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Fabricating Israeli History: The 'New Historians' (Israeli History, Politics And Society)



Synopsis

Israeli historiography is under assault by "new historians" exposing "Zionist narrative". This text takes issue with these "revisionists", arguing that they have ignored or misinterpreted much documentation in developing their analysis of Israel's history.

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Customer Reviews

This is a classic book. I read it when it first came out. It had a big effect on me. It may have changed me as a person more than any other book I have ever read. When I read it, I was a little surprised by the fact that Benny Morris had made an error that wound up with him saying that in 1938, David Ben-Gurion had said "We must expel Arabs and take their places." In fact, as Karsh pointed out, using the actual source would have confirmed a typo here: Ben-Gurion actually wrote, "We do not wish and do not need to expel Arabs and take their places." Yes, that was a big mistake on Morris' part, not checking the original source. And it was a big mistake to get something like this wrong. But I still pondered about how Morris could write something so unusual without checking it. After all, wasn't he aware of Ben-Gurion's other statements in the previous and following years? Wasn't he aware of how far this would have been from the statements of most of Ben-Gurion's political allies and supporters? Wasn't Morris aware of how insane it would have seemed to most Jews to prescribe a policy of war towards the much more numerous Arabs? What Karsh appeared to be telling me was that some extremely unlikely speculations had been presented as history. It would be as if some historian quoted John Kennedy as President claiming that the Earth was flat in an

important speech, after proposing that we send a person to the Moon. Karsh did a careful job of coming up with the actual history here. And he then demolished Avi Shlaim's claim of "collusion across the Jordan." Here again, Karsh showed a situation in which a supposedly serious historian made a highly dubious claim and supported it with a single piece of highly disputable evidence.

The need for this work speaks volumes about the success of Arab propaganda in the last 30 years. Any study of any of revisionist and leftist historians, so-called "new" for good reason, should be filtered through the eyes of Professor Karsh--and Anita Shapira's 10,000-word New Republic piece, "The Past is Not a Foreign Country." Both call to task Avi Shlaim and Benny Morris, who like Tom Segev, fail to explain the war and peace that has afflicted the Middle East since Israel's founding. These new historians all make one gross omission: They consider it irrelevant that seven Arab nations attacked Israel upon her founding in 1947, making no secret of their intention to destroy the new Jewish state. In 1947, Arab League Secretary General Azzam Pasha promised "a war of extermination," "a momentous massacre" to be remembered "like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." Nor do new historians bother to note that such words were followed by gruesome acts, about which the world has forgotten, given the ubiquity of biased news reports. In 1947 and 1948, for example, all but one of the 600 Jews captured by Arab forces, including many noncombatants and children, were murdered in cold blood--and mutilated beyond recognition. According to Dr. Eugene Narrett and Jerusalem Post reporter Sarah Honig, amid scenes of rape and other sexual abuse, the Jewish victims were dismembered, decapitated and photographed by their proud captors. In the Etzion settlements south of Jerusalem, three truckloads full of Jewish corpses were found sexually mutilated. Current accounts of those years often do, however, detail supposedly heinous deeds of Jewish fighters--without appropriate context. In the so-called massacre at Deir Yassin some 200 Arabs were killed.

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