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Six years of the second intifada

The museum test

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It is difficult to determine which side is right in the midst of bloody wars. To examine the justice of a cause, one must disconnect from the everyday and look at things from an historical perspective. So here is an intellectual exercise for the Jewish New Year and the sixth anniversary of the outbreak of the second intifada.

It is customary to think that a just war deserves a museum. So let's imagine that twenty years after quashing the intifada we are invited to sit on a state commission engaged in planning the national museum to memorialize the historic victory over our Palestinian enemies. Several ideas come to mind for the museum site:

In the main wing, the IDF will demonstrate how it deployed the most advanced aircraft, the most air-conditioned tanks, and the most high-tech intelligence tools to destroy metalworking facilities used for manufacturing rockets, to intercept any two-legged creatures approaching the fence and to strike at tiny fishing boats transporting weaponry.

The "closed wing" in the museum will illustrate the subterfuge employed to convince Palestinians to become collaborators. For a few moments, the intrepid visitor will be able to experience the jail facilities that broke the prisoners' spirits.

A special exhibit will be devoted to the Israeli success in "searing the consciousness" of the Palestinians. If scientific progress is still unable to display the variety of consciousnesses on the walls, we'll suffice with pictures: hospitals that are hardly functioning, sewage systems that are collapsing, endless lines at the checkpoints and terminals, people crying out for aid packages, and a father preparing dinner with a bit of humus and tea by candlelight.

Even the justice system will be allotted a corner where it will present in words and sounds how the law was exploited to justify expropriation, demolitions, arrests and the rest of the occupation's wonders.

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Enough fantasizing. It is impossible to even imagine the museum of Israel's victory over the intifada. It is simply impossible to build such a museum. The Russians did not build a

museum to memorialize the Soviet invasion of Prague. In the U.S., there is no museum glorifying the Vietnam War. In London, there is no trace of the victory of the British fleet over the boats of the *ma'apilim* [illegal Jewish immigrants] during the mandate era.

On the other hand, the image of a person standing in front of a tank is displayed in the museum in Prague and is engraved in the hearts of millions of people throughout the world. In Vietnam, the area of the Vietcong's battles has been turned into something like Disneyland and you can crawl in the tunnels just as we do in the Bar Kochba tunnels in the Judean plains. Tens of thousands of citizens get stuck at the Hasira [the boat] intersection in Herzliya every day and the names of "Hebrew terrorists" adorn the streets of every city and town in Israel.

The Palestinians will have no difficulty building the museum of the intifada in Gaza, despite their military defeat. You have to admit that there will be impressive stories of heroism and sacrifice there. Many children will be memorialized, some who were on their way to buy gum at the corner grocer and some who were trying to set a trap for IDF soldiers. It will also be possible to crawl under fences. Videos will document the exploits of detainees who succeeded in outwitting the Shin Bet. I hope, but am not certain, that this museum will not extol the suicide attacks.

This will be a museum that our grandchildren will visit and perhaps they will ask how it was possible that in the summer of 2006 their grandparents did not speak out when Israel was crushing Gaza, bombing the power plant to teach the Gazans what it is like to live without electricity, making the lives of millions miserable and demonstrating a lack of respect for the lives of others.

The rebirth of Israel and most of Israel's wars are certainly deserving of many museums. But our current battle against the Palestinians, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, is a battle of the occupier against the occupied, the strong against the weak, the rich against the poor – a battle in which no museum can take pride. The museum test suggests a cruel and painful conclusion – that the current battle is not just.