

APPENDIX E 

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[This correspondence originally appeared as Appendix E in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* article "Plan Dalet Revisited" by Walid Khalidi in 18, no. 1 (Aut. 1988).]

## The *Spectator* Correspondence\*

Sir—Before writing to comment on Mr. Childers' article *The Other Exodus* in your 12 May issue, I wanted to wait for a week to observe outside reactions.

Now, with that week gone by, I feel that the lack of effective rebuttal has borne out my first impression: this is an article of very great importance.

Here I must make myself quite clear. In my view—and I think most observers of the Middle East scene would agree—there is one point made in the article which overtowers all others. Straight fact only is involved. It is Mr. Childers' statement that he checked all radio broadcasts from the Middle East in 1948, and found that not a single appeal was ever made to Palestine Arabs by their leaders to leave their homes.

About Mr. Childers' other observations, I shall not comment except to refer to my own extensive study of the Arab refugee problem, embodied in my book *Israel: A Blessing and a Curse*; and to say that my views remain substantially unchanged a year after publication.

But before anyone's views on these questions can carry much weight, a basic obstruction to clear thinking about all these Arab-Israeli matters must be removed. I mean the consistently low quality of news and commentary on the Middle East available to readers in our Western lands. And it is by illustrating how terribly low that quality has been that Mr. Childers has rendered an immense service.

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\*This correspondence, which followed the 12 May 1961 publication of Childers' article, lasted through 4 August 1961.

For it would be hard to think of any point much more emphasized by Israel and the Zionists over the years than those alleged broadcasts calling on the Arabs of Palestine to evacuate their residences. And whether or not we ourselves regarded them as a vital factor in the total appraisal of the refugee question, it was always made abundantly clear that Israel's government did so regard them. It had, here, the backing of a strong public opinion which accepted the information as authentic.

Thirteen years had to elapse, though, before any determined effort was ever made to find out the facts underlying that information. During which time many millions of words must surely have been written about the Arab refugees—stressing, too, the menace to world peace from a persistent failure to find a solution.

The implication, usually, was that the real facts about the flight were quite unobtainable. However, at the International Press Institute conference at Zurich in 1954 it was brought out that, where the Middle East is concerned, the press often displays an inertia which would be unthinkable in its coverage of other regions.

That situation has not improved much. Nor was much improvement possible without more concrete evidence of the possible damage being done. There is one school of thought, moreover, which professes to regard this go-easy tendency as desirable. "By speaking out too plainly and strongly, you run the risk of stirring up trouble" the argument runs.

Just in the past week, however, Mr. Childers has supplied a most useful bit of that much-needed evidence; and *Time*, in its 19 May issue, has helped matters by giving a jolt to that "don't stir things up" theory.

Rather amusingly, on the same date as that *Time* issue, the London Zionist paper the *Jewish Observer* invoked an Israel [*sic.*] policy standpoint, i.e., statecraft, as a reason why Mr. Childers should not speak out as he did. Not disputing those findings about the alleged Arab broadcasts, the paper's criticism ended: "If Mr. Childers wants the Israelis to commit national suicide let him say so and give his reasons, but don't weep crocodile tears for the refugees, when all you do is encourage them in a course of action that can lead them only to war and still greater suffering and frustration."

Nor is even this the end of interesting developments of the past few days. In its 18 May issue, the *Times* printed—without critical comment—the following: "Mr. Ben-Gurion, the Israel [*sic.*] Prime Minister . . . denied in the Knesset yesterday that a single Arab resident had been expelled by the Government since the establishment of the State of Israel and he said the pre-State Jewish underground had announced that any Arab would remain where he was. *He said the fugitives had fled under the orders of Arab leaders.*"

Here are developments which, if followed up efficiently, could lead to a much wider opening of our news and information channels—an essential step towards any solution of the actual problems of the Middle East. These aims would, however, be rendered the more difficult where Mr. Childers' disclosures to be taken up as a mere propaganda weapon against Israel.

Yours faithfully,  
*Hedley V. Cooke*  
 4 Great Bounds Drive,  
 Southborough, Kent

. . .

Sir—Since Mr. Cooke has somewhat gratuitously, and none too accurately, dragged me into this discussion, may I bring it back to earth again? For, unlike Mr. Childers or Mr. Cooke, I was present at most of the decisive phases of the “Exodus” of the Palestine Arabs and I have spent some years since then checking and rejecting not only the evidence but also the so-called sources of the evidence. One thing I have learned in this process is that nothing can be taken for granted in this story, not even events which I have myself witnessed. For, as the years go by, new myths and legends seem to have taken the place of old ones. The Israelis and the Zionists have contributed their share but more lately it has been the Arab propagandists (especially Walid Khalidi and Childers) who have managed to confuse the account of the Palestinian exodus.

Mr. Cooke's letter last week is an excellent example of how a shrewd observer becomes enmeshed in this kind of confusion. He commends Mr. Childers for having checked “all radio broadcasts from the Middle East in 1948” and for having discovered that “not a single appeal was ever made to Palestinian Arabs by their leaders to leave their home.” Now, it would be interesting to know how Mr. Childers checked all the Middle East broadcasts, who monitored them and where, and whether there were really no gaps at all in these monitorings of all Middle East broadcasts in 1948? As I recall them, most of the broadcasts came either from Ramallah, Damascus, or Beirut. Cairo at that time was still a little aloof, and Baghdad was not really in the picture. But Ramallah, Damascus, and Beirut could be monitored only locally, or possibly in Cyprus. It would be instructive, therefore, to know a little more about the nature of the broadcasts which were checked by Mr. Childers: were they complete in every sense of the word, and were they checked by him in English or in the original Arabic?

But this is less important than my second point. The suggestion that the

Israeli case rested on the existence of a broadcast order from the Arab leaders to the Palestinians is a myth invented and exploited by Professor Walid Khalidi, on whose researches Mr. Childers seems to have based himself. But Professor Khalidi had told us earlier (in the December 1959, issue of the *Middle East Forum*) that contact between the Arab leaders and the National Committee in Haifa was maintained, not by broadcasts, but "through messengers and telephone conversations," which I presume Mr. Childers has not been able to check. In fact, I came to the conclusion some time ago that this is not something which can be established by a written piece of paper. It rather reminds me of the occasion during the war when an American marine colonel, who had commanded a landing party of Americans which had been driven off the beaches of Guadalcanal, was lecturing to the Military Commentators group in London. When question time came he was asked by the late Field-Marshal Lord Milne who had given the order to retreat, the admiral on board ship or the officer in command on the beaches? The marine colonel fixed the Field-Marshal with a firm stare and replied: "Sir, my men needed no orders to retreat."

But there is now a mountain of independent evidence to show that the initiative for the Arab exodus came from the Arab side and not from the Jews. For example, the files of the British CID headquarters in Haifa have a whole series of reports on the situation between April 26 and the end of the month. Let me conclude with a sentence from the report of April 28, 1948 (AAIGCID). "The Jews," it says, "are still making every effort to persuade the Arab population to remain and settle down to their normal lives in the town . . ." It is signed "A.J. Bidmead for the Superintendent of Police." But the Arab leaders insisted that the Arab population be evacuated and that the British military authorities should provide them with the necessary transport. No wonder that Professor Khalidi had to conclude after his research that "the Exodus need not have taken place, if only the Arab leaders had been able to rise to the occasion."

Yours faithfully,  
 Jon Kimche  
 34 North Gate, NW8

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Sir—Jon Kimche has belatedly entered this discussion from the heights of "a mountain of independent evidence" which he claims now exists "to show that the initiative for the Arab exodus came from the Arab side and not from the Jews." I also note that he claims to be bringing the matter

“back to earth again” from the confusion allegedly wrought by “Arab propagandists” like Professor Walid Khalidi and myself. Let us see.

He questions whether the BBC monitors may not have missed some 1948 Arab broadcasts, since I found their record contained no broadcast Arab evacuation orders to the Palestinians. His concern about this might be more convincing, had he not refrained from mentioning the other vital fact I reported: that this monitor record shows repeated Arab broadcasts ordering and appealing to the Palestinians not to evacuate, and announcing many measures to prevent and stem the exodus. Are we really to believe that the monitors fabricated this record? I can cite to him *Zionist* newspapers and broadcasts in Palestine in 1948 reporting these Arab anti-evacuation measures.

But Mr. Kimche judiciously covers himself by next claiming that in any case the Israeli version of the exodus has never rested on the “existence of a broadcast order from the Arab leaders”—a myth, he says, invented by Dr. Khalidi. Doubtless Dr. Khalidi will be writing from Princeton for himself. I will therefore simply refer Mr. Kimche to only one example of Israel very definitely resting her case on this radio story: her 1953 official pamphlet on the Arab refugees alleged that the exodus followed “express instructions broadcast by the President of the Arab Higher Executive.”

What next? Mr. Kimche next covers himself by saying that he has concluded that the cause of the exodus “is not something that can be established by a written piece of paper.” Good: we may then take it that Mr. Kimche, Zionist editor and author of a book endorsed by Mr. Ben-Gurion, refutes all Israeli claims of “documentary evidence” of the alleged Arab evacuation orders.

So we have no evidence of broadcast orders, and judicious silence by Mr. Kimche about the record of Arab broadcasts against evacuation. And we have no “written piece of paper.” Yet Mr. Kimche says there is a “mountain of evidence” of Arab “initiative” for the exodus. He offers us only one “example” that the British CID reported Jewish appeals in Haifa to Haifa’s Arabs to stay. Is this evidence of Arab orders? I openly acknowledged the appeals by the late Mayor Levi. But Mr. Kimche apparently does not wish to acknowledge his own earlier description [in] *Seven Fallen Pillars* of the deliberate “psychological blitz on Arab quarters” of Haifa by official Zionist forces using loudspeakers and leaflets until “the Arab nerve broke and the flight from the town assumed panic proportions.” That is what became of the Jewish mayor’s appeal so often and so cynically invoked since 1948 by Israeli apologists. As to the full story of Haifa. I imagine Dr. Khalidi will deal with it.

And what else from Mr. Kimche's "mountain"? How was his alleged "Arab initiative" implemented? He exploits a reference by Dr. Khalidi to Haifa contact with Arab leaders by telephone and messenger. From this we are supposed to credit that 650,000 civilians, rooted to their homes, obediently fled out of Palestine on orders from Arab leaders that were not broadcast and not written, but allegedly sent by messenger and phone all over the country; and that these 650,000 civilians so fled despite the fact that the same Arab leaders were broadcasting to them not to leave!

As for reports that they were "systematically stripped of all their belongings" by Zionist troops "before being sent on their trek to the frontier" (*Economist*, 21 August 1948) Mr. Kimche apparently wants us to believe they were fabrications. And his very own description which I quoted, of the way official Israeli troops cleared out the Arabs of Lydda and Ramleh—over 60,000, one whole tenth of the total exodus—is in some extraordinary way so irrelevant to his "mountain" that he has nothing whatever to say about it.

We are discussing, I claim, a crime against humanity. I think Mr. Kimche ought to treat it, and us, more seriously.

Yours faithfully,  
*Erskine B. Childers*  
 Ennismore Gardens, SW7

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Sir—I read Mr. Kimche's letter of last week with interest. On one point, i.e., whether broadcast orders figured prominently in Israel's official arguments, my own experiences may be of interest.

In the United States, long before ever going to Israel, I had heard it emphasized over and over—by Israeli diplomats and visiting officials, in public speeches and in interviews—that the flight of Palestine Arabs was caused by broadcast orders. No other form of order was even mentioned; and, in most cases, specific reference was made to a broadcast by the ex-Mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, but without details as to date or station.

In Israel, for three and a half years, I made repeated efforts to verify this information, but with much the same results as Mr. Childers. Sometimes, it is true, in official pronouncements made while I was there, the reference was only to "orders by Arab leaders." But whenever I pressed for details, the answer supplied to me was invariably in terms of broadcasts and nothing else.

Clearly, then, there was always a powerful desire that world public opinion should (a) accept the authenticity of those broadcast, (b) regard

them as an essential link in the chain of right reasoning about the Arab refugee question.

Under the circumstances, I feel that Mr. Kimche's letter, though full of words, studiously ignores the main point: if those alleged broadcasts were deemed so important by the Israel [sic.] government in after years, surely some Israelis must have sensed that importance when they were heard, and placed the whole matter indelibly on record.

It now seems fair to put this simple question to Mr. Kimche (as editor of the London Zionist weekly, the *Jewish Observer*): Were such broadcast orders issued, or were they not?

There are only three possible answers: "Yes", "No", or "I don't know."

Yours faithfully,  
Hedley V. Cooke

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Sir—In his letter of June 2, Mr. Kimche states that he has spent some years "checking and rejecting not only the evidence but also the so-called sources of the evidence" on the Exodus of the Arabs from Palestine. At the same time, however, he is clearly unaware of the nature, scope, and whereabouts of the monitoring records of the M.E. broadcasts for 1948 which constitute perhaps one of the most important collections of material on the contemporary attitudes and reactions in the 1948 war. There are, in fact, two monitoring collections for 1948: one compiled by the BBC, the other by the CIA, both from Cyprus. There is considerable overlapping between these collections but in the interests of "checking" and "rejection" they should be studied separately. Both collections give detailed daily coverage of broadcasts from Arab capitals and of such Zionist radios as Haganah Radio (in Hebrew, English, and Arabic); the Free Hebrew Station (Stern) and the Voice of Fighting Zion (Irgun). I was pleased to see that the researchers of Mr. Childers in the British Museum confirm my own findings. I can report now that the complete CIA collection here in Princeton also overwhelmingly confirms and elaborates the results that Mr. Childers and I have arrived at independently of one another. Briefly, these are the following: (1) There are countless broadcasts by Zionist radios which indicate deliberate psychological warfare against the Arabs. (2) There is not one single instance of an Arab evacuation order or a hint of such an order. (3) There is an impressive stream of explicit Arab orders to the Palestinian Arab civilians to hold their ground and remain in their towns and villages. (4) A similar stream between March and May announces plans for the

setting-up of a Palestinian administration and urges Arab civil servants to stay at their posts. (5) Many Zionist broadcasts repeat and comment on the Arab announcements, referred to in (3) and (4). (6) Even at the darkest of times Arab broadcasts consistently belittled Zionist atrocities.

The evidence of the monitoring records is not only negative in that it shows that there were no Arab evacuation orders but also positive inasmuch as it indicates what both Arab and Zionist broadcasts did actually say. This is why no amount of footwork (however deft) can save Mr. Kimche: such as his saying that it was I who invented the myth of the Arab broadcasts, or that he cannot produce "a piece of paper" to prove the broadcasts (a welcome admission in itself) or that the orders were really telephoned, or that there was no need for orders in the first place. Indeed, these reactions of Mr. Kimche serve only to illustrate the synthetic and tactical nature of Zionist propaganda: once one fabrication is shot off, you simply invent another or shift your ground. Consider in particular Mr. Kimche's reference to telephone conversations between Cairo and Haifa, in which I believe we have been privileged to witness a new Zionist fabrication in the very pangs of parturition. The logic seems to be: A spoke to B on the telephone, therefore, A must have told B such and such.

The Zionists must really make their minds up: to have an order or not; to have the order broadcast or telephoned, etc. Incidentally, the CID document on Haifa which Kimche mentions is neither a photostat of an original nor of a copy of one. One cannot but recall in this connection the fictitious British army unit described by Kimche in his *Secret Roads* which the Zionist Mossad organization created in Italy complete with "all the documents and papers needed by an Army unit, all meticulously copied." Kimche should also have a look at the banner headlines of the semi-official Zionist *Palestine Post* of 23 April 1948 (the morrow of Haifa's fall) announcing that "Haganah forces in a thirty-hour battle . . . crushed all resistance, occupied many major buildings forcing thousands of Arabs to flee by the only open escape route—the sea."

Yours faithfully,  
*Walid Khalidi*  
 Research Associate,  
 Near East Program  
 Princeton University

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Sir—Life is too short to deal with deliberate misapprehension. Mr. Childers will therefore have to forgive me if I do not take up his



“interpretations” of what I have said and written. It is, after all, on the record and a rather longer and more sustained record than that of either Mr. Childers, Mr. Cooke, or Professor Khalidi.

I have been concerned with this problem since 1948, and at the abortive Lausanne Conference of the Palestine Conciliation Commission in 1949 I acted frequently as an unofficial intermediary and arranged a number of meetings between the Israeli and Arab heads of delegations, and I spent much time with the refugee delegation itself. I therefore need no lecture from Mr. Childers about the seriousness of the problem.

The Arab Exodus was a complicated and confused affair. Its origins cannot be settled by rhetorical but meaningless questions such as Mr. Cooke’s “were there Arab broadcast orders or were there not?” I have never said that there were. What the Arab leaders did was much more serious—and effective: first, they encouraged the Arabs to leave by running away themselves; then, they so frightened the leaderless mass, who had stayed behind, with atrocity propaganda that it fled as well; and, finally, they prevented a truce settlement in Haifa.

But let us not forget the origin of the Exodus. According to Musa Alami, 400,000 Arabs left Palestine while the British Administration and some 50,000 British troops remained in charge. They left in the main from towns and districts where the Jews exercised no control—or where Jews were only a pronounced minority. Many of these Arabs were Palestine government civil servants who had been given leave, three months’ pay, and advised, according to E.N. Koussa, to leave the country until the situation had settled down. British firms, such as the Iraq Petroleum Company and Steel Bros., transferred their offices and employees to the Lebanon. In their wake came the families of well-to-do Arabs and of many of the Arab civic leaders. It was they who set the trend and created the climate of near-panic among those who stayed behind.

By the time the Haifa crisis broke there was no Palestinian Arab leadership in the country—and certainly not in Haifa. General Stockwell told me of his troubles with the Arab representatives even before the show-down. They insisted on referring every request for decision to Beirut or Damascus, or to the Commander of the Arab Liberation Army. And this also happened at the crucial truce conference in Haifa. The Arab reply to General Stockwell was a statement by the spokesman of the Arab delegation after they had asked for a recess “so that we can contact the Arab States for advice.” They would not live under Jewish rule. It would be degrading, the Arab delegation replied. “We shall return when you are no longer here.” And another 20,000 Arabs left Haifa that day. Only 4,000

stayed and among them were most of the delegation who had made the announcement to Stockwell that it would be degrading for them to remain.

There is, in fact, no slick explanation of the Arab exodus from Palestine. During this initial phase, the responsibility was partly that of the British Administration and largely that of the Arab leadership—those who should have set an example were first to go. Later, the responsibility was in part that of the invading Arab armies and the Israelis who “encouraged” and in some cases forced the Arabs to leave. But, in general, it was the initial propaganda pattern set by the Arab leaders that created panic whenever the Israelis appeared, and led to indiscriminate flight. In truth—as distinct from propaganda—it is a very mixed-up story and not easy to unravel.

And as for the broadcast reports which Professor Khalidi and Mr. Childers have so carefully checked in the British Museum: may I suggest they forget all about them. They are so ludicrously incomplete that they cannot be considered as evidence. They do not cover even 10 percent of the broadcasts. They prove nothing.

In a typical week these monitoring reports carry about a thousand words concerning Palestine from Beirut, with a sentence or two from Cairo and Damascus and from the British “Arab News Agency.” During that week the actual output of the Arab stations was somewhere between half a million and a million words!

The Arab refugees have surely had enough of words about the past. Should we not now concern ourselves rather with bringing about a reasonable and practical settlement of the problem?

Yours faithfully,  
*Jon Kimche*

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Sir—It is a typical tactic of all propaganda that seeks to misrepresent the facts, to quote selectively and out of context; also to give, by use of a juxtaposition which I can only describe as lacking in scholarly integrity, the selected quotation a meaning which in fact is not in it.

In the article on “The Arab Refugees” the late Dr. Kohn asserts that “there is also a wealth of evidence from Arab sources to show that the Arab League at an early stage of the campaign adopted a policy of evacuating the Arab population to the neighboring countries, being convinced that their absence would be of short duration and would facilitate the impending military operations,” and then he quotes:

This wholesale exodus was partly due to the belief of the Arabs, encouraged by the boasting of an unrealistic Arabic press and the irresponsible utterances of some of the Arab leaders, that it could be only a matter of some weeks before the Jews were defeated. (From *The Arabs*, by Edward Atiyah, formerly Secretary of the Arab League Office in London, Penguin Books, 1955, p. 183.)

My first comment on this quotation from my book is that it leaves out my very next sentence which reads: "But it was also, and in many parts of the country, largely due to a policy of deliberate terrorism and eviction followed by the Jewish commanders in the areas they occupied, and reaching its peak of brutality in the massacre of Deir Yassin." I was not afraid to say the whole truth, as it was known to me, and I stand by what I said then today, if it is taken in its entirety. I can only wish that the writer of the article had been equally prepared to accept the whole truth instead of evading or suppressing a very important part of it.

My second comment is that there is no suggestion whatever in what I wrote that the exodus of the Arab refugees was a result of a policy of evacuating the Arab population. What I said is something quite different from the Zionist allegation that the Arab refugees were ordered or even told by their leaders to evacuate, which is the main point at issue in the whole controversy which has been going on for some weeks now in your columns. By giving the quotation from my book as an example of the "wealth of evidence from Arab sources to show that the Arab League at an early stage of the campaign adopted a policy of evacuating the Arab population, etc.," the writer of the article not only misrepresents what I said but also shows the highly suspect character of his "wealth of evidence."

Yours faithfully,  
Edward Atiyah  
3 Vale Close,  
Strawberry Vale,  
Twickenham

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Sir—The article "The Arab Refugees" by Leo Kohn published in the *Spectator* on June 16 contains excellent examples of certain standard techniques of Zionist propaganda:

(a) The isolation of events from their chronological sequence: Kohn refers to "the innumerable atrocities committed against the Jews such as the wholesale massacre of Jewish employees by their fellow workers in the Haifa Refineries." The chronological context of this incident is described by

Major R.D. Wilson in *Cordon and Search* (p. 157): "It started when IZL gangsters threw two bombs from a passing car among a large group of Arab employees waiting for transport outside the refinery. This act resulted in six Arabs being killed and forty wounded, many of them seriously. The casualties were immediately taken into the refinery First Aid Post on the way to which they were seen and questioned by their compatriots. The reaction of the latter was instantaneous . . . All subsequent casualties were suffered by Jews of whom forty-one were killed and forty-eight injured . . . In spite of the fact that this massacre was the direct outcome of the initial attack by the IZL . . . the Haganah felt itself obliged to carry out a reprisal. The following night the Arab village of Balad el Sheik . . . was attacked . . . They succeeded in killing fourteen Arabs of whom ten were women and children."

(b) The multi-purpose half-truth: Kohn writes: "More than 220,000 Arabs live today in the State of Israel. Not a single Jew survived in any part of Palestine that fell under Arab sway."

The fact is that the 220,000 Arabs in Israel today are the "balance" of some 800,000 Arabs who inhabited the same areas before their expulsion by the Zionists in 1948. To argue (as Kohn seems to be doing by implication) that this balance in itself proves the humane treatment of the Arabs by the Zionists is *logically* analogous to arguing that the survival of a certain number of Jews in Europe is evidence of the humane treatment of Jews by the Nazis. At the same time to state that "not a single Jew has survived etc." is to suggest that many Jews (just how many is left to the reader's imagination) would today be alive in Jordan had they not been liquidated when they fell "under Arab sway" in 1948. The fact is that according to the UN partition decision the Jews, who occupied less than 7 percent of a predominantly Arab country, were to have 55 percent of Palestine with some 500,000 Arabs and about 10,000 Jews falling within the proposed Jewish and Arab states respectively. In the course of the Zionist offensives, both before and after May 15, the Jews expanded over 77 percent of the country including most of the areas in which the 10,000 Jews of the proposed Arab State lived. In all, less than 2,000 Jews fell under "Arab sway" both within the borders of the Arab State and the Jerusalem enclave. These were (1) 1,300 civilians and 340 combatants taken in the Old City of Jerusalem. The civilians were immediately handed over to Zionist authorities, and the combatants who were taken as prisoners of war were returned after the armistice. (2) Some 350 combatants taken as prisoners of war from Gush Etzion were also released after the armistice. Arab Legion behavior at the Jewish surrender in the Old City is described by Dov Joseph,

the Jewish Military Governor in Jerusalem, as follows: “The Arab Legion according to all our evidence behaved extremely well. Some of their officers were Arab, some British, but all of them treated the Jews correctly and even courteously.” To say as Kohn does that at Gush Etzion, the Arab Legion was guilty of “horrible treachery” in “letting loose an Arab mob” on the settlers is a shocking travesty of the truth. Jewish eyewitnesses themselves attest to the protection given them by the Arab Legion at the time. If what Kohn said had really happened very few of the 350 POWs of Gush Etzion would indeed be alive today.

(c) The “scholarly” reference to non-existent evidence in Arabic sources: Kohn mentions the memoirs of Nimr al-Khatib in support of his contention that the Arab leaders urged the Palestine Arabs to leave their country. In fact Khatib quotes the full text of the twelve communiqués issued by the Haifa National Committee (translated by me in *Middle East Forum*, December, 1960) in which the Arab inhabitants are expressly and repeatedly urged to hold firm and attend to business as usual. Khatib also gives much detailed evidence of Zionist atrocities to compel Arabs to leave their villages, including the pouring of paraffin and then the setting on fire of Arab captives in the village of Tireh and the methodical shooting and burial in a communal grave of some forty young men in Tantura village.

Yours faithfully,  
Walid Khalidi

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Sir—Erskine Childers has destroyed one myth, only to substitute another. There was no Arab “policy” of evacuation; but neither was there a Jewish “policy” of expulsion—any more than there was a single “Exodus”.

The situation was far more complex and contradictory than Childers, knowing no Hebrew or Arabic and taking his main material from the propaganda of both sides, imagines. Like a detective in a whodunit he pins the crime on the party with the most motive for it—the Jews; but although he accuses the late Dr. Kohn of failing to produce evidence, the only evidence of a deliberate Zionist plan that he himself can provide is (a) an Israeli statement, six months after the beginning of the exodus and in the middle of a “war of extermination” on five fronts, that Israel could not take back the refugees, and (b) a fragment, quoted out of context, from a statement by Ben-Gurion made some time afterwards; and here, even if the context were right, what politician would not later claim that he planned and foresaw an event which worked out so advantageously to his own side?

Maybe this tells us something about the attitude of Ben-Gurion to the plight of the wretched refugees but it tells us nothing about what happened in 1947–48.

This had no coherent pattern, but was a tangle of endless variation depending on the conflicting responses of Arab leaders and of local Haganah commanders, some of whom encouraged an exodus and waged psychological warfare to this end, others of whom opposed it (for instance, as late as July, 1948, Dayan's shock tactics for persuading the inhabitants of Lydda to leave and not return were countermanded by his superior officer Sadeh).

In many places the precipitate departure of the Arab population took the Jews by surprise and even scared them. Already by March some 20,000 Arab inhabitants of Jaffa had fled, not because they were ordered to by either Jews or Arabs but simply because they panicked on seeing that the leaders of their community, a few rich families with villas and bank accounts in Beirut, had left (with the intention, in fact, of returning when the fighting was over). Or take the situation in Haifa. Childers cites the "gentle mayor, Shabatai Levi, with tears streaming down his face, imploring the city's Arabs to stay," as if it were a case of the one just man, whereas it was the official view of the Socialist Zionist town council that the Arab inhabitants should be induced to stay. In the Carmel village of Zichron Jacob the same course was taken, for colonialist reasons: Arab labor was necessary to the local Jewish economy. And so on. It was a situation for which no one was prepared, no ready formulated policy existed, and response was local, conflicting, uncoordinated. Events were moving too fast for policy. Perhaps the Zionist leaders were naively unimaginative in failing to foresee the situation. Certainly, when they saw what was happening many not unnaturally hailed it as an immense advantage to themselves, and actively encouraged the exodus. By the Second Truce it had become official policy. But that they planned it, worked for it, or that the idea even entered their heads—this is a wild invention which Childers has not begun to substantiate.

Despite the Arab governments' refusal to discuss a general settlement, Israel has a responsibility—and many Israelis feel this as strongly as Childers—for taking a positive initiative towards resettling refugees; but it should do so on grounds of humanity and international law, and not for the pseudo-historical reasons concocted in "The Other Exodus."

Yours faithfully,  
*David Cairns*  
1 Glebe Place, SW3

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Sir—Under challenge, Jon Kimche has now shifted ground so breathtakingly that I have quite lost his “mountain of evidence that the initiative for the Arab exodus came from the Arab side.” He now writes that he “never said there were” Arab broadcasts ordering evacuation. Why, then, the 130 words of his earlier letter questioning the completeness of the BBC monitor records—which he carefully depicted as only not showing such orders, not as also showing repeated Arab broadcasts against evacuation? Mr. Kimche is still going on about the supposed incompleteness of the BBC (and I suppose the separate yet wholly corroborative CIA?) monitoring. But I will save precious space because, praise be, Mr. Kimche has now conceded the whole broadcasts issue.

And under direct challenge, Mr. Kimche is silent about his previous fantasy of the telephones and messengers verbally ordering 650,000 Arabs to leave! In fact in his latest letter Mr. Kimche drops all suggestion that the Arabs left under Arab orders. This, from a leading Zionist publicist in the West, at a time when Mr. Ben-Gurion is repeating (May 16) the myth, is really quite something.

Mr. Kimche has also exploded Mr. Ben-Gurion’s latest denial that “a single Arab resident was expelled” since Israel’s establishment. For Mr. Kimche now admits that “later”—clearly, after Israel’s creation on May 15, 1948—the Israelis “encouraged” and in some cases “forced the Arabs to leave.”

I do not quite grasp the distinction, and nor, apparently, does Mr. Kimche, since he himself put “encouraged” in quotes. But I will state what he felt hesitant to say. Those civilians not already fleeing out of the panic long incited by the Zionists were “encouraged” to leave by the advancing Israeli troops indiscriminately shooting up their homes and families (cf. Mr. Kimche himself on Dayan entering Lydda and Ramle); and by loudspeaker vans. If any Arabs were still left when the Israelis fully took a town or district these were then “forced” to leave at bayonet-point, first being “stripped of all their belongings” (cf. *Economist*, etc.). That is what happened. Mr. Kimche attributes partial “responsibility” for this phase of the exodus to the “invading Arab armies.” They did not succeed in preventing this mass expulsion: so that makes them “responsible” for it, according to Mr. Kimche!

Where, then, has Mr. Kimche’s mountain gone? Having admitted Israeli expulsion after 15 May, he for some strange reason seeks to absolve the Zionists from any responsibility for the exodus phase before 15 May. Here, we are back with the familiar Zionist story of the Arabs being demoralized by bad leaders and the initial exit of the well-to-do. Of course there was demoralization. But did that make these first 300,000 Arabs flee?

Mr. Kimche's method of suggesting it did makes me gasp. He writes that these pre-15 May Arabs "left in the main from towns and districts where the Jews exercised no control."

No control? It was against precisely these Arab centers that Zionist troops, beginning in April, launched their all-out military attacks designed (Ben-Gurion) to "make the State larger and Jewish." On 10 April, Deir Yassin's Arabs were butchered; 20 April, Tiberias was attacked; Haifa on 22 April; Jaffa on 26 April; Acre, Safed and the rest before 15 May. It was in precisely these Arab centers that official and unofficial Zionist troops began their "orgy of looting and wanton destruction" (Mr. Kimche himself); and that the whole Zionist campaign of deliberate terrorization by radio, loudspeaker vans, and atrocity reached its peak. And Mr. Kimche would have us believe that these Arabs were not under Zionist "control"; that Zionist "encouragement," leave alone "force," they left [*sic.*], all 300,000 of them, simply through demoralization, Arab- and British-caused demoralization. Is there no limit to Zionist rewriting of history?

The rest of Mr. Kimche's latest letter is the usual mine-field. "Many of these Arabs were Palestine Government civil servants . . . advised to leave the country," he writes. How many, Mr. Kimche? We are dealing with the fate of 650,000 people. And why, since the well-to-do minority's departure began in January, was it that the great mass only left in April—the month of Dayr Yasin and the major Zionist offensive? And on and on and on . . .

And at the end having, in the midst of all this, made his enormous admission of Zionist mass expulsion of Arabs, Mr. Kimche dares to suggest that these same Arabs have had "enough of words about the past."

Yours faithfully,  
*Erskine B. Childers*

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Sir—It should be now be obvious to anyone who has been following the correspondence in these columns concerning the events of 1948 in Palestine, that the Zionists haven't a scrap of evidence to substantiate their ex post facto allegation that the Palestine Arab refugees were ordered or told by their leaders to leave the country. In particular, the main Zionist contention that such Arab orders were broadcast from Arab capitals stands finally refuted.

The central aspect of the events of 1948 in Palestine is not, of course the question of whether Arab evacuation orders were given or not. It has been necessary to go in detail into this question only in order to meet the Zionists



on their own ground and because it was the Zionists themselves who have seen fit to invent this myth of Arab evacuation orders by way of diverting attention from what actually happened in 1948.

The Zionist expulsion of the Arabs from Palestine in 1948 must be seen against the background of six years of mounting Zionist terrorism and propaganda warfare against the British authorities in the country: once the British declared in 1947 their intention of leaving Palestine the Zionist paramilitary organizations turned their main attention to the Arabs. The same leadership using the same combination of psychological and terroristic warfare and the same ambivalence in the manipulation of the dissident Zionist forces which had been so successful against the British authorities now applied itself to the task of mastering the Arabs. The fantastic UN partition decision which "gave" the Zionists 55 percent of a country of which they occupied less than 7 percent and which the Arabs naturally opposed was the signal for the all-out Zionist offensive.

A Zionist master-plan called Plan Dalet for the forceful occupation of Arab areas both within and outside the Jewish State "given" by the UN to the Zionists was put into operation. This plan aimed at the de-Arabization of all areas under Zionist control. A major incentive for the speedy implementation of Plan Dalet was the remarkable resistance put up by the Palestine Arabs in the period November 1947, to March 1948. The Zionists were also alarmed by two political developments: (1) the preparedness of the Arab countries to discuss a moderate solution along federal lines and (2) the American and UN change of heart with regard to partition which was not unconnected with the Arab federal proposals.

Plan Dalet aimed at both breaking the back of Palestine Arab resistance and facing the UN, the U.S. and the Arab countries with a political and military *fait accompli* in the shortest time possible—hence the massive and ruthless blows against the centers of Arab population. As Plan Dalet unfolded and tens of thousands of Arab civilians streamed in terror into the neighboring Arab countries, Arab public opinion forced their shillyshallying governments to send the regular Arab armies into Palestine. It is the considered opinion of this writer that it was only the entry of the Arab armies which frustrated the more ambitious objectives of Plan Dalet which were no less than the military control of the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan.

Yours faithfully,  
Walid Khalidi

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Sir—David Cairns concedes that the Israeli myth about Arab evacuation orders has been exploded, but says there was no Israeli expulsion policy either. He then says “some” Haganah commanders did “encourage” an Arab exodus; that “many” saw its “immense advantages”; but that the Zionist leadership, “perhaps naively,” had no “ready formulated policy” until “the second truce” (in October, 1948). And then, Mr. Cairns says, the Zionist leaders did make it “official policy” actively to “encourage” the Arab flight. Having said all this, Mr. Cairns writes: “that they planned it, worked for it, or that the idea even entered their heads—this is a wild invention which Childers has not begun to substantiate.”

Since a government still vehemently denying that “a single Arab” was expelled controls the relevant archives (or verbal secrets), we obviously lack the total proofs. We always do about grim secrets. But let us see. Did “the idea” never enter their heads? It had entered Herzl’s decades earlier (cf. the Zionist founder’s proposal, in his *Diaries* but not in his “nicer” works for general consumption, that the Arabs be quietly “worked across the frontier” and then kept out). In 1944 even the British Labor executive got the general idea to the point where they publicly—and discredibly—proposed that the Arabs be “encouraged to move out as the Jews move in.” Yet in the midst of all this—and through all the years while they were conducting their racial boycott of Arab labor in Palestine—the Zionist leaders themselves just never even thought of “the idea”?

And was there no “ready formulated policy”? Even in September, 1947, the Zionists had ready an offensive-defensive plan to strike at the enemy, a plan covering every Arab village in the whole of Palestine. I quote further from the verbatim account of the Haganah operations chief, given in the pro-Zionist Sacher’s *Israel: Birth of a State* (p. 217): “We have a map in which the strategic characters of every Arab village and the quality of its inhabitants were indicated.” This at a time when, publicly, the Zionists were accepting partition.

Then in late November, 1947, came the UN partition vote. At once Mr. Ben-Gurion sent buyers to Europe for major new arms supplies. Within three weeks, the official Palmach began attacking Arab villages deep in Arab areas; before even the volunteer Arab forces went into Palestine; five months before the Arab States armies went in. These attacks “caused great disturbances and started an exodus” (Mr. Kimche). Next, in late March, the Zionists got their new arms into Palestine. At once, and to the tune of clear panic-incident by the centrally directed Haganah radio as well as by Irgun’s, the entire Zionist military force launched a systematic offensive

against every Arab center of population it could reach. And the mass Arab exodus began. I noted Ben-Gurion's description of the goal—to make the state “larger and Jewish.” Mr. Cairns first says this is quoted out of context but then, even if the context were right, he says, Ben-Gurion was only claiming foresight after the event. The same Ben-Gurion who, Mr. Cairns says, did make it “official policy” to “encourage” an exodus, but only “by the second truce.”

As for the August 5, 1948, Israeli letter to the UN, refusing to readmit the (by then) 500,000 refugees on “insuperable economic” grounds, as well as security, Mr. Cairns dismisses it. He says it came six months after the exodus began. It came just as soon as Israel was challenged by the UN to state her policy towards the refugees. Mr. Cairns also says it was written in the middle of war. That is just the point. Here were “perhaps naive” Zionist leaders, without “formulated policy,” who during a continuing war and continuing exodus made such far-reaching economic calculations that they decided formally and permanently to deny the refugees return. All these “ideas” had very much entered their heads by late July, 1948; their troops had been systematically attacking and terrorizing Arab centers since December 1947, massively since the end of March 1948; they had their maps ready in September 1947; they had been treating Palestine's Arabs like dirt (let us not mince words) for over thirty years. And Mr. Cairns accuses me of “wild invention.”

And Dayan's “persuasion” (more euphemism) of Lydda's and Ramleh's Arabs was “countermanded”? He did it; they were driven out; untold children died en route. And even this “countermanding,” Mr. Cairns says, was reversed by October, into “policy” to “encourage . . .” Enough said.

Yours faithfully,  
Erskine B. Childers

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Sir—May I correct a small but important error in my last letter? I noted Theodor Herzl's *Diaries* proposal that “Arabs” be worked across the frontier. To be exact, this Herzl reference was to the “naive inhabitants” of his outlined Jewish State. In his later draft Charter for Zionist Colonization of Palestine and Syria which he submitted to the Ottoman Sultanate, Article III was to give Zionists the right to deport the native population—in other

words, the Arabs (cf. Van der Hoeven Leonhard, *The Truth About the Palestine Problem*, The Hague, 1960).

Yours faithfully,  
*Erskine B. Childers*