

The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
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HAWKS & DOVES, PIGS & RABBITS

In the second week of March, the "National Unity Government" fell apart. Prime Minister Shamir expelled the Labor Ministers, giving his Likud Party complete control over the remaining rump cabinet – but a few days later, he lost a vote of confidence, and Labor leader Shimon Peres confidently set about forming a new cabinet. This confidence was premature – by the end of April Peres had to admit his failure, and it became clear that the Israeli political system is in its deepest crisis ever.

The Labor-Likud grand coalition fell over the basic issue facing Israel – peace negotiations with the Palestinians. The two big parties could not agree on an answer to U.S. Secretary of State Baker, concerning the proposed talks in Cairo with a PLO-approved Palestinian delegation.

Basically, Peres now wants to form a "Peace Government" which would say "Yes" to Baker, go to Cairo, and possibly (though Peres never said so explicitly) later start talking directly with the PLO. The Likud's counterpart is the idea of "A Jewish Nationalist Government", dedicated to accelerated settlement in all parts of "Greater Israel" and firmly opposed to any territorial concessions.

During the intricate negotiations, this basic issue was often obscured. The two big parties are very evenly matched; a change of mind by one or two Knesset members is enough to tip the scales. Thus, any KM who is not firmly committed to one side or the other could claim an exorbitant price for his allegiance.

Such a situation gives a great advantage to the religious parties, which hold 18 out of the 120 Knesset seats. The average non-religious Israeli, contemplating this key segment of the political system, feels trapped in a bewildering maze: there are four different parties; final decisions are often made by unwordly octogenarian rabbis; there are sects within sects and factions within factions, with feuds and rivalries sometimes going back for decades or centuries.

Yet, however much this ultra-Orthodox community may voluntarily segregate itself, it still is part of Israeli society. Among the Orthodox – as in all parts of Israeli society – there are hawks and doves. Some prominent rabbis support Greater Israel, others – equally prominent – support "territory in return for peace", and all are able to substantiate their respective

views by appropriate quotes from the scriptures, the Talmud or the writings of later sages. Peres' plan was to obtain the support of the religious doves on a programmatic basis, and of at least some hawks – by providing generous government subsidies to their religious schools.

This plan was far from unreasonable. As it turned out, however, the most respected leader of the religious doves – the erudite, 94-year old Rabbi Eliezer Shach – could not overcome his long-standing revulsion for the *un-Jewish Godless kibbutzniks who eat pigs and rabbits*. Actually, the atheism of the (Labor-affiliated) kibbutz movements has considerably mellowed since the 1950s, when Rabbi Shach first encountered it. Yet, for Rabbi Shach it was reason enough to overcome his aversion for conquests and annexationism and to cast his lot with the more traditional-conservative Likud. Moreover, Shach's prestige and influence enabled him to draw with him others who previously supported Peres.

In despair, Peres attempted to obtain a majority by drawing away some of the Likud's own disgruntled members, offering them ministerial posts and even sums of money. The Likud responded by making similar offers, both to its own breakaway members and to Labor backbenchers.

The left-wing parties viewed these manoeuvres with growing discomfort, but continued to support Peres' efforts to rig up a majority-for-peace*. However, the Likud won "the battle on the breakaways" – and the method of open bribery, used equally by Labor and Likud caused a great wave of public revulsion against the entire political leadership of Israel. A mass movement was formed overnight, with dozens of reserve army officers on hunger strike in front of the Knesset, and a giant rally held on Tel-Aviv's municipal square. The main demand of the new movement is for direct elections of the Prime Minister – which would create a semi-presidential regime and remove the power of small factions and corrupt KMs. This movement undoubtedly reflects a widespread discontent and a genuine desire for change. At the same time, there is in it an element of longing for a strong leader, accompanied by hostility to the Knesset and all its members, which may lead it to the opposite of its proclaimed democratic goals.

Conscience and the army

by Toma Sik

Not many people know that the IMCWR (International Movement of Conscientious Objectors) is among the Israeli peace groups with the longest continuity, and having been founded in 1945 is three years older than the state of Israel. The following is an account of IMCWR's recent activities provided by its coordinator.

Six resisters to military service have lately been adopted by the International Movement of Conscientious War Resisters. The "season" started with strong involvement in the defense of Adam Keller during his hunger strike in Athlit Military Prison – which resulted in his exemption from military service. Adam Keller is considered by the IMCWR to be a new "convert". Although not a pacifist, Keller now seems to realise that in order to combat the occupation it is not enough to refuse military service in the Occupied Territories.

A case representing an opposite dynamic is that of U.K., a new conscript from a suburb of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa. Two years ago he was an active participant in the Pacifist Youth Group of the IMCWR. While still defining himself as an Anarchist, he decided for practical reasons and under various pressures to accept conscription. When his military unit was ordered to Rafah, in the occupied Gaza Strip, he refused to follow orders and was confined to his barracks. Upon the unit's return from its mission U.K. was sentenced to 28 days' imprisonment. Recently, he was granted an exemption from service in the Occupied Territories, "on psychiatric grounds".

Jailed in Athlit, at the same time as Keller, was Shlomo Frost from Kibbutz Kabri in the Gallilee. He is a reservist male-nurse. For many years already he has had written guarantees from the military authorities allowing him not to carry weapons during his military service, and promising him that he would not be sent beyond "The Green Line" (*pre-'67 boundaries*). From his youth – he is now 42 – Frost has been a pacifist, but he consented to do military service – under these modified conditions. This year he was called to serve in the Megiddo prison, located inside the "Green Line" but holding 1500 administrative detainees from the Occupied Territories under very bad conditions (*see sep. article*). Frost refused, stating: *You agreed not to send me to the Occupied Territories, and now you bring the Occupied Territories here to me!* He was sentenced to 28 days

As soon as he got rid of the Labor ministers Yitzhak Shamir embarked on a wide-scale settlement drive in the Occupied Territories including the over-crowded Gaza Strip. On April 27, the day on which President Herzog entrusted Shamir with forming a new government, there was a clash with the army in Jabaliya Refugee Camp, near which a new settlement had been established. Four inhabitants were killed; 150 Palestinians and 12 Israeli soldiers were wounded. An army officer described what happened as "a real war", and as "the most serious incident since the Intifada began" (*Ha'aretz*, 1.5.'90). On the following day, Shamir started negotiations with parties such as "Moledet" (Fatherland) whose program advocates the "transfer" of all Arabs out of "Greater Israel".

It is not yet clear whether Shamir will succeed in forming his nationalist annexationist government; it is possible that he, too, will get entangled among the religious parties and factions. Such a development will give the cue to Yitzhak Rabin, Peres' rival for leadership of the Labor Party, who makes no secret of his desire to revive the "National Unity Government".

Whichever government is formed, it will have to answer the set of questions which were asked in February by Secretary of State Baker. If the answer is "No" – as now seems likely – the American administration will face a decisive test, which will show how serious were its often repeated declarations of support for "The Middle East Peace Process".

The editor

** Shimon Peres, in his attempts to form a peace coalition, relied for his majority upon the votes of the seven Arab Knesset members. This was the first deviation ever from the basic policy laid down in 1948 by David Ben-Gurion – Shimon Peres' own mentor – which required an Israeli government to have a majority, not only in the Knesset but also among the Jewish KMs. Even though Peres's efforts in the end failed, an important precedent has thus been created, which paves the way for a stronger, no longer divided, peace camp in Israel. This was especially reflected at the rally held in Nazaret on April 23: fourteen Knesset Members of the Labor Party and all parties to its left, spoke out in support of the Arab KMs right to participate in the government-forming process.*

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imprisonment. Upon leaving jail he demanded total exemption from military service. The answer to letters by Frost himself, his family and IMCWR was: *The army does not give exemptions for political reasons.*

O.C., aged 35, returned recently to Israel from a prolonged visit to India. He maintains that he has converted to Buddhism and has a certificate to prove it from authorities in India. In a letter to the army he explained his present moral standpoint concerning war, peace and military service. The authorities seem to take his case seriously; he has already received two interim replies, but his case is still pending. He requested exemption, on grounds of "unsuitability", according to Article 36 of the Defence Service Law.

During the past few years, most of the appellants to IMCWR were young women. The law does provide explicit exemption from military service for women on grounds of conscience or because of religious beliefs (Article 39). However, the existence of the first possibility is nearly unknown, as the authorities do their best to maintain the impression that exemption is granted on religious grounds only. Even in cases of conscientious objection based on completely secular motives, the Exemption Board contains a rabbi and a religious woman. The IMCWR (with its limited resources) is the only body which tries to inform Israeli young women of their legal right to exemption on grounds of conscience.

S.G. facing conscription, had friends who told her about the possibility of counseling at the IMCWR. She applied for exemption according to the prescribed procedure, although the time for submitting requests had already passed, and was informed that her case had been submitted, after all, to the Exemption Board.

A few weeks ago a small news item which appeared in only one of the daily newspapers, told of a young man, Yoni Siglis (aged 21), who had attempted to commit suicide after his failure to get an exemption from military service. His address was located, and on the same evening, two days after the sad attempt, an IMCWR representative (myself) visited him at his home.

Siglis had been studying electronics in the university, under an agreement with the army that postponed his "national service" until he completed his university studies. Under this arrangement he committed himself in advance to add two years as a career

soldier to the usual 3 years of military service. This commitment had been made by Siglis at the age of eighteen. Later, he stopped his studies, and requested exemption on grounds of pacifist and anarchist convictions. At that time - October 1989 - he already knew of the existence of IMCWR but efforts to contact us failed. His request was rejected by the army which insisted that he fulfill the obligations he had undertaken. On the day when he was supposed to be conscripted, Siglis swallowed an enormous quantity of tranquillizers. Doctors said it was a miracle that his life was saved.

Following this, two military psychiatrists confirmed that Siglis is a honest pacifist who attempted suicide under extreme pressure. They didn't find any grounds to treat him psychiatrically, and affirmed that, in a country where the law provides exemption on grounds of conscience, Siglis would have been a clear case. Despite all this, the army refuses to grant Siglis an exemption. In the meantime, there have been three more cases of soldiers who actually committed suicide. The Association for Civil Rights has taken up the case of Yoni Siglis, and requested to see the psychiatric reports, which so far were only read to Siglis by word of mouth.

IMCWR's campaign has so far not succeeded in winning cooperation from the Yesh Gvul movement of reservists refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories. Article 36, which may be interpreted as providing a base for exemption on "special grounds" could also be applied to partial exemption. According to the IMCWR's experience, Yesh Gvul could benefit from appealing to that interpretation of the law. Probably more soldiers would resist serving in the Occupied Territories if they knew that it would not automatically be considered "against the law".

IMCWR, with a small membership and always facing material difficulties, continues to distribute leaflets with the text of the articles of the law relevant to exemption from the army. Such leaflets are distributed at peace rallies, public meetings on human rights and peace or alternative music shows. To recruit new devoted members is not so easy. Real pacifists are rare and mostly very individualistic, too!

Contact: IMCWR, P.O.B. 28058, Tel-Aviv-Jaffa (IMCWR is a section of the War Resisters International)

■ On April 14, Yesh G'vul organised a Passover celebration at "its" mountain opposite the Athlit military prison. Bottles of wine and boxes of matzot were taken all the way up. Actor Sinai Peter read to the 150 participants a text which remained quite close to the Passover Seder prayer book, the Hagada - celebrating the victory of the Moses-led "Jewish Liberation Organization" (with the help of superpowers). The only Yesh G'vul prisoner at

that moment was kibbutznik Dubi Chiyon. He was not only supported by the people present, but also by one of the few early Zionist pioneers still alive, former Secretary-General of the Histadrut Yitzchak Ben-Aharon. A recorded greeting by Ben-Aharon was broadcast, through the Yesh G'vul loudspeaker, directly to the prison below.

■ A week later, on April 22, Captain (Res.) Dany Zamir refused to assume command over a troop

in Nablus, and was sent to the Athlit prison for 28 days. Including him, a total of 109 reservists and conscripts have been imprisoned for refusing to participate in crushing the Intifada.

■ On the night of February 3, a large military force entered the West Bank village Beit-Ana'an, declared a curfew and started house-to-house searches and arrests. Two reservists (names unknown) were left to guard the force's jeeps.

They were provided with automatic rifles and plenty of ammunition. Nevertheless, when a group of stone-throwing Palestinian youths approached, they did not shoot but withdrew and let the youths pour petrol over the jeeps and burn them down. When put on trial, they explained that *they didn't want to kill or wound the boys*. Their commander defined their behaviour as 'disgraceful'. However, they only got a fine and a suspended 21-day prison term because of their long years in the unit (including two wars), *during which they had never displayed signs of cowardice* (Ha'aretz, 4.2.90).

Dialogue and the law

On February 9 Abie Nathan, renowned owner of 'The Voice of Peace' radio station, left Eyal Prison where he had served four months' imprisonment for having met PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Less than a month later, Nathan was at PLO headquarters in Tunis, where he met Arafat again. In that meeting - extensively covered by the Israeli media - Yasser Arafat warmly congratulated Abie Nathan, and agreed to help in discovering the fate of Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon. Arafat also helped arrange a Yemenite visa for Nathan - the first such visa ever given to an Israeli. Nathan wants to visit Yemen in order to make contact with its Jewish community, whose members were, over many years, cut off from any contact with their relatives who emigrated to Israel in the early 1950s.

Upon his return to Israel Nathan may expect to be prosecuted again for having broken the 'Anti-Terrorist Law'. Already hanging above his head is a term of one year's suspended imprisonment, which - according to the verdict in his first trial - will be implemented 'should he repeat his crime within three years'.

Shortly before the fall of the government Labor Minister Gad Ya'akobi wrote, on official government stationery, a letter to the Swedish Nobel Committee, in which he proposed Abie Nathan's candi-

dature for the Nobel peace price.

Meanwhile the 'Rumania Four', who appealed against their sentence of six months imprisonment, are still awaiting the Supreme Court's verdict.

At the Ramleh Court, the trial of 'The Hungary Eight' still continues. Against one of the eight, David Ish-Shalom, a second trial was opened - concerning his meetings with PLO members in February 1988, at Greece and Cyprus, in connection with the 'Ship of Return' project. Ish-Shalom admitted all facts enumerated in the charge sheet, but claimed that the PLO isn't 'a terrorist organization' and that - therefore - meeting its representative does not constitute an offence under the Anti-Terrorism Law.

Contact: David Ish-Shalom, Moshav Beit-Zait, House 22, Israel

Spreading the dialogue

In certain middle class circles of the big population centers, Israeli-Palestinian dialogue has nearly become the new fashion. Not so in the outlying, provincial towns or in the slum neighborhoods. Gradually these areas are getting more attention from the Israeli peace movement - in close cooperation with the Palestinian leadership in East Jerusalem. Indeed, Palestinian activist Feisal Hussein has already become well known for his seemingly indefatigable willingness to travel anywhere and address any audience in order to bring a Palestinian message of peace.

Before March 3, no Palestinian had ever made a public appearance in the town of Hadera, midway between Tel-Aviv and Haifa. In the meeting, organised by a group of local Ratz people, the speakers were Hussein and KM Yossi Sarid. The organisers encountered many obstructions and threats from right-wingers. The local Histadrut trade union branch, which first agreed to make its club available, withdrew the promise under pressure from Labor hawks. The owner of a private hall, to which the meeting was transferred, also came under heavy pressures; he begged the

organisers to cancel the meeting, promising to pay them a large sum, but they were adamant.

In the event, the meeting passed quietly and successfully; more than 400 people came to the hall and paid admittance fees, while the right-wingers succeeded to muster no more than 30 people for a counter-demonstration.

A similar course of events took place a few weeks later at the town of Safed, in the Gallilee. There, Hussein was due to address a meeting inaugurating a local Peace Now branch. The Likud mayor of Safed, Ze'ev Perl, took an active part in the intimidation campaign, telephoning the owners of public halls and asking them 'not to let a terrorist defile our town'. The owner of the first hall which Peace Now rented was thereby induced to cancel the appointment; however, a second hall owner told the mayor and the press, not without a cynical sense of humour, *I lived in this town before 1948, when more than 12,000 Arabs lived here as well. I was not afraid of them then, and I am not going to fear a single Arab now*.

On March 30, Hussein arrived accompanied by several trade union leaders from Nablus who also addressed the meeting. Large police forces were present, but had nothing to do; again, the participants in the meeting greatly outnumbered the counter-demonstrators outside, headed by (yes!) the mayor.

Hapatish (The Hammer), is a freely distributed magazine, focusing on social problems, especially those of Oriental Jews. Its March issue reports on the visit of Palestinian journalist and activist Radwan Abu-Ayash to the Tel-Aviv neighborhood of Jamusin. Before 1948, Jamusin was a Palestinian village, the village where Abu-Ayash's parents lived. After the creation of Israel, the empty village was swallowed by Tel-Aviv and became a slum neighborhood, mostly inhabited by Jewish immigrants from Arab countries who came to Israel in the 1950s. Abu-Ayash himself was born in a refugee camp and had never before seen Jamusin.

In one of the Jamusin houses, where he was invited, Abu-Ayash told his (Arab speaking) hosts that he and his parents have no intention to dispossess them. He also expressed his sympathy with the struggle of Jamusin's present inhabitants against the municipal plans to evict them and erect luxurious apartment buildings on the site.

Later, Abu-Ayash was introduced to many other Jamusin inhabitants, all of whom received him warmly. They located the former Abu-Ayash home, 'the house with the well'. Abu-Ayash was shocked to hear that the nearby Yarkon River, where his father used to fish, is now polluted and lifeless. When after several hours he departed, many inhabitants accompanied him to his car.

Administrative Detention

On March 1988 – the third month of the Intifada – the military government in the Occupied Territories published new decrees which vastly increased its powers to impose 'Administrative Detention' without trial. The new decrees practically abolished even the little bit of judicial review of the detentions, which existed in pre-Intifada times, and made it possible to increase the number of detainees from dozens to thousands. To house the influx, a number of new detention camps were opened, the largest being Ketziot/Ansar-3 in the Negev desert. Since the beginning of the Intifada, ten thousand Palestinians have undergone terms of Administrative Detention. An investigation by 'Amnesty International' has established that many people have been detained 'solely because they exercised non-violently their right of freedom of expression and association'.

March 1990 – the second anniversary of the creation of Ansar-3 – was chosen by the *Israeli-Palestinian Human Rights Committee* (IPHRC) as the focus of a month-long campaign against Administrative Detention.

At a January 23 meeting attended by representatives of sixteen organizations, the general lines of the

campaign were laid out. It was to include panel discussions, demonstrations, lobbying in the Knesset, visits by Knesset Members to Ansar-3 and the publication of reports on Administrative Detention. Each of the 16 groups participating undertook to organise one event in a month-long campaign. The campaign was launched with an open letter to Defence Minister Rabin, signed by IPHRC-coordinators Edy Kaufman and Adv. Darwish Nasser, who is also an ICIPP member. A few days later, Rabin's subordinates detained Gaza lawyer Mahmoud Abu Sha'aban, a former Administrative Detainee. On this occasion the detention lasted only a few hours, but long enough to prevent him from speaking on Administrative Detention at the meeting organized by the *Haifa Coordination Committee of Peace Groups*.

In addition to press-conferences held by the IPHRC, *Yesh G'vul* organised a discussion in the Journalists' House of Jerusalem; twelve members of the *Palestinian Center for Non-Violence* held a day of fast; a conference about 'Administrative Detention and Halachic (Jewish-religious) Law' was sponsored by the religious peace group *Netivot Shalom*; and *Israelis by Choice* organized a discussion with former Administrative Detainees. *B'tzelem* (the Ratz-connected Human Rights Information Center) published a report on the subject.

In spite of the fact that the fall of the government overshadowed other political issues, the campaign did succeed in getting quite a good press coverage. Another highlight of the campaign were the exchanges between former Administrative Detainees and Israelis – some of whom had been detained in the same way ... under British rule, before 1948.

The campaign was concluded on April 4, with the visit to Ansar-3 Detention Camp by six Arab Knesset Members – including the one from Labor. On the following press conference in Be'er Sheva they denounced the bad prison conditions which they had seen: the prisoners' leadership had recently been segregated from the others and placed in wire-mesh cages, so

overcrowded 'that it would be a shame even for a zoo'. Another participant in the press conference was a reserve soldier, fresh from a term of military service at Ansar-3, who was willing to give eye-witness testimony.

The six KMs concluded with a joint statement extensively quoted by the press: *Our support for any government is conditional upon its undertaking to dismantle the Ansar-3 camp and free its inmates.*

Contact: IPHRC, P.O.B. 19786, Jerusalem.

Same prison. Different wing.

In Hasharon Prison there is a wing for 'criminal youth'. The 'criminals' are young Israelis. It is good to hear that the young criminals are allowed to have telephone calls home, weekend leaves, contact with social workers, and gymnastics. It is good to hear that here and there in Israel certain liberal ideas have reached the prisons.

In the same Hasharon Prison there is another wing for youth who are considered to be 'a danger to security'. These 'security dangers' are all Intifada-boys.

According to the newly founded *Committee to Defend Imprisoned Minors* (CDIM) the liberal ideas have not yet entered this wing. Therefore, for the about hundred boys aged from 12 to 18: no phonecalls, no weekend leaves, no social workers, no gymnastics.

After gathering information from families and lawyers, CDIM published a harrowing list of complaints. It was brought to the attention of Knesset Members and organizations such as *The Association for Civil Rights* (ACRI) and the Council for Children's Rights. The complaints include direct humiliations and beatings and also 'subtle' cruelties like confiscating study material, books, and photographs of parents.

In one recent case, a guard entered a cell in the middle of the night to count the boys. After having an argument with one of the nine boys, the guard started to beat the boy; the cell-mates pro-

tested; twenty more guards came in with sticks; all nine boys were beaten and isolated.

Based on CDIM's material, a local paper in a nearby town published an extensive article about Hasharon Prison, centering on Aron Burkan, aged 17, sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. Burkan was found guilty of throwing stones and Molotov cocktails – no damage caused.

As the other imprisoned boys explained, Aron Burkan is a special target. He is regularly beaten in front of the others. Once he was tied to a gate which was subsequently closed. A thirteen year old who cried when he saw it, was thereupon beaten himself and put in isolation. Whenever Aron Burkan's parents visit him he has his hands and feet handcuffed. This, however, will not be the case for some time to come. On April 16, a collective punishment was imposed: no visits at all in this wing of Hasharon prison for two months.

Besides bringing these facts to light, CDIM has taken up the project of creating a library for the Hasharon prisoners. So far 500 books in English, Arabic and Hebrew have been collected and donated. At first the Prison Administration refused to accept them, but changed its mind after CDIM enlisted the support of 'Lahav' – the semi-official Prisoners' Help Association, headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Etzioni. The Prison Administration promised to make the library available to all prisoners, Palestinian as well as Israeli. Past experience has shown, however, that careful monitoring is necessary to ensure that such promises are kept.

The CDIM has not, so far, succeeded in convincing the authorities of the Megiddo prison to give permission for a similar library project. Three hundred boys (and 1200 adults) are held prisoner there. In the Megiddo prison the only reading material permitted is the Koran.

It is difficult for the CDIM to contact the visiting families, since the prison guards chase the Committee's activists from the gate.

The local Women in Black got

wind of tear gas being used inside the prison against the young. They held a vigil at the Megiddo prison gates, on April 17.

At the Abu Kabir Detention Center in Tel-Aviv, a small number of Palestinian boys are incarcerated. In this prison only direct family members can visit. The foster parents of two orphans were prevented from seeing their adopted sons. After the intervention of CDIM this abuse ended.

Also, several prisoners who had been denied visits because of faulty registration by the prison personnel, are now receiving visits by their families.

Contacts: CDIM c/o Maya Dvash,
9 Yoseph Eliyahu St., Tel-Aviv
tel:03-285971/227334;
or: Lily Traubin, Kibbutz Megiddo.

Intifada and learning

In 1988, after some months of Intifada, all West Bank schools had been closed. More than a year, and many protests later (*TOI-37, p.10*) the elementary and high schools reopened (July 1989). However, within a few weeks the military government already ordered all schools to observe a months-long vacation, despite the request of the Palestinian teachers to dispense with the summer holidays.

Since the end of that 'vacation' schools have been closed down one by one, in retaliation for 'incidents in which their pupils had been involved'. The army maintains regular patrols near the schools. A group of three pupils walking or standing together already constitutes 'an incident', for which the kids may be arrested and sentenced to 6 months, on charges of 'holding an illegal gathering'.

Members of the Haifa-based Committee in Defence of Children Under Occupation (CDCUO) had, for a long time, been engaged in weekly distributing materials for self-study to the children of Jenin. The official reopening did not make much of a difference. In Jenin alone, four schools suffered new periods of closure. The CDCUD simply continued its weekly visits to the town and the neighboring

refugee camp, with learning materials and instruments for self-expression. Thanks to new volunteers, among them students of Haifa University, activities could be extended. At Jenin Refugee Camp a permanent headquarters was set up in a rented room, where games and a library are made available to the children of the camp.

On March 16 a 'Day of Open Learning' was held. At the center of the refugee camp 500 children, boys and girls of the primary school age, received 'learning and creativity sheets' from dozens of Jewish and Arab volunteers; with the volunteers' assistance, they read, studied and drew.

Contact: CDCUO, P.O.Box 44984,
Haifa 31448, Israel.

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All institutions of higher learning in the Occupied Territories had been closed down since the beginning of the Intifada, and their closure remained in force after the school reopening. The universities do maintain an underground existence, holding regular lectures in private houses; however, there are limits to what can be done without access to libraries and laboratories. The issue of university closures was taken up by different groups in the Israeli universities, such as Campus and Tzavta (students) and Ad Kan (lecturers). On the university campuses, there are regular rallies and protest meetings with Palestinian students and lecturers invited to speak. On the 1st of March, a group of Israelis, students and lecturers, accompanied their Bir-Zeit counterparts in an attempt to enter the closed Bir-Zeit campus, and were dispersed together by the army.

The organized academic world, however, is refraining from solidarity with colleagues under occupation. In the Senate of Tel-Aviv University, a motion to discuss the university closures was rejected. The administrations of other uni-

versities did not even get to the stage of motions. On March 7, Prof. Dani Amit of the Hebrew University announced that he will boycott the annual meeting of the Israeli Society of Physicists, because of the society's failure to condemn the deportation of Palestinian physicist Taysir Aruri, and the detention without trial of several other physicists. On the 22nd of the same month, two hundred lecturers of Tel-Aviv University threatened to go on strike if the Senate would not take a position against the university closures in the Occupied Territories.

On student union level, resolutions condemning the closures are more common. But in March, the Labour-affiliated student faction in control of the Tel-Aviv student union, was taken over by hawks who support Yitzchak Rabin; as a result, the union's previous position on the university closures was reversed.

Nevertheless, on April 25 a day of protest against university closures was held on the grass at the campus of Tel-Aviv University, with the participation of Israeli and Palestinian academics and artists. This event, a united initiative of all peace groups in the university, attracted a big crowd and got considerable TV coverage. In many of the speeches, the policies of the University Administration were criticized together with those of the government.

The issue of university closures was several times raised in the Knesset Education Committee, at the initiative of members who are themselves university lecturers, such as KM Amnon Rubinstein of Shinuy, a former Dean of the Tel-Aviv Law School. Not only Labour doves, but even the hawkish KM Michael Bar-Zohar, joined in the pressure on fellow-Laborite Rabin, then still Minister of Defence.

Of probably greater importance was the European Community's decision to suspend scientific exchanges with the Israeli universities. In February, Rabin announced the 'gradual' reopening of the colleges, hinting at the possibility that universities will be reopened 'at a later date'. However, only three colleges out of 16 were reopened

before the government fell. Further developments are dependent on the next government's position, and especially on the identity of the next Defence Minister.

The struggle for equal rights

In the Occupied Territories, the population as a whole is waging a struggle to end Israeli rule and establish an independent state – the intifada.

The 700,000 Palestinians who are citizens of Israel feel a strong solidarity with the intifada – and there is a rise in what the police calls 'nationalist incidents', such as stone-throwing, the writing of Palestinian nationalist graffiti, the raising of Palestinian flags, etc. Nevertheless, inside the pre-'67 borders these remain the acts of small, scattered groups. In general, the Israeli Arabs express solidarity for their rebellious brothers in the Occupied Territories by gathering food and medicines, but themselves feel no inclination to revolt. Their own struggle is not to get rid of Israeli rule, but to achieve, in the state of Israel, a real equality and a full integration. Those things have been promised to them by all Israeli governments, and are inscribed in Israel's Declaration of Independence, but even the smallest step towards their implementation requires a hard struggle and many sacrifices.

On March 30, 1976 – the first 'Land-Day' – six of Israel's Arab citizens had to be shot down, by what is supposedly their own country's army, before the government conceded that Arabs – like everybody else – have the right to hold a general strike in support of their political demands.

In 1981, the Begin government outlawed the first attempt to set up a comprehensive leadership for Israel's Arab citizens; yet now such a leadership exists and the government de facto recognises it. This leadership – the Committee of Arab Mayors, in which Arab Knesset Members and public figures also participate – enjoys wide authority, and its calls for general strikes are universally heeded.

Following the 1989 municipal elections, the Arab mayors found themselves holding the balance, in the powerful General Association of Israeli Mayors, between the Labor mayors and those of the Likud. Soon afterwards, Jewish mayors belonging to both major parties took the totally unprecedented step of participating in demonstrations and rallies organised by the Arab Mayors' Committee and declaring their support for the Arabs' demands.

These events took place in the context of a major campaign, in which the Arab municipalities – nearing financial collapse – demand immediate government relief. A more far-reaching demand is the rectification of the infamous inequality in the allocation of governmental budgets, where Jewish municipalities receive, per capita, up to four times as much as their Arab counterparts. In protest, municipal services were stopped for a long period and the whole Arab population held a general strike on February 26.

The government did offer an agreement with the commercial banks, to re-schedule the Arab municipalities' debts; however, as regards the overall budgetary policy, government officials so far confined themselves to general promises.

On March 30 took place the – by now traditional – general strike of 'Land-Day'. In different Arab population centers, from the Galilee in the north to the Bedouin towns and encampments in the Negev, Arab as well as Jewish speakers addressed big crowds (*see box next page*). Over the past few years, a tacit understanding has been established between the government and the Arab leadership about the maintenance of 'law and order' on such days: police and military forces are not to enter the Arab towns and villages during the strike, while the mayors take responsibility for keeping the demonstrations and rallies orderly, and for preventing violent outbreaks.

On this 'Land-Day', too, most events passed quietly. However, on the main road near the town of Taibeh, things got out of hand: the (possibly accidental) appearance

of military trucks provoked a group of youths to start throwing stones; the stone-throwing spread along the road; police forces started to chase the boys, who set tyres on fire; a youth pulled out a knife and stabbed a policeman; the other police charged into the town, beating up anyone who 'looked suspicious'; dozens of boys were detained and taken away by a convoy of police cars.

In the media, the confrontation at the outskirts of Taibeh got a 'colourful' coverage. Even so, the Israeli public gradually gets used to the fact that the Arab citizens are now an organized political force which no one can ignore.

Bedouin rights

On Land Day 1990, General (Res.) Matti Peled of the ICIPP was one of the speakers at a rally organised by the Association for the Defence of Bedouin Rights.

The rally took place at the village of the Abu Qaf Bedouin tribe.

Several 'illegal' houses in this village had recently been destroyed, and no less than two hundred are threatened.

The whole tribe participated in the rally, men and women, young and old.

The following is taken from Matti Peled's speech.

I have come to encourage you who are here – and all the other Negev Bedouins in demanding your rights, which have been denied to you since the establishment of the state of Israel. The government scheme to get all the Bedouins of the Negev concentrated in townships, devoid of any means of subsistence, is aimed at establishing a pool of cheap labour for the benefit of Jewish farms and enterprises – a situation similar to that of South Africa.

The Bedouins have a long and noble tradition as shepherds and cultivators of their lands. It is your elementary right to adhere to your culture and way of life.

You demand to be allowed to build your homes on the part left to you of the lands you inhabited since early times; to get the means to develop agricultural farms on it; and to go on living in dignity and in accordance with your traditions.

These demands are wholeheartedly supported by all those who wish to see peace and equality in Israel and elsewhere.

Ongoing struggle

■ *On March 3, a delegation of Israelis and Palestinians for Non-Violence visited the West Bank town of Beit-Sahur. The following account was given by Amos Gvirtz. The town is quiet. Here and there roadblocks of stones which are only partially removed to let vehicles pass. The only tension is when a military jeep passes by.*

We meet with a group of the local residents for an exchange of ideas. We tell them about our organization which encourages non-violent forms of political struggle, and about how impressed we are by the Beit-Sahur population's refusal to pay taxes. We feel that the Israeli authorities are very afraid of this form of struggle. This was shown by the extreme efforts on the part of the army to break Beit-Sahur's tax rebellion, efforts in the course of which the army turned into a band of robbers (see TOI-38, p.1).

The Beit-Sahur residents want to convey, through us, a message to the Israeli people. The essence of the message, repeated again and again, is that *Palestinians want peace with Israel - a peace between two peoples, who live in two states - peacefully and with mutual cooperation.* They want to achieve a dialogue with Israelis from all parts of the political spectrum. It is important for them to understand why Palestinian aspirations are rejected by the Israelis. They fight the occupation, not Israelis as such. They want Israelis to understand why they refuse to pay taxes to the occupation authorities. They do not want any material support from us, to compensate for the property and money stolen from them. They greatly appreciate our moral support. They say: *The army can deport, destroy houses, rob property and kill, but it cannot destroy our willpower.*

Throughout the whole visit they were afraid that soldiers would suddenly appear and expell us from the city. It is an absurd situation: a group of non-violent Israelis and Palestinians sitting together with beating hearts, apprehensive that the Israeli army might find out about their common desire for peace and justice...

■ *On the morning of April 14, 1989, the name of Nahalin – a small West Bank village – appeared in news broadcasts throughout the world. During the previous night, Israeli 'Border Guards' had rampaged through the village and shot down four of its inhabitants (TOI-36, p.9). On the anniversary of that tragic night, Peace Now activists set out for a solidarity visit to Nahalin. Ehud Spiegel was there.*

Near the Jerusalem Theatre, some fifty activists had gathered and a line of private cars stood ready to go, when we heard the news on the radio that *anticipating the arrival of Israeli agitators the army had declared the whole area of Nahalin to be a 'closed military zone', and had erected roadblocks.* There followed an excited consultation on the perennial question of whether to defy the closure and risk a violent confrontation with the army, or to give in and let ourselves be sent home. The policy for the day was satisfactorily defined by one of the organisers: *If an army officer finds us and presents us with a legally-binding closure order, we will obey; but we will try not to let the officer find us in the first place.*

We set off after scraping Peace Now stickers and other signs that might betray our identity from the windshields. We traveled in convoy; the driver of the first car knew the Nahalain area like the palm of his hand. Near the village of Husan, we spotted an army roadblock in front of us. The lead car turned into a sidetrack, and everybody followed. The soldiers at the roadblock did not seem to be specially interested, but we could not be sure that information about our manoeuvres was not transmitted by field-telephone.

We traveled for some time along a wadi, clearly intended for donkeys rather than cars. The track became worse and worse, and at a certain point we stopped the cars. Two demonstrators volunteered to stay and guard them, while the rest continued on foot.

After about a kilometer's walk, we met our friends from Nahalin who were looking for us. There was not much time wasted on exclamations of enthusiasm. We all wanted to be inside Nahalin, before the army

would find out.

We entered the village. On the hills surrounding the village we could see the military lookouts, but there did not seem to be a large force present. Those who had been here in July 1989 remembered how the soldiers had come down from the hills and started shooting (TOI-38, p.5).

We went into the school building, in order to prevent the lookouts from noticing 'a suspicious crowd'. Inside we had a chance to talk with the villagers in a more relaxed way and hear about their situation. Then we set off in small groups, for the scene of last year's killings. Since our previous visit, a stone monument had been erected for the four *Shadids* (martyrs). The entire wall of a nearby building, painted as a giant Palestinian flag, had (so far) escaped the attention of the military. We stood around the stone, and there were several short speeches. One of the inhabitants translated from Arabic into Hebrew and vice-versa. I knew the man already; he is Nahalin's contact-person with the Israeli peace movement.

I had a chance to speak with him. There was one thing bothering him especially: *Before, if you were on the Shabak (Israeli secret police) 'most wanted' list, you had to face arrest and torture. Now, when they catch a 'most wanted' man, they just shoot him on the spot, and declare that he was 'killed while trying to escape'.*

While we were talking, a masked youth went quickly through the crowd, distributing leaflets, and then disappeared. There were two kinds of leaflets: one about the lives of the four *Shadids*, the other extending warm greetings to the Israeli peace movement, for its support of Palestinian independence.

We had been in Nahalin for two hours, and the army had not shown up. Our purpose had been achieved, and we turned back home. As I said goodbye to my Palestinian friend, I expressed my fear that the army would come later, as soon as we had left. He answered: *Yes, they might come, they might punish us for having contact with you. Still, it was worthwhile.*

The Alawneh family

Asmahan Alawneh, from the West Bank village Jaba, arrived wounded at Hasharon Prison on December 24.

The Israeli army wanted her brother. They had arrested him inside the house. At the occasion he received six bullets in his knees, and became a cripple for life. Another daughter of the family, aged 15, was shot dead, as was a cousin of that age. A little brother, aged four, was wounded.

After the soldiers 'finished', they took not only the brother but also Asmahan.

Women For Political Prisoners, with help of the Association for Human Rights, launched a campaign to get Asmahan free.

As usual the prosecution proposed a 'deal': Asmahan should admit that she had threatened a soldier and then would get a 'reasonable' prison term. Adv. Hussein did not accept.

A big flood of letters had arrived at the authorities' desk, among them letters from prominent public figures in different countries. On April 5, Alawneh was suddenly set free with all charges dropped.

Contact WOFPP POBox 31811 Tel-Aviv

■ *April 17, marked by Palestinians as a day of solidarity with the prisoners. Throughout the Occupied Territories there were demonstrations. In the Gaza Strip, over forty demonstrators were wounded in a clash with the army.*

Among the Israeli peace activists, who also demonstrated their concern for the situation of the Palestinian prisoners, nobody was wounded. Nevertheless, it is far from easy to stand in the centre of Tel-Aviv with slogans expressing solidarity with 'the enemy'.

□ About 25 women – joined by a few men – picketed the Defence Ministry at the call of Women for Political Prisoners and Democratic Women. Placards, calling for an end to imprisonment without trial and immediate closure of the huge 'Ansar-3' detention camp in the Negev Desert, were waved. Towards the end of the vigil, a group of passing soldiers noticed a press photographer filming the demonstration. Accusing her of photographing 'a restricted military object' (the Defence Ministry, which is located in the heart of

Tel-Aviv) the soldiers demanded the film and camera, and the photographer's identity card. Some demonstrators crowded around the soldiers, reminding them that they have the right of search and confiscation only in the Occupied Territories. After several minutes, the soldiers brought two policemen to their support – but, by that time, the press photographer was no longer present, nor was her camera.

□ Later that day, another vigil took place at Dizengoff Square. Past experience had shown this square to be an inhospitable environment for peace demonstrators. The young members of Halah HaKibush (Stop the Occupation) were prepared to take the risk. They did not only bring slogans but also came themselves dressed as prisoners.

Soon there developed a sharp and emotional debate with a group of soldiers on leave from the Gaza Strip. Thereupon the loiterers, who spend their days around the fountain at the center of the square, joined the discussion. For three-quarters of an hour the demonstrators stood at the center of a growing crowd, with dozens of debates going on simultaneously. When a group of 'Moledet' (Fatherland Party) members appeared on the scene, the debate degenerated into a shouting match accompanied by blows. The 30 peace demonstrators, who could only save their placards by folding them, retreated slowly and in a compact mass.

■ At the Women's Peace Conference, held in Brussels on May 1989, and attended by prominent Israeli and Palestinian women, a declaration was adopted and signed by all participants, calling for peace based on the two-state solution. Ever since, the Reshet (Network) women's organization has been collecting additional signatures, reaching both to female members of the establishment and to poor women of the slums. To conclude this campaign, Reshet planned to hold a public meeting on the dividing line between East and West Jerusalem. The police refused to grant permission, claiming that the events of the '1990:

Time for Peace' demonstration (TOI-40, p.10) proved that demonstrations in this area provoke violence. Reshet appealed to the Supreme Court, which approved the holding of the meeting on a grass plot, near the Old City's Jaffa Gate, at the junction of the two Jerusalem.

On International Women's Day (March 8) hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian women participated in the ceremony. On the Israeli side, there were many members of the Labor Party, the most prominent being Masha Lubelski, head of Na'amat - women's section of the Histadrut Trade Union Federation. Also present was Tamar Bar-Lev, wife of (then still) Police Minister Chaim Bar-Lev. The Palestinian women included supporters of all PLO factions. In their name, Zuhira Kamal of East Jerusalem stated: *On this day, two Palestinians were killed, one of them a ten-year old girl. On this very day, we Palestinian women have come to extend our hand in peace to the Israeli women.*

■ On April 13, the state prosecution published the results of its investigation of police conduct during the 'time for peace' demonstration. The report strongly condemned the police, stating: *The chaos and the escalation of events were caused neither by the demonstrators holding hands around the Old City Wall, nor by the Arab crowds, but by ill-considered actions of the police.* The police had no choice but retracting its earlier claim that *all policemen had acted correctly.* Four policemen are now to be put on trial for 'using force unnecessarily'. Yair Most - chief of the Old City Police - was sacked.

Peace Now claims that, in fact, Most was not the real culprit, and that he was made into a scapegoat to divert attention from the higher echelons - including the political level - where the police provocation originated (TOI-40, p.10).

■ On April 16, Peace Now again had an occasion to demonstrate at the Old City, this time to protest the invasion of the Old City's Christian Quarter by nationalist settlers. As usual, the venue for the demonstration was a matter of hard negotiations with the police. The bulk of the 250 demonstrators

had to stay outside the Old City Wall; only a few were allowed to approach the 'hot spot'. Outside the walls, the demonstrators shouted slogans calling for the settlers' immediate removal, as well as the eviction of Likud hardliner Ariel Sharon, who also established himself in the Old City.

There was a constant stream of visitors: Christian and Muslim religious leaders; extreme-right KM Geula Cohen, who attempted to tear the Peace Now placards and had to be restrained by the police; and members of the religious Netivot Shalom movement, who joined the Peace Now people, with placards calling the settlers' act 'a blasphemy'.

Contact: Peace Now, P.O.Box 24288 Jerusalem

Expensive graffiti

Five young kibbutzniks have been sentenced, on April 10, to two months' suspended imprisonment and a fine of 750 Shekels (about \$375) each, on charges of 'defacing real property'. The five were caught by the police in Be'er Sheva's commercial center while writing slogans on the walls.

They wrote:

I AM A REFUSER - END THE OCCUPATION - EXTRADITE RABIN TO THE POPULAR COMMITTEES - LONG LIVE FREE PALESTINE.

Judge Tzvi Segal explained that, though the charge was not serious, the punishment had to be 'in order to deter others'.

The five will soon be drafted to the army (*Yediot Aharonot*, 11.4.1990).

□ *On the same April 16, Green Line-Israelis and Palestinians for Peace organized a demonstration - at the request of Ramallah residents - to protest the murderous actions of military snipers. The latest case had happened in Ramallah: At noon, on Thursday 5 April, a man in military uniform shot a single 'rubber' bullet at 16-year-old Mustafa Ali Tal Shrakeh, killing him. According to numerous eyewitness testimonies, collected by the Ramallah-based Al-Haq human rights organization, there was no stone-throwing or any other incident happening at the time. It was the*

19th such case documented by Al-Haq and reported by Amnesty International.

Maxine Nun participated in the demonstration.

There were about 15 of us - Green Liners, Women in Black, radical youth from Tel-Aviv and at least one religious peacenick. There would have been more except that many people feared that participation in our demo would force them to miss the Peace Now protest against the settlers in the Christian Quarter. Also, to avoid being stopped before reaching our destination, we refrained from giving details by phone, limiting our day and a half of recruiting to word-of-mouth. Our taxi drivers took back roads to Ramallah, in order to avoid the roadblocks.

We arrived without incident and lined up along the sidewalk facing the building from which snipers had killed Mustafa. Uniformed men with guns looked down as we looked up (but snipers don't shoot Jews!).

In due course, the soldiers came with the obligatory order closing the area to nonresidents. We had accomplished our aim - we had stood with our signs, in solidarity with Ramallah's embattled population, been seen by them, by the army, and by WTN (world television news). So it was time to leave for the Old City demonstration - not to risk arrest or confrontation. As we walked towards the Jerusalem-bound service-taxi stand, a soldier became furious, shoved one demonstrator and kicked another in the stomach, then began ripping our still-unfurled cloth signs from our hands. Another soldier scuffled with the first one, while bystanders applauded.

Leaving the soldiers to deal with this situation, we piled into cabs and started to leave. Suddenly the army - which, except for the 'renegade', had satisfied itself with letting off a 'sound bomb' and asking us officially to leave - let loose with tear-gas, which they sprayed and shot all around the taxis and on whoever was unlucky enough to be on the streetcorner. We hurriedly shut the cab-windows, sealing ourselves inside with a nice dose of gas.

■ As part of the settlement drive in the Occupied Territories, the Shamir government announced its intention to establish in the Gaza Strip a settlement named 'Dugit' (Fisherboat).

Peace Now activists developed a nation-wide telephone-chain in order to be on the spot when the new settlement was to be inaugurated. The exact date was kept secret, but sympathetic journalists promised to leak it to Peace Now as soon as the settlers invited them to the ceremony.

On April 25, the two o'clock news of Ga'aley Tzahal (the army radio) announced the unexpected arrival of the first settlers at the Dugit location. The telephone chain mobilized dozens of Peace Now activists from all over the country; by half past four, they had gathered in Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, at the pre-'67 border.

With a big contingent of kibbutzniks, Peace Now, on the same afternoon, confronted the settlers near the contested new settlement - as near as the army would let them. There were placards like *While the fisherboat is sailing, peace is drowning*; on one placard there was a cartoon in which Shamir was the sailor, who did not see the cataract just beyond. Avi Farchan - a settler leader notorious for his extremism - showed up, to help 'the poor newcomers'. The Peace Now group shouted: *Dugit won't be, and We will come back.*

The army and police on the spot felt the need to temporarily prohibit the cars of the 'new inhabitants' from entering the road to their new 'homes'. They guessed - rightly so - that the crowd of a hundred angry peace activists would become quite uncontrollable if others would have access to what they had been told was 'a closed military zone'. When an army officer complained over the loudspeaker that 'all this is diverting manpower from patrolling the refugee camps nearby', he was warmly applauded by the peace crowd.

The moment of truth was the end of the demonstration: The Peace Now activists sang Hatikva - and the self-styled ultra-nationalists fell silent, unable to bring them-

selves to join in the national hymn.

■ On the following day, April 26, there was, at the same location, another Peace Now demonstration. Peace Now succeeded to actually synchronize its protest with the arrival of a caravan of more new settlers. When bulldozers were set to prepare the ground for building houses, some Peace Now activists threw themselves before them. There started a violent confrontation with the settlers, one of whom drove his bulldozer forward. A Mapam youth's hand was hit, and slightly wounded. Another settler attempted to empty a truck full of earth upon the demonstrators. After heated debate, filmed by an Israeli television crew, the Peace Now, activists were violently removed by soldiers.

Adam Keller released, exempted

by Beate Keizer

When Adam Keller was released on March 1, having been kept in the isolation ward of the Atlit military prison for 28 days, he had the exemption paper in his hands, exemption from reserve service based on a psychiatric report, a 'medical profile-21' - well-known among Israelis.

A.K.: Of course, the army knows very well that I was not exempted for psychiatric reasons but for my political stance. The Israeli law does not provide the citizen with a right to refuse military service for reasons of conscience. 'Profile-21' is a backdoor way out. In general it is considered a shameful stigma. By informing everybody, and by having it published in big headlines over interviews in the daily press, I really seem to have broken a taboo. I stated that I am not ashamed of anything. It is the army which should be ashamed of what it is doing in the Occupied Territories. If such an army calls me 'crazy', then crazy I am proud to be.

How did your fellow-prisoners react to your being a 'leftist intellectual'? Did you have difficulties with them?

A.K.: On the contrary, I succeeded

in establishing good rapport. I was imprisoned with conscripts, who had in one way or another come into conflict with the rigid discipline of the army. Those whom I met in the 'isolation ward' are the men who, when angry, don't keep silent. Most of them are from the lower social strata, slum neighborhoods or 'Development Towns'. Usually they have right-wing ideas about the Arabs.

Being in conflict with the military system and hating the prison guards do not prevent them from holding very nationalistic views. But these prisoners also have a strong feeling of solidarity with each other, and I was included in this solidarity. They regarded me as a fellow trouble-maker.

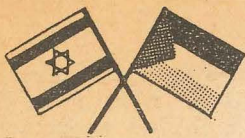
I should explain that being in the 'isolation ward' does not mean that you are alone in a cell; it means that you are a 'dangerous one', who must be isolated from the 'normal' prisoners. I got there because of my refusal to wear a military uniform, and because after the guards dressed me by force, I started a hunger strike which I continued for two weeks. The other prisoners could not stand seeing me not touch the food on my plate, three times a day. One of them even offered me a little food from his plate swearing 'not to tell the guards'. When my fellow prisoners saw me refusing to address the guards as 'Sir' - a policy which I continued until the end - they appreciated my defiance, though they did not share my politics.

A prisoner's appeal

Mahmud Masarwa, the trade unionist known for his efforts to unite Jewish and Arab workers and imprisoned on dubious "espionage" charges (*TOI-38, p.12*) is being victimised at Ramleh Prison. The prison has a separate ward for drug addicts; Masarwa, though not an addict, was placed in this ward, where constant shouting and screaming makes it nearly impossible to sleep or read; all his requests to be moved to the "normal" ward were refused.

Letters of protest to: *The Warden, Ramleh Prison, Ramleh, Israel.*

Copies to: *P.O.Box 26097, Tel-Aviv.*



As a matter of fact, this refusal to say 'Yes, Sir' infuriated the prison authorities more than anything else. And they did not know how to react to it. They threatened me with physical violence, they threatened me with more days of imprisonment – and I knew that they could have added up to 70 days, without a court martial.

The fact that I was not intimidated by their threats and did not lose my calmness frustrated them extremely. Their normal pattern of breaking the resistance of prisoners requires that anyone who dares to resist starts to curse them, then they have a pretext for becoming violent. They felt – and soon got confirmation – that I was not alone, that I had a world of support behind me.

They became uneasy about me. The amazing amount of letters from all over the world and the articles about my case in the Israeli press did not please them at all. They wanted to get rid of me as soon as possible.

In fact I got a better treatment than other prisoners. Although I practised defiance I was not beaten and I was never punished by being handcuffed.

Handcuffs – hands tied behind the back, and the feet tied as well – is one of the routine cruelties. All of us know about cruelty to Palestinians. Few realise that the cruelty is seeping into the internal relations of Israeli society. There are young soldiers who can't stand it any longer and try to commit suicide, or announce that they might do so. Such boys are automatically handcuffed for at least 24 hours. After several hours with the hands cuffed behind the back there is great pain in the shoulders, and when the prisoner complains, the only reaction is to make the handcuffs tighter.

How do you feel now that you are totally out of the army?

A.K.: In a strange way I feel amputated. A part of my life – the army – is cut off. People abroad will probably have difficulty understanding what the army is in the life of an Israeli male. After three years as a conscript, there is

one month (at least) of reserve duty each year until the age of 55. People sometimes grumble at the inconvenience, but they accept it as a part of life. When two strangers meet, the first question is 'how do you make a living', and the second is 'what do you do in the army'. Still I felt that I had no other choice. Four soldiers, who beat a father to death in front of his children were pardoned and returned to their unit. From that moment on, I could not bear the thought of wearing the same uniform.

Thanks to all

During my month in Athlit Military Prison I received hundreds of letters from all over the world expressing solidarity and moral support. I'm sure this massive flow of letters helped convince the military authorities to treat me with respect. I want to thank everyone for their endeavors on my behalf. Since it is quite impossible to write to everybody personally I would like through this open letter to express my appreciation to all those who:

- sent me individual expressions of solidarity.
- sent letters and telegrams of protest to the Defence Minister
- organized and signed petitions
- distributed leaflets
- bombarded the Israeli press with the latest news
- faxed bulletins in all directions
- demonstrated in London and Washington at Israeli embassies
- held daily vigils at the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv

It is good to have so many friends!

Yours, Adam Keller

Are you not afraid that people will feel that you have chosen an easy way out?

A.K.: That is not at all what I encounter. There are people who disagree with the principle of 'disobeying legal orders', or of refusing to serve in the army. But people do not take lightly the stigma of the 'profile-21' – which blocks all governmental jobs and many others as well, and which

even makes it difficult to get a driver's licence. This is the fate of the men with whom I was in prison. After many months of humiliation and violence, they have no choice but to accept the 'profile-21'. Men who, had they been born in other circumstances, probably would have been considered to be 'leadership material'. I feel that taking the same door out of the army and shouting to everybody is also an act of solidarity with them. I want to do what I can to let Israeli society know what is happening behind the closed doors of the military prison's 'isolation ward'; that there is usually nothing wrong with the boys who end up with '21'.

Adam Keller wrote an extensive report about the prison conditions. It includes his own observations and the testimonies of two fellow prisoners, whom he interviewed in the cell. The full report was published in Zu HaDerech. An English translation can be ordered through P.O.B. 956, Tel-Aviv 61008, Israel. We kindly ask you to send us a small donation, if possible, to cover the expense of distributing the report (make checks payable to Beate Keizer).

Unspeakable

Since being founded in February 1989, B'Tzelem, (*The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*) has succeeded in establishing a reputation, among Israeli as well as foreign journalists. It recently received the Human Rights Prize established by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

B'Tzelem is always submitting its reports to the Military Censor, before publication. It seems, however, that this is not enough: on April 6, the Censor demanded that B'Tzelem also submit to him any information it intends to tell journalists by word of mouth. B'Tzelem rejected this 'manifestly illegal' demand (*Kol Ha'ir*, April 13).

Contact: B'tzelem, 8 Hatibonim St., Jerusalem 92386.