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HUNGRY FOR PEACE

June 6, 1991

Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir chose today, the double anniversary of the Six-Day-War and the Lebanon War, as the date on which to declare officially his rejection of President Bush's terms for a Middle East peace conference - thus putting in question the whole initiative undertaken by the U.S. administration over the past months.

There were endless discussions about formalities and modalities, subtle nuances and distinctions comprehensible only to professional diplomats. But the reality behind all this is quite straightforward: a successful Middle East peace conference - whatever its format - would inevitably lead to Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. Shamir dedicated fifty years of his life to the ideal of "Greater Israel" and is totally opposed to such a withdrawal. Therefore, he tries everything in his power to avoid entering the conference. And should he after all be forced to attend a peace conference, Shamir would still use any possible trick to prevent it from reaching a successful conclusion.

Shamir may be induced to change his mind; the Likud Party may be induced to change its leader; a change may even occur in the identity of Israel's ruling party (though the opposition Labor Party is in disarray) - but to bring any of these changes about, enormous pressure needs to be exerted: pressures inside Israel, pressure from the organised peace movement and pressure from unorganised Israelis - many of them Likud voters - who are fed up; pressure from a million and a half disenfranchised Palestinians, who resist the perpetual military rule; pressure from the international community and international public opinion, and in particular - from the United States.

What is required is not only pressure from outside, nor just pressure "from below", but a convergence of pressures. Developments throughout the world, in the past two years, have shown that when such convergence occurs, the impossible sometimes comes true.

The editor

Like nobody else, 64-years old Abie Nathan managed to be all his life a controversial man and, at the same time, to become a sort of "national institution". After having been for years a combat pilot, he devoted the rest of his life to the cause of peace and human understanding.

Born in Iran and growing up in India, Nathan enlisted in the R.A.F. during World War II. In the 1948 War of Independence he participated in creating the Israeli Air Force. He never could get used to the idea that this war was followed by peace. As a result, he turned to the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

Already a wealthy man, he startled the Israeli public in 1966 by taking off in his airplane, on a private peace mission to Egypt - whose President Nasser was regarded by the average Israeli as a blood-thirsty monster. Nathan narrowly escaped being shot down by the Egyptians, and spent several days in an Egyptian jail. He was treated well and established friendly relations with his guards. Nathan's adventures made headlines in all Israeli papers, and the public followed them with bated breath and a lot of sympathy. Upon his return, however, the government prosecuted Nathan for "illegal entry into an enemy country" - and he spent 40 days in prison.

Nathan was, at the time, already well-known as the owner/manager/chef of "California" - a Tel-Aviv restaurant which, through him, had become a popular haunt for members of the Israeli economic, political and cultural elites. In the early 1970s, Nathan sold the restaurant (which soon afterwards had to close). He also sold his apartment - in order to finance a new project: The Voice of Peace radio station, broadcasting from "somewhere in the mediterranean", as it announces each hour in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Actually, the station's "Peace Ship" is normally moored off the Tel-Aviv shore, though once - at the height of the Lebanese Civil War - Nathan took it as near to Beirut as he could.

Soon after its inception, the Voice of Peace became extremely popular among Israeli youths. The Army Radio had to adapt and start broadcasting the kind of music which the conscripts like.

During the 1970s, Abie Nathan also got known as a philanthropist and organiser of volunteer charitable actions. He undertook relief operations to numerous countries hit by natural or man-made disaster, such as Biafra, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Cambodia, and Columbia (the latest being a mission to help Kurdish refugees in Turkey after the Gulf War).

In 1979, Nathan held a hunger strike, calling upon the Begin government to halt construction of settlements in the West Bank. He ended that 45-day long hunger strike after the Knesset unanimously called upon him to stop it, and after Menachem Begin gave him a half-promise to halt the settlements (which was, of course, not kept).

In 1982, Nathan – with the authorisation of then Defence Minister Sharon – entered besieged Beirut and met with several PLO officials, including Yasser Arafat, in an effort to achieve the release of an Israeli pilot captured by PLO troops. At that time, however, Nathan did not become an active proponent of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. In fact, for many years afterwards Nathan advocated peace in the abstract, avoiding issues subject to political debate; he concentrated on such actions as the burial of war toys, given up by youthful listeners of the Voice for Peace. The only reference to actual politics was a refrain, which is still being broadcast every hour – a recording made at Camp David, in which Begin's voice is heard promising: "No more war, no more bloodshed!"

In the 1980s, other peace activists regarded Nathan with growing suspicion, feeling that his initiatives may have the net effect of diverting youths from the concrete struggle against the occupation into an abstract, unfocused prayer for peace – easy to live with for the government. Nathan was also criticised for being a solist, making decisions alone without consulting anybody.

Be that as it may, in 1988 Abie Nathan took an important, far-reaching decision. After the PLO recognised Israel, Nathan set out, with his characteristic energy and determination, to promote dialogue with the Palestinian organization. Prosecuted in 1989 for having met with Arafat, Nathan was sentenced to half a year's imprisonment; he chose not to appeal.

During Nathan's term, the Eyal prison became a virtual place of pilgrimage; on his release, a large crowd of supporters gave him a hero's welcome (see *TOI-38, p.3, and TOI-39, p. 6-7*). Immediately after, Nathan repeated his "crime", going off to Tunis, where he participated in a press conference held by

Yasser Arafat. The beginning of Nathan's second trial was set for May 15, 1991 – with Nathan facing a maximum of four years, including a suspended one year from the former trial. Two weeks before the trial, Abie Nathan started a hunger strike, unlimited in time, demanding the abolition of the law prohibiting contacts with the PLO.

On April 28, 1991 – the twenty-fifth anniversary of his flight to Egypt – Abie Nathan established himself at the Tel-Aviv Dan Hotel, under constant medical supervision, consuming nothing but mineral water. His Dan Hotel suite – overlooking the sea – became the focal point for a constant procession of visitors: Israelis and foreigners, journalists and politicians, personal friends and complete strangers, Palestinian leaders from the Occupied Territories and Knesset Members – including several from the right. As Nathan weakened, his doctor protested against this constant demand on his energy. Except for special cases, Nathan's contact with the public was, therefore, restricted to one hour a day – when he came to a tent especially erected at the center of a Tel-Aviv square.

This "Peace Tent", in turn, became the focus for large crowds of supporters, some of whom traveled considerable distances to meet Nathan. Thus, a group of highschool students from the north of Israel, coming to see a museum in Tel-Aviv, staged a virtual mutiny, forcing their teachers to take them to Abie Nathan's tent as well.

Meanwhile, Nathan's struggle provoked a sharp debate in the Israeli press and political scene. Nathan's opponents were quick to accuse him of "emotional blackmail". Ge'ula Cohen, of the extreme right Techiya party, remarked: *Nathan's hunger strike is nourishing the PLO*. Such expressions were, however, outnumbered on the editorial pages by articles expressing enthusiastic support for Nathan and his cause.

On walls across the country, the scrawled slogan *Abie, we are hungry for peace!* appeared. Na'amat, the women's section of the Histadrut Trade Union Federation, adopted a resolution calling for abolition of the prohibition on meetings with the PLO. A group of prominent jurists – including deans of law faculties and a former Minister of Justice – condemned the law forbidding meetings with the PLO for creating a category of victimless crime; they pointed out that under this law, a person may be convicted even after proving that his acts harmed nobody.

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(Indeed, at Nathan's first trial this point was conceded by the prosecution, but was ruled by the court to be irrelevant.) In a petition, published simultaneously in five newspapers, twenty prominent writers, poets and playwrights stated:

(...) The personal suffering which Abie Nathan imposes upon himself is a justified act of protest, against a law which blocks the road to peace. We join with all our heart Abie Nathan's protest.

There was also a petition signed by university lecturers, and another one – by all Arab mayors in Israel and the heads of Arab political parties and social associations. Many of the signatories participated in one-day fasts, in solidarity with Nathan, taking place at public squares in Tel-Aviv and Nazareth. A 16-year old boy started an unlimited solidarity hunger strike – without the assistance of a medical team; at the request of the boy's father, Nathan convinced him to stop, after the boy had weakened and lost much weight.

Meanwhile, Nathan had to show up for his trial, on May 15. Immediately at the beginning, Nathan made two requests: he asked for a safe-conduct for members of the PLO, who were present at his meeting with Arafat, to come to Israel and testify at his trial; he also asked for official permission to contact the PLO headquarters in order to obtain the names and addresses of the foreign journalists who were present at the meeting. (Their presence – if proved – would make the meeting into an "international press conference" – in whose context a meeting with the PLO is not illegal.) "Unless these requests are met, my client would be severely handicapped in conducting his defence", stated Nathan's lawyer. The judge seemed perplexed, and ordered the trial adjourned until September.

At the courthouse corridor, an Israeli Television crew made a long interview with Nathan. Not one word was broadcast; Aryeh Mekel, head of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority, forbade the broadcasting of interviews with Nathan in the state radio and television, on grounds of sub-judice – a rare display of such scruples, which were for example totally absent when the settler leader Rabbi Levinger was on trial for killing an Arab.

Nathan presented an appeal against Mekel to the Supreme Court – which was rejected. It is, however, not so easy to silence completely a man who has his own radio station. Moreover, a few days later, debate on the Nathan Affair in the Knesset broke into a shouting match; the state television could not avoid broadcasting this sight – and an interview with the man who caused it.

Shinuy KM Amnon Rubinstein tabled a Private Member's Bill, which would have exempted Israeli citizens who met with the PLO from prosecution, provided that they could prove to the court *that the contact was aimed at furthering the achievement of peace between Israel and its neighbors, that the Palestinian interlocutor expressed a desire for peace, and that no damage was caused to state security.*

Labor KM Yossi Beilin intended to present a similar bill. His initiative aroused fierce debate, with

the Labor hawks claiming that "Beilin's bill will make the Labor Party look like a pro-PLO party." In the end, Beilin was forbidden by the Labor parliamentary faction to present his bill, pending a discussion by a higher party forum at an unspecified future date

Labor's decision doomed Rubinstein's bill. It got the support of Labor doves and the parties of the left, 27 votes in all, and was defeated by 43 votes of the Likud and its allies; Shimon Peres, Yitzchak Rabin and other Labor leaders were conspicuous in their absence – preferring not to expose themselves to the silent gaze of Abie Nathan, who sat throughout the vote in the visitors' gallery.

In contrast with the cool reception by the legislators, Abie Nathan received prolonged applause from a crowd estimated at 20,000 people, gathered at Tel-Aviv's Municipality Square on May 26. Nathan's appearance was the climax of an hours-long rally at which some of Israel's foremost artists – Jewish and Arab – sang peace songs; of political figures supporting Nathan's struggle, there spoke Labor dove Aryeh Eliav and the two dissident Likud mayors, Shlomo Lahat of Tel-Aviv and Eli Landau of Herzliya.

Abie Nathan started his speech with referring to the Arab villages which he bombed in 1948. *"But everywhere in the world, after war comes peace. Only in Israel it is forbidden to talk peace with the enemy."*

He had decided to go on hunger strike after seeing on television another of those violent confrontations between Israeli conscripts and Palestinians of the same age. *"These young people have to risk their lives all the time. Could I, who have already lived a full life, stay at home eating icecream without taking a risk of my own – to give them a chance to live in peace?"*

There are two kinds of hunger strike. One is like the child that refuses to eat unless his father buys him a certain toy. The other is like the child that refuses to eat unless the father stops beating the mother.

Abie Nathan (*Ha'aretz*, June 7)

At the time of writing, Abie Nathan is on the thirty-ninth day of his hunger strike. He is really becoming weak, no longer able to see anyone but a few close friends, nor to address the listeners of *The Voice of Peace*. Requests for him to stop the hunger strike arrive at the hotel day after day – from such diverse persons as PLO chair Yasser Arafat, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Knesset Speaker Dov Shilanski, who is a Likud hardliner. (Shilanski was most severely criticised by his own circle, when repeating this request on the Knesset floor.)

Nathan received a letter signed by seventy Gaza prisoners – members of different currents of the Palestinian national movement – asking him to preserve his life; a similar request came from a group of eighty rabbis, accompanied by many Talmudic quotations.

P.S. On June 6, the 40th day, Abie Nathan chose to accept the request of Israel's President, Chaim Herzog, and broke his fast at the President's residence with dozens of cameras trained on him,

stating: *My message got through.* The next morning, big ads appeared in all the papers, where 64 prominent Israelis declared their willingness to go together with Abie Nathan, within the coming 30 days, to meet with the recognised representative of the Palestinian people, in Tunis or anywhere else in the world, in order to talk about peace. Among them were ICIPP members Matti Peled, Uri Avneri, Prof. Uri Ma'or and Yossi Amitay. Uri Ma'or and the painter Dan Kedar – who had together started the initiative – were mentioned by Nathan in public on the next day as the ones who enabled him to end his hunger strike.

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Dissenting voices in the Likud

by Adam Keller

The Likud, Israel's ruling party, is founded upon the *Greater Israel* ideology; the whole of the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is regarded as one and undivisible, the exclusive patrimony of the Jewish people. (Indeed, the party used to claim the territory of the Kingdom of Jordan as well – and this claim, though dormant, was never formally renounced).

Shortly before the outbreak of the Intifada, a small group of Likud members, headed by Moshe Amirav, challenged their party's prevailing ideology, and engaged in extensive talks with Palestinian leaders in the Occupied Territories (see *TOI-28/29*, p.5). After news of these talks leaked to the press, the Likud leadership was quick to stamp out this "rebellion of the doves". Amirav, who refused to recant his position, was expelled from the party, and became a peace activist. (Several Likud Knesset Members who apparently participated in the talks with the Palestinians denied that they had done so, and disowned Amirav; two of them later received ministerial posts in Shamir's government.)

The expulsion of Amirav did not, however, resolve the Likud's basic dilemma: with the Intifada, continued Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories was cast into heavy doubt, not only for Israelis in general, but also for the Likud and its members. Likud voters share in the feeling of frustration felt by reserve soldiers who, year after year, confront the stone-throwing Palestinian children. Like other Israelis, Likud voters feel increasingly weary of an insecure daily life, overshadowed by the threat of attack by knife-wielding, desperate Palestinians. Such knife-attacks provoke violent reactions and calls for revenge against the Arabs – but also a growing realisation of the need for a political solution.

Several recently conducted public opinion polls gave seemingly contradictory results. Thus, the poll conducted by Prof. Asher Arian of Tel-Aviv University (*Ha'aretz*, 1.5.'91) indicated that the Likud is likely to win the next general elections, with the Labor Party trailing far behind – but that the views of many Likud voters, with regard to the future of the Occupied

Territories, are far more flexible than their party's official position.

Peace activists who regularly have confrontations – and conversations – with Likud supporters are also familiar with the phenomenon. The explanation usually given is that such people have become resigned to the need of making concessions – but still prefer Shamir to conduct the negotiations, on the assumption that he will be the more tough negotiator.

On May 17, Hadashot published a set of interviews under the title "Israel after 14 years of Likud rule". One of those interviewed was 32-year old taxi driver Moshe Mizrahi, a Likud voter.

People have changed. Now, everybody is thinking about the situation. Even the most right-wing people in the Likud understand that we must make peace, that we have had enough wars. But the only party capable of making peace is the Likud.

In the 1950s, when we were the new immigrants, we slept in tents. Now, the poor people of yesterday are bringing up a new generation of poor people. You can see it especially in Jerusalem, in the slums here. This is the country's biggest problem. Poor people are discriminated against in this country. The combination of a bad social situation and the lack of peace is very bad.

We can have peace, the Gulf War has given a big push, but the problem is that the government is splitting hairs and debating about procedures. The government should be forthcoming, stop being small-minded! They should say: *Let's give it a real chance!*

We have to talk to the PLO. With whom else can we make peace? The Palestinians here are in any case identified with the PLO. And of course we will have to give up territories. If we really want peace, there is no other choice. For peaceful coexistence, we have to give up territory. Why not?

– *And what about Jerusalem?*

– No, not that. About Jerusalem, there can be no compromise.

– *And the settlements?*

– If we really want to make peace, and if we believe this will be a real peace, why should the settlers not live under Arab rule? What is wrong with that?

– *Do you think the Likud leaders think like you?*

– Yes, I think so. Look at David Levy, who is becoming less and less of an extremist. As for the others – if they start negotiating seriously, without all this pussyfooting, they will reach some compromise. Perhaps they will have some trouble with the hardliners, but then they can rely on the support of the Labor Party. I believe that Shamir will make peace, in the same way that Begin made peace. We went through something in the Gulf War. That's enough – we must learn our lesson.

– *Were these your views always?*

– No, I have changed. I learned to know the other side, the Arabs. There is a good part among them, those who want peace. Look, you heard that Assad wants peace, and the Kuwaitis and the Saudis, they all talk about it. Something is happening, also among them.

– *When do you think it will come about?*

– Within three years, at the most.

Among the Likud leadership, difficulties are experienced by those charged with justifying government policy towards foreign diplomats and public opinion abroad. This was noticeable from 1988 to 1989 when Moshe Arens, the present Defense Minister, held the Foreign portfolio. It has become even more

clear with David Levy – a former hardliner – who has considerably moderated his positions since becoming the Foreign Minister in the present right-wing government.

Never did Levy explicitly break the bounds of Likud orthodoxy; but his more accommodating attitude in the talks with U.S. Secretary of State Baker brought him into sharp conflict with his former ally, hardliner leader and Housing Minister Ariel Sharon. Their conflict became manifest when Levy opposed firmly Sharon's pet slogan, "Jordan is Palestine". Sharon, for his part, was infuriated when Levy dared to state: *since we don't want to talk with the PLO, we will have to talk with the Palestinians in the Territories who had danced on the roofs; there is no third alternative.*

The often acrimonious confrontations on the ministerial level sparked off debate at lower echelons of the Likud. On April 28, there was a radio debate between two not well-known members of the Likud Council, Aharon Grinstein and Shimon Der'i. Political commentator Ran Kislef wrote two days later in *Ha'aretz*: "Anyone who did not know that these two are members of the same party would have believed them to represent parties at different sides of the political spectrum. Grinstein presented a tough right-wing position of total loyalty to 'The Greater Israel', with no hesitations and no reservations whatsoever. The views of Der'i seemed to be those of a dovish member of the Labor Party. He accepted the 'Land in return for Peace' formula, and when asked about Palestinian representation, answered *we have to talk with the enemy.* He also warned his party's leadership that, by ignoring the changes in public moods since the Gulf War, the Likud might eventually lose power."

According to *Yediot Aharonot* (22.3.'91), "many Likud members – mayors, heads of branches, members of the Likud Council – all support a compromise for peace, but say it only in private." Among the Likudniks who do speak out, mayors are the most prominent. Due to the fact that Israeli mayors are directly elected, they are able to build a power position relatively independent of the party apparatus; also, Likud members who are mayors come into regular contact with Arab mayors through the Association of Israeli Mayors, at whose general assembly the Arab mayors constitute a crucial voting block.

Tel-Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat was long known for expressing opinions contrary to the Likud program (see *TOI-44, p.2*). He has been joined in his heresy by Herzliya Mayor Eli Landau – an unlikely dove, who started his political career as Ariel Sharon's protégé, and in 1983 swept into power at Herzliya – previously a Labor stronghold – on a "law and order" platform.

Over the past year, Eli Landau has been advocating negotiations with the PLO; he has also started presenting a regular daily program at Abie Nathan's Voice of Peace radio station, in which he expounds his ideas and challenges Shamir and the other Likud leaders to *revise their hidebound, outdated ideology.* During May, internal party proceedings were started against Eli Landau, aimed at expelling him from the

Likud. Landau is, however, in a stronger position than Amirav was in 1987. Expulsion of the popular Landau would risk Likud control of the municipality of Herzliya – a sizeable, important Tel-Aviv suburb; the Herzliya Likud branch voted unanimously to support Landau's right to express his opinions inside the Likud; moreover, Landau contests – apparently with considerable legal grounds – the very validity of the party tribunal which intends to consider his case at the middle of June.

Meanwhile, Landau remains defiant, repeating his views at numerous newspaper interviews, as well as actively supporting Abie Nathan's hunger strike.

'We are going to talk with him'

I am in favour of talks not only with Arafat, but also with Ahmed Jibril, with Hawatmeh, with any Palestinian willing to talk to us. I am not in love with them, but we just have to talk with them, like American officers now talk with Iraqi officers. Arafat made big mistakes, but nevertheless the Palestinians think that he represents them. Like it or not, we are going to talk with him. As a person, he does not interest me. I am interested in what he is, whom he represents.

Eli Landau (*Yediot Aharonot, May 24*).

Vicissitudes of dialogue

Since the end of the Gulf War, Middle East diplomacy has been dominated by the repeated visits of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, and by Baker's efforts – in which some role was also given to his Soviet colleague – to convene a peace conference (alternatively dubbed *regional* or *international*).

During all this, it seems to be taken for granted that there should be no direct PLO participation in the conference; that the Palestinians should be represented by a delegation from the Occupied Territories – be it separately, jointly with Jordan, or as part of a united Arab delegation. The European community members – except for France – also take such a position.

At the same time Israelis, Arabs, Americans and Europeans all know very well that no Palestinian would participate in any negotiations without the approval of the PLO – though this fact is not always admitted in public. Indeed, the Palestinian delegation headed by Feisal Hussein which met Baker in Jerusalem, did so only after receiving an express public authorisation from Arafat's headquarters.

Individual peace activists tend to regard Baker's efforts with great scepticism. Still, the ambiguity with regard to the PLO has seeped into the statements and pronouncements of the mainstream peace movement. Thus, Mapam KM Ya'ir Tzaban, who did meet recently with Arafat's adviser, Nabil Sha'ath, in Cairo (see *TOI-46, p.5*) now states that *the PLO will have no role in the first stages of the negotiations; the PLO must prove again the credibility of its 1988 recognition of Israel* (*Ha'aretz, 5.5.1991*).

The same ambiguity was apparent in Mapam, Ratz and Shinuy taking a rather lukewarm attitude towards Abie Nathan's hunger strike. They did vote

for changing the law against meetings with the PLO, but without great enthusiasm. Ratz KM Dedi Zucker put it bluntly: *Abie Nathan's timing was wrong, this is not the time for the Israeli left to appear as the protector of the PLO* (Hadashot, June, 7).

Since the end of the Gulf War, a new coalition was gradually formed under the name *Time for Peace*. The leadership of the Peace Now movement initiated this move, in the hope of bringing together the widest possible spectrum of peace forces. The idea is to launch a massive campaign of signature-collecting, on a petition supporting the "land for peace" principle, and with the backing of Knesset Members from many parties and of other VIPs. The organizers did succeed in putting together an impressive list of supporters, including, for example, former Labor ministers Moshe Shahal and Gad Ya'akobi. As the price for their participation, however, the former Labor ministers demanded that the petition circulated will contain no reference to the PLO.

In spite of such hesitations and ambiguities, the past month saw a practically full resumption of dialogue between Israelis and the PLO – with the Israeli participants including many Labor doves. Indeed the hawkish Labor KM Michael Bar-Zohar complained: *I am fed up with these members of the Labor Party who seem to have nothing on their minds but meeting with the PLO and talking with the PLO. The whole world has rejected the PLO, except for France and the Israeli Labor Party doves!* (Davar, 3.6.1991.)

As before the Gulf crisis, the main forum for such meetings are international conferences, which give meetings with the PLO a semi-legal status. Numerous such meetings at conferences have taken place.

■ On May 13-15, the International Women's Conference for Israeli-Palestinian Peace took place at Geneva. Among the Israeli participants were the Communist KM Tamar Gozanski, Yael Dayan of the Labor Party, and representatives of the Women and Peace Coalition and the Women's Peace Network. They met with Palestinian women activists such as Sama Luftawi and Leila Shahid, as well as with women from many other countries, including a Swedish government minister. At the end of three days' discussions, the participants adopted resolutions calling for negotiations between Israel and the PLO, aimed at creating a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel.

Unfortunately, on their return to Israel some participants got cold feet; in their press release, they decided not to mention that Leila Shahid, with whom they had met, is not just a Palestinian woman, but holds the position of PLO representative in Holland.

Sama Luftawi, who represented the women's organizations in the Occupied Territories, had to go straight from the Geneva meeting to the next such meeting, which took place between May 16-19 in Milano. Again a women's conference, this one was under auspices of the Italian Center for Peace in the Middle East.

At Milano there were also fresh participants: from Israel came a delegation including Ratz KM Shulamit Aloni and Prof. Galia Golan of Peace Now; at the

Palestinian side Vera Naufal joined in – representing the PLO-affiliated women's organization at Tunis.

■ At the end of April, the Mediterranean Institute for Promoting Peace held a conference at Granada, Spain, co-sponsored by the ruling Spanish Socialist Party. Among the big Israeli delegation were to be found the KMs Aryeh Eliav of Labor, Dedi Zucker of Ratz and Abd-el-Wahab Darawshe of the Arab Democratic Party, as well as the Labor Party's Yael Dayan and Ephraim Shneh (a former West Bank military governor).

The Israelis got a chance to meet, not only with the PLO's Nabil Sha'ath, but also with with representatives from the mediterranean countries – among them Egypt, Syria, Algiers, Tunis and Morocco. Another participant, Shadli Klibi, until half a year ago Secretary-General of the Arab League, had definitely never before met publicly with any Israeli.

Latif Dori (Mapam) was, on his return, quoted in *Al-Fajr* (May 24): *Our dialogue with the PLO has paved the way to dialogue with people from Arab countries with whom we never had contact before. It would be the same for the government, if they start talking to the PLO.*

The conference received much attention – most of it sympathetic – from the Israeli press, which emphasized Nabil Sha'ath's statement: *The PLO has no great confidence in the present efforts at Mid-East mediation – but it will do all in its power to help them succeed* (Hadashot, April 29). For his part, KM Eliav told the Israeli papers: *The Palestinians have come down from the roofs!* (referring to those who broke the curfew to cheer at their roofs, when the scuds were going in the direction of Tel-Aviv).

The success of Granada was, however, marred by a nasty sequel. Upon return to Israel Yael Dayan – in an apparent effort to appease her party's hawks – launched a public attack upon Mapam representatives Latif Dori and Monica Polak, accusing them of "having represented the Palestinian, and not the Israeli side", and citing the fact that Dori – who was born an Iraqi – gave his speech in Arabic!

■ Also in Spain, a conference under U.N. auspices took place at the end of May. The only Israeli there was the former Likud dissident Moshe Amirav – who, as member of the left-liberal Shinuy, now has a seat in the Jerusalem municipal council. To delegates from many countries, including several PLO members, he expounded his position with regard to the future of his city. He stated that Jerusalem should remain one municipal unit; that the Jewish neighborhoods established beyond "the green line" should not be evacuated; and that, in the final agreement, the Arab part of Jerusalem could become the capital of a Palestinian state.

Since his return, Amirav has made efforts to mediate between the U.N. and the Israeli establishment. He told *Ha'aretz* (June 6): *The U.N. organs dealing specifically with the Palestinian issue are no longer given to sterile anti-Israel rhetoric; when you talk to these people in a reasonable way, they are willing to listen. Our government, for its part, should also cease*

its blindly hostile attitude towards the United Nations.

A future project of the U.N., in which Amirav was involved, is a meeting of Israeli, Palestinian and European economists, to discuss economic development of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

■ Between June 3-6, a conference at Helsinki – also under U.N. auspices – brought together Haim Ramon, head of the Labor Party Knesset faction, as well as Mapam's Secretary-General El'azar Granot – with Yaser Abd-Rabo of the PLO Executive Committee. At the opening session Abd-Rabo told Ramon: *We don't care whether it is called an "international" or a "regional" conference. The content is what counts. The PLO is willing to sit down and hold peace talks with Israel at any time, in any place, and under any guise* (Davar, June 4).

■ At June 7, the Italian Trade Union Federation (CGIL) hosted a large Israeli delegation, ranging from Labor KM (and Shimon Peres aide) Yossi Beilin, to Adv. Amnon Zichroni (ICIPP) – and a Palestinian one headed by Arafat aide Basam Abu-Sharif. Also present were major and minor VIPs of other countries; the Italian Foreign Minister attended, as did a senior advisor of President Gorbachev.

Portrait of an activist

by Beate Zilversmidt

In Kol Ha'ir, May 17, she appeared in full action. During the vigil at the Russian Compound Detention Center in Jerusalem (May 14), protesting torture, they photographed her while in a most vivid confrontation with a man - both of them of respectable age. Chava Cohen, 62, was born in Lodz, Poland, and came here with her parents as a child. A year and half ago she went on pension - after 30 years as a history teacher. She is now one of the full-time volunteers of the Tel-Aviv Women for Women Political Prisoners.

The holocaust is the most important thing in my life. Just because I was not there when it happened. All but one of the other children with whom I went to the first grade were killed. Why did I remain alive, why just me? In a way I do not have the right. I should have been dead.

Rights have always fascinated me. Human rights. Also animal rights. That's where my political involvement starts. I am sensitive to suffering. A human being that suffers comes first. I have always been politically involved, but less on abstract issues than where there is the human angle.

I participated in demonstrations against the British as a member of the left-wing Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatza'ir. I have fought in the 1947/1948 Independence War against the Kaukji army of Syrian volunteers, besieged in an old Crusader's castle. Half a year I slept with a rifle under my bed. I went to found a kibbutz. I married. We left the kibbutz. (I wanted to do agricultural work and was sent year after year to the kibbutz kitchen; my husband, however, was made to do agricultural work though he wanted to be a

fisherman!) No longer being in a political collectivity I became in fact more politically militant. I participated in the demonstrations to support the famous sailors' strike of 1952. In the 1960s we demonstrated when there was trouble with the (then) military government in the Arab villages of the Gallilee. Today you can find me in the demonstrations of Women in Black, Dai Lekibush, Yesh G'vul, Peace Now, or what more there is. But never was I so totally committed as to the work in WOFPP.

Most of the prisoners we are taking care of are Palestinian women from the Occupied Territories. We are not allowed to visit them. Only our one member who is a lawyer has the right to enter the prison. We try to find out the facts. To begin with: the whereabouts of prisoners - sometimes the family does not know. We contact the families in front of the prison during the visiting hour. We ask them to tell us what help is needed and to report to us about what happens inside. We try to help with small things. We also have lawyers working for us who visit the prisoners in order to hear directly from them. The authorities don't like that at all.

Just this week one of the lawyers reported that the girls had no writing paper, and no pens. Then, of course, we buy it for them. Hopefully, it will get in easier than the games. In order to let the prisoners have a few games I had to fight a whole year. I don't know to whom I did not go. The Prison Authorities already know me. I always write friendly letters but I don't give up. In the end they just didn't know what to do with me and let me have what I want.

Now there is the fight over the washing machine. One of the prisoners, Intisar El-Qak gave birth a year ago while in prison. She is still there, with the baby. Only recently her giving birth while being handcuffed got wide attention of the Israeli and the foreign press. A year ago (see TOI-42, p.9) we just succeeded to get it into small circulation, but it was introduced by Ahmed Tibi in a VIP conference in Granada, Spain. One of our regular supporters living in England wrote us that suddenly now it had appeared in *The Guardian*. With so much media attention, I do think that we will get the washing machine in.

We have a whole network of people whom we can contact by phone or by fax, and who are ready, when we inform them, to write at once letters to the Israeli authorities. We don't try so much to let many Israelis write letters. Soon they would be labelled *those leftists*. Letters from abroad do have an effect; especially when there are among the writers well-known figures, respectable names, or established organizations.

By getting things published - and debated - we also try to influence Israeli public opinion. We have a close cooperation with the more mainstream, more 'respectable' B'tzelem human rights organization. Several of the facts about the use of torture revealed lately by B'tzelem had come to their attention through us.

In the more than three years of WOFPP's existence we have dealt with over a thousand cases. The fate of women political prisoners in Israel has improved a

little bit. Our biggest successes? The individual cases, women who were suddenly released after we had made a lot of noise about them. And that they dare not give the women exactly the same bad treatment as before. I only can hope that this is also reflected in a little bit better standards for others - for all those tens of thousands of men in the same situation ...

Contact: WOFPP, P.O.Box 31811, Tel-Aviv.

Torture and the law

■ On May 14, bypassers on Jerusalem's crowded Jaffa Street encountered a group of young men and women with their heads covered with sacks and their hands tied. It was an action organised by the **Public Committee Against Torture** in order to show the public what is going on behind the walls of the nearby "Russian Compound" - headquarters of the Jerusalem Police and seat of the regional Shabak (security service) bureau.

On different days, demonstrations against prison torture also took place in Haifa (organised there by **Peace Now**) and at the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv (by **Women for Political Prisoners**).

■ This year's "Israel Prize" ceremony was disrupted by hecklers and demonstrators. One of the recipients of the annual prize was former Supreme Court Judge Moshe Landau - who in 1987 headed the "Landau Commission", which was supposed to investigate prison torture. This commission's report declared the use of *moderate physical pressure* to be a legitimate means in the interrogation of suspected terrorists (see *TOI-28/29, p.8*). In a secret appendix - accessible only to a select group of high officials - the report also details the ways in which such physical pressure may be applied. The **Committee Against Torture** intends to lodge an appeal to the Supreme Court to declassify this appendix.

The B'tzelem human rights organisation's recent revelations about the practice of torture of Palestinian prisoners (see *TOI-46, p.6-7*) had brought the Landau report back into public attention. Landau responded by attacking **B'tzelem**, as an *organisation blind to the needs of state security*.

■ The authorities couldn't just ignore the sudden public attention, inside and outside Israel. The three institutions involved in the use of torture - the army, the police and the security service - are now engaged in efforts to shift blame upon each other.

The police commander of the Russian Compound welcomed a delegation of four Jerusalem municipal councillors (from Ratz and the religious parties Degel Hatora and Agudat Yisrael) to examine all parts of the facilities - all but the Shabak section, where interrogations take place. 'There I can't enter myself, unless the Shabak invites me.' (*Ha'aretz*, May 24.)

The army announced the formation of a commission of inquiry, headed by General Rafael Vardi, to investigate all evidence with regard to soldiers mistreating Palestinian prisoners.

The Shabak has disclosed that it has appointed an

internal comptroller. Since his reports, and even his name - remain classified, it is difficult to evaluate the significance of this innovation.

The Knesset State Comptrollership Committee, headed by David Libai (Labor), formed a special subcommittee on the Shabak, and demanded that the Shabak will come to testify before it.

■ Meanwhile, more reports of torture continue to arrive. B'tzelem researcher Bassam Id: "I visited in the East Jerusalem Musakad Hospital a guy from Gaza, who was arrested in good medical condition and came out half paralysed. He has reportedly been tied to a pipe and beaten while his face was covered with a sack. They continued beating him even after the prison doctor warned them that he is developing signs of paralysis." (*Hadashot*, May 12.)

Contact: B'tzelem, 18 Keren Hayesod St., Jerusalem 92149; phone: 02-667271; *The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel*, POB 8588, Jerusalem 91083.

The following few lines are translated from an extensive account by Ha'aretz journalist Ari Shavit, describing his recent term of reserve service as a guard in the Gaza detention camp, Ansar-2. It was published in Ha'aretz, on May 3.

Ansar-2 has twelve guard towers, mine was Number 6. You sit on top of this tower the whole night. There is a projector, but it is rarely used, because the whole prisoner enclosure is, in any case, lighted by a strong yellow light. (...) You come off, after a night without any incident. You take the towel and the soap from your tent, and go off to the showers. On the way there, you have to pass the galvanised iron fence, marking off the interrogations section. And then, from the other side, you hear a scream, a hair-raising scream. What is going on there, five meters from you? You cannot see, you can only imagine it. You do know that from now on you will have no rest, because fifty meters from the bed where you try to sleep, eighty meters from the mess hall where you try to eat, human beings are screaming. They are screaming because other human beings - who wear the same uniform as you do - are making them scream. They are screaming because your country - your democratic country, your Jewish country - is making them scream, in a systematic and organised manner and in accordance with the law.

■ Shortly after the end of the Gulf War, 18-year old Lior Ovshani was conscripted. Soon, he was ordered to pass a course of basic training at a camp located in the Occupied Territories - and refused to obey this order. At first, the commanding officer sent him to another camp - also located in the Occupied Territories, but near to the pre-'67 border. When he refused this compromise, too, Ovshani was sentenced to 21 days' imprisonment, followed - on his continued refusal - by a further 28 days. According to his father, Lior decided not to serve in the Occupied Territories at the age of 17, after he worked as a construction worker together with Palestinian workers.

At first it seemed that the military authorities intended to break his resistance in a harsh manner. However, the affair got increasing public attention

through an interview in *Hadashot* newspaper. Later, Israeli television picked up Lior Ovshani's parents at the Abie Nathan rally, holding a sign protesting the harassment of their son. The military authorities started to soften; Lior Ovshani's third term was for seven days only, and – so far – there was not a fourth. Letters of support to: *Private Lior Ovshani, Military Personal Number 5045337, Israeli Defence Forces.*

The Intifada at the crossroads

Since its beginning, the Palestinian uprising had two distinct aspects: the highly visible one of confrontations with the Israeli army, and the less visible – but possibly more significant – aspect of building up a network of independent Palestinian political, economic, social and cultural organizations, as the basis on which the independent Palestinian state would be erected. Even the extensive repression, practiced for three and a half years by the military authorities, did not succeed in ending the intifada. But under this constant pressure, many features of the Intifada were changed and distorted.

The systematic detention of the intermediate-level leadership often left local Intifada committees in charge of young and inexperienced activists, having only loose links with the central leadership. Moreover, the continued pressure of the army, especially in the cities, makes large demonstrations difficult or impossible, leaving much of the daily confrontations with the army in the hands of small bands of masked youths. To this should be added the extreme rise in unemployment – at present mounting to about 50% in the Gaza Strip.*

One of the symptoms of the growing despair is the spread of lethal violence. Knife-attacks on random Israeli civilians seem to have been the acts of individual Palestinians. The killing of Palestinian collaborators has a more systematic character. This last phenomenon has lately reached the average of one victim per day.

In the beginning, the targets were obvious collaborators – those who walk village streets flaunting openly the guns given them by the army, and using their connections with the authorities to get material benefits. Then, searches started to be made for those who secretly provide the army with information – and torture was introduced to obtain confessions from suspects. (Sometimes, youthful Palestinian interrogators make use of methods whose effectiveness they learned when they had received the attentions of the Israeli Security Service.)

Finally, the youths – under no outside control – began killing common criminals, as well as settling private scores – to the point where more Palestinians are now killed by other Palestinians than by the Israeli army. Also, members of different factions began turning their weapons on each other; on June 3, an actual gun battle between different factions took place in the alleys of the Nablus Cashbah.

The Palestinian leadership is increasingly concerned by this state of affairs, whose corrosive effect on the

fabric of Palestinian society may long outlast the Israeli occupation. A measure of this concern is that discussion of the matter is no longer confined to closed meetings, but is carried on in the East Jerusalem press.

Adnan Damiri, a Tulkarm journalist considered a high-level Fatah activist, wrote: *for too long we have been trying to find excuses for all these executions of people who work with the authorities. We run away from questions, by the foreign and Israeli press, about the phenomenon which has emerged, where every knock on a door by a masked man becomes a nail in a coffin.* (Al-Fajr, June 5.)

Damiri – who himself spent several six-month terms in administrative detention at Ansar-3, for his political activities during the Intifada – writes further: *a friend told me he has been arrested four times by soldiers who attacked his house, but now he is more afraid of masked men because he doesn't know their names, their addresses, their faces, and not even their smell.*

In a related development, major leaders of the main PLO factions in the Occupied Territories – Feisal Husseini of the Fatah, Zuhira Kamal of the Democratic Front, and Riad Malki of the Popular Front – all made public calls for a reassessment of the Intifada's strategy. Husseini called for renewed emphasis on the construction of an independent Palestinian infrastructure.

The chances for such a reversal are of course closely tied with the progress of the diplomatic process – giving the Palestinians at least a measure of hope for an eventual end to the occupation. With no prospect for the future but further repression, the descent into blind, all-out violence could only be hastened.

** As a result of the immigration wave, unemployment has gone up sharply in the Israeli economy. The most severe damage was done to the most vulnerable workforce: the Palestinians from the Territories, who used to commute daily to work for Israeli employers.*

In the months following the Gulf war, the misery became so acute that Defense Minister Moshe Arens – in order not to lose control – had to alleviate some of the restrictions on the Palestinian economy. In the past period, more operating permits were given by the occupation authorities to Palestinian entrepreneurs per month than normally in a whole year. Also, from now on, these Palestinian entrepreneurs would, during the first three years, enjoy tax exemptions.

■ On Saturday May 4 (on the weekend closest to the International Workers' Day), hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians gathered to discuss the situation of the Palestinian workers. It was the first such meeting in which Palestinian Trade Unionists spoke, together with (left-factions) members of the Histadrut.

The Palestinians present are forbidden to enter Israel, but the organisers, the Jewish-Arab Coexistence Circle held the meeting on the fields of Kibbutz Metzzer, adjoining the pre-'67 border.

Contact: Yoav Ben-Naftali, Kibbutz Metzzer 38820; or: Najib Abu-Rakiya, Mayser Village 38815.

ICIPP symposium

■ On April 14, an Israeli soldier, on patrol in Hebron, on the West Bank, was hit by a swerving Palestinian car and severely wounded. An other soldier opened fire, killing the Palestinian driver.

Two days later, large military forces arrived at the house of the dead driver, Munaser Naji Abdallah. His widow and six children were evicted, and the house sealed with concrete, in preparation for its demolition.

The case was taken up by Adv. Yehoshua Shofmann, of ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel), who lodged an appeal to the Supreme Court in the name of Wala, the dead man's 10-month old daughter. He argued that the army did not conclusively prove that Abdallah had acted deliberately in hitting the soldier – and that even if he did, he had already suffered capital punishment, and there was no reason to punish his innocent family.

The case received some attention in the Israeli press, as well as in major American papers such as the *New York Times*. On May 12, shortly before the Supreme Court was due to hear the appeal, West Bank governor Dany Yatom announced that, as a humanitarian gesture, the house would be spared, and only Munaser Abdallah's room will be sealed.

■ Also on May 12, ACRI won another small victory: a boy from Han-Uneis in the Gaza Strip received 1500 Shekels (about \$670) in compensation from the military government. In 1990, the boy was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment for stone-throwing, and was held five extra days after the expiry of his term. Legally, he was entitled to compensation, but the authorities withheld the money until the intervention of ACRI lawyer Tzvi Tish.

Contact: ACRI, POB 8273, Jerusalem 91082.

■ May 5, 1991: For the first time in the history of Israel, a cloud of tear gas entered the open windows of the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem, causing the government ministers to scatter and break off the cabinet meeting.

Outside the building, the police was battling hundreds of Druze demonstrators, at the peak of a long sit-in strike by the Druze mayors. The Druze are conscripted like the Jews, but suffer discrimination like the other Arabs: Druze municipalities receive 683 Shekels per capita from the government, where municipalities of Jewish towns receive 1685 Shekels (*sic!*).

Already at the beginning of the strike, several ministers approached the Druze leaders and made rosy promises. The Druze were not very impressed since, already in 1987, the cabinet adopted a resolution calling for full equality between Jews and Druze – and did nothing to implement it. The Druze strike was called off only after two weeks, when – in addition to promises for the future – the government gave the collapsing Druze municipalities the sum of 15 million Shekels in emergency aid.

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On April 27, about a hundred people participated in the Eighth Sartawi Memorial Symposium, held by the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace at Kibbutz Har'el.

Speaking on a podium decorated with the late Sartawi's portrait and the crossed Israeli and Palestinian flags, Yossi Amitay and Uri Avnery opened the meeting. They recalled their meetings with Sartawi – who was assassinated in 1983 by the notorious Abu-Nidal splinter group, for holding views which in the meantime have become the official position of the PLO. Amitay emphasized: *At that time, by pioneering Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, we Israelis risked our political reputation, but the Palestinians risked their lives.*

This year's symposium focussed on the Gulf War and its aftermath. Matti Peled analysed at length the military and political aspects, concluding that developments since the end of hostilities – such as the Kurdish and Shiite rebellions and their crushing by Saddam Hussein – tend to confirm the opinion of those who opposed the war from the start.

Dr. Miriyam Mar'i, an Arab educator from Acre, touched a hot issue: "During the war, the Israeli press repeatedly wrote about Palestinians dancing on the roofs while the scuds fell. My Jewish friends also asked me about that. I talked with Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. One girl told me: *We live under occupation; we never said we are friends with the Israelis; we are enemies, and when the enemy is hit, we are happy. Wern't the Israelis happy when we were hit?* What struck me was the divergent attitudes towards the Israeli state in the abstract and towards concrete Israelis. I met Palestinians who were happy that scuds fell on Tel-Aviv, but immediately telephoned to make sure that their Jewish friends had survived the attack."

Dr. Azmi Bishara of Bir-Zeit University spoke of the Intifada and the war. "The month-long curfew during the war was an effort to break the continuity of the Intifada, to create a fait accompli that the Intifada is over. It didn't work. As soon as the curfew was lifted, the Intifada burst again into the streets." Bishara also spoke of the "failure of secular Arab Nationalism, of Arab Socialism, and – despite superficial appearances – also of Muslim Fundamentalism". According to Bishara, young Arabs are nowadays groping towards a new synthesis.

Adv. Darwish Nasser also spoke of the new (Palestinian) generation – and the generation gap. "The new generation has grown up with the full bitterness of 43 years of refugee life and 24 years of military rule. They see that their elders made enormous concessions, and got nothing in return."

Much of the day-long discussion turned on the role of the U.S. in the aftermath of the war. Uri Avnery questioned the real motivation behind the spectacular U.S. "peace initiatives". *In fact, the U.S. is quite content to maintain a fragmented Middle East, where Washington acts in the double role of chief diplomatic*

arbiter and chief arms dealer. A real peace would make the U.S. superfluous in both roles.

This thesis sparked off a vivid discussion. Some speakers regarded the Camp David Agreements – despite all their limitations – as an example of successful American peace-making. Also, it was pointed out that the American interest is not something static and that the Americans may gradually become interested in defusing the Middle East conflict, before revolutionary pressures destroy the region's pro-American regimes.

Haim Bar'am concluded this discussion: "Never was there, and never will there be such a thing as a pro-American left – but there could still be a temporary convergence of interests. If Baker were to pressure Shamir, I would not start waving a red flag of anti-imperialism on Shamir's behalf."

A mother's struggle

In the beginning of 1990 we published an interview with Efrat Spiegel (see TOI-40, p.8-9). She wanted to have the text changed on the tombstone of her son Yoav, who was among those who fell in the Lebanon War. Efrat explained how, throughout all those years, on every weekly visit to the grave her pain was sharpened by the words *killed in Operation Peace for the Galilee*. She can't believe in these words. Yoav himself, who died at the age of 21, would not have believed in them.

He did not die in the Galilee and it did not happen during an operation for peace. He died in Lebanon, in an unnecessary, unjustified war. This was the way he thought about the war. His only reason not to refuse was his feeling of responsibility – as an officer – for his soldiers. But he did ask his mother to go into the streets and shout protest against this war.

Efrat – a widow since 1971 – is among the hard-core of the peace movement, but this struggle she had to carry on alone. The judicial struggle at the Supreme Court, with the legal assistance of Adv. Yossi Bard, took more than a year. It ended in a compromise: not *killed in the Lebanon War* – as Efrat Spiegel had demanded – but *killed while on duty in Lebanon*.

On June 6, she was shown on television in front of the rewritten tombstone. It happened to be also the anniversary of the Lebanon War. The reporter asked: *can you now live with it?* She answered: *I can't live with it, but now at least I can look at it.*

The next morning *Hadashot* reported that among the parents of the 650 soldiers killed in the Lebanon War, there are quite a lot who want to follow the new precedent.

A sample of 1,200 Israeli citizens were asked: *Do you think there is a chance that peace negotiations with the Arabs will take place without American pressure?*

Fifty-nine percent answered: *little or no chance.*

There was no significant difference in the division of opinions between Likud and Labor voters.

(*Davar*, 2.6.'91).

■ *As on every year, the beginning of June – marking the anniversaries of the 1967 and 1982 wars – saw a concentration of actions by different peace groups.*

■ Starting from May 24, activists of the new *Time for Peace* coalition place tables at street corners all over the country, gathering signatures on a petition supporting *Land for Peace* and a peace based on the *Palestinian right to self-determination and Israel's right to exist in security*. Copies of the petition were published in Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. The campaign is due to continue until the end of June, at least. By the time of writing, some 25,000 signatures were already collected.

■ On June 1, groups of *Yesh G'vul* activists arrived at twenty points on the Green Line (pre-'67 border), and hanged signs in Hebrew and Arabic reading: *Stop! Border ahead!*

■ Also on June 1, the Haifa Peace Groups Coordinating Committee organised dozens of activists who visited villages in the north of the West Bank, distributing toys and educational equipment donated by Haifa inhabitants. This particular action was undertaken to mark the International Children's Day.

■ On June 2-3, *Imut* (Mental Health Workers for Peace) held a conference in Jerusalem, with international participation, on the subject: *The psychology of nationalism*. Among the workshop subjects were "Colonizer-colonized relations"; "National Myths"; and "History, politics and their reflection in the clinic." Another item discussed at the conference was "how to deal with colleagues who live in settlements in the Occupied Territories."

Contact: *Imut*, POB 23864, Jerusalem.

■ On June 4, members of the *International Gulf Peace Team* set out on a peace walk, from Jerusalem to Amman (see TOI-46, p.9).

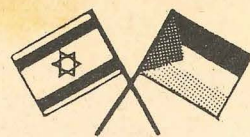
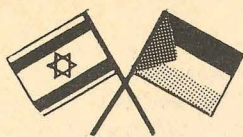
Near Ramallah, the 23 peace pilgrims – among them Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Catholic and Buddhist priests – were met by soldiers and presented with an order declaring the stretch of road ahead of them to be a *closed military zone*. They continued walking – and were promptly arrested. Released at a late night hour, the pilgrims were undaunted; on the following morning they set out again. Near Jericho, the sequence of events repeated itself: declaration of a military zone, pilgrim defiance, and arrest. Released after another day's detention, the pilgrims set out for the third time – and actually succeeded to reach the Jordan bridges with no further mishap.

There, the Israelis – who can't enter Jordan – bade farewell to their friends, who went on towards Amman.

Contact: *Gulf Peace Team*, POB 925182, Amman, Jordan.

■ On Friday, June 7, the *Women in Black* vigils across the country were far bigger than usual, with men and women of other groups invited to join in. The television coverage concentrated on the Jerusalem vigil, in which several hundred people participated.

■ On Saturday afternoon June 8, several hundred



activists of different peace groups gathered at a park on the northern outskirts of Tel-Aviv, where they held a rally. Jewish and Arab children sang peace songs from the platform, and Knesset Members and representatives of different parties spoke; the most popular speaker was Abie Nathan.

Afterwards, the participants lined along the nearby Tel-Aviv-Haifa highway. For more than an hour they stood, waving placards at the passing drivers: "Enough with the Occupation!"; "Israeli-Palestinian Peace - Now!"; "Give Peace a Chance!"

Anti-settlement drive

■ On April 12-14, members of Mapam, Ratz and Shinuy halted for several days the construction of the new settlement Revava, by repeatedly lying down in front of the bulldozers. Eventually, they were evicted by the army (see also TOI-46, p.5).

■ April 17 - members of Peace Now held a demonstration at Revava, confronting the settlers who had, in the meantime, moved in.

■ April 23 - Peace Now demonstrators arrived at Talmon-B settlement north of Jerusalem. (The "B" refers to the fact that, officially, this is not a new settlement but an extension of the existing settlement Talmon, several kilometres away.) To arrive at the settlement site, the demonstrators passed through a narrow mountain track, where they were suddenly assaulted by a group of armed settlers. A fist-fight developed, in the course of which the settlers also assaulted a soldier and an officer who had tried to restrain them, and smashed a television crew's camera.

■ At the evening of the same day, about a hundred people participated in a protest vigil in front of the Prime Minister's Residence under the slogan *Give peace a chance*. It also was organised by Peace Now.

■ On May 2, KMs Haim Oron (Mapam) and Dedi Zucker (Ratz) disclosed information regarding a new settlement, due to be created within a few days near Hebron. The disclosure forced Housing Minister Sharon to put off implementing this plan. The furious Sharon reacted: *These leftists are a commando of volunteer informers*. Sharon also did not like the delegation of dovish KMs which, on that same week, set out for the U.S. and met with administration officials, Members of Congress, and presidents of major Jewish organizations - expressing their opposition to the settlements and to the "Greater Israel" policy. (Sharon himself got a public rebuff from the American administration on his own trip to the United States, a few days earlier.)

■ On May 4 hundreds of people, organised by Peace Now, arrived at various settlements, on a "sight-seeing tour"; the advertisement, calling upon the public to participate in the tour, read:

Taxpayers! Come and see the places where your money is wasted and where the road to peace is blocked.

Among the participants were many Soviet immigrants, as well as a considerable number of slum-dwellers from Be'er Sheba, who expressed astonishment and indignation at the high-level standard of housing in the settlements. The settlers reacted with fury to the "tour", several times attempting to block the buses and throwing stones on them.

■ On May 14 and 16, two further demonstrations were held at the newly-established settlements of Giv'on and Betar, north and south of Jerusalem. Again there was a considerable participation of slum dwellers, organised by Jerusalem municipal councillor Dede Ben-Shitreet (Mapam), who is an inhabitant of the Ir Ganim slum neighborhood. Contact: *Peace Now, POB 6733, Tel-Aviv, 61066.*

■ May 26 - at Ariel, one of the largest West Bank settlements, the (Labor-Party-dominated) Trade Union Federation "Histadrut" inaugurated a local branch. Membership in it is to be confined solely to Jewish settlers; Palestinian workers - of whom many are employed in the settlement - are ineligible for membership.

The creation of the new Histadrut branch was opposed by the left-wing factions inside the Histadrut: Mapam, Ratz and the Joint Jewish-Arab List. Some thirty members of these factions secretly arrived in Ariel and successfully infiltrated the ceremony, establishing themselves near the podium. When Histadrut Secretary-General Yisrael Kesar rose to speak, his opponents rose too, stood on their seats, unfurled banners and shouted: "*Shame!*" They were immediately attacked by settlers and Histadrut stewards, who attempted to tear up their placards; the police also joined in, detaining three of the demonstrators. Amidst the shouting and pandemonium Kesar left, bringing the ceremony to a premature close.

■ Aside from his settlement campaign in the Occupied Territories, Housing Minister Sharon is moving against Israel's Arab citizens. He has started a campaign to house Soviet immigrants on confiscated Arab lands in order - as Sharon said on television - *to drive a Jewish wedge between Arab villages and prevent them from becoming new Arab cities.*

This activity - unlike Sharon's actions beyond the Green Line - received scant attention, even within the peace movement. In an effort to rectify this situation, the Nitzotz group organised a tour on May 11. Some fifty people visited the sites and expressed solidarity with the increasingly apprehensive Arab inhabitants.

Contact: *The Nitzotz, POB 1575, Jerusalem.*

Adam Keller will be staying in London between June 24 and 30 (phone: 071.639.7967 or: 071.732.8819) and in Amsterdam between July 1 and 11 (phone: 020.6410388).
