

# The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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## CHAIN OF EVENTS

On July 5, many Israeli peace activists – and even many Palestinians in the Occupied Territories – were, in spite of themselves, waiting tensely for the decision of the Likud's 2400-member 'Central Committee'. In the previous months, Prime Minister Shamir's 'peace plan' had become almost universally accepted in Israeli politics as 'the only game in town'. Many Israelis and Palestinians hoped that – whatever Shamir's own intentions – his plan would set in movement an irreversible dynamic, leading to Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. The same possibility was viewed with apprehension by Shamir's hardliner rivals inside the Likud – the Sharon-Levy-Moda'ey trio. For months, the Likud factions marshalled their forces for the showdown. Shamir was expected to get a narrow majority – but on the last moment, fearing to endanger the Likud's unity, he decided to back down and accepted his rivals' demands on all essential points. As unanimously amended by the 'Central Committee', the Shamir plan was emptied of any positive content it may have had.

For those who had 'come very far' to invest a reluctant hope in Prime Minister Shamir, the disappointment was deep to the point of humiliation.

One inhabitant of the Gaza Strip chose the following day, July 6, to perform an act of destruction. He boarded the Tel-Aviv/Jerusalem bus and in a suicidal bare-handed attack on the driver forced the bus into a deep mountain ravine, causing 16 deaths.

The news of this attack drew attention away from an incipient Labour-Likud split; it was the signal for a new anti-Arab campaign in different parts of the country. For days mobs, shouting 'death to the Arabs', threw

stones on cars bearing the easily recognised license plates of the Territories. In two cases, where stones were thrown from cars coming from the opposite direction, the stones had enough force to cause the Palestinian car to overturn, with fatal consequences for the drivers.

One of the main centres of racist violence was the Shmu'el Hanavi neighborhood, which borders on the dividing line between Jewish and Arab Jerusalem. Shmu'el Hanavi, populated mainly by Oriental Jews and riddled with drug and prostitution problems, is a permanent focus of seething discontent.

At one of the bus victims' funerals Shimon Peres was assaulted by Shmu'el HaNavi residents as the cortege passed through their neighborhood. They heckled him: 'Shut up, Arab lover! Now we start the Jewish Intifada!' Peres' bodyguards had to extricate him from the angry crowd. During the next two weeks, youths daily went to the Shmu'el Hanavi Junction, to assault Palestinian cars and clash with the police.

Not all inhabitants of Shmu'el Hanavi, however, felt comfortable with this situation. When their neighborhood was described in the media as 'a hotbed of fanaticism and extremism', the neighborhood committee took an initiative which constituted the first break in a long chain of violent events: on July 21, the junction was lined with dozens of Shmu'el HaNavi residents giving flowers to each passing driver, Jew or Arab. Avi Alzam, head of the neighborhood committee, told the press: 'We have started an Intifada of Flowers.'

The upheaval in July gave way to general feelings of resignation and apathy. The political and military

leadership claimed the Intifada to be 'burning out', and Intifada news was pushed to the back pages.

The headlines were captured by other issues: the growing unemployment and the apportioning of political blame for it; the unfinished war in Lebanon and the audacious Israeli kidnap of Sheih Obeid, an important Lebanese Shi'ite leader; the involvement of ex-Israeli generals in training the Columbian drug-lords' private army...

Meanwhile, the level of violence in the Occupied Territories escalated. Defence Minister Rabin instructed the army to shoot down any Palestinian whose face is covered, even though his hands are empty. The immediate result was an abrupt climb in the number of Palestinians killed and wounded. The growing savagery was also reflected in the proportion of little children among those killed.\*

The Israeli secret services attempted to rebuild their network of informers, disrupted at the start of the Intifada. The result was a steep rise in the number of suspected collaborators killed by the Palestinians. Another Palestinian struggle had a clear non-violent nature: the inhabitants of Beit Sahur, on the West Bank, who refuse to pay Israeli taxes, maintained their refusal even in the face of weeks of virtual looting by soldiers and tax gatherers. In raids on the residents' houses, property worth millions of dollars was seized in order to be sold to cover the tax arrears.

On September 18, the citizens of Israel saw the embattled commander of the Haifa firemen on their television screens, with pillars of flame behind him. He said: 'The fire broke out in five places at once. We

were not prepared... everybody we have is here, fighting the fire...'. Within hours, the entire Carmel Mount National Park was burned to the ground. Responsibility was claimed by a previously unknown Palestinian group, calling itself 'Direct Revenge'.

The Israeli public response was very different from that which followed the bus attack. There were no outbursts of hatred against Arabs. Public attention was mainly directed towards the rare animals who died in the fire and those, deprived of their natural habitat, who had to be taken care of. Several columnists wryly pointed out the contrast between the concern for vegetation and rare animals – and the silence about the Palestinian children's death toll.

The 'Ten-point' initiative of Egyptian President Mubarak might be the last chance to break the fatal political deadlock, at least for a long time to come. Shorn of the diplomatic verbiage surrounding it, the Mubarak initiative consists of an attempt to start negotiations in Cairo, between Israel and a Palestinian delegation approved by – but not officially representing – the PLO.

The Mubarak initiative occasioned several weeks of hectic diplomatic manoeuvres. There was the strange spectacle of two senior Israeli Ministers – Likud Foreign Minister Arens and Labor Finance Minister Peres – simultaneously visiting the United States and presenting in their meetings with the American officials positions diametrically opposed to each other.

At the time of this writing, the debate in the Israeli inner cabinet ended with the Likud ministers vetoing the Labor proposal to accept the Mubarak initiative.

Several factors will determine the next diplomatic developments: will Labor be able (and willing!) to start a direct confrontation with the Likud, to the point of breaking up the

National Unity Government; will Shamir continue to maintain his rather unstable alliance with the Likud hardliners; will the U.S. administration, after all, come up with an initiative of its own which will seduce the Israeli leaders into freeing themselves of some taboos; and what amount of energy the Soviet Union, with enormous problems closer to home, could invest in the Middle East.

The time available for diplomatic experiments is not unlimited. Over a year has passed since PLO leader Yasser Arafat officially recognised the existence of Israel and launched an outspoken peace-seeking policy. So far, he has little to show for it; after a year of American-PLO dialogue, it is still doubtful whether Arafat would be granted a visa to address the U.N. General Assembly in New York. Despite all their sufferings and deprivations, most Palestinians give their support to the Arafat line of reconciliation.

There is no way of knowing how long this will go on. If the present situation continues, frustration and despair may build, forcing Arafat to change his position or causing his downfall. This might be exactly what the Israeli hardliners hope for. These hardliners have, however, to reckon with the desire for peace, which is a very real force among the Israeli public. It is being expressed, for example, by the massive outpouring of public sympathy for Abie Nathan, imprisoned for meeting with Arafat.

At this moment, there exists a very real chance for peace in the Middle East. To keep it in existence, the Israeli government must take, within the coming months, a first step – however small and hesitant – towards dialogue with the Palestinians. The step which the Mubarak initiative requires should be considered small enough to fit even within the limited political horizons of the Israeli National Unity Government. By failing to take even this small step

the Israeli government would, in effect, be taking a very big step in the other direction – the direction of war, destruction and tragedy.

The editor.

\* From the beginning of the Intifada until August 22, 1989, hundred and fifteen Palestinians aged less than 16 years were killed by the Israeli army; twenty-nine of them were 12-years old or less. The Jerusalem-based Occupied Territories Information Centre, headed by Ratz Knesset Member Dedi Zucker, published a full list of their names on September 9.

## 'Anti-terrorism' update

A new amendment to the infamous 'anti-terrorist act' was presented to the Knesset by Justice Minister Dan Meridor. Aimed at 'preventing the PLO from funneling funds into Israel', the new amendment would empower the police to seize the funds and property of any association which receives money from abroad. The association would then have to prove that the money didn't come from 'a terrorist organization'.

In the past few years, donations from Western churches and charity organizations have formed a significant income of Arab municipalities and public associations in Israel, who receive far less government funding than their Jewish counterparts. This is now threatened by the new amendment, as the government's 'Arab affairs experts' claim that the Western organizations are 'PLO fronts and go-betweens'. The amendment has already passed its first reading, but the vocal opposition it aroused made many establishment Knesset Members pause. Even K.M. Re'even Rivlin of the Likud spoke out in favor of limiting the amendment's scope. Nevertheless, it may soon become law, constituting a further limitation of democratic rights in Israel.

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Meanwhile, Attorney-General Charish and Police Commissioner Kraus are under strong pressure to enforce a previous, much violated 'anti-terrorist regulation' which prohibits Israelis from meeting with PLO officials. During June and July, the police interrogated dozens of activists in peace groups and political parties who had participated in one or more meetings with the PLO.

Two prominent members of our ICIPP were interrogated: Uri Avnery, editor of *Ha'olam Hazeh* magazine, who had participated in a press conference with PLO leader Yasser Arafat and reported on it to his readers – and former K.M. Matti Peled who met with PLO officials at Belgrade, and signed a joint communiqué calling for Israeli-Palestinian peace (see *TOI 34*, p.3).

Attorney-General Charish has announced his intention to ask for the removal of K.M. Miari's parliamentary immunity and to prosecute Miari, for his participation in the Belgrade meeting and for his public meetings with PLO officials in Athens, in connection with 'the deportees' ship' project (see *TOI 31*, p.5). This is not the first time that Miari, an Arab, was singled

out for attacks on his immunity.

*The Other Israel received the copy of a letter sent by the Dutch Stichting Joods Palestijnse Dialoog (Foundation for Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue) to Israeli Justice Minister Dan Meridor and to Attorney-General Yosef Charish:*

Sir,

We sharply condemn your intention to initiate a procedure to lift the parliamentary immunity of KM Miari, because of his contacts with the PLO. By thus applying the 'August 1986 Amendment to the Act for the Prevention of Terror' you create a major obstacle for peace.

We blame you for singling out an Arab KM amongst several other KM's who also had contacts with the PLO. We specially regret your intended move towards people like Miari who could play a role in paving the road towards peace.

Yours sincerely, Yehuda Sofer,

Radi Su'udi, Eddy Keizer

*The 'Stichting J.P.D.' can be contacted at: Heemraadschaplaan 33, 1181 TZ Amstelveen, Holland – phone 31(0)20 410388.*

The 'Anti-Terrorist Amendment' continues to be flouted. The indefatigable Latif Dori, while waiting for the verdict of his Rumania trial, was photographed shaking hands with PLO officials at the U.N. Conference of Non-

Governmental Organizations in Vienna.

Dori also participated in the Toledo Conference, at the beginning of July. The 38 Israeli participants had come to Spain as an Oriental Jewish delegation. The Oriental Israelis' roots in the Arab countries were reflected in the great attention given – by both the Israeli and the Palestinian participants – to the common cultural elements. Several Israelis spoke in Arabic; special reference was made to 'The Golden Age' of Jewish-Arab cultural cooperation and cross-fertilization which had made Toledo one of the most important centres of learning in Medieval Europe.

Israeli journalists present at Toledo conducted interviews with Mahmud Abass ('Abu Mazen'), a member of the PLO Executive Committee, which appeared in nearly all Israeli papers. These interviews reflected the growing understanding by PLO speakers of the Israeli fears and traumas, and their efforts to convey a sincere wish to make peace.

On their return to Israel the Israeli participants stated that the cultural heritage common to Jews and Arabs should be a basis for the

At the end of September, public attention in Israel centered upon a short but sensational trial – that of Abie Nathan, the 63 year old popular owner of 'The Voice of Peace' pirate radio ship. Abie has managed to accumulate no less than twelve separate charges for meeting PLO officials. A year ago there was worldwide press coverage of Nathan's public appearance at the European Strassbourg Parliament side by side with Yasser Arafat – who on that occasion wished all Jews *Shana Tova* (Happy New Year in Hebrew). On trial 'the peace sailor' seemed more capable of embarrassing the authorities than any of the peace movement's diehards. Already at the beginning of his trial, he declared his willingness to plead guilty to all charges, provided that the prosecution change the wording 'the accused met with members of terrorist organizations' to 'the accused met with members of organizations declared by the government to be terrorist'. Rather than wage a long battle on the issue 'who is a terrorist', the prosecutor agreed to this change.

## The Voice of Abie Nathan

Speaking as the sole defence witness, Nathan recounted his life story: his birth in India, his service as a combat pilot in 1948, including the bombing of civilian targets; his subsequent decision to devote his life to peace; his private 1966 'peace mission', in the course of which his plane was nearly shot down by the Egyptian Air Force and which allowed him to see the inside of both the Egyptian and the Israeli prison system; and his decision to start a dialogue with the PLO. Nathan concluded: *I think I convinced our main enemy to grasp the olive branch. I don't think I did any harm to Israel's security.*

The prosecutor asked for a stiff prison sentence, considering the lack of any regret on the part of the accused, and his explicit intention to repeat his crime. On October 4, the court sentenced Abie Nathan to one-half year in prison and one year suspended imprisonment, to be im-

plemented should he repeat his offence. Nathan decided neither to appeal nor to request that his sentence be commuted to community work. On Israeli television Abie Nathan said: *I have broken the law and I am willing to pay the price. When I get out of prison, I will go on with my work for peace. When I see citizens, or soldiers, or Arabs die, prison does not deter me anymore. I am quite stubborn, you know!*

The morning after Yom Kippur, on October 10, Abie Nathan started his term. Six Knesset Members and over a thousand others had come to accompany him up to the Prison gate.

Letters of support to: *Abie Nathan, Eyal Prison, Israeli Prisons Authority, Israel.*

Letters protesting the sentence should be sent to: *Justice Minister Dan Meridor, Justice Ministry, Salah-a-Din St., East Jerusalem.*

Copies to: *The Committee to Save the Peace Dialogue, P.O.Box 20395, Tel-Aviv 61204.*

future of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

Persistent – though officially denied – rumors tell of extensive meetings between PLO officials and senior Labor Party members, such as Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin. Indeed on the day of 'The Roumania Four' appeal, Housing Minister David Levy – a Likud hardliner – remarked: 'This is an injustice! Why put these leftists in prison for meeting with the PLO, when a Labor Deputy Minister can do the same and keep his job?'

Soon afterwards David Levy was to hear that a member of his own Likud party – Eli Halally, former mayor of Dimona – also met with PLO officials. Halally himself admitted that he had participated in a symposium in Vienna, where several senior PLO members were also present, but denied that he had directly addressed them.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Israeli mass media attended a press conference held by PLO leader Yasser Arafat in Cairo. Extensive parts were broadcast by the Israeli television. Shlomo Kor, a Likud representative on the Israeli Broadcasting Authority's Board of Governors, demanded the firing of the reporters who covered Arafat; but he was opposed by Uri Oren, another Likud member on the board, who stated: 'They just did their job. A press conference with Arafat is news, whether you like it or not.'

The Labor daily *Davar* remarked: *Some doves hope for the day in which Yasser Arafat will visit Jerusalem, like Sadat in 1977; some hawks dread the same possibility. Both are out of date. Arafat already was in Jerusalem. Arafat is a regular visitor in every Israeli living-room.*

## Barriers

The authorities seem concerned over the deepening of the dialogue conducted between the Peace Now movement and West Bank Palestinians. With its wider resources, Peace Now is able to draw in many Israelis who were not involved before, as was evident from the kind of questions asked by the audience in the August 26 meeting in Haifa – where five Palestinian trade unionists from Nablus had come to speak about the critical condition of the Palestinian workers.

The army has taken steps to prevent this dialogue. Only small Peace Now

delegations, travelling inconspicuously in Arab taxis, are able to get through into the Occupied Territories; larger groups, whose identity cannot be concealed, are now stopped by army roadblocks.

## Obstacle Race

Since the beginning of September, a group of five Israelis and four Palestinians has been meeting once a week and jogging together through the streets of Bethlehem, wearing T-shirts with the words 'We want peace' in Arabic, Hebrew and English. On September 30, the army ordered the Israeli joggers to leave Bethlehem immediately and arrested one of them. The joggers intend to go on with their weekly activity in spite of the obstacles. (*Chadashot* October 2, 1989)

On October 7, about a thousand Peace Now supporters were blocked at the outskirts of Tulkarm and held a protest rally at the roadblock. The Palestinian political activist Feisal Hussein, who was invited to address the audience, said: *This roadblock is a symbol of the barriers which the government is trying to erect between Israelis and Palestinians – but we, together, will pull them down!*

Labor Party activist Ya'el Dayan added: *In 1948 my father – Moshe Dayan – and Abd el-Kader Hussein – Feisal's father – fought each other in a life and death struggle. I am proud that today, the two of us can share the platform at a peace demonstration – of which hopefully our children will have the full profit.*

## Conference in Spain

by Spike Pittsberg

From 6-9 July, 1988, the eighth European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Convention was held in the medieval Basque town of Vittoria in northern Spain. Besides the issues of ecology, disarmament, and non-violence, which are central to the traditional European peace movement, the END conference also focused on various trouble-spots around the world. Naturally, the Middle East was one area for which the Conference displayed much concern.

We representatives of Israel, Palestine, and a few other Middle Eastern countries were featured in a number of the most significant plenary and workshop sessions. As we stated during our presentations at the major forum entitled 'Peace in the Middle East and International Significance,' Europeans hold a great deal of responsibility for the develop-

ments over the last century or so in our area, and therefore their efforts in support of a just settlement should reflect that fact. The truth is that the Europeans themselves recognize this, as evidenced by their initiatives and support.

Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of the END conference was the manner in which the various Middle Eastern delegates worked together. We were a number of Israelis, Palestinians from the territories, expatriot Israelis and Palestinians living in Europe, a human rights activist from Tunisia, a veteran Egyptian journalist, and two official representatives of the PLO. In a stroke of brilliant planning, all of us were housed in the same hotel, thus facilitating our ability to form close ties and work together. We had breakfast and dinner together daily, collectively reviewing the Conference schedule and delegating assignments, helping each other out with strategy and technical problems such as translations and photocopying, and creating a workplan which would keep the Conflict prominent among the Conference priorities.

For some of us Israelis, it was our first time to actually work closely with representatives of the PLO in a political context, and although it is part of our region's irony that we must travel to Spain to do so, this connection was one of the more inspiring aspects of our experience there. We found little difference between our positions, and as the days passed, we felt more and more like a united Israeli-Palestinian progressive movement trying to do political work within an international forum made up of people who, although they definitely wished us the best, were surprised to find that we – the Palestinians and Israelis – were not at each other's throats. As the articulate PLO representative Ilan Halevy said in his opening remarks in the Middle East Forum, and I paraphrase: Although the organizers of this session have encouraged us to present 'both sides,' to speak frankly about our conflicts, we have a problem. We know that we can only make peace by talking to our enemies. So I am sorry, but we will not be making peace today. For these are not my enemies; these are my allies. The progressive Israelis and the PLO are working together for a common solution that we all know to be in all of our own interests.

We did, in fact, represent a good

chunk of the anti-occupation spectrum: Yesh G'vul, Women in Black, Orientals for Peace, an Israeli anti-nuclear activist, the Progressive List; an activist in the Intifada, a Palestinian journalist, a Lebanese Palestinian, representatives of the PLO organization. We found the response from the Europeans very enthusiastic and encouraging. They committed themselves to various projects around the Middle East issues, from organizing a peace march of 1000 Europeans through Israel and the Territories this winter\*, to expanding the extensive network of Women in Black vigils across Europe. The representatives from the USA also seemed very concerned, and they told us, for example, of additional Women in Black vigils in places (Washington D.C., Missouri, etc) that we didn't even know about. Our speeches were well-received, our literature was grabbed up voraciously, and addresses were exchanged constantly. Because of our own strong sense of a common cause, the END peace movement was forced to confront the real possibility of Palestinians and Israelis forging a powerful common vision.

We also learned a great deal about the END movement. Détente has had no less an effect on their situation than on ours. Some of the speakers were quite frank about the need, now that the Soviets are taking a lead in nuclear disarmament, to revise the European peace movement's list of priorities. They noted that many of the demands they made at their first conference have already been met. There were speakers from a number of East European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, who spoke about the changes in their political reality. The struggle of the Basques, both against the Spanish government and within their own internal structures was very much a factor in the general atmosphere. The ETA people mounted continuous protests against the organizing committee of END which they felt was dominated by the less radical Basque groups and from which they felt themselves excluded. It was interesting to see how the ETA were permitted to enter the hall with gigantic anti-END banners without visible restraint from the organizers. Only in the final closing session did the confrontation get so heated that the program was disrupted.

Finally, one must ask how valuable our participation in these abundant international peace conferences is

and how much of our limited resources should be put into them. One thing seems clear: on the personal level, it is an exciting and broadening experience for the individual activist to work inside such a structure. It renews one's energy and inspires one to work harder. Therefore, it is important that as many different people as possible get the opportunity to represent the Israeli anti-occupation movement abroad. People who make a profession out of conference-hopping inevitably get a bit jaded, while those for whom it is all brand new can both arrive and depart with a special enthusiasm. While it is true that repeated participation can result in deeper and more continuous contacts, still, changing representation widens the exposure of our varied anti-occupation movement; this is all the more true when both Israelis and PLO people are participating.

\* Contact for the Peace March: *Associazione per la Pace, Via Francesco Carrara 24, 00196 Roma, Italy; tel. 06/3608687 - 3612539.*

*From the address delivered by PLO representative Vera Nawfal at the closing session of the Vittoria conference:*

Let me express my emotion at being here with you, the peace forces of so many countries, at this unconventional convention - these four days with you have been an enriching experience; and I am confident that your movement - with the diversity and vitality which we have seen at work, will play an increasing role in the European debate.

(...) I seize this opportunity to greet those Israelis who have stood up against the war, and particularly those who have refused, at the price of imprisonment, to serve in the occupied territories.

### *Diary of a traitor*

*On July 29, 1989, Israeli peace activists were directly involved in an Intifada incident in which the Israeli army opened fire. None of the 150 Israelis present was hit in this incident in which four Palestinians were wounded. The incident occurred during a solidarity visit to the village of Nahlin, where five inhabitants were killed in a surprise army raid in April (see TOI no.36, p.9). The following fragment is taken from the diary of Ehud Spiegel, who was among the four busloads of Israelis:*

(...) an abandoned stone house; a sharp turn to the right; two mosques; one-storey houses scattered along half-paved roads, tattered green-red-black-white flags hanging on electricity wires, women in traditional long dresses, black and burgundy, clutching small children, and very many excited youths running around.

(...) My friends and I found ourselves mixing with the villagers who received us with embraces and heartiness as if we were long-lost friends.

(...) Hebrew, Arabic and English are mixed as the youths describe in detail how each of the five 'Shahids' - martyrs - was killed, and lead the visitors to the road in the village's upper part which in April has suddenly become a local 'Via Dolorosa'. And what does a martyr's tomb look like in Nahlin? A little mound of earth, covered with some stones, and a wreath of flowers - not yet wilted - inside a miniature cemetery, where olive trees overlook Wadi Fukin and the Jewish settlement 'Hadar Beitar' whose red-tile roofs wound the mountain landscape (...)

After an exchange of speeches and good wishes, which is an integral part of such solidarity visits, we started on our way back to the buses. Then, suddenly, a delay, a change in the atmosphere: fear and anger. The young start running around, shouting 'the army has come'. There started shouting from all sides. As a self-understood human act which is required on such a moment, all of us without exception started running quickly, in order to block the soldiers and prevent them from entering the village. At this stage everything becomes confused. I find myself among youngsters throwing stones on the soldiers; suddenly volleys of bullets cleave the air (...).

On the following day I read in the paper the report of K.M.Darawshe (who had tried to intercede with the soldiers and stop the shooting. Ed.) the soldiers had called me and my fellow Israeli participants 'traitors'. Perhaps they were right!

At the cemetery I had spoken the following words: *I lost my brother in the Lebanon War, and today I have come to mourn with you. From this cemetery I call upon our leaders Rabin and Shamir, and your leader Arafat, to sit together and make peace.* The traitor's speech.

Ehud Spiegel

## Doctors' struggle

Since the beginning of the Intifada, Israelis organised protests on a professional basis: teachers, lawyers, architects, journalists, artists, actors, professors, psychologists etc. Such groups are engaged in opposition to those aspects of the occupation which relate to their own fields, and in acts of solidarity with Palestinian colleagues.

On August 16, 'The Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights' (AIPPHR) published a comprehensive report 'On the Condition of the Health Services in the Gaza Strip'.

This report, the result of months of research and investigation, gives shocking details about general medical shortages as well as about 'Intifada emergencies'.

Among the items documented are:

- the lack of the basic equipment, medication, ambulances and staff.
- the number of patients hospitalized after being beaten, shot or exposed to tear gas, and how many of them died.
- army interference in the hospitals' daily work (tear gas in the hospital; violent entrance into emergency rooms and operating theatres; arrests of wounded patients; beating and shooting of patients and medical staff).

The publication of the report caused a storm in the Israeli medical community. Dr. Ram Yishai, the chairman of the Israeli Medical Association, published a counter-report directed at international medical organizations, containing a justification of the Israeli government's policies. However, his attempt to refute the facts presented in the AIPPHR report was not taken very seriously in the Israeli press.

At the same time, the military government's 'civilian administration' invited Israeli and foreign journalists to a ceremony at which new equipment was presented to a Gazan hospital. The televised festivities were marred, however, by a senior Palestinian doctor, who pointed out the immense gulf separating his hospital - even with the new equipment - from the Israeli hospitals just a few kilometres away ...

Contact: AIPPHR, P.O.Box 10235, Tel Aviv 61101 - tel: 03-5464608. The report may be ordered by sending a check of \$20, postage included. All proceeds to further AIPPHR humanitarian activity.

## Peace Blockader

Did the Likud central committee destroy the Israeli government's peace initiative? The truth is that such an initiative did not really exist in the first place.

It will be impossible to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict until each side recognises the other side's right to sovereign national existence. It will be impossible to solve the conflict as long as one side tries to dictate who will represent the other side. Just as the government of Israel represents the Israelis, the PLO is the representative of the Palestinians. These two representatives must enter into direct negotiations. The resolutions adopted by the Palestinian National Council in Algiers make such negotiations an immediate possibility.

It might also be possible to achieve a solution through free general elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip - but only if this interim stage is part of a process leading to the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied in 1967, and to a future of peaceful coexistence between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. Without a guarantee of a sovereign future for the Palestinians, elections could become a means of perpetuating the occupation, and no Palestinian would accept this. All of the Israeli decision-makers - Sharon, Levy and Shamir, as well as Rabin and Peres - adamantly refuse to give the Palestinians such guarantees.

Meanwhile, more Jews and Arabs are daily falling victim to the raging conflict. Fourteen Israelis died in the attack on the Jerusalem-bound bus; more than five hundred Palestinians have been killed since the Intifada started. Throughout the land, members of both peoples are undergoing pain, suffering and bereavement; hatred and the desire for revenge are on the rise.

To stop the escalation, it is not enough to remove the four "blocks" which Sharon imposed upon Shamir. What is required is a thorough change in the positions of the State of Israel; an acceptance of the land's partition among its two peoples, and a willingness by the government of Israel to enter negotiations with the PLO leadership. Until the Labour Party accepts such positions, all of its manoeuvres and posturing are meaningless.

The Israeli Council for  
Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Advertisement in Jerusalem Post, 19 July '89, and in Hebrew in Ha'aretz on July 16.

## Jobs, Equality and Peace

During recent years, three Israeli political formations, starting from very different ideological bases, arrived at similar programs calling for negotiations with the PLO, Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and complete equality between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. Nevertheless, in the 1988 Knesset elections there was no cooperation between these three groups: the Progressive List for Peace (PLP), the Communist-led Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Chadash), and the Arab Democratic Party (ADP). On the contrary, their fierce competition resulted in a loss of at least one - and possibly two - Knesset seats, which the three united could have obtained (see TOI 34, p.8).

Since the Knesset elections, the leadership of all three parties was under strong grassroots pressure to achieve cooperation, the first concrete occasion being the Histadrut elections, due on November 13, 1989. A further stimulus for cooperation among the parties was a change in the Histadrut electoral system: Histadrut electoral lists are now required to cross a 3% threshold, in order to achieve representation. Singly, each of the three parties might have proved unable to obtain the necessary percentage.

The Histadrut is a unique Israeli institution: at one and the same time a trade-union federation and economic empire, including its own factories, marketing chains and the second largest bank in Israel. All of these are supposed to be owned by the workers themselves, but are in fact controlled by a self-perpetuating bureaucracy, with all the mismanagement inherent in unregulated power.

About 80% of Israel's citizens are members of the Histadrut. Every four years they participate in semi-parliamentary general elections, to elect the Histadrut central organs as well as the local 'workers council' in each town. The same political parties as in the Knesset compete with each other in the elections for control of this 'state within a state'.

This year, more than ever, the Histadrut elections will be of general political importance. For the first time in the Histadrut's 70-year history, the Labor Party's dominance is in jeopardy. The Labor leadership is held solely responsible for the bipartisan government's failure to stop

the spread of unemployment. The right-wing populist Likud party is gaining ground among Israeli workers. Whatever the voters' motives, a Likud victory in the Histadrut elections would be regarded as an endorsement of 'tough' policies in the Occupied Territories. Moreover, unemployment is a breeding ground for racist attitudes towards Palestinian workers. Therefore, it is imperative that a strong electoral list present itself, on the basis of Jewish-Arab equality and solidarity.

### Educational polls

On August 7, the Education Ministry published the results of a poll, conducted among highschool students, as indicating a growing polarization among youths. No less than 53% of those asked expressed sympathy with soldiers who refuse service in the Occupied Territories - as compared with only 17% in a similar 1982 poll. At the same time, the Education Ministry's poll investigated the spread of anti-Arab prejudice among youths; no less than 40% wrote down that they hate all Arabs!?

A few days later, the 'Youth Parliament' of Haifa, containing representatives of the town's schools, adopted a resolution calling for negotiations with the PLO.

During June, a series of meetings between Knesset Members Miari and Darawshe, of the PLP and the ADP respectively, brought about an agreement for a joint Histadrut electoral list. Subsequently, these forces were joined by the bigger Chadash, with seats in the new list being apportioned at 60% to Chadash and 20% each to the PLP and ADP.

On August 27, the formation of the new 'United List for Jobs, Equality and Peace' was proclaimed in Tel-Aviv. Leaders of the three parties signed the articles of agreement in front of television cameras, and presented the new list's program. Besides demands for a better position of the worker, especially the unemployed, much emphasis is given to the importance of the equality in work and living conditions for Jews and Arabs, men and women, Orientals and Europeans.

The new list intends to conduct a campaign against the occupation and for 'peace, achievable only through the creation of a Palestinian state', since 'peace means prosperity; peace is the only true medicine for Israel's economic illness'.

If this united list is the harbinger of lasting unity, this new force could

have an impact on Israeli political life, far beyond the Histadrut and its particular problematics.

*The Joint List may be contacted at P.O.B. 26614, Tel-Aviv 61266.*

### A private Intifada

by Beate Keizer

One item out of eight in the *Jerusalem Post's* column 'News in Brief' of Wednesday, September 6:

*The Tel Aviv Magistrates' Court yesterday fined Shabtai Levi, age 49, 1,000 Shekels (equivalent of \$500) and handed down a suspended sentence of five months after convicting him of having insulted the Prime Minister by referring to him as 'Führer' and to the Defence Minister as 'Wehrmacht Minister'.*

Shabtai Levi is one of the stubborn 'streetcorner workers for peace' in Tel-Aviv. He always stays calm, even when provoked by not-so-friendly bypassers. He never raises his voice, but reacts with an ironic smile or word. What made him angry enough to bring himself to such difficulties?

Shabtai's grim struggle with the authorities has already gone on for many years. It dates back to his experiences in school and afterwards in the army. His parents being Bulgarian Jews, he always felt in a bad position: Among Ashkenazi Jews he was the Sephardi, among the Sephardis the Ashkenazi. Bulgarians happen not to fit so well in the unfortunate division between Ashkenazi (*European*) and Sephardi (*Oriental*) Jews.

His experiences with the institutions made him feel that the establishment behaves without any respect for the individual. He had a years-long struggle with the National Insurance, after a traffic accident left him an invalid; only after fifteen years did he receive the money to which he was entitled by law; before that, there was his experience with the contractor who employed him in building fortifications under fire, on the 1969 Suez Canal front line; the contractor did not pay him - and when Shabtai took the case to court, he lost for 'lack of evidence'.

Ever since, Shabtai is at war with the establishment. In his home he keeps an archive of all the angry letters which he wrote to government ministers and officials. Only gradually he learned that his personal experiences could be analysed in a political way. A country which, in order to oppress another people, uses its citizens as cannon-fodder, could not

be expected to respect the individual human being. During the Arab-Jewish work camp in Nazareth of this year, he told some Palestinians (Birzeit students) why he envies them:

You will have your state, that is for sure, sooner or later you will have your state. And it will be a better state than ours. You will not have to prepare for war with all your neighbors, you will not have to oppress another people. There will not be two months of military service for every man until he is fifty-five. More energy and attention for the building of life, health care, education, conditions of life. You will have a better state.

Shabtai is not going to pay the fine. He prefers to go to prison, to show clearly what this state does to a citizen for the use of two angry words.

\* On October 12, Shabtai went to prison.

### Rabbis and politics

by Adam Keller

In the last two decades, the political views of the Orthodox Jewish community in Israel\* have shifted sharply to the Right. The military victory of 1967 was seen as a 'Heavenly Deliverance'. The religious nationalist-fundamentalist 'Gush Emunim' movement established settlements purporting to revive biblical villages. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate publicly supported continued Israeli rule in what they called 'Judea and Samaria' and declared the selling of land to an Arab to be a sin. In Israeli synagogues, mass meetings took place in favor of a pardon for extreme-right terrorists, convicted for murdering Arabs. The whole Jewish religion was reinterpreted: the Book of Joshua, with its description of the savage conquest of Canaan by the ancient Hebrews, gained a central place which it never before enjoyed in Judaism.

Dissenting voices within the religious community were marginalized. The more outspoken religious peace activists, being laymen, lacked the spiritual authority of a rabbi. There were rabbis with moderate views, but they mostly voiced these views in their own 'inner circle'; the general public, either religious or non-religious, heard little of them.

In September 1982, the harbinger of change was the call by Rabbi Yehuda Amital for public mourning for the victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. At that time, the religious movement 'Netivot-Shalom' (Ways of Peace) was formed.

In the 1988 Knesset elections the 'Meimad' (New Dimension) list, headed by Rabbi Amital, did not succeed to secure a seat, but Rabbi Avraham Ravitz's 'Degel Ha'Torah' (Flag of the Torah) did. In the Knesset, the 'Degel Ha'Torah' members distinguish themselves by fierce debates with the nationalists. In these debates they maintain that relinquishing control of the territories is not too high a price to pay, to prevent the spilling of Jewish blood.

Following the Intifada, nationalist and occasionally racist statements still abound, but they no longer completely dominate the rabbinical scene. More and more is heard of the Rabbinical Human Rights Watch, whose members hold prayers for peace at the Prime Minister's residence and visit West Bank villages stricken by the Israeli army; the young rabbis Moshe Swisa and Mordechai Malka participated in the Toledo dialogue with the PLO, and outspokenly defended their action against the rabbinical establishment's attacks.

Rabbi Ovadyah Yosef is one of the most well-known rabbis in Israel. Once Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, he lost his job to a scheming rival, only to make a spectacular comeback as the spiritual leader of the new 'Shas' party, which is gaining ground among the Oriental (i.e. Sephardi) Jewish masses. Rabbi Yosef, who had served as the Chief Rabbi of Egypt between 1947 and 1950, is known to have moderate views; but until recently, he aired them only in private conversations or small gatherings and refrained from making official pronouncements on political issues.

Rabbi Yosef's chief ally within the Shas party is a young disciple, Rabbi Aryeh Der'ey, considered the rising star of Israeli politics. Der'ey obtained in 1988 the influential Interior portfolio – the first Israeli, so far, to become a cabinet minister before being 30 years old.

An outspoken dove, Der'ey influenced Rabbi Yosef to make public his views and to become more directly involved in the political debate. In July Rabbi Yosef, accompanied by Der'ey, visited Egypt. The ostensible reason for the visit was the question of a planned highway that would intersect the site of the old Jewish cemetery of Cairo. Rabbi Yosef found a religiously satisfactory solution: to elevate the highway on pillars above the cemetery. Der'ey

located an American-Egyptian Jew who is willing to finance the additional expenses.

Meanwhile, the two rabbis carried on other discussions with Egyptian leaders, including President Mubarak. After the meeting, Rabbi Yosef told the Egyptian and international press: 'Hebron and Shachem (Nablus) are dearer to me than Tel-Aviv or Haifa; but our Torah forbids killing. Sometimes, it is necessary to amputate a hand or a leg, in order to save the body.'

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Rabbi Yosef's statement was regarded in Israeli political circles as a heavy blow for the 'Greater Israel' idea. But he was prepared to go still further, and hold a mass meeting in Jerusalem, in which he would formulate his position regarding the return of territories for peace in a 'Rabbinical Verdict' (Psak Halacha), which would be binding upon anybody who regards himself as the rabbi's follower.

Even for such a venerable and prestigious rabbi as Yosef, that would be a far-reaching step. Shas is a heterogeneous mass movement, including in its ranks many extreme nationalists; even some supporters of the racist Rabbi Kahane voted for Shas when their own party was banned in 1988. Rabbi Yosef was pressured to demur by members of the Bukhari congregation, in whose synagogue he delivers a weekly sermon; Yosef's wife was asked by vendors in the Jerusalem marketplace – a focal point in the city's local politics – to influence her husband to change his mind. At the same time, Yosef was also approached by senior Likud members, including Prime Minister Shamir, who claimed that his intended action would 'damage the vital interests of Israel'. Posters announcing the mass meeting were torn from the walls, and the director of the Rabbi Cook Memorial Institute, hosting the meeting, received many telephone threats.

The meeting's date was fixed for August 13. Until the last moment it was not clear what Rabbi Yosef was going to say. The large hall was packed with his supporters, groups of his nationalist opponents scattered among them. Upon his entry, Rabbi Yosef was greeted by prolonged clapping and cheering. In a carefully-balanced speech, Yosef stated that it is legitimate, according to the Jewish religion, to give up part of 'the Land of Israel' in return for a perfect peace, but that for the time being this is purely hypothetical, since 'the Arab partner for such a peace had not yet appeared,' but that his opinion would take on new significance, if at some time in the future an Israeli government was in a position to negotiate a true peace. He stated that the holiness of the Land of Israel is a supreme religious value, and that after the coming of the Messiah, the Land would even include Damascus; but until the Messiah comes, consideration should be taken for the saving of lives, a supreme principle for which all actions are justified except those involving idolatry, incest or bloodshed. Though Rabbi Yosef's speech turned out to be less than what the peace camp hoped for, it does constitute a tremendous shift for all those whose respected leader he continues to be.

In the 1970's, Rabbi Menachem Furman was one of the enthusiastic young men who founded the 'Gush Emunim' settler movement. He was active in founding the 'Teko'a' settlement on the West Bank, and became its rabbi.

Firmly committed to the ideal of 'The Land of Israel' as one, indivisible entity, Rabbi Furman became gradually convinced that this entity could not survive for long without taking account of the Palestinians. Being as concerned as ever to safeguard the right of Jews to settle in all parts of the Biblical Land, since the outbreak of the Intifada Rabbi Furman gradually moved away from the Jewish supremacism of his fellow-settlers, towards the concept of a 'bi-national state'. Over the past two years, Rabbi Furman has established a dialogue with some circles in the peace movement, and tried to contact Palestinian leaders. Most Palestinians, however, were reluctant to meet with a settler, whatever his views. It was the well-known Feisal Hussein who took up Rabbi Furman's invitation. On September 21, they held



a five-hour meeting at the Haifa home of a peace activist. Most of the conversation turned on the nature of nationalism, Jewish, Palestinian or in general, and on Rabbi Furman's idea of organising a meeting between rabbis and muslim religious leaders to discuss the long-term implications of coexistence. It seems that Rabbi Furman has some idea of creating a state which would be called 'Israel' in Hebrew and 'Falastin' in Arabic, and which would have two presidents – though he did not work out all the implications in a coherent political plan.

Feisal Hussein notes the marked similarity between Rabbi Furman's ideas and the program of 'a Secular Democratic Palestine' which the PLO gave up. He declared himself willing to continue talking with Furman and other settlers.

The Gush Emunim leadership responded to the meeting with great anger, accusing Furman of treason and issuing a boycott against him. However, the settlers of Furman's own Teko'a settlement – while mostly disagreeing with him – declared their desire to have him continue as their rabbi. Furman also got the support of Likud K.M. Michael Eytan.

It is too early to say that the nationalist-fundamentalist hegemony among Orthodox Jewry in Israel has been overthrown, but there are clear signs that it is starting to crumble.

*\* Most religious Jews in Israel are Orthodox, and Israel has an Orthodox-Zionist 'Established Church' – the Chief Rabbinate. The Reform and Conservative currents of Judaism are represented in Israel only by small communities, which get no official recognition and whose rabbis are not allowed to perform marriages.*

## Women in Black

by Beate Keizer

On Shabbat, September 9, the 'Woman in Black' held their first 'field-day' which meant 250 women gathered on the lawn of Kibbutz Har'el for discussions and workshops, and afterwards in a long black line along the Jerusalem/Tel-Aviv highway, to the astonishment of many weekend-families-on-their-way-home.

The number is quite significant since these are women who, dressed in black, standing on intersections all over the country on Friday afternoons,

are willing to endure vicious taunts like *Go home, work in your kitchen* or *All you want is to be fucked by Arabs*. These 'Intifada-witches' insist on a quick end to the occupation. In dozens of places, not only big cities – there was a map with flags to show it – this is happening, and every week there are more places. It is difficult to avoid encountering them, and in Jerusalem, where the number of weekly participants amounts to about a hundred, they have become one of the city's landmarks.

Also present in Har'el were women from the West Bank, with hair raising stories about a new policy of 'family-disruption'. Women of the West Bank have suddenly been expelled from the country, mostly in the middle of the night, without even time to say Goodbye. The excuse is that in spite of their marriage to local residents they are not entitled to live there. In June, July and August 57 women were expelled. Over two hundred children were either deprived of their mothers, or expelled with them. A number of the women have lived all their lives in the village or town from which they were deported. They happened to have crossed the Jordan river on the day in which the Six Day War started, perhaps for a family visit in Amman or elsewhere. These fifty seven women were then declared 'foreigners without residence permit' which they remain, even after marriage. Therefore, their expulsion is not legally a deportation!

The Women in Black expressed intense sympathy for the plight of the deportees and their families and sent a telegram of protest to the Defence Minister – focussing on the case of a woman, who received one week postponement as she was in the middle of giving birth.\*

On this field-day nearly everybody expressed the need to bridge the gap, between Jewish and Arab women. So far, very few Palestinian women have joined the Israeli peace movement. The Women in Black want to use their special awareness of the mechanisms of oppression in order to break through patterns, which exist even within the peace movement.

Contact: Dita Bitterman, 209 Dizengoff St. Tel-Aviv, 63115.

*\* At the time of writing the number of deported women has more than doubled. Some journalists and Knesset Members are involved, but no action strong enough to stop the deportations was so far possible.*

## WHO GUARDS THE GUARD?

Yihya Ayub Abu-Samara, a Palestinian prisoner at Ashkelon Prison already served a fifteen years' term for 'being a senior commander in a terrorist organization'. At the end of his term, he was not released but placed under Administrative Detention without trial. In the prison, he is held in solitary confinement, to prevent him from 'inciting others'.

David Yosef, an Israeli guard officer, established contact with Abu-Samara and accompanied him on his solitary walks in the courtyard, holding long conversations with him on subjects such as the Intifada, the Shamir elections plan, and the right of the Palestinians to establish an independent state. Yosef allowed Abu-Samara to stay in the courtyard for longer periods than the prison regulations permit. Yosef also used to come at night to Abu-Samara's cell and sit with him for hours. Yosef even allowed Samara to meet other Palestinian prisoners and talk with them, and he brought Samara alcoholic drinks or food better than the prison fare.

Jewish (non-political) prisoners sent a letter of complaint to the prison director, asking 'when Knesset Members' immunity could be removed because of their contacts with the PLO, why should a prison guard remain immune?'. The story found its way to the press. The Israeli Prisons Authority seemed embarrassed by the issue. It started disciplinary proceedings against David Yosef, but in the event Yosef got off with a reprimand and a warning not to repeat his 'misdeed'.

## Jaffa in the picture

by Andrew MacDonald  
and Inge Kämmerer

Between July 29 and August 4 the 'International Volunteer Work Camp' took place in Jaffa, for the seventh consecutive year. The Israeli participants, Arab and Jewish, were joined by over twenty European volunteers from seven countries. Three volunteers from Hungary were the very first participants from Eastern Europe in such a camp. The annual work camp is now well established as the high point in the year's work of Al Raabitah, the League of Jaffa Arabs. Losing the bulk of its population in 1948, and with it much of its intelligentsia and wealth, the broken Arab community in Jaffa was incorporated into the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipal

authority, and has long been the victim of official discrimination and neglect. Vacant property has been let to incoming Jews or demolished, and local business discouraged. Education, social and welfare services are minimal (see *TOI 1, p. 6*).

The work camp acts as a constructive protest against this official treatment of the community, calling public attention to the municipality's deficiencies by decorating a play area, constructing an access road, improving kindergarten facilities, and cleaning rubbish from the streets. Lack of funds limits the number of projects undertaken which have tangible permanent results, but the street cleaning serves as a valuable symbol, and has led in the past to some vacant lots being planted with trees and becoming recreation areas.

The camp is also intended to rally local people, often demoralised, to strive more for their amenities and rights. A particularly encouraging feature of this year's camp was the increased number of residents joining the local and international volunteers in the work.

This year the camp included a tour of Jaffa for the foreign visitors, putting the community's present position in a historical context; evenings of Palestinian and Jewish poetry reading and Dabkeh dancing; a children's street party; and a brief visit to the Jewish-Arab settlement Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam.

There were two specific targets this year. As a form of constructive protest, a rubbish clearing demonstration was organised with enthusiastic participation of inhabitants. On Thursday, August 3, a demonstration was mounted at the beach against the proposed municipal enclosure of 80 dunams of sea and shore to build entertainment facilities, for the wealthy. Al Raabitah has already won a Supreme Court ruling against the Municipality's unlicensed construction of a 120 dunam artificial promontory, hemming in Jaffa to the west for future building of expensive apartments. The demonstration-happening, which included floating sculptured hands raised in appeal from the sea, engaged a large crowd of Jaffa residents, both Arab and Jewish, and attracted national press and television coverage.

Predictably, right wing journalists chose to characterise Al Raabitah as a front for PLO and radical nationalistic activities. The explicitly non-violent and legal demands for equal rights and services by Jaffa Arabs are

more easily sidetracked by the authorities if the League of Jaffa Arabs can be dismissed in this way. The presence of international and of Jewish Israeli volunteers at the work camp is therefore an important factor in promoting the legitimacy of Al Raabitah.

*Volunteers for the 8th Jaffa International Work Camp, 1990, should write to The Secretary, League of Jaffa Arabs, Arab Cultural Centre, 73 Yeffet Street, Tel-Aviv/Jaffa 68171, Israel.*

## Pardon

*On October 2, the newspapers Ha'aretz, Ma'ariv and Al-HaMishmar quoted an open letter, addressed to Defence Minister Rabin:*

During the last two years I have become more and more concerned about, and ashamed of, your policy of cruel oppression against the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

Two days ago, a pardon was granted to four imprisoned soldiers of the Giv'ati Brigade. You gave your approval to this pardon, knowing that the Southern Command Court Martial had found them guilty of breaking into a house in Jabaliya Refugee Camp, of beating the 47-year old owner for over an hour with clubs, rifle butts and a broomstick, and of jumping up and down on his belly before the eyes of his children. As you know very well, he died a few hours later, though the court could not determine whether his death was caused by these four soldiers or by one of the other twenty who beat him afterwards.

I have to inform you that your decision to approve this pardon has made it impossible for me to continue wearing the uniform of the I.D.F. An army which pardons thugs, thereby turns itself into an army of thugs. In such an army I am neither willing nor able to serve. Therefore, if I receive another reserve service call-up order, I will refuse, whatever the consequences.

*The letter was signed by IDF reserve private Nr 2213693 - Adam Keller.*

## Teachers' campaign

by Zvi Schuldiner

For 19 months, Palestinian schools in the West Bank were closed. The military authorities argued that this was due to security reasons, since the schools 'were used as rallying points for stone-throwers'. Rather quickly it became clear that this step was a new type of collective punishment, since after long months of school closure the degree of violence in the Territories did not diminish.

In the course of last year, concerned Israeli educators started protesting against the closure of the schools. Israeli teachers met with their colleagues in the Occupied Territories

and started a campaign for reopening the schools (see *TOI 37, p.10*). The Israeli educators felt that it was very hard to continue 'teaching as usual' when, at a few minutes' distance from their schools, Palestinian children were being deprived of their right to learn.

Palestinian educators visited a school in Jerusalem and explained their case to more than a hundred Israeli teachers, including many who did not have previous contacts with Palestinian colleagues. The student council of another Jerusalem high school arranged a visit to their school by high-school students from the town of Beit-Sahur, on the West Bank.

At the end of the school year, a public meeting was held in Tel-Aviv under the auspices of the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East. For the first time, the leaders of the two Israeli Teachers Unions took a public stand against the closure of schools, declaring that they no longer accepted the official reasons for the closure.

Meanwhile, various American organizations such as The Foundation for Peace in the Middle East, The National Association of American Arabs, and The Jewish Peace Lobby started a campaign to get Congress to adopt a resolution on the school closure. A Palestinian educator and an Israeli one, Dr. Munir Fashe of Bir-Zeit University and myself, were invited to explain to Congresspersons and their staff the problem of school closures as it affects both societies.

Dr. Fashe pointed out that with 310,000 students deprived of education for more than one and a half years, the closure was a disruptive factor for the entire population of the West Bank. Moreover, once school reopened three different groups of pupils would have to attend first grade simultaneously!

Representing the Israeli side of the question, I emphasized that Jews cannot think about existence as a people without education. In the course of history, the Jewish people have known various attempts at depriving them from the elementary right to education. But edicts and repression have never been enough to suppress a nation. To close the Palestinians' schools meant to build a future of hatred for Israeli children. It's in the interest of all children to reopen a path for understanding, irrespective of the different political solutions one advocates.

AIPAC (better known as 'The Jewish Lobby') and the Israeli Embassy continuously tried to convince Members of Congress and Senators that schools are a danger for Israeli security, even after the spokesperson of the Defence Ministry announced – in the middle of our campaign – that the schools in the West Bank would be reopened. The weakness of the official position was so obvious that even Israel's strongest supporters were critical about it. Many were eager to express to a critical Israeli their concern about the activities of the AIPAC people, which seemed more and more related with the position of the extreme right-wing elements in the Israeli government, rather than with general Israeli interests. Some Senators mentioned signs of change in the position of the American electorate; the letters which they receive from their constituents have become more critical about Israeli policies.

In general people are aware of the fact that the Intifada had changed Israel's role as 'a stabilizing factor' in the region. The actual Israeli government policies are in fact endangering the stability of the whole region.

The Senate and the House passed separate resolutions commending Israel for reopening the schools, and asking the school administrators to stay away from the political discussion. In very clear terms both Houses condemned the way in which the Palestinian population had been punished.

## 'We both need peace'

by Ehud Spiegel

*On Saturday August 27, a group of Israelis – Jews and Arabs – organised by the Haifa area Peace Groups Coordinating Committee set out from Umm el-Fahm, to the villages of the northern West Bank.*

Umm el-Fahm is receding behind us. The road is becoming more and more narrow and broken. We pass through woods and a deserted junction, and enter the Occupied Territories. In an empty gas station, our contact man is waiting, to escort us into Ya'abed Village. At the village entrance the street is cut in two by a man-high wall built by the army. Behind it, some houses are surrounded by wire. They have been taken over as military observation posts. In the middle of the village we see another army post, and next to it a big, three-floor building, partly burnt. One of the villagers explains: 'In this building live 26

collaborators from all the villages around. The army brought them here and gave them this building. Every day they shoot at us.' One night, villagers set the collaborators' house on fire. Since then, the collaborators have been retaliating by damaging property at random. From the building we see a man looking at us, and a voice over a loudspeaker menacingly orders us to go away, all of us. A lawyer in the group shouts to them what right do they have to disperse us. The only answer is some shots toward the local youths. If that was meant to keep them away from us, the result was the opposite: the youths join us most enthusiastically. The soldier looking from the army post does not pay any attention.

The next village is Arabeh. This time the roadblock at the entrance is not one put up by the Israeli army, rather it is manned by youngsters with faces covered by Kaffiyas, brandishing sticks in their hands, painted black, green, red, white. A more experienced Israeli participant reassures me that everything is okay, they only want to guard us: they are the Intifada militia. In Arabeh no confrontations take place, and far more Palestinian flags and PLO leaders' pictures are to be seen in the narrow streets. It seems some time has passed since the last army raid.

In the next village, Ra'ey, they know about our coming. The crowds of youths greet us warmly. On the faces we see there is a smile of welcome. Some faces we don't see – they are covered with black kerchiefs, and the hands beneath them are holding iron chains. These are Rabin's notorious 'masked inciters', whom he authorised the army to shoot at sight. Here they are engaged in safeguarding us from the 'Hamas' fundamentalists, who are not so pleased with our visit. There is a sudden commotion. A sweating fat youth is making his way through the crowd. He had come to tell us that two Ra'ey villagers, who had intended to meet us in Ya'abed, were beaten up by the collaborators. We asked to meet the two and were taken to the house where they were recuperating. I wrote down the story of Mufid Sheikh Ibrahim, a man about forty years old: *We were waiting for you at the Ya'abed gas station. Suddenly a car with two collaborators arrived. They threatened us with their rifles and forced us to climb into their car. Then they took us up a narrow track, beat us up and said: 'a bullet costs one Shekel, and that is how much your lives are worth. If you don't rebuild our burned house we will finish you.*

Their recent harsh experience did not make Mufid and his friend Husni hostile to us. They talked to us with great warmth, repeatedly shaking our hands.

From there, we were taken to see the family of Iman Fares, a boy who was killed by soldiers in June. Two of our group were Israeli mothers whose sons were killed in the Lebanon War.

The common pain of mothers who lost their sons created an exceptional sphere of understanding and eagerness to talk. An Israeli mother spoke:

*All violence must stop immediately and on both sides. Let us each have our own state in peace. One of the Fares' relatives responds: Your sons and our son who fell – it is all the same pain. We both need peace.*

On a late afternoon hour we leave the village. We drive slowly in convoy. At our sides are cars full of 'Intifada boys'. Suddenly the convoy stops. We are told that a Hamas member, gesturing in a hostile way, was seen approaching the road ahead of us. The boys demand that he move away from the road; only then does the convoy continue.

## A deportee's farewell

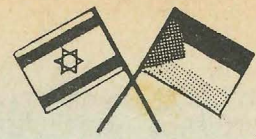
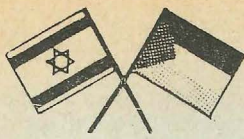
The deportation of Bir-Zeit physics lecturer Taysir Aruri was implemented in spite of protests inside and outside Israel, a petition signed by a thousand physicists, and the protests of Amnesty International – all in vain. The government's only concession had been to allow Aruri to go to France by plane, rather than the 'normal procedure' of just pushing deportees across the Lebanese border.

At Ben-Gurion airport, amidst the lines of tourists and business people, a clash took place between airport police and protesters. The police tore the protesters' placards to pieces, and arrested Aruri's wife who was in the midst of all this. A few hours later they let her go home.

## Ins and Outs

After a long struggle, conscript Amit Lewenhof – having spent more than 100 days in prison – was allowed to do his military service within the pre-'67 borders of Israel.

The army announced a new policy, of not forcing a Yesh G'vul reservist more than two consecutive times to refuse service in the occupied territories, thereby limiting the de-facto punishment for refusal of reservists to two months of imprisonment per call-up.



## Something wrong

'Everything that you read in the newspapers is true, and it is only a part of the truth. I was in Gaza several times, and I know. My captain is a decent man. He tries to restrain the soldiers. But the lieutenant and the senior sergeant are real beasts. They take the lead in beating up prisoners. How do you expect the soldiers to behave, with such an example?

I wish I had a camera with me there. Some things will always remain imprinted on my mind. The other soldiers thought there is something wrong with me because I stood on the side and did not participate.

If I told everything I have seen, I could wreck the lieutenant's career.'

- 'Why don't you?'

'After all, he is my commanding officer...'

*Noted down on a wedding party, from the 19-year old brother of the bride, who was on a one-day leave.*

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In the meantime, Rami Chasson, who achieved world-wide fame during his prolonged struggle early this year, was ordered to present himself in November for a new term of service - as a prison guard over Intifada prisoners. Unless the army relents, he will be in prison again, less than half a year after his release. Chasson, the 33-year owner of a health-parlour, has little time left for his clients!

## 'You just have to read it!'

*On August 11, 1989, the right-wing daily Ma'ariv gave an example of how to make the idea of negotiations with the PLO acceptable for more Israelis. Ya'el Paz-Melamed interviewed the young Rabbi Mordechai Malka, who participated in the Toledo Conference. The journalist describes a man having the same small vices as everybody, and therefore to be trusted. Rabbi Mordechai Malka is indeed an interesting addition to the spectrum of the peace movement. The following is translated from the article:*

The rabbi of the cooperative village (*Moshav*) Chatzav has four charming children who go skateboarding around the house. He lost his driving licence because of travelling at high speed. Rabbi Mordechai Malka keeps at his side a Bible and a box of cigarettes. He is 31 years old. He has served in a combat unit, and ten years ago he broke the Shabat prohibitions in order to fight Palestinians, who took as hostages passengers of a bus on the coastal highway. The interview is interrupted when Rabbi Malka is asked to speak urgently to a young soldier who was heavily upset after being rejected by the Paratrooper Corps. Rabbi Malka speaks to the soldier in a calm voice, and quotes anecdotes from the Torah.

A few days ago, Rabbi Malka was summoned to the office of the Chief Sephardi Rabbi, Mordechai Eliyahu, to be reprimanded for his participation in the Toledo Conference. The Chief Rabbi accused Malka that in his Toledo speech - delivered to an audience including several PLO members - he had 'defended murderers'. Rabbi Malka was not intimidated by the Chief Rabbi's authority. He told Rabbi Eliyahu that he does not retract even one word which he said in Toledo. He had said that all human beings were created by God, and all of them have the right to a peaceful and secure life; that the Jewish religion believes in absolute justice and opposes violence of any kind, and that it forbids all forms of discrimination. He produced copious references from the Bible, from the Talmud, and from Maimonides. 'It's all there, you just have to read it.'

When he was invited to Toledo, he accepted the invitation immediately. He saw in it a precious chance to overcome the bad image given to Judaism by rabbis such as Kahane and Levinger, who preach hatred of Arabs. 'These are the rabbis who help murderers!' he said.

The Chief Rabbi became more and more displeased with Rabbi Malka's 'impertinence' and threatened to deprive him of his rabbinical tenure.

'How could he stop me from being a rabbi?' asks Malka. 'Could he stop the members of the congregation from coming to me with their problems? Could he stop me from helping them? It is like stopping a

doctor from helping the sick.'

Rabbi Malka's children go in and out of the room during the whole interview. The youngest is three and a half years old. Not long ago, his hair was shorn in the Chalaka ceremony\* which was the occasion of a great family celebration. Rabbi Malka is fond of celebrations in which people gather and open their hearts to each other. Previously, he had lived in a northern moshav, near to many Arab villages. He was often invited by Arab neighbors to their family celebrations, which strengthened his belief in the possibility of coexistence. He says:

The government must start talking with the PLO. The actions of ordinary citizens like me could not replace it - but they could bring peace just one small step closer.

\* Traditionally Moroccan Jews do not cut a child's hair in the first three years of his life. The child's first haircut is the occasion of a great celebration, and usually takes place at the tomb of a Saint.

## The Masarwa verdict: Guilty!

On October 10, The Tel-Aviv District Court found Mahmud Masarwa, an Arab citizen of Israel, guilty of arson and aggravated espionage. This verdict leaves grave doubts.

Practically all prosecution witnesses were feeble, contradicting themselves and each other. The prosecution's main evidence was Masarwa's confession, extracted from him in the months-long period of interrogation, when he was held in total isolation. At that time, no lawyer was allowed to see him, several being disqualified 'for lack of a security clearance'.

The court chose to disbelieve Masarwa's claim that he was forced by torture to sign his confession.

The case of Masarwa - a political activist and a trade unionist successful in establishing cooperation between Jewish and Arab workers - has aroused worldwide interest, which will continue with his expected appeal to the Supreme Court.

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