

# CHAPTER 88

*The 1947 partition of Palestine • The birth of Israel in 1948 • Arab League armies invade Israel and are defeated • The refugee problem • A shaky peace • Increasing guerrilla warfare • The Suez Canal fiasco and Israeli gains • Rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) • Guerrilla warfare intensifies • PLO's guerrilla terrorist elements • Israeli countermeasures • The 1967 six-day war • United Nations Resolution 242 • The occupied territories • 1973 invasion of Israel • The Camp David Accords • The Lebanon war and Israeli occupation • Yasser Arafat's defeat • Decline of the PLO • Israeli departure from Lebanon • Outbreak of the intifada • Yasser Arafat's renaissance • Israeli conflict with the U.S. Government • Israel expels Islamic Hamas guerrillas • Peace talks resume • Israel's secret talks with the PLO • The new Israeli-PLO peace plan • The problems ahead*

... life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,  
hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burn-  
ing.

EXODUS 21:23-5



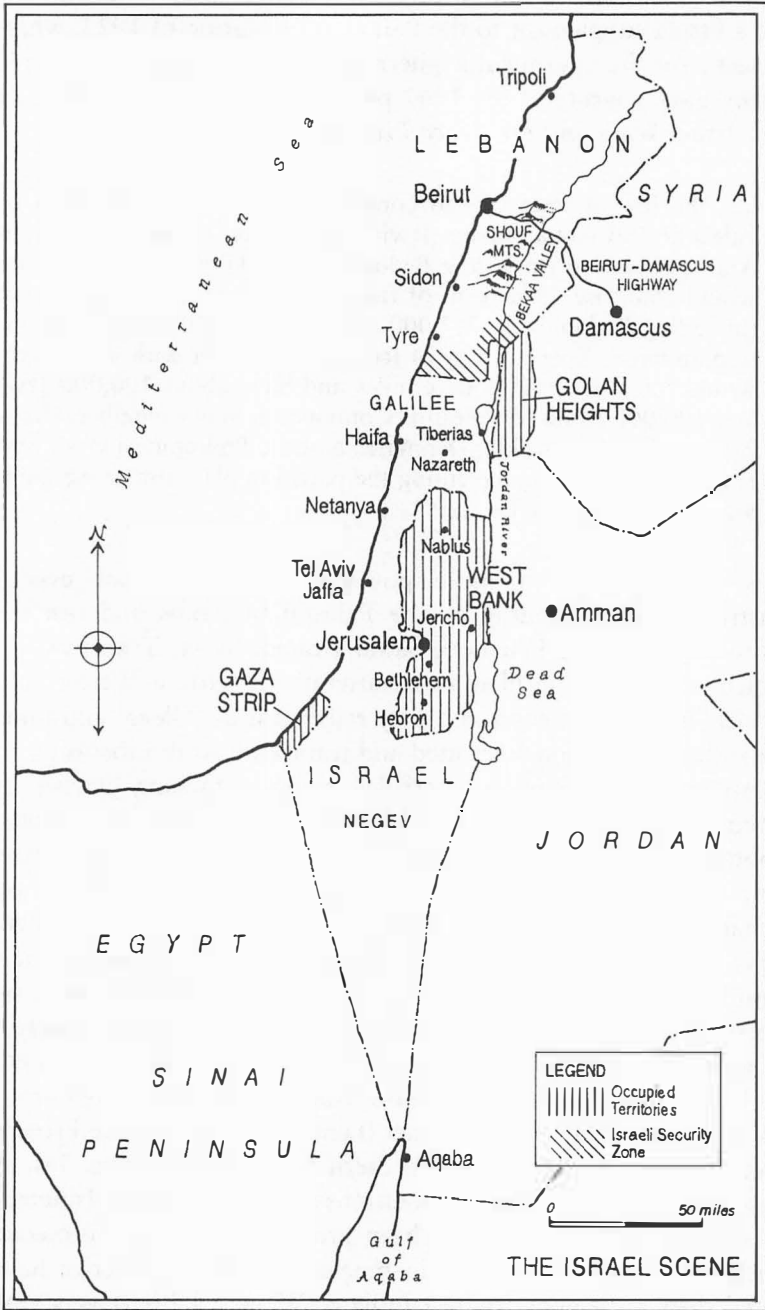
WE LEFT PALESTINE ON the verge of being partitioned between Jews and Arabs (see Chapter 45), the details to be worked out by a special United Nations committee. The committee's solution was reluctantly adopted by the Jewish Agency (the executive body of the international Zionist organization) once the British Government made it clear that it intended to yield the mandate and withdraw its troops in the near future. The resolution was passed by UN General Assembly vote, by no means unanimous, in late 1947. The Arab League

responded by ordering attacks against Jewish settlements not only in Palestine but throughout the Middle East.

The partition was immensely complicated and rather unrealistic, thus a fitting supplement to the Balfour Declaration of 1922, which set the scene for the interminable guerrilla wars prior to World War II. As Sydney Bayley wrote of the 1947 partition in his excellent book, *Four Arab Israel Wars and the Peace Process*:

... the Jewish state was to comprise 56 percent of the area of Palestine and would have a Jewish population of 449,000 and an Arab population (including Bedouin) of 510,000. The Arab state would comprise 43 percent of the area, with an Arab population (including Bedouin) of 747,000 and about 10,000 Jews. The international enclave [the city of Jerusalem together with Bethlehem] would total about 68 square miles and have about 100,000 Jews and 100,000 Arabs. A Palestine Commission of five members [from Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and the Philippines] was given responsibility for implementing the partition plan, under the guidance of the Security Council.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful that a more powerful time-bomb has ever been constructed. Not unnaturally the Palestinian Arabs and other Arab states—Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan, and Yemen—regarded the plan as an attempt to settle a Western-created problem at their expense, and they rejected it as “illegal and unjust.”<sup>2</sup> While the Arab League recruited and trained an Arab Liberation Army, Palestinian and Egyptian guerrillas began attacking Jewish motor convoys and isolated Jewish settlements busy turning desert sands into profitable farming communities. Jewish Haganah (Defense Organization) counterattacks of Arab villages followed. In this opening exchange, the Jews had the upper hand. Neither the Arab Liberation Army nor local Arab militias in Palestine were well-trained or well-organized forces. The Haganah and its Palmach assault units, on the other hand, had been fighting Arabs and the British for nearly three decades. World War II saw the birth of two guerrilla terrorist groups, the Irgun Tsvai Leumi (Etzel)—the National Military Organization—and the Lokhammei Kherut Israel (Lehi)—Fighters for the Freedom of Israel—better known as the old Stern Gang (see Chapter 45), which now conducted independent operations against the Arabs. Isolated Jewish settlements had long since been providing their own protection in much the same way pioneers in nineteenth-century America had protected their settlements against Indians. When a kibbutz was violated, retaliation by Haganah and guerrilla units was swift and harsh. Perhaps inevitably, this led to pre-emptive strikes against Arab targets, the ar-



gument being that these were “defensive”<sup>3</sup>—a semantic perversion historically known as “preventive war” and practiced by, among other aggressors, Frederick the Great and Eric Ludendorff. Some of the strikes were unnecessarily harsh, for example that by Israeli guerrillas who in 1948 put one village to the torch after killing 250 Arabs, half of them women and children.<sup>4</sup> Arab guerrillas at once retaliated by ambushing a convoy and killing seventy-seven Jews, but it was the village massacre that captured headlines and led not only to international opprobrium but also to the Arabs leaving their villages in increasing numbers, the beginning of what grew to be an unmanageable and enormously tragic refugee problem.<sup>5</sup>

Unable to stem escalating violence the UN Palestine Commission, supported by the Jewish Agency, asked for an international military force to intervene, but nothing came of this largely because of U.S. resistance,<sup>6</sup> nor was the dispirited British army scheduled for departure about to help. The British mandate ended in May 1948, whereupon David Ben-Gurion declared that the Provisional Government of Israel had come into being. It was a stormy birth at once contested by Arab League armies invading from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. UN special envoy Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden somehow managed to arrange a cease-fire policed by a force of UN observers, but guerrilla forces refused to accept it and when fighting resumed in July, the Israeli army soon gained the upper hand. Bernadotte’s repeated efforts to achieve a compromise settlement by granting Israel western Galilee and the Arabs the Negev led to his assassination by Israeli guerrilla terrorists in September 1948. Despite the pleas of UN envoy Ralph Bunche, who had replaced Bernadotte, Israeli forces continued to push into Galilee and the Negev, routing the Arab Liberation Army and even briefly pushing into Egypt before year’s end.

Bowing to U.S. demands, Israel pulled back from Egypt early in 1949 and accepted a cease-fire that left it with more land than it had been granted by the partition. It had been quite a year: over half a million Arabs had fled their Palestinian villages; an estimated one hundred thousand Jewish immigrants had arrived in Palestine and many more were to come.<sup>7</sup> The Arab League was in disarray. In January, what was now the Government of Israel signed an armistice with Egypt; similar agreements followed with Lebanon and Syria, and in spring of 1949 Israel was admitted to the United Nations. Under UN auspices, Armistice Demarcation Lines supervised by UN personnel were established. In July 1949, Ralph Bunche informed the Security Council that fighting had ended in Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

This happy event was not long lasting. As Israel consolidated its territorial gains, as Israeli citizens “made the desert bloom,” as the young nation grew in confidence and manpower—over half a million

immigrants, many of them from Arab countries, received with open arms between 1949 and 1956—the Arab states festered in disunity, refusing to recognize Israel's place in the sun yet unable to challenge it by other than pinprick raids by guerrillas, the *fedayeen*, answered rapidly and roughly by an increasingly mobile Israeli army equipped with modern U.S. weapons to defend its vulnerable borders with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The refugee problem, roughly one million Arabs jammed into camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Gaza Strip, went unheeded. Israel did not want them back, indeed David Ben-Gurion washed his hands of any responsibility for their plight; the Arab states did not want them, and those who managed to escape the camps and settle in those states were shabbily treated.<sup>9</sup> Each side was too busy feeding hatred to allow humanitarianism to interfere. For Arabs, it was a matter of revenge; for Israelis, preservation. Border raids increased; Egyptian suicide teams were sanctioned by Egypt's Gamal Abdul-Nasser; Israeli retaliation followed; armistice agreements bent and broke; Jordan grew antagonistic and seized the West Bank;\* superpowers entered the fray; Russia replaced U.S. influence in Egypt; the U.S. continued to support Israel; wanting to isolate Israel economically, Gamal Abdul-Nasser closed the Suez Canal to Israeli use and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba; Nasser nationalized the Canal; to retrieve it, Britain and France supported by Israel launched a surprise attack during which Israeli troops seized the Sinai Peninsula and passed into Egypt—an ill-planned, ill-executed, and very costly fiasco that terminated in November 1956, the UN sending in a six-thousand-man force to police up the mess while the principals withdrew their troops. Though pressed by the U.S., Israel refused to yield either the Gaza Strip or the western coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. In 1958, Egypt and Syria formed the United Arab Republic; Moslems in Christian-dominated Lebanon started a civil war; Iraq and Jordan formed a union that lasted for six months, ending with King Faisal's murder . . . and so it went. As Julian Becker put it: “. . . Manifestly the desire for Arab unity was the chief cause of Arab disunity.”<sup>10</sup>

Nearly a decade passed before the next decisive development in the Arab-Israeli conflict, not that there was a lack of regional crises during this period. Although Egypt stopped sending guerrilla teams into Israel, partly owing to UN observation posts along the border, such attacks continued from Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Some of these were made by Syrian guerrillas recruited from Palestinian refugee camps in Leba-

■ The West Bank of the Jordan River is inaptly named. The area containing the biblical lands of Judaea and Samaria and such cities as Jerusalem, Nablus, Jericho, and Bethlehem measures nearly eighty miles north to south and thirty miles east to west, thus amounting to a considerable portion of Palestine. Its western border is only about nine miles from the sea at its nearest point.

non, some by factions of Ahmed Shuqairi's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), a new movement formed by six Palestinian groups at Egyptian President Nasser's instigation, its goal the "liberation" of Palestine.<sup>11</sup> The principal group, the Movement for the Liberation of Palestine, or al-Fatah, was organized in 1957 by, among others, twenty-six-year-old Yasser Arafat, a Palestinian refugee and an officer in the 1956 war. Al-Fatah guerrillas first went into action in 1964, small raids that publicized the group and won financial support from the Arab world.

As Israel again moved toward war with its neighbors—this time the *casus belli* was a dispute over Israeli use of water from the Jordan river—the PLO became increasingly active but was temporarily eclipsed by Israel's overwhelming military victory in June 1967—the famous six-day war which left Israel in possession of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank of the Jordan, and the Golan Heights, a land area three times the size of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

But victory is an illusory word. The new lands included "a million hostile Arabs," in the words of one realistic Israeli politician.<sup>13</sup> Israel's victory and subsequent harsh military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza guaranteed implacable hatred that could not but result in another war.<sup>14</sup> In an attempt to forestall this, the UN in November 1967 passed Resolution 242, which called for ". . . Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from 'territories occupied in the recent conflict . . . [and] a just settlement of the refugee problem,'" the latter exacerbated by the addition of another three hundred thousand refugees to a total 1.5 million.<sup>15</sup>

As superpower positions polarized, the U.S. supporting Israel, the Soviet Union supporting Egypt and Syria, it was apparent to the Palestinians that an impasse had developed. In their minds, their only recourse was guerrilla warfare, and it was not long before PLO guerrillas of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) were striking Israeli positions from Jordan and Lebanon with Israeli forces retaliating in kind.

The PLO was gaining in strength, drawing on the immense pool of young refugees and a horde of youthful volunteers from Arab countries for its guerrilla recruits and on rich Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kuwait for money to buy arms. Shuqairi's death late in 1967 was followed by the young Yasser Arafat's ascendancy.<sup>16</sup> In early 1969, Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO's executive committee. Of the organization's several guerrilla groups, Arafat's al-Fatah with about seven to nine thousand guerrillas was the most important and also the least militant. More recently formed groups included Dr. George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Marxist guerrilla terrorist group of about five hundred members formed in 1968; and two splinter groups from the PFLP, Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front

for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC), and Naif Hawatmeh's Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP).<sup>17</sup> In addition to these groups was a large Syrian Ba'ath guerrilla organization founded in 1968 and called Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War, its military arm being al-Saiqa (Thunderbolt), led by Zuhayr Muhsin.<sup>18</sup> Of these organizations, Arafat's Fatah, Hawatmeh's PDFLP, and Muhsin's Saiqa "... wanted political negotiation and territory for Palestinian self-determination wherever it could be won."<sup>19</sup> The remaining groups, refusing these notions in favor of an all-out "armed struggle" to annihilate Israel, formed the Rejection Front, itself of fragile lasting power.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, had it not been for the intense factionalism that led to countless quarrels between the Arab guerrilla groups, it is doubtful that Israel could have survived.

By 1969, several thousand Saiqa and PLO guerrillas were based in southern Lebanon where they infiltrated refugee camps that held some one hundred thousand Palestinians and "... were turning the camps into centers for guerrilla training and indoctrination."<sup>21</sup> Arafat's major guerrilla force in Jordan had expanded sufficiently to control large areas of the kingdom and there was talk that he was planning a coup against King Hussein.

In 1969, guerrillas based in Lebanon and Jordan carried out an estimated thirty-nine hundred guerrilla actions against Israel and in 1970 were averaging about five hundred a month including raids from Lebanon as far into Israel as Haifa.<sup>22</sup> Israel did not take this lying down, and most observers give the army high marks for its counter guerrilla tactics. When an El Al plane was hijacked, Israel responded by an airborne commando raid on the Beirut airport that destroyed thirteen planes belonging to Arab countries. Ground forces were authorized to make "hot pursuits" into Lebanon and Jordan and also to make pre-emptive strikes against suspected guerrilla concentrations.

George Habash's PFLP terrorists made world headlines in May 1970 by blowing up the pipeline that carried Saudi Arabian oil to Mediterranean ports.<sup>23</sup> Later in the year, PFLP terrorists hijacked four Western commercial aircraft and held passengers and crew hostage until the release of some imprisoned guerrillas. After releasing the hostages, they blew up the planes. That action, coupled with increasing encroachments by the PLO in Jordan and two attempts by PFLP terrorists to assassinate Hussein, led to what the PLO would remember as Black September: its forceful eviction by the Jordanian army after heavy fighting which cost the guerrillas perhaps three thousand dead before the groups retreated dispiritedly into Syria and southern Lebanon.<sup>24</sup> Guerrilla terrorists of the PFLP and of a new group, the Black September Organization operating out of Syria, now began claiming headlines by such operations as the murder of nine Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich

in September 1972 (after previously carrying out a series of assassinations in Europe).

What few people seemed to realize was that the PLO could not exist without Palestinian refugees.<sup>25</sup> It was all very well to have forced those people from their lands, but surely it was incumbent on the responsible parties—Britain, the U.S., Israel, Egypt—to find them a new homeland and in conjunction with their oil-rich fellow Arabs—Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Yemen—to give them the money necessary to build new livelihoods. It was not as if the Israelis had been given or had taken the world—“ . . . in 1984,” wrote one commentator, “the size of the Jewish State is less than a quarter of 1 percent of Arab territory, and the Arabs have some two dozen states.”<sup>26</sup> There is almost no mention of this collective responsibility. In 1972, King Hussein did come up with a plan to build a federated United Arab Kingdom with Jordan, a plan immediately denounced by Israel, Egypt, and Syria,<sup>27</sup> and soon forgotten. Yet almost everyone in a responsible position stressed again and again that there could never be a suitable peace between Israel and the Arab world until the “Palestinian question” was satisfactorily resolved.

Various attempts to bring about Israeli evacuation of the vast Sinai Peninsula having failed, in 1973 Egyptian and Syrian armies opened a surprise invasion of Israel which caught its army off guard. Although the October war ended favorably for Israel, it also deepened Arab hostility and for the first time opened Arab eyes to the value of oil as a weapon against the West. We should take note that the war could not have been fought without massive U.S.-Soviet military aid to the belligerents; indeed it very nearly provoked a clash between the two superpowers.

The war left the Palestinian refugee problem unsolved. It was, however, becoming better recognized thanks in part to headlines engendered by PLO terrorist attacks abroad. In 1974, the UN General Assembly, ignoring Israel and U.S. protests, listened to Yasser Arafat talk about Middle East problems, an impressive performance that helped win the PLO an observer's role in the United Nations, full membership in the Arab League, and general recognition that the Palestinian refugees must be provided with a homeland.

In mid-1977, Prime Minister Menachem Begin (whose Irgun guerrilla terrorists had helped to force Britain from Palestine) visited America's new President, Jimmy Carter, who

. . . made it clear that there was no hope for a settlement in the Middle East without a homeland for the Palestinians. . . . Carter stressed that the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occu-



ped territories was a serious obstacle to peace, but Begin insisted that there was no way of stopping Jews from settling in biblical Israel. . . . Begin ruled out any contact with the PLO and said that Israel would never agree to a Palestinian homeland or entity.”<sup>28</sup>

Carter’s determined attempts to break the deadlock, notably by sending veteran negotiator and now Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the troubled area, finally brought an unprecedented meeting between President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Begin under the auspices of President Carter. This resulted in Israel and Egypt signing the Camp David accords and subsequently a formal peace treaty in 1977. Under its terms, Israel agreed to a phased withdrawal from the entire Sinai Peninsula. The treaty also affirmed “. . . the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements.” Although the Israel Knesset, or parliament, approved the accords, Israeli right-wingers vigorously opposed them. President Sadat for his part won only open censure from the Arab world and Egypt was expelled from the Arab League. As for “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people,” no action was taken and little more was heard for the next few years.

An important casualty of the Middle East deadlock was Lebanon, whose once-prosperous facade had been shattered by continual political turbulence compounded by the presence of Zuhai Mohsen’s Syrian-backed Saiqa guerrillas and the influx of PLO guerrillas evicted from Jordan. Early in 1975, a new civil war broke out between Christians and Moslems, the left-wing Druze groups of the latter being supported by Palestinian guerrillas. By early 1976, the almost defunct Lebanese army and the Maronite Christians, whose main military strength rested in Pierre Gemayel’s Phalange militia, were on the verge of defeat by Arafat’s PLO guerrillas and socialist Kamal Jumblatt’s Druze militia (themselves in conflict with the Rejection Front of splinter guerrilla groups). Not wanting this to happen, Syria’s Hafez Assad sent in an armor division to support the Maronites and Israel began supplying them with weapons. Owing largely to the leadership of Gemayel’s son Bashir, the war ended in October in the Maronites’ favor, a hollow victory in view of the casualties—at least forty thousand killed, one hundred thousand wounded and half a million people displaced from their homes.<sup>29</sup> Syrian armies remained in northern Lebanon and in the Bekáa Valley “as a peacekeeping force” and most of the PLO bases in Beirut and in northern and southern Lebanon remained intact, their presence formally accepted by the Lebanese Government.<sup>30</sup>

This was anathema to Bashir Gemayel, who, supported by the slippery Phalange patriarch Camille Chamoun, eventually persuaded Israel

to guarantee “. . . the safety of the Lebanese Christian community.”<sup>31</sup> Begin did not encourage Gemayel’s bellicose intentions of ejecting the Syrians from Lebanon. Gemayel’s desire for a confrontation with Syrian troops in the Bekáa Valley probably would have been frustrated by Begin’s government had it not been for the PLO presence in southern Lebanon, the supportive presence of Secretary of State Alexander Haig in Washington, and the hawkish presence of Ariel Sharon, the Minister of Defense in Begin’s cabinet.

Ironically, Yasser Arafat’s presence in southern Lebanon resulted from the mass of refugees caused by Israel’s victories over the Arab states. Arafat’s guerrillas had easily infiltrated the refugee camps eventually to build “a state-within-a-state,” gathering the support of Shiite Moslems in the countryside and Sunni Moslems in the cities: “. . . the PLO had become by 1976 the sole instrument of rule in the western sector of Lebanon stretching from Beirut to the Israeli border,”<sup>32</sup> from where PLO guerrillas stole into Galilee and elsewhere. Israeli troops retaliated by striking PLO camps in Lebanon—in early 1978, twenty-five thousand Israeli troops pushed across the border and, aided by Major Sa’ad Haddad’s expanding Christian militia, burned dozens of Palestinian villages and left some seven hundred dead before withdrawing.<sup>33</sup>

In 1981, Menachem Begin was taking an even stronger line against the PLO enemy. With the exception of a surprise air raid that knocked out Saddam Hussein’s nuclear reactor plant in Iraq and the abrupt annexation of the Golan Heights later that year (actions that infuriated his U.S. ally), Begin’s main thrust was against the PLO. A host of raids by land and sea accompanied by heavy aerial bombing raids of PLO camps in Beirut and southern Lebanon brought prolonged PLO artillery shelling of the Galilee settlements, a duel interrupted by a cease-fire in July. But Begin and his closest advisers had decided that the PLO had to leave southern Lebanon if Israel’s northern flank was ever to be secure, the plan being to clear the area of enemy and establish a twenty-five-mile-deep security zone north of the border. But now a secret plan was hatched by central players Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, and a few military hawks, who intended not only to drive Arafat’s PLO and Assad’s Syrians out of Lebanon but to install Bashir Gemayel as president. This fitted in nicely with Alexander Haig’s current vendetta against Syria although the extent of his encouragement to Sharon (against Reagan’s wishes) has not yet been fully revealed; that it was considerable is suggested by his quarrel with Reagan and subsequent removal from office.

The Machiavellian details of Sharon’s double-dealing and the subsequent mainly conventional and very cruel war that began on June 6, 1982, by Israeli forces pushing into Lebanon are not pertinent to this survey. It is enough to say that Israeli soldiers and fliers won an over-

whelming victory against both Syrian and PLO armies.<sup>34</sup> Arafat was forced into asylum in Tripoli and an estimated eight thousand of his followers were dispersed in various Arab states.<sup>35</sup> This was a solid enough gain for Israel but it was tempered by the majority of three hundred thousand Palestinian refugees, including several thousand guerrillas, remaining in their squalid Lebanon camps; by a large Syrian army based in the Bekáa Valley, from where it controlled over half the country; by a strong Druze militia holed up in the Shouf Mountains, where Bashir Gemayel's Phalange militia suffered a serious defeat in attempting to evict them; by the precarious position of Bashir Gemayel's new government; by his assassination in September; and by the opprobrium heaped on Israel from Cairo, Washington, and other capitals for invading Lebanon and then carrying out a prolonged and bloody occupation.

Suddenly aware that Sharon's war had placed him in a vulnerable position, Menachem Begin decided that both Israeli and Syrian troops must vacate the country, leaving the Lebanese responsible for policing the border security zone. Here Israel-manned surveillance posts would be supported by Major Sa'ad Haddad's Christian militia of fifteen hundred to two thousand troops. Washington agreed with the plan, a "simple and logical" solution in Secretary of State George Shultz's words, but one that depended on Christian Maronite control of the country.

Amin Gemayel, who had replaced his brother as president, did not control the country. The steps taken by the Reagan administration to gain him control did not sufficiently respect either the intense religious and political factionalism in Lebanon or the political acumen of Syria's Hafez Assad generously supported by an extremely anti-Israel Soviet Union.

The basis of the plan was a multinational armed force to keep the peace while Gemayel relied on U.S. economic and military aid to build a strong army. Meanwhile, Arafat's remaining forces in Lebanon would be given sanctuary in Iraq and Jordan. A Lebanese-Israeli-PLO treaty would further isolate Syria. The Reagan administration had made the supreme error of underestimating Assad. Increasing aid to the Moslem Druze militia, he reinforced his army in Lebanon to a total twelve hundred tanks, increased his Soviet military advisers to five thousand, and surrounded Damascus with batteries of SAM-5 ground-to-air missiles.<sup>36</sup>

What of the PLO? There was no doubting that it had suffered "... the worst blow in its eighteen-year existence."<sup>37</sup> It had lost heavily in numbers—estimates vary from one to five thousand—and it also had lost its corporate "homeland." Its various groups were widely dispersed. Arafat and about a thousand guerrillas finally ended up in Tunisia. Leaders of small terrorist groups found refuge in Damascus but their fighters had to go as far as South Yemen and Algeria. An estimated two thousand guerrillas remained secretly in Beirut while others joined the

three to four thousand guerrillas still in the Bekáa Valley and in north Lebanon.

Yasser Arafat remained chairman of the PLO and, after beating off a rebellion in his own Fatah Party, was soon touring the Arab states, pulling the strands together.<sup>38</sup> If the PLO had been weakened, it certainly was not moribund, and such countries as Saudi Arabia and Libya continued to contribute generous amounts of money. Arafat's task was daunting, not only organizationally and logistically but politically. The big question was, what next? Some within the organization wanted to intensify "... the armed struggle for the total liberation of Palestine." Others realized that Israel was there to stay and believed that the solution lay in an independent state comprising the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>39</sup> Some Arab countries agreed with this, others did not. In September 1982, President Reagan, borrowing from King Hussein's 1972 proposal, called for an end of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, refused the notion of converting these lands into an independent Palestinian state, and concluded: "... it is the firm view of the United States that self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan offers the best chance for a durable, just and lasting peace." Considering that the PLO still refused to recognize Israel's existence, that Israel refused to negotiate with the PLO, that Jordan did not recognize Israel, that any thought of Jordan mixing into PLO affairs was anathema to Syria and the PLO splinter groups in Damascus, neither Reagan's nor any other plan was to be even debated, much less accepted. Israel rejected the plan outright. Although Arafat did not directly reject it, he effectively neutered it by insisting on "... the national rights of the Palestinian people 'under the leadership of the PLO, its sole legitimate representative' and demanded the setting up of 'an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.'"<sup>40</sup>

In mid-September, Israeli troops in the shattered city of Beirut joined with Amin Gemayel's Phalangist militia in storming PLO refugee camps in West Beirut which were believed to be harboring militant guerrillas, a two-day operation that turned into a sickening slaughter of an estimated three thousand Palestinians.<sup>41</sup> World-wide condemnation of the action was shared within Israel by protest marches of up to four hundred thousand people and by the emergence of a Peace Now movement. It also brought harsh words from President Reagan and it cost Israel a great many former friends including some important Jewish figures.<sup>42</sup>

The unhappy occupation continued throughout 1983. In September, Prime Minister Begin resigned, reportedly distraught by the occupying army's high casualty rate, but such was the power of the military that occupation continued into 1984. In April, the government announced that its forces would stay in Lebanon until the South Lebanese Army

(SLA)—formerly the Christian militia commanded by Major Sa'ad Hadad (and after his assassination by Antonio Lahad)—was ready to replace them.<sup>43</sup> This decision was tempered later in the year when a Jordan-PLO initiative based on UN Resolution 242 called for Israel to respect “. . . the principle of territory in exchange for peace” and withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>44</sup> Wiser heads now recognized that the political priority had to shift southward (where it had always been despite Sharon's costly frolic into Beirut) and a three-stage withdrawal from Lebanon commenced in early 1985. Owing to guerrilla interdiction, this was a slow and painful operation completed only in June.

Such was the perpetual turmoil in the Middle East that one crisis was scarcely over before another began. While members of the major factions continued to kill each other in Lebanon and while the Jordan-PLO initiative was making tentative approaches to Israel's new “national unity” Labor government headed by Shimon Peres, the world's attention shifted to the Iran-Iraq war which ended only in 1987. By then, Hussein and Arafat's attempt to bring Israel into peace negotiations had come to naught. Also by then, the long-suffering Palestinian refugees living under Israeli rule in the occupied territories had had enough.

In 1987, rumbles of civil revolt heard for years turned to thunder. When an Israel taxi driven by a Jew crashed into and killed four Palestinian laborers, the storm boke. The ensuing Arab uprising, or *intifada*, in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights was carried out on the one hand by youths hurling stones and petrol bombs, on the other by passive resistance in the form of general strikes, resignations of Arab officials and policemen, refusal of Arabs to pay taxes and boycott of Israeli-owned shops and Israeli-made goods.

The Israeli government moved fast and hard to quell the uprising. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's “iron fist policy” was spelled out by Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin as giving priority to “might, power and beatings.”<sup>45</sup> This resulted in several hundred Palestinian deaths, seven to eight thousand wounded and twenty-two thousand imprisoned in 1988.<sup>46</sup> It also resulted in massive official protests by the U. S. and U. K. governments, the European parliament, the UN Security Council, and not least by the general Israeli public. As the rebellion spread in 1989, Israeli security forces began firing plastic bullets in carrying out an official policy of “shoot-to-wound,”<sup>47</sup> to achieve Rabin's announced goal of “hurting them . . . leaving scars.”<sup>48</sup> By year's end, the number of Arab deaths from military action had risen to six hundred plus 150 caused by Arab vigilantes killing suspected Arab collaborators. Jewish deaths numbered forty. Although some schools reopened in the West Bank, the *intifada* was becoming a way of life: “. . . The government,

army and the public had settled into an attitude of acceptance of the level of violence and a pattern of attrition was established.”<sup>49</sup>

The intifada apparently caught the PLO by surprise, although Arafat hastened to support it politically and financially. Arafat’s authority, however, was seriously challenged by Palestinian members of Hamas, a growing militant Islamic resistance movement which advocated “. . . an Islamic state in all of Palestine (including Israel) and rejected the PLO’s giving growing reliance on political struggle and a compromise solution.”<sup>50</sup> The gulf between Arafat’s PLO and other guerrilla terrorist groups widened visibly in late 1988 when, in presenting a peace plan to the UN, he “. . . condemned terrorism in all its forms,” later telling journalists, “. . . I repeat for the record that we totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism.”<sup>51</sup> Secretary of State Shultz took the next important step in agreeing to open talks with the PLO, though without recognizing it as a Palestinian state. Shultz’s successor, James Baker, openly criticized the Israeli Government for continuing its policy of armed struggle. Shamir shrugged off his words, the PLO committed itself to more not less violence, the Islamic Hamas gained in strength and influence, and the intifada intensified.

Once again, the “Palestinian problem” was shunted aside by war, this time brought on by Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and the ensuing Gulf War. That crisis resolved (at least in part), the intifada regained center stage as the Israeli government expanded its settlement program, which, according to an official U.S. report, had established “. . . over 200,000 Israeli settlers . . . in some 200 settlements in the occupied territories” and was growing as much as 10 per cent annually.<sup>52</sup> Hoping to halt the program, the Bush administration delayed approval of \$10 billion in promised loan guarantees to Israel, but at the same time pushed ahead on bringing Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiating table, no mean feat that was accomplished in Madrid in late 1991. More talks ensued, intransigence prevailed, intifada violence reached a new high as Israel’s relations with Washington reached a new low, the Bush administration holding firm in refusing to release the loan guarantees until the settlement program was halted.

In February 1992, Prime Minister Shamir publicly reneged on Israel’s commitment to the Camp David Accords.<sup>53</sup> Seemingly nothing could alter conservative Likud intransigence, that is until mid-1992 when, *mirabile dictu*, the conservative government gave way to Yitzhak Rabin’s center-left coalition. The new government held out the olive branch to Washington by canceling future settlement building. In mid-August, Rabin opened peace negotiations with Syria, going so far as to offer Hafez Assad a portion of the Golan Heights in return for a peace treaty between the two governments—tacit acceptance of the “land for peace” formula originally set forth in UN Resolution 242.<sup>54</sup> At peace

talks in Washington in late August, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres did not offer much more than some form of Arab autonomy in the occupied territories, but he subsequently stated that he wanted a political settlement, a goal that he realized could be achieved only by pursuing the “land for peace” formula.

Negotiations came to an abrupt halt in December 1992 when the Israeli government summarily expelled 415 Palestinian Islamic fundamentalists—suspected Hamas guerrilla terrorists—from the West Bank. Because no other country offered sanctuary, the unfortunates, some of whom were *not* guerrilla terrorists, were consigned to a bleak hillside in Israeli-occupied Lebanon, there to spend a cold winter in tents with neither adequate food nor medical care—a TV spectacular that, although blackening the Israeli image, failed to change the government’s stance until spring of 1993. Indeed, the government in March again moved firmly when, in an attempt to end Palestinian guerrilla attacks inside Israel, it closed the borders of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, thus preventing over 100,000 Arabs of the 1.8 million in these territories, from keeping their jobs in Israel.<sup>55</sup>

These events, taken with frequent riots and killings in the occupied territories, did not encourage a resumption of peace talks, and it was only by a superhuman diplomatic effort that Secretary of State Warren Christopher brought delegations from the concerned parties—Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinians—together in Washington for the ninth round of talks. This time a new and important face appeared at the table, that of Faisal Husseini, the leader of the Palestinian team, who heretofore at Israeli insistence had not been permitted to attend the talks. For this slight plus, however, there was a very large minus, and that was the absence of the well-known scruffy face of the all-time guerrilla survivor, Yasser Arafat, a political pariah in the eyes of Washington and Israel. The ninth round of what Clyde Haberman aptly termed “the stutter-start negotiations” ended three weeks later with the usual whimper, the all-important question of Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories no closer to a solution than ever.<sup>56</sup>

The tenth round of talks that resumed in mid-June, again without the presence of Yasser Arafat, ended “with such gloom there was not even talk of a date to talk again.”<sup>57</sup>

Matters might well have remained in limbo had it not been for fourteen rounds of secret talks in an isolated Norwegian farmhouse that had begun in May. A month earlier the doughty political columnist Flora Lewis had called attention to Yasser Arafat’s appeal to end the violence and hold elections in the occupied territories. More important, he “accepted that the first stage of negotiations be linked to ‘self-government,’ without reference to the later goal of statehood.”<sup>58</sup> This became the basis for the ultra-secret talks between Yasser Arafat and

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres under the aegis of the Norwegian government.

Without revealing the existence of the talks, Peres in late June “. . . joined the growing number of Israeli politicians . . . urging that the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip be turned over to Palestinians ‘as soon as possible’ and that the Israeli army retreat from most of the area.”<sup>59</sup> Concurrent with this development, certain Israeli cabinet ministers realized that the *bête-noire* of the Washington negotiations was the absence of Yasser Arafat and, contrary to Washington’s policy, that the time had come for direct talks with the PLO—a feeling that gained weight during a summer of heavy fighting and the increasing threat from Islamic guerrilla terrorists in the West Bank and Gaza, not to mention a dangerous stalemate with Syria over the Golan Heights and Syrian support of guerrilla terrorists in Lebanon.

Although Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin still refused to recognize either Yasser Arafat or the PLO, that decision was forced on him in late August when the story broke of Shimon Peres’ secret negotiations having produced “. . . a radical new peace formula under which Palestinians hope independence would be tested first in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank town of Jericho.”<sup>60</sup>

This was the concept, an *Arab* concept, that won almost instant approval by the members of the eleventh round of peace talks then taking place in Washington. Within a week the logjam of years had been broken: Israel and the PLO formally recognized each other; the U.S. recognized the PLO; Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat not only signed the agreement at a special White House ceremony but *publicly shook hands*.

The ratified agreement called for a withdrawal of Israel troops by December 13, 1993, from the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho, security to be taken over by Palestinian police. An interim Palestinian government is to be replaced by election of a Palestine Council in spring of 1994. It was anticipated that the agreement would pave the way for separate agreements between Israel and Jordan (accomplished), and between Israel and Syria-Lebanon (not accomplished), and would lead eventually to Israel’s turning over all of the West Bank to Palestinian rule.

The agreement was at once denounced by powerful factions both in Israel and the PLO. The Israeli right-wing Likud Party pronounced it a betrayal of Israel’s interests as did the 100,000 or so Jewish settlers in Gaza and the West Bank. The Israeli army grumpily announced that it had not been consulted and pointed to security dangers that would accrue from an Israeli troop-police evacuation. Yasser Arafat faced an incipient rebellion in the PLO, whose governing council nevertheless approved the agreement.



Scarcely a day has passed since ratification without a crisis developing in the occupied territories, all to the delight of the gloom-and-doom factions on each side. As fighting intensified between Jewish settlers and Palestinian Arabs in late November and early December, Prime Minister Rabin warned of a possible delay in troop evacuation, much against the wishes of Yasser Arafat. Sure enough, the day arrived—and the troops remained. The world must hope that this is only a temporary setback now that the way has at last been opened for peace.

## CHAPTER EIGHTY-EIGHT

1. Bayley, 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 4.
3. *Ibid.*, 3.
4. Goode, 90–1.
5. Bayley, 12–13.
6. *Ibid.*, 8.
7. *Ibid.*, 44.
8. *Ibid.*, 66–70.
9. Becker, 2.
10. *Ibid.*, 37.
11. Bayley, 187.
12. *Ibid.*, 240.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Cobban, 36–9.
15. Bayley, 270–1, 243. See also, Clutterbuck, *Guerrillas and Terrorists*, 79.
16. Cobban, 21–35, is excellent on the origin and growth of Arafat's al-Fatah and the PLO.
17. Becker, 73, for biographical details of the various leaders.
18. *Ibid.*, 72–3.
19. *Ibid.*, 82.
20. Cobban, 15.
21. Goode, 102.
22. *Ibid.*, 101.
23. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1970*, 45.
24. Cobban, 49–52. See also, Becker, 75–6.
25. Cobban, 7–8, 38–42.
26. Becker, 30.
27. Bayley, 293.
28. *Ibid.*, 351.
29. Becker, 136.
30. Cobban, 81.
31. Schiff and Ya'ari, 29.
32. *Ibid.*, 79.
33. Cobban, 94–5.
34. Becker, 205–7.
35. Cobban, 3.
36. Schiff and Ya'ari, 295.
37. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1982–83*, 75.
38. Cobban, 4–5.
39. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1982–83*, 77.
40. *Ibid.*, 78.
41. Cobban, 129–30.

42. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1982-83*, 71-2, 75-7.
43. *Keesing's Record of World Events* Vol. 31, 1985. February 1985, 33,438.
44. *Ibid.*, March 1985, 33,494.
45. *Ibid.*, Vol. 34, 1988. April 1988, 35,859.
46. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1988-89*, 157-8.
47. *Keesing's Record of World Events* Vol. 35, 1989. December 1987-December 1988, 36,436.
48. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1988-89*, 159.
49. *The Annual Register and Record of World Events 1989*, 197-8.
50. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1988-89*, 159.
51. *Keesing's Record of World Events*, Vol. 35, 1989. December 1987-December 1988, 36,438.
52. *Ibid.*, Vol. 37, 1991. April 1991, 38,168.
53. *International Herald Tribune*, February 8-9, 1992.
54. *Newsweek*, March 2, 1992.
55. *International Herald Tribune*, April 12, 1993.
56. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1993.
57. *The Independent* (U.K.), July 6, 1993.
58. *International Herald Tribune*, April 16, 1993.
59. *Ibid.*, June 29, 1993.
60. *The Independent* (U.K.), August 29, 30, 31, 1993.