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Anniversary of Deir Yassin

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the silent majority has not protested against the official attitude.

"Student revolt in the United States broke out spontaneously, without organization from above, and its leaders were volunteers. But the student strikes here are started by specific organizations, all of whose representatives receive regular salaries. These organizations are financed from two sources: university funds, and funds collected by the universities — illegally, in my view — from every student as part of teaching fees.

"Finally, student revolt in the West — in spite of the great harm it has done — has led to the performance of a number of excellent voluntary actions. Law students have established social and legal aid offices and numerous societies to assist the poor and lower classes... But in Israeli universities there are practically no voluntary activities, and there is no interest in the problems of the oppressed classes."

#### WHY ISRAEL WENT TO WAR

According to Major-General (Res.) Dr. Matetiyahu Peled (Chief of the Supplies and Provisions Section of the Supreme Command of the Israeli Army during the 1967 War, presently Professor of Middle East History in the University of Tel Aviv and a researcher in the Shiloah Institute), to say that Israel was in danger of annihilation in June 1967, and that the State of Israel fought the war for its material survival, is "a delusion that arose and grew only after the war."

Dr. Peled was speaking at a discussion on Amos Elon's book, "The Israelis," which aroused violent controversy among critics and readers.

*Haaretz* (March 19, 1972), reporting this, went on to say that Dr. Peled also claimed that in May 1967 the Israelis were not in danger of annihilation "either individually or collectively," adding that "the Egyptians had mobilized 80,000 men in Sinai, while we had mobilized against them hundreds of thousands of men." He said that the fact that there was no danger of annihilation had led to irresolution in the government, which had acted in conformity with the point of view that only the danger of

annihilation could justify the waging of war, and that it was not possible to start the war for political reasons. In his opinion, the cause of the war was an attempt by the USSR to change the situation in the area, so that a Soviet settlement might take the place of the American settlement that had existed since 1957, whilst the Arabs had played a secondary role in the affair. Dr. Peled added: "When was Israel last exposed to an Arab attack? In 1948, according to my reading of history."

According to *al-Hamishmar* (March 20, 1972), Major-General (Res.) Ezer Weizmann (Chief of the Operations Branch in the Supreme Command of the Israeli armed forces in 1967 and now a leader of the Herut Movement), in the course of a discussion with Major-General (Res.) Matetiyahu Peled, expressed a measure of agreement with the view that Israel was not in danger of being destroyed on the eve of the Six Day War.

"I am ready to agree," said Weizmann, "that there was no danger of the State of Israel being destroyed. But this does not mean that we could refrain from striking at the Egyptians, Jordanians and Syrians. If we had refrained from doing so, the State of Israel would not have continued to exist in the same degree, with the same spirit and with the same character." He added that it should be clearly stated that it was the Egyptians who had started the war by their previous measures.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF DEIR YASSIN

On the twenty-fourth anniversary of the massacre of Deir Yassin, *Yediot Aharonot* (April 4, 1972) published a report written twenty-four years ago by "a young Palmach fighter..." called Meir Philipski, who is today Colonel (Res.) Meir Pa'el. According to *Yediot Aharonot*, "he is probably the only eye-witness outside the ranks of ETZEL [Irgun — the National Military Organization] and LEHI [The Stern Gang — Fighters for the Freedom of Israel] who investigated the secret operation at Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948, and set down what he saw with his own eyes and what he heard with his own ears in the report which he sent at the time to Israel Galili, the head of the Haganah command."

*Yediot Aharonot* goes on to say "for twenty-four years Pa'el has kept to himself the scenes that took place on 'the ugliest day in my life,' and a few months ago, when he was released from continuous service in the Israeli Army — from some of the most distinguished posts in that service, including supervision of the Israeli Army Officers School, senior posts in the command, and Commander of an Infantry Brigade — he hesitated for a long time before allowing the report he wrote at that time to see the light of day."

Meir Pa'el says in his report: "In April 1948 the most decisive battles were being fought around Jerusalem, and much Haganah and Palmach blood was shed in the battle of Qastal, the object of which was to obtain control of the city. At the height of this endeavour, LEHI and ETZEL were spending leave in Jerusalem; each was operating independently, and they had not joined in the general battle to liberate the city. But the realization by the secret movements, and by LEHI in particular, that they were missing the opportunity of taking part in a major event, which was likely to change the history of the capital of Israel, induced them to mount a major military operation, in co-ordination or in partnership with the Haganah.

"According to my information, LEHI proposed to ETZEL that Sheikh Jarrah or Sha'fat, east of the city, should be occupied, for the occupation of these areas would enable them to contact the besieged Mount Scopus. But ETZEL refused to carry out operations in these areas and 'withdrew' to Deir Yassin. In my opinion there was something obscure about this withdrawal — perhaps there had been a wish to settle old scores with the Arab village since the incidents of 1936-1939 which occurred in the Giv'at Sha'ul quarter...

"In the night of April 8-9, while Palmach units were fighting a battle of 'life and death' in Qastal, LEHI and ETZEL units approached the village. Before the operation, a number of irregulars had proposed a massacre of the inhabitants of the village, but the senior officers had rejected the proposal.

"An ETZEL force went out from the Beth Hakerim quarter and attacked Deir Yassin

from the south-east, while an ETZEL force attacked it from the north-east. At dawn the two forces reached the outskirts of the village. A LEHI unit sent towards the village an armoured tender fitted with a loud-speaker to broadcast calls to the inhabitants to surrender and evacuate the village. However, the vehicle did not carry out its task; about 200 metres from the village it fell into a defence trench dug by the Arabs, and the shock put the loudspeaker out of action.

"The people of the village discovered that members of the secret movements had entered Deir Yassin before the attackers fired their first shot, so that it was the inhabitants of the village who fired first. The attackers burst into the village and met with violent opposition. Most of the male inhabitants fled from the village with their arms, a small number of men and a large number of women and children remaining in the houses. In a short time the raiders had obtained control of most of the village, except for the western part.

"In that part of the village there was a high building, from which the attacking force was being fired on; the LEHI and ETZEL troops returned the fire from positions they had occupied in the houses. In the course of this exchange of fire, four fighters were killed, and dozens wounded; the battle was proving indecisive, and the fighters' ammunition was running out. In view of this deadlock, a member of LEHI decided to ask for help. Leaving the field of battle, he made his way quickly to the Schneller Camp in Jerusalem. In this military base there was a company of the sixth Palmach battalion. He went to the room of the commander of the company, Ya'qub (Ya'qi) Wug, of the Marhavia kibbutz, and gasped out to him: 'We are attacking Deir Yassin. Baruch [their friend] is there. You must help us.'

"Ya'qi loaded a number of the men of his company on a freight truck, took a 2-inch gun, and set off at once for Deir Yassin. A few hundred metres away from the village, Ya'qi and his men set up the gun, and shot several rounds at a house in the western part of the village. When I saw the Palmach men in the area, I went to Ya'qi and suggested to him that they should go away immediately if they did

not want to be involved. They agreed to my suggestion, and left the place at once. The gun had helped the fighters to complete their task.

"It was noon when the battle ended and the shooting stopped. Things had become quiet, but the village had not surrendered. The ETZEL and LEHI irregulars left the places in which they had been hiding and started carrying out cleaning up operations in the houses. They fired with all the arms they had, and threw explosives into the houses. They also shot everyone they saw in the houses, including women and children — indeed the commanders made no attempt to check the disgraceful acts of slaughter.

"I myself and a number of inhabitants of Jerusalem begged the commanders to give orders to their men to stop shooting, but our efforts were unsuccessful. In the meantime some twenty-five men had been brought out of the houses; they were loaded onto a freight truck and led in a 'victory parade,' like a Roman triumph, through the Mahaneh Yahuda and Zakhron Yosef quarters [in Jerusalem]. At the end of the parade they were taken to a stone quarry between Giv'at Sha'ul and Deir Yassin and shot in cold blood. The fighters then put the women and children who were still alive on a truck and took them to the Mandelbaum Gate.

"Some hours after midday David Shaltiel arrived in the area, and asked Mordecai Ranan, the ETZEL commander, and Joshua Zetler, the LEHI commander, what they intended to do with the village. They told him: 'We are leaving; we are an independent striking force, we shall not keep the village.'

"The commanders of the secret organizations refused to comply with the request that their men should bury the 245 Arab victims whose bodies were lying all over the village. This unhappy task was performed by two companies of the Gadna' who were brought to the village from Jerusalem for the purpose."

*Yediot Aharonot* (April 14, 1972) brought

the historian Arieh Yitzhaqi into the discussion of the "Deir Yassin operation," explaining that he had reached his conclusions through his work as a 'research worker' for many years in the service of the history section of the Israeli Army, and recently as an independent research worker. *Yediot Aharonot* added that Yitzhaqi will shortly be publishing a 1200 page book on the 1948 war.

Yitzhaqi claims in his article that the Palmach organization also engaged in operations like that of Deir Yassin, and that such operations were not restricted to ETZEL and LEHI.

"If we assemble the facts," says Yitzhaqi, we realize that, to a great extent, the battle followed the familiar pattern of the occupation of an Arab village in 1948. In the first months of the War of Independence Haganah and Palmach troops carried out dozens of operations of this kind, the method adopted being to raid an enemy village and blow up as many houses as possible in it. In the course of these operations many old people, women and children, were killed wherever there was resistance.

"In this context I can mention several operations of this kind carried out by Pa'el's comrades in arms — the Palmach irregulars who were trained to be concerned for the 'purity of Hebrew arms.'

"In the evening of January 30-31, 1947 a mixed force of the First Battalion of Palmach and the 'Carmel' Brigade under the command of Haim Avinoam attacked the village of Balad al-Shaikh (now Tel Hanan). In this operation more than sixty of the enemy, most of them non-combatants, were killed in their houses. According to a report written by the commander of the operation, 'the units silenced the heavy firing by their own heavy firing. The attacking units then entered the village and started operating inside the houses, and, because of the heavy firing in the rooms, it was impossible to avoid hitting women and children also.' (See *The Book of the Palmach*, p. 55).<sup>1</sup>

"In the evening of February 14-15,

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to *Sefer Ha-Palmach* (in Hebrew), the official Israeli army publication on the 1948 war.

1948, a force of the Third Palmach Battalion raided the village of Sa'sa. In this operation, which was for many years to be regarded as a model raid because of the high standard of its execution, twenty houses were blown up over their inhabitants, and some sixty Arabs were killed, most of them women and children.

"In the battle around Saint Simon's Monastery in Qatamon, Arab women working in the monastery as servants were killed in the course of the onslaught by the Fourth Palmach Battalion.

"There were also the indiscriminate reprisal attacks on Arab civilian communications, in which many innocent citizens were killed.

"The best known Palmach operation of this kind was the suppression of the rising in Lydda on July 12, 1948, within the framework of the 'Danny' campaign. At 11.30 a.m. on that day a detachment of armoured cars belonging to the [Jordanian] Arab Legion entered the town of Lydda, which had already surrendered to the Third Battalion of the 'Yiftah' Brigade of Palmach. After the entry of the detachment, the local Arab population rose in revolt, and, to suppress the revolt, orders were given to fire on any one seen in the streets. 'Yiftah' troops opened heavy fire on all passers-by and suppressed the revolt mercilessly in a few hours, going from house to house and firing at every moving target. According to the commander's report, 250 Arabs were killed in the fighting.

"The report submitted by the commander of the brigade, Mula Cohen, admits the fact that there were 'unhappy aspects' to the suppression of the revolt in Lydda. According to this report, which is reproduced in *The Book of the Palmach*, p. 885: 'There can be no doubt that the affair of Lydda and Ramleh, and the flight of the inhabitants, and the revolt and eviction that followed, had a great effect on all who experienced them. Here the savagery of war reached its climax, and the occupation of the town, which was an important enemy base, aroused feelings of revenge that should have been suppressed.'

"It is to be observed that not one of the 'conscientious' Yeshuv leaders who were so angry after Deir Yassin said a word.

The poet Nathan Alterman was the only one to criticize the Lydda massacre (and a similar operation in Beersheba)..."

In *Yediot Aharonot* (April 29, 1972) Meir Pa'el once again wrote on the Deir Yassin massacre, adding new details. "After the Palmach men left the village," he says, "the men of ETZEL and LEHI started a shameful massacre of the inhabitants — men, women, old people and children, without distinction, standing the inhabitants against walls and in corners in the houses. There is photographic evidence of this. It is true that most of the people were killed with fire-arms; it is true that the killing took place spontaneously immediately after the end of the battle, and it is true that the officers were not controlling their men, and showed no inclination to do so. But it was killing, even if it was carried out in hot blood.

"The number of Arabs killed at Deir Yassin was 245. This is the estimate made by the men of Gadna' and the men of Jerusalem who had to do the burying after the ETZEL and LEHI men had left the village, refusing to perform this task. The number of killed was thus determined by those best qualified to do so.

"The ETZEL commander in Jerusalem can protest a thousand times that the 'victory parade' in Jerusalem was a 'criminally concocted charge,' but I, as an eye-witness, regret to have to state that this is what really happened. The Arab men were killed (in cold blood, this time) in the stone quarry between Deir Yassin and Giv'at Sha'ul, and there is photographic evidence of this too. It was thus a criminal act, not a criminally concocted charge."

Meir Pa'el goes on: "Arieh Yitzhaqi tells his readers that many irregular actions took place during the War of Independence, but no action in the whole War of Independence was as atrocious as the Deir Yassin massacre, for the following reasons:

"The 'irregular action' in Deir Yassin was carried out after the battle, when the village was in Jewish hands, and without the inhabitants having taken any provocative action that could have justified the shooting. It was not a question of cleaning up houses, but of entering them to kill and plunder. The number of Arabs killed was

much greater than in all the examples cited by Mr. Yitzhaqi, including the 'irregular action' at Lydda..."

The second reason given by Pa'el is that the ETZEL leaders still refuse to criticize themselves for the Deir Yassin massacre. On the contrary, they regard it as an "important event" and the "principal act that made the Arabs frightened of Jewish atrocities and led them to flee. Some of them have gone so far as to assert that the Deir Yassin affair was the most important turning point in the War of Independence."

### THE BLACK PANTHERS

"Black Panther" leaders in Israel have made statements indicating new trends in their principles and political attitudes. These statements were summarized by Yosef Waksman in an article published in *Maariv* (April 11, 1972).

According to Waksman, anyone who believes that the Black Panthers will be content with distribution of milk to the needy and with making a little noise "is likely to be disillusioned." For the Panthers have long-term aspirations in many areas, amongst them the social and political, including party political, fields.

"Our aim is to bring about a social revolution in the country and build a society so far unparalleled anywhere in the world — a leftist society, but not like the USSR or China; it will be something like the kibbutz, though not exactly so. And we shall establish a society of complete equality."

"We must reach a position from which we can combat the regime side by side with the Arabs and the oppressed. Only we Panthers can form a bridge to peace with the Arabs on the basis of combating the regime."

"We are against settlement that involves plundering the inhabitants. Therefore we make no distinction between military and

civilian settlement, as Mapam does, for example."

"It is our aspiration to establish a major socialist party."

"These are some of the political principles of the Panthers, announced by leaders of the movement at an evening organized at the educational institution of 'Hashomer Hatzair'<sup>1</sup> in Ghor Baisan by the secretary of the institution, Israel Zemer. According to Kuchabi Shemesh, a Black Panther leader who was the first to speak at the meeting: 'In our view there is no difference between Ya'ari and Begin,<sup>2</sup> nor is there any difference between Sapir and Dayan, or between Golda and Shlomo Hillel, or between Yesha'yahu and Navon<sup>3</sup> — they all belong to the 'Two Hundred Families' which have the right to take decisions in the State, which hold the reins of power, of which the regime is formed and from which come all the senior officials. Talk of Yesha'yahu being appointed Speaker of the Knesset, to represent the Oriental communities, merely makes us laugh. This is only talk, for he also belongs to the Two Hundred Families. If I had been a relative of Shlomo Hillel I should have been a senior official long ago.'

"The Panthers do not intend to take part in the next elections. 'After study, we have found that we could win at least two seats in the Knesset, but we shall not try to do so, for the prevailing circumstances of the regime here rule out any possibility of bringing about a change in the Knesset. At this moment it is of no importance that there should be 120 Ashkenazis in the Knesset, because they have no power to take decisions; this is enjoyed by the senior officials who are appointed by the government. Unfortunately, among the three hundred officials in Grades 1 to 3 there are only nine who come from the Oriental communities, and even they belong to the Two Hundred Families of exalted descent.'

"What sort of society do you want to

<sup>1</sup> "The Young Guard," the Mapam Party kibbutz movement.

<sup>2</sup> Meir Ya'ari, the leader of Mapam, and Menachem Begin, a Herut leader.

<sup>3</sup> Israel Yesha'yahu-Sharabi and Yitzhak Navon, both Oriental Jews, Members of the Knesset, and Labour Party candidates for the post of Speaker of the Knesset.