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FIRST STEP IN MADRID?

October 25, 1991

It now seems that a conference for peace in the Middle East will indeed open at Madrid, on October 30. Under auspices of Presidents Bush and Gorbachev, the representatives of Israel and its neighboring Arab states will engage in formal negotiations, for the first time in decades. It will also be the first time in Israel's history that official Israeli representatives will engage in formal negotiations with representatives of the Palestinian people.

The convening of this conference is the result of six months' strenuous diplomatic efforts by American Secretary of State James Baker, including no less than eight trips to the Middle East. It may be said, however, that the most decisive stage of these efforts took place in early September at Washington D.C. when President Bush took on – and defeated in a head-on collision – the powerful Jewish lobby and its following on Capitol Hill.

Bush's intervention prevented the approval of 10 billion Dollars in housing loan guarantees to Israel. *But for Bush's intervention, the loan guarantees would have passed through Congress like a knife through butter*, Capitol Hill observers were quoted. As it was, discussion of the guarantees is put off until January or February 1992. It now seems likely that, even then,

a condition will be attached to the guarantees strictly limiting – if not altogether forbidding – Israeli settlement activity in the Occupied Territories. Moreover, it is quite possible that similar conditions will be attached to the regular American aid to Israel, three billion Dollars a year – hitherto, the least controversial item on the congressional agenda. Already, a senatorial committee failed to approve a request for an additional 200 million Dollars in military aid to Israel.

Bush's displeasure with the Shamir government was displayed in other ways as well, such as loud protests when Israeli planes carried out aerial reconnaissance of Western Iraq (and, in the process, violated the airspace of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia!). Altogether, former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban – a man usually not given to superlatives – concluded: *This is the worst crisis ever in Israeli-American relations.*

The end of the cold war brought about the collapse of political structures on both sides of the "iron curtain". Israel's long-standing "special relationship" with the United States seems to be one of them. With the "Soviet threat" no longer hanging over the Middle East, Israel's strategic value in American

Giant Peace Now Rally in Tel-Aviv

Stop press!

On the evening of October 26, an enormous crowd gathered at Tel-Aviv's Municipality Square. People continued streaming out of buses which arrived from all over the country. Peace Now leader Tzali Reshev opened the rally with the words: *It is long since the square was so full!* Careful experts estimated that there were at least 80,000 people. One of the main speakers was the writer A.B. Yehoshua who made a direct appeal to Shamir on the eve of the conference: *Shamir, don't wait for the American pressure! Think of Israel's dignity! Think of the 70% of Israelis who agree to give up territory for peace! Think of the pressure of your own peace movement! Take the initiative for peace!*

There were many other speakers, including the still eloquent 85-year old Yitzchak Ben-Aharon, nicknamed "the conscience of the Labor Party". However, the biggest impression was made by a speaker who was not physically present – Abie Nathan. Ratz leader Shulamit Aloni read a letter from Nathan, written in his prison cell. Accompanied by wild applause, she added: *Haim Herzog, President of the State of Israel! I call upon you to use your authority and pardon Abie Nathan on the very day of the Madrid conference. It is an abomination to continue imprisoning Abie Nathan for his meeting with Yasser Arafat, while the government itself enters into negotiations with the Palestinians!*

eyes is steadily diminishing – and against Arab opponents such as Saddam Hussein, it is politically far more expedient for Washington to employ Arab allies.

President Bush's attack on the loan guarantees struck deep chords in the American public – deeper, perhaps, than he thought or intended. The world's sole, unchallenged super-power is in the throes of a perennial socio-economic crisis, and is less and less able to provide its own citizens with the kind of amenities which used to be known as "the American way of life". It is far from strange that American foreign aid is becoming less popular with the U.S. electorate.

The American Jewish lobby was caught off-guard. Relying upon its impressive past record, and giving little attention to changing conditions, AIPAC had planned a lobbying campaign, with a thousand representatives of Jewish communities descending upon Capitol Hill in a single day. They were totally unprepared for the backlash. Implicitly in his televised speech – but quite explicitly in private conversations which were promptly leaked to the press – President Bush flung at the American Jewish leadership the accusation of "double loyalty". That would have been a serious matter at any time; it is doubly so, coming so shortly after anti-Jewish riots broke out among the black community in Brooklyn.

The American Jewish leadership, realising that it may have led itself – and its constituency – unto a dangerous path, was quick to backtrack. For the first time ever, statements critical of the Israeli government's settlement policy began to issue from the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations.

Clearly, the coming months will be a time of trial for the American Jewish community, as much as for the nations of the Middle East. The old policy – unquestioning allegiance to whatever government happens to hold power in Jerusalem – had much in common with the attitude of the old-style Communist parties towards Moscow. Both turn out to be equally untenable.

President Bush's confrontation with Shamir may have provided PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat with the decisive argument needed in order to obtain, in the Palestine National Council and other PLO bodies, an overwhelming majority in favor of Palestinian participation in the American-brokered conference. That decision required the Palestinian

leadership to swallow several bitter pills. The American conditions excluded the PLO from any official role in the conference; restricted the Palestinian participation to half of a joint delegation with Jordan; and excluded East Jerusalem Palestinians as well as Palestinians from the diaspora from being delegates. In fact, the PLO had to accept all of the procedural preconditions posed by the Shamir government.

However, while complying with the letter of these conditions, the Palestinians managed, to a major extent, to circumvent them. Little doubt was left, in the minds of readers of the Israeli or world press, that all decisions on the Palestinian side are being taken by the PLO, and that Palestinian negotiators Feisal Hussein and Hanan Ashrawi were acting under Arafat's authorisation and instructions. Indeed, Baker connived in this game, by providing the Palestinian negotiators with virtual immunity against Israeli prosecution, after Hussein and Ashrawi travelled to Algiers and addressed a closed session of the Palestine National Council.

Thus, Yitzchak Shamir – heading the most right-wing, nationalist government in Israeli history – finds himself compelled to do what all his predecessors avoided: engage in negotiations with what is, to all intents and purposes, a PLO delegation. His denials that this is so only add to the confusion and disarray in government circles and among Likud supporters.

It is virtually certain that the Middle East peace conference will open in Madrid on October 30. Beyond that, nothing is certain.

In 1977, the opening of official Israeli-Egyptian peace negotiations was preceded by secret talks in Morocco, where the basic principle – Israeli withdrawal from Sinai in return for Israeli-Egyptian peace – was agreed upon, even before President Sadat set foot in Jerusalem. There are no indications that the present Madrid Conference is being preceded by such a prior understanding; on the contrary, it seems that Shamir is likely to make all possible efforts to sabotage the conference from the outset.

This impression is increased by Shamir's decision to shove aside his (relatively moderate) Foreign Minister David Levy, to take personal direction of the Israeli delegation, and to fill the negotiating team with hardliners. Moreover, the Shamir government vehemently proclaims its intention to hold on

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to the whole of the Occupied Territories, and – in token of this – to continue constructing settlements and changing the demographic balance in the territories subject to negotiations.

Unless resolved, the settlement issue in itself can cause a break-up of the talks within days of their opening. And should Shamir be somehow made to accept a settlement freeze (in return for a lifting of the Arab trade boycott on Israel?), numerous other pitfalls wait ahead: the scope and extent of the proposed Palestinian autonomy, and the length of time until this interim arrangement is replaced by a definite solution; the fate of the Syrian Golan Heights – whose retention by Israel is supported also by the leaders of the opposition Labor Party; the emotionally-loaded question of Jerusalem; the thorny issue of conventional and non-conventional disarmament – an issue where American, Soviet and European economic interests often clash with the pious statements of political leaders.

The task of pushing the conference forward would fall, in the first place, to the Americans; it is they who brought it into being, despite the formal pretence of equal American-Soviet co-sponsorship. As the inhabitants of Panama and Iraq can testify, George Bush is no apostle of peace. He is a cool and calculating politician, whose assessment of the American national interest – and actions under that assessment – seem, for the time being, to coincide with some aims of the peace movement.

At the time of writing, preparations are going on for what we all hope will be a truly giant peace rally in Tel-Aviv, on the eve of the conference. Whatever the politicians and diplomats get up to, it is up to us – the peace-seekers in Israel and elsewhere – to maintain and increase our pressure and our struggle.

The editor

NGO meeting

The Eighth U.N. International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine took place at the U.N. Vienna headquarters on August 28-30, 1991. This meeting was held against the background of the Gulf war and its aftermath, the diplomatic moves toward a regional peace conference, and the continued oppression of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories.

Several workshops were held to deal with actual issues concerning the Middle East as a whole, such as demilitarization and water resources. Other workshops dealt with issues directly concerning the Palestinian question: protecting the rights of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories, family reunification, Jewish immigration and its implications for the human and national rights of the Palestinians, and ways and means of lobbying governments on behalf of the Palestinian national rights. Attention was also given to the persecution of Palestinians in Kuwait and their massive deportation from there, following the Gulf war.

Among the "Special Interest Groups", mention

should be made of the exposition by Dr. Marc Ellis – a professor of religious studies known for his efforts to formulate a Jewish Theology of Liberation – at the workshop "Auschwitz and the Intifada". Ellis dealt with the Jewish history of victimization and the difficulty for Jews in acknowledging that in today's Israeli-Palestinian conflict it is the Palestinians who are the oppressed victims.

Also deserving special mention is the fact that the Final Declaration incorporated most of the joined statement of the Israeli and Palestinian NGOs issued in Jerusalem on August 14, 1991 (see TOI-48, p.8).

* The texts of the Final Declaration and of the workshops reports are available from the NGO Coordinating Committee, P.O.B. 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

As always, the NGO conference provided a forum for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, involving both a large PLO delegation and many Palestinians from the Occupied Territories – though some of the most prominent, such as Sa'eb Erakat of Al-Najah University and Raji Sourani of Gaza, had been prevented by the military government from traveling.

Although the Israeli participation in this year's NGO conference was limited to the more radical peace and human rights groups (essentially, those who had come out in opposition to the Gulf war) it got considerable attention from the Israeli media. The public debate between Uri Avnery (ICIPP) and senior PLO member Nabil Shaath about Palestinian participation in Baker's conference got into the television news, Avnery emphasizing the importance of Palestinian participation, however humiliating the conditions, *because the conference could create its own momentum*, and Sha'at defining which were the non-negotiable conditions – such as Jerusalem being on the conference agenda.

The ICIPP had two panelists in the conference, Matti Peled and Uri Avnery. In his exposition, Peled spoke about *the discrepancy of the American efforts to fight the Gulf war under a United Nations mantle, while reducing the U.N.'s role in the peace conference to a bare minimum*.

Avnery emphasized another paradox: *the majority of Israelis, who would like the right-wing Likud to conduct a left-wing policy of achieving a peace settlement*.

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■ In the beginning of September, Ratz Knesset Member Shulamit Aloni underwent a liver operation in Paris. The *Ma'ariv* reporter who interviewed Aloni in her hospital room entitled his article: *Aloni in Paris hospital receives flowers from Israeli ambassador and PLO representative*. He further reported that "intentionally or not, these two bouquets were placed side-by-side in her room" (*Ma'ariv*, 16.9.91).

Simulation and reality

On September 16, the draft of an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty was officially presented to American Secretary of State James Baker. It had been worked out in the July Israeli-Palestinian simulation game at Stanford University, California (*see TOI-48, p. 8*), and made public in a press conference that took place in the Notre-Dame Building, located in what was until 1967 no-man's-land between the Israeli and Jordanian positions.

The signatories of the document include, on the Palestinian side, senior Arafat aide Nabil Sha'ath as well as Feisal Husseini and others involved in the current diplomatic efforts. On the Israeli side it was not possible, of course, to have the same kind of mainstream representation. Nevertheless, the Israeli participants were far from being lightweights: former member of the Likud Council Moshe Amirav (who is now in Shinuy), and Giora Forman, Secretary of the Mapam-affiliated kibbutz movement* who was long considered one of the more conservative members of his party, as well as other respectable Israelis such as the orientalist Moshe Ma'oz.

On four points the document which they wrestled together seems to help break entrenched taboos, which are notorious for stumping many previous meetings.

- It was agreed that Israeli settlers would be allowed to stay in the territory of the Palestinian state, provided that they agree to respect its laws – but that they would have to give up lands which were confiscated from Palestinians.
- The document provides for the creation of a partly demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with a defence force sufficient to maintain internal order only, and with international guarantees for its security and sovereignty. Giora Forman – who is a reserve brigadier and former Deputy Commander of the Israeli Air Force – was especially pleased with *such unprecedented consideration, on the Palestinian side, for Israel's security needs.*
- On Jerusalem, the document reads: *Jerusalem will be a city of peace and, though remaining physically undivided, will be the capital of both Israel and Palestine.* This must be considered a significant step for the Israeli participants. Amirav, who is a member of the Jerusalem Municipal Council, declared: *signing this document was painful, but I knew that the Palestinians, too, signed away some of their most cherished dreams.*
- With regard to the refugee problem there is the formulation: *The Palestinians will have the right to return to the Palestinian state; procedures will be worked out for applications by Palestinians to return to their homes inside Israel, or to receive compensations for them; no collective return of Palestinians to their homes is envisaged* (text re-translated from Hebrew).

* Forman's Mapam affiliation was overlooked in TOI-48.

■ On the morning of September 8, several dozen of the Mapam youths occupied the parking lot of the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem, waving signs reading: Shamir, the time for peace has come! – The only settlement we want is a peace settlement! (The last one in English, of course.) The youths also drafted a "Letter of Invitation to the Peace Conference" and presented it at the gate of the Prime Minister's office.

■ Because of President Bush's anger at the continued settlement activities in the Occupied Territories, the Israeli government adopted sophisticated tactics: it announced the creation of a chain of settlements just inside the Green Line (pre-'67 border). Government officials told the press that, in future, these settlements will extend over the Green Line and effectively obliterate it. Already, the projected access roads altogether ignore the pre-'67 border. The inauguration of the first one, "Tzur Ig'al" was scheduled for September 24, with the participation of Prime Minister Shamir and other public figures.

The new approach put Peace Now in a quandry. In principle, it has nothing against settling inside Israel's pre-'67 territory, but the government's barely-hidden annexationist provocation had to be exposed.

Eventually, it was decided to hold a protest on that same day – not at Tzur Ig'al but at the site of a new settlement, some twenty kilometres into the occupied West Bank. This site, known as Giv'at Oranim, was not officially announced by the government, but Peace Now's settlement monitoring team had discovered extensive construction activity going full steam on it.

On the afternoon of September 24, several busloads of peace activists arrived at the site and held a rally, addressed by four Knesset Members. Some of the demonstrators engaged in talk with Palestinian construction workers, who explained (in Hebrew) that they did not especially like to do this work but could find no other way to feed their families...

At the beginning of July, the first inhabitants were due to move into the new settlement of Re'ut. However, a bad surprise awaited them: the sewers were blocked with concrete, and water and electricity lines were cut. It is estimated that repairs will take several months. One of the new residents told *Hadashot*: "For ten years, as a Security Service operative, I made the Arabs' life into hell. Now they found a way to get back at me".

■ In August 1991, the military authorities resumed the policy of deporting women married to Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories; they claimed that the permit given such women in June 1990, following the previous struggle on that issue (*see TOI-39, p. 9*), is not effective for women who arrived after that date.

Now, many Palestinians expelled from Kuwait arrive back in the Occupied Territories; some of them have in the meantime gotten married in Kuwait, and are unable to get a residence permit for their wives and children. (The wives are often

themselves Palestinians, the children of refugees.)

There were numerous protests by Knesset Members of the Labor, Ratz and Mapam parties. On August 18, the rabbis of Clergy for Peace made a well-publicized visit to the Nur-Shams Refugee Camp, where one of the threatened families lives. Three Israeli human rights organizations jointly sponsored an appeal to the Supreme Court, which on September 22 issued an interim order, forbidding the expulsions.

Jewish-Arab dialogue in Europe

JADE (Jewish-Arab Dialogue in Europe) is a newly-founded network aimed at coordinating the peace activities, carried out within and between Jewish and Arab – most notably Palestinian – communities, as well as among European friends of peace in the Middle East. Jewish-Arab dialogue groups already exist in Brussels, Paris, Geneva, Rome, Milan, Amsterdam, London, Vienna, Frankfurt and Barcelona.

The network is intended to build and provide a data bank of contacts and activities for the various European groups, and also to coordinate the different groups' efforts of inviting host speakers. A regular monthly newsletter is still in preparation. There already appeared, however, a *diary of events*, reporting such events as a human chain between the Israeli embassy and the PLO office in London, on October 3.

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■ On September 25, at the eve of the convention of the Palestine National Council (PNC) in Algiers, a group of twenty-seven Knesset members published a public call for the PNC delegates "to show moderation and accept the American conditions for Palestinian participation in the peace conference". The signatories included all ten Knesset members of the Mapam, Ratz and Shinuy parties, as well as seventeen Labor doves. The declaration was received with annoyance by some Palestinian activists in the Occupied Territories, who regularly participate in dialogue with Israelis, and who felt that the American conditions are unjust and that Israeli peace seekers should not endorse them uncritically. However, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat praised "The Letter of the Twenty-Seven" on the PNC floor, pointing out that – whatever its precise wording – the signatories recognised the PNC as the fount of Palestinian decision-making.

■ During the preparations for the PNC session, Arafat aides approached the correspondents of major Israeli newspapers and offered to let them come and give a direct reportage of the PNC proceedings. However, to the disappointment of both Israelis and Palestinians, this plan was vetoed by the Algerian government, which feared that the presence of Israelis on Algerian soil may exacerbate its difficulties with local Muslim fundamentalists.

A month later, however – in the week preceding the convening of the Madrid peace conference – Israeli journalists Uzi Mahanaymi of *Yediot Aharonot*, and Salim Jubran, editor of *Al-Itihad*, were reporting

from Tunis, where they covered at first hand the PLO's preparations for the conference. On October 25, *Yediot Aharonot* published Mahanaymi's interview with Yasser Arafat, where the PLO chairman stated he would consider *stopping the Intifada in return for a settlement freeze* – if this idea was officially proposed to him by the Israeli government.

■ At the end of September, a delegation of Ratz students met in Holland with Palestinian students supporting the El-Fatah faction of the PLO. On their return, the Ratz group's spokesperson Danny Mayodovnik gave the following account: *The meeting focussed on the question "why are we afraid of peace", with the word "we" referring to all of us – Palestinians as well as Israelis. We are all afraid of peace, of the totally unfamiliar reality we will encounter after peace is signed. But we all are also tired – tired of constant conflicts and wars. Our meeting in Holland did not contain any dramatic breakthrough, but it did make clear to us that we must rouse ourselves, because we have a partner for peace* (Hadasht, 7.10.91).

■ On October 5, the Israeli radio broadcast news of a poll conducted among members of the ruling Likud party's Central Council, showing that most of them support Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for peace, and that some 20% support the creation of a Palestinian state. The poll was conducted by followers of Foreign Minister David Levy.

The leaking of the poll – which was supposed to remain confidential – caused a storm inside the Likud. Aryeh Mekel, head of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority known for his close connections to Prime Minister Shamir, forbade the radio to repeat broadcasting this news item, and Likud hardliners denounced it as "a total fabrication".

Another statistical fact had surfaced on the previous week. Only 200 of the Likud Central Council's more than 3000 members – all of whom were invited – turned up for a public meeting called by the Golan settlers, in opposition to Israeli withdrawal from that area. Again: what is in a number? But on that occasion the Committee of Golan Heights Settlements, which organized the meeting, declared its disappointment. They had expected that more than a thousand Central Council Members would come, especially since many of them live in the northern part of the country (*Ha'aretz*, 27.9.1991).

■ On October 7, as the Knesset held its first session after the summer recess, several dozen Peace Now activists held a vigil outside, calling for an immediate halt to all settlement activities. Also displayed were signs supporting Abie Nathan and his struggle against the law forbidding contacts with the PLO.

■ On October 8, there was again a vigil in front of the Knesset: this time, a group of veterans of the Palmach (pre-state Jewish militia), headed by poet Haim Hefer, were holding signs reading: *Shame!* This day was the Palmach's fiftieth anniversary. To commemorate that event, a special session of the Knesset was held, to which all Palmach veterans had

been invited. Among these veterans there is also a cabinet minister – namely Rehav'am Ze'evi, the notorious leader of the Moledet party which advocates the "transfer" of all Arabs.

The commemoration, organized by the Palmach Veterans Association and given official status by the government, did not develop into the display of National Unity which the organizers intended. As soon as Ze'evi started to speak, fifteen Knesset Members walked out in protest, as did many of the non-KM Palmach veterans, invited as guests of honour.

Young blood to Peace Now

by Lior Kay

In Israel, it is not easy to maintain a youth group over a long period. When the leading activists reach the age of eighteen they are conscripted, and if there is nobody to take over their responsibility the group falls apart and has to be re-started from scratch. Thus, although Peace Now exists since 1978, its present youth group was only founded about a year ago.

The beginning was not very auspicious. The senior Peace Now activists tried to organise the youths according to their "grown-up" ideas, but we didn't like it. Then, they started to regard us as a bunch of crazies. The fact is that for a long time we were coming to the office, smoking and making fun and not much more than that. The "grown-ups" started to complain that we are a nuisance. But gradually this situation started to disturb us, too, and some youths stopped altogether coming to the weekly meetings. It was then that a few of us decided to take things into our hands, and we also found among the grown-ups one who is different, and with whom we can work.

We organised a vigil at the Likud headquarters. We had alarm clocks with us, in order to let Prime Minister Shamir wake up from his dreams of "Greater Israel". There were only ten people in this vigil, but we had very good media coverage because of the gimmick. That's how the media works: when you have a good gimmick they will cover you even when you have only a few people.

After the alarm clock demonstration we had many new recruits. At the moment we have some five hundred youths registered, from all over the country. We have become attractive for youths. Except for participating in the general Peace Now activities, we initiate our own things. We try to be original and daring. In many cases, youths are ready to undertake operations about which grown-ups are hesitant...

We have the weekly meetings and actions such as demonstrations in "hot spots". On certain occasions we accept the risk of being arrested, for example in the August 26 demonstration against the interrogation of Hussein and Ashrawi (*Palestinian negotiators accused of meeting the PLO. Ed*). We were some twenty youths there, in front of the police station, and the police demanded that we disperse. We refused, because they didn't disperse the extreme rightists who were also there. Then they arrested me

and another boy. It was not so horrible; they held us for two hours, asked questions and then we went out on bail.

We get some problems with parents who fear that their children will be arrested. But in general, most of the parents are more positive than we expected.

Except for the demonstrations we organise different kinds of dialogue. We had several meetings with Arab youths. We are now trying to arrange a meeting with Egyptians. We contacted the Israeli and the Egyptian Ministries of Education; both were surprisingly cooperative, and the plan is moving forward.

Recently, we had a meeting with members of the religious youth movement "Ezra". We had much debate before this meeting took place. There were among us many who thought it was no use, that the distance was too big. They thought the religious youths would all be crazy fanatics, especially since Ezra insisted in advance on separation of boys and girls. But in the end we did meet – somewhere in the open air, boys and girls under different trees. There followed quite a good discussion; we could even agree with them on some points.

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■ On October 13, a public meeting was held on the campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, organised by the newly-founded **Committee for the Defence of Academic Freedom**. The speakers called upon the government to immediately re-open Bir-Zeit University on the West Bank, closed for more than three years. The committee spokesperson, Prof. Yaron Ha'ezrahi, was interviewed on Israeli radio. Demanding the abolition of military censorship over the West Bank University schoolbooks, he argued: *The claim that certain books incite to violence may let the government end up forbidding all the philosophers who said that human beings are born free. After all, such talk could incite people whose freedom is denied.*

The Hebrew University Student Union announced the formation of a **Joint Struggle Committee** with the Bir-Zeit students.

■ On October 16, some twenty Ratz, Mapam and Shinuy activists stationed themselves on a pedestrian bridge spanning the Tel-Aviv – Jerusalem highway, decorated the bridge with a 7-metre long banner, reading (in Hebrew and English) **ISRAEL WANTS PEACE** – and waited for American Secretary of State James Baker who was to arrive in Israel for a crucial round of talks.

They had to stay waiting for hours and hours, since Baker was detained by prolonged negotiations in Damascus. Meanwhile, as many drivers as can pass on a central highway in a couple of hours voiced their diverging comments – in a noisy mixture of waving, shouting and hooting.

■ On October 17, several dozen youths, members of the Labor-affiliated youth movement, arrived at the Jerusalem offices of the "Gush Emmunim" settler movement, where they demonstrated against the settlers' efforts to stop the proposed peace conference. After half an hour, members of the racist Kach Party

arrived at the spot; the confrontation between them and the youthful Laborites developed into a fistfight.

We must do more...

Moshe Goldschlager interviewed by Adam Keller

During more than three years, bypassers and motorists on Ibn-Gvirol – one of Tel-Aviv's main streets – can see a line of demonstrators standing every Thursday afternoon at an intersection, defiantly holding up their signs: Are you happy with the occupation? – Let's prevent the next war! – Talk peace with the PLO! and Down with the occupation! (in Hebrew Dai Lakibush, which is also the group's name).

Maintaining a volunteer group over such an extended period is far from easy; its continued existence owes much to the persistence of 67-year old Moshe Goldschlager, the group's organiser.

While being interviewed, Goldschlager is busy producing new signs with the slogan Abie Nathan – Freedom fighter!

“During the Second World War, I spent four years in a forced labor battalion, set up by the pro-Nazi Rumanian government. We worked from dawn to sunset, building roads. We were mostly students and merchants, not used to physical labor, and here we had to smash stones with an eight-kilo hammer. Still, it was better than being sent beyond the Dniester River; of those who went there, only very few came back. Our guards, soldiers of the Rumanian army, were not always brutal; and some of them could be bribed to reduce the work quota.

“After the war, I came back to Czernovitz, my hometown. My immediate family survived the war, but we felt we could not stay there, where only a broken remnant was left of the Jewish community. We wanted to start a new life, and applied for permission to emigrate. We had to wait many years. I arrived at Israel in 1952, all alone; my father and sisters were allowed to leave Rumania only in 1960. Shortly after my arrival I was conscripted. At that time I was not involved in politics; I had too many personal difficulties. For many years I did not have a place of my own, but lived in a hostel, in a room with five other men.

“In 1956, I saw a leaflet about the Kafr-Qasem massacre – an event whose publication in the papers was, at that time, forbidden by the military censorship. I was very shocked. Later, I participated in demonstrations against the expropriations of Arab lands. I became very involved in the Israeli Association of Anti-Fascist Fighters and Victims of Nazism. For years, I was selling the association's paper *Antifa*, which had articles relating our past experiences to phenomena of racism in the Israeli society.

“In 1977, we were horrified by the electoral victory of Menachem Begin – a fascist in our eyes. In retrospect, it seems that this was too harsh a judgement, though we were right in opposing Begin's nationalism and his annexationist policies.

“Shortly after the beginning of the Intifada, I was in

a large protest meeting at the “Tzavta” club, here around the corner. There were fierce speeches against the killing of Palestinians in the Territories, but some of us felt that we must do more, something directed to the general public. More or less spontaneously, we went into the street, stood here holding signs for an hour, and then we decided to make it a regular weekly vigil.

At first, there were some fifty or sixty people every week, but this didn't last. Many became tired of it. Some of the bypassers were very hostile, I think that sometimes people with a personal frustration are taking it out on us and it makes them feel very patriotic. Also, our ranks dwindled after Peace Now officially accepted the two state solution and the idea of negotiations with the PLO. Some participants felt that our small group is no longer needed, and went away. I was left more or less in charge of those who remained.

I felt that Peace Now's activity is very much fluctuating: sometimes they have a big demonstration and then they go to sleep for half a year, and it is important to do something – however small – which goes on week after week, in all kinds of weather, summer heat or winter rain. In **Dai Lakibush** men and women, young and old are standing together. The model of a weekly vigil was adopted by other groups, like **Women in Black** and **Yesh G'vul**. This makes us only happy: the more the better!

The crossed flags of Israel and Palestine first appeared in 1967 as the symbol of the ICIPP. Since then, this symbol has spread far and wide among supporters of Peace. Recently, we noticed our symbol on one of a series of beautiful buttons based on drawings by Jewish and Palestinian children.

Obtainable from:

Artists for Mideast Peace, Worldwide Bldg., 144 Moody St., Waltham, MA USA 02154; ph: (617) 891.4235.

“By now, those of us who remain are a very tight-knit group. Most of the participants are regulars, though we get occasional reinforcements. Being a mixed group in an accessible place makes it easy for people to start talking to us. Sometimes, young or not so young bypassers ask us *may we stand with you?* There was a young woman who stopped one day and joined us, and then became a regular herself. For more than a year she took the signs to her house – we use signs of quite heavy plastic, since carton ones are in danger of being torn. There was a period when organised youngsters from the extreme right were coming every week to harass us, spitting, insulting, sometimes throwing eggs. But they became tired of it, and we persisted.

There was also harassment by the municipal inspectors, who several times imposed fines for littering when we distributed leaflets. We asked the help of the **Israeli Civil Rights Association**. The municipality said that we needed a permit for leafletting. But when I tried to get such a permit, nobody at Town Hall could tell me where to obtain it. However, we never had to pay the fines! A television crew also once came around. They interviewed me, but when I was not willing to give them statements in

favor of terrorism and violence, they were no longer interested.

"We have been standing like this for three and a half years, with no interruption – except during the Gulf war, when the streets were empty, anyhow. I don't know how long it will take before peace comes. I hope we will have to give up standing here every week only when there is no more need for it."

■ A few months ago, Labor Knesset Member Amir Peretz – inhabitant of Sderot, a town located close to the Gaza Strip border – took an initiative to create a "good neighborliness forum", comprising prominent people from the Gaza Strip and from the parts of Israel near to it. Together with kibbutzniks and several other Labor Kms from the neighboring towns, Peretz established contact with a Palestinian group headed by Dr. Haider Abd-el-Shafi, President of the Gaza Red Crescent Society. On the Israeli side, the enterprise received the blessing of Baruch Abu-Hatzira, the "Baba Sali" – head of an influential local religious cult, with followers all over Israel (see *TOI-40*, p. 6).

The Palestinians felt that, before the new initiative is launched, several prominent Gazans imprisoned at the Ketziot (Ansar-3) Detention Camp in the Negev must be consulted. Peretz, using his authority as a Knesset Member, succeeded in visiting the camp and talking with these prisoners – and obtained their approval. Not all of his fellow-Laborites in Sderot were enthusiastic: for example, a cartoon circulated, showing Peretz wearing Arab headgear and with the caption "Muhammad Peretz". But Peretz went ahead with preparations for a public meeting, which was due to be held at the end of October in a tent on the Israel – Gaza-Strip border. This, however, had to be put off – since Dr. Abd-el-Shafi was elected to head the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Peace Conference.

On October 24, Israeli television covered KM Peretz and his colleagues, as they came to see their Palestinian friend off and wish him success.

ERRATUM

In a previous issue we mistakenly gave a wrong address for Kav Le'oved (Workers Hotline).

The true address is: P.O.B. 2319, Tel-Aviv 61022

■ The October 9 invasion, by Israeli settlers, of Silwan – a part of the annexed "Greater Jerusalem" – got a worldwide coverage. Silwan, the birth place of Yasser Arafat, is a village just outside the walls of the Old City, one of the Intifada centers. The world already heard of its existence a year ago: the village is at shouting distance from the Temple Mount. The Temple Mount massacre followed a previous invasion of Silwan by Jewish fanatics.

In the past weeks, Silwan became the scene of protests by the Israeli peace movement. The police, which failed to stop the settlers from coming in, was more successful in keeping out the peace activists; they could only rally on the outskirts of Silwan. Thus it was in the October 12 demonstration at the initiative of **Women in Black**. In the action on

October 17, which was part of Peace Now's country-wide *Time for Peace* campaign, it was the same. However, Knesset Members had access, because of their parliamentary immunity. The KMs of Hadash went to meet with the Palestinians who had in such a traumatic way been thrown out of their houses. Five dovish Labor KMs did the same. Protests of the settler provocation were heard also from moderates inside the ruling Likud party.

In spite of all this, Israel's Supreme Court of Justice decided, on October 24, that for the time being the settlers could stay. The houses happened to be registered in the name of Palestinians who in 1967, when East Jerusalem was conquered, were in Jordan. They were not allowed to come back, and were declared "absentees". According to Israeli law, the property of absentees is automatically confiscated by the government – and since government officials gave the settlers the right to live there, they seem to have a "legal" title to do what they did.

The settler provocation had been condemned by an unprecedented large part of society. Still, the settlers so far won. The occupation law is on their side.

The settlers who invaded Silwan village justified themselves by claiming that the houses they occupied used to belong to Jews before 1929. They did not, however, count upon the reaction of 71-year old Yosef Meyuhas.

It pains me to see the house where I was born thrust into such a storm. Of course I am against this settlement, it could only bring harm. I am for peace, and this is a provocation against peace.

My grandfather built this house in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. When I was a child, there were other Jewish families living with us in Silwan. We had excellent relations with the Arab neighbors. I especially remember the family of Abasi Gozlan.

(Ha'aretz, 10.10.91).

■ October 16, a new initiative was started by Peace Now and its partners in the broad *Time for peace* coalition: an old truck was provided with enormous billboards on both sides, bearing the slogan THIS JOURNEY MUST END WITH PEACE! Starting in a much publicised launch-off at the northern border of Israel, where a group of youthful bicyclers joined the truck, it went for a whole week all over the country. At every small or big town, in every kibbutz or moshav the truck stood half an hour – according to a tight time schedule – with prominent speakers addressing "the masses". *The Other Israel's* staff happened to be present when the truck was in Holon.

□ Friday October 18, at noon, the famous *Time for Peace* truck was to arrive at Holon's central Weitzman Square. Not only had members of the local Peace Now branch handed out leaflets on the previous days, announcing when and where the truck was to appear, but some members had been busy until late in the previous night. The Holon police had only been willing to give a permit on the condition that there would be space for the truck on the small parking lot at the side of the square; therefore, five peace activists had to wait with their private cars

until they could occupy five adjoining places.

The police left nothing to chance: during the half an hour before the truck arrived, the peace activists were far outnumbered by the also waiting police force. Then, on schedule, the truck arrived with its meters-high hardboard sides.

Bypassers were crowding around the truck where they could sign their names on the billboards (some youths did it standing on each other's shoulders!). The local Peace Now spokesman introduced the guest speaker, former Knesset Member Meir Pa'il. Pa'il is known abroad for his part in the dialogue with the PLO, and as such his temperament is not appreciated by everybody. But in the Hyde Park of Holon his kind of charisma was quite effective: he is a reserve colonel – and it shows; his language is not that of an intellectual; but with all that he happens to be strongly for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Pa'il got several applause, and more and more people were attracted to the scene. He quoted Likud Minister Roni Milo, according to whom Menachem Begin had had no choice but signing Camp David because of the intensity of the peace demonstrations. Pa'il added: *What we forced Begin to do, we will succeed to let Shamir do, too!*

The police escort was after all not totally idle: Tzomet members, waving national flags, tried to organize their own happening at exactly the same spot, and were ordered aside.

After half an hour the truck left for its next destination: Kibbutz Nahal Oz near the Gaza border, where a rally was scheduled near Geyzi Shavit's controversial Intifada Monument (*TOI-42, p. 8,9*).

Ramiya: continued threat

The Arab village of Ramiya, where 17 farmer families live, was due to be demolished on September 16, since – according to an official statement by the Israeli Government's Lands Authority – the village lands are to be incorporated in the nearby Jewish town of Karmiel and used "to construct housing for Soviet Jewish immigrants" (*see TOI-48, p. 6*).

Two days previous to this date, hundreds of Jews and Arabs gathered at Ramiya and symbolically planted olive trees – undeterred by police warnings that such planting is illegal since "the land has been confiscated and now belongs to the government". With the inhabitants determined to stay in their homes and defy the eviction order, Tel-Aviv peace activists (including TOI's editorial staff) spent several nights in a "solidarity tent" erected at Ramiya. A few days later, the Supreme Court granted an extension of the eviction deadline, until the end of November.

On September 28, thousands of demonstrators answered a call by **The Committee of Arab Mayors**, forming a human chain along the nearby highway, and then marching to Ramiya and holding a protest rally there.

A week later, Mr. Babay of the Government Lands Authority met with the inhabitants of Ramiya. He

told them that their wish to continue living on at least part of their ancestral land, as a neighborhood of Karmiel, was out of the question. He offered them only (very meagre) compensations for leaving their lands altogether, plus a "fatherly advise": *You better take this offer; soon your political friends will forget you; then we send a police force of 1500 men to evict you, and you remain with nothing.*

It is vitally important to maintain the campaign for Ramiya, inside Israel and internationally. The new deadline, at the end of November, draws near!

Protests to: *Yitzchak Shamir, Prime Minister, 3 Kaplan St., Hakiryia, Jerusalem 91919, Israel. Fax 972-2-664838, and/or to: The Israeli Embassy in your country. Copies to: The Ramiya Residents Committee, P.O.B. 388, Al Ba'aneh 20189, Israel.*

N.B.: Through the IJPU (International Jewish Peace Union) New York chapter it is possible to send a protest telex message. Call: *Wordlink NA at 800 827-2831 and ask for the Ramya telex.*

Mordechai Vanunu

Inhuman conditions of imprisonment

The following statement, issued on August 12 by The Committee for an Open Trial to Mordechai Vanunu, was published (as a letter to the editor) in Ha'aretz, Hadashot and Davar, as well as in the religious weekly Erev Shabat.

(...) We express our strongest protest and outrage at the decision, by Judge Tzvi Cohen of the Jerusalem District Court, to reject Mordechai Vanunu's appeal and continue the conditions of total isolation imposed upon Vanunu since the beginning of his imprisonment, five years ago.

Holding a person in isolation for such a prolonged period cannot be interpreted as anything but an act of spite on the part of the authorities, an act aimed at breaking his mental balance. We regret to note that, with regard to Vanunu, the Israeli judicial system did not show itself to be independent; on the contrary, it collaborated with the government throughout the Vanunu Affair.

In reporting on the judge's decision ITIM, the official Israeli news agency, labeled Vanunu "the Israeli nuclear spy". This definition is unjust, both to the man and to the issue. Mordechai Vanunu is no spy; he was not engaged in giving classified information to the intelligence-gathering agencies of foreign governments. What he did was the duty of a citizen possessing a democratic consciousness: to provide the public with information on a danger threatening it, information which the government seeks to conceal. Vanunu's act is similar to that of Prof. Daniel Elsberg who – during the Vietnam War – made the American public aware of "The Pentagon Papers", which proved that the U.S. government was lying to its citizens. But where Vanunu was condemned to prolonged imprisonment and isolation and labelled "public enemy", Elsberg was acquitted on

the basis of the American citizens' right to the freedom of information.

We regard Mordechai Vanunu as a totally innocent person, who should be allowed to walk the world freely. But even granting that the government of Israel saw fit to imprison him, there is still no conceivable reason to impose upon him unbearable conditions of imprisonment, whose like is unknown even for the most hardened and dangerous criminals.

Gideon Spiro and Haim Bar'am

Committee for an Open Trial to Mordechai Vanunu
POB 7323, Jerusalem

The Vanunu case was taken up by Amnesty International, which termed his isolation "inhuman".

Vanunu is allowed to receive and send letters, though his mail is censored. Letters could be sent to: M. Vanunu, Ashk. Prison POB 17, Ashkelon 78100, Israel

Occupation justice

In February 1985 the Ramallah Military Court inflicted five years' imprisonment upon a 13-year old boy from Dheishe Refugee Camp, in the course of an "instant trial" lasting not more than one afternoon.

Following that trial, Jerusalem peace activist Gideon Spiro wrote letters to all three of the military judges involved, stating that "this trial made a mockery of any concept of justice, being reminiscent of the trials in the courts of dictatorial and tyrannical regimes" and wishing the judges' sleep to be nightly interrupted by nightmares reminding of the Palestinian child Ahd's experiences in the Israeli prison. The judicial system did not take kindly to this criticism; Spiro was prosecuted and sentenced (by a civilian court) to two months suspended imprisonment for "insulting a public official".

Three years later, at the beginning of the Intifada, "instant trials" became the rule at the military courts. Mass arrests were carried out by the army, and the High Command expected the military judges to help break the uprising by swiftly handing down the required number of "detering" verdicts. It was at that time that Adv. Felicia Langer – well-known since 1967 for her determined defence of Palestinians – decided to retire and close down her Jerusalem office. In a newspaper interview she explained: *I can no longer defend my clients. The judges expect them to plead guilty in order to finish quickly, and anybody who tries to conduct a real defence just gets a more severe punishment.*

In the following period, the issue dropped out of the media – not because the situation improved, but because it had become a routine. It only achieved prominence again through the Amnesty International's report of July 1991, which was based on many months of thorough research. As well as giving detailed reports of the institutionalised torture of Palestinian detainees, the report – which was extensively quoted in the Israeli press – concentrated on judicial malpractice by the military courts.

Amnesty researcher Wesley Greek told Israeli

journalist Tom Segev of the scene he had witnessed at the Hebron Military Court, on November 9, 1990:

The accused was brought wounded before the judge. He had apparently been tortured. His shirt was torn and bloodstained. On his left arm, open wounds were visible. There was also a chest wound. During the proceedings the accused took off his trousers, and his lawyer asked the judge to look at his thigh, which was blue and black and wounded. The judge said that this was not relevant and refused to look at the wounds. (Tom Segev in his article "The Guilt of the Judges", Ha'aretz 2.8.91).

Not all military judges – mostly lawyers who do this as part of their reserve military service – are happy with the role they are called upon to play. When the dissident sociology lecturer Haim Gordon explored the attitudes of his fellow academics to the Intifada, he came upon the following testimony by a law professor at Tel-Aviv University:

*... About a year ago, I was called up into the reserves, in order to act as a judge on appeals of prisoners in the Ketziot camp (Ansar-3, a large detention center for Palestinians from the occupied territories). I reviewed the cases and released about a third of the prisoners. After that, a letter arrived at the Army Attorney General from the Security Service, saying that I am pro-PLO in my views.**

Gordon's contact, who described himself as "politically centrist and opposing leftist views," insisted on his name being kept secret. However, another military judge – Aryeh Koks, a lawyer in civilian life – spoke out in an extensive interview published in *Hadashot* (11.10.91):

There are dozens of mostly young prisoners. They don't even try to defend themselves. They have no confidence in the system. There are different standards for Jews and for Arabs. A Jew would get a year for killing an Arab; an Arab would get the same for throwing a stone that did not hit anybody.

I tried not to conduct "assembly-line" trials, but to ask personal questions of the accused and to determine the details of the alleged crime. But it is difficult. Usually the main evidence is a total confession of all the charges, and it is very difficult to get at the bottom.

In the Territories, the people we have to judge are regarded by the population as heroes. This makes it difficult for a judge to function. It is very unpleasant to sentence 17-year old boys – the same age as my son – for acts which any normal person would have done in their place. I also would have done the same.

Meanwhile, Gideon Spiro wrote to the (civilian) judges who convicted him in 1985, asking for their apology since *the expressions which I used in my letter to the Ramallah military judges should be regarded, as it now turns out, as having only one fault: extreme understatement.*

* Published in *Struggle* magazine, available from Haim Gordon, 258/7 Derech Mezzada St., Be'er-Sheba 84755.

■ On May 10, a new Israeli film was shown in Tel-Aviv: Tzvi Zelinger's "Besh'chenut Tova" (As Good Neighbors). Taking place at some time in the near future, the film shows two Israelis travelling through

the State of Palestine which was founded next to Israel, five years previously. Dorit Shikersky, film critic of *Zu Haderech*, writes: *Zelinger's political views are obvious, but his Israelis and Palestinians are living characters*. She cites a scene where one of the Israelis, after having been cheated by a money changer, bursts out: *I was beaten up by fascists so that you will have your state!*

■ After nine years, the Lebanon War has only started to be dealt with in Israeli cinema. Haim Buzaglo's *Cherry Season* centers on Micky Gur, a successful copywriter at a big Tel-Aviv advertising agency, who is wrenched out of his comfortable existence and sent to do reserve duty in Lebanon. There, he becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of getting killed.

■ Eran Riklis produced *Cup Final*, which circulated several weeks throughout Israel. It is the story of an Israeli soldier captured by a group of Palestinian fighters in Lebanon, and the quite realistic relations between him and his captors. What captors and captive share from the start is their eagerness to hear news about the World Cup football games in Barcelona - which took place simultaneously with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. When in the end the Palestinian "terrorists" are killed or captured, the audience suffers from a divided loyalty.

■ The young Gazan film director Rashid Mashrawi is much at home in Tel-Aviv's bohemian circles. Mashrawi was already awarded a prestigious Israeli prize for his film *The Shelter* - about Palestinian workers who illegally spend the night at a hiding place in Tel-Aviv. He himself is an inhabitant of Shati Refugee Camp, and needs a military permit every time he enters Israel. Work on his latest film was interrupted when policemen, on a routine check, discovered an "irregularity" in his papers and held him for five days' detention.

His new film - "Long Days in Gaza" - describes the Gulf War experience from the Gazan point of view: deserted streets under the prolonged curfew, with a band of children drumming on empty tins and scattering at the sound of an approaching jeep. A central character is a genial, fat greengrocer, who is a religious fanatic and regards the Scuds as a sign of Allah's retribution upon the Jews. *I could have made this character less religious and more peace-loving, in order to please my Israeli friends - but then I would have been creating propaganda, worthless politically as well as artistically*, says Mashrawi (*Hadashot*, June 31).

■ Uri Barbash's new film, *Real time*, goes back to the Yom Kippur war. Its hero, Eli, is a young and ambitious Armoured Corps colonel. During a crucial battle, he fails to relieve in time an embattled unit. Facing a court-martial, the accusations of the dead soldiers' parents and his own feelings of guilt and failure, Eli's life breaks down to the point of disintegration. The role of Eli is played by Asi Dayan, the son of the late Moshe Dayan - Israel's Defence Minister during the Yom Kippur war, who was blamed for much that went wrong in that war.

■ On October 5, the Rishon Letzion Philharmonic Orchestra performed a world première: Oded Zehavi's "Israeli War Requiem". Thirty-year old Zehavi told *Yediot Aharonot*:

As a conscript I was in a tank unit in Lebanon. During the first days I felt numb, as if it was all happening to somebody else. We had a battle at Kafr Shima, south of Beirut. Afterwards, I saw one of the houses which our guns had hit. The house was half demolished, and the people were dead, but the breakfast table was still whole and the food they had been eating was still there... I decided that if I get out of this alive, I will tell about it in my way.

■ Having served a term of 28 days' military detention, reserve soldier Ronen Katz went, on September 11, back to work in his job as a guard of the Ashdod-Eilat Pipeline. But at the workplace he heard from his superior that, because of his refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories, he had been sacked as "a security risk" - on direct instructions from the Shabak (Security Service).

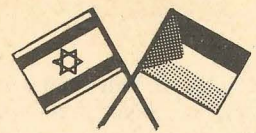
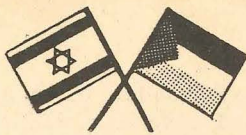
The affair received extensive press coverage. The Civil Rights Association declared its willingness to assist Katz in presenting his case to the Supreme Court. However, after several days Katz was contacted by the pipeline company and re-instated. The company's spokesperson told the press: "We would never permit the Shabak any interference in our affairs! Katz's superior acted on his own initiative, and has been reprimanded."

■ On October 15, the military authorities announced the release and discharge from military service of twenty Druze conscientious objectors - among them the son of Knesset Member Muhammad Na'fa, Adi, whose detention helped dramatise the issue of the Druze refusers (see TOI-42, p.10, 11). All of them had previously undergone terms of imprisonment ranging from several months to nearly two years.

Sheikh Ja'aber Muadi, head of the Druze Initiative Committee, welcomed the move, but also emphasized that many more Druze refusers are still incarcerated, and that the committee would continue struggling for their release and for an end to Druze conscription - Druze youths being the only non-Jewish conscripts in Israel. (According to the commander of the Haifa Recruiting Station, more than half of the Druze conscripts of 1990 avoided conscription in one way or another: by outright refusal, exemption on grounds of religious vocation, or through a psychiatric discharge!)

Sheikh Muadi, a teacher, has meanwhile become the target of disciplinary proceedings, initiated by the Ministry of Education. He is accused of seditious activities in support of the Intifada, incompatible with being a teacher. Should the disciplinary court rule against him, Sheikh Ja'aber Muadi may lose both his job and his right to a pension.

■ On October 27, the Jerusalem court sentenced businessman/peace activist David Ish-Shalom (42) to nine months imprisonment for his participation, in 1988 and 1989, in three meetings with the PLO.



Abie Nathan Prisoner of peace

On October 6, the Ramleh Magistrate's court sentenced peace activist Abie Nathan to a year and half imprisonment, for having met PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, in contravention of the "Anti-Terrorism Act". Judge Abraham Tal rejected Nathan's plea that he had conducted a peaceful dialogue with Arafat, in the presence of the international press, and ruled that "the wide publicity given to the accused's acts only makes the offence worse, since it may encourage others to follow him." In 1990, Nathan already served a half-year prison term for a similar "crime" (see TOI-38, p. 3).

Abie Nathan was granted four last days of freedom. These were crammed with hectic activities. In Nazareth, Nathan was given the town's honorary citizenship. In the ceremony, Mayor Tawfiq Ziad - a poet known in the whole Arab world - read a special poem in honour of Abie Nathan.

The following day, Nathan sat at the Knesset visitors' gallery, while four Knesset members - Laborite Uzi Bar'am, Ratz's Dedi Zucker, Hashem Mahamid of Hadash and Muhammad Miari of the PLP - praised him and called for abolition of the prohibition on meetings with the PLO. Justice Minister Dan Meridor admitted that this law is indeed "strange and exceptional" and shifted responsibility for it upon Labor leader Shimon Peres - who was Prime Minister in 1986, when it was enacted. (On that same evening, the three Hadash Knesset Members announced that they are going themselves to meet with the PLO, as an act of solidarity with Nathan.)

Later, Nathan spent eight hours in front of the microphone at his radio station, *The Voice of Peace*, where he talked with phoning-in listeners and told anecdotes of his life, starting with his horrifying experience as a young pilot in his native India, sent to evacuate Hindu refugees from Pakistan.

Nathan also spent much of these last days trying to find new sponsors for the station - since several big advertisers have started boycotting the station for political reasons. Nathan will now have to suspend his extensive philanthropic activities. (One day before entering prison, he donated forty wheelchairs to a hospital).

Throughout, all of Nathan's movements were closely followed by journalists and press photographers, and he was interviewed again and again, repeatedly giving the same answers to the same questions: *No, I don't regret it. Yes, I will continue to meet the PLO, after I get out. What will I do in prison? Learn Arabic and finish writing my memoirs.*

On the last evening, however, the journalists agreed to leave him alone for a few hours, when he went to his favorite Tel-Aviv pub with a few intimate friends.

On the following day, hundreds of peace activists thronged the entrance to Ramleh police station, hours before Nathan had to present himself. Getting off his car, Nathan passed among the demonstrators, smiling and shaking hands. He made a short speech to the television cameras, and climbed into the waiting police car which whisked him off to prison.

□ Calls were made upon President Haim Herzog to pardon Abie Nathan by Ratz leader Shulamit Aloni, and the Head of the Labor Party Parliamentary Faction, Haim Ramon.

□ Likud dissidents Shlomo Lahat and Eli Landau, mayors, respectively of Tel-Aviv and Herzliya, together with Labor KM Aryeh Eliav and Yitzchak Ben Aharon, former head of the Israeli Trade Union Federation, held a vigil in front of Nathan's prison on October 25.

□ Thousands of Arab Israelis in the Galilee signed a petition to President Herzog, calling upon him to pardon Abie Nathan on the opening day of the Madrid peace conference.

Letters of solidarity to: *Abie Nathan, Ma'asiyahu prison, P.O.B. 13, Ramleh 72150, Israel.*

Nobel Prize appeal

An international appeal is being prepared to nominate Abie Nathan's candidature for the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. Since such nominations derive their validity from the signatures of parliament members, readers of *The Other Israel* are urged to help in convincing members of the parliament in their country (or of the European parliament) to write letters supporting Nathan's nomination. Write to:

*Abie Nathan Nobel Prize Campaign
c/o P.O.B. 956, Tel-Aviv 61008
phone/fax: 972-3-5565804.*

■ On September 10, about a hundred supporters of Yesh Gvul climbed the hill overlooking Athlit military prison. With them were nine guests from the United States - Vietnam veterans, whom military service had made into war resisters.

At the top, a New Year ceremony was held on behalf of prisoner Barak Ben-Gal (18), who refuses to serve in the Occupied Territories, and whose struggle, him being a conscript - not a reservist - is a long one. Actually, a few hours previously, Ben-Gal was transferred to another prison - for the express purpose of preventing him from hearing the ceremony, which was, like in previous years, broadcast into the prison compound by powerful loudspeakers.

The campaign for Ben-Gal's release continued through the weekly Yesh Gvul vigils in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem; there was also a demonstration in front of the Israeli consulate in Los Angeles.

At the time of writing Ben-Gal, after a total of 72 days in prison, is stationed in an army base near Tel-Aviv, pending a final decision on his case.