

The Other Israel

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BACKDOOR GAMBITS

Immediately upon its formation, Israel's new "National Unity Government" finds itself faced with a multitude of crises. The Intifada continues, for the fourteenth month; violent clashes are on the increase, and the leadership of the Intifada manifests its authority through such acts as the successful boycott of Israeli products. The Israeli economy slides into recession, for which the Intifada is one of the main causes*; with soaring prices and mounting unemployment, social unrest is spreading in the Israeli society. Meanwhile, the opening of a dialogue between the U.S. government and the PLO is making the government's traditional diplomatic positions increasingly untenable; both inside and outside Israel, calls for an Israeli peace initiative are becoming louder.

Rumors circulating in the Israeli and international press are hinting that such an initiative is, indeed, being prepared. Such persistent rumors, in themselves, are creating expectations whose non-fulfilment the Israeli government might find hard and costly.

Foreign Minister Arens is due to visit Washington in February; in March, Prime Minister Shamir will follow him to the American capital. On these occasions, the Israeli visitors would be expected to bring some "new ideas" with them. On the face of it, both Shamir and Arens seem very unlikely candidates to make any kind of concession or conciliatory move. Known for many years as hard-liners, both of them opposed Menachem Begin's signature of the Camp David agreements. In the last two years, Shamir has repeatedly frustrated the initiatives taken by Labor leader (then Foreign Minister) Peres - even though the main purpose of Peres' so-called "Jordanian option" was to exclude the PLO

from the peace process. Indeed, Shamir's "No!" became proverbial in Israeli politics.

However, during the past year Shamir and Arens took a series of steps designed (as Shamir himself avowed) to put them closer to the center of the political spectrum. The first sign was the Likud party's support for the banning of Rabbi Meir Kahane's racist party. Later, Shamir and Arens rejected the option of forming a coalition with the extreme right and religious parties, offended these parties by breaking written agreements, and opted instead for a coalition government with the Labor Party.

Stop press!

29.1.1989

The well-known Palestinian leader and peace activist, Feisal Hussein, was today released from prison after repeated administrative detention periods. A few days ago, a senior official was sent by Defence Minister Rabin to Hussein's cell, in order to hold talks with him. The significance of this move is not yet clear. Hussein is an independent thinker, who wields a great deal of influence in the occupied territories; he would not contemplate setting up a "local, non-PLO leadership" - as Rabin may hope; nor would he take any major step without consultation with Tunis. After his release he did, however, publicly offer his help in "constructing a ladder for the Israeli government to climb down from its precarious perch, and rejoin the family of nations".

Moreover, Ariel Sharon - Shamir's main rival inside the Likud - was excluded from the direction of the Likud's elections campaign; during the formation of the new government, Sharon was kept out of the foreign ministry as well. (At the same time, Shimon Peres was shunted

over to the finance ministry and the foreign ministry was given to Arens - thus securing for the Shamir-Arens team complete control over the conduct of Israel's foreign policy.) Ariel Sharon offered a strong challenge to the Shamir leadership; nevertheless, Shamir and Arens succeeded in getting the Likud's Central Council to ratify the coalition agreement with the Labor Party - though by a narrow majority.

At stake in the Shamir-Sharon contest are two opposing visions about the role which their party should play in Israeli politics and society. Sharon would like to keep the Likud as Menachem Begin founded it: a populist party, drawing the support of the underprivileged and disinherited by means of rabble-rousing nationalist demagoguery; a party centering around the person of a charismatic leader. Shamir and Arens, on the other hand, are intent on transforming the Likud into a "respectable" conservative party, patterned on the British Tories or the American Republican Party (with whose leaders Arens, a former American citizen, maintains extensive personal contacts).

By no means does such a conservative party have to be dovish or peace-seeking; but in Israel - more than anywhere else - such a party would avoid at all costs any breach with the administration in Washington. Thus, it can confidently be expected that a new "Israeli peace plan" would be hammered out, to be unveiled during either Arens' or Shamir's Washington visits. Such a plan would have to include some concessions - or apparent concessions - in order to gain the support even of the American Jewish leadership - a support which, in the last few months, the Israeli government can no longer just take for granted. More substantial conces-

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sions would have to be made in order to fall in line with the new American administration. The new "peace plan" would probably be bi-partizan, enjoying - at least in its main outlines - the support of Labor leaders Peres and Rabin; Shamir would require such support in order to counterbalance the opposition expected both inside the Likud and from the extreme right parties. Shamir already made a major step in Labor's direction, by accepting the idea of negotiations carried out under the joint auspices of the two superpowers, as well as the involvement of the U.N. Secretary-General - thus edging closer to the idea of an International Peace Conference, which he previously rejected categorically. (Of course, Shamir still continues to oppose PLO participation in the negotiations.) By taking this position, Shamir practically closed the distance separating him from Shimon Peres - who had spent most of 1987 in fruitless searches for an "International Conference without the PLO". On the other hand, Ariel Sharon sharply denounces Shamir's new position, stating that the PLO is inevitably bound to become a participant in U.N.-backed negotiations. Sharon's interpretation was surprisingly amplified when Mahmoud Abbas ("Abu Mazen"), member of the PLO Executive Committee, welcomed Shamir's statement as "a positive change".

Some ideas of the "peace plan" being formulated can already be gathered from unofficial leaks and

official statements, such as the one made by Defence Minister Rabin on January 19. It can be assumed, for example, that a central element of the "peace plan" would be the holding of elections in the occupied territories. In itself, this idea is not only acceptable to most Palestinians, but has often been raised as a demand by Palestinian leaders. However, the Israeli government is likely to make the holding of elections conditional upon a stoppage of the Intifada and "a period of quiet" - an impossible condition, since no Palestinian can be reasonably expected to give up the achievements of the last fourteen months, paid for with untold suffering and sacrifice, and return - even "temporarily" - to the situation of a meek and submissive subject. Certainly, it is difficult to hold elections in the midst of daily violent clashes and bloodshed; but the Israeli government can only hope to achieve calm by such steps as releasing the political prisoners, ceasing its repressive measures, and creating conditions under which the extensive network of social and political institutions, driven underground, could re-surface. Moreover, the Palestinian clandestine leadership would not expose itself and take part in open political activity, while knowing that its exercise of basic democratic rights is revokable at the Israeli government's whim, and while the elected Palestinian representatives might be arrested, deposed, or deported - as were the Palestinian mayors democratically elected in 1976. To give such assurances to the Palestinians, there must be a binding international commitment by the Israeli government - and an effective form of international monitoring in the occupied territories themselves.

At present, the Israeli government seems far from ready to give such assurances. There is, moreover, another major obstacle: totally opposing views about the role which the elected Palestinian representatives

may be expected to play. The Israeli authorities might demand of the candidates in the projected elections to agree in advance that, once elected, they would set themselves up as an "alternative to the PLO"; such a demand would make the whole elections project into a farce.

The only way for elections actually to take place is for the Israeli government to fully realise that the entire Palestinian leadership in the occupied territories regards itself as part of the PLO; that any decision to participate in elections would be taken in consultation with the PLO leadership in Tunis; and that any participation of the elected representatives in negotiations would be, in fact, a PLO participation.

It is far from certain that the Israeli decision-makers are ready to face up to these realities. Yitzchak Shamir might intend to do nothing more than present some glossy document known as "The Shamir Plan", whose expected rejection by the Palestinians would give the Israeli government some propaganda points; Shamir would pose as "a man of peace" while giving up nothing substantial. Sometimes, however, such roles are more easily assumed than discarded. Propaganda tricks or gimmicks will not resolve the Israeli government's predicament, which results from Israel's internal crisis, from the unbroken resistance of the Palestinians, and from the new superpower détente, are all of these conditions likely to continue over the next few years, and their combined effect might force Yitzchak Shamir and his colleagues to continue further on the road where, despite themselves, they now take the first step.

The editor

* On January 16, 1989, Finance Minister Shimon Peres enumerated to the press economic damages caused by the Intifada: lowering of the gross national product, reduction of tourism, reduction of Israeli exports to the occupied territories and an increase in defence expenditure.

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Rubber conscience

The number of Palestinians killed and wounded in December 1988 was higher than on any previous month of the Intifada; on one day alone, December 16 – which became known as “Black Friday” – eight Nablus youths were shot down by the Israeli army. The increased number of casualties is mainly due to the introduction of “plastic” and “rubber” bullets (actually, these are metal bullets thinly coated with plastic or rubber). Such bullets are supposed to be “non-lethal” and, therefore, Israeli soldiers have been given greater freedom to shoot them on civilian demonstrators – with very lethal results.

On January 15, Defence Minister Rabin disclosed at the cabinet meeting that soldiers have been authorised to shoot plastic bullets at fleeing stone-throwers *in order to capture them*; thus, an official end was put to the myth that soldiers shoot only in “self-defence”. At the same time, Rabin also announced a series of new tough measures, such as the destruction without trial of any house in which a person suspected of stone-throwing had lived; a new regulation making it possible to impose a fine or imprisonment on parents, in punishment for acts committed by their children; and a further extension of the soldiers’ right to shoot “plastic” bullets, also on persons seen putting up road-blocks or burning tyres.

The new policies arouse strong protests. Six opposition parties presented motions of no confidence in the government. There ensued a stormy parliamentary debate, in which K.M. Muhammad Miari accused the government of having “a heart of lead and a conscience of rubber”; K.M. Yossi Sarid, during his speech, waved a “rubber” bullet of the deadly kind; and the generally moderate K.M. Amnon Rubinstein, who is a widely-respected jurist, called upon soldiers to disobey the orders to shoot fleeing Palestinians, which he defined as “manifestly illegal”. These well-known voices were joined by a new K.M., Rabbi Avraham Ravitz of the religious “Degel Hatorah” party, who made an impassioned plea for an end to bloodshed.

During Rabin’s answering speech, the shouting and heckling became louder and louder; Rabin stopped his speech in the middle and left the

Knesset in a huff.

At the Supreme Court, the League for Human and Civil Rights together with Adv. Felicia Langer presented an appeal, asking the court to rule that Rabin’s new orders are illegal.

On January 19, the “Peace Now” movement decided to establish permanent daily vigils in front of the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv and the Prime Minister’s residence in Jerusalem, calling for Rabin’s resignation. The demonstrators (who continue to stand at the time of writing) carry signs accusing Rabin of the death of 87 Palestinians aged 16 or younger since the beginning of the Intifada, and the slogan STOP SHOOTING CHILDREN IN THE BACK! START TALKING TO THE PALESTINIANS FACE TO FACE!

Objections to the new policy were also voiced by government ministers, such as Moshe Shachal of the Labor Party and Ehud Olmert of the Likud. In a series of newspaper and television interviews, Olmert stated: *In the absence of a comprehensive and effective policy for facing the uprising, the increasing number of casualties, and especially the high number of children among them, could cause Israel grave damage. He maintained that Israeli soldiers are operating within the law and have the right and the duty to defend themselves and other citizens, but said that the best policy would be to lower the number of Arab casualties as much as possible. While the army forces should defend the lives of Jewish settlers in the territories, the policy should be characterised by wise moderation and restraint: If an Arab child, after throwing a stone on soldiers, is turning and running away, I don't think he should be shot. (Yediot Aharonot, January 17)*.*

The issue of the “plastic bullets” has caused a sharp debate between Israel’s military and legal establishments: on January 24, (Likud) Justice Minister Dan Meridor, Attorney-General Charish and the top officials of the justice ministry held a long meeting with the army Chief of Staff and several generals. The discussion ended in disagreement. On the same day, Meridor received a delegation of the Association for Civil Rights, headed by former Justice Minister Chaim Tzadok and retired Judge Eli Nathan, who called upon him to oppose the destruction of houses, as well.

The controversy, which divides internally the two big parties, is still raging in the press. Rabin is still

maintaining his position on the shooting orders, but is apparently feeling the need to make some concessions. In this light could be seen Rabin’s declaration of a “freeze” on deportations.

** Ehud Olmert, a Shamir protégé and one of the Likud’s “bright young men” was placed in charge of the government’s relations with Israel’s Arab citizens. Olmert’s two predecessors, since this ministerial post was established in 1984, were Ezer Weitzman of Labor and Moshe Arens of the Likud, both of whom tried to establish a comparatively liberal and conciliatory policy – sometimes at odds with the policy of other ministries, such as the Interior Ministry, which is in charge of destroying “illegal” Arab houses. Ehud Olmert seems intent on continuing in the same way: upon entering his new ministry, Olmert called upon the Finance Ministry to double the budgets allocated to Arab municipalities in Israel.*

‘Yes to the pain of hunger’

The story of Ansar-3

In December 1988, Palestinian prisoners in Ansar-3 have opened a hunger strike. The following excerpt is taken from an English translation of a letter smuggled out of the camp (the original was not available for comparison).

We are addressing you from the heart of the Naqab desert, from Ansar-3 prison – a prison that is a graveyard for the living, whose purpose is to kill Palestinians in body and spirit; this is what the enemies of peace and freedom want, those who tremble with fear at the mere thought of our people obtaining their freedom, reclaiming their dignity and establishing an independent Palestinian state, ending years of torture and exile, years of fighting, killing, expropriation and deprivation.

(...) Thousands of us are thrown into detention camps without any specific charges or trial. Despite being classified as administrative detainees, we are denied the legal rights of administrative detainees; indeed, we are denied all the rights found in any prison, even those maintained for criminals. Arrests are based on secret evidence; extension of arrest is based on accusations trumped up during our incarceration. The trial is a comedy, in which the judge plays the role of the prosecutor and the intelligence officer plays the role of the judge. Worse, we are tried in large groups, sometimes without detainees even entering the courtroom, and are denied the most basic human rights guaranteed by all international legal covenants.

(...) We are forbidden to see our family (...). We do not have radios, newspapers, books, appropriate food, or clothes to protect us from the winter cold. We don't have beds to protect the blankets from getting wet in the rainwater; neither do we have closets for our belongings, as the authorities, claim we have only the clothes on our backs. We are denied shoes to protect us from cold and sickness. Different forms of physical and psychological torture are practiced against us. The intelligence agents bargain with us for our freedom, as they want us to leave the prison as traitors to our people and principles.

(...) We are unable to continue in these conditions. We have tried all possible means, including dialogue and persuasion, but the result was more pressure. The situation reached the point where the head of the detention center ordered fire randomly on the strugglers, on August 16, 1988. Two prisoners were martyred: Assad Al-Shawa and Bassam Samordi.

We have no alternative but to commence an open hunger strike, until death or until achieving our legal and legitimate demands and improving our conditions and treatment.

**YES TO THE PAIN OF HUNGER!
NO TO CAPITULATION!**

The Ansar prisoners' nightmare began in the first months of 1988. The Israeli government's inability to cope with the Intifada led to a policy of mass arrests at random. Prison facilities in the occupied territories became not just crowded but virtually overflowing, following the arrest of thousands upon thousands of Palestinians of all ages. The Israeli authorities hastily established a series of new detention camps, the largest of which, in the middle of the Negev desert (*Naqab in Arabic*), is housing (in tents) mainly "administrative detainees". Officially known as "The Ketziot Penitential Facility", the place fast became known by the name the prisoners gave it: *Ansar-3**. The new name has gained universal currency, and is often used even by the camp's own guards.

Several protest demonstrations have already taken place outside the gates of Ansar-3; the demand for the camp's dismantling was raised by Knesset Members from several parties. The existence of a prison camp deep inside Israel's pre-'67 territory, in which thousands of political prisoners are held without trial, is alarming the Israeli peace camp not only for reasons of conscience or solidarity: Israeli peace activists are more and more using such expressions as "see you in Ansar-4".

In December 1988 reserve lieu-

tenant Saul Yanay, of Kibbutz Ashdot Ya'akov, was ordered to assume command over a detachment of guards in Ansar-3. He preferred to refuse this order and become himself a prisoner (in another military prison, used for disobedient soldiers).

Another reserve soldier summoned to guard duties at Ansar-3 was Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom of Jerusalem. Milgrom did show up at the camp, but refused to take up a rifle, saying that it is not his custom to threaten fellow human beings; nor did he agree to work in the kitchen and prepare the meals of those engaged in guarding. Milgrom stated to the camp authorities his intention to act as an observer, to collect evidence about human rights violations for later publication. He prepared himself for being imprisoned, but after three days the camp administration preferred just to send him home.

Shabbat at Ansar

The following is an excerpt from a text spread on January, 28, by the group "His Brother's Keeper", at the protest camp in front of Ansar-3.

We have come to Ketziot prison (i.e. Ansar-3) for the Sabbath to raise a dissenting voice within the religious camp. (...) Those who have experienced slavery in Egypt – or in Auschwitz – can emerge equipped either with everlasting hatred and the knowledge of how to oppress and enslave others – or with the compassion and empathy born of the memory of suffering.

"Jethro," the portion of the Tora read this week, is dedicated to fashioning a system of law to safeguard the rights of every individual under Moses' jurisdiction, and the access of every individual to a fair trial. It marks the moment that the children of Israel were transformed from slaves into a free people, and concludes with the granting of the Ten Commandments, which were to form the cornerstone of Western concepts of justice and equity. What a tragic irony it is that we read these passages in full view of a prison situated in the Holy Land, under Jewish sovereignty, that violates the spirit and the letter of that law.

"Administrative detention" is a euphemism for the state of lawlessness that the occupation has engendered. We have gathered here in order to try to save the Palestinians from further injustice, to save ourselves from further shame and to save Judaism from the corrupt use of state power.

"His Brother's Keeper" is a rabbinic human rights watch, numbering at present seventy Reform, Conservative and Orthodox rabbis.

Contact address: P.O.B. 32225, Jerusalem 91999, phone: 02 81370.

The "Twenty-First-Year" group** coordinated an act of protest and solidarity with the prisoners: between January 26 and 28 a tent camp was established in front of Ansar-3.

There was a "tent gallery", in which a group of thirty Israeli artists presented paintings and sculptures with political themes. Another active element was "His Brother's Keeper", a newly-created group of Israeli rabbis, which declared itself not so much interested in "who" is a Jew, but far more in "what" a Jew should do and not do (*see box*). On the protest camp's last day, K.M. Muhammad Miari read to the assembled activists a message from the Ansar-3 prisoners, transmitted through a lawyer, in which they expressed thanks and asked not to be pitied but to be supported in their struggle. "Even inside the prison we feel strong and united. Let's achieve a just peace, you and us together!"

* *The original Ansar was the prison camp established in 1982 at Ansar village in South Lebanon, and dismantled in 1985; Ansar-2 (officially, "The Sea-Shore Penitential Facility") is the main detention camp in the Gaza Strip.*

** "Twenty-First-Year", P.O.B. 24099, Jerusalem.

Enfant terrible

By Beate Keizer

Pressure on the Israeli government to fundamentally change its attitude to the Palestinian question is no longer to be heard only from "radicals". The Intifada developed into an amazingly successful attack on the silence of world public opinion, of diaspora Jews, and of ever widening circles in the Israeli establishment. What the "newly convinced" have in common is that their new attitude seems to be the outcome of years in which they gradually reached the boiling point, and they are in general not at all hesitant in their new point of view.

One of the most colourful "converts" is unmistakably the satirist, writer of songs and television personality Dan Almagor. More than a famous individual, he had become an institution, the symbol of everything Israelis are proud of, the personification of the sentiments expressed in the early Israeli folk songs. All the vigor which he had devoted in the past to Israeli "positivism" is now being dedicated to the cause of peace. He started his new life on a rostrum erected in front of the Tel Aviv municipality,

where he addressed demonstrators at the "first anniversary" of the Intifada. It was still before "Peace Now" started its "Talk Peace with the PLO Now" campaign. To the surprise of everybody present, he talked about war crimes committed by soldiers and officers of the Israeli army – the same Dan Almagor who wrote the anthems of several famous Israeli army units, and who was on intimate terms with practically the entire high command! After the demonstration, his words were the ones people continued to talk about. On the following days, several papers published interviews – interviews in which Dan Almagor did not spare himself. He made clear how much he had hesitated to confront the Israeli society with the painful truths he had been conscious of for a long time; no longer to please and lead a comfortable life; no longer to be silent. He explained that he had to do what he did in the most blatant way, in order to burn all bridges behind him. One of his statements: *when people like me already speak out, things are really going too far.*

Martial Arts

The bulletin published by the Israeli Association of Community Centres reports a greatly increased demand by settlers for courses in Judo, Karate and other Martial Arts.

The same bulletin published a complaint from the settlers' community centres regarding their difficulty in arranging artistic performances. Some of the artists flatly refuse because of opposition to the existence of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories; others claim that their schedules are full, or demand a convoy of cars, full of armed guards, to accompany them to the settlement and back, and, in addition, a higher payment because of the risk.

Since then, Dan Almagor darted into peace activities like a meteor. As if relieved that, at last, he is able to do what he has impatiently been waiting for, he developed an amazing spectrum of activities. Not only is he suddenly present on all lists of "peace speakers" but he also initiates less glamorous actions, some of them quite unusual.

In one such action, The Other Israel's team participated. In the Soldiers' House in Tel-Aviv (a huge building including an auditorium) an army festivity took place, in which all the most famous Israeli singers were to be heard, and in which the hundreds of participants included the Director General of the Ministry of Defence and several generals. Almagor's special target on this

evening was the curator of the Tel-Aviv Municipal Museum, former general Rechav'am Ze'evi, lately elected Knesset Member for "Mole-det" (the newly-formed "transfer-of-the-Arabs" party). For Dan Almagor it was probably the first time to be expelled from such a building. He was not allowed to stay inside with his two helpers, holding a huge banner – with a petition – protesting against the racist Ze'evi's continuing to be curator of the Tel-Aviv Museum. The employees did not succeed in persuading Almagor that this was forbidden (*But I am Dan Almagor!*). The director of the Soldiers' House made him understand that, even for the establishment's own *enfant terrible*, there is a limit. The way out, with the banner, down the stairs, the angry director following, Dan Almagor sputtering and the visitors wondering, would have made a perfect scene in a Woody Allen movie. Outside, it was decided that Dan Almagor would go back, without banner. The public which passed the banner on the way to the entrance of the Soldiers' House was not used to find peace demonstrators there. Sixteen people signed the petition, overcoming the embarrassment of going against the surrounding public. In the meantime Dan Almagor, when called upon to take the microphone and amuse the guests, also succeeded in conveying his new message (and creating a big tumult).

A few days later, Defence Minister Yitzchak Rabin announced in the Knesset that Dan Almagor would not any more be called to reserve service in the army's Educational Corps, because *a person who is accusing our soldiers of murdering children is not fit to educate.* Asked for his comment Almagor told a radio interviewer that the teachers in the school, to which both he and Yitzchak Rabin went, *would have been ashamed of Rabin, had they lived to see this day.*

Asked what reactions he gets from his former admirers, Dan Almagor told The Other Israel that the reactions which he got through mail, as well as from "the man in the street", are mostly warm. He is still invited to kibbutzim, where he still attracts a full house. Even when people do not fully understand or agree with him, in general they show respect. They still believe in him and are eager to hear what he has to say "not because of my personal charm, but because eighty percent of the Israelis, deep in their hearts, know

that there is much injustice". Paradoxically, among his left-wing old friends some have more of a problem with his moral explosion – and the attention it gets. His turnaround will soon become old news, they predicted. This may be true, but all the same Dan Almagor – a generation-long darling of the public – might be able to become accepted as the "voice of conscience". He already proved that, also in his new role, he can be very funny.

Ongoing struggle

In January 1989 the weekly vigils, held by "Down with the Occupation" and "Women in Black" in the main Israeli cities, have entered their second year. In addition, there were vigils on specific issues. The "Peace Now" vigils against the "plastic bullets" include some novelties, such as the kibbutz movement's chorus, singing peace songs on the pavement in front of the Defence Ministry. The vigils continue undeterred after the January 25 incident, in which thugs jumped out of a car, beat up several demonstrators, and escaped before help could arrive.

Another series of vigils was held at Tel-Aviv University, to protest the deportation of 13 Palestinians to Lebanon. There were also solidarity visits to the families of the deportees.

On December 24, "Peace Now" held a rally centered on its new slogan "Talk Peace with the PLO Now!". Tens of thousands of demonstrators, from all over Israel, turned up despite a very stormy weather. The demonstration expressed the change in the positions of the moderate peace parties Mapam, Ratz and Shinuy, whose leaders participated as well; others, though dovish, declined Peace Now's invitation since they prefer to struggle for negotiations with the PLO within the Labor Party's structures.

The demonstration was helped along by a public opinion poll published, on the previous day, by Israel's largest-circulation daily *Yedioth Aharonot* which placed it on the front page of its weekend edition. According to the poll 54% of the Jewish Israelis now support negotiations with the PLO. The position of "Peace Now" was summarized by one of its veteran leaders, Janet Aviad, who has always been anxious

not to step too far ahead of "the man in the street"; she stated: *We think we now represent the majority of public opinion. Israelis have changed dramatically in the past year and are now ready to accept an independent Palestinian state in return for peace.*

During the generally-calm demonstration, two policemen suddenly pounced upon ICIPP supporter Ehud Spiegel, who was holding a placard bearing the ICIPP emblem – the entwined flags of Israel and Palestine, which is to some policemen like a red rag to a bull (see also *The Other Israel n° 4-5, p.6 and n° 35, p.5*). The policemen pulled the placard out of his hands and tore it to pieces.

In response, Spiegel sent a letter to Attorney-General Charish, challenging him either to prosecute Spiegel – if the policemen's act was justified – or to prosecute the policemen – if it was not. So far no answer was received.

In the past several years, the Tel-Aviv Municipal Museum is under the curatorship of Rehav'am Ze'evi, an outspoken racist, a former general, and since the last elections, a Knesset member. A growing number of individuals refrains from visiting the museum. Until recently, however, there was no organised boycott – a situation changed by the peace camp's newest recruit, Dan Alamgor (see *sep. article*).

On December 21, a performance by former members of the Israeli army's "singing troupes" was scheduled to take place in the museum's auditorium. However, many of the artists invited did not appear; instead, they participated in a vigil outside the museum gates, organised by Almagor, which called upon Israelis to boycott the museum until Ze'evi is fired from its curatorship. The "Boycott Committee" also intends to convince school principals to cancel pupil visits to the museum.

The Megiddo military prison, in normal times used to house soldiers imprisoned for disciplinary offences, is now filled to overflowing with 2,500 Palestinians from the occupied territories. On visiting days, thousands of the prisoners' family members gather around the gates. The atmosphere between them and the guards is explosive. A Palestinian who came to see his imprisoned son told - *Hadashot* newspaper: *The guards were beating my son right in front of me. I was mad with anger, I wanted to*

kill them, but I could do absolutely nothing.

Tensions in the prison increased after three prisoners succeeded in escaping, crossing the short distance back to the West Bank, and so far evading recapture. Two guards were court-martialled for dereliction of duty. The other guards got stricter orders.

On January 9, a group of Israeli demonstrators, organised by "Hal'ah Ha-Kibush" (Stop the Occupation) arrived at Megiddo. Holding signs in Hebrew and Arabic protesting the conditions of imprisonment, they stood among the visitors. After a few minutes, dozens of civilian and military policemen, including members of the "special anti-terrorist unit" charged, waving clubs and hitting at demonstrators and visitors alike; several tear gas grenades were shot. The visitors scattered widely, many of them running away across the fields, and some starting to throw stones on the police and on cars in a nearby highway. At the end of *The riot which brought Intifada into Israel* – as it was dubbed – nearly a hundred Israelis and Palestinians were detained by the police.

None of your business..

On January 24, a conference of the hotel business took place in Jerusalem, to discuss the crisis of tourism in Israel, which brings the hotels near to collapse. A hotel owner, interviewed on the radio, said "the Intifada is destroying us". The conference resolved to start a large-scale sales campaign in the U.S. and Europe. Most of the participants, however, doubted whether such a campaign could counteract the daily reports of violent clashes in the occupied territories, which are keeping tourists away. The general view was that only a peace initiative by the Israeli government, which would bring about an end to violence, could save Israeli tourism.

Prime Minister Shamir, who was present, accused the hotel owners of "losing faith in their country" – and the world media of "spreading anti-Israeli lies".

On January 17, Prime Minister Shamir visited Nablus to meet with reserve paratroopers stationed there. Nearly all of the soldiers and officers at the meeting – which was broadcast by Israeli television – expressed bitter grievances: *To make order in the Casba (old city), we have to brutalize innocents, to let them fear us (...) in the street I catch a man who has a worker's hands like me, and I have to beat him. Don't say that we do not have to beat them. You don't know what is going on here. An oppressive rule cannot be enforced*

without oppression. This is a catastrophe. We must have a political solution, urgently.

Shamir replied with a few suave sentences: *You do not agree with government policies, but you are fulfilling your duties very well, so I have been told by your commanders; I am proud of you.* The Likud representative on the Israel Broadcasting Authority was less restrained: *This paratrooper battalion is full of leftist troublemakers. The television should not broadcast their complaints.*

In the occupied territories the authorities treat severely the writing of graffiti; in Nablus a man was shot dead while writing on the wall. The inhabitants are repeatedly forced by soldiers to erase all graffiti, among them slogans which call for Israeli-Palestinian peace, or encourage Arafat on taking the way to peace.

In protest against this policy, Peace Now activists set out on January 23, for the West Bank village Jabel Mukaber. Accompanied by Mapam and Ratz KM's, they began to put up stickers coloured green, red, black, white and blue – the combined colours of the Palestinian and Israeli flags – and bearing the slogan: *For peace between a free Palestine and a secure Israel in Arabic, Hebrew and English.* The village youths enthusiastically joined in, and within half an hour the villages' walls, fences and electricity pylons had all become very colourful.

"Israeli and Palestinian Doctors Against the Occupation", an association numbering 115 doctors, revealed at the end of 1988 that hundreds of Palestinian patients – those with heart and kidney diseases and those suffering from cancer – had their treatment stopped. Eighty percent of the budgets for their treatment in Israeli hospitals, previously provided by the Israeli government, has been cut in March 1988, while the Palestinian hospitals lack adequate equipment to treat these lethal diseases. In several cases, the names are known of Palestinian patients whose death could have been prevented; many other such cases have probably gone unreported (*Hadashot*, 23.12.88). Moreover, the selection of patients who receive hospitalization, financed by the remaining twenty percent of the budget, is done by a military officer rather than by a doctor.

Among the Knesset Members who signed a protest letter in January

1989 were those of Rabbi Avraham Ravitz (of the new religious party "Degel Hatorah), and Rabbi Yair Levy of the fundamentalist Shas party.

A years-long witch-hunt against an ICIPP member, Advocate Darwish Nasser, has been conducted by the notorious "hunter" Elyakim Ha'etzni. In 1981, Nasser defended the Palestinians who were on trial for shooting to death six armed settlers in Hebron, and who were sentenced to life imprisonment. The book in Arabic, which Darwish Nasser afterwards published about the case, was quite successful and it did pass the occupied territories' strict censorship. Ha'etzni's appeals to have the book forbidden and the writer put on trial were rejected by the Supreme Court on January 5, 1989.

On January 7, several dozen Yesh Gvul demonstrators came from Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv to the Atlit military prison, and climbed one of the mountains overlooking the prison. The imprisoned refusers and other prisoners heard the echoing calls and started waving in the direction of the giant banners, high on the mountain.

For the past several months, the "Lawyers for Human Rights" group is conducting a campaign, aimed at getting the Israeli Bar Association more involved. On January 22, a simulated trial was conducted before a large audience in Tel-Aviv, against the government's policies of administrative detentions, deportations and house demolitions. The prosecution witnesses included Palestinian former Administrative Detainees (who, by this public appearance, risked a new detention), Israeli civil rights lawyers, and a professor of Moral Philosophy. The defence brought a former Likud Knesset Member, a military judge, a West Bank settler, and a veteran of the anti-British underground. The verdict reached by the five judges was read by Prof. Baruch Bracha, a well-known jurist. In it, deportations were condemned as contradicting the Geneva Convention, and the destruction of houses - as a collective punishment. The verdict did not oppose administrative detentions as such, on the grounds that there are many precedents of democratic countries resorting to them; it did, however, criticise the mass use of such de-

tentions, the lack of judicial review, and the practice of keeping the evidence secret from the detainees and their lawyers.

Contact: "Lawyers for Human Rights", c/o Dr. Shlomo Cohen, 56 Pinsker St., Tel-Aviv 53568.

In November 1988, activists of WOFPP (Women for Women Political Prisoners), searching for a Palestinian woman rumored to be held in the Kishon Prison, accidentally discovered that three Lebanese - an old woman and two teen-age girls - were held there. It turned out that the three were kidnapped from their village in South Lebanon because of their being the mother, sister and fiancée of a Lebanese man, suspected of involvement in a car-bomb explosion in Southern Lebanon in which eight Israeli soldiers were killed. Upon arrest the mother was subjected to "interrogation", involving electric shocks to the hands and the breasts. When contacted by WOFPP, the three women were held in a cell together with Israeli criminals who harassed them, and were denied a change of clothes, winter garments, shoes, etc. The WOFPP got ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel) involved. An appeal was brought before the Supreme Court. However, on December 26 - one day before the appeal was due to be heard - the three women were released.

Contact: WOFPP, P.O.B. 6069, Tel-Aviv; ACRI, P.O.B. 8723, Jerusalem.

During January 1989, students in Tel-Aviv University were engaged in a struggle against the university administration, which decided to segregate Jewish and Arab students in the dormitories. The dean of students, Professor Gideon Fishelzon, claimed that Arab students have a negative influence upon the opinions of North American Jewish students, who spend one year at Tel-Aviv through the university's "overseas" program. Among the thousands of signatories on a protest petition were quite a lot of the intended overseas "beneficiaries". In case that the student union's appeal to the Tel-Aviv District Court will fail, hundreds of students intend to stage a sit-in, and prevent the eviction of Arab students.

Meanwhile, the student union's 70-member council adopted a resolution calling upon the government

to open immediate negotiations with the PLO. It was adopted by a majority of 28 against 13; the 25 representatives of the Labor Party Student Organization abstained.

The tremendous effect of the Intifada on the foundation of new Israeli peace groups has been pointed out before. Gradually, some of these many initiatives cluster into more permanent structures. "Shani" is one of these newly-emerging organizations.

SHANI, Israeli Women Against the Occupation, is a Jerusalem-based group believing that Israel must recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood and demanding that the Israeli government meet with the PLO to negotiate an end to the conflict "so that we can use our resources for education, health and welfare services".

SHANI's activities in the field of education consist of bi-weekly house meetings with Palestinian women about the effects of the occupation; study groups on the background of the conflict; public meetings with Israeli political figures.

The SHANI women also engage in protest activities against human rights violations in the occupied territories, in coalition with other peace groups and women's groups; friendship visits to women in the West Bank; workshops with professional groups etc.

Contact address: SHANI, P.O.B. 9091, Jerusalem 91090; phone: 02-630759 (Judy), 02-699870 (Ruth), 02-639467 (Karen).

In June 1988, right-wing hooligans assaulted a "Down with the Occupation" vigil in Tel-Aviv; police was present but did nothing to prevent them and one of the policeman went as far as openly encouraging them. Not so uncommon, but all the same peace activist Rayna Moss lodged a complaint against this policeman. Quite to her surprise, she was half a year later informed that the case had been investigated and the policeman removed from patrol duty, and that it was published in the police's internal bulletin, as a lesson to others.

However, when the police arrived, on January 24, at the Haifa home of Whada Badran - an Arab - who is active in the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), the lesson did not yet seem to work. The police confiscated Badran's archive on human rights violations in the occupied territories, which they suspected of being "inciting material". Badran and two of his friends were brought

to the police station, where the policemen started to accuse them of setting a synagogue on fire, beat them up and covered their heads, for several hours, with stinking blankets. Later, they were freed, the policemen jeering *go and complain to your civil rights friends, it will not help you.*" Another complaint reached the minister of police. ACRU demands that the policemen will be put on trial.

Beita revisited

By Rayna Moss

In mid-December, a group of Israeli peace activists organised by the Beita Committee, went to Beita village on the West Bank to help in rebuilding the homes destroyed by the Israeli army last spring as a "punishment" for being visited by an organized group of settler youths - in which visit a settler girl and two Beita residents were killed by the wild-shooting settlers' youth leader. The following is a participant's account.

After passing the roadblocks, we enter the village where, it seems, everyone knows who we were, and offers rides to keep us out of the rain.

The walls of the homes are covered with slogans. Young men and boys keep up a "patrol" to warn people about the army's movements. On the way we can see some of the destroyed homes, a few of them new, having been recently finished when blown up. The families live in tents near their former homes. In the rain and wind, the tents seem about to collapse, yet even as winter progresses, none of the families have gotten permission to rebuild their homes.

The home chosen for the day's work is one of those destroyed "by mistake" - evidently the soldiers used too much explosives on the neighboring house, and this one was destroyed as well. With its furniture, appliances, etc.

Working side by side with members of the family, we soon notice a few dozen boys who come to stare at the sight of Israelis working in the rain. Some of them join in, others look out for the army. Indeed, after two hours of work, shrill whistles notify us of the army's entering Beita. Swiftly, kefiyas are wrapped around faces, sleeves rolled up, stones clutched. But the army isn't after Palestinians today: we are the target. In minutes the whole area is surrounded by armed soldiers and policemen. The area is declared a "closed military

area" as of three minutes ago, and we are forced to leave.

The officer in charge claims he is acting to protect us. However, while we begin the 3-kilometre walk out of Beita, we are met with smiles, greetings, invitations to come back. Women wave and smile from their doorways, children shout hello. When this becomes evident to the soldiers, they force us into a van, threatening the use of force, making us a legitimate target for stones, which are not thrown. This action makes the army's policy clear: when Israelis enter a village armed, uninvited, killing people on the way, they deserve army protection and are within their rights. When Israelis come to a village unarmed, are welcomed by the residents, remain there for hours without attack or even a rude word, they must be forced out at gunpoint. Contact: "The Beita Committee", P.O.B. 24099, Jerusalem 91240; phone: 02 342267

Dialogue update

On December 12, The "Romania Four" appealed to the Supreme Court against the Tel-Aviv District Court's verdict, which imposed upon them half a year's imprisonment for participating in a meeting with a PLO delegation.

In the appeal, lawyers Amnon Zichroni and Avigdor Feldman claimed that the District Court's interpretation of the "Anti-Terrorism Act" makes legitimate political activities into a crime, and that the act should be interpreted as prohibiting meetings with the PLO only if such meetings endanger Israel's security. Such interpretation, it was claimed, would be in line with some recent Supreme Court's rulings in other civil rights cases, such as press censorship.

In the last week of 1988, Latif Dori - one of the "Romania Four" - participated in a conference of African NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations) on the question of Palestine, held under auspices of the U.N. at Cairo. The speeches of the two Israeli peace activists, Dori and former Mapam KM Muhammad Wadat, were warmly received; later, Dori, was photographed shaking hands with Labib Terzi, the PLO's representative.

More attention in Israel was given, however, to another Cairo event: a

joint press conference by Terzi and Moshe Amirav, the former Likud member expelled from the party because of his contacts with PLO-minded Palestinians in the West Bank (*see issue 28-29, p.5*). Meetings with official PLO representatives are a new experience for Amirav; nor did any other member of Amirav's new party, the centrist "Shinuy" ever before participate in such meetings, and the party's leader, KM Amnon Runinstein, was not particularly pleased.

On his arrival in Israel, Amirav stated: "Terzi asked me to tell the Israeli public that the PLO has abandoned the dream of "Greater Palestine" and accepts the existence of Israel."

Labib Terzi repeated the message in another U.N.-sponsored seminar at London, in which the Israeli participant was David Shacham of the (Tel-Aviv-based) International Center for Peace in the Middle East.

ICIPP member Dr. Israel Loeff was invited to Catania University, Sicily, and participated in a symposium with Palestinian participation on "How to achieve an Israeli-Arab peace in the Middle East". Loeff was invited to lecture in Messina and Giarre as well on that question. Israel Loeff reported a common and broad understanding as to the desirability and possibility of a peace based on mutual recognition of the Israeli and a Palestinian state, coexisting in peace and security side by side - though there are some differences in opinion concerning history, the meaning of Zionism today, etc.

Dr. Loeff had been calling for stopping terrorist acts, which he condemns whether they come from Palestinians or from the Israeli government.

Four Knesset members, Orah Namir and Aryeh ("Liova") Eliav of the Labor Party, Yair Tzaban of Mapam, and Shulamit Aloni of Ratz participated in a conference in Paris; at a different part of the hall was seated a PLO delegation, headed by Nabil Sha'at, a senior member of the Palestinian National Council, and Ibrahim Sus, PLO representative in Paris. The Israeli KM's were careful to address themselves to the European "mediators", so as to bend - rather than break - the legal prohibition on contacts with the PLO. Nevertheless, a de-facto dialogue did develop. KM Eliav, who is a founding member

of the ICIPP, spoke about the 1975 beginnings of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, in the same city of Paris, and commemorated two of the early participants – the PLO's Issam Sartawi, and the mediator Henri Curiel – who were both afterwards murdered. (The present meeting was the first in which Eliav participated since he became a Labor Knesset member).

In several stormy Knesset sessions the participants of the Paris meeting were accused of "abusing their parliamentary immunity". In a convincing reply Ratz KM Yossi Sarid pointed out that parliamentary immunity was created exactly for the opportunity where the KM, in order to fulfill the party's program – on the basis of which they got their votes – would have to do what is forbidden to ordinary citizens. Labor hawks seized upon this argument, accusing the two Laborites at Paris of violating an article in the Labor program. Now the Labor doves have launched a campaign to amend the program, which is ambiguous on this matter, and two leading Labor Knesset Members, Chaim Ramon and Chagai Merom, also presented in the Knesset bills to abolish the anti-peace law in order to make peace dialogue with the PLO legal.

Two Labor ministers sided with the doves: Mordechai Gur announced his intention to challenge Shimon Peres for the party leadership, and – at the same time – came out in support of the participants in the Paris meeting stating that *The PLO is an indispensable participant in any conceivable peace process*; and Ezer Weitzman strongly reiterated his plea for negotiations with the PLO.

Meanwhile, conferences with participation of PLO representatives and Israeli – preferably mainstream – Knesset members are becoming big fashion in many a European capital. Difficult days and long nights of debate are in the offing for the Labor Party.

Commerce boycott

For several years the Palestinian peace activist Mubarak Awad advocated boycott on Israeli products as a non-violent way of opposing the occupation. Awad was deported, but his idea was successfully adopted by the Intifada leadership.

According to Yoram Belizovski, Director-General of the Ministry of Commerce, Israeli exports to the West Bank and Gaza Strip went down from 850 million dollars in 1987 to 250 million in 1988; particularly hard-hit are the Israeli food and textile industries (Yediot Aharonot, 21.12.88).

Reserve general Shlomo Gazit is a former head of the Israeli military intelligence who is still a respected member of the "intelligence community". On December 27, 1988, he called upon the government to invite Yasser Arafat to Jerusalem, for peace talks. In fact, he said, the negotiations have already started, with the Americans representing Israel. If Israel will not actively involve itself, the Americans might in the end present Israel a ready-made treaty, needing only the Israeli government's signature on the bottom line.

Vagaries of censorship

At the beginning of January the Supreme Court ordered the military censor to permit the publication, in Ha'ir weekly, of an article about the Mossad – Israel's external security agency. The article gave details on the internal Mossad factions and power struggles – based on information apparently provided by disgruntled candidates for the Mossad directorship. It was the first time that an Israeli newspaper was able to publish an article giving any details whatsoever about the Mossad. Also for the first time, the Supreme Court set a limit on the powers of the military censorship – which are completely unlimited according to the letter of the law. According to the verdict, publication of information should be prevented only in cases where such publication would constitute "a clear and present danger" to state security.

It remains to be seen whether the Supreme Court's liberal approach is going to be applied also to Arab newspapers...

On January 17, the Israeli Interior Ministry threatened to close down *Al-Ra'aya* (The Flag), the Arabic-language newspaper of the "Ibna el-Balad" (Sons of the Country) group, which is mainly distributed among Israel's Arab citizens. The Ministry's Northern District Officer, Amram Kala'aji, claimed that the paper is "financed and controlled" by George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The editor, Raja Agbaria, denied the allegations and defied Kala'aji to put him on trial. He accused the authorities of attempting to undermine the paper's influence on the Arab public; he added that the paper's account books were already seized by the Finance Ministry,

due to a problem with the income tax, and that – therefore – the government knows very well that none of the paper's money comes from Habash.

The struggle against *Al-Ra'aya's* closure was undertaken by the "Stop the Occupation" group, which held a vigil on January 29, at the Tel-Aviv Journalists' House.

Protest letters to: Amram Kala'aji, District Officer, Interior Ministry, Kiryat Hamemshala, Upper Nazareth; copies to: *Al-Ra'aya* Newspaper, P.O.B. 2385, Nazareth, or to: 'Stop the Occupation', P.O.B. 26207, Tel-Aviv

On January 25, the trial of the "Nitzotz Four" abruptly ended. The four agreed to a plea bargain, in which they admitted to the charges of membership in Naif Hawatme's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), one of the organizations defined as "terrorist" by Israeli law – and of supplying services to an illegal organization (the same one). The prosecution, in return, dropped the more serious charge of "contacting a foreign agent", which carries a maximum 15-years' imprisonment penalty.

The court sentenced Ya'akov Ben-Efrat to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment, and his wife Roni to nine months (she was released, since she had already spent that time in prison).

Asaf Adiv and Michal Schwartz were each given 18 months:

According to Adv. Felicia Langer, the main reason for the defendants' decision was that the Supreme Court refused them bail; continuation of the attempt to contest the validity of the confessions extorted from the four by the Shabak (*secret service*) would have prolonged the trial for at least another year. Four children – two of Ya'akov and Roni Ben Efrat, and two of Michal Schwartz, who is a widow would have remained, during all that time, with no parental care.

Felicia Langer defined the four's membership in DFLP as "nominal and vague" and emphasized that they had committed no act of violence, and that their "terrorist" activity consisted of publishing a bi-weekly, with a legal permit, all of whose articles were passed by the military censorship, and which advocated the two-state solution – a legitimate political opinion shared by many Israelis.

Contact: Derefch Hanitzotz, P.O.B. 1515, Jerusalem.

Yesh Gvul attacked

In recent weeks, the Israeli authorities seem to become concerned at the growing impact of the Yesh Gvul movement. Again and again, the public hears about "refuseniks" – soldiers who decline to take part in anti-insurgency operations against the Palestinian uprising, or who refuse outright to serve in the occupied territories. Several of them have been imprisoned two or three times; others have newly joined the ranks of the refusers. Moreover, the contagion is spreading: when a veteran Yesh Gvul member refused to serve in the occupied territories and was imprisoned, he was on the same day followed by three other soldiers of his unit, who were imprisoned as well.

The fact that hundreds of Israelis – who have given long and devoted military service, many in posts of command and combat duty – are now willing to defy orders indicates their deep disquiet over the growing brutality of the occupation.

In July 1988, Attorney-General Yosef Charish – acting at the behest of the Shabak (security service) – ordered the police to start an investigation of Yesh Gvul, the support group which offers the refusers moral and material aid, and makes their protest the focus of its campaign to end the occupation. The investigation centered on "The Service Notebook" – a "survival kit for refuseniks" whose publication by Yesh Gvul is alleged to constitute "incitement to subordination", in contravention of article 109 of the penal code, never before invoked. For several months, nothing was heard of the investigation; apparently, in this time the police have mounted "covert surveillance and intelligence-collection" against Yesh Gvul.

In the first week of 1989 – soon after the new government was inaugurated and a young, energetic Minister of Justice was installed – the investigation entered a new stage. Within one week, seven members of Yesh Gvul have undergone police interrogation. They were questioned under caution, fingerprinted and released on bail. While one of the seven was away on military duty, two detectives arrived at his home at 7.a.m. to conduct a search; they confiscated a Yesh Gvul booklet, asked his American-born wife whether she had been politically active in the U.S., and demanded to know why their 12-year-old son wears an earring!

Ignoring the official pretext for the investigation, police interrogators who questioned the seven made almost no reference to the "service notebook"; instead, they conducted a blatantly political probe into Yesh Gvul activities, organisational structure, finances etc. (A court order enabled police to scrutinise the group's bank account.) The interrogations are carried out by the "special unit for investigation of serious crimes". Further steps against the group are awaited daily.

The official crackdown on Yesh Gvul has been denounced by civil libertarians and jurists, and by public figures such as the writers Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua; it is regarded as an intervention by state security agencies in legitimate political protest, and as a further erosion of democratic freedoms. The fact that Charish, Israel's chief law-enforcement official, could be spurred to action by the Shabak – which has no legal powers to supervise overt political activity – is yet one more manifestation of undemocratic patterns, long familiar in the occupied territories, which are now progressively infiltrating Israeli society.

Widening support

The following petition was published in Ha'aretz on January 17, signed by a hundred prominent Israelis:

We, the undersigned, are not willing to remain silent in face of the campaign of accusations and interrogations conducted against Yesh Gvul members. Though we take different views regarding where the limit between obedience and refusal should be placed, we unanimously recognize that the right to public protest – expressed in a variety of forms – is the very essence of democracy. Only a government which completely lost its self-confidence would stoop to using against its critics the ultimate weapon – covert and open use of the police.

As a consequence of the continuing occupation, Israeli democracy itself is in danger. The freedom of protest – and of protesters – must not be infringed. Stop the interrogations – immediately!

On January 13, many prominent writers and journalists held a protest demonstration at the journalists' House in Tel-Aviv. This institute is located near to several army bases; the demonstrators distributed to passing soldiers Yesh Gvul leaflets, setting out Israeli soldiers' legal duty to disobey manifestly illegal orders, as defined by the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, support for Yesh Gvul

on the parliamentary level has increased. In the past, only Knesset Members of the Progressive List for Peace and the Communist Party were willing to give such support. Now, the Knesset Members of Mapam and Ratz – though still keeping their distance from the idea of refusal – have also protested against the persecution of Yesh Gvul and subjected the Minister of Police to searching parliamentary questions. Even some Labor Knesset Members have shown themselves sympathetic.

On January 27, representatives of groups and parties including the entire spectrum of the peace movement, condemned the persecution of Yesh Gvul to a packed hall in Tel-Aviv.

Letters of protest to: Chaim Bar-Lev, Minister of Police, Ha-Kiryat, West Jerusalem, Israel; and to: Dan Meridor, Minister of Justice, East Jerusalem, via Israel (copies to: Yesh Gvul, P.O.B. 4172, Tel-Aviv, Israel, or to: American Friends of Yesh Gvul, 1678 Shattuk Ave., P.O.B. 6, Berkeley, CA 94709, U.S.A.)

'Schizoidniks'

In the previous issue, we mentioned the case of Ephraim Shirman, the reserve soldier who refused to perform military service of any kind because of his unwillingness to be part of an army of occupation. Shirman was imprisoned and held a hunger strike inside the prison; a defence committee was formed, which held a vigil in front of the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv, and hundreds of signatures on a petition were collected in Switzerland, West Germany and other European countries. Shirman's supporters prepared for the possibility of a prolonged campaign, inside and outside Israel. However, in his prison cell Shirman was persuaded to see a psychiatrist. A few days later, he was released from prison, to be notified two weeks later that the army had decided to discharge him on medical grounds, since the psychiatrist had diagnosed "schizoid tendencies in his personality".

It seems that Shirman's is not the first such case; in the last year the Israeli army got rid of several other conscientious objectors in the same way. Thus, the soldiers' right to freedom of conscience remains unrecognised and public attention for the problem is avoided. Moreover, the "psychiatric discharges" are a way of penalising conscientious objectors, the stigma of such discharges seriously harming the objector's professional career: he is

practically barred from any governmental and many other jobs; he is no longer allowed to have a driver's licence, etc.

The Ephraim Shirman Defence Committee decided to maintain itself in regular existence, as an association for the defence of those who are in prison because of having been denied the right of conscience, and campaigning for a change in the law which will make conscientious objection the legal right of every Israeli citizen*. The association includes among its participants citizens who altogether refuse to perform military service - out of opposition to the existence of any army, anywhere - but also citizens/soldiers who refuse (further) service out of opposition to the specific role at present played by the Israeli army; there are also soldiers who refuse to carry arms, or who clash with the military authorities due to other kinds of disobedience motivated by reasons of conscience. The new association was joined by an already-existing group of pacifist youths, who intend to refuse conscription when they reach the age of eighteen.

The Refusers' Group can be contacted at P.O.Box 28058, Tel-Aviv 61280, Israel.

* Present law reserves the right not to serve in the army, for reasons of conscience, to religious women only.

A changed world

By Uri Avnery

George Bush, the new American President, is not a profound thinker; he will not bring to his task a wide, new perception of the world. He is a person more used to responding to situations than to creating them, fond of hearing advise and taking cautious action. However, Bush and his new administration will face a new, rapidly-changing world. Whether they like it or not, they will have to give new answers to new challenges, to renovate, to change the attitude of the U.S. to all issues - including, prominently, the issue of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Eight years ago, when Ronald Reagan entered upon his job, the world was in the grip of a cold war. All over the world, regional conflicts were raging, in which the Americans supported one side and the Soviets - the other. The armaments race gained momentum. President Reagan, spoke about the 'Evil Empire', and divided the whole world into 'goodies' and 'baddies', 'Forces of Light' and 'Forces of Darkness'.

This was the backdrop for the flowering of Israeli-American partnership. Washington conducted a war in Nicaragua, and was involved in other wars: Afghanistan, The Gulf, Angola, El-Salvador and Kampuchea. It was no great further step to give Ariel Sharon the green light for invading Lebanon. The fight against 'international terrorism' became a catch-all slogan, which served - among other things - to aggravate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The world of January 1989 is incomparably different. Ronald Reagan himself, in his farewell speech, spoke warmly of 'my friend, Michail Gorbachev'. The 'Red Czar' of the 'Evil Empire' might still be 'red'; but that, now, is the colour of his Santa-Claus robe. The Bush administration will have to take decisions of a completely new kind. The real threat facing the U.S. is not, any more, Soviet nuclear power. Far more threatening is the rising economic power of the East Asian nations - Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China - and the impending economic unification of West Europe.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union must make considerable cuts in their spending on armaments, in order to survive the economic battle. All over the world, regional conflicts are dying down, because the superpowers have ceased to feed their fires with expensive oil.

These conditions will also define the Bush administration's attitude to the Israeli-Arab conflict. In the atmosphere of American-Soviet honeymoon, both the American attitude towards the PLO and the Soviet relationship with Israel are changing. The pressure for compromise and a peace agreement will grow more strong and persistent. The government of Israel is attempting to adapt itself to the new situation by all kinds of devices and gimmicks. This will not do: Israel will have to make a fundamental adaptation. In this respect, the PLO is already far ahead of Israel. The Bush years might be a turning point - both for the United States and for Israel.

Translated from Ha'olam Hazev
January 18, 1989

David Neuhaus is another conscientious objector discharged on "psychiatric grounds" in 1988. The following is taken from his prison diary.

A particularly difficult experience is to listen to the boys describe to one another their exploits in the Occupied Territories. One Georgian boy, vaguely resembling a rhinoceros, fat, blond and blue eyed, a proud Border Policeman, claimed to be in prison because he had beaten some Arabs. In his detailed description of how he had used his wooden baton, he insinuated that one of his victims was a pregnant woman. Later it transpired that he was actually in prison because he had deserted from his unit. The boys swap these stories, inspiring one another to greater feats of "bravery" in their semi-mythical reconstruction of the events of the past months.

In the detention barracks at Bakum Danny, a young Russian from an infantry unit, 18 years old, fresh with a toothy grin, told of incessant beatings. With great show he boasted how he personally had shot dead a Palestinian youth who had flung a fire bottle at the patrol from a rooftop in Gaza. Yet behind Danny's eyes, flickered pain,

Prison mythology

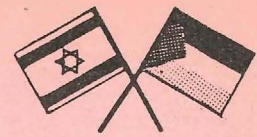
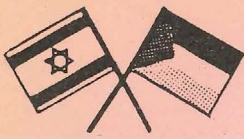
sorrow and guilt. Finally he broke. He told of one of the groups of arrested Palestinians, kneeling in the dust. The sun was burning down on the soldiers and the Palestinians alike. After some hours one of the prisoners begged the commanding officer for some water. The commanding officer refused. Danny, noticing that the prisoner was in dire need, flagrantly disobeyed his officer and brought the man a glass of water from the soldiers' supplies. The prisoner turned to him and in Hebrew said: "You are a true man." Danny cried. Yet a few minutes after having related this incident, Danny, a little embarrassed at having revealed his humanity, returned to even more elaborate tales of his exploits.

Military prison is a harsh place and these young boys are treated like dirt. The cells are dark, dank and dirty. The commanding officers bark endlessly, each command preceded by a torrent of insults. Most of these guards are Ashkenazim, middle class Israelis.

(...) Our Shabbat guard was a particularly malicious character. He was good looking and self assured, his whole body sense focused upon his arrogant self-appraisal. He took scrupu-

lous care of his appearance, showering five or six times a day. No older than 20, the limited power he had been granted had transformed him into a heartless and consciously apathetic oppressor. He kept us locked up in our dark and stuffy cell and refused us our most banal requests.

(...) Women too take on the role of guards and respond with particular harshness if the prisoners take verbal note of their femininity. These women provide endless stimulation for conversations among the prisoners. They apparently have endless sexual appetites, choosing prisoners as studs and raping them. Some of them are even rumoured to have male organs. (...) The dirt, the bars, the stripping away of all personal belongings, the shouting, the loudspeakers which spew out commands, these are designed to crack the defenses. The boys pull together in the face of this pressure. Alone they are frightened and impotent in the face of the stern, shouting commander. They are not filled with hatred but with a hollow and oppressive frustration which can turn violent when they are faced with those even more oppressed and impotent (...). Interested readers may contact David Neuhaus through The Other Israel.



Look forward in hope

By Israel Loeff

The change in U.S. policy towards the PLO is not, primarily, a result of a change in the political positions of the PLO leadership. Already for a long time, hints had been dropped by that leadership with regard to its readiness to establish a state that would live in peace alongside the State of Israel. All that was necessary for this line to be adopted as the official policy of the PLO was some encouragement from the Israeli or the U.S. government.

Three main causes have contributed to the shift in the American policy:

First, the Intifada and its success in constructing institutions of self-rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, institutions which survive all the occupation authorities' measures against them.

Second, the Israeli ruthless reaction that is being regarded by the whole enlightened world as a brutal occupation. The international community is not willing to accept the death of approximately 350 Palestinians in a single year – the price paid for oppressing a popular uprising against a never-ending occupation – not to mention administrative detentions, expulsions from the country, demolition of houses etc.

Third, the new international atmosphere, the accords on the reduction of nuclear armaments achieved by the two superpowers and the more or less successful attempts to solve regional conflicts – such as those in Afghanistan and Angola – resulted in the Israeli-Arab conflict being put again on the international agenda.

One may assume that the U.S. government's change of policy towards

the PLO will not stop at random talks between minor American and Palestinian officials, but will lead to the establishment of some kind of procedure for the opening of peace talks; an international conference seems to be the most likely possibility. However, more than a few obstacles still remain, such as the American stress on the abandonment of 'terrorism' – a term which was never clearly defined. Presumably, that the organizations affiliated to the PLO will refrain from random acts of violence against non-combatants. However, it is difficult to see how a national leadership, heading a struggle for national independence, could refrain from all kinds of military activity, as long as peace talks didn't bring an end to the occupation.

A cessation of military activities is possible only on a mutual basis. To establish this mutuality, extensive American and international pressure is necessary, in order to make the Israeli government refrain from military activities across the Lebanese border, stop specific kinds of oppression in the occupied territories – especially acts forbidden by international law, release administrative prisoners and permit free political activity by the Palestinian population.

It may be assumed, therefore, that in the near future international diplomatic activity will aim at reaching an (indirect) agreement between Israel and the PLO, on mutually ceasing hostile activities. There is a precedent for this: a similar agreement – though limited only to the area of the Lebanese border – had been achieved between the government of Menachem Begin and the PLO in July 1981, with the mediation of American envoy Philip Habib. That agreement lasted for eleven months, until broken by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982. To prevent the new cease-fire from having a similar fate, its achievement must be immediately followed by peace talks. These talks should include all parties, in order to bring about a comprehensive solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. An Israeli-Palestinian agreement would need the support of the entire Arab world – to prevent any Arab governmental support to Palestinian dissident military organizations.

The moment a peace agreement, or even cease-fire, is signed between

ADAM KELLER IN EUROPE

Between February 10 and 24 Adam Keller will be on a lecture tour in Britain, and in the following three weeks he will mostly stay in Holland. During his stay in Britain he could be contacted through the "Adam Keller Tour Committee", Flat 24, Rye Court, Peckham Rye, London SE22, phone 01-693 7965 (ask for Clive Bradley or Mark Osborn). Contact person for Holland and Belgium: Eddy Keizer, Heemr. laan 33, 1181 TZ A'veen, Holland; phone (0)20-410388.

Israel and the PLO, the PLO will be responsible for preventing any Palestinian hostilities against Israel. Presumably, the PLO would do its utmost to prevent such violations, but – in the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement – the existence of dissident Palestinian organizations' bases across the borders, in a hostile Arab country, will make this task very difficult and may endanger the achieved peace agreement. Most of the Palestinian dissident organizations are at present supported – and, in practice, controlled – by Syria. Therefore, it is the duty of the Israeli peace organizations to put again on the international agenda the issue of the need for peace with Syria. Such a peace agreement is indeed possible on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 242, which the Syrian government accepts, and whose implementation would require Israel to evacuate the Golan heights occupied in 1967.

In summary one may view the new stage, just opened in the Middle East, quite optimistically. But we have to remember that, in any prospective agreement which might be achieved and which could guarantee Israel's security, the boundaries would have to follow the outline of the 1967 borders.

Bound Edition

An archive collection of *The Other Israel's* issues 1 to 33, with a preface and an index, has been prepared, due to the efforts of Dr. Tyrus Maynard of Asheville, North Carolina. It was published by the "America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace", and is available from 4816 Cornell Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60515, U.S.A., for the price of \$7, plus \$2 (for mailing inside the U.S.) \$3.20 (for surface mail outside the U.S.), or \$20 (for air-mail).

The collection will be made available free of charge to the libraries of learning centers.

The following petition is being circulated by the new Refusers' Group (see p.10):
To Prime Minister Yuzchak Shamir
Ha-Kiryat, Jerusalem:

Dear Sir

The government which you head has chosen the way of violence in order to oppress the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. Whoever chooses the way of violence is directly responsible for the counterviolence and the endless bloodshed. A growing number of Israeli citizens refuse to become part of the apparatus which maintains the violence. We, the undersigned, support their right to refuse military service.