge after Israel's disestablishment or demise. He obviously supports a single bi-national state in all of Palestine. And he is no fool. He must know what such a state will look like. A bi-national state, if established tomorrow, would contain roughly five million Jews and four and a half million Arabs (1.3 million Israeli Arabs, including the Arabs of East Jerusalem; two million West Bank Arabs; and close to one and a half million Arabs of the Gaza Strip). There would be instant chaos, as Arab and Jewish communities would vie for dominance and try to settle old scores, and as the two to three million refugees from 1948 and their descendants, now resident in the West Bank and Gaza, would make tracks for, and try to repossess, lost houses and lands in pre-1967 Israel.

Moreover, were the "right of return" to be adopted--as would be demanded by Palestine's Arabs and the surrounding Arab world, perhaps with European endorsement--another million Arabs would pour into the country from the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, instantly creating an Arab majority in the "bi-national" state. If that state were democratic, the majority would determine its character, and in fairly short order it would become an Arab state with a gradually decreasing Jewish minority. Without doubt, the Arab majority would pass legislation blocking further Jewish immigration into the country; and, equally without doubt, Jews would begin to leave.

But even without implementation of an instant or gradual return of refugees from outside Palestine, Pappe's binational state would quickly become an Arab-majority state, given relative Arab and Jewish birthrates. Palestinian Arab families have an average of four or five children (and this includes Israeli Arab households), while Israeli Jewish families tend to have two or three children. Within a decade or so of its creation, the bi-national state would have an Arab majority. I find it difficult to imagine what sort of life Pappe really believes that he and his children and grandchildren can expect as members of a Jewish minority in an Arab state. After all, the Jewish minorities in the Islamic Arab world have fared poorly over the centuries, always subject to second-class citizenship and often to brutal oppression and massacre; as late as the 1940s they suffered from discriminatory laws and pogroms (in Baghdad, Tripoli, Aden); and by the 1960s they had all fled, or been expelled from, their native lands. Iraq, with one hundred thirty-five thousand Jews in 1948, has today about fifty Jews; Egypt, once with seventy-five thousand, has about one hundred; Morocco, with two hundred sixty-five thousand in 1948, has about six thousand. For all practical purposes, these countries have been ethnically cleansed of their Jews. Almost no Jews at all are left in Yemen or Algeria, and none, as far as I know, live in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Oman, Kuwait, or the United Arab Emirates.

A Muslim-dominated Palestine would be even less benign or hospitable toward its Jewish minority. After all, the Palestinians are not a particularly forgiving people (the cry for revenge seems to be on the lips of every suicide bomber), and what they have suffered at Jewish hands since 1947 will not easily be erased from their collective and individual memories. Moreover, the Islamic Arab world, including Arafat's Palestinian Authority, has shown little penchant for democracy. More generally, tolerance of the "other" is not a deeply ingrained tradition in the Muslim Arab world, as the fate of the Arab world's Christian communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will attest. (Look at Sudan.) Nor would the social and economic gap between the Jews and the Arabs of Pappé's bi-national state make for peaceful co-existence.

So I doubt that Ido and Yonatan will enjoy life in their new Muslim Arab-dominated environment. My prediction is that, whatever their politics, they will quickly repair to Europe or America. And if, contrary to logic, they stick it out, they will enjoy an existence infinitely less free, creative, and pleasant than that currently enjoyed by Israel's Arab minority citizens. This truly is an appalling book. Anyone interested in the real history of Palestine/Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would do well to run vigorously in the opposite direction.

BENNY MORRIS is professor of Middle East history at Ben-Gurion University and the author, most recently, of *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge University Press).

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