

The Big Lie (I)

Are the "occupied territories" really occupied territories?

As Adolf Hitler discovered, the Big Lie will eventually be accepted as the truth. The Big Lie, the monster whopper of our time, is that the provinces of Judea/Samaria, often called the "West Bank," are "occupied territories."

What are the facts?

A Brief History: Most of the area now called the Middle East was part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire before World War I. Germany lost the war and so did its ally Turkey. The Ottoman Empire ceased to exist and the League of Nations assigned Britain and France as the mandatory powers.

France assumed mandatory control over what is now Syria and Lebanon. Britain assumed mandatory control over all the rest, including "Palestine," which comprised all that is now Jordan and Israel, including the "West Bank." The Golan Heights, which Syria now claims as its age-old patrimony, was originally part of Palestine.

In 1917, the British issued the Balfour Declaration, under which Palestine was to be the homeland for the Jewish people. In 1921, Winston Churchill, who was then Colonial Secretary of Great Britain, separated all the land east of the Jordan River from the territory designated to be the Jewish homeland, and awarded it to the Hashemites, who established the kingdom of Transjordan.

The Arabs, whipped up by their fanatic clergy, fiercely opposed the presence of the Jews on what they considered "sacred Moslem territory." There was constant warfare between the two groups, which the British tried to arbitrate, always favoring the Arabs, whom they considered more important to their imperial interests.

In 1947, the British decided that they had enough and resigned the Mandate. They left the Arab-Jewish antagonists to their own devices and turned it over to the United Nations. Their solution was to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. The area west of the Jordan River (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip were allotted to the Arabs. Jerusalem was to be an "international" zone. After much soul searching, the Jews accepted the partition and, in April 1948, declared their independence in the area allotted

to them by the partition. The Arabs rejected the partition out of hand. On the very day of Israel's birth, five Arab armies invaded the nascent Jewish State. In what must be considered an almost Biblical miracle, the rag-tag Jewish forces decisively defeated the combined Arab might. But Israel had suffered enormous casualties – 6,000 dead, about one per cent of its population.

Israel not an "occupier":

Israel stayed in control of most of the area west of the Jordan River, except for the Gaza Strip, which stayed under Egyptian control. The "West Bank" and the eastern part of Jerusalem stayed under

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the control of Transjordan, which promptly renamed itself Jordan and proceeded to ruthlessly expel all Jews and to obliterate all vestiges of over 2,000 years of Jewish presence in that land.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel recovered the "West Bank," the eastern part of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, conquered Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, and conquered and annexed the Golan Heights. During the 19 years that Jordan and Egypt were in possession of the "West Bank" and the Gaza Strip, it didn't occur to them or to anybody else that the Palestinians should have a state or even that they were a distinct nationality. The claim for that did not arise until after the Six Day War.

Jews have been living in Judea/Samaria since Biblical times. The area was made *judenrein* (free of Jews), following the Nazi model, by Jordan, when it was in possession of the territory. After 1967, Jews moved back into the territory and a great hullabaloo was raised and is still being raised about the not more than 200,000 "settlers," who do not occupy more than 2 per cent of the area. But there is no concern about the hundreds of thousands of Arabs, who, lured by the prosperity of Israel, have flooded into the area, nor of the more than one million Arabs who live in Israel proper and who enjoy full rights of citizenship.

Israel acquired the territories (the "West Bank" and Gaza) in defense of an aggressive war waged against it. No country in history has ever been asked to return such territories. Do the Poles return the huge chunk of Germany that they acquired in the wake of World War II? Do the Czechs return the Sudetenland, do the French return Alsace-Lorraine? Of course not! Only Israel is being asked to return such territories. The last sovereign of the "West Bank" and of Gaza were the Ottomans. The "West Bank" and Gaza are unallocated territories. To speak of Israel as "occupier" is preposterous; to speak of it, as Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the UN does, as "illegal occupiers," is poisonous slander. He knows better. But unfortunately, the Big Lie of Israel's "occupation" has been repeated so long and so often that even people of good faith have come to believe it and to accept it.

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