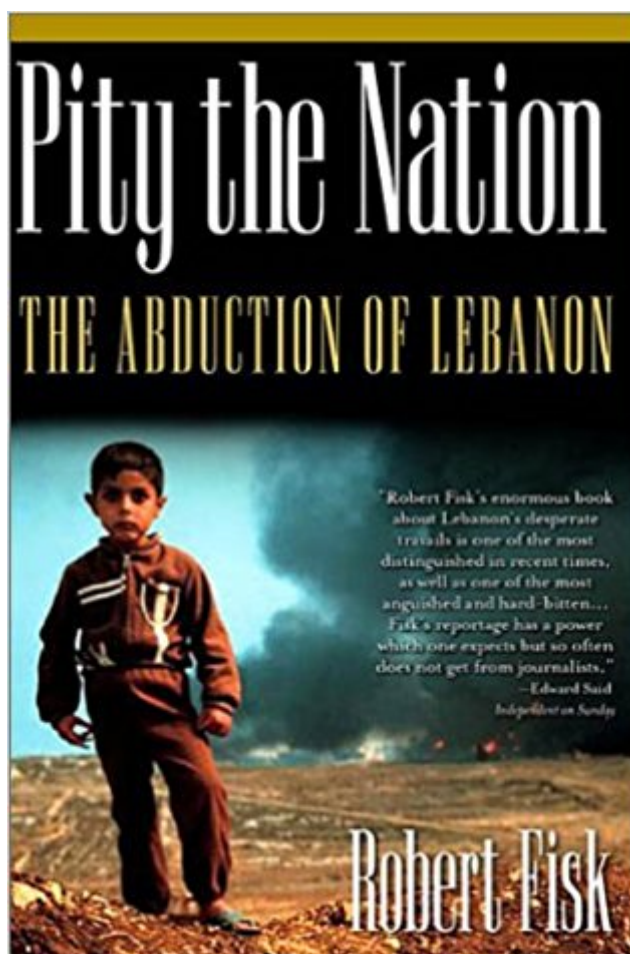


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Pity The Nation: The Abduction Of Lebanon (Nation Books)



Synopsis

With the Israeli-Palestinian crisis reaching wartime levels, where is the latest confrontation between these two old foes leading? Robert Fisk's explosive *Pity the Nation* recounts Sharon and Arafat's first deadly encounter in Lebanon in the early 1980s and explains why the Israel-Palestine relationship seems so intractable. A remarkable combination of war reporting and analysis by an author who has witnessed the carnage of Beirut for twenty-five years, Fisk, the first journalist to whom bin Laden announced his jihad against the U.S., is one of the world's most fearless and honored foreign correspondents. He spares no one in this saga of the civil war and subsequent Israeli invasion: the PLO, whose thuggish behavior alienated most Lebanese; the various Lebanese factions, whose appalling brutality spared no one; the Syrians, who supported first the Christians and then the Muslims in their attempt to control Lebanon; and the Israelis, who tried to install their own puppets and, with their 1982 invasion, committed massive war crimes of their own. It includes a moving finale that recounts the travails of Fisk's friend Terry Anderson who was kidnapped by Hezbollah and spent 2,454 days in captivity. Fully updated to include the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon and Ariel Sharon's electoral victory over Ehud Barak, this edition has sixty pages of new material and a new preface. "Robert Fisk's enormous book about Lebanon's desperate travails is one of the most distinguished in recent times."—Edward Said

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fisk, a former Middle East correspondent for the London Times , details violence, sundry political factions, the 1982 invasion of Israel, the efforts of the multinational peace-keeping force and the taking of Western hostages. "A passionate and often angry book describing how Lebanon 'humiliated the West, brought shame upon Israel, corrupted the Syrians and destroyed itself,' " said PW . Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The labyrinthian tale of Lebanon's destruction has been told a number of times from a number of vantage points, but not since Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari's *Israel's Lebanon War* (LJ 10/15/84) has such a powerful book appeared. Fisk, a highly honored British journalist who wrote for *The Times* (London) for 11 years and who still lives in Lebanon, conveys those appalling events of 1976-85 with the passionate intensity of someone outraged at the actions that have turned a country and people inside out. Fisk graphically portrays the Lebanese tragedy through interviews, anecdotal information, and thoughtful, incisive analyses. Thomas Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (LJ 7/89) and Charles Glass's *Tribes with Flags* (LJ 4/1/90) are comparable efforts, but Friedman's work deals more with the psychological aspects of Arab versus Israeli; Glass has a more leisurely pace that belies Fisk's sense of urgency. Highly recommended for all libraries of any size.- David P. Snider, Casa Grande P.L., Ariz. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is the book that I've meant to read for years, but have only just got round to. Now I wish I hadn't waited so long. According to , 5 stars means you "Loved It". Well, "loved it" is not a phrase you can apply to a book like this. It is a horrific tale. But once you're through with it, you find that you've gained the beginnings of a solid "understanding" as to why the Lebanese tragedy unfolded the way it did. I will admit, for someone like myself who doesn't possess a very large knowledge base on the subject of Lebanon, Fisk's work was hard to get into. For openers, he doesn't cover his subject chronologically. In fact, he skips around in history quite a bit (for a reason, as he explains in his prologue). And the maps he provides are rudimentary at best. In fact, I eventually purchased a travel map of Lebanon so that I could better follow his reporting. It was pretty confusing at first, sorting through all the actors and the various factions that influenced the country in the 1900's. But suddenly, after about 4 or 5 chapters, I reached a point where I could not put the book down. I found myself pulled completely into Fisk's world. It is a hair-raising world, indeed. Interviews with Arafat. Interviews with the Gemayals. Interviews with Israeli soldiers. Interviews with Christian and Muslim

inhabitants from all walks of life on both sides of the green line in Beirut. But the most striking passages are his on-the-scene accounts of atrocities large and small ... the horrific events that we don't want to know about but that we MUST know about if we are to have any hope at all of not repeating history in future. Afterwards, wanting more historical background, I found Kamal Salibi's work, "A House of Many Mansions", to be tremendously helpful in sorting out the various factions that influenced the region in the time period Fisk covers.

As Fisk tells us this book is not an academic history of the wars in Lebanon but rather a personal narrative of a news reporter based on his mountain of notes, a profession in which he is just the best. This leads to some confusion for a reader who has to stay with him as he jumps from place to place, army to army, party to party, and even time to time. It also takes a strong stomach as he forces us to read about the reality of modern "war", the ugly brutality of what modern weapons can do in dismembering pitiful, innocent human beings. Over and over. As he says, "So far as armies and militias go, there are no good guys in Lebanon." While none of them including the PLO come out as heroes the Israelis certainly do not look good, not just in the brutality inflicted on the Lebanese but in their racist arrogance and lies they often told to cover up their actions. For exposing these Fisk was, as usual, subject to attack by the ubiquitous Israeli lobby in the US including the dreary and false charges of "anti-Semitism". He is one of the few foreign reporters who has called attention to the Israeli practice of falling back on "the Holocaust" or accusations of anti-Semitism when caught out in one of their military outrages. This book although a difficult read is particularly educational for Americans who may have opinions about Lebanon formed by the usually inadequate US media. Fisk is British but lives in Lebanon. He was educated in Ireland and has somewhat Irish outlooks which I think give him a certain sympathy for those without power. I note that when on leave he went to the remote west of Ireland rather than the fleshpots of Europe! Lastly, his bravery in reporting literally under fire is unique as far as I know, except for a few of his other companions such as his friend the kidnapped Terry Anderson and a few others from several nations and the brave United Nations soldiers. His final chapter about the Israeli attack on the UN base at Qana with its Fiji soldiers and many civilians is shocking and a fitting finale to the book.

It is difficult to know what to say about this book. I believe it to be a genuine effort to chronicle Lebanon's civil war and Israel's 1982 invasion of the country in as objective a tone as possible. For everything written has a "tone" no matter how objective the author tries to be. I believe the facts speak for themselves. Robert Fisk had first-hand experience of the invasion and subsequent events

so this is primary source material and should be read as such. I read the book originally in order to verify certain historical events as they are presented in a novel "The Scar of David". When I found these events to be confirmed by Fisk's narrative, I investigated further by searching the Internet for additional verification and found it. All three sources do not present Israel in a particularly flattering light. Is this the result of bias, of anti-Semitism, or simply evidence that the country has behaved badly on occasions? The massacres at Sabra and Chatilla and the shelling of United Nations headquarters in Lebanon in 1996 are historical fact, as is the Holocaust. To deny that they happened, or to accuse Fisk of anti-Semitism because he focuses on these events, is to approach the evidence with a biased eye in favor of Israel. Is Fisk critical of Israel? Yes, he is. Is the criticism justified? I believe so. The horror of the Holocaust has made something of a sacred cow of Israel and with good reason. Six million dead is a figure that is difficult to ignore. But Lebanese and Palestinians are human beings too, and they have suffered as well. If Fisk had any intention in writing this book other than pure journalistic coverage, I believe it to be to point this out. I have read no other books on the subject other than the aforementioned novel, so I cannot compare Fisk's book to anyone else's coverage of events. Is he thorough? Certainly. Is the reporting comprehensive? Possibly. Is the graphic depiction of the carnage necessary? Probably not. But it is effective. Is the U.S. complicit in its unwavering support for Israel? Almost certainly. Is the Palestinian terrorism justified? Are Israel's responses to it proportionate to the offense? These are difficult questions to answer, and I can only offer something I read recently in another venue; "ideal justice, however yearned for, is beyond direct human experience". We can only pity the innocent, and yes, pity the nation.

great

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