

THE TEARS OF ZION

PUBLIC OPINION in Europe and America is principally informed about developments within Israel by a select group of spokesmen, whose voices are heard over and over again. It represents itself as an enlightened opposition to mainstream prejudices, critical of much in Israeli political and intellectual life from a progressive point of view. The reality is quite different. Intellectuals of the Zionist Left play a crucial part in sustaining the oppression and exclusion of the Arab populations of Palestine. A look at the period from the collapse of the Camp David negotiations at the end of July 2000, through the outbreak of the second Intifada in October, up to the Israeli elections of February, 2001, offers a graphic demonstration of this role.

The starting-point of the Zionist Left was the assumption that there was only one central contradiction in Israeli politics—the rivalry between Labour and Likud, or the contrast between peace and war. Its intellectuals expected the Palestinians to accept this presupposition, and assist ‘the good to overcome the evil’. In the year 2000, what this meant was to help Ehud Barak overcome Ariel Sharon. Everything boiled down to just this one choice. Or in slightly more theoretical language: the sum of contradictions ‘among us’ is the only totality, everything else is secondary and insignificant; therefore, the focal contradiction in our lives has to become central in theirs, too.

The repression of the contradiction between Palestinian interests and the Israeli occupation, between the occupation and Palestinians’ lives under it, has been a long process, of which the Oslo Accords were a culmination. But it has since continued with the transformation of Meretz from a centre-left to simply an ‘anti-religious’ party, followed by the disappearance of Peace Now.¹ Its next stage was the ‘obligation’ of the

Left—and even of the Palestinians—to assist Ehud Barak to be re-elected as Prime Minister.

The existentialist

What argument did intellectuals of the Zionist Left use to try to force Palestinians to swallow this partial, limited contradiction—the choice between Barak and Sharon—as if it were the only one that mattered? *Realpolitik*, naturally. Who has to foot the bill for this political realism? They do. Who doesn't have to pay anything for it? 'We' don't. Menahem Brinker, a well-known professor of philosophy in the Hebrew University and University of Chicago, announced to the Israeli Left during Barak's journey to Camp David, in an article in *Ha'aretz*: 'Barak came to Camp David with a far-reaching political plan. No former Israeli leader has ever offered the Palestinians a similar plan. The Left has no reason whatsoever to criticize his red lines'.²

In other words, the Left could only commend Barak because he was ready to 'give' the Palestinians such a lot. Not everything, of course. Brinker immediately goes on to explain: 'I am interested in peace on the ground, not merely on paper, and therefore I must understand that there are some objective circumstances that impose certain limits on Barak's concessions.'

Anyone familiar with the map of Barak's proposals knows what Brinker had in mind by 'certain limits'—the lying sales-talk of all those who marketed a shopping list for the Palestinians that offered them '90 per cent' of the West Bank: that is, 90 per cent of what would be left of it after Israel kept its expansion around Jerusalem, its military roads and bases, its settlements. To those who over the years have got used to thinking of the Palestinians as a 'demographic threat', calculating with fear 'how many Arabs will be living among us', it comes quite naturally to reduce their land to percentages, too. What is unthinkable is to envisage them as citizens of their own country, capable of travelling from place to place within it without countless roadblocks (which Barak's map

¹ Peace Now: organization founded in 1978 to press for a settlement with Egypt; generally affiliated with Labour; arriving, very late, at a shy recognition of the Palestinian right to an independent state.

² 'The Ethics of Pragmatics', *Ha'aretz* 17 July 2000. [Menahem Brinker: b. 1935; leading representative of existentialism in Israeli philosophy—eds.]

granted them for ever), with a natural love of their land, and of freedom of movement within it.

Brinker, an 'old sage' of Peace Now, no longer has time for the difficult daily struggle against the settlements, the only thing his movement—rich in money and reputation all over the world, including the Arab countries, but very poor in activists—has done in recent years. The *Ha'aretz* report goes on:

The red lines presented by Barak before leaving for Camp David are fully accepted by Brinker. Annexing settlement clusters in which most of the current West Bank settlers will live does not in his view contradict the minimal aspirations of the Palestinians and does not undermine their chances of establishing a viable Palestinian state. Brinker is even willing to go further and determine that the Palestinians share this opinion as well. 'If they were thinking of Yamit', he says, 'they would not have come to Oslo. Any Palestinian who came to Oslo understood that the Yamit precedent would not repeat itself in the West Bank'.³

For good measure, Brinker adds a jab at his friends in Peace Now, who mistakenly focused their struggles in recent years against the settlements:

'We always saw the settlements as an obstacle to peace, and always focused most of our energy against them. Now it turns out that the Palestinians view the settlements very differently. They do not view them as an obstacle to peace, and do not demand the evacuation of all the settlements.'

No less. Brinker offers no proof, yet the sympathetic reporter continues:

Last week, he suddenly remembered an Israeli–Palestinian gathering held over 20 years ago in the United States, at Harvard University. The Israeli delegation included, besides Brinker, also Aryeh Eliav and Matti Peled; on the Palestinian side were, among others, professors Edward Said and Walid Halidi.⁴

All these years, while Brinker opposed the policy of settlements, this forgotten fact, this distant memory from Harvard, lay at the bottom

³ Yamit: Jewish settlement in Northern Sinai, returned to Egypt in early 1982—having been razed to the ground by the retreating IDF.

⁴ Two figures of the Zionist Left who initiated a dialogue with the PLO in the seventies; Matti Peled was a former General in the IDF whose criticisms of Israeli policies went far beyond the outlook of his associates.

of his consciousness: 'We, the Israelis, talked of leaving the settlers, and already then there were Palestinians, like Halidi, who were not deterred by this.' After long and tortuous discussion of the subjective and the objective, after all the talk about the advantage of 'peace on the ground over justice on paper', this is the sum of the Palestinian voice: '*They were not deterred*'. How were they not deterred? Did they nod? Did they shrug their shoulders? Lament? Perhaps this belated memory had more to do with the rise of Ehud Barak, and the emergence of a 'new national agenda', from which no self-respecting Israeli intellectual could stand apart.

'*The Decent Society*'

Interviewed for the same article in *Ha'aretz*, Avishai Margalit—favourite writer on Israeli affairs of the *New York Review of Books*—welcomed Barak's acrobatics no less fulsomely.⁵ Like Brinker, he too belittled any criticism of the Prime Minister. He had heard of misgivings in certain circles about the basis of the rush to Camp David, and swept them contemptuously aside:

Barak's talk about his red lines does not bother me in the least. This is just rhetoric, empty talk that will not bind him. Under these red lines he will be able to include anything he wants in the agreement . . . 75 to 80 per cent of the settlers can be left on 6.5 per cent of the land in the territories, or they can be left on 50 per cent of the land.

No more talk of a compromise between equals. No more talk of 'dividing the Land of Israel [100 per cent] between two nations', but a division of the 1967 occupied territories [23 per cent] between them. Margalit went on in the arrogant tone of so many intellectuals from the 'Peace Camp' in Israel.

The only question that interests me is whether Barak is presenting at the summit positions that match the Beilin–Abu Mazen accord.⁶ If yes—then everything is okay. If he suddenly presents positions closer to the

⁵ [Avishai Margalit: b. 1939; Professor of Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; editor of *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration* (1991), and author of *The Decent Society* (1996)—eds.]

⁶ A nominally secret agreement between Arafat's second-in-command Abu Mazen and Labour politician Yossi Beilin, which contained territorial concessions to Israel beyond even the Oslo accords, including Palestinian recognition of the major blocks of Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Alon plan—then he will be to blame for the failure of the summit. The same goes for Arafat. If he agrees to what Abu Mazen agreed—everything is okay. If he demands much more than that—I will lay the blame for the failure on him.

Why was it so important for Margalit to insist that both sides must return to the Beilin–Abu Mazen accord of 1995?

We are talking here of two definitely not marginal people within their societies, who sat down not under siege conditions and came to an agreement. Any agreement which will be similar, more or less, to the Beilin–Abu Mazen accord will under no conditions be a forced agreement.

In an interview devoted mainly to repudiating past positions of Peace Now, which in recent years did practically nothing apart from monitoring the expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, Margalit in effect gave the ‘new peace map’ initiated by Ariel Sharon in the eighties the backing of Peace Now—hiding behind the Beilin–Abu Mazen formula to talk calmly about ‘leaving most of the settlers in place’. Particularly odious was the attempt to legitimate dispossession and annexation by pretending they were consented to by those who suffered them. *‘We are talking here of two definitely not marginal people within their societies, who sat down not under siege conditions’*⁷ Try telling that to the marginal population that constitutes so much of Palestinian society, the uprooted peasants, the unemployed, the youths in the refugee camps who are sitting ducks for the IDF. Margalit, of course, was not alone in this. He had a fellow-spirit inside the Cabinet—Professor Yuli Tamir, the government spokesperson during Camp David and the subsequent killings, philosopher and author of essays on multiculturalism that have even defended the right of minorities to circumcize women. These are the two most prominent Israeli protégés of Isaiah Berlin. Both Margalit and Tamir arrived at the heart of the matter, choosing at the crucial moment the side of power, denying or faking the Palestinians’ right to their own voice.

Margalit later published an article in the *New York Review of Books*, shortly after the collapse of the talks orchestrated by Clinton at Camp David, in which he declared:

⁷ Notice the brand-marks of hypocrisy in the repeated negatives.

The hundred year conflict, as Ehud Barak describes it, shrank at Camp David to its core. According to reliable reports, the core now concerns neither the Palestinian refugees, nor the Jewish settlers. It does not involve the issues of security or water. It is Jerusalem.⁸

A careful reading of the official Israeli version of the negotiations reveals how faithfully Margalit was repeating the cynical logic of latter-day Zionism. Of course, he had inside information from such supporting organizations as Peace Now, in which he plays an active part. The message is: we give them symbols, in return for annexation of lands, roads, water sources. The underlying assumption of this cynicism could be summed up like this: Israel is too weak to uproot its own settlers, but it is strong enough to nourish a long conflict with the peasants around the settlements—urban communities that keep growing in size. In other words, one of Barak's major achievements was to change the priorities of the 'Peace Camp' completely. The premise now is that the settlements in general should not be dismantled.

The Zionist Orwell

In the months preceding Camp David, one of Barak's central goals was to muster Western opposition to the Palestinian declaration of statehood that Arafat had promised his people for September 2000. This was not a very onerous task, though he boasted more than once of his feat in achieving it—just as he would later boast of his imposition of the Camp David summit itself on Arafat (the symbolic image of Barak shoving Arafat through a doorway into a closed building, in front of the world's television cameras, is lodged in Palestinian folklore). None of this mattered to the chorus of sycophants who suddenly discovered a heroic peacemaker in their new ruler. For in general, since the Oslo Accords the imaginary of the dovish Left in Israel has been void of Palestinians. 'They are there and we are here' (as Barak's 'own' soundbite repeated itself endlessly). The fact that the 'there' is controlled and ruled by the 'here' was neutralized and obliterated by the lie of the 'end of the conflict'. For a time Netanyahu unsettled this tranquillity, giving the enthusiasm accorded to Barak a hysterical edge. No figure in Israeli public life gushed more effusively over him than the novelist Amos Oz,

⁸ 'The Odds against Barak', *New York Review of Books*, 21 September 2000.

hailed in *Newsweek* as ‘the Zionist Orwell’.⁹ On July 11, he explained to British readers in the *Guardian*, in an article entitled ‘Chief Surgeon Must End the Bloodshed’:

There is a fascinating resemblance between these days and the crucial moments of the birth of the Israeli nation: November 1947 . . . and May 1948 . . . Ehud Barak is facing a challenge of Ben-Gurion’s dimensions; he seems to be meeting this challenge with Ben-Gurionian courage.

Within three or four months Barak had become a figure of leonine moral stature. One should bear in mind: Barak didn’t release one Palestinian prisoner during the eighteen months of his premiership; he didn’t dismantle one settlement. On the contrary, during his short career the greatest expansion of the settlements occurred since the Oslo Accords were signed. Criticism of Barak’s manoeuvres was brushed aside, as if never voiced. In full spate, Oz characteristically went on:

We should turn out now, to show the country and the world that millions of Israelis accompany their prime minister with warmth, support and wishes for success . . . Go to Camp David, Ehud Barak. Go with courage and caution and wisdom and vision and empathy for others, and with your sharp sense of reality. Go to Camp David like a surgeon walking into the operating theatre; the theatre in which the future of both Israel and Palestine will be decided.

If it is not untypical of the *Guardian* to publish such trash, there was worse to come. Two weeks later, the ‘peace process’ had collapsed, and it once again called upon Oz to tell its readers why. Here is what he wrote on July 25, when it should have been clear that the article he penned fourteen days earlier had little value to anyone but the few remaining consumers of fish and chips in rainy London:

Ehud Barak went a very long way towards the Palestinians, even before the beginning of the Camp David summit; longer than any of his predecessors ever dreamt to go; longer than any other Israeli prime minister is likely to go. On the way to Camp David, Barak’s proclaimed stance was so dovish that it made him lose his parliamentary majority, his coalition government, even some of his constituency. Nevertheless, while shedding wings and body and tail on the way, he carried on like a flying cockpit, he

⁹ [Amos Oz: b. 1939; service in the tank corps in 1967 and 1973; novelist and teacher at Ben-Gurion University—eds.]

carried on. Seemingly Yasser Arafat did not go such a long and lonely way towards the Israelis. Perhaps he could not, or lacked the fierce devotion to making peace.¹⁰

As far as the Israeli propagandist is concerned, Arafat was simply less pacific than Barak. The Palestinians and their plight might as well not exist. This was written for British readers, where something poetic, not too angry, not too anti-Arab, was expected. Three days later, on July 28, Oz was commenting on the same events in the *New York Times*, in an article whose title, 'The Spectre of Saladin', aptly conveys the flavour of his literary world. Here, writing for American readers in a city with a large Jewish population, he adjusted his sights with the calculated aim of the professional propagandist. The style is best Bronx kitsch:

I am sitting in front of the television in the living room, seeing Yasser Arafat receive a triumphant hero's welcome in Gaza, and all this for having said no to peace with Israel. The whole Gaza Strip is covered in flags and slogans proclaiming the 'Palestinian Saladin' . . . My heart breaks.

After describing the calamitous return of the warmonger, the melodrama returns to Oz himself, his heart breaking in his living room, facing the Gaza Strip covered with banners. Did he see the settlements of Gush Katif, of Netzarim and Kfar Darom, did he see the refugee camps? No. He sees himself:

Already in 1967 I was one of the very few Israelis invoking the solution of two neighbouring states, with Jerusalem as the capital city of both, reciprocal recognition and mutual acceptance. Since then, for many years, my own people treated me like a traitor. My children at school suffered all manner of insults, accused of being the children of one ready to sell off his homeland.

In reality, Amos Oz has never suffered for his opinions. He has always been a favourite son of the Israeli establishment, not least the Army. But now the melodrama hurries on its way, from the passive victim of the moment to the active hero, the saviour: 'And after all these difficult years, Prime Minister Ehud Barak went to Camp David to offer the solution I foretold over 30 years ago.' So the victim was not altogether

¹⁰ 'Even if Camp David Fails, this Conflict is on its Last Legs', *Guardian*, 25 July 2000.

helpless—in fact, he turns out to have been a pretty good counsellor of peace. Thinking back on the old days, prior to the great transformation of Israel that changed it from a state that persecuted the Palestinians into one committed to peace, Oz indeed now counts himself part of the moral majority:

I pause to reflect. I remember how in the old days a single phone booth would have sufficed to contain the entire national assembly of Israeli peace activists. We could literally count ourselves on the tip of our fingers, a tiny minority among minorities. Today everything is different. More than half the nation is with us.

But if this is reassuring news for the readers of the *New York Times*, they still must face the other side of the new situation—the obdurate, outrageous demands of the Palestinians, that menace the very existence of Israel itself:

Yet the Palestinians said no. They insist on their ‘right of return’, when we all very well know that around here ‘right of return’ is an Arab euphemism for the liquidation of Israel. Mr Arafat doesn’t insist on merely the right to a Palestinian state, a right I fully support. Now he demands that the Palestinian exiles should return not only to Palestine, but also to Israel, thus upsetting the demographic balance and eventually turning Israel into the 26th Arab country. After all, there are millions of Germans who will never return to their former homes in Poland, East Prussia or the Sudetenland. The Palestinians have a right to their own free and independent Palestine. But if they also want to have Israel, they should know that they will find me ready to defend my country: an old peace activist ready to fight for the survival of Israel. I believe this to be the last opportunity: the Palestinians must choose if they want a new Saladin, or to really work for peace.

Oz does not deign to argue with the Palestinian position. Instead he tells them they are like the Germans, and should be happy with what is offered them. Anything else amounts to ‘the liquidation of Israel’. There is not a word about the issues of water, the settlements, about Jerusalem—a city whose Jewish expansion now virtually reaches to the Dead Sea. It has never occurred to him to ask what it is like to be a Palestinian today. If their water is stolen—are they not thirsty? If their land is confiscated—do they not go hungry? If they are shut into their villages and towns, do they not suffocate? If on their way to work they are continuously harrassed at three or four roadblocks daily—will they not want to kill?

The parade of lies about Barak's generosity did not come to an end with Camp David. Tension was clearly mounting in Jerusalem, around the settlements, in the West Bank, before Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount ignited a conflagration. The IDF was aware of the likelihood of a new Intifada, and its contingency plans for dealing with one were in the public domain. Those who cared to know, knew. The plans were aired at endless military briefings, even discussed on the radio and television. They always mentioned tanks, they always mentioned missiles, helicopters; and they promised 'a low level of [Jewish] casualties'.

'The Left in Distress'

Two months after the second Intifada had indeed broken out, the toll of Palestinian deaths was already half as many as Israel suffered in its first three years in Lebanon, in addition to many thousands of wounded and hundreds badly maimed. Many of those killed were no more than children or young boys, but the intellectuals of the Zionist Left kept stubbornly silent. The Palestinian dead are not counted. Had this slaughter occurred while Netanyahu was in power, the indifference of the Zionist Left would have evaporated immediately, and we would have heard a completely different discourse, at times even sentimental, full of 'authentic' pathos. For example, in the two-day clashes that followed the opening of the 'Western Wall' tunnel in September 1996, sixteen Israelis and more than eighty Palestinians were killed. But the Zionist Left pointed its accusing finger only at Netanyahu, and in no way at Arafat. With Barak in power, everything changed.

When the number of casualties was already very high, and the killing had extended to Palestinians inside Israel, *Ha'aretz* Magazine published on October 20 a survey of the 'Left in Distress'. Needless to say it did not interview even one of the hundreds of activists (including 'important academic figures', heads of university departments, etc.) doing real work on the ground, mobilizing in meetings and demonstrations. But it did find space for A. B. Yehoshua,¹¹ who explained how let down 'we' were by the Palestinian leadership:

The reaction and the disappointment are understandable. We sat down with Arafat, Barak's offer was generous and then [Arafat] smashed everything to

¹¹ [Abraham Yehoshua: b. 1936; service in the paratroops; writer and professor of literature at the University of Haifa; 'Israel's best living novelist' (*Commentary*)—eds.]

pieces, thinking that only through violence and international pressure could he achieve more. This is the cause of the disappointment. And he made a big mistake, because he was facing Barak, not Sharon or Netanyahu, with a broad consensus to finish the deal.

There could be only one comparison for actions as destructive as this: 'I admit that I didn't understand what Arafat wants. But the Yugoslav people also followed Milošević and fought alongside him, and now he's gone.' Milošević, of course, was accused of ethnic cleansing—the violent expulsion of people from their land. Who is being compared here to the perpetrators of this crime? The Palestinians, naturally.

For his part Dan Miron, doyen of specialists on Hebrew literature, was confident he could determine 'the Palestinians' wishes', or what the Palestinian voice 'really' says.¹² After expatiating on Israel's willingness to give back everything, apart from a few 'vital interests', this is how he put it:

The Palestinian Authority has decided that it will secure an evacuation of the territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state without an agreement with Israel. The evacuation will be achieved as it was in Lebanon, by means of violence and international pressure. The stones, the shootings, the world media, the commissions of inquiry and UN forces will create a reality that will deprive Israel of the territories, without peace and without a settlement of the disputes over its new demands: all of pre-1967 'Arab' Jerusalem, the right of return, and so on.¹³

Proof of this fantasm? Miron offered none. His description of the Palestinians too is void of roadblocks, restrictions on movement, settlements, thirst, a complete devastation of public infrastructure. In 34 years of occupation, not one hospital was built by the Jewish state in the occupied territories, no new buses were purchased, no new water lines were laid. No reason is given why masses of youngsters should be willing to go out and face the IDF snipers. Miron had only one fear: the expansion of Arab Jerusalem and the right of return. In its resistance to these dangers, he explained that Israel was now fighting its most just war since 1967:

¹² [Dan Miron: b. 1934; Professor of Hebrew Literature at the University of Jerusalem, and at Columbia; author of *A Traveller Disguised* (1973)—eds.]

¹³ 'What is the Struggle About', *Yedioth Ahronot*, 24 October 2000.

The Israeli response was therefore inevitable. IDF soldiers are forced to shoot (rubber bullets) because Israel can evacuate the territories only in the framework of a comprehensive peace agreement. The Palestinian boys, whether they are desperate or incited, are—objectively speaking—carrying out a deliberate policy, seeking to create a Palestinian state that has not made its peace with Israel and has not waived its demands of it. Israel must use force to prevent the fulfillment of this policy.

What prompts a scholar like Miron to lie in an Israeli tabloid, telling the reader (in brackets) that the soldiers are firing only ‘rubber bullets’—when even the American press calls them ‘rubber-coated metal bullets’? What causes such a figure to send us transatlantic words of encouragement during this war? What obliges him to claim that ‘there is no other choice, we must kill boys because they want a state that has demands of Israel?’ The answer is: panic at the prospect of a collapse of the current order, in which Israelis set the agenda for both Jews and Arabs.

Enter the writers’ petition

Then, on November 17—after Israeli propagandists had finished massaging international opinion; after more than two hundred Palestinian casualties; after Barak’s policy started to have the blood of Israelis, too, on its hands; after managing to keep quiet on all the crimes committed by the IDF—came a petition signed by intellectuals of the Zionist Left: a huge advertisement in the press, financed by an unidentified source, with tortuous political wording—but, at its climax, a call for dismantling the settlements, containing the following factual statement:

Barak’s government has not dismantled even one settlement. It has invested even more than Netanyahu’s government in developing and strengthening the settlements . . . *Leaving the settlements in place and expanding them prevents any possibility of drawing a sensible border between Israel and Palestine. In fact, it means the conflict will go on forever.*¹⁴

The petition was signed by many writers who had said not one public word since Palestinians had started to be mown down, and of course by those who might better have kept their mouths shut, such as A. B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz. Suddenly the picture changed. Why? What had happened?

¹⁴ ‘Stop the Deterioration,’ *Ha’aretz*, 17 November 2000; emphasis in original.

After two and a half months of repression, this mobile literary salon came to say what should have been said before Camp David, before the dead, the wounded, the maimed. Were I not familiar with this scene from the first days of the Lebanon War, I would not be bothering with this essay. The writers' petition had very little impact, published at that point. The Meretz voters, the 'doves' who are the main audience for articles of the sort quoted here, and the television and radio interviews not quoted, had flown out of sight. The ad came too late to stop the carnival of slaughter, and in the flood of petitions and ads that had preceded it, was not the right means—even had it been born of a true desire to admit that its authors had been wrong (but which of them was ever wrong?)—to stop the killing. The ad did not disavow anything its signatories had previously said. 'We all' said that Barak wanted a generous peace at Camp David and Arafat was to blame for its failure. 'We all' said the Palestinians were offered everything. 'We all' said they did not understand what they were missing. And now, all of sudden, for no apparent reason, 'we all' say that Barak invested more in the settlements than even Netanyahu. We also said the opposite? So what? This is why we always stick together.

Why didn't they know this before? Because they did not care to know this before. Why did they not care to know this before? Because the Palestinians and their hellish lives never interested them. Because they are against occupations, but if they do not call ours by its name it will not be an occupation, but rather part of a 'peace process', good for the BBC and the *NYT*. Of course, if Amos Oz believes what he wrote in the *Guardian* and in the *New York Times*, how could he sign such a petition on November 17? And if the facts in the petition he signed on November 17 are correct, how could he have written those articles?

Anyway, we should not be misled about the ad itself. Its concluding paragraph insists on calling 'upon the Palestinian leadership to announce its readiness to settle the conflict not by violence'. Make no mistake. This is the sentence that legitimizes the army's actions, the siege of the villages, the tanks parked on the outskirts of the towns, the daily shooting of demonstrators, the kidnapping, the assassinations. Here are the words that furnish an alibi for our crimes. The occupation is not violent. They are violent. The army does what it does because of their violence. This is the real meaning of the position expressed in the ad. The fate of the settlements isn't up to us, and is anyway not that important. We will never

deny the IDF's legitimate role as prosecutor, judge and executioner. This is the fighting spirit in which we were raised.

No arrogant or insolent speech of the Amos Oz type, or the sort carefully worded by Brinker as if he were an archivist of state-sponsored history, would be possible had an awareness of the crimes committed against the Palestinians become part of the credo of the Israeli Left. No peace movement would invite these people to speak on its behalf had an effort ever been made in the Jewish Left to sever itself from the state's colonial past, had an effort ever been made to look at what it has done and denounce it, declare that we have no commitment to its heritage, which has led us to this point. This is in fact the dividing line between those who opposed the current war from day one (the non-Zionist Left), and those who were 'distressed', but who 'sounded the trumpet' and supported it (the Zionist Left).

In the vile interview given to *Ha'aretz*, Brinker said:

Israel cannot under any circumstances accept the Palestinian demand regarding its legal and moral responsibility for the departure of the refugees. What the Palestinians are demanding is a matter for historians, not for politicians. What do they want, that political negotiations will determine how many Palestinians were driven out by Israel and how many left of their free will, aiming to return with the victorious Arab armies? That is a question for Benny Morris, not for Ehud Barak.

All the racism of Zionist intellectuals is summed up in this short passage. The refugee camps in the West Bank, or in Lebanon, are not a political issue. They are material for scholarship. But who will have to cope with this issue—politicians or historians? And by the way, who will this historian be? A Jew, of course, as stated in this text: 'This is a question for Benny Morris, not for Ehud Barak'. The matter always stays in the hands of the Jews. There is no Palestinian voice even in examining the 'historical question'.

Apology: we regret that in the printed version of this article it was not made clear which footnotes were editorial additions.