

the Other Israel

Newsletter of the Israeli Council for
Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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Introduction

This is the first issue of **The Other Israel**, newsletter of **The Israeli Council For Israeli-Palestinian Peace (ICIPP)**. We, members of that council, believe that problems of the Middle East are not the exclusive concern of the region's peoples, but world problems. The growing involvement of both superpowers in the Middle-East; the concentration of economic and strategic interests; the emotional ties of the monotheistic religions to The Holy Land; the efforts of both **The Zionist Movement** and **The Palestinian National Movement** in recruiting world support for their causes – all these factors make it essential that people of good will everywhere help in the search for a peaceful solution of the conflict.

Our newsletter is intended for every person, anywhere, who wishes to lend a hand in achieving this. In particular, it is intended for all – Jews and Non-Jews – who regard themselves as friends of Israel, yet do not agree with the policies of Israel's Government. We seek to represent **The Other Israel** – the Israel of those who reject the role of oppressors; who recognize that the Palestinian People's self-determination, far from being a threat, is in fact the only way of securing the future of Israel; that a Palestinian State in The West Bank and The Gaza Strip, existing side-by-side with Israel, can be Israel's partner in making this a prosperous region.

In the Newsletter, we will bring you news of our own activities, as well as those of other groups in the **Israeli peace movement**. We will also bring our own commentaries on major Middle-East events.

This first issue is being prepared at the time of the first anniversary of The Lebanon War, and the sixteenth anniversary of the Six Day War. The occasion is being marked by widespread activities of the **Israeli peace movement**, on the one hand, and by mounting tension along the cease-fire lines and a threat of a new war with Syria, on the other.

We are doing our best to spread our message, here and overseas, in the face of considerable obstacles put up by the strong **Annexationist and Militarist forces**, that include not only the Israeli Government, but also a large part of the **Labor party "opposition"**.

Not only in Israel, but in many other countries, the radio, television and most of the mass-circulation newspapers are permanently open to the propaganda of the **official Israel**. Only with great difficulty can the **other Israel's** voice be heard in them. We need your help and support to enable us to get our message across. We hope to hear from you.

The Editor
Tel Aviv, 15.6.83



THE ISRAELI COUNCIL FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In December 1975, feeling that important developments in the thinking of the PLO were being ignored by the Israeli Government, a number of people organized to form this council. We believed that the PLO had reached the conclusion that the Middle East conflict could be solved only through negotiations and mutual recognition. The evidence of this change of heart was easily available, but the Labor government preferred to ignore it, so as to avoid having to reconsider its expansionist policy regarding the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Believing that it was essential that the leadership of the PLO realize that there are in Israel people who are aware of their revised attitude, the founders of the ICIPP convened in Tel Aviv and decided to signal to the PLO that we were interested in and impressed with their new policy.

In March 1976 the ICIPP published its Manifesto, in which our solution to the conflict was outlined. In July 1976 the first meeting between the Council and the PLO took place in Paris, through the mediation of a group of dedicated people led by the late Henri Curiel. Since then the contacts between the ICIPP and the PLO continued regularly, with the number of the participants on both sides steadily increasing.

The objective of the ICIPP is to help bring about frequent and extensive meetings between Israelis and PLO members in order to discuss both the ways to bring about a closer cooperation in the search for peace, and the nature of the future relations, once peace is achieved, between Israel and the Palestinian state. It is believed that such meetings will eventually draw into the process active Israeli politicians who will realize that contributing in this manner to the peace process is more constructive than their present fear that talking with the PLO is a risk they cannot afford. By creating an atmosphere of friendly discussion, involving Israelis from all walks of life, individuals from the political mainstream may be encouraged to join the talks.

A start in this direction was made on March 1983, when there was a meeting in Budapest, between Abu-Iyad, an important PLO leader, and an Israeli delegation that included, among others, Hana Zemer, editor of The Labor Party daily "Davar", and Mordechai Bar-On, a member of "Peace Now". Although both were present in a private capacity, without a mandate to represent their respective organisations, this is still a big step forwards, on the road the ICIPP had pioneered.

It is of the utmost importance at this stage to counter the efforts made by the Israeli government to dehumanize the Palestinians and the PLO, by proving that amicable negotiations can take place, and that a just solution to the conflict is perceived as feasible and desirable, by a growing number of Israelis. ●

THE DIALOGUE — AFTER SARTAWI

The hit-man of the Abu-Nidal group, an anti-PLO terrorist outfit backed — curiously enough — both by Damascus and Baghdad, who assassinated Issam Sartawi on April 10, 1983, in Portugal, obviously intended to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Sartawi was not only the chief Palestinian official in charge of these contacts, but also a consistent and outspoken proponent of the PLO peace line. A man of incredible courage, he took over from Said Hamami, who started these contacts in 1974, and who was assassinated by the same terrorist group. But while Hamami's contacts (mainly with Uri Avnery) were on a personal basis, Sartawi conducted the dialogue from 1976 on with an organisation — the Israeli Council for Israeli Palestinian Peace (see separate article).

This dialogue reached its highest point on January 18, 1983 when a delegation of the ICIPP, consisting of General (res.) Mattitiahu Peled, former Knesset member Uri Avnery and former Director General of the Finance Ministry, Yaakov Arnon, met with a PLO delegation consisting of PLO chairman Yassir Arafat, Executive Council member Abu-Maazen (Mahmud Abbas), Imad Shakkur and Sartawi, who was instrumental in bringing this

meeting about. A joint statement about the meeting was published simultaneously in Tunis and Tel-Aviv, declaring that the PLO and the ICIPP would seek to collaborate for the common goal of achieving a permanent and just peace in the Middle East.

These contacts gave rise to a violent debate during the session of the Palestinian National Council — the Palestinian parliament in exile — which met on February, in Algiers. While many PLO moderates thought Sartawi too undiplomatic and outspoken, there was no doubt that the great majority of the delegates approved of the contacts, a point which was underlined by the official Fatah speaker, Abu-Iyad (Salah Halaf). A member of the ICIPP, the Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliuk, was present at these deliberations, as a representative of French and Israeli Newspapers.

After the assassination of Sartawi, concern about the future of the dialogue was voiced in many quarters. These were laid to rest on May 5, when Uri Avnery and the PLO representative in Rome were scheduled to appear together at a public meeting in Turin. Instead, Chairman Arafat sent a member of his personal staff, Imad Shakkur, to represent him at the meeting, in order to signal his clear determination to continue and enlarge the dialogue. These contacts were, of course, one of the points at issue during the recent confrontation between



THE ISRAELI PEACE MOVEMENT

The Israeli peace movement is far from being a homogeneous body. It is made up of several groups and organisations, of various political platforms, methods of operation, and, of course, sizes, each with its own special role.

They can be roughly divided into two categories: the radical and the moderate.

On the moderate side, the dominant body is "Peace Now", which is also the biggest and most widely known, both in Israel and internationally. "Peace Now", originally founded after president Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, when it became clear that the Begin Government was not responding to his initiative, has become a permanent feature of Israeli political life. Only "Peace Now" can mobilise demonstrators by the hundreds of thousands. Its importance is, therefore, immense.

However, "Peace Now" has paid for its size and influential position by espousing a vague political program. This enables it to act as an umbrella

Fatah "rebels" in Lebanon and the PLO-Fatah leadership.

A moving memorial meeting for Sartawi was held in Tel-Aviv on May 31. A large portrait of the late PLO leader was displayed, together with the emblem of the ICIPP, consisting of the crossed flags of Israel and Palestine. Israeli and Palestinian personalities took part. After the meeting, a curious thing happened. Police officers, who attended the meeting in order to prevent violent provocations, confiscated the emblem of the Council and opened criminal proceedings against Avnery and Peled, claiming that the displaying of the Palestinian flag, even in this form, constitutes a criminal offence.

Other recent activities:

* Members of the ICIPP intervened when Israeli authorities denied permission to inter the remains of Wajiah Hussein in Jerusalem. Mrs. Hussein, who died in London at the age of 76, was the widow of Abd-el-Kader Hussein, legendary commander of the Palestinian irregular forces during the 1948 war, who was killed during the battle for the Kastel, near Jerusalem. After protestations, permission for the interment was granted, and the funeral took place in Jerusalem.

* Members of the ICIPP and the Shelli-alternative party took part in a demonstration outside the Dan Hotel in Tel-Aviv, where a party was given by the Minister of Industry and Commerce in honour of a South-African trade delegation. The protesters demanded to cut off all relations, commercial and other, with the racist Pretoria regime.

* Several members of the ICIPP took part in meetings abroad. Yaakov Arnon, Matti Peled and Haim Bar'am undertook extensive lecture tours in the United States; Uri Avnery was invited to lecture in Cambridge (England), the Hague, Turin and Copenhagen, and was also called to address the Green party in Bonn.

organisation and accommodate the greatest number of supporters who can agree among themselves and participate in a joint effort. The leaders of "Peace Now" are anxious not to antagonize potential supporters in the political center, particularly among Labor Party members and voters. For this reason, "Peace Now" delegations refused to meet with representatives of the PLO, such as the late Dr. Sartawi. For the same reason, the "Peace Now" program does not refer to a Palestinian State, but substitutes a vaguer phrase — "the right of the Palestinians to a national existence".* Also, while "Peace Now" favors "a partition of Eretz Israel",* it carefully refrains from mentioning the 1967 borders.

This policy of "Peace Now", undestable and perhaps justifiable for practical reasons, explains the essential role of those more radical peace groups, articulating a clear peace plan, including a recognition of the PLO and a return to the 1967 borders, even though this inevitably means limiting their potential following to a far smaller segment of the Israeli public.

One such group is our own Council For Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which has concentrated on the task of legitimizing contacts with the PLO in Israeli public opinion.

When it comes to organizing radical demonstrations, the ICIPP generally supports "The Committee Against The War In Lebanon" (CAWL). Originally formed as "The Committee For Solidarity With Bir-Zeit University" at the end of 1981, when that West Bank University was closed by the military authorities, this committee has grown swiftly into a body uniting all the currents in Israel who accept its program of negotiations with the PLO and a peace based on the creation of a Palestinian state in The West Bank and The Gaza Strip. With regard to Lebanon, the committee totally opposed the invasion from the start, and has consistently demanded complete and immediate withdrawal by The Israeli Army.

An important feature of the CAWL is the national composition of its membership. In contrast to "Peace Now", which is an exclusively Jewish movement, the CAWL's members are both Jews and Arabs, who regard joint day-to-day participation in political activities as an important step towards peace.

A third radical peace group is called "Yesh Gvul" (meaning both "there is a border" and "there is a limit"), a group numbering about 2,000 reserve soldiers who demand not to be sent into Lebanon. The group concentrates on helping members who are court-martialed for refusing to go to Lebanon. So far, 61 soldiers have been given jail sentences, and 14 are imprisoned at the moment. Their number is steadily growing, and so is the public acceptance of their actions. As a result, the Army Authorities have adopted a more and more harsh attitude towards imprisoned soldiers. Recently, a judge of the

* The quotes are taken from the "Peace Now" program, published in English on October 1982, and available at P.O.B. 108, Jerusalem.



Jerusalem District Court has created a big controversy by joining publicly the "Yesh Gvul" group.

The importance of the radical groups became evident at the beginning of The Lebanon War. In the first weeks of the war, "Peace Now" was paralysed. Most of its leaders felt that, while they were opposed to the war — which was expected to be very short — they should remain silent until the fighting was over. Before 1982, a public protest during a war was considered unthinkable in Israel. It was, therefore, The Committee Against The War In Lebanon which broke the taboo and roused public opinion against the war. Starting from a small demonstration on June 8th, 1982 (the third day of the war) which was violently dispersed by the police, through a series of demonstrations and petitions, The CAWL succeeded in bringing out about 20,000 people on June 26th. Many of these were "Peace Now" supporters, frustrated by their own movement's silence. This stirred up the "Peace Now" leadership, which a week later, on July 3rd, held a demonstration of 100,000 people. The protest snowballed, and The Labor Alignment's Doves (who are closely connected to "Peace Now") swung the whole of The Labor Party, which had supported the war at the beginning. The result was the giant demonstration of 400,000 people in Tel-Aviv, after The Sabra and Shatila Massacres.

The cooperation with The Labor Party is, however, a very problematic one for The Peace Movement. This was seen in February 1983, in the aftermath of The Cahan Commissions' report. In the first, crucial, days after the report was released, the Peace Now leaders waited for Labor's reaction, and instead of calling for a giant demonstration (for which they wanted Labor's cooperation), they settled for smaller ones. It was only after the fatal grenade attack on one of these, that a giant, joint "Peace-Now"-Labor demonstration was decided upon.

However, a few days before it could take place, The Labor Misleaders lost their nerve, and some of them decided to try joining the government and creating a so-called "Government Of National Unity" with the Likud. Because of this, they seized on the handy excuse of bad weather, to call off the demonstration. For "Peace Now" it was too late to organise a separate event; also, after the public had been led to expect a gigantic turnout, it was feared that anything less would be considered a failure.

Thus, the Israeli Peace Movement may have lost an opportunity to topple The Likud Government, and had to settle for the replacement of Sharon by Arens — a man no less extremist than his predecessor, for all his "moderate" image.

The lesson for The Peace Movement is clear: cooperation with large political parties may be useful and even effective on particular occasions, but it must not become a dependence. "Peace Now" must preserve its freedom of action from The Labor Party, and The Radical Groups — their independence from "Peace Now". Only in this way can the struggle for peace move forward.

A MONTH OF PROTESTS ON LEBANON

The continuing guerrilla war in Lebanon, in which Israeli soldiers are almost daily killed and wounded, has caused an increasing concern in Israeli public opinion. At the beginning of May, Zvi Ginzburg, a man who lost his son in Lebanon and who had supported the war in its initial stages, started a sit-in strike in front of The Prime Minister's home, demanding the return of the soldiers from Lebanon. He was soon joined by a group of medical students, who as reserve soldiers have seen some of the bloodiest fighting in Lebanon. (The strike is still going on at the time this is being written, more than a month after its start).

A few days later, the mother of a soldier serving in Lebanon wrote a letter to the newspapers, calling on other soldiers' parents to unite. She immediately received hundreds of responses. Thus was born a new movement, "Parents Against Silence". Its power lies not in a concrete political program, which it does not have, but in focusing and giving vent to the feelings of thousands of parents, many of whom had never before engaged in any political activity. In an interview printed in a Tel-Aviv paper on 3.6.83, one member of the movement said she was a Likud supporter and had opposed the former demonstrations against the war, but "now I can't stand it any longer".

Meanwhile, the various groups in the Peace Movement have stepped up their activities towards the first anniversary of The Lebanon War, which is also the sixteenth anniversary of The Six-Day-War. During the week preceding the 4th of June, there were scores of meetings and demonstrations.

On Sunday, the 29th of May, "Peace Now" began a week-long protest march, from the Lebanese Border to Tel-Aviv. On the same day, The Committee Against The War In Lebanon (CAWL) held public meetings in Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. On May 30, several thousands soldier's parents demonstrated in front of the Knesset in Jerusalem. The following day, our Council For Israeli-Palestinian Peace held a meeting in memory of the late Dr. Sartawi, to emphasize the Palestinian dimension of the struggle (see separate article).

On June 1, CAWL members set up tables on street-corners in Israel's big cities, collecting signatures on a petition calling for withdrawal from Lebanon and negotiations with the PLO.

On June 2, hundreds of students, both Arabs and Jews, demonstrated at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, against the appearance and speech of Rafael Eitan, the former chief-of-staff known for his extreme right-wing views. The students were violently ejected by police.

On the same day, there was a demonstration by the "Yesh Gvul" group in front of the defence ministry in Tel-Aviv, demanding the release of the soldiers jailed for refusing to go to Lebanon.

THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE
RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE ICIPP
EXECUTIVE ON ITS 28/6/83 SESSION,
AND PUBLISHED IN "JERUSALEM POST"
AND "HA'ARETZ" ON 1/7/83.

ISRAEL AND THE PLO MUTINY

Once again, we are seeing automatic cooperation between the Arab rejectionist front, with its allies among PLO extremists, and the Israeli rejectionist front, which runs our government.

The Syrian government and its agents in the PLO have declared war on the PLO leadership, in order to destroy the independence of the Palestinian national movement. They accuse Yasser Arafat of following a policy leading to recognition of Israel, and a peace settlement with her. One of the extremists' demands is the termination of the dialogue between the PLO and Israeli peace forces.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, and other Israeli officials, and also certain spokesmen of the Labour "opposition" cannot conceal their delight. They openly voice their hope that the extremists will take over the PLO, and put an end to the moderate policies of its present leadership. In the last few years, the PLO leadership has indicated many times to Israel and the United States its readiness for a political solution. The present situation proves that these messages were genuine and sincere. Otherwise, the PLO extremists would never have rebelled as they have.

The Israel government has ignored all the signals from the Palestinian side — some of which were conveyed through the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, whose members have met with Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian leaders. One of the real goals of the Lebanon war was to put an end to the moderate policies of the PLO, which may have awakened in Israeli and world opinion a belief in the possibility of an historic reconciliation. Now the Begin-Shamir government hopes that this goal has been attained — with Syrian help. Had this goal been achieved, it would have destroyed all chances for peace for many years; it would have led to more wars, and untold bloodshed and destruction.

The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace hopes that the PLO will retain its independence, despite the onslaught mounted against it — and that it will articulate a clear and unequivocal policy of Israeli-Palestinian coexistence, on the basis of self-determination, and the Palestinian people's right to an independent state of its own, alongside — and at peace with — Israel.

We call on the Israel government to declare its readiness to recognize the PLO, and seek a peace agreement, based on coexistence between two states in this one land.

**The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
P.O.B. 956, Tel Aviv**

All who concur with these views are invited to contribute towards the cost of this advertisement.



On June 4, two demonstrations took place: the first was organised by the CAWL, emphasizing in its slogans the connection between the old occupation in The West Bank and Gaza and the new occupation in Lebanon, both of which stem from the same refusal to talk with the Palestinians.

Afterwards, the CAWL demonstrators joined a giant "Peace Now" rally, at which about 150,000 people took part. This was the largest turnout ever at a demonstration held by "Peace Now" independently, without the participation of The Labor Party. Also, the tone of some "Peace Now" speakers was more radical than at previous demonstrations, clearly reflecting the mood of their listeners.

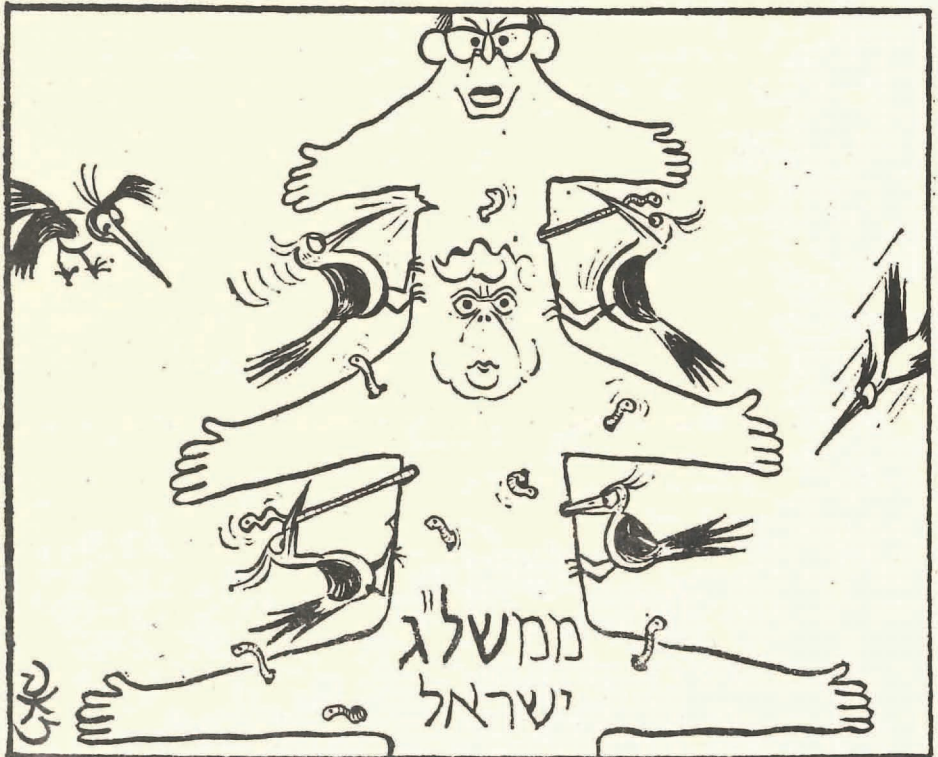
On the morning of June 5th, a group of reserve soldiers, who had served in Lebanon, demonstrated in front of The Prime Minister's office during the cabinet meeting, booing the arriving ministers. Afterwards, they publicly returned the special Lebanon War Ribbons, which they had received.

On Saturday, June 11th, when the news came out that three soldiers have been killed in Lebanon, bringing the total number to 500, several hundreds of "Peace Now" members gathered in front of Mr. Begin's home and held a silent vigil. The permanent sit-in strike at the same place has entered its second month.

At one of the soldiers' funerals, shown on television, the deceased's brother started cursing the government, for which he had voted. At another funeral, held at a northern kibbutz, kibbutz members refused, as an act of protest, to allow Army representatives to participate in the funeral.

All these demonstrations, and the noticeable change in public opinion (see separate article) have already had an effect on the political establishment. The Labor Party has adopted a new plan, calling for an unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon within three months. This demand should not be taken at face value, as Labor's plan really means a continued Israeli presence in South Lebanon, under the guise of "Major Haddad's Militia" (Haddad was initially installed there by a Labor Government). However, it is obvious that Labor's opportunistic leaders realise that withdrawal from Lebanon is now a popular demand. Even the Prime Minister has been forced to pay some lip-service to the idea of withdrawal, in his recent Knesset Speech. Mr. Begin has also been known to complain, in a cabinet meeting, that the demonstrations near his house are getting on his nerves. Meanwhile, several ministers have started a wave of public accusations and counter-accusations, trying to saddle each other with responsibility for the war.

In this situation, the task of The Israeli Peace Movement is not to let up, to increase as much as possible the pressure on the government until the last Israeli soldier leaves Lebanon.



This cartoon, printed in Ha'aretz on 7/6/83, comments on the present situation of the Israeli Government



A GROWING TREND AGAINST THE WAR IN ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION

A series of public opinion polls, conducted during the past year, shows a clear trend of

| The answers were: | End of June '82 | October '82 | January '82 | May '83 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| It was right to go to war | 84 % | 67 % | 61 % | 51 % |
| It was wrong | 13 % | 29 % | 36 % | 44 % |
| Undecided | 3 % | 4 % | 3 % | 5 % |

It should be noted that the Israeli-Lebanese-American agreement, signed before

growing disapproval of The Lebanese War.

In the opinion polls, published by the Israeli Weekly "Koteret Rashit" (Headline) on May 25, a question was put: "Was it right or wrong for Israel to go to war in Lebanon, given the achievements of the war and the price paid?"

the May '83 poll, has not affected this trend.

PLIGHT OF THE JAFFA ARABS

The Arab residents of Jaffa, who have known a great deal of hardship and neglect by the authorities, are now faced with a serious new threat. The Tel-Aviv-Jaffa municipality is preparing to transform the Arab quarters of Ajjami and Jebileah into a high-class Jewish residential neighborhood and tourist center.

In response, there was formed in December 1982 a citizens' group, calling itself **The Jewish-Arab Action committee For The Arabs of Jaffa**. Working closely with local Jaffa citizens' group and the league of Jaffa's Arabs, it supports the right of Jaffa's Arab residents to remain in their neighborhoods, and to receive the public services and assistance that all citizens of The State of Israel are entitled to.

At the time of the Israeli War Of Independence, in 1948, the Arab population of Jaffa numbered 120,000. Of these, there remain today only about 15,000. They are being denied various municipal services and the building permits necessary to make minor structural repairs. In February 1982, representatives of Jaffa's Arab population appeared before The Knesset Economic Committee to report

on their community's deteriorating socio-economic situation: There is a 50% truancy rate, a marked increase in the use of drugs, a spiraling crime rate, and a severe housing problem.

At that meeting, the Knesset Committee proposed a five-year rehabilitation plan. However, no funds have, so far, been allocated for the implementation of that plan, and the situation is growing worse. Residents repairing their disintegrating homes without a permit are faced with heavy fines, the destruction of the repair, and even prison sentences. This policy is regarded by the citizens' groups as part of a larger government plan to uproot the Arab citizens from their homes.

The Jewish-Arab Action Committee is planning an international work camp and day-care program, to be held in Jaffa from July 23 to August 6, 1983. It is intended to bring together Arab and Jewish youth and to perform needed services that are not being delivered by The Municipality; and local engineers and architects are working on an alternative development plan that will take into consideration the needs of the local Arab residents.

For further information write to:

The Jewish-Arab Action Committee For The Arabs of Jaffa, P.O.Box 078, Jaffa, Israel

THE COMMUTER SETTLEMENTS

About a year ago, a radical change took place in the Israeli government's policy of building settlements in the occupied territories. Government planners realized that only a small number of nationalist-religious zealots, of the "Gush Emunim" type, were willing to settle in the occupied territories for purely ideological reasons. Since the government's plans called for mass settlement, a different method had to be devised. The new

method took advantage of the fact that Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, like big cities everywhere, have been growing outwards, in wider suburban rings. This tendency was strengthened and channeled into the Occupied Territories, by applying pressures and inducements on the building industry to cut back housing construction within the pre-'67 borders of Israel, and by means of unprecedented subsidies to invest all their resources in the occupied territories.

Thus, it is becoming harder for an ordinary Israeli citizen to find a house anywhere but in the occupied territories.



Similarly, many industrialists have found that to get government loans and subsidies, they have to move their plants into the occupied territories.

This policy created a boom of private-enterprise settlements, with major housing contractors publishing two - and three - page ads in the newspapers, to entice buyers to The West Bank. Besides the promised low-cost and high-quality housing, the most emphasized feature of each new settlement is its proximity to a big urban center, so that prospective settlers will be able to commute to work inside Israel.

It should be noted that among the individuals and companies lured by the scent of easy money in the new settlements are not only government supporters, but also many who are closely associated with the Labor "opposition". For example, the "Nofim" ("Landscapes") company, one of the first to take advantage of the new policy, is owned by a former Labor deputy-Mayor of Givataim. The law office of Haim Zadok, a former Minister of Justice in the Labor Government provides legal counsel to companies building new settlements in the occupied territories. What is worse - "Solel-Boneh", the giant construction company belonging to the Histadrut (the trade union federation, which is Labor's Stronghold) is also participating actively in building these settlements. When this activity was challenged, both the Histadrut Central Committee and the Labor Party bureau voted, by a large majority, to continue it. Once again, material considerations prevailed over principles.

The means of obtaining land for the new settlements are various and shady. The transactions are usually secret, involving all sorts of middle-men and "straw-men" to conceal the identity of the sellers. If, in the course of such a transaction, land is sold by someone who is not its legal owner, the authorities turn a blind eye and if necessary enforce the false owner's claim.

One such case came to light on May 3: In a small village called Bidia, several farmers discovered that their land had been sold to settlers without their knowledge. They went to the Nablus court and obtained an injunction, but this was ignored by the settlers, who continued to "develop" the land. When the farmers tried to stop the works on their land, police and other armed forces opened fire on them, killing one man and wounding two others (Ha'aretz, 3/5/83).

However, when it transpired that many building companies were using fraudulent methods not only against the Arabs, but against their Israeli customers as well, the situation became embarrassing for the building companies and the government. The government is now planning a new set of regulations, governing the sale of land in the occupied territories. Some government circles are also offering as a scape goat the deputy minister of agriculture, Michael Dekel, who was accused in the media of over-cooperation with the building companies. It remains to be seen whether these measures will be enough to save the government's new settlement policy.

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APRIL FOOLS IN MAY

It is said that a clever man knows how to get out of a mess that a wise man would never get into.

The Israeli Government has recently proved once again that it is neither wise nor clever. The Israeli-Lebanese Agreement, obtained by U.S. Secretary Of State, George Shultz, illustrates the extraordinary stupidity of the Israeli Government.

What is now known of the contents of that agreement proves that the government was lying to the Israeli people and to the whole world, about the real goals of the inexcusable Lebanese adventure. This bears out everything that peace groups in Israel, including our council, have said all along.

Secondly, it is very doubtful if this agreement will ever be implemented. From the beginning of the war, Israel has repeatedly declared that she is not waging war against Lebanon, nor against Syria ("unless Syria initiated a confrontation with the IDF") but only against the so-called "PLO terrorism". What, then, is the use of signing an agreement with the Lebanese Government, which is totally incapable of enforcing its authority on vast portions of its own country, and against which Israel has never fought? Can such an agreement bring about the withdrawal of the Syrian and PLO forces from Lebanon, while those two sides have not been parties to the negotiations? Israel, we should recall, is determined not to talk to the PLO, under any circumstances.

Thirdly, that agreement has again proved, if further proof was needed, that the government's true objective—namely, the political annihilation of the PLO, to clear the way for the formal Israeli annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories—is simply unattainable (as well as being both immoral and illegal).

The Israeli government, then, is neither wise nor clever. It was not wise enough to stay out of the mess, nor is it clever enough to get out of it.

Israel should not have invaded Lebanon at all. Instead, she should have used the achievement of the tacit cease-fire agreement with the PLO on the northern border (from July 1981) as the start of a dialogue with that organisation, which is the unquestioned representative of the Palestinian People. An overall solution for the Palestinian issue, which is the core of the entire Middle-East Conflict, can not be achieved by other means. But the Israeli Government deluded itself that it had the power to put a violent end to the national aspirations of the Palestinian People. Now, we are witnessing the catastrophic results of such a distorted mentality.

But having embarked on that misguided adventure, the government should at least find a way of getting out of it without further harm. Unfortunately, it seems incapable of doing even that....

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