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What Are My Opinions?

by Israel Shahak

During my visit abroad to Western-Europe, a concerted attack on my activities was made in the Israeli press especially in Haaretz, but also in Maariv, Yediot Ahronot, Davar, Jerusalem Post and other papers. [See SWASIA I, 42, for translations of several articles attacking Shahak.] No attempt was made by any paper to check (with me or my friends) any item of the many lies they published about me personally, and likewise nothing of my opinions was explained in detail. I was only accused in general terms of being a "slanderer," "poisoner of the wells of peace," etc.

I have tried to offer the following article to Haaretz. It was accepted and I was asked to shorten it. I did so to the prescribed length, and was then put off by a succession of ridiculous excuses, the last of which was that the manuscript was lost. Finally after more than three weeks I was told that no article of mine will be published by Haaretz. The decision was made by the editor, Gershom Shoken. The article in its original version is given below:

There is a fact which should have really interested the Israeli public in the affair of the witch-hunt leveled against me by Herzl Rosenblum, editor of *Yediot Ahronot*; by the editor of *Maariv*; Amnon Rubinstein [Dean of Tel Aviv University's Law School] and Uri Avneri [editor of *Haolam Hazeh*]. It is the plain fact that none of them said exactly what are the "terrible" things, what are the so-called "lies," which even Rubinstein sometimes can't deny. In short, what is it that I really say, here in Israel as well as abroad?

Since I consider it beneath my dignity to conduct a discussion with people who do not even care to check the most elementary facts about me, I do not intend to answer here any of the "charges" levelled against me. I do not

see myself as a defendant, but as an accuser; I want to explain exactly about what I accuse the state of Israel; I mean by this term especially the Jewish community of the state of Israel and only after that the government, which fulfills the will of that public.

Space lacking, I will confine myself to the occupied territories. I shall not enter into my claims concerning discrimination within Israel itself.

The Occupied Territories

In my opinion, the Israeli occupation regime in the conquered territories is not only not a liberal one; it is in fact one of the most cruel and repressive regimes in modern times. Maybe we can start with a simple problem: The number of Palestinians living now in the occupied territories is slightly above a million. Before the Israeli conquest the number of Palestinians living there was a one and one-half million, plus some three hundred thousand more relatives working temporarily in various countries.

The first thing done by the occupation authorities was to organize by all means, both by cruel coercion and in supposedly "humane" ways, a mass-expulsion of Palestinians from their motherland. This mass-expulsion (unlike the expulsion of individuals, about which I'll speak later) was carried out until August, 1968, and was only interrupted because the government of King Hussein shut the bridges for further expulsion. In almost all Palestinian families that "policy" has caused separation of parents from children, of brothers from brothers and sisters; in short human suffering that it is hard to describe. But for the government of Israel, for all the Zionist parties and for undercover servants of the government like Uri Avneri, this is not a human problem, this is not a gross and cynical trampling underfoot of the most

elementary values of justice—this is only the well-known "demographic problem." In the "united" Jerusalem of today, the very same situation also prevails. The Israeli government speaks of "reunion of families" when it comes to Russian Jews, but does not allow the "reunion of families" when it comes to Palestinians of Jerusalem. And I talk of *right*, not of some act of charity, sometimes accomplished as a measure of favouritism.

People who were born, and lived most of their life in Jerusalem are not allowed to come back and to settle in *their own city*, if they are not Jews; of course, if a Dutchman converts to Judaism tomorrow (by way of Orthodox Jewish conversion) he will not only be allowed to do so at once, he will also get an apartment in Ramat-Eshkol (all-Jewish suburb of Jerusalem, built on Arab land conquered in 1967).

All the arrangements known as "summer visits", so praised by all sorts of hypocrites, is essentially meant to aggravate the problem: Brother is allowed to see brother, children to see their father. Of course, nostalgia becomes overwhelming, and then they are told: You want to reunite? Please do so—but on the other side of the Jordan river! Thus does false liberalism serve the real aim of the Israeli government: the expulsion of Palestinians from their country.

Democratic Rights

More than seven years have elapsed since the conquest. Let us consider what was the situation of Nazi Germany and Japan seven years after they were conquered and occupied by the Allies. In 1952, there were already Japanese and German states. They were not spontaneously generated. They were established by Germans and Japanese, because, shortly after the war, the residents of occupied territories in Germany and in Japan were granted basic democratic rights, rights that were constantly enlarged. These were the right to create political parties, to write political programs, to hold non-violent demonstra-

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tions, in short, the right to debate and to decide about their future. The situation in the territories occupied by Israel is just the opposite. Not only are political parties—all political parties—totally forbidden; even unions, such as trade-unions, student-unions or cultural associations, are forbidden. It is not only forbidden for Palestinians to demonstrate; it also is forbidden to go on strike; it is even forbidden to close one's own shop in sign of protest, even though it is hard to imagine a more peaceful way of protesting.

I recall those facts, not only because I condemn and oppose them very deeply, but also in order to stress that here lies the root of Palestinian terrorism. And even though I condemn all terrorism, be it Palestinian terrorism or Israeli terrorism—the later being bigger from the standpoint of view of the number of innocents who fall victim to it—I place the heaviest responsibility upon the shoulders of the Israeli government. It is only natural that a people whose existence is denied, whose most basic family and human rights are denied, and who are denied any right to wage a political struggle—should choose another form of struggle, some manifestations of which certainly deserve to be firmly condemned.

Violations of the Geneva Conference

Moreover, Israel shamelessly and cynically violates, in the conquered territories, all the Geneva conventions. The same people who have the audacity to recall the Geneva convention on prisoners of war when it is violated by the Syrians (and I have no doubt that it was indeed violated by the Syrians in regards to our prisoners, just as I have no doubt that Israel violated that convention in regards to Syrian prisoners), the same people were silent, and are still silent when Israel violates overtly, through acts committed in broad daylight, the 4th section of the set of Geneva conventions 1949, the section which deals with the status of the residents of occupied territories. Out of the many violations I shall quote only three, which are committed overtly, on the basis of an almost unanimous agreement inside Israel.

Let us take as an example the blowing up of houses and other collective punishments. The facts are well known: When the occupation authorities arrest a suspect, even before he is put on trial, sometimes even before he is "officially" indicted, an order is issued to destroy the house in which the suspect lived. Sometimes it is the house of his family, sometimes not. Sometimes "refinements" are introduced. All the inhabitants of the

village are forcibly concentrated on a nearby hill, so as to watch the "educative show". It must be stressed that such an act is fundamentally barbaric. People who even in the eyes of the authorities, are innocent are ousted. Children, old people, women, sick, cripples, and all of them together are thrown onto the street, regardless of weather. This is one example of collective punishment such as is expressly prohibited by the Geneva conventions, as well as by any notion of natural justice. More than once in the course of my functions, I had the privilege of sitting, together with one of such families, on the ruins of their house, and nothing convinced me more of the barbaric character of our occupation than the sight of children on the ruins of their house. Aside from that punishment, there is a whole set of different collective punishments. Does one want to punish the area of Hebron? Grapes are not allowed to be transported on the roads during picking time, until the "notables" finally fall on their knees before the military governor. Does one want to punish the city of Ramallah? The sale of mutton is forbidden in that town for two months, or the municipality is not allowed to receive contributions coming from natives of Ramallah abroad and sent for purposes of municipal development. Does one want to punish the town of El-Birah? An order is issued to take pictures of Palestinian folklore off the walls of the city hall, and to hide them in a cellar! I could go on indefinitely, and give innumerable examples of this kind.

Learning from Antisemites

As a Jew, I must say that all this is quite familiar to me. Collective punishments inflicted upon Jews, the belief all the Jews in the neighborhood are "guilty" of this or that deed committed by one Jew, and that they must therefore be collectively punished, all this is quite well-known in Jewish history. All the collective punishments and the "justifications" raised to rationalize them only demonstrate in my opinion, to what extent the state of Israel is adopting progressively all the values and opinions of antisemitism. The discussion between the Israeli government and false liberals is only about the question of knowing whether "it helps" or not. In Israel one is not allowed to say that to take an innocent child and inflict a cruel "punishment" upon him is a barbaric and horrible act in itself. This is "calumny", for to say this is to relate to Palestinians, to non-Jews, as to human beings, while false liberals only deal with the "interest of the Jews"; they only deal with the hypocritical question: Is the oppression of Palestinians a good or a bad thing for the Jews, in the short and in the long run?

Individual Expulsions

I have spoken of the mass expulsion that was interrupted in 1968 after King Hussein refused to cooperate. But the expulsion of individuals is taking place all the time. Here again, the story is simple. The authorities come to a man's house in the middle of the night. They give him a half-hour or an hour to pack up a few things, while making sure that neither he nor his family get in touch with the outside. A group of such people is taken to the Jordan Valley, and with the help of blows, shots (and even wounds provoked by the blows) they are simply forced to pass to Jordan. The majority of the expelled belong to the leadership of the Palestinian nation: mayors of towns, lawyers, engineers and intellectuals. Of course, they are not officially charged with anything, so that they have no possibility to defend themselves. The day after, the Israeli government announces that they had "incited" the population; the Israeli intellectuals, the judges, the lawyers, the writers and others, who shout, for instance, about the harassment of "immigration activists" in the USSR; do not pronounce a single word of condemnation against that barbaric act, in which a person is uprooted from his motherland, a father from his family, without a legal charge. And, of course, to a family thus orphaned of its father, they say simply: Why don't you also go and reunite outside? In many cases the family rejects this sentence of "liberal" occupation, and stays, and suffers, only so as to prevent the success of the Israeli authorities' plot, to expell as many Palestinians as it can from their country. And the well-known "calumniator", Israel Shahak, with his "primitive style" (according to Amnon Rubinstein) hereby announces that he has more respect for those families than for the whole Israeli government together with its overt and covert servants, and that he will continue to struggle, in Israel and abroad, in order that those people obtain justice!

Jewish Settlement in the Conquered Territories

At the time of the sterile discussion about "legal" or "illegal" settlement, there is a tendency in Israel to forget that any settlement of civilians of a conquering power in the occupied territories is a violation of section IV of the Geneva conventions. I consider with much greater opposition the "legal" settlements authorized by the Israeli government than the illegal settlements. Not only because of the Geneva convention, and not only because it prevents or does not prevent peace (what peace?), but also because of more essential motives: the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, by their very nature, constitute a dispossession.

sion, a discrimination and a system of apartheid. The territories confiscated, so acquired by pressure and deceit for settlement, become territories where only Jews are allowed to live, and where only Jews shall be allowed to live in the future. They are taken out of their natural geographical context, and become typical imperialist bases, serving the strategic needs of the colonialist power—in this case Israel—that has erected them. Thus, by the way of “legal” settlement, the “Jordan Valley” has become one half of the West Bank, and almost reaches to the eastern suburbs of Nablus. Thus the Gaza Strip constitutes a concentration camp (and just like a concentration camp it is surrounded by barbed wire) “guarded” by the settlements of the Rafah area, and the “Jewish fingers.” Those are the kibbutzim, which Moshe Dayan and Arik Sharon have planted in the strip. The function of those settlements, clear to anyone who consents to look at the map, is territorial expansion; it is the enslavement and proletarianization of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories.

I shall add a few words concerning the “principle of land acquisition.” First of all, the Israeli occupation regime confiscated all the government lands and devoted them to Jewish settlement. This, from any point of view, is really a theft. In most cases those had always been communal lands of the Palestinian village. They were registered, according to the regional custom, in the name of the Ottoman Sultan, then in the name of the British High Commissioner, and finally, in the name of the Jordanian king. In all cases, those lands were actually utilized by the local residents. Now the “Socialist” Israeli rule has come; it transfers land in a racist way to the use of exclusive members of one ethnic group: the Jews. By the way, this was not exclusively for use by Israeli citizens but for the use of Jews from all over the world. This is racism! Another form of land acquisition is by way of confiscation of that which is called “lands of absentees.” Once again it is a simple matter: More than one-third of the Palestinians in the territories were expelled, and among them many whose lands were registered in their own name. For example, if a family father was expelled and if his wife and children remained in the village, then they are living on an “absentee’s lands.” Next comes the “Socialist” Israeli government and expels them from that land, which it consecrates to Jewish settlement. Thus is the land of Israel “redeemed!” In this way a supplementary “socialist” result is obtained. In many villages the lands “belonging” to the Jordanian administration separate and cut the plots still in private hands. Then, pressure is exerted in direction of what is called “land concen-

tration,” i.e., that the remaining villagers shall become partners in the spoliation of widows and orphans of their village, by exchanging their lands for the confiscated lands, so as to create a “checker”—a continuous territory that shall be “cleared out” for Jewish settlement. That was the root of the problem in the famous case of the village of Akrabah, and those were the means by which it was “redeemed.” On this land stands the kibbutz “Nahal Gittit” (which is, of course, in my view a kibbutz of robbers and oppressors). Together with the full kibbutz movement this represents looting!

Jewish Terrorism?

I condemn and oppose all terrorism. I have condemned in the firmest way every Palestinian act of terrorism, and I have done so in particular when in front of a public which sympathizes with the Palestinians. But unlike hypocrites, I really condemn *all* terror. Not only terror directed against Jews, but also terror committed by Jews and directed against Arabs. So as to save time, I shall not speak of the terrorism of all the Jewish underground organizations under the Mandate; I shall start with the existence of the state of Israel. It seems to me that it would be hard to find a man more worthy of the name of terrorist than Meir Har-Zion. In his diaries and in the many interviews with him in the Israeli press, that man revealed not only what an assassin he was, but also how much he enjoyed—purely and simply enjoyed—murder. How much he enjoys killing an Arab, particularly with a knife, because he can then feel that he is a “male.” [See *Huaertz Weekly Supplement*, November 9, 1969.] He asks of his commander the permission to kill an unarmed Arab shepherd, precisely with a knife, and then describes with sadistic enjoyment the way his comrade holds him, while Har-Zion plunges the knife in his back.” and the blood splashes from the wound” (See Meir Har-Zion Diaries). Are we in need of further description of Har-Zion’s deeds which appears in Moshe Sharett’s diary? [See *Maariv*, June 28, 1974.] Sharett tells how Har-Zion, with a group of terrorists like him, went across the borders of Israel, got a hold of six Arabs, and killed, with a knife, five of them. He felled them one after the other, while the others watched; he left the sixth one alive so that he could tell... That man is considered a national hero by the majority of Israeli Jews. That man was praised and was presented as a model to the youth by the defense minister of Israel and the general in charge of the southern command (Moshe Dayan and Arik Sharon). No protest was raised against that “model”, not even among many people who talk of peace!

I will add to this the “Beirut expedition” of April 1973, an operation in which were murdered, not only PLO leaders, but also women whose sole crime was that they lived next to PLO leaders. (This was a murder lauded by Uri Avneri.) I will add to this the napalm bombings in Irbid, Es-Salt and other Jordanian towns in the summer of 1968. I will add to this the summer, 1974, habit of bombing refugee camps in Lebanon, and on top of ordinary bombs, dropping delayed-action bombs, which only explode after one hour or two, i.e., when the families and medical squads are searching through the ruins to rescue the wounded. And one can add much more to the list. Is not all that terror? Isn’t it just as bad as Kyryat-Shmoneh? Do those who are not ready to condemn the sadistic declarations of Meir Har-Zion, and the transformation of such a character into a “model for the youth” have any right at all to condemn Ahmed Jibril? My answer is: I have the right to do so. They don’t. Murderers and accomplices of murderers had rather not pose as moralists. And to those who justify (and even enjoy) the murder of non-Jews, to those for whom only Jewish children shed blood, and for whom, so it seems, Arab children have water in their veins, I will simply say: It is not you who can preach morality to me.

Torture

My considered opinion is that people are tortured in Israel and in the conquered territories. I confess: I have in the matter no hard evidence, and I do not expect to obtain any. I am not so naive as to believe that a torturer will stand up and announce: I have tortured!—Or that he will introduce two witnesses into the torture-room so that they can testify afterwards. But such is the situation in all the countries. There are no *such* testimonies about Brazil, none about Greece under the Colonels’ rule. Moreover, there are no such testimonies about that which was inflicted upon the Israeli prisoners in Egypt and in Syria. Most of the claims, which I believe, are exclusively based upon the testimony of the victims of torture. Therefore *it is not* a matter of “proofs”, or of “unchecked allegations.” It is a matter of Jewish racism. The majority of the Jewish public in Israel (and also out of it) believes that only Jews are human beings, and, therefore, deserve to be trusted, while the Gentiles usually lie, as stated in most cases throughout Talmudic Law. Hence, when a Jew claims that the Syrians tortured him, we must believe him at once, on the basis of his testimony. But when a Palestinian claims that Jews tortured him, we must not believe him in any way, because he is a gentile.

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I, on the other hand, claim that all men are worthy of minimal trust, especially men who suffer, and I tend to believe the testimonies about tortures both when they come from Israeli prisoners in Syria and when they come from Palestinians in the conquered territories. I consider it my duty to publicize them and to demand an inquiry. I see the most striking evidence that the Israeli government and its agents torture systematically thousands of people in the fact that all the supporters of the Israeli government, be they vocal or hidden, refuse to demand an independent inquiry on the subject.

The Right To Check

What is in my opinion even more appalling than the tortures themselves, a fact which I do not doubt, is the attitude of the majority of the Israeli public vis-a-vis the *complaints about tortures*, and especially the arrogant claim that facts haven't been sufficiently checked. How do Rubinstein and Avneri "check?" They never get in touch with the claimants or with their lawyers. They do not answer letters demanding an interview with them, letters demanding a chance to give the opportunity to hear what the man himself cries from his own pain. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from this is that when Rubinstein and/or Avneri claim that they have "checked," they mean they consulted someone in one of the "security branches," and consider that the answer they got is the truth, without hearing the other side, without hearing the claimant at all. The political conclusion is clear, but the human conclusion is worse than that: In the state of Israel the majority of the judges, the jurists and the intellectuals, not to mention politicians, are indifferent to the most basic human rule that the claim of a man who says he's been mistreated must be listened to, and must be examined *objectively*. That is, in my eyes, infinitely more important than the tortures themselves, for the majority of the public, and especially the heads of the public have been and are guilty of

that sin. Even though I am convinced that there were numerous cases of torture, I may be wrong. If my claims were checked, and the proof of the opposite was made, I would stand up and admit that I was wrong. But I am not mistaken, and I cannot be mistaken, when I claim that the majority of the Israeli public shut their ears to a simple human cry, that this ignores the most fundamental political duty—the duty of independent inquiry—and that this is the source of the corruption, which is being uncovered, and that will continue to be uncovered in many diverse places.

Nazification

Therefore, I am not afraid—neither in that field, nor in other fields, even though certainly not in all the fields—of the comparison with "that which befell the German people between the two world wars." I am not afraid to say publicly that Israeli Jews, and with them most Jews throughout the world, are undergoing a process of Nazification. Does a people whose official "hero" is Meir Har-Zion deserve any other title? Would we give another name to a people whose hero enjoys killing Jews with a knife and to see how the blood splashes? Isn't it the Nazi "Horst Wesel" who spoke of the pleasure of Jewish blood dripping from his knife?

But the silence concerning other claims is worse. It includes—exactly as it did in Germany—not only those among us who are in my opinion real Nazis, and there are a lot of those, but also those who do not protest against Jewish Nazism, so long as they think it serves Jewish interest. It is for instance a fact, that according to Jewish Talmudic law, legally valid in Israel today, any Gentile woman is considered as impure, slave, Gentile and whore; when she embraces the Jewish faith she stops being impure, slave, and gentile, but she remains a whore. The argumentation, provided by Talmudic law to back that judgment, when raised in the twentieth century can only be compared to Julius Streicher; for instance the judgment whereby all "Gentile women" must necessarily be prosti-

tutes. Did a jurist in Israel explain this sentence? Did anyone warn any of the "famous female convents" that together with conversion they undertook to be "whores"? Did anyone raise the question of knowing whether that law is wise and just or not? The answer is clear, and just for the same reason similar jurists in Nazi Germany accepted just for the the Nuremberg Laws (which are infinitely more moderate than the "Gentile" regulations in Talmudic Law). Exactly for the same reason, the leading Israeli jurists don't even want to examine the demand for inquiry on tortures raised by a non-Jew.

I can only conclude with the words of Hugh Trevor-Roper, at the end of his book *The Last Days of Hitler*, talking about Albert Speer: "He had the capacity to understand the forces of politics, and the courage to resist the master whom all others have declared irresistible. As an administrator he was undoubtedly a genius... His ambitions were peaceful and constructive: he wished to rebuild Berlin and Nuremberg, and had planned at the cost of no more than two months' expenditure to make them the greatest cities in the world. Nevertheless, in a political sense, Speer is the real criminal of Nazi Germany, for he, more than any other, represented that fatal philosophy which has made havoc of Germany and nearly shipwrecked the world. For ten years he sat at the very center of political power; his keen intelligence diagnosed the nature and observed the mutations of Nazi government and policy; he saw and despised the personalities around him; he heard their outrageous orders and understood their fantastic ambitions; but he did nothing. Supposing politics to be irrelevant he turned aside and built roads and bridges and factories while the logical consequences of government by madmen emerged. Ultimately when their emergence involved the ruin of all his work, Speer accepted the consequences and acted. Then it was too late; Germany had been destroyed."

So said Trevor-Roper. I am trying to act before it is too late.

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