

May 15, 1948, 400,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes.<sup>6</sup> The single most glaring atrocity committed in this expansionist drive was the April 9th massacre at Deir Yasin where the Irgun and Lehi were joined by Hagana cadres in their slaughter of 250 Palestinians, including women, children and elderly. This was not an excess committed in the heat of war, but part of a premeditated strategy to strike fear in the Palestinians, leading them to flee, while simultaneously clearing the road to Jerusalem where the Zionists attacked and occupied the Katamoun quarter on April 29th. It is

also probable that the Zionists hoped that their expansionist drive would precipitate the Arab armies' entry into Palestine, so they could cover their war on civilians with claimed 'self-defense' against combined Arab forces - a frequent theme in Zionist propaganda.

Though world opinion tended to forget these facts until the Palestinian revolution revitalized the Palestinian cause in the late sixties, the Zionists themselves officially recorded their actions. Ben-Gurion wrote: «As April (1948) began, our War of Independence swung decisively from the defence to attack... Field troops and Palmach in

particular were deployed and quickly showed the mettle that was soon to animate our army and bring it victory. In operation Nachshon, the road to Jerusalem was cleared at the beginning of April, almost all of New Jerusalem occupied, and the guerrillas were expelled from Haifa, Jaffa, Tiberius, Safad while still the Mandatory was present.»<sup>7</sup> In *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun*, Menachem Begin wrote that there would not have been a state of 'Israel' without the «victory» at Deir Yasin. An IDF Intelligence Branch report from June 30, 1948, which was recently found in a private Israeli library, surmises that «more than 70% of the Arab exodus from Palestine by June 1948 was caused by Jewish military attacks.» It speaks of «the depopulation of some 250 villages and several towns by June 1948.» Contrary to some attempts to pin the worst atrocities on the Irgun and Lehi, rather than mainstream Zionism, the report stated that «at least 55 per cent of the total exodus was caused by our (Hagana/IDF) operations and their influence.»<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the 1948 war was fought and won before the Arab armies entered Palestine. The warriors were almost exclusively the Zionists. The Palestinians, though they put up resistance in some places, had been lacking in arms and military forces since the brutal suppression of the 1936-39 revolt. Ben-Gurion's reference to guerrillas is more a propaganda ploy than a reflection of the facts, like the Zionists' claim in 1982 to be fighting 'terrorists' in Lebanon, while they themselves were terrorizing the whole population.

## TRICKING THE ARAB ARMIES

In mid-May, the British withdrew from Palestine, the Zionists proclaimed their state and the Arab armies entered Palestine. The fighting was scattered and inconclusive, and within a week the UN was arranging a ceasefire, ordering the two sides to desist from bringing in more arms or military forces. In fact, the Zionists used the interval until July 9th, when fighting resumed for nine days, for a massive build-up. In *The Seven Fallen Pillars*, Jon Kimche (pro-Zionist historian) wrote: «Israeli emissaries scoured the whole of Europe and America for possible supplies... When the truce ended, a coherent Jewish army with a tiny but effective

Picture by Suleiman Mansour.

