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## **PR HOAXES AND HORRORS OLD AND NEW**

IT is a commonplace that aggressors often accuse their victims of aggression. Adolf Hitler was a frequent practitioner in this field; his meticulously planned invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, was accompanied by the declaration, delivered in the Reichstag, that it was the Poles who had started the war. Some of his soldiers, dressed in Polish uniforms, even staged an attack on a German radio station.

The lie, which may have impressed some German citizens, made no impact abroad, and was soon forgotten.

It was left to the Arabs to bring off one of the great hoaxes of the century. A central feature has been their fictional version of their war on the Jews of Palestine in 1948. After the war, thwarted in their purpose of destroying the infant Jewish state at birth, they set in motion all their propaganda resources, using a simple formula.

They reversed the roles of the two sides. Arabs thus became Jews, and their allies became the "imperialist friends of the Jews." They have had earth-shaking success, with ready assistance from dyed-in-the-wool antisemites, other enemies of Israel and, alas, well-meaning but ignorant sympathizers of Israel. Every word in the Arab view on the creation of Israel is an absolute untruth - and does not even make any kind of sense.

Here, in a nutshell, is the story of the opening of the 1948 war and its antecedents. When the British announced their relinquishment of Palestine, the UN Assembly, on November 29, 1947, passed a resolution recommending its partition into two states, one Arab, centered on the mountains, and one Jewish, centered on the coastal plain - and by any criterion indefensible. (Even when enlarged as a result of the war, it was described by cautious foreign minister Abba Eban as "a death trap.") The Arab spokesmen at the UN in one voice declared repeatedly that they not only rejected the plan *holus bolus*, but would do their utmost to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

Perhaps in recognition of the meagerness of Jewish weapons, the UN resolution called on Britain (which was to retain control of the country in the interim period) to open a port on February 1, 1948 (which would enable the Jews to bring in arms and manpower). The British did not comply. The ports remained closed.

As for the Americans - already in January they announced an embargo "on both sides." THE Arab states did not need US arms. Their arsenals were well-stocked with British arms; and foreign minister Bevin announced in Parliament that Britain was continuing to supply them. On the morrow of the UN resolution, the Palestine Arabs launched well-prepared attacks on the Jews in the three major cities.

The most spectacular feature was the destruction of the Jewish commercial center in Jerusalem. In the following weeks, the attacks developed into a countrywide onslaught, reinforced by "volunteers" from Syria and Iraq. In the British House of Commons, it was announced that some 5,000 of such volunteers had entered the country without hindrance after the UN meeting.

Meanwhile, the British navy maintained its blockade of the coast to prevent Jews or arms coming in. Arab attacks were continuous and intensive; *inter alia*, they blew up the building of the Jewish Agency - the national headquarters. Most effective was the

offensive against Jewish transport.

Many interurban roads were abandoned by the Jews; and for many weeks Jerusalem was cut off - deprived of food and scarce of water. By the month of March, the plight of the Jews seemed to the American military leaders and observers to be desperate. They did not offer help.

Instead, the US administration announced withdrawal of its support for the partition plan, and urged the acceptance of a trusteeship regime (in effect a return to British rule); and it began to press the Zionist leaders not to proclaim a state. In April, the tide began to turn. Jewish resistance improved; but most important, two consignments of arms arrived from Czechoslovakia, one by plane and one by a boat named Nora, which managed to evade the British blockade.

Jewish counterattacks were now launched, and a number of Arab positions, including the town of Jaffa, from which Tel Aviv had been subjected to incessant sharpshooting throughout the winter, were captured. Throughout the conflict, the British forces extended aid to the Arabs. And "unofficially," British soldiers blew up the Jewish daily Palestine Post in Jerusalem.

They also planted explosives in Ben-Yehuda Street early one morning, and 50 men, women and children were killed in their beds. However, on May 14, rejecting US pressure, the Jewish leadership proclaimed the state. The next day, the British civil administration came to an end; and five Arab states invaded Palestine with the intention of carrying out their promise to destroy the embryonic state.

They failed in that purpose. The Jews, however, in that year of war, lost 6,000 dead, a proportion of the population higher than that of the British losses in six years of World War II, and of the losses of the Americans in their four years. Let it be said again.

Far from "creating" the Jewish state, the "West" made a great effort to prevent its birth, causing much new suffering in consequence. The state was created by the strivings of the Jewish people, its sacrifices and its valor. Now, in 1993, the Jewish government is mindlessly pursuing a plan which would restore to the Arabs an enhanced version of their opportunity of 1948 - so that the Jewish lives lost in that horrendous war, and those lost in the Arab states' second attempt on Israel in 1967, shall have been sacrificed in vain.