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## **Two Letters between Nicholas Bethell and Anwar Nusseibeh, 1979**

This archival item shows two English documents dated 1 March 1931 and 31 December 1989, which show two letters between Lord Nicholas Bethell in London and Anwar Nusseibeh in Jerusalem.



THE PLACE OF THE NATIVITY

Anwar Nuseibeh  
49 Nablus Road  
Jerusalem.

1st March 1979

Dear Lord Bethell:

How considerate of you to reply at length, as in your letter of January 31st, to the few somewhat random comments which I had made in my earlier letter.

Of course I agree that the Arab point of view was fairly and correctly presented: It is only that the ready and abundant availability of material on the one side, and its relative paucity on the other, tended to create an imbalance in favour of those who appeared to be doing more about helping themselves; and so endow their view-point, as seen against the Hitler background with a greater measure of credibility; especially as success, in retrospect, is its own best justification.

This unintended effect was also a little accentuated, I thought, by the book's short historical introduction, which seemed to lay special stress on the story of Palestine as related in the Old Testament. Again, in many respects this is understandable; but the full history of Palestine the land, Palestine the people, and Palestine the spiritual heritage, comprises other factors as well. In fact, the root cause of the conflict, is surely that the relevance of these other factors has been and continues to be assiduously minimized by the proponents of Zionist thought and Zionist policies, in the name of a somewhat narrow interpretation of that story. Therefore to give it, arguably, such emphasis in a context which sets out to be even-handed, is to bestow upon its one-sided interpretation an objectivity to which, with respect, it is not entitled. What I particularly have in mind in this connection, for purposes of comparison is J.M.N. Jeffrie's earlier book Palestine the Reality, which had placed the same story in its proper focus, against the general and no less important or valid historical background of the country and its people; but the book unfortunately is now out of print.

Otherwise your book is in my opinion a priceless contribution to the history of Mandatory Palestine. Although the Arabs were the main victim, Britain itself did not escape unscathed: It had hoped to contain, in its own best interest above all, but also, may one dare hope, for moral reasons as well, the forces which it had helped unleash; but was faced, in the event, with what it regarded as a deviant "golem", as in the Hebrew play, that it could not accommodate. However, such is the logic of human events, and

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the story has by no means ended yet.

I look forward to seeing you when next in Jerusalem.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

*An N*

Anwar Nuseibeh

Lord N. Bethell  
73 Sussex Square, London W.2  
England.

AIR MAIL

FROM NICHOLAS BETHELL

73 SUSSEX SQUARE, LONDON W.2

01-402 6877

H.E. Mr Anwar Nusseibeh,  
Nablus Road,  
EAST JERUSALEM.

31st January 1979

*Dear Mr Nusseibeh,*

I was very glad to receive your letter of January 11th about my book The Palestine Triangle and delighted to read that you found it absorbing. I fear that I will have to agree with you that I have had wider access to British and Israeli sources than to Arab sources. This is something which I regret, although I am not sure how it could have been avoided.

The point is that many of the leading participants on the Jewish side of the conflict in the last years of the Mandate are now alive in Israel, some of them in senior positions. The leading characters on the Arab side, on the other hand, were all of an older generation and most of them have died.

Also, while it was easy for me to obtain access to Zionist archives and to obtain photocopies of the most interesting material, I did not feel it advisable to go to Beirut to consult the Palestinian Arab archives there. I did write some letters to possible witnesses in Beirut, but I am afraid that I did not get any replies. Over the past two or three years the mail service between Beirut and the outside world has not been good.

I hope nevertheless that you will agree that, when my book presents the Arab point of view, it presents it fairly and correctly. I agree with you that the other two cases are presented more extensively. I tried hard not to form a judgement.

I hope therefore that you will believe me, when I say that my failure to

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H.E. Mr Anwar Nusseibeh

31st January 1979

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include a fair measure of Arab material in the book is due to lack of will, but to force majeure.

I hope to be in Jerusalem again at the end of April and would very much like to talk to you, if you have the time.

*Yours sincerely*

*Nicholas Bethell*

Lord Bethell